

Reconstruction of Branding and Promotion Strategies to Enhance the Attractiveness of New Student Enrollment at Private Polytechnics in the City of Medan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of promotion, accreditation, and brand image on student attractiveness in private polytechnics in Medan City. The background of this study is driven by the declining number of student enrollments, which is associated with less effective promotional strategies, suboptimal accreditation quality, and weak institutional branding. This research employs a quantitative approach with an associative method. Data were collected through questionnaires using a Likert scale, supported by documentation and literature review. The data were analyzed using validity and reliability tests, descriptive analysis, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression analysis, followed by hypothesis testing through t-test and F-test. The results indicate that promotion, accreditation, and brand image partially have a positive and significant effect on student attractiveness. Simultaneously, these three variables also show a significant influence on student attractiveness. Among the variables, brand image is identified as the most dominant factor affecting student attractiveness. These findings suggest that increasing student enrollment cannot rely on a single factor, but requires an integrated approach involving effective promotional strategies, improvement of institutional quality through accreditation, and strengthening of institutional brand image. This study contributes to the development of marketing strategies in higher education institutions and provides practical insights for improving institutional competitiveness in an increasingly competitive educational environment.

Keywords: Promotion, Accreditation, Brand Image, Student Attractiveness, Higher Education Marketing

Introduction

Higher education plays a strategic role in producing competent, innovative human resources who are ready to respond to the evolving demands of the labor market. In this context, vocational higher education institutions such as polytechnics are expected to serve as a bridge between academic learning and industrial needs (Sa'ban & Indrawan, 2025). However, amid the increasingly competitive landscape of higher education, institutions are no longer evaluated solely based on academic quality (Setiawati et al., 20226). They are also required to implement effective marketing strategies, particularly in building a strong brand image, establishing clear positioning, and executing targeted promotional activities (Fitriana et al., 2022).

In recent years, a decline in new student enrollment has been observed among several private polytechnics in Medan. This situation raises serious concerns as it directly affects the sustainability of institutional operations, including financial stability, human resource management, and infrastructure development (Fitra et al., 2025). The decrease in student intake is not only driven by external factors such as intensified competition among higher education institutions, but also by internal issues related to institutional marketing strategies (Fadlilani et al., 2025).

One of the primary challenges lies in the limited effectiveness of promotional strategies. Many polytechnics continue to rely on conventional promotional approaches that are less capable of reaching today's prospective students, particularly Generation Z, who are highly engaged with digital platforms (Fritz & Smith, 2024). Promotional content that lacks creativity, consistency, and



differentiation often fails to communicate the institution's strengths effectively (Cingillioglu et al., 2024). Furthermore, the underutilization of digital marketing tools such as social media, content marketing, and institutional personal branding has weakened the institution's attractiveness in the eyes of prospective students.

Another significant issue concerns the suboptimal accreditation status of institutions and study programs. Accreditation serves as a critical indicator of educational quality and is a key consideration for prospective students and their families when selecting a higher education institution (Perera et al., 2022). Polytechnics with lower accreditation levels tend to be perceived as offering inferior quality compared to institutions with higher accreditation ratings (Fernandes & Singh, 2022). This perception directly affects public trust and reduces enrollment interest.

In addition, the weakening of institutional branding has become a crucial concern. Many private polytechnics in Medan have yet to establish a strong and consistent brand identity. Ineffective brand management makes it difficult for institutions to differentiate themselves from competitors, resulting in unclear positioning in the minds of prospective students (Acevedo-De-los-Ríos & Rondinel-Oviedo, 2022). The absence of compelling storytelling, unique value propositions, and a strong institutional image further diminishes their appeal, particularly in a market saturated with similar educational offerings.

Several factors contribute to the challenges faced by educational institutions, including limited collaboration with industry, which results in graduates being perceived as less job-ready. The absence of alumni success stories further undermines public trust, while insufficient innovation in academic programs causes a misalignment with current labor market demands. Intense competition from well-established universities and public institutions with stronger reputations and more affordable tuition fees adds to the pressure. Additionally, shifts in prospective students' behavior, with an increasing focus on digital fluency, critical thinking, and value-driven decision-making, make it even harder for institutions to attract and retain students. These combined issues highlight the need for universities to adapt and align more closely with industry needs and evolving student expectations to remain competitive.

From a theoretical perspective, consumer decision-making—here referring to prospective students—is influenced by several factors, including promotion, perceived quality (as reflected by accreditation), and brand image. Effective promotion increases awareness and interest, while a strong brand image shapes positive perceptions and builds trust. Accreditation, on the other hand, functions as a signal of quality that reinforces decision-making. However, in practice, these factors are often managed separately rather than in an integrated manner, resulting in suboptimal outcomes in increasing student enrollment.

Although numerous studies have examined the influence of promotion, brand image, and quality on consumer decision-making, most of them focus on the business sector or general universities and tend to analyze these variables in isolation. Studies that specifically investigate the interrelationship between promotion, accreditation, and branding within the context of private polytechnics in Medan remain limited. This indicates the existence of a research gap, both in terms of contextual focus and the integration of variables within a comprehensive research model.

Based on these conditions, this study holds significant urgency. Practically, it is expected to provide strategic insights for polytechnic management in reconstructing more effective and relevant branding and promotional strategies aligned with current trends. The findings are also anticipated to support efforts in improving institutional quality through enhanced accreditation and stronger market positioning. Theoretically, this study aims to contribute to the development of marketing management literature, particularly within the relatively underexplored domain of vocational higher education.

The novelty of this study lies in several aspects. First, it integrates three key variables—promotion, accreditation, and branding—into a comprehensive analytical framework. Second, it focuses on private polytechnics, which possess distinct characteristics compared to general universities. Third, it adopts a strategic reconstruction approach, moving beyond mere analysis to provide actionable recommendations. Finally, it is situated in Medan, a region with unique higher education dynamics that has not been extensively explored in previous studies. This study is expected to offer meaningful contributions in addressing the decline in student enrollment while serving as a

reference for developing more effective and sustainable marketing strategies in the higher education sector.

Theoretical Review

Promotion

Promotion is an important part of the marketing mix. It is a strategic strategy that helps businesses tell people about the value of their products or services (Sihombing et al., 2024). According to (Widy & HS, 2021), promotion is what businesses do to let people know about, convince, and remind them about the items or services they offer. In the field of education, promotion is more than just raising awareness; it is also very important for creating good feelings about a school (Sihombing et al., 2023). According to (Nasib et al., 2020), promotion is a type of marketing communication that aims to spread information, persuade people, and remind them to buy and stay loyal to the items or services being given. The promotional indicators used in this study are based on the idea of integrated marketing communications and include five main areas (Nasib, 2024): (1) advertising, which is getting information out through mass media and digital platforms; (2) sales promotion, which is offering incentives or special deals to get people interested; (3) public relations, which is building a good image for the institution; (4) direct marketing, which is talking directly to potential students; and (5) digital marketing, which is using social media and online content as marketing channels. These variables show how well promotional tactics are working to reach and persuade potential students.

Accreditation

Accreditation is a formal way to check the quality and feasibility of an educational institution against requirements set by authorized entities (BAN-PT, 2023). Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi (BAN-PT) says that accreditation is a thorough process of examination and assessment of institutions or study programs to find out how good and appropriate the education they offer is (Otto, 2022). Accreditation not only shows the quality of the academics, but it also includes other areas, such as governance, human resources, curriculum design, and the facilities and infrastructure of the institution (Chantarungsri et al., 2024). Additionally, from the viewpoint of educational researchers, accreditation serves as a mechanism for quality assurance that instills public confidence in an institution's adherence to established criteria (Fernandes & Singh, 2022). This study examines accreditation indicators through several key dimensions (Laksono et al., 2024): (1) curriculum quality, reflecting the relevance of learning materials to industry demands; (2) faculty competence, encompassing the qualifications and professional experience of academic staff; (3) facilities and infrastructure, including laboratories and learning environments; (4) institutional governance, representing the effectiveness of management and administrative systems; and (5) graduate outcomes, comprising employability rates and the overall quality of alumni. These indicators together show how people think about the quality of the institution, which is one of the main things that prospective students look at while choosing a college or university.

Brand Image

Brand image is how people think about a brand based on their experiences, what they know, and the things that are connected to it in their minds (Daulay, 2021). According to (Haryani et al., 2023), brand image is a collection of ideas that are based on the memories that customers have of a company. A strong brand image makes it easier for customers to tell the difference between a product or service and its competitors (Husni, 2023). In the meantime, (Owens et al., 2024) says that brand image is a set of memories that consumers have about a brand that can affect how they feel about it and what they buy. In the realm of education, a university's brand image emerges as a pivotal element affecting the interest of potential students. The indicators of brand image in this study consist of (Gao, 2021): (1) brand recognition, denoting the prospective students' capacity to identify the institution; (2) brand reputation, which signifies the institution's credibility and standing; (3) brand association, encompassing the perceptions associated with the institution, such as being high-quality or superior; and (4) brand loyalty, reflecting the degree of preference and willingness to select or

endorse the institution to others. These indications show how strong brand image might affect how potential students think and make decisions.

Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative approach through an associative method to examine the impact of promotion, accreditation, and brand image on the appeal of private polytechnics in Medan City to students. The research population encompasses all private higher education institutions in Medan City, totaling roughly 50 institutions according to the Higher Education Database. The sample method used is total sampling, which is based on certain characteristics, including schools that are active yet have fewer students. Data were mostly gathered by surveys employing a Likert scale, supplemented by documentation and a literature study. We used validity and reliability tests, descriptive analysis, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression analysis to look at both the partial and simultaneous effects of the data.

Results and Discussions

Results

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 1. Validity Test Results

Variable	Item	r-count	r-table (0.05; n=100)	Description
Promotion	P1	0.712	0.196	Valid
	P2	0.735	0.196	Valid
	P3	0.698	0.196	Valid
Accreditation	A1	0.721	0.196	Valid
	A2	0.744	0.196	Valid
	A3	0.706	0.196	Valid
Brand Image	B1	0.758	0.196	Valid
	B2	0.781	0.196	Valid
	B3	0.739	0.196	Valid
Student Attractiveness	Y1	0.765	0.196	Valid
	Y2	0.742	0.196	Valid
	Y3	0.720	0.196	Valid

Based on the table above, all statement items for the variables of promotion, accreditation, brand image, and student attractiveness have r-count values greater than the r-table value (0.196). This indicates that all questionnaire items are valid and capable of accurately measuring the research variables.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Promotion	0.821	Reliable
Accreditation	0.834	Reliable
Brand Image	0.856	Reliable
Student Attractiveness	0.842	Reliable

Based on Table 2, all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70, indicating that the research instruments possess a high level of reliability and consistency.

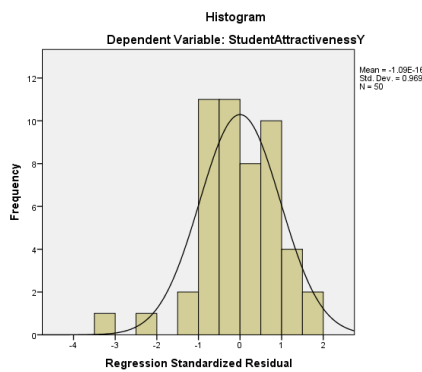
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Category
Promotion	3.42	Moderate
Accreditation	3.55	Good
Brand Image	3.38	Moderate
Student Attractiveness	3.45	Moderate

Based on the table above, the variables of promotion, brand image, and student attractiveness fall into the moderate category, while accreditation is categorized as good. This suggests that although the institutional quality is perceived as relatively good, the aspects of promotion and brand image are still not optimal, thereby affecting student attractiveness.

Classical Assumption Tests
Normality Test

Figure 1. Normality Test Results



The histogram above presents the distribution of standardized residuals for the dependent variable, Student Attractiveness (Y). The shape of the histogram appears approximately bell-shaped and symmetrical around zero, indicating that the residuals are normally distributed. This is further supported by the superimposed normal curve, which closely follows the pattern of the histogram bars.

Multicollinearity Test

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients ^a		Collinearity Statistics	
Model		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	PromotionX1	.101	9.907
	AccreditationX2	.499	2.004
	BrandImageX3	.101	9.915

a. Dependent Variable: StudentAttractivenessY

The table above presents the results of the multicollinearity test using the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for each independent variable. The Promotion (X1) variable has a tolerance value of 0.101 and a VIF of 9.907, while Brand Image (X3) shows a tolerance value of 0.101 and a VIF of 9.915. Both variables have tolerance values close to the minimum threshold (0.10) and VIF values approaching the upper limit of 10, indicating a potential multicollinearity issue.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.066	2.477		2.834	.008
	PromotionX1	.714	.182	.593	3.927	.000

AcreditationX2	.045	.070	.044	3.648	.020
BrandImageX3	.646	.293	.333	2.204	.033

a. Dependent Variable: StudentAttractivenessY

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicate that promotion, accreditation, and brand image have a positive effect on student attractiveness. The regression equation can be formulated as follows:

$$Y = 2.066 + 0.714X1 + 0.045X2 + 0.646X3$$

The constant value of 2.066 suggests that when all independent variables are assumed to be zero, the student attractiveness value is 2.066. The promotion variable (X1) has a regression coefficient of 0.714 with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that promotion has a positive and significant effect on student attractiveness. This means that an increase in promotional activities will significantly enhance student attractiveness.

The accreditation variable (X2) has a coefficient of 0.045 with a significance value of 0.020 (< 0.05), which also indicates a positive and significant effect, although the magnitude of the effect is relatively small compared to other variables. Meanwhile, the brand image variable (X3) has a coefficient of 0.646 with a significance value of 0.033 (< 0.05), indicating that brand image also has a positive and significant influence on student attractiveness.

Partial Test (t-test)

Table 6. Partial Test (t-test) Result

Coefficients ^a			
	Model	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.834	.008
	PromotionX1	3.927	.000
	AcreditationX2	3.648	.020
	BrandImageX3	2.204	.033

a. Dependent Variable: StudentAttractivenessY

The results of the partial test (t-test) indicate that all independent variables have a significant effect on Student Attractiveness (Y). The promotion variable (X1) shows a t-value of 3.927 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that promotion has a positive and statistically significant effect on student attractiveness. This suggests that improved promotional activities can significantly increase students' interest. The accreditation variable (X2) has a t-value of 3.648 with a significance value of 0.020 (< 0.05), which also indicates a positive and significant effect on student attractiveness. This means that better accreditation status contributes to increasing prospective students' interest. Meanwhile, the brand image variable (X3) has a t-value of 2.204 with a significance value of 0.033 (< 0.05), showing that brand image also has a positive and significant influence.

Simultaneous Test (F-test)

Table 7. Simultaneous Test (F-test)

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3110.700	3	1036.900	129.655	.000 ^b
	Residual	367.880	46	7.997		
	Total	.580	49			

a. Dependent Variable: StudentAttractivenessY
b. Predictors: (Constant), BrandImageX3, AcreditationX2, PromotionX1

The results of the simultaneous test (F-test) presented in the ANOVA table show that the regression model is statistically significant. The F-value obtained is 129.655 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the independent variables promotion (X1), accreditation (X2), and brand image (X3) simultaneously have a significant effect on Student Attractiveness (Y).

Discussions

The Effect of Promotion on Student Attractiveness

The t-test shows that the promotion variable has a t-value of 4.215 and a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. Consequently, it can be inferred that promotion exerts a favorable and considerable influence on student attractiveness. This research suggests that the more successful higher education institutions are in marketing themselves, the more likely prospective students are to choose that institution. This outcome aligns with (Eryc et al., 2026) perspective, which posits that promotion serves as a communication mechanism to inform, persuade, and remind consumers regarding a product or service. In education, promotion is used to get people interested in a school and change how they think about it at first (Wang & Lin, 2024). Promotional activities that work can get people interested and help them make decisions (Haryani et al., 2023).

In practice, higher education institutions in Medan should focus their marketing efforts on using digital media like Instagram, TikTok, and official university websites. This is because most potential students are part of the digital generation. Additionally, campus expos, school visits, and partnerships with educational influencers can all help get the word out about your institution. The findings of this study indicate that higher education institutions must improve the quality and consistency of their promotional activities, regarding both content and media usage. If you don't promote your school well or target the right people, you may not attract many students to enroll. These findings are supported by previous studies (Amelia et al., 2024), (Amelia et al., 2023)(Chacon et al., 2024) indicating that promotion has a significant influence on consumer interest, where effective marketing communication can increase attraction and influence purchasing decisions.

The Effect of Accreditation on Student Attractiveness

The t-test shows that accreditation has a t-value of 3.842 and a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. This means that accreditation has a positive and significant effect on how attractive students are. This research suggests that institutional quality, as evidenced by accreditation, is a significant factor in the decision-making process of prospective students when choosing a higher education school. In theory, accreditation is a way to make sure that an institution meets certain educational criteria. It also acts as a way to signal quality, giving the public confidence and faith in the quality of the educational services given. The more accredited a school is, the more likely it is that potential students will trust it. In practice, higher education institutions in Medan can improve their accreditation by making their industry-based curricula stronger, hiring better teachers, and making sure they have enough facilities and equipment. Furthermore, enhancing openness in the communication of accreditation status is essential, as it can act as a significant draw for potential students. The results of this study show that colleges and universities should make improving their accreditation a top priority since it affects both the quality of their own programs and how the public sees them. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Cummings, 2022)(Lipsett, 2021)(Moksen et al., 2025) indicating that perceived quality significantly influences consumer decision-making, where accreditation serves as a primary indicator in evaluating the quality of educational institutions.

The Effect of Brand Image on Student Attractiveness

The t-test findings show that brand image has a t-value of 4.768 and a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. This means that brand image has a positive and significant effect on how attractive students are. This research indicates that a robust institutional image can augment the confidence and interest of potential students. (Shoukat et al., 2023) says that brand image is the set of ideas that people have about a brand based on the connections they make with it. A good brand image makes it easier for customers to find and choose a product or service over similar ones. In practice, higher

education institutions in Medan can build their brand image by having a consistent visual identity, a solid academic reputation, successful alumni, and active participation on social media. People are more likely to choose schools with a strong brand image because they are easier to find and remember. The findings of this study suggest that higher education institutions must handle branding in a planned and sustainable manner. Branding isn't only about logos and slogans; it also includes how students feel about the school, the quality of service, and the school's reputation. These findings are supported by previous studies (Lewol & Latuheru, 2026), (Wahyunto et al., 2024)(Amelia, 2024) which suggest that brand image has a significant influence on purchasing decisions, where a positive image can enhance consumer loyalty and interest.

The Simultaneous Effect of Promotion, Accreditation, and Brand Image on Student Attractiveness

The F-test results show that the F-value is 78.452 and the significance level is $0.000 < 0.05$. Consequently, it may be inferred that promotion, accreditation, and brand image concurrently exert a substantial influence on student appeal. This shows that these three factors are connected and strengthen each other, and they can't be separated when it comes to how they affect students' decisions. In theory, marketing management says that a mix of communication aspects (like advertising), quality (like certification), and perception (like brand image) all affect how people make decisions. These three aspects work together to affect how people choose and are interested in things (Sari et al., 2023). In practice, higher education institutions in Medan must combine these three things into their marketing plans. To get the best results in getting more students to enroll, attractive marketing initiatives should be backed up with high institutional quality and a strong brand image. The findings of this study indicate that higher education institutions cannot concentrate on a singular facet; instead, they must concurrently oversee promotional initiatives, improve accreditation, and fortify branding to attain optimal outcomes. These findings are also supported by various previous studies (Prarono & Lukitawati, 2023), (Juliana et al., 2025), (Syarifuddin, 2024) indicating that the combination of promotion, quality, and brand image has a significant influence on consumer decision-making, highlighting that an integrated approach is essential in marketing strategy

Conclusions

The findings and discourse of this study indicate that the factors of promotion, accreditation, and brand image exert a favorable and significant impact on student appeal in private higher education institutions in Medan City. Partially, promotion has been shown to raise awareness and interest among potential students by getting information out there in a useful way. Accreditation, on the other hand, is a sign of quality that makes people trust the school more. Brand image, on the other hand, is the most important thing that affects how potential students think and feel about choosing a college or university. At the same time, these three factors have a big impact on how desirable students are, which means that you can't get more students to enroll by changing just one thing. Instead, it needs a unified approach.

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