The Effect of Promotional Strategies on New Students' Decisions When Choosing a Private High School in Malang City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the level of promotional strategies and the decision-making process of new students at private high schools in Malang City, as well as to analyze the influence of promotional strategies on the decisions of new students in that region. A total of 352 new students were given questionnaires to complete as part of the quantitative methodology of this study. SPSS version 25 was used for data analysis, which included descriptive analysis, normality tests, linearity tests, simple linear regression analysis, and t-tests. The results showed that the level of promotional strategies at private high schools in Malang City fell into the high category. Meanwhile, the level of decision-making among new students also fell into the high category. The results of the linearity test yielded a value of 0.269, indicating a linear relationship between the variables. The correlation test produced a significance value (two-tailed) of 0.000, indicating a significant positive relationship between the variables. The results of the simple linear regression analysis showed a significance value of 0.000, indicating that the school's promotional strategies have a positive and significant effect on new students' decisions. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.315 indicates that promotional strategies account for 31.5% of the variation in new students' decisions.

Keywords: Promotional Strategies; Decisions; Private High Schools

1. Introduction

Education is a basic need for every individual to become a high-quality human resource. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System states that "education serves to develop abilities, shape character, and foster a dignified national culture in order to enrich the nation's life." The importance of education encourages the public to be more selective in choosing educational institutions. This situation places schools in the role of education providers, requiring them to adapt to the changing times and demonstrate excellence so they can maintain their existence and win the competition for new students (Supriyanto et al., 2022). High school (SMA) is one of the educational levels prioritized by the public because at this level, students are guided to acquire skills and expertise, develop good character, and prepare to advance to higher levels of education. Both private and public high schools must strive to demonstrate high educational quality. This is done to attract the public's interest (Lestari and Akbar, 2026). However, according to Mushoffi and Supardi (2024), high schools face challenges in their development, namely the difficulty of attracting new prospective students, particularly private schools. This is confirmed by Rosmaniar (2018), who notes that competition among schools has become increasingly fierce in the 21st century as more schools are established each year.

The flood of competing information makes it difficult for prospective students to

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distinguish between and select the right educational institution to meet their needs (Harahap and Ariani, 2023). It is at this point that school management becomes the determining factor in the sustainability of an educational institution. Schools that are not managed optimally risk losing their appeal to the public (Kamal, 2023). This is also emphasized by Habibah and Hijayanti (2023), who note that schools that are unable to effectively highlight their strengths to the public risk losing prospective students and may even face closure. This situation underscores the need for every school to have the right strategies to strengthen its position and enhance its competitiveness relative to other schools. This phenomenon of school competition is evident in the city of Malang.

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (2025), the city of Malang has 48 high schools, consisting of 11 public high schools and 37 private high schools. The large number of private high schools indicates that competition among private schools to attract students is also high. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture's Dapodik database (2025), there has been a trend in enrollment at private high schools in Malang City over the past three years: 2,954 students in 2025, 3,234 in 2024, and 3,086 in 2023. This phenomenon indicates that the number of new students enrolling in private high schools in Malang City has not yet fully stabilized. Based on the conditions outlined above, it is evident that there is a need to understand consumer behavior—specifically, the behavior of prospective new students. Through effective promotional strategies, private schools can highlight their institutional strengths, such as the quality of instruction, facilities, and flagship programs (Kotler & Keller, 2016),

The urgency of this topic is reinforced by Rahayu's (2021) findings. Therefore, this study was conducted to reexamine that relationship, focusing on a different context—namely, private high schools in Malang City. Against this backdrop, this study is titled "The Effect of Promotional Strategies on New Students' Decisions When Choosing a Private High School in Malang."

2. Method

2.1.1. Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in private senior high schools located in Malang City, East Java, Indonesia. Data collection was carried out from January to March 2025. The population consisted of all first-year students enrolled in 36 private senior high schools in Malang City during the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling 3,235 students. The sample comprised 352 respondents selected using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error. Proportionate random sampling was employed to ensure that each school was represented proportionally according to its student population.

2.1.2. Research Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The independent variable, promotional strategy, was measured using five dimensions adapted from Kotler and Armstrong (2018): (1) advertising, (2) personal selling, (3) public relations, (4) sales promotion, and (5) direct marketing. The dependent variable, students' decision-making, was measured according to the consumer decision-making process proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016), including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase (school choice) decision, and post-decision behavior.

Before data collection, the instrument underwent expert judgment to establish content validity. Subsequently, empirical validity was assessed using Pearson's Product-Mome correlation, while reliability was e valuated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The promotional strategy instrument obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.916, and the student decision instrument obtained a value of 0.863, indicating high internal consistency

2.1.2.1. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to describe respondents' perceptions of promotional strategies and students' decision-making. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests were conducted, including normality, linearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to determine the relationship between the variables, while simple linear regression analysis was used to examine the effect of promotional strategies on students' enrollment decisions. The hypothesis was tested at a significance level of 0.05.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

Based on the graph, the promotional strategy variable is divided into four categories. The “very high” category comprises 87 respondents (25%), the “high” category comprises 170 respondents (48%), the “low” category comprises 78 respondents (22%), and the “very low” category comprises 14 respondents (4%). Based on these results, it can be concluded that the level of the advertising sub-variable falls into the high category. The level of promotional strategies at each private high school in Malang City shows variation across categories. Most schools received ratings in the high to very high categories. The results of the analysis by school also show that most private high schools in Malang City are dominated by the high and very high categories.

There were 107 respondents (30%) in the “very high” category. Next, the “high” category included 194 respondents (55%). There were 44 respondents (12%) in the “low” category. Meanwhile, the “very low” category included 7 respondents (2%). It can therefore be concluded that the level of students’ decision-making variables falls into the “high” category.

A t-test was conducted to determine the effect of the Promotion Strategy variable (X) on New Student Enrollment Decisions (Y). The test results show that the calculated t-value is 12.691 and the significance value is 0.000. Since this significance value is < 0.05, it can be concluded that the better the promotional strategies implemented by the school, the higher the likelihood that new students will choose that school. The results in Table 4.19 show that H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected.

The R-squared value was 0.315, or 31.5%. This value indicates that the promotional strategy (X) accounts for 31.5% of the variation in new students’ decisions (Y). The remaining 68.5% of the variation is attributed to factors outside the scope of this study.

3.2 Discussion

The research results show that the level of promotional strategies implemented by private high schools in Malang City falls into the high category. The implementation of promotional strategies by private high schools in Malang City has been effective in increasing school awareness among prospective students. This has contributed to students’ decisions to

choose the promoted schools. This finding aligns with the views of Kotler and Keller (2009), who explain that promotion plays a crucial role in conveying information, introducing, and reminding consumers of the existence and benefits of a product or service—so that they understand the benefits of a product and are thus interested in purchasing it. When a positive perception is formed, the tendency to choose the school as an option increases (Labib and Nurfuadi, 2026).

The level of decision-making among new students in choosing private high schools in Malang City falls into the "very high" category, indicating that new students have gone through various stages of decision-making and considered a range of information obtained before determining their choice of a suitable school. Decision-Making: According to Kotler and Keller (2009), decision-making is a process of selecting the best alternative from among several available options. The results of the categorization based on each school show that the level of decision-making among students in choosing private high schools in Malang City varies. Some schools fall into the "very high" category, while others are in the "high" category, and a few schools remain in the "low" category. These differences indicate that the level of decision-making among students in choosing a school is not the same across all private high schools. This variation may be influenced by various factors, such as cultural, social, and personal factors (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Another perspective on the factors influencing decision-making, as proposed by Shiffman and Kanuk (2007), is as follows: (a) marketing mix factors, consisting of product, promotion, price, and distribution channels; and (b) social factors, which consist of family, information sources, non-commercial sources, social class, culture, and subcultures (Shiffman and Kanuk, 2007).

The research hypothesis was accepted, indicating that promotional strategies influence students' decisions when choosing a private high school in Malang. These results suggest that the implementation of promotional strategies is one of the factors influencing students' choice of school. This finding is consistent with the views of Schiffman and Kanuk (2007), who explain that consumer decisions are influenced by various elements of marketing efforts, namely promotion, price, product, and marketing channels. The findings of this study support the views of Fauzi and Kartiko (2023), who assert that the effective and efficient promotion of educational services can influence an individual's decision to choose a school. Promotion helps prospective students obtain information about the educational services offered, thereby facilitating the decision-making process.

Table 1. Simple Linear Regretion

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	34.582	2.001		17.114	.000
	Strategi Promosi	.450	.035	.561	12.691	.000

Table 1. Koefisien Determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.561a	0.315	0.313	6.612

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4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research conducted, this study reached the following conclusions. The level of promotional strategies implemented by private high schools in Malang City falls into the high category. This indicates that the implementation of the promotional mix—which includes advertising, personal selling, publicity and public relations, sales promotion, and direct marketing—has been carried out effectively, thereby successfully introducing the schools and enhancing their appeal to prospective students. The level of decision-making among new students in choosing private high schools in Malang City falls into the very high category. This indicates that students have gone through the decision-making process very effectively, which includes identifying needs, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, deciding on a school, and post-selection behavior. This demonstrates that students are able to choose a school in accordance with their needs and expectations. The research results show a significant relationship between promotional strategies and new students' decisions when choosing private high schools in Malang City.

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