



Determinants Of Students' Decisions In Choosing A College: The Role Of Institutional Promotion And Perception Of Education Costs At The Keling Kumang Institute Of Technology, Sekadau

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the determinants of students' decisions in choosing a university by focusing on the role of institutional promotion and perceptions of educational costs at the Keling Kumang Institute of Technology. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The study population was 720 students, with a sample of 88 respondents determined using the Slovin formula with a *proportionate stratified random sampling technique*. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using statistical analysis with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicate that institutional promotion has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions in choosing a higher education institution. Similarly, perceptions of educational costs also showed a positive and significant influence on student decisions. These findings suggest that effective promotional strategies and affordable educational costs play a crucial role in attracting prospective students to higher education institutions. Therefore, universities are advised to strengthen their marketing communication strategies and maintain transparent and competitive educational cost policies to increase student enrollment.

INTRODUCTION

The number of private universities (PTS) in Indonesia has increased significantly over the past decade. However, this increase has not always been accompanied by a proportional increase in the number of new students. This has led to increasingly fierce competition among universities, particularly for private universities, which compete not only with other private

universities but also with state universities with stronger reputations and government funding. This phenomenon requires private universities to develop more aggressive differentiation and marketing strategies to maintain institutional sustainability (Kompas, 2023).

In the context of higher education marketing, universities are no longer viewed solely as academic institutions, but also as service organizations that must be able to offer added value and clearly position themselves in the minds of prospective students. Previous research has shown that promotional factors and tuition fees are important determinants in the decision to choose a private university (Siregar & Pratiwi, 2022). Therefore, this competitive dynamic encourages higher education institutions to be more strategic in managing marketing communications and tuition policies.

Competition among universities in Indonesia is also increasing along with the development of digital technology, which has changed the behavior of the younger generation in seeking and accessing information about educational institutions. These behavioral patterns in accessing information require universities, particularly private universities (PTS), to face greater challenges in attracting prospective students. Therefore, the formulation and implementation of adaptive, innovative, and effective promotional strategies are necessary. One strategy currently widely implemented by higher education institutions is social media marketing (SMM), which serves as a means of communication, interaction, and promotion to prospective students and the wider community as marketing targets.

Popular social media platforms today include Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, with TikTok being one of the apps that has garnered the most attention. This platform is widely utilized by various institutions due to its visual nature, easy access, and popularity among the younger generation growing up in the digital age. Social media enables communication that is not only one-way but also two-way, with reciprocal feedback. This creates more interactive communication and opens up significant opportunities for institutions to reach, build rapport, and influence the perceptions of prospective students (Khoerul Anam, 2025).

Changing characteristics of the current generation of prospective students have further exacerbated this competitive landscape. The digital generation tends to be more rational, critical, and information-driven in decision-making. They no longer rely solely on conventional recommendations, but actively seek information through social media, official websites, online forums, and alumni reviews before deciding on a college (Putri & Handayani, 2021). This increasingly widespread, digital-based information-seeking behavior makes the college selection process more systematic and evaluative.

Prospective students generally compare an institution's reputation, quality of academic services, facilities, job prospects, and tuition fees before making a final decision. This suggests that an appropriate promotional communication strategy and the perception of competitive tuition fees are important factors that can influence prospective students' preferences and final decisions when choosing a university.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Promotion

Institutional promotion is a crucial element in higher education marketing strategies, aiming to introduce, communicate, and build a positive image of the institution to prospective students. Within the marketing mix concept, promotion is a key component used by organizations to convey the value of products or services to consumers. According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller in their book, *Marketing Management*, promotion is a marketing communication activity aimed at informing, persuading, and reminding consumers about a product or service, thereby influencing their attitudes and decisions. In the context of higher education, institutional promotion is conducted through various communication media such as advertising, publications, school outreach activities, educational exhibitions, and digital

marketing through social media and the institution's official website. Effective promotion can increase brand awareness, strengthen the institution's image, and build prospective students' trust in the quality of education offered. Therefore, a well-planned and integrated promotional strategy is a crucial factor in enhancing the competitiveness of higher education institutions amidst increasingly fierce competition.

Perception of Education Costs

Perception of educational costs is a prospective student's subjective assessment of the amount of money they must pay to obtain educational services at a university. This perception is not only related to the nominal fee paid, but also relates to how individuals assess the appropriateness of that cost compared to the benefits obtained. From a consumer behavior perspective, price or cost perception is one of the important factors influencing purchasing decisions. According to Leon G. Schiffman and Joseph Wisenblit's consumer behavior theory, price perception is often more influential than the actual price because consumers assess a product or service based on their perceived value. In the context of higher education, educational costs that are perceived as affordable, transparent, and commensurate with the quality of academic services provided can increase prospective students' interest in choosing an institution. Conversely, if educational costs are perceived as too high or disproportionate to the quality offered, this can reduce prospective students' interest and trust in that institution.

Students' Decision in Choosing a College

A student's decision to choose a university is a decision-making process undertaken by prospective students after going through various stages of evaluating available alternative educational institutions. In consumer behavior theory, the decision-making process consists of several stages: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. According to Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, consumer decisions are the result of an evaluation process of various information obtained before finally deciding on a product or service. In the context of higher education, the decision to choose a university is influenced by various factors such as the institution's reputation, the quality of academic services, educational facilities, graduate job prospects, promotional strategies, and the tuition fees offered. Prospective students generally compare various institutions before making a final choice. Therefore, universities need to understand the factors that influence these decisions in order to formulate more effective marketing strategies and institutional policies to attract prospective students.

Operational Definition

An operational definition is a practical translation of a theoretical concept into measurable indicators. This definition explains how an abstract construct is transformed into observable and empirically testable variables. According to Sugiyono (in Oscar, Bheben, & Sumirah, 2019), an operational definition serves as a measurement guideline to ensure that research variables are analyzed systematically, objectively, and consistently. In this study, three variables were operationalized: Institutional Promotion (X1), Perception of Education Costs (X2), and Student Decisions in Choosing a College (Y). Each variable was measured using specific indicators developed based on an established theoretical framework and measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Table 1 The Operational Definitions of Variables

Variable	Theoretical Basis	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	Indicators
Institutional Promotion (X1)	Philip Kotler – Promotion & Marketing Mix	Promotion is a marketing communication activity designed to inform, persuade, and remind target markets about an organization's offerings.	Students' perception of the effectiveness and attractiveness of institutional promotional activities.	1. Advertising exposure 2. Social media effectiveness 3. School outreach/socialization programs 4. Clarity of information delivered 5. Institutional image building
Perception of Education Costs (X2)	Michael E. Porter – Perceived Value & Competitive Strategy	Cost perception reflects consumer evaluation of price fairness relative to benefits received.	Students' assessment of tuition affordability, fairness, and value for money.	1. Affordability of tuition fees 2. Transparency of cost structure 3. Availability of payment schemes 4. Availability of scholarships 5. Perceived value compared to quality
Students' Decision in Choosing a College (Y)	Leon Schiffman & Leslie Lazar Kanuk – Consumer Decision Process	Decision-making is a process through which consumers select among alternatives based on evaluation and preferences.	The level of students' certainty and commitment in choosing the institution.	1. Need recognition 2. Information search 3. Evaluation of alternatives 4. Final enrollment decision 5. Confidence in decision

METHODS

Data Types and Sources

The type of data in this study is quantitative data, which is data in numerical form and can be analyzed statistically to determine the relationship and influence between research variables. Quantitative data in research is generally obtained through measurements using research instruments such as questionnaires or questionnaires compiled based on the indicators of the variables being studied. Research data sources consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly from respondents through data collection processes in the field, for example through questionnaires, structured interviews, or directed observations, so that the data is authentic and in accordance with the research conditions. Meanwhile, secondary data is supporting data obtained not directly from respondents, but through documents, archives, reports, or official records relevant to the research object and serves to complement and strengthen the analysis of primary data. The use of quantitative data and grouping data sources into primary and secondary data is a common procedure used in scientific research because it allows researchers to obtain objective, measurable data that can be statistically tested to draw valid conclusions.

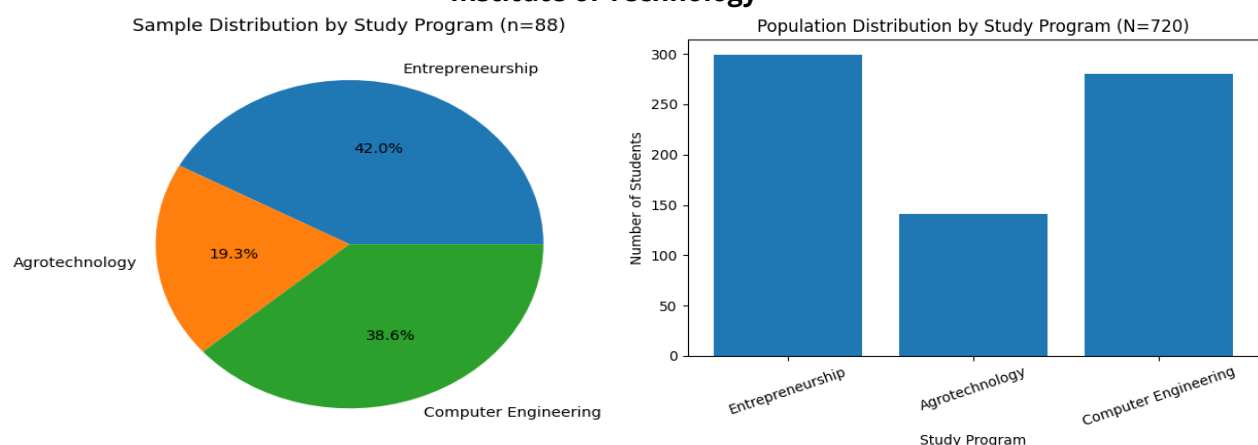
This is in line with the opinion of Sugiyono (2019) who stated that quantitative research uses data in the form of numbers that are analyzed statistically and utilizes primary and secondary data as sources of research information, then reinforced by Suharsimi Arikunto (2013) who explains that primary data is obtained directly from research subjects while secondary data comes from documents or indirect sources, and is supported by the view of John W. Creswell (2014) who emphasized that quantitative research emphasizes measuring variables with numerical data collected through standardized instruments to produce objective and generalizable analysis.

Data Analysis Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to analyze the influence of institutional promotion and perceived tuition costs on students' decisions in choosing a university. The quantitative approach is used to collect, process, and analyze numerical data, allowing for objective interpretation through statistical techniques (Arikunto in Syahroni, 2022). The research data is presented in tables, graphs, and other statistical representations to facilitate the analysis process. The data sources used were primary data obtained directly from respondents through questionnaires. Primary data is information obtained directly from research subjects at the research location (Sugiyono in Yunita et al., 2020). Data collection techniques used included observation, interviews, questionnaire distribution, and documentation (Nelson et al., 2023). The data obtained were then analyzed using a statistical approach with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The population in this study was all 720 students of the Keling Kumang Sekadau Institute of Technology. The sample determination used the Slovin formula with an error rate of 10%, resulting in a sample of 88 respondents. The sampling technique used was proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure the representation of each study program in the population. Based on proportional calculations, the sample consisted of 37 respondents from the Entrepreneurship Study Program, 17 respondents from the Agrotechnology Study Program, and 34 respondents from the Computer Engineering Study Program. The research data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and multiple linear regression analysis to test the influence of institutional promotion variables and perceptions of education costs on students' decisions in choosing a college.

RESULTS

Figure 1 Diagram of the number of students in 3 study programs at the Keling Kumang Institute of Technology



Descriptive statistics were used to describe respondents' perceptions of each research variable.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Institutional Promotion	88	2.40	4.80	3.85	0.62
Perception of Education Costs	88	2.20	4.70	3.74	0.65
Students' Decision	88	2.50	4.90	3.92	0.58

Descriptive analysis shows that the average value (mean) of the institutional promotion variable is 3.85, which indicates that respondents consider the promotional activities carried out by the institution to be quite good. The variable of perception of education costs has an average value of 3.74, which indicates that students generally consider the set education costs relatively affordable. Meanwhile, the variable of student decisions has an average value of 3.92, which indicates that the level of student decisions in choosing the Keling Kumang Institute of Technology is quite strong.

Respondent Characteristics

Respondent characteristics describe the demographic profile of the students participating in this study. The characteristics analyzed included study program and gender to provide an overview of the respondents involved in the study.

Table 2 Respondents Based on Study Program

Study Program	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entrepreneurship	37	42.0%
Agrotechnology	17	19.3%
Computer Engineering	34	38.7%
Total	88	100%

Based on Table 3.2, the majority of respondents came from the Entrepreneurship Study Program (37 students) (42.0%), followed by the Computer Engineering Study Program (34 students) (38.7%), and the Agrotechnology Study Program (17 students) (19.3%). This distribution reflects the use of proportional sampling techniques in this study.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Result
Promotion	0.812	Reliable
Education Cost	0.798	Reliable
Student Decision	0.824	Reliable

Table 4 Regression Results

Variable	B	t-value	Sig
Constant	1,245	2,318	0.023
Promotion (X1)	0.412	4,562	0.000
Education Cost (X2)	0.367	3,984	0.000

$$Y=1.245+0.412X_1+0.367X_2$$

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 t-test

Variable	t-value	Sig	Result
Promotion	4,562	0.000	Significant
Education Cost	3,984	0.000	Significant

The t-test results indicate that both independent variables significantly influence student decisions. This is indicated by the significance value of each variable being below 0.05, thus supporting both research hypotheses. These findings indicate that institutional promotion and perceived tuition fees play a significant role in influencing students' decisions when choosing a university. In other words, the more effective an institution's promotional strategy and the more positive students' perceptions of the tuition fees offered, the stronger their tendency to choose that institution as a place to continue their education. These results demonstrate that marketing communications and tuition fees are strategic factors that universities need to consider in attracting prospective students.

Table 6 Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.721	0.520	0.509

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that institutional promotion has a positive and significant influence on students' decisions in choosing a university. This finding aligns with Philip Kotler's marketing communications theory, which emphasizes that promotion is a crucial element in the marketing mix used to inform, persuade, and remind target markets about the value offered by an institution. In the context of higher education, promotional strategies such as digital marketing, social media engagement, school visits, and information campaigns serve as effective communication channels to increase an institution's visibility and credibility. When prospective students receive clear and persuasive information about an institution's academic programs, facilities, and strengths, they are more likely to form positive perceptions that subsequently influence their enrollment decisions. Furthermore, the findings of this study support the consumer behavior theory developed by Leon G. Schiffman and Leslie Lazar Kanuk, which explains that consumers go through several stages in the decision-making process: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and final decision-making. In the context of higher education, students act similarly to consumers, actively gathering information about various universities before making their final choice. Promotional activities undertaken by universities provide important information that helps prospective students evaluate the various available alternatives. Thus, effective promotion not only increases awareness of the institution but also facilitates the evaluation stage of the decision-making process, thereby strengthening students' confidence in choosing a university.

In addition to promotional factors, perceived tuition fees also play a significant role in influencing student decisions. This finding aligns with Michael E. Porter's value-based competitive strategy perspective, which emphasizes that organizations can gain a competitive advantage by offering superior value relative to the costs incurred by consumers. In the context of higher education, students will assess whether the tuition fees set by an institution are commensurate with the expected benefits, such as educational quality, adequate facilities, and promising career prospects.

When students perceive that the educational investment is reasonable and provides significant long-term value, they are more likely to choose that institution. Therefore, universities must not only maintain a competitive tuition fee structure but also be able to clearly communicate the value and quality of the education offered to prospective students.

LIMITATION

This study aims to examine the influence of institutional promotion and perceived cost of education on students' decisions in choosing a higher education institution at the Keling Kumang Institute of Technology. The results indicate that both variables have a significant influence on students' decision-making process. Institutional promotion plays a crucial role in shaping students' awareness and perceptions of the institution. Effective promotional strategies, such as digital marketing, social media engagement, and outreach programs or school visits, enable institutions to communicate their strengths and academic programs to prospective students. Therefore, promotion is a crucial instrument in attracting students and strengthening the institution's competitiveness in the higher education market. Furthermore, perceptions of tuition costs have also been shown to significantly influence students' decisions when choosing a university. Students tend to evaluate tuition costs based on affordability, transparency, and the value they receive from the institution. When students perceive tuition fees as commensurate with the quality of education, facilities, and future career opportunities, they are more likely to choose that institution.

Therefore, universities need to ensure a transparent tuition fee structure and provide flexible payment schemes and scholarship opportunities to increase the perception of affordability for prospective students. Overall, the results of this study emphasize the importance of integrating effective promotional strategies with competitive and transparent tuition policies. Universities need to continuously enhance their marketing communications efforts while ensuring that the value and quality of the education they offer are clearly communicated to prospective students. This way, higher education institutions can increase their attractiveness, boost student enrollment, and maintain their competitiveness amidst the increasingly competitive dynamics of higher education. However, this study has several limitations.

First, the study was conducted at a single higher education institution, so the results cannot be broadly generalized to all higher education institutions in Indonesia. Second, the variables studied were limited to institutional promotion and perceived educational costs, while students' decisions in choosing a higher education institution can also be influenced by other factors such as institutional reputation, quality of academic services, educational facilities, and social influences. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the research object to several different higher education institutions and add other relevant variables to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' decisions in choosing a higher education institution. Furthermore, the use of a mixed methods approach can also be considered to gain a deeper understanding of students' perceptions and considerations in the higher education decision-making process.

RESEARCH TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICS STATEMENTS

1. Author Contributions:

RJ: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Data Analysis,

AS: Writing – Original Draft, Visualization, Review and Editing

VL: Writing – Original Draft, Visualization, Review and Editing

2. Funding:

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3. Conflict of Interest:

No conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to the research and publication of this article.

4. Research Ethics:

The study did not involve any intervention, biological specimens, vulnerable groups, or sensitive personal data. Participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality of the respondents was maintained.

5. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

No use of ai. The authors declare that generative ai was not used in the preparation of this article.

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