

# THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC BRANDING REPUTATION IN MEDIATING THE EFFECTS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON INTEREST IN CHOOSING PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES (PTS) IN EAST JAVA

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was conducted to examine and analyze the effect of marketing communication consisting of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, direct marketing and word of mouth variables on the interest in choosing a private university in East Java by mediating Academic Branding Reputation. The research method uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with testing using AMOS, a research sample of 186 people with a multi-stage random sampling method. The results of the study that marketing communication which includes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing that has been carried out by Private University in East Java cannot directly encourage interest in choosing Private University. Only the word of mouth variable has a significant effect on interest in choosing a private university. Variable advertising, public relations, personal selling and word of mouth have a significant effect on the Academic Branding Reputation of Higher Education. However, sales promotion and direct marketing have no significant effect on Academic Branding Reputation. Academic Branding Reputation plays a role in mediating the influence of Public Relations on the interest in choosing Private University in East Java. However, it does not play a role in mediating the influence of other communication variables, namely advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and word of mouth.

**Keywords:** Academic Branding Reputation, Interest in Choosing, Marketing Communication, Advertising, Word of Mouth.

## INTRODUCTION

They were entering the 21st century, the world of college face of increasingly stringent and complex. This condition requires each college always to pay attention to and meet the needs and desires of potential consumers that prospective students and their parents or in a more satisfactory compared to other universities. This certainly requires the parties involved in the management of Higher Education to improve their quality (continuous quality improvement) continually, because only genuinely qualified universities can compete in the global tertiary market.

At present, the interest in continuing studies to tertiary institutions is increasing. However, the Higher Education Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) is still below the GER of other levels of education but has increased from year to year. Targets for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 APK for tertiary institutions reach 26.86%, 28.16%, 29.54% and 31.07% even endeavoured to reach 35%, meaning the Government has a target of 35% of children aged 19-23 years can enjoy college in college. To achieve these targets, one of them is to increase the capacity of existing tertiary institutions or build new tertiary institutions. This phenomenon has prompted the Government to grant permits to open new colleges that are managed by the community or Private Universities with various study programs that are of interest to the public as well as various facilities offered.

The position of the Private University has a role in the community to educate the nation's children amid government limitations reaching all lines of education. The public image which considers Private University as a second-class college has become a negative image that influences the interests of prospective students to study at Private University. Whether we realize it or not, the number of Private Universities has increased significantly in the last five years.

Private University is a brand that has not yet gained a place in the hearts of the public and the industrial world. This can be seen from the difference in a community assessment of Private University graduates who require higher achievement index compared to State Universities as well as in terms of accreditation assessment. Also supported by the Government's policy which does not favour the Private University further worsens the image of the Private University in the eyes of the public. Nevertheless, from year to year, the growth and development of Private University in Indonesia are very rapid, especially in the East Java region, which has reached 326.

The interests of prospective students largely determine decisions in the selection of a Private University; usually, the interest arises after the evaluation process. The interest of prospective students in the selection of a Private University is influenced by several factors, including brand equity and the reputation of the Private University (Rizka & Eva, 2014). According to Kotler (2005), interest is an adequate response or process of feeling or liking a product but has not decided to buy. Private University communication towards prospective students through a compelling promotional mix can encourage interest in choosing a Private University. In line with Lamb's (2001) research, one way to develop buying interest is through promotion, namely communication that informs prospective buyers of an income or something or receives a response.

Universities that have successfully communicated their brands well will continue to attract the interest of many prospective students. College marketing communication which includes the

installation of billboards, banners, radio advertisements, mass media and television is a means used to inform, remind and influence prospective students directly or indirectly about the products and programs they offer. The rapid development of information technology encourages universities to be more quickly known to the public through the web, Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube. Keller (2007) further stated that marketing communication depicts the "voice" of a brand and is a means that can be used to build dialogue and build relationships with consumers. Marketing communication enables companies to connect their brands with others, places, special events and brand experience. Marketing communication can contribute to brand equity by building a brand in memory and creating a brand image.

This study aims to examine and analyze the effect of marketing communication consisting of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, direct marketing and word of mouth variables on the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java with Academic Branding Reputation mediation. The object of the research was conducted at the Private University located in 6 regencies/cities, amounting to 41 Private Universities with various forms of Higher Education namely Universities, Institutes, Colleges, Polytechnics and Academies. Academic Branding Reputation is a new variable resulting from the synthesis of appropriate concepts to explain branding in Higher Education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The relationship of advertising to Academic Branding Reputation and interest in choosing a Private University**

Rahmani and Noor (2012) concluded that advertising and sales promotion are effective factors that influence brand equity. The same study was conducted by Zanjani et al. (2012) and Maleki (2016). In theory, it is reinforced by the thought of Kotler (2010) that marketing communication influences brand equity. The same research was conducted by (Mubushar 2013; Kim 2001), which gave no different results, namely that marketing communication had a significant and robust effect on brand equity.

Previous research results show that aggressive advertising can increase brand power and encourage consumer buying interest. Whereas Aydin's (2015) provides the same results that customer-based brand equity influences consumer buying interest. Setyawati (2010), in her research linking advertising and buying interest, stated that consumer buying interest is strongly influenced by ad quality. Likewise, the results of research by (Malik et al., 2014; Zinyemba et al., 2015), support the results of research which state that marketing communication variables influence consumer behaviour. Another study conducted by Rai (2013), which explains that in this era, advertising plays a major role in changing the behaviour and attitudes of consumers towards the products displayed in advertisements. Advertising not only changes the way the product is consumed by users but changes their attitude towards the product. Advertising has a significant influence on customer purchasing decisions for certain brands. Another study conducted by Kusdiyanto (2008) on the image of Private University in Kopertis Region VI Central Java showed that based on the analysis of familiarity scale and favorability scale of universities in Kopertis Region VI of Central Java, it could be concluded that prospective students in the Surakarta City Government knew well and like to study at the Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, this proves that the image of the University of

Muhammadiyah Surakarta is better than the two other universities studied. More than 75% of respondents agreed that they bought the product advertised more than the product that was not advertised. Then the research hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: Relationship of Advertising with Academic Branding Reputation.

Hypothesis 1b: Relationship between Advertising with interest in choosing Private University.

### **Relationship of sales promotion to Academic Branding Reputation and interest in choosing Private University**

The results of Kurniawan's research (2014) which states that effective marketing communication will increase brand equity. More specifically, the variables forming marketing communications such as advertising and sales promotion, products, prices and distribution are proven to be effective variables that enhance brand equity. Other research conducted by Rahmani et al. (2012) shows the results that advertising and sales promotion are effective factors that influence brand equity.

Mohsen's (2014) concludes the results that Advertising and sales promotion have a positive effect and play an essential role in brand equity and brand loyalty that drive consumer interest in purchasing. Ansari (2012), in his research which aims to examine the effect of sales promotion on consumer behaviour by also taking into account cultural factors, gives the result that sales promotion has a direct and significant effect on consumer behaviour. Then the research hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2a: Relationship between Sales promotion and Academic Branding Reputation.

Hypothesis 2b: Relationship between Sales promotion and interest in choosing Private University.

### **Relationship of public relations to Academic Branding Reputation and interest in choosing Private University**

Mubushar et al. (2013), by using advertising, price promotion, public relations and brand reputation variables, concludes that marketing communication has a strong influence on brand equity. This means that the company's marketing communication influences the strength of a brand through publications. Other research conducted by Kim (2001) proves that there is a positive relationship between brand equity and company reputation in the integrated marketing communication model. The relationship between variables in integrated marketing communication, especially between advertising and public relations, are interrelated.

Gilaninia's (2013) on public relations provides the conclusion that public relations play a role in building organizational communication. Very public relations have a role in accelerating the achievement of company goals. Public relations plays a role in forming, maintaining and changing public behaviour attitudes towards individual institutions (Lupiyoadi, 2013). Based on the theory put forward by several experts, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3a: Relationship of Public relations with Academic Branding Reputation.

Hypothesis 3b: Relationship of Public relations with interest in choosing Private University.

### **Relationship of personal selling to Academic Branding Reputation and interest in choosing Private University**

Ansari (2014) the results of his research showed that there was a relationship between variables in the marketing mix (price, image, sales promotion and personal selling) to brand equity. The same study was conducted by Mubushar (2013), who clarified the effect of marketing communication with brand equity-supporting the research of Ansari and Mubushar (2014) in their findings stating that effective marketing communication will increase brand equity.

Oladebo's (2015), with the variable brand image, advertising, sales promotion, personal sales and consumer purchasing decisions concluded that brand image, advertising, sales promotion and personal selling affect consumer purchasing decisions. The results of the study underlie the emergence of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4a: Relationship of Personal selling with Academic Branding Reputation.

Hypothesis 4b: Relationship of Personal selling with interest in choosing Private University.

### **The relationship of direct marketing to academic branding reputation and interest in choosing Private University**

The results of Dameh's (2019) which examines the effect of direct marketing in the form of pamphlets, catalogues and direct mail on building brand awareness of IKEA products in Jordan shows the results that direct marketing influences brand awareness.

Moharam and Shawky's (2012) research results indicate that direct marketing and personal selling are essential variables in creating interest in buying credit cards but through subjective norms. Based on these studies, the following hypotheses are obtained:

Hypothesis 5a: The relationship of direct marketing with academic branding reputation.

Hypothesis 5b: The relationship between direct marketing with interest in choosing Private University.

### **The relationship of word of mouth to Academic Branding Reputation and interest in choosing Private University**

In the context of tertiary institutions, brand image can increase or decrease the perceived value of students that can increase student confidence, especially new students, in deciding to enrol at a Private University. This shows the existence of an interest in new students because of the brand image. Research by (Rao and Monroe 1989; Dodd, Monroe and Grewal 1991) states that if a brand is known. Then in the minds of consumers, there are specific associations of a brand to distinguish it from other brands. Consumers will perceive high quality and make they are satisfied that the brand has high brand equity.

(Dewi 2005; Andre 2006) in their research concluded that if students who are satisfied with the products and services of a tertiary institution will be loyal to the tertiary institution, then the student will recommend other prospective students to a particular tertiary name so that the customer (student) can help in enhancing the brand image of a college. Based on the results of these theoretical and empirical studies, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 6a: Relationship of word of mouth with academic branding reputation.

Hypothesis 6b: The relationship of word of mouth with interest in choosing Private University.

### **Relationship of Academic Branding Reputation to interest in choosing Private University**

The research of Esmaeilpour and Barjoei (2016) with research variables of corporate image, brand equity, brand loyalty and brand association gives the result that the company's image has a positive and meaningful impact on brand equity. This is supported by research conducted by



Pinar (2013), that the dimensions of brand equity consisting of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty are essential in building a strong university brand.

The same research was conducted by Naser (2013), which stated that brand equity had a significant and positive effect on consumer decisions. Torres (2015) who examined the perceived quality, brand awareness, brand equity and brand loyalty variables gave results in his research that brand loyalty mediates the influence of brand awareness and perceived quality on brand equity. Khan (2016), supports the results of research that states. Brand equity has a positive and significant effect on buying interest. Whereas Aydin's (2015) provides the same results that customer-based brand equity influences consumer buying interest.

Yu (2014) examined the effect of brand image on consumer interest and concluded that brand image has a mediating effect on the relationship between perceived individual perceptions and consumer behaviour. Oladepo (2015) also examined the effect of brand image perception on consumer buying behaviour. They were supported by research by Pinar et al., (2013) which concluded that brand image significantly influences purchase interest. This is supported by the results of research conducted by Alhaddad (2015).

The result of Saydan's (2013) research with the country of origin image, brand equity and purchasing decision variables concluded that the evaluation of the country of origin brand image affects the brand evaluation process and consumer decisions. This means that brand image is a consideration of consumers in decision making. Based on these results, the following research hypotheses can be drawn:

Hypothesis 7: Relationship of Academic Branding Reputation with interest in choosing Private University.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study was conducted with a quantitative approach with a survey method, namely, research aimed at assessing large and small populations by selecting and reviewing selected samples (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The number of research samples was 186 respondents with sampling criteria, namely class XII students with the consideration that they would soon finish their education, the students planned to continue to Higher Education after graduating from High School in East Java. Data collection procedures using interviews, documentation, and questionnaires with the method of collection and sampling using multi-stage random sampling. This research uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), while the development and testing of hypotheses use AMOS Statistics. Research analysis techniques using confirmatory factor analysis as well as explanatory research and regression weight approaches, while the construct in this study uses exogenous construct and endogenous construct.

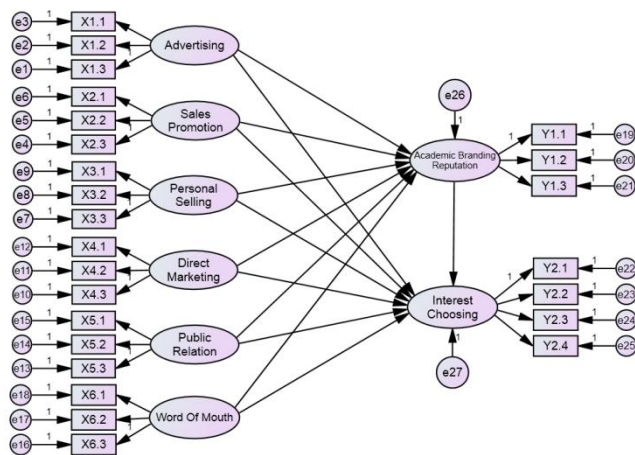
## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Result**

#### Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis

SEM test results for the influence of Advertising (X1), Sales promotion (X2), Public Relations (X3), Personal selling (X4), Direct marketing (X5), and Word of Mouth (X6), to Academic

Branding Reputation (Y1) and Interest in choosing Private University (Y2), can be seen in the following Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Test Results**

1) The goodness of Fit Test

The results of the Goodness of Fit Test in the study note that of the eight criteria used to assess whether a model is feasible or not, most have been met, with good structural equation model criteria, thus it can be said that the model is acceptable. There is a model's conformity with the data.

2) Causality Test

The next step is to test the causality of the hypothesis developed in the model. Testing the path coefficients is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Causality Test Results**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Description
ABR	<---	Adv	0,224	0,097	2,300	0,021	Significant
ABR	<---	SP	-0,229	0,179	-1,277	0,202	Not significant
ABR	<---	PR	0,621	0,095	6,555	0,000	Significant
ABR	<---	PS	0,257	0,082	3,128	0,002	Significant
ABR	<---	DM	-0,114	0,078	-1,467	0,142	Not significant
ABR	<---	WOM	0,190	0,081	2,348	0,019	Significant
IC	<---	Adv	0,095	0,090	1,054	0,292	Not significant
IC	<---	SP	0,190	0,165	1,150	0,250	Not significant

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Description
IC	<---	PR	-0,094	0,107	-0,873	0,383	Not significant
IC	<---	PS	0,083	0,074	1,110	0,267	Not significant
IC	<---	DM	0,055	0,069	0,792	0,428	Not significant
IC	<---	WOM	0,550	0,084	6,576	0,000	Significant
IC	<---	ABR	0,222	0,106	2,090	0,037	Significant

## DISCUSSION

### The Effect of Advertising on Academic Branding Reputation and Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that advertising activities significantly influence the Academic Branding Reputation but do not affect the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java. The probability value of 0.021 is smaller than the required significance level of 0.05 and 0.292 is greater than the significance level. This means that advertising activities that have been carried out by the Private University in East Java have a direct effect in increasing the Academic Branding Reputation Private University but do not have a direct impact in encouraging high school students to choose Private University in East Java.

Hypothesis 1a, the path coefficient test results show that advertising has a significant effect on Academic Branding Reputation. This means that the advertising activities that have been carried out by the Private University, directly affect the academic branding reputation. These results indicate that the hypothesis that the higher the advertising activities carried out by the Private University, the higher the Academic Branding Reputation Private University can be accepted or proven. These findings indicate that if the advertising activities undertaken by the Private University are higher, it will further increase the Academic Branding Reputation Private University. Vice versa if the advertising activities carried out by the Private University is low, it will reduce the Academic Branding Reputation Private University in East Java.

This finding explains that advertising activities undertaken by Private University through the delivery of information in various advertising media and advertising messages that highlight the advantages of Private University and attractive display of advertisements can increase positive perceptions of Private University's academic reputation. The three advertising indicators are proven to be able to increase trust and reduce the hesitation of high school students towards Private University in East Java. This means that the advertising media conducted by the Private University through the Jawa Pos (Radar) newspaper, local T.V. in each district and radio, as well as brochures and billboards, can enhance the positive image of Private University in the eyes of high school students.

This finding is relevant to the results of research by (Mubushar 2013; Rahmani 2012; Buil 2012; Tajzadeh 2014; Alhaddad 2015). Research of Mubushar's (2013) concluded that marketing communication which includes advertising, promotion, public relations has a strong



influence in improving brand image. In line with the results of this study, Rahmani (2012) concluded that advertising is a useful tool in influencing brands. This shows that Private University advertisements carried out through various media and interestingly packaged with informative advertising messages and highlighting the advantages of Private University can build positive perceptions and images for Private University in East Java. Installation of billboards, banners and pamphlets in several strategic places in East Java has provided positive information for high school students. The same study was conducted by (Mohsen Ameri Hamed Jafar Zanjani 2012; Dini-Hadi 2016). In theory, it is reinforced by Kotler's (2010) thinking that marketing communication influences brand equity. Other studies that support these findings are research conducted by Kim (2001), that marketing communication has a significant and robust effect on brand equity. Maleki (2016) states that Advertising plays a key role in building brand equity; Advertising is the determinant of a brand. Likewise, Sales promotion is a key in marketing communication which impacts brand equity.

Hypothesis 1b, the path coefficient test results show that advertising does not significantly influence the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java. This means that the advertising activities that have been carried out by the Private University do not directly influence in encouraging interest in choosing a Private University in East Java. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the advertising activities carried out by the Private University, the more the interest in choosing Private University is unacceptable or unproven. These findings show that advertising by the Private University through various media (newspapers, T.V., radio, banners, brochures, billboards, billboards, etc.) packed with attractive advertising messages and displaying the advantages of Private University has not been able to encourage student interest high school to choose a Private University in East Java.

Based on the results of the description of respondents' answers, it can be concluded that the response of respondents to advertising activities carried out by the Private University is quite good. However, for the attractiveness indicator of advertising that distinguishes it from other Private Universities, respondents respond neutrally. This means that the interest in advertisements made does not have a significant difference between one Private University and another Private University. Based on the results of the respondents' answers showed that the advertising carried out by each Private University in East Java was perceived to be the same, and there was no difference. So that respondents assume that all Private Universities in East Java are the same in the eyes of high school students. As happened just before the admission of new students, almost every Private University put up banners, billboards and pamphlets in various places to be remembered and noticed by prospective students. This can lead to saturation of Private University advertisements that highlight their advantages.

The results of this study support the research of Swantara (2012), which results in the finding that marketing communication (advertising) does not affect brand reputation and purchasing decisions. In contrast, the results of this study contradict the findings of Rai (2013), stated that in this era of advertising plays a major role in changing the behaviour and attitudes of consumers towards the products displayed in advertisements. The findings of Malik (2014) which concluded that the effect of advertising on buying behaviour is greater than consumer perceptions. In this research, the interest in choosing a Private University is not influenced by

advertising, because all Private Universities do the same thing and there is no difference. Advertising activities carried out by Private University through various media have not been able to encourage interest in choosing a Private University. Findings research Arista's (2011) support the results of this study which proves that advertising does not significantly encourage consumer buying interest.

### **The Effect of Sales Promotion on Academic Branding Reputation and Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java**

Hypothesis testing results show that sales promotion has no effect on Academic branding reputation and interest in choosing Private University. Probability values of 0.202 and 0.250 are greater than the required significance level of 0.05. This means that the sales promotion activities that have been carried out by Private University in East Java cannot improve the Academic Branding Reputation Private University and have no influence in encouraging high school students to choose Private University in East Java.

Hypothesis 2a, the path coefficient test results show that sales promotion does not affect Academic Branding Reputation. This means that the sales promotion activities that have been carried out by Private University have no direct effect in increasing Academic Branding Reputation. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the sales promotion activities undertaken by Private University, the more the Academic Branding Reputation Private University is not acceptable or unproven. These findings indicate that the sales promotion activities undertaken by the Private University cannot improve the perception of high school students of Private University's academic reputation.

Based on the results of the description of respondents' answers indicate that most high school students answered agreed to the three indicators of the statement which states that the Private University provides scholarships for prospective students who excel and less able. Likewise for statements about affordable education costs and the ease of payment of tuition fees. Indicators of scholarship granting by the Private University cannot improve academic reputation considering all accredited Private Universities receive scholarship allocations by LLDikti East Java. Even from the data available, the allocation of scholarship funds at State Universities is much greater than at Private Universities, so the stimulation of scholarships at Private Universities is not sufficiently attractive for students. Indicators of affordable Private University education costs have also not been able to improve the academic reputation of Private University, and this shows that the academic reputation of Private University is not measured by the size of the cost of education and ease of payment.

The results of this study contradict the findings of Rahmani (2012), which concluded that advertising and sales promotion are effective factors affecting brand equity. Another research that contradicts the results of this study is Kurniawan (2014) which concluded that sales promotion proved effective in increasing brand equity. Maleki (2016) concludes the results of research related to sales promotion that sales promotion is the key in marketing communication which has an impact on brand equity.

Hypothesis 2b, the path coefficient test results show that sales promotion does not affect the interest in choosing Private University. This means that the sales promotion activities that have been carried out by Private University have no direct influence in encouraging high school students to choose Private University. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher sales promotion activities undertaken by the Private University increase the interest in choosing Private University is unacceptable or unproven. Judging from the results of respondents' answers showed that the majority of high school students agreed to the existence of scholarships, affordable tuition fees and the ease of payment. This finding shows that the issue of education costs is not a consideration of students in choosing a Private University. Given the phenomena that occur in the world of education shows that some schools and colleges with high tuition fees become an option. Judging from the characteristics of high school students who on average are still aged 18-20 years, usually have very high ideals, so the desire to continue their studies at favourite State Universities is also high. Selection of Higher Education can not be separated from the role of parents, considering education will affect one's future. So that the consideration of the prestige and image of tertiary institutions has a profound effect on the selection of tertiary institutions and not just cheapening the cost of education. The results of this study contradict the research of (Rahmani 2012; Ayu's 2014), which concluded that sales promotion influences buying interest.

### **The Effect of Public Relations on Academic Branding Reputation and Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java**

The path coefficient test results show that public relations has a significant effect on Academic branding reputation but does not affect the interest in choosing a Private University. A probability value of 0,000 is less than the required significance level of 0.05 and 0.383 greater than the significance level. This means that public relations activities that have been carried out by Private University in East Java can increase the Academic Branding Reputation Private University but have no effect in encouraging high school students to choose Private University in East Java.

Hypothesis 3a, Path coefficient test results show that public relations have a significant effect on Academic Branding Reputation at Private University in East Java. This means that if the public relations undertaken by the Private University are higher, it will further increase the Academic Branding Reputation Private University in East Java. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the public relations activities undertaken by the Private University, the more the Academic Branding Reputation Private University can be accepted or proven.

Judging from the results of respondents' answers indicate that the majority of respondents answered agreed to statements about the collaboration of schools with Private University in the form of sponsorship and the provision of Private University information via the web. These findings indicate that the collaboration network that has been built by the Private University in various student activities at school has been able to improve the academic reputation of the Private University. So far, the Private University in East Java has been continuously

collaborating with high schools in order to support sports, arts, and teacher competency development through the Subject Teachers' Consultation.

Building cooperation with schools is one of the University's public relations activities. The results of this study reinforce the opinion of Lupiyoadi (2013) which states that the task of the public relations department is to form, maintain, and change the attitude of public behaviour towards certain institutions. Public Relations is very concerned with several marketing tasks, namely building an image, supporting other communication activities, overcoming existing problems and issues, and strengthening the company's positioning. This shows that the private University public relations influence in building a positive perception of the image of the Private University. They were supported by Kucuksule's (2015) which concluded that universities and several universities rely on their image to attract prospective new students.

The results of this study support the research of (Mubushar 2013: Kim 2001). The findings of Mubushar (2013) conclude that marketing communication which includes advertising, promotion, public relations has a strong influence in improving brand image. In contrast, Kim concludes that there is a positive relationship between brand equity and company reputation in the marketing communication model. Relationship variables in marketing communication are interrelated, especially between advertising and public relations.

Hypothesis 3b, The path coefficient test results show that public relations do not significantly influence the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java. This means that public relations conducted by the Private University are not able to encourage the interest of high school students to choose a Private University in East Java. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the public relations activities undertaken by Private University, the more the interest in choosing Private University is unacceptable or unproven.

Judging from the results of respondents' answers indicate that the majority of respondents answered agreed to statements about the collaboration of schools with Private University in the form of sponsorship and the provision of Private University information via the web. These findings indicate that the collaboration of Private University with high school in the form of sponsorship can only enhance the positive image of Private University in the eyes of high school students but have not been able to encourage interest in choosing Private University. This means that Private University's collaboration with schools in providing sponsorship can establish Private University communication with schools but does not cause students' preferences towards Private University.

Lamb (2001), in his theory, states that one way to develop buying interest is through promotion, namely communication that informs prospective buyers of an income or something or gets a response.

## **The Effect of Personal Selling on Academic Branding Reputation and Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java**

The path coefficient test results show that personal selling has a significant effect on Academic branding reputation but does not affect the interest in choosing a Private University. The probability value of 0.002 is smaller than the required significance level of 0.05, and 0.267 is greater than the significance level. This means that personal selling activities that have been carried out by Private University in East Java can increase the Academic Branding Reputation Private University but have no effect in encouraging high school students to choose Private University in East Java.

Hypothesis 4a, The path coefficient test results show that personal selling has a significant effect on Academic Branding Reputation at Private University in East Java. This means that if the person selling done by the Private University is higher, it will further increase the Academic Branding Reputation at the Private University in East Java. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the personal selling activities are undertaken by Private Universities, the more the Academic Branding Reputation Private University can be accepted or proven.

Judging from the results of respondents' answers indicate that the majority of high school students stated neutral tend to agree with the presentation activities by students, lecturers and alumni. It can be concluded that the responses of respondents related to personal selling activities carried out by Private University in East Java can be understood. Through presentations made by students and alumni, Private University can deliver the development of tertiary institutions. This can increase trust and reduce doubts about the academic reputation of the Private University. Students and alumni already have an emotional bond with the school so that it will be easier to build a positive image of Private University. Students will be more confident with the information conveyed by students and alumni because they have an experience that can convince students.

These findings support the research of Ansari (2014), which states that there is a relationship between promotional mix and brand equity.

Hypothesis 4b, The path coefficient test results show that personal selling has no significant effect on the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java. This means that the personal selling activities that have been carried out by the Private University have no direct effect in increasing interest in choosing a Private University in East Java. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher personal selling activities undertaken by Private Universities, the more the interest in choosing Private University is unacceptable or unproven. Judging from the results of respondents' answers showed that the majority of high school students stated neutral and agreed to the presentation activities by students, alumni and lecturers. This indicates that students still have doubts about the information conveyed. High school students do not easily believe in Personal University's selling activities. This finding is contrary to the results of Oladepo's (2015), which concluded that personal selling affects consumer buying decisions. The results of this study also reject the results of research by Ansari (2014), Moharam and



Shawky (2012), who stated that direct marketing and personal selling are important variables in creating buying interest.

### **The Effect of Direct Marketing on Academic Branding Reputation and Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java**

The path coefficient test results show that direct marketing has no effect on Academic branding reputation and interest in choosing Private University. Probability values of 0.142 and 0.428 are greater than the required significance level of 0.05. This means that direct marketing activities that have been carried out do not affect Academic Branding Reputation and interest in choosing a Private University in East Java.

Hypothesis 5a, The path coefficient test results show that direct marketing does not affect academic branding reputation. This means that direct marketing activities that have been carried out by Private University have no direct impact on increasing Academic Branding Reputation. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the direct marketing activities undertaken by Private Universities, the more the Private University's Academic Branding Reputation increases, is unacceptable or unproven.

Judging from the respondent's answers, it shows that the respondents' responses related to the direct marketing activities carried out by the Private University in East Java generally agreed and tended to be neutral, which means that high school students know the reputation of the Private University in East Java through educational exhibitions (Expo) which is held every year. High school students know the reputation of the Private University in East Java through letters and emails sent directly to students. High school students know the reputation of the Private University in East Java through Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Instagram and other social media. This means that direct marketing activities that have been carried out by Private University can be accepted and participated by students but are not able to improve perceptions of the academic reputation of Private University. This happens because all Private Universities take advantage of educational expos to introduce their campuses and make correspondence directly to students' addresses. Education expo is generally scheduled every year at East Java under the coordination of the Department of Education so that the school requires the participation of students in these activities. Even not only the Private University in East Java who participated in the education expo but also participated by State Universities and even some large Private Universities in East Java.

The results of this study support the findings made by Swantara (2012), who examined the variables of marketing communication, brand equity and direct sale. The results of the study concluded that integrated marketing communication had less effect on recognition of brand equity in Thai products when compared to foreign products.

Hypothesis 5b, The path coefficient test results show that direct marketing does not affect the interest in choosing a Private University. This means that the direct marketing activities that have been carried out by Private University have no direct effect in increasing interest in choosing Private University. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the direct marketing activities undertaken by Private Universities, the more the interest in

choosing Private University is unacceptable or unproven. Judging from the respondents' answers, it shows that the respondent's responses related to direct marketing activities carried out by the Private University in East Java generally agreed and tended to be neutral. The participation of high school students in the education expo every year and every district does not guarantee they make choices at the Private University. This means that most Private Universities do the same activity in introducing their universities to students, namely through correspondence, email, Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Instagram and other social media. The interest of high school students as measured by their desire to continue their studies at Private University and the desire to make Private University the first choice cannot be built only through educational exposures, letters or emails. The results of this study support the research of Swantara et al. (2012).

This finding is contrary to the results of Moharam et al. (2012), which indicates that direct marketing and personal selling are essential variables in creating buying interest. Interest, according to Holland and Djaali (2006) interest is a high tendency towards something. So that interest can be indicated by the feeling of pleasure, interest, attention, etc.

### **The Effect of Word of Mouth on Academic Branding Reputation and Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java**

The path coefficient test results show that word of mouth has a significant effect on Academic branding reputation and interest in choosing Private University. Probability values of 0.019 and 0,000 are smaller than the required significance level of 0.05. This means that word of mouth activities that have been carried out by Private University in East Java can increase the Private University Academic Branding Reputation and at the same time also be able to increase the interest of high school students to choose Private University in East Java.

Hypothesis 6a, Path coefficient test results show that word of mouth affects Academic Branding Reputation. This means that the word of mouth activity that has been carried out by Private University has a direct effect in improving Academic Branding Reputation. These results indicate that the hypothesis which states that the higher the word of mouth activity undertaken by the Private University, the more the Academic Branding Reputation Private University can be accepted or proven.

Judging from the respondents' answers, it shows that concerning the word of mouth marketing communication, the majority of high school students in East Java provide the majority of agreed and neutral evaluations, which means that students get recommendations to choose Private University in East Java from their friends who went to college first. High school students get a good impression of the Private University in East Java from the story of their classmates or classmates. Students are also often invited and persuaded by friends to continue their studies at the Private University in East Java. This means that mouth-to-mouth communication related to the private University's academic reputation is well perceived and can improve the private University's image and academic reputation. Communication from the mouth is considered reliable because it is based on the experiences of friends who have gone to college and also recommendations from friends.

Supported by the opinion of Lupiyoadi (2008) that WOM is a good way of promotion. Mangold et al. (1999) said that today the role of WOM as a promotion tool is increasing, especially for products in the form of services that are credence and experience. It means that higher education is a service whose results cannot be felt directly but can only be felt after entering Higher Education, so the role of others (friends) can reduce the risk of uncertainty. In line with this research, Pruden and Vavra (2004) argue that WOM is a good source of information, especially in the field of services that can increase sales and develop brand image and credibility.

Hypothesis 6b, the path coefficient test results show that word of mouth influences the interest in choosing Private University. This means that word of mouth activity has a direct effect on increasing interest in choosing Private University. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the word of mouth activities undertaken by Private Universities increases the interest in choosing Private University to be accepted or proven. In terms of respondents' answers, it shows that the majority of high school students in East Java, the majority of them gave an agreed and neutral assessment regarding communication from mouth-mouth. This means that students get recommendations to choose a Private University in East Java from friends who have already gone to college. A friend's experience will be considered in choosing a Private University. Likewise, a positive impression about Private University will be a strong recommendation for inviting and persuading students to choose University Private.

Mangold et al., (1999) said that today the role of WOM as a promotional tool is increasing, especially for products in the form of services. For Universities, WOM is proven to be able to increase their interest in choosing Private University. So the task of the manager of a Private University is to maintain and build positive communication with various parties to create positive word of mouth. To improve the image of the Private University, it is necessary to avoid internal conflicts between the Private University Managers and the Foundation, because it results in a decrease in the interest of prospective new students to enter the Private University. The results of this study support Lin (2010) findings that WOM can mediate the influence of corporate image on buying interest.

### **The Effect of Academic Branding Reputation on the Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java**

The path coefficient test results show that Academic Branding Reputation has a significant effect on interest in choosing a Private University. The probability value of 0.037 is smaller than the required significance level of 0.05. This means that emotional appeal, academic atmosphere, and perceived quality can increase interest in choosing a Private University. These results indicate that the hypothesis stating that the higher the Academic Branding Reputation Private University, the more interest in choosing Private University can be accepted or proven.

Based on the results of the description of respondents' answers indicate that respondents' responses related to Academic Branding Reputation conducted by the Private University in East Java, the majority gave an assessment that tends to be neutral and agrees, this means that basically, respondents gave an assessment that agreed with emotional appeal, atmosphere academic and perceived quality. The emotional appeal of Private University includes the

reputation of the Private University, the existence of the Private University as a choice for continuing studies at the university level, and the belief in the reputation of the Private University can realize the hopes and ideals for success in the future. Besides, the academic atmosphere is also a factor that can improve Academic Branding Reputation. The academic atmosphere is measured by the implementation of scientific activities at the Private University, teaching and learning process and the availability of facilities while the perception of the quality of Private University is measured by graduates, national standards of education and accreditation.

Judging from the academic atmosphere, some respondents realized that the number of Lecturers who hold a Professor at Private University is still small, building facilities, scientific activities, student facilities and other facilities at State Universities are still considered better. This can create an unfavourable image for the Private University. Judging from the accreditation ranking, Private University in East Java on average is still ranked C even there are still some Private Universities that have not been accredited. For this reason, the Private University in East Java needs to improve Academic Branding Reputation to encourage interest in choosing a Private University. Nowadays the role of brands has shifted, competition in fighting over consumers is no longer limited to functional attributes but has been associated with brands that can provide a special image for the wearer (Aaker, 2001). In other words, the role of the brand is very important in making decisions about choosing a university.

These findings support Purolinna's (2016) findings that the image of a university influences the application of the interests of prospective students. The University's image is a multidimensional construction formed through cognitive and affective attributes. The research of Eva (2014), provide a similar conclusion that the interest of prospective students in the selection of Private University is influenced by several factors, including brand equity and the reputation of Private University. According to Durianto et al. (2001), brands play a very important role, one of which is to bridge the expectations of consumers when the company promises something to consumers. Products that have brand strength (Brand equity) will be able to meet the expectations of consumers and consumers will make decisions in purchasing.

These findings contradict Hou's (2017) study, which states that brand image does not directly influence interest but must be mediated by perceived quality and brand trust. The results of Calvo's (2013) show that there are differences in perceptions in assessing the quality of higher education in State Universities and Private Universities. Other findings show the results that the dimensions of tangibility and empathy are the most influential variables on perceived quality in assessing the quality of higher education. This study makes it clear that different research respondents will provide differences in assessing the perception of the quality of higher education.

**The role of Academic Branding Reputation in Mediating the Effect of Advertising, Sales Promotion, Public Relations, Personal Selling, Direct Marketing and Word of Mouth on the Interest in Choosing a Private University in East Java**

Sobel test results show that Academic Branding Reputation plays a role in mediating the influence of public relations on the interests of choosing a Private University but does not play a role in mediating advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and word of mouth on the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java. From the results of hypothesis testing shows that public relations directly affects the Academic Branding Reputation but does not directly influence the interest in choosing a Private University. After being mediated by Academic Branding Reputation, public relations influence the interest in choosing Private University. This finding means that public relations activities undertaken by Private University will increase interest in choosing a Private University if students' perceptions of Private University's academic reputation are good.

Private University Public Relations are measured by indicators of collaboration, sponsorship and information display through the Private University web. This shows that Private University collaboration with schools can build customer relationships and improve networking in the world of education. The role of schools is very large in giving recommendations for students who will continue their studies in Higher Education. The existence of the Private University's emotional ties with the school through alumni and teachers at the school will strengthen the relationship of the Private University with the school. The concern of school principals and teachers in guiding and directing students to enter tertiary institutions is essential to note. The characteristics of high school students with age who have just reached adulthood and entering a period of transition into adulthood require parental guidance and direction from teachers at school. Collaboration can be done in the form of providing sponsorships for organizational activities, performing arts, sports and other school activities. Not infrequently Private University also involves teachers and students in every activity on campuses such as the Math Olympiad, the Olympics accounting debate in English and the Competency Test for various fields of study.

The rapid development of information technology has made it easy for Private University to communicate with students through the Private University web and the Public Relations department. At any time students can monitor the development of the Private University, supported by the characteristics of high school students who are never separated from the gadget, helping the Private University's public relations department to build more intense communication with various parties including with students.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of research and discussion it can be concluded that marketing communication which includes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing that has been carried out by the Private University in East Java cannot directly encourage interest in choosing a Private University. Only the word of mouth variable has a significant effect on interest in choosing a Private University. The results also concluded that advertising, public relations, personal selling and word of mouth variables significantly influence the Academic Branding Reputation Private University. Still, sales promotion and direct marketing have no significant effect on Academic Branding Reputation.



In this study, the role of Academic Branding Reputation in mediating the effect of marketing communication on the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java shows the results that Academic Branding Reputation plays a role in mediating the influence of Public Relations on the interest in choosing a Private University in East Java but does not play a role in mediating the influence. Other communication variables are advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and word of mouth.

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