



Analysis of the Influence of WOM, Physical Environment and School Image on the Decision to Choose a School with Intention to Choose a School as a Mediating Variable (Study on Students of SMKN 47 Jakarta)

Miftahul Huda^{1*}, Adi Nurmahdi²
Universitas Mercu Buana, Jakarta

Corresponding Author: Miftahul Huda: miftahulhuda313@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Word of Mouth, Physical Environment, School Image, Intention to Choose, Decision to Choose

Received : 20, June

Revised : 22, July

Accepted: 20, August

©2025 Huda, Nurmahdi (s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine and analyze the influence of word of mouth, physical environment and school image on the decision to choose a school with the intensity of choosing a school as a mediating variable (a study on students of SMKN 47 Jakarta). The population used in this study were students enrolled at SMKN 47 Jakarta in the 2024/2025 academic year. The method used in this study was probability sampling with a simple random sampling technique, with the criteria being students of SMKN 47 Jakarta enrolled in the 2024-2025 academic year, with a sample size of 187 respondents. The data analysis method used Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). The results of this study indicate that word of mouth and the physical environment have a positive and significant influence on the intensity of choosing, while the image of the school does not have a significant influence on the intensity of choosing. Word of mouth, the physical environment and the image of the school and the intensity of choosing have a positive and significant influence on the decision to choose a school. The intention to choose is a partial mediation between word of mouth and the physical environment on the decision to choose a school, while there is no mediation on the image of the school.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid technological advancement and increasingly dynamic information flows, the quality of human resources has become a crucial factor in determining a nation's competitiveness. To achieve this, quality education is a key element in shaping the competencies of the younger generation, particularly in developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. This aligns with the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is globally agreed upon: ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

Vocational High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMK), as part of Indonesia's vocational education system, hold a strategic role in producing graduates who are job-ready and possess skills aligned with industry needs. The government's commitment to strengthening the role of SMKs is reflected in Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2016 on SMK Revitalization, as a step to improve the quality and competitiveness of Indonesia's human resources.

Although there has been a national increase in public interest toward vocational education, field observations indicate that not all SMKs are the top choice among prospective students. Based on the 2024 student admission results (PPDB) in South Jakarta, SMKN 47 Jakarta ranked third in terms of the number and scores of admitted students, behind SMKN 6 and SMKN 8 Jakarta. This finding warrants further investigation.

From the data, the researcher identified a phenomenon in this study: prospective students' interest in choosing SMKN 47 Jakarta ranked last compared to other public vocational schools in South Jakarta, with SMKN 47 placing third in terms of student admission scores, after SMKN 8 and SMKN 6. Therefore, to identify the reasons behind prospective students' decisions in selecting a school, the researcher conducted a pre-survey of students currently enrolled at SMKN 47 Jakarta to determine the variables that influenced their school choice.

The pre-survey results revealed that *word of mouth*, the school's physical environment, and school image were the three main factors influencing students' decisions in choosing a school, with *intention to choose* acting as a mediating variable. Thus, this study aims to analyze the influence of these three variables on school choice decisions, with *intention to choose* as the mediating variable, using SMKN 47 Jakarta students as the study population.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Marketing

According to Kotler et al. (2022), marketing management is the art and science of selecting target markets and acquiring, retaining, and growing customers by creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value, in collaboration with stakeholders in a dynamic environment. Kotler & Armstrong (2021) state that the goal of marketing management is to develop strategies related to target customers and to build profitable relationships.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The grand theory used in this study is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Pramana et al. (2023) explain that TPB describes consumer behavior as being influenced by an individual's intention to engage in a behavior, which consists of three variables: *Attitude toward the behavior*, *Subjective Norm*, and *Perceived Behavioral Control*, which ultimately support purchase intentions.

Purchase Decision

Kotler et al. (2022) describe a purchase decision as the process by which consumers make buying decisions, and post-purchase behavior is often referred to as the consumer decision journey. Furthermore, Umar Bakti et al. (2021) state that purchase decisions are made after consumers evaluate a product, leading to the decision to buy or not to buy. In summary, a purchase decision is the process of selecting a product from several alternatives, influenced by various determining factors.

Stages in the Purchasing Process

According to Kotler et al. (2022), the purchasing decision process consists of five stages: problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior.

Intention to Choose

Purchase intention or intention to choose can be defined as the consumer's desire for a specific product or brand. Purchase intention can be measured by asking about the likelihood of buying or choosing a known product or brand (Dapas et al., 2019). There is a distinction between purchase intention and purchase decision: purchase intention refers to a consumer's plan to buy something in the future, while purchase decision refers to the actual purchase made (Dapas et al., 2019). Therefore, in the context of this study, students' intention to choose refers to the internal motivation that drives them to select the best school.

Word of Mouth (WOM)

Word of mouth refers to a marketing communication activity in which customers promote to other customers, either verbally or in writing, by sharing information about a company, product, or service (Rifani et al., 2023). WOM is part of promotional strategies in marketing activities that use satisfied customers to increase product awareness and achieve certain sales levels (Gede Sindy Artha Wiguna et al., 2024). It is one of the most influential marketing strategies affecting consumer decisions to use specific products or services. This strategy relies on person-to-person communication to encourage product selection and sales growth (Sudarman et al., 2022). Umar Bakti et al. (2021) further explain that WOM involves sharing perceptions about a product with close contacts, in order to assess whether the product or service is worth consuming.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative research method, as it aims to examine causal relationships between variables related to the research object (Sugiyono, 2022). Quantitative research is chosen to measure the relationships among several variables, namely Word of Mouth (WOM), Physical Environment, School Image, Intention to Choose, and School Choice Decision. The researcher will address the study's objectives by determining the effects of the variables included in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Measurement Model Test (Outer Model)

Results of the Convergent Validity Test

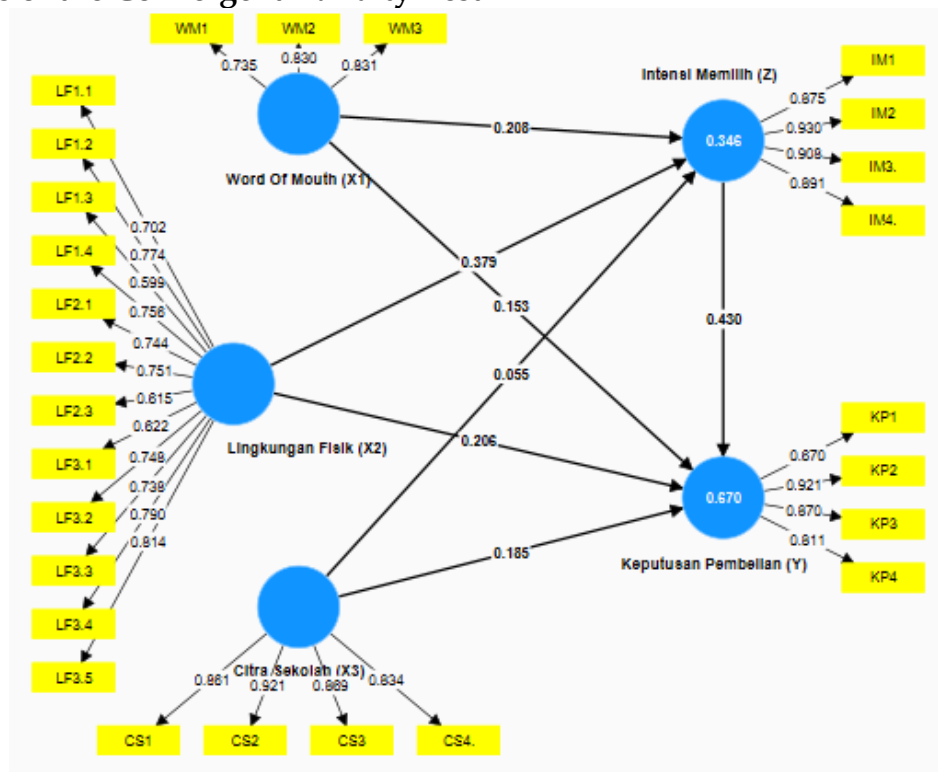


Figure 4.1 PLS Algorithm Results

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

Table 4.9. Outer Loading Test Results

Variable	Outer Loadings	Remarks
WM1 ← Word of Mouth (X1)	0.735	Passed
WM2 ← Word of Mouth (X1)	0.830	Passed
WM3 ← Word of Mouth (X1)	0.831	Passed
LF1.1 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.702	Passed
LF1.2 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.774	Passed
LF1.3 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.599	Passed
LF1.4 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.756	Passed
LF2.1 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.744	Passed

Variable	Outer Loadings	Remarks
LF2.2 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.751	Passed
LF2.3 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.615	Passed
LF3.1 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.622	Passed
LF3.2 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.748	Passed
LF3.3 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.738	Passed
LF3.4 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.790	Passed
LF3.5 ← Physical Environment (X2)	0.814	Passed
CS1 ← School Image (X3)	0.861	Passed
CS2 ← School Image (X3)	0.921	Passed
CS3 ← School Image (X3)	0.869	Passed
CS4 ← School Image (X3)	0.834	Passed
IM1 ← Intention to Choose (Z)	0.875	Passed
IM2 ← Intention to Choose (Z)	0.930	Passed
IM3 ← Intention to Choose (Z)	0.908	Passed
IM4 ← Intention to Choose (Z)	0.891	Passed
KP1 ← Purchase Decision (Y)	0.670	Passed
KP2 ← Purchase Decision (Y)	0.921	Passed
KP3 ← Purchase Decision (Y)	0.870	Passed
KP4 ← Purchase Decision (Y)	0.811	Passed

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

Table 4.9. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Word of Mouth (X1)	0.716	0.715	0.842	0.640
Physical Environment (X2)	0.917	0.922	0.929	0.525
School Image (X3)	0.894	0.897	0.927	0.760
Intention to Choose (Z)	0.923	0.924	0.945	0.812
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.836	0.847	0.893	0.678

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that the variables *Word of Mouth* (X1), *School Image* (X3), and *Intention to Choose* (Z) meet the criteria for convergent validity, with all loading factor values above 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.5. Meanwhile, for the *Physical Environment* (X2) variable, three indicators have loadings < 0.7, namely LF1.3 = 0.599, LF2.3 = 0.615, and LF3.1 = 0.622, while the *Purchase Decision* (Y) variable has one indicator with loading < 0.7, namely KP1 = 0.670.

However, considering that the Composite Reliability values for *Purchase Decision* (Y) and *Physical Environment* (X2) remain above 0.7, and their AVE values are also above 0.5, it can still be concluded that these variables fulfill the criteria for convergent validity. This indicates that all indicators can consistently represent their respective constructs and are therefore valid.

Discriminant Validity Test Results

Discriminant validity testing consists of cross-loading values and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), aimed at ensuring that each construct is distinct from the others.

Table 4.10. Discriminant Validity Test Results Based on Cross Loadings

	Word Of Mouth (X1)	Lingkungan Fisik (X2)	Citra Sekolah (X3)	Intensi Memilih (Z)	Keputusan Pembelian (Y)
WM1	0.735	0.650	0.616	0.369	0.538
WM2	0.830	0.458	0.461	0.421	0.465
WM3	0.831	0.523	0.439	0.412	0.494
LF1.1	0.460	0.702	0.471	0.538	0.528
LF1.2	0.546	0.774	0.606	0.369	0.542
LF1.3	0.345	0.599	0.527	0.345	0.408
LF1.4	0.521	0.756	0.643	0.453	0.537
LF2.1	0.439	0.744	0.534	0.415	0.475
LF2.2	0.548	0.751	0.703	0.364	0.522
LF2.3	0.518	0.615	0.610	0.256	0.429
LF3.1	0.414	0.622	0.428	0.305	0.400
LF3.2	0.515	0.748	0.656	0.390	0.550
LF3.3	0.482	0.738	0.531	0.432	0.503
LF3.4	0.510	0.790	0.626	0.481	0.565
LF3.5	0.612	0.814	0.710	0.483	0.600
CS1	0.622	0.742	0.861	0.474	0.572
CS2	0.616	0.730	0.921	0.458	0.599
CS3	0.450	0.641	0.869	0.336	0.547
CS4.	0.507	0.708	0.834	0.443	0.584
IM1	0.422	0.547	0.523	0.875	0.600
IM2	0.455	0.526	0.455	0.930	0.627
IM3.	0.439	0.465	0.415	0.908	0.631
IM4.	0.488	0.500	0.394	0.891	0.710
KP1	0.537	0.573	0.655	0.390	0.670

KP2	0.516	0.631	0.562	0.661	0.921
KP3	0.559	0.592	0.540	0.639	0.870
KP4	0.451	0.515	0.432	0.638	0.811

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

Based on Table 4.10, all loading values for each variable's designated construct are greater than their loadings on other constructs, indicating that all latent constructs meet the criteria for good discriminant validity.

Furthermore, discriminant validity was also assessed using the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio). HTMT measures the ratio of average heterotrait correlations (between indicators of different constructs) to monotrait correlations (between indicators of the same construct).

Table 4.11. Discriminant Validity Test Results Based on HTMT

	School Image (X3)	Voting Intention (Z)	Buying decision (Y)	Physical Environment (X2)	Word Of Mouth (X1)
School Image (X3)					
Voting Intention (Z)	0.542				
Buying decision (Y)	0.772	0.808			
Physical Environment (X2)	0.896	0.606	0.803		
Word Of Mouth (X1)	0.785	0.616	0.813	0.840	

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

The HTMT values for all construct pairs are below the 0.90 threshold, indicating that each construct has good discriminant validity and can be used for further analysis.

Reliability Test Results

Reliability testing assesses the extent to which indicators consistently produce the same results when measuring the same concept. This can be measured using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4.13. Reliability Test Results Based on Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho a)	Composite reliability (rho c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Word Of Mouth (X1)	0.716	0.715	0.842	0.640
Lingkungan Fisik (X2)	0.917	0.922	0.929	0.525
Citra Sekolah (X3)	0.894	0.897	0.927	0.760
Intensi Memilih (Z)	0.923	0.924	0.945	0.812
Keputusan Pembelian (Y)	0.836	0.847	0.893	0.678

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

Based on Table 4.13, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all variables are above 0.7, indicating that all indicators are reliable and consistent when used to measure the same construct.

Structural Model Test Results (Inner Model)

Coefficient of Determination (R-Square) Test Results

The coefficient of determination (R-Square) describes the extent to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable. The classification of R-Square values is as follows:

- R-Square value of 0.67 = Strong Model
- R-Square value of 0.33 = Moderate Model
- R-Square value of 0.19 = Weak Model (Sihombing et al., 2025)

Table 4.14 R-Square Coefficient of Determination Test Results

Relationship	R-Square	Interpretation
Choosing Intention (Z)	0.346	Moderate
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.670	Strong

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

From Table 4.14, it can be seen that the Choosing Intention variable has an R-Square value of 0.346, meaning that the independent variables Word of Mouth (WOM) (X1), Physical Environment (X2), and School Image (X3) simultaneously have a moderate effect of 34.6% on the dependent variable Choosing Intention (Z), while the remaining 63.4% is influenced by other variables outside the model in this study.

The Purchase Decision variable (Y) has an R-Square value of 0.670, meaning that the independent variables Word of Mouth (WOM) (X1), Physical Environment (X2), and School Image (X3) simultaneously have a strong effect of 67% on the dependent variable Purchase Decision (Y), while the remaining 33% is influenced by other variables outside the model in this study.

Effect Size (F-Square) Test Results

The Effect Size (f-square) test is conducted to determine the influence of exogenous/independent latent variables on endogenous/dependent latent variables.

Table 4.15 Effect Size (F-Square) Test Results

Relationship	F-Square	Effect Size
School Image (X3) → Choosing Intention (Z)	0.002	Small
School Image (X3) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.034	Small
Choosing Intention (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.367	Large
Physical Environment (X2) → Choosing Intention (Z)	0.064	Small
Physical Environment (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.035	Small
Word of Mouth (X1) → Choosing Intention (Z)	0.034	Small
Word of Mouth (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.035	Small

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

From Table 4.15, the F-Square test results show that:

- The School Image (X3) variable on Choosing Intention (Z) yields an F-Square value of 0.002, indicating a small effect.
- The School Image (X3) variable on Purchase Decision (Y) yields an F-Square value of 0.034, indicating a small effect.

- The Choosing Intention (Z) variable on Purchase Decision (Y) yields an F-Square value of 0.367, indicating a large effect.
- The Physical Environment (X2) variable on Choosing Intention (Z) yields an F-Square value of 0.064, indicating a small effect.
- The Physical Environment (X2) variable on Purchase Decision (Y) yields an F-Square value of 0.035, indicating a small effect.
- The Word of Mouth (X1) variable on Choosing Intention (Z) yields an F-Square value of 0.034, indicating a small effect.
- The Word of Mouth (X1) variable on Purchase Decision (Y) yields an F-Square value of 0.035, indicating a small effect.

Stone-Geisser Q-Square Test Results (Predictive Relevance Test)

The Q-Square test measures how well the observed values are generated by the model and its parameters. A Q-Square value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance, while a Q-Square value less than 0 indicates that the model has little or no predictive relevance (Sihombing et al., 2025).

Table 4.16 Stone-Geisser Q-Square Test Results (Predictive Relevance Test)

Variable	Q-Square Predictive Relevance
Choosing Intention (Z)	0.306
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.523

Source: Researcher, processed (2025)

From Table 4.16, Choosing Intention has a Q-Square value of 0.306, which falls under the moderate category, meaning that factors such as Word of Mouth, Physical Environment, and School Image contribute moderately to predicting students’ intention to choose a school. Meanwhile, Purchase Decision has a Q-Square value of 0.523, which falls under the high category, indicating that the model has strong predictive capability for Purchase Decision based on Choosing Intention and other factors. Thus, it can be concluded that the model has predictive relevance.

Hypothesis Test Results

The hypothesis testing in this structural model was carried out using the bootstrapping procedure within the PLS-SEM approach. The significance of the relationships between variables is determined based on the t-statistic and p-value from the bootstrapping results.

For direct path testing (without mediation), a one-tailed test was used with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). The decision criteria are as follows:

- If $|t\text{-statistic}| > 1.645$ and $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ with a positive path coefficient, then H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, meaning there is a positive and significant effect from the exogenous variable to the endogenous variable.
- If $|t\text{-statistic}| \leq 1.645$ or $p\text{-value} \geq 0.05$, then H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected, meaning there is no significant positive effect.

For relationships involving mediation variables, a two-tailed test is used, with the criteria:

- If $|t\text{-statistic}| > 1.96$ and $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, the relationship is significant.
- If $|t\text{-statistic}| \leq 1.96$ or $p\text{-value} \geq 0.05$, the relationship is not significant.

Table 4.17 Hypothesis Analysis Test Results

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Direct Effect					
H1	Word of Mouth (X1) → Choosing Intention (Z)	0.208	2.351	0.019	Accepted
H2	Physical Environment (X2) → Choosing Intention (Z)	0.379	3.055	0.002	Accepted
H3	School Image (X3) → Choosing Intention (Z)	0.055	0.444	0.657	Rejected
H4	Word of Mouth (X1) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.153	2.739	0.006	Accepted
H5	Physical Environment (X2) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.206	2.487	0.013	Accepted
H6	School Image (X3) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.185	2.176	0.030	Accepted
H7	Choosing Intention (Z) → Purchase Decision (Y)	0.430	6.035	0.000	Accepted
	Indirect Effect				
H8	Word Of Mouth (X1) -> Voting Intention (Z) -> Buying decision (Y)	0.090	2.275	0.023	Accepted
H9	Physical Environment (X2) -> Voting Intention (Z) -> Buying decision (Y)	0.163	2.515	0.012	Accepted
H10	School Image (X3) -> Voting Intention (Z) -> Buying decision (Y)	0.024	0.441	0.660	Rejected

Summary:

- **H1:** Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Choosing Intention (O = 0.208; T = 2.351; P = 0.019).
- **H2:** Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on Choosing Intention (O = 0.379; T = 3.055; P = 0.002).
- **H3:** School Image has no significant effect on Choosing Intention (O = 0.055; T = 0.444; P = 0.657).
- **H4:** Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision (O = 0.153; T = 2.739; P = 0.006).

- **H5:** Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision ($O = 0.206$; $T = 2.487$; $P = 0.013$).
- **H6:** School Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision ($O = 0.185$; $T = 2.176$; $P = 0.030$).
- **H7:** Choosing Intention has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision ($O = 0.430$; $T = 6.035$; $P = 0.000$).
- **H8:** Word of Mouth has a positive and significant indirect effect on Purchase Decision through Choosing Intention ($O = 0.090$; $T = 2.275$; $P = 0.023$).
- **H9:** Physical Environment has a positive and significant indirect effect on Purchase Decision through Choosing Intention ($O = 0.163$; $T = 2.515$; $P = 0.012$).
- **H10:** School Image has no significant indirect effect on Purchase Decision Through Choosing Intention ($O = 0.024$; $T = 0.441$; $P = 0.660$).

These results indicate that Word of Mouth and Physical Environment have both direct and indirect significant effects on the decision to choose a school, while the influence of School Image is limited to direct effects only.

DISCUSSION

In this research discussion, the aim is to conclude the relationship between the independent variables – Word of Mouth, Physical Environment, School Image, and Choosing Intention – and the dependent variable, namely the Decision to Choose. Based on the questionnaire results from 187 respondents processed using Smart PLS 4, the explanation for each variable is as follows:

The Effect of Word of Mouth on Choosing Intention

From the data processing conducted, the results show that the first hypothesis – which states that Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Choosing Intention – can be accepted. This is consistent with previous studies by Temaja et al. (2019) and Gede Sindy Artha Wiguna et al. (2024), which proved that Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on choosing interest. This means that the more prospective students receive positive Word of Mouth from others, the more it increases their interest in SMKN 47 Jakarta.

From the data processing, it is known that the most influential indicator is “Talking positively about the product” with the questionnaire item “I receive positive information about SMKN 47 Jakarta.” Prospective students who plan to continue to vocational high school will have higher interest in SMKN 47 Jakarta if they continue to receive positive information about the school.

The Effect of Physical Environment on Choosing Intention

The questionnaire data results show that the second hypothesis – which states that the Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on Choosing Intention – can be accepted. This is in line with previous studies by Wulansari & Haryati (2021) and Sutrisno & Riyanto (2017), which proved that the Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on Choosing Intention. The better the school's physical environment, the greater the prospective students' interest in SMKN 47 Jakarta.

From the data processing, the most influential indicator is “Staff clothing” with the questionnaire item “The uniforms of teachers and staff at SMKN 47 Jakarta are neat and proper.” Prospective students will have higher interest in SMKN 47 Jakarta if its physical environment continues to be maintained and improved.

The Effect of School Image on Choosing Intention

The third hypothesis test shows that there is no significant relationship, so the hypothesis stating that School Image has a positive and significant effect on Choosing Intention is rejected. This aligns with previous research by Isman et al. (2020) and Geraldine (2021), which showed no significant relationship between brand image and buying interest. This could be due to SMKN 47 Jakarta’s status as a public vocational school where all costs are covered by the government, meaning that students may not be overly concerned about the school’s image in influencing their interest in choosing it. Other factors may act as stronger catalysts in increasing interest in choosing SMKN 47 Jakarta.

The Effect of Word of Mouth on the Decision to Choose

The data processing results show that the fourth hypothesis – which states that Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose – can be accepted. Research by Wijareni & Nurmahdi (2023) found that the better the information received by prospective consumers about a product, the greater the likelihood of deciding to purchase or use it. This is consistent with studies by Napitupulu & Simanjuntak (2023) and Gede Sindy Artha Wiguna et al. (2024), which proved that Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose. This means that the more prospective students receive positive Word of Mouth from their reference groups, the more likely they are to decide to study at SMKN 47 Jakarta.

The most influential indicator is “Talking positively about the product” with the questionnaire item “I receive positive information about SMKN 47 Jakarta.” SMKN 47 Jakarta should continue to provide excellent service so stakeholders become WOM agents by giving positive information, recommending, and encouraging prospective students to choose SMKN 47 Jakarta for their studies.

The Effect of Physical Environment on the Decision to Choose

The questionnaire data processed using Smart PLS 4 show that the fifth hypothesis – which states that the Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose – can be accepted. This aligns with studies by Gede Sindy Artha Wiguna et al. (2024), which proved that the Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose. A good and representative physical environment that supports the teaching and learning process greatly influences prospective students in deciding to choose the school.

The Effect of School Image on the Decision to Choose

The data processing results show that the sixth hypothesis – which states that School Image has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose – can be accepted. This aligns with studies by Juliana & Johan (2020) and Ahidin (2021), which state that School Image has a positive and significant effect on the

decision to choose. To attract more prospective students to choose SMKN 47 Jakarta, the school needs to improve its image.

From Table 4.9, the largest outer loading in the construct is the indicator CS2 (school reputation) with the questionnaire item “SMKN 47 Jakarta is a school with a good reputation in terms of achievements and graduates.” SMKN 47 Jakarta should continue to build its image by consistently achieving excellence and producing graduates with competence and competitiveness.

The Effect of Choosing Intention on the Decision to Choose

The data processing results show that the seventh hypothesis – which states that Choosing Intention has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose – can be accepted. This aligns with studies by Putri Nanda Leri et al. (2022) and Susy Alestriani Sibagariang et al. (2022), which proved that Choosing Intention has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose. This means that the higher the interest or intention of prospective students in SMKN 47 Jakarta, the greater the likelihood of deciding to choose it as their place of study. SMKN 47 needs to continue efforts to increase prospective students’ intention by creating unique attractions that foster deeper interest.

The Effect of Word of Mouth on the Decision to Choose through Choosing Intention as a Mediating Variable

The questionnaire results show that the eighth hypothesis – which states that Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose through Choosing Intention as a mediating variable – can be accepted. This relationship is classified as partial mediation since both direct and indirect effects are significant. This is consistent with previous research by Rizki Mahbub et al. (2023) and Luhung et al. (2024), which concluded that Word of Mouth positively and significantly influences the decision to choose through Choosing Intention. Choosing Intention significantly mediates WOM’s effect on the decision to choose, meaning WOM influences Choosing Intention, which then positively affects the decision.

SMKN 47 Jakarta should continue to encourage reference groups or stakeholders to give recommendations to prospective students, especially since Table 4.9 shows the most influential construct is the indicator “Encouraging others to buy the product.” This will indirectly foster prospective students’ interest in SMKN 47 Jakarta and ultimately lead to their decision to enroll.

The Effect of Physical Environment on the Decision to Choose through Choosing Intention as a Mediating Variable

The data processing results show that the ninth hypothesis – which states that the Physical Environment has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose through Choosing Intention as a mediating variable – can be accepted. This relationship is also classified as partial mediation since both direct and indirect effects are significant. This is consistent with research by Rianti et al. (2023) and Page et al. (2025), which also found a positive and significant relationship between the physical environment and purchase decisions mediated by choosing intention.

Table 4.9 shows that the largest outer loading is reflected in the social media indicator with the questionnaire item “SMKN 47 Jakarta has social media with interesting and informative content.” Therefore, the school should maintain and improve its social media content, as it has a positive and significant effect on Choosing Intention, which in turn affects the decision to choose SMKN 47 Jakarta.

The Effect of School Image on the Decision to Choose through Choosing Intention as a Mediating Variable

The questionnaire results show that the tenth hypothesis – which states that School Image has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose through Choosing Intention as a mediating variable – must be rejected, as there is no mediation effect. The direct effect is significant, but the indirect effect is not. This is consistent with previous studies by Willliya et al. (2025) and Dina (2023), which concluded that School Image does not significantly affect the decision to choose when mediated by Choosing Intention. This aligns with earlier findings that School Image does not significantly affect buying decisions, nor does it influence Choosing Intention in this mediation role.

This could be due to SMKN 47 Jakarta’s status as a public school, meaning that students may not focus on the school’s image when deciding to enroll, instead prioritizing other variables that have a greater impact. However, this could also motivate SMKN 47 Jakarta to continue improving its image as a distinguishing factor that could attract prospective students.

CONCLUSION

After conducting research and analyzing the data, the conclusions from the study on the influence of Word of Mouth (WOM), physical environment, and school image on the decision to choose a school, with the intention to choose as a mediating variable (a study on students of SMKN 47 Jakarta), are as follows:

1. **Word of Mouth** has a positive and significant effect on the intention to choose. This indicates that the more often prospective students receive positive Word of Mouth from their reference groups in the form of positive information, recommendations, and encouragement regarding SMKN 47 Jakarta, the stronger their intention to choose SMKN 47 Jakarta as their school.
2. **Physical Environment** has a positive and significant effect on the intention to choose. This suggests that the better the physical environment of SMKN 47 Jakarta, the higher the interest of prospective students to choose to study there.
3. **School Image** has a positive but not significant effect on the intention to choose. This indicates that prospective students entering SMKN 47 Jakarta are not strongly influenced by the school’s image. The school image acts only as a supporting variable and is not a major factor in motivating students to enroll at SMKN 47 Jakarta.
4. **Word of Mouth** has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose. Word of Mouth serves as a key driver in shaping prospective

students' attitudes to decide to continue their studies at SMKN 47 Jakarta. Each WOM indicator influences students at every stage of decision-making, from problem recognition, seeking information, evaluation, and ultimately deciding to choose the school.

5. **Physical Environment** has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose. The physical environment is an important factor that positively and significantly influences prospective students' decision-making process. Students will compare and evaluate the best school they can attend, and the most visible and easily comparable indicators are those of the physical environment, such as school facilities and infrastructure, ease of access, school social media, and others.
6. **School Image** has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose. A good school image, stemming from the school's ability to produce quality graduates, a good reputation from achievements and graduate competencies, as well as the positive values cultivated by the school, significantly drives students to decide to study at SMKN 47 Jakarta.
7. **Intention to Choose** has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a school. This indicates that students who already have the intention to choose SMKN 47 Jakarta as their next educational destination have a strong motivation to decide on SMKN 47 Jakarta as their chosen school.
8. **Intention to Choose** can positively and significantly mediate the effect of Word of Mouth on the decision to choose. This result shows that the better the prospective students' perception of the Word of Mouth they receive, the stronger their intention to choose a school, which in turn positively affects their decision to choose the school.
9. **Intention to Choose** can positively and significantly mediate the effect of the Physical Environment on the decision to choose. This indicates that the better the school's physical environment, such as its facilities and infrastructure, the stronger the intention to choose the school, which then positively and significantly impacts the students' final decision.
10. **Intention to Choose** cannot positively and significantly mediate the effect of School Image on the decision to choose. Perceptions of the school image do not directly encourage the intention to choose the school, which would impact the decision to enroll. This is consistent with the previous hypothesis results showing that the school image also does not significantly influence the intention to choose.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the variable most influencing the decision to choose is the intention to choose, followed by the physical environment, school image, and Word of Mouth. Meanwhile, the variable most influencing the intention to choose is the physical environment, followed by WOM, while the school image has a positive but insignificant effect on the intention to choose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher acknowledges that there are certain limitations that could not be addressed in this study; therefore, the following academic recommendations are proposed for future researchers:

1. Future research may further examine the dimensions of WOM by comparing direct Word of Mouth with electronic Word of Mouth to determine which dimension has a stronger influence, depending on the research object.
2. Future research may develop the model by adding variables not used in this study, such as the influence of the marketing mix, social media, parents, guidance counselors from the previous educational level, tuition fees, or family economic factors, to assess their contribution to the decision to choose a school.
3. Future research may test other mediating variables in a broader context, such as the mediation effect of school promotion or service quality on the decision to choose a school.

REFERENCES

- Adi, N. R. M., Ramadhan, M. R. I., Aristawati, T., & Pratama, S. A. (2022). Pengaruh Word of Mouth dan Brand Awareness Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Makanan di ShopeeFood. *Briliant: Jurnal Riset Dan Konseptual*, 7(2), 420. <https://doi.org/10.28926/briliant.v7i2.1001>
- Adiwiguna, R. H., & Munandar, J. M. (2024). (2024). Faktor-faktor yang Mempengaruhi Perilaku Dalam Memilih Sekolah MTs. *Jurnal Ekonomi Bisnis, Manajemen Dan Akuntansi (Jebma)*, Volume: 0(02), 774–786. <https://doi.org/doi.org/jebma.v4n2.3889>
- Ahidin, U. (2021). Pengaruh citra sekolah dan biaya pendidikan terhadap keputusan siswa untuk melanjutkan pendidikan ke SMK. *JPPi (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)*, 7(2), 181–189. <https://doi.org/10.29210/020211138>
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2005). The Influence of Attitudes on Behavior. *The Handbook of Attitudes*, January 2005, 187–236. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410612823-13>
- Asmita, W., & Fitriani, W. (2022). Studi Literatur: Konsep Dasar Pengukuran. *Jurnal Mahasiswa BK An-Nur : Berbeda, Bermakna, Mulia*, 8(3), 217–226.

Bappenas. (2021). *Bappenas*.

Benhardy, K. A., Hardiyansyah, Putranto, A., & Ronadi, M. (2020). Brand image and price perceptions impact on purchase intentions: Mediating brand trust. *Management Science Letters*, 10(14), 3425–3432. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2020.5.035>

cerdasberkarakter.kemdikbud.go.id. (n.d.). *cerdasberkarakter.kemdikbud.go.id*. <https://cerdasberkarakter.kemdikbud.go.id/sahabatkarakter/kegiatan/93212a18-7b1e-4f4e-9919-51129308a785.pdf>

Dapas, C. C., Sitorus, T., Purwanto, E., & Ihalauw, J. J. O. I. (2019). The effect of service quality and website quality of zalora.Com on purchase decision as mediated by purchase intention. *Quality - Access to Success*, 20(169), 87–92.

Geraldine, Y. M. (2021). PENGARUH CITRA MEREK, KUALITAS PRODUK, MEDIA SOSIAL DAN HARGA TERHADAP MINAT BELI KONSUMEN PADA PRODUK BRAND WARDAH. *POINT: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Manajemen*, 3(1), 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.46918/point.v3i1.880>

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., Danks, N. P., & Ray, S. (2021). *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) Using R*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80519-7>

Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>

Isman, I., Patalo, R. G., & Pratama, D. E. (2020). Pengaruh Sosial Media Marketing, Ekuitas Merek, Dan Citra Destinasi Terhadap Minat Berkunjung Ke Tempat Wisata. *Jurnal Studi Manajemen Dan Bisnis*, 7(1), Inpress. <https://doi.org/10.21107/jsmb.v7i1.7447>

Huda, Nurmahdi

Juliana, J., & Johan, J. (2020). Pengaruh brand image terhadap keputusan memilih universitas dengan brand trust sebagai variabel intervening. *Journal of Business and Banking*, 9(2), 229.

Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2021). *Principles of Marketing* (18 Edition). Pearson Education Limited.

Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., & Chernev, A. (2022). *Marketing Management* (16 Edition). Pearson Education Limited.

Laraswati, C., & Harti, H. (2022). Pengaruh Persepsi Kualitas, Citra Merek Dan Etnosentrisme Konsumen Terhadap Minat Pembelian Produk Somethinc. *Jurnal Ekobis: Ekonomi Bisnis & Manajemen*, 12(2), 185–196. <https://doi.org/10.37932/j.e.v12i2.564>

Leindarita, B. (2020). Pengaruh Bauran Pemasaran 7P Terhadap Keputusan Orang Tua Dalam Memilih Rumah Tahfidz Qur'an. *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian*, 2(10), 3589–3598.

Lionitan, W., & Firdausy, C. M. (2023). Pengaruh Persepsi Harga, Word of Mouth dan Customer Satisfaction terhadap Purchase Intention Pelanggan Mixue di Cibubur. *Jurnal Manajerial Dan Kewirausahaan*, 5(3), 805–813. <https://doi.org/10.24912/jmk.v5i3.25450>

Luhung, R., Utama, W., Welsa, H., & Cahya, A. D. (2024). PENGARUH WORD OF MOUTH DAN BRAND IMAGE TERHADAP PURCHASE DECISION DAN BUYING INTEREST SEBAGAI VARIABEL INTERVENING PADA PIZZA HUT DI DAERAH. 13(04), 1136–1149.

Muhammad Thariq Nahra Putra, A. N. (2020). Analysis of Effect Price and Quality on Brand Image and Its. *Dinasti International Journal of Digital Business Management*, 1(5), 747–761. <https://doi.org/10.31933/DIJDBM>

Napitupulu, P. D. S., & Simanjuntak, M. (2023). Pengaruh Promosi Dan Word of Mouth Terhadap Keputusan Memilih Berkuliah Di Institut Teknologi Del.

Jurnal Ekonomi, Manajemen Dan Akuntansi Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Enam-Enam Kendari, 1(2), 401–407.
<https://doi.org/10.572349/neraca.v1i2.163%0Ahttps://jurnal.kolibi.org/index.php/neraca/article/view/163>

Pramana, M. Z. R., Winarno, S. T., & Amir, I. T. (2023). Analisis Perilaku Konsumen dalam Keputusan Pembelian Sayuran Melalui Pendekatan Theory of Planned Behavior (Studi Kasus di Pasar Modern Cirtaland, Surabaya). *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*, 23(1), 86.
<https://doi.org/10.33087/jiubj.v23i1.2853>

Putri Nanda Leri, Elfritri Santi, & Irda Rosita. (2022). Pengaruh Minat, Dukungan Orang Tua dan Citra Kampus terhadap Keputusan Mahasiswa Memilih Kuliah di Jurusan Akuntansi Politeknik Negeri Padang (Studi Empiris pada Mahasiswa Program Studi D-III dan D-IV Akuntansi Politeknik Negeri Padang). *Jurnal Akuntansi, Bisnis Dan Ekonomi Indonesia (JABEL)*, 1(1), 79–85.
<https://doi.org/10.30630/jabei.v1i1.14>

Rianti, T., Taufiqurrahman, T., & Firli Musfar, T. (2023). The Effect of Product Quality and Store Atmosphere on Puchase Decisions mediated By Purchase Intention as Intervening Variable (Study at Café Ma’Ani Rengat). *Dinasti International Journal of Digital Business Management*, 4(5), 1018–1031.
<https://doi.org/10.31933/dijdbm.v4i5.2020>

Rifani, R. A., Aryanti, S., & Syamsuriani, S. (2023). Pengaruh Pengaruh Word of Mouth dan Kualitas Produk terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Konsumen (Studi Pada Livestream Tiktok Shop). *Amsir Management Journal*, 3(2), 100–114. <https://doi.org/10.56341/amj.v3i2.204>

Rizki Mahbub, M., Sulistya Rini, E., & Absah, Y. (2023). Effect of Social Media Promotion and Word of Mouth on Purchasing Decisions Through Purchase Intention as an Intervening Variable at Coffee Shop Minum Kopi Medan. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 10(6), 376–381.
<https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20230646>

Seočanac, M. (2024). PLS-SEM: A hidden gem in tourism research methodology. *Menadzment u Hotelijerstou i Turizmu*, 12(1), 115–131.
<https://doi.org/10.5937/menhottur2400005s>

- Sihombing, P. R., Indonesia, S., & Arsani, A. M. (2025). *Aplikasi SEM PLS dalam berbagai Software Untuk Statistisi Pemula (Software R, STATA, Adanco, WarpPLS)* (Issue February).
- Siregar, R. H. M., & Nurmahdi, A. (2021). The effect of Price and Brand Image on Purchase Decisions and their Implications on Consumer Satisfactory of Ebara Pump Products in Jabodetabek. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 3(2), 19–30. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jbms.2021.3.2.3>
- Wijayanti, A. A., & Cahyono, K. E. (2024). PENGARUH WORD OF MOUTH , BRAND IMAGE , KUALITAS PELAYANAN TERHADAP KEPUTUSAN ORANG TUA MEMILIH PENDIDIKAN DI SDIT. *Jurnal Ilmu Dan Riset Manajemen*, 13.9.
- Williya, A., Yuse, P., Brama, V., Della, K., & Putri, A. (2025). *Pengaruh Citra Merek Dan Promosi Terhadap Pembelian Dengan Minat Beli Sebagai Variabel Intervening Pada Mascara Somethinc (studi kasus pada mahasiswa di Kota Padang)*. 01(03), 86–91.
- Willy, W., & Nurjanah, S. (2019). Pengaruh Kemasan Produk Dan Rasa Terhadap Minat Beli Yang Berdampak Pada Keputusan Pembelian Pelanggan Minuman Energi. *Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen*, 8(2), 65. <https://doi.org/10.32502/jimn.v8i2.1820>
- Wulansari, A., & Haryati, I. (2021). Pengaruh Physical Environment Terhadap Minat Beli Konsumen. *Equilibrium: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Dan Ekonomi*, 18(02), 169–178. <https://doi.org/10.25134/equi.v18i2.4153>
- Yasin, A. A., & Achmad, G. N. (2021). Influence of Word of Mouth and Product Quality on Purchase Decisions and Repurchasing Interest. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting Research (IJEBAR)*, 5(2), 410–419.
- Yuslih, D. F., Martono, T., & Nugroho, J. A. (2021). Pengaruh Kualitas Pelayanan Dan Citra Sekolah Terhadap Kepuasan Siswa Di Sma Negeri 1 Jatisrono. *BISE : J Urnal Pendidikan Bisnis Dan Ekonomi*, 7(1), 1–10.