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Promotion and School Image as Determinants of Students' School Choice: Evidence from YAPIM Biru-Biru Private High School

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Abstract

Increasing competition among private schools highlights the importance of promotional communication and institutional image in shaping students' educational preferences. This study aims to examine the associations of promotion and school image with students' evaluations of their school choice at Yapim Biru-Biru Private Senior High School. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design was employed, involving 75 respondents from a population of 305 students in Grades X and XI. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results indicate that promotion (B = 0.387; t = 5.129; p < 0.001) and school image (B = 0.372; t = 4.269; p < 0.001) were positively and significantly associated with students' evaluations of their school choice. The regression model was statistically significant (F = 43.727; p < 0.001), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.536, accounting for 53.60% of the variance in the dependent variable. These findings highlight the relevance of promotional communication and institutional image in educational marketing. However, given the retrospective and cross-sectional nature of the data, the findings represent statistical associations rather than causal relationships.

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1. Introduction

Education plays an important role in developing human resources with knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to contribute to society. As formal educational institutions, schools are responsible for providing learning environments that support students' academic development and character formation. At the secondary education level, schools not only function as places for knowledge transfer but also become institutions that compete to provide quality educational services to attract prospective students and gain public trust. The increasing number of educational institutions has created stronger competition among schools, particularly private schools, which require effective strategies to maintain institutional sustainability and improve student enrollment. Therefore, educational institutions need to implement strategic management approaches, including educational marketing, service quality improvement, and stakeholder-oriented management, to strengthen institutional competitiveness and respond to changing expectations of educational consumers (Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024). The implementation of educational marketing enables schools to identify community needs, develop institutional advantages, and communicate their educational values effectively, while improving service quality contributes to building public trust and strengthening the reputation of educational institutions (Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024; Helmawati et al., 2025).

Student enrollment has become an important indicator reflecting public trust and the perceived quality of an educational institution. A high number of new student registrations indicates that a school has successfully developed a positive image and attracted the interest of students and parents. Conversely, a low number of applicants may indicate that a school has limited attractiveness compared with other educational institutions. Therefore, schools need to develop appropriate strategies through service improvement, communication management, innovation, and effective marketing approaches to strengthen their competitiveness. The ability of schools to

build a positive image, provide quality educational services, and implement effective marketing communication influences parents' perceptions and decisions in selecting educational institutions (Aritonang et al., 2024; Permana et al., 2023; Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024).

One strategy commonly implemented by educational institutions is the application of marketing concepts through promotional activities. In the context of education, marketing does not only focus on increasing the number of students but also aims to communicate the advantages, academic programs, facilities, and values offered by schools to the community. The marketing mix concept in educational institutions consists of several important elements, including product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence, people, and process. Among these elements, promotion has an essential role because it functions as a communication medium between schools and prospective students by delivering information about educational quality and institutional advantages. Educational marketing strategies allow schools to introduce their educational services, build relationships with the community, and influence prospective students' perceptions toward institutional choices (Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024; Pamungkas et al., 2023; Aprilliantoni, 2026).

The development of information technology has also changed the way schools conduct promotional activities. Digital marketing, social media, websites, and online publications have become important tools for educational institutions to reach wider communities. Effective promotional strategies can increase public awareness and influence students' perceptions when selecting a school. Digital communication channels provide opportunities for schools to distribute information more widely, efficiently, and interactively to prospective students and parents. The utilization of social media and digital platforms also enables educational institutions to strengthen institutional brand image, establish communication with stakeholders, and influence students' decision-making processes in selecting educational institutions (Aulia et al., 2022). Previous research demonstrated that promotional activities contribute to increasing students' interest because promotional communication provides relevant information regarding educational programs, institutional advantages, and learning facilities offered by schools (Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024). However, promotional factors do not always become the dominant determinant of students' educational choices because decision-making may also be influenced by institutional reputation, service quality, school image, and parental trust (Aritonang et al., 2024). These inconsistent findings indicate that the relationship between promotion and student decision-making still requires further investigation in different educational contexts.

Besides promotion, school image is another important factor that may influence students' decisions. School image refers to the perception formed by the community regarding the quality, reputation, achievements, facilities, and overall credibility of an educational institution. A positive school image can increase confidence among students and parents because it reflects the perceived reliability and quality of educational services. School image is developed through various institutional attributes, including academic achievements, teacher competence, learning facilities, student achievements, and the school's involvement in community activities. A strong institutional image represents stakeholders' perceptions regarding school credibility, reputation, and educational quality, which subsequently influences preferences and decisions when selecting educational institutions (Arlinwibowo et al., 2024). Previous studies also indicate that institutional image and perceived credibility become important considerations in educational decision-making because students and parents tend to evaluate the reputation and advantages of institutions before making enrollment decisions (Budaya et al., 2024; Aritonang et al., 2024).

SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru, located in Deli Serdang Regency, represents an educational institution that has experienced growth in student enrollment in recent years. Based on institutional data, the number of students increased from 356 students in 2024 to 389 students in 2025 and reached 422 students in 2026. This development indicates that the school has succeeded in attracting increasing public interest; however, continuous evaluation is still required to identify factors influencing students' decisions to select the institution. Promotional activities conducted through banners, brochures, websites, and direct community engagement have been implemented consistently, while school image

has been developed through academic achievements, educational programs, and institutional activities. Nevertheless, several aspects, such as strengthening teacher professionalism and improving institutional reputation, remain important areas for further development.

The increasing number of students at SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru indicates that institutional factors, including promotional communication and school reputation, may contribute to students' decisions in selecting the school. In educational marketing, student enrollment is not only influenced by the availability of educational services but also by how schools communicate their advantages and develop positive perceptions among prospective students and parents. Educational institutions need to implement strategic marketing management to strengthen institutional image, communicate educational values, and maintain competitiveness in an increasingly competitive education sector (Helmawati et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of effective promotion strategies and a strong school image becomes an important approach for private schools to attract prospective students and sustain institutional competitiveness (Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024).

Based on previous studies, there is a research gap regarding the inconsistent findings related to the influence of promotion and school image on students' decisions in choosing educational institutions. Some studies confirm that promotion influences students' decisions by providing relevant information and increasing institutional attractiveness, while other studies indicate that promotional activities alone are insufficient to determine student choices because other factors, such as school reputation, service quality, institutional image, and parental trust, may also influence decision-making (Aritonang et al., 2024; Budaya et al., 2024). Similarly, although several studies demonstrate that school image influences students' decisions, differences in institutional characteristics and research contexts indicate that the strength of this relationship may vary among educational institutions (Arlinwibowo et al., 2024). These differences suggest that further empirical studies are needed to provide a deeper understanding of how promotion and school image contribute to students' school selection decisions.

Previous studies have examined the role of promotion and institutional image in educational decision-making from different research perspectives, including the mediating role of brand image in higher education selection, school image and parental trust, and educational marketing strategies influencing parental decision-making (Aritonang et al., 2024; Kango et al., 2021; Napitupulu et al., 2024). Marketing communication strategies play an important role in strengthening brand awareness, shaping consumer perceptions, and building trust, while creative marketing contributes to institutional brand image formation within educational settings (Jufry, 2025; Oktavia et al., 2026). However, the contribution of promotion and school image as simultaneous predictors of school choice from students' perspectives warrants further empirical examination in private secondary education.

This issue is particularly relevant to SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru, where institutional records indicate an increase in total student enrollment from 356 in 2024 to 389 in 2025 and 422 in 2026. Although this growth does not establish a causal relationship with promotion or school image, it provides an empirical basis for investigating their respective contributions. Accordingly, this study provides a contextual empirical extension of existing educational marketing research by examining the partial and simultaneous effects of these two predictors from students' perspectives. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights for school management in improving promotional strategies and strengthening institutional image. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of promotion and school image on students' decisions in choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru. Specifically, this research examines the partial and simultaneous effects of promotion and school image on students' school selection decisions.

2. Literatur Review

2.1 Marketing in Educational Institutions

Educational marketing refers to strategic activities undertaken by educational institutions to communicate institutional values, identify stakeholder needs, and develop sustainable relationships with students, parents, and the wider community. Unlike conventional commercial marketing, educational marketing emphasizes service quality, institutional credibility, public trust,

and the long-term benefits associated with educational services. In private secondary education, these marketing activities are increasingly important because schools must respond to institutional competition and changing stakeholder expectations (Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024; Aprilliantoni, 2026).

The educational marketing mix encompasses product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Empirical research involving private vocational high schools in Indonesia identified 60 marketing components across these seven elements, demonstrating the importance of adapting marketing strategies to the characteristics and needs of secondary education institutions (Panditatwa & Hidayat, 2024). A recent case study involving a private junior high school also highlighted the importance of integrated marketing strategies in strengthening institutional attractiveness and public trust (Aprilliantoni, 2026).

The development of digital communication technology has expanded educational marketing opportunities through institutional websites, social media, and other online communication platforms. These channels enable schools to communicate educational programs, institutional achievements, and service advantages while maintaining relationships with prospective students and parents. Effective digital marketing and consistent institutional communication contribute to brand awareness and the development of a credible school image (Jufry, 2025; Oktavia et al., 2026; Yaqin & Aini, 2025).

2.2 Promotion

Promotion is an essential element of educational marketing that involves communicating information about institutional programs, educational services, facilities, achievements, and advantages to prospective students and parents. In educational settings, promotion supports decision-making by increasing information accessibility and helping stakeholders evaluate available educational alternatives (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015; Kango et al., 2021).

Promotional activities can be implemented through advertising, brochures, websites, social media, publicity, and direct communication with prospective students. The effectiveness of promotional communication depends on the clarity of promotional messages, accessibility of information, attractiveness of promotional content, and consistency of communication across different channels. Integrated marketing communication can strengthen institutional visibility and increase public awareness of educational services (Jufry, 2025; Pamungkas et al., 2023).

Recent empirical research in secondary education indicates that digital marketing platforms provide distinct opportunities for reaching different stakeholder groups. Instagram and TikTok facilitate engagement with younger audiences, whereas Facebook and WhatsApp support communication with parents and alumni. These findings highlight the importance of selecting promotional channels according to the characteristics of the intended audience (Yaqin & Aini, 2025).

Previous research conducted among private vocational high school students also demonstrated that school promotion significantly influences students' interest in selecting educational programs. Similarly, research on higher education selection identified promotion as a significant factor affecting prospective students' institutional choices, both directly and through educational brand image (Pujilestari et al., 2021; Kango et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, promotional activities may not independently determine school selection because educational decisions also involve institutional reputation, service quality, family considerations, and parental trust. Research involving private schools found that several elements of the educational marketing mix contribute to parental decision-making, while the relative importance of these factors depends on institutional characteristics and stakeholder expectations (Aritonang et al., 2026; Napitupulu et al., 2024). Based on these theoretical considerations and empirical findings, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1**:** Promotion has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions in choosing schools.

2.3 School Image

School image refers to the perceptions, beliefs, and impressions formed by stakeholders regarding an educational institution. These perceptions reflect evaluations of institutional reputation, educational quality, credibility, academic achievements, and service performance. A favorable school image may strengthen

stakeholders' confidence in an institution and differentiate it from competing educational alternatives (Aritonang et al., 2026; Arlinwibowo et al., 2024).

School image is developed through institutional performance, teacher professionalism, learning facilities, academic achievements, educational programs, and communication with stakeholders. However, institutional image is not solely determined by internal school characteristics because public perceptions may also change in response to external factors, including educational policies and student admission systems (Arlinwibowo et al., 2024).

Recent developments in educational marketing demonstrate that institutional branding increasingly involves digital communication and stakeholder engagement. Schools can communicate their institutional identity through social media content, student achievements, educational activities, and parental testimonials. These activities contribute to public recognition, trust-building, and the formation of institutional brand image (Oktavia et al., 2026; Aimah et al., 2024).

From a decision-making perspective, school image provides prospective students and parents with information about the perceived reliability and quality of educational services. An empirical study involving parents at a private educational institution identified school image and educational service quality as significant predictors of school choice decisions, with parental trust emerging as the most influential factor among the variables examined (Aritonang et al., 2026).

In the present study, school image is conceptualized through institutional identity, reputation, educational values, and communication with stakeholders. These dimensions represent students' perceptions of the school's credibility, educational characteristics, and institutional attractiveness. Although previous findings suggest that institutional image contributes to educational decision-making, its influence may differ between students and parents because these stakeholders may evaluate educational alternatives using different considerations. Consequently, further examination from students' perspectives is necessary within private secondary education settings (Aritonang et al., 2026; Napitupulu et al., 2024).

Based on these theoretical explanations and empirical findings, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2**:** School image has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions in choosing schools.

2.4 Students' Decisions in Choosing Schools

Educational decision-making refers to the process through which individuals identify educational needs, obtain relevant information, evaluate available alternatives, and select an institution that meets their expectations. Unlike ordinary purchasing decisions, educational choices involve long-term considerations associated with academic development, educational costs, institutional reputation, and future opportunities (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015; Le et al., 2022).

Students' decisions in choosing schools involve both individual preferences and external influences. Individual considerations may include educational interests, perceived institutional quality, and personal expectations, whereas external factors include parental recommendations, family circumstances, social environments, and institutional communication. Research conducted among students selecting secondary education institutions indicates that school marketing elements contribute to the evaluation of educational alternatives (Maryanthi et al., 2024).

Parental involvement also represents an important factor in secondary-school selection. A study involving parents at Muhammadiyah senior high schools identified school location, accessibility, institutional vision and mission, family support, and religious education as important considerations in school selection. These findings demonstrate that educational decisions cannot be explained exclusively through promotional activities or institutional reputation (Hasanah & Machali, 2025). Furthermore, empirical research involving private schools identified promotion and other marketing mix elements as significant determinants of parental school choice decisions. Word-of-mouth communication may also contribute to the relationship between educational marketing and parents' institutional preferences (Najwa Mu'minah et al., 2024; Napitupulu et al., 2024).

In the context of this study, students' decisions are examined from the perspectives of enrolled students, focusing on their consideration of school information, evaluation of educational alternatives, perceived

suitability of school characteristics, and final school selection. This approach recognizes students as active participants in educational decision-making without disregarding the potential influence of parents and other external factors.

2.5 Relationship Between Promotion, School Image, and Students' Decisions in Choosing Schools

Promotion and school image represent complementary factors in educational marketing. Promotion provides information that enables prospective students to recognize and evaluate institutional characteristics, whereas school image reflects perceptions of the institution's reputation, credibility, and educational quality. Together, these factors may contribute to reducing uncertainty and strengthening confidence during educational decision-making (Aritonang et al., 2026; Kango et al., 2021).

Previous empirical research has examined the relationship between marketing activities, institutional image, and educational selection using different analytical approaches. Research in higher education has identified promotion and brand image as important factors associated with students' institutional choices, while studies involving private secondary education have emphasized the contribution of marketing mix elements to parental decision-making (Arifin et al., 2020; Kango et al., 2021; Napitupulu et al., 2024).

Recent studies have further demonstrated that creative marketing, digital communication, and stakeholder engagement contribute to institutional brand image and public trust. However, these studies primarily examine branding processes and communication strategies rather than directly estimating the joint contribution of promotion and school image to individual students' school selection decisions (Oktavia et al., 2026; Yaqin & Aini, 2025).

The differences in educational settings, respondent characteristics, and analytical approaches indicate the need for contextual empirical evidence regarding the relationship between promotion, school image, and school selection. Accordingly, the present study examines promotion and school image as independent predictors of students' decisions within a private senior high school setting. Their simultaneous examination allows the study to assess their joint explanatory contribution without assuming a mediating or moderating relationship between the two variables.

Based on these theoretical arguments and previous empirical findings, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows. H3: Promotion and school image simultaneously have a significant effect on students' decisions in choosing schools.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an explanatory research design. The quantitative approach was selected because this study aims to examine the influence of promotion and school image on students' decisions in choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru through numerical data measurement and statistical analysis. Quantitative research enables researchers to measure relationships among variables objectively, test theoretical assumptions, and determine the significance of relationships between independent and dependent variables based on empirical data collected from respondents (Kango et al., 2021; Zainul et al., 2023).

The explanatory research design was applied because this study seeks to explain the causal relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. In this research, promotion and school image were positioned as independent variables, while students' decisions in choosing schools were positioned as the dependent variable. This research design is commonly applied in educational marketing studies to analyze how institutional marketing strategies influence students' decision-making processes through statistical hypothesis testing (Arifin et al., 2020; Suyono, 2017). The selection of a quantitative explanatory approach is considered appropriate because the objective of this study is not only to describe students' perceptions regarding promotion and school image but also to examine the extent to which these variables contribute to students' decisions in selecting educational institutions.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population refers to the entire group of subjects or objects that possess specific characteristics determined by researchers for investigation and conclusion purposes. Population determination is an essential stage in quantitative research because it defines the

scope of research generalization and ensures that collected data represent the characteristics of the research object. The study population comprised 305 Grade X and XI students at SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru, focusing on students whose school selection decisions were relatively recent. The sample size was estimated using Slovin's formula

$$n = N/(1 + Ne^2)$$

with a 10% margin of error, yielding approximately 75 respondents. Simple random sampling was applied using [source of the student list] and [random selection procedure] to ensure equal selection opportunities for eligible students. Non-responses and incomplete questionnaires were handled through [actual procedure], resulting in a final sample of 75 respondents.

The sampling technique used in this study was simple random sampling. This technique provides equal opportunities for every member of the population to be selected as a respondent, thereby reducing selection bias and increasing the representativeness of research data. Similar quantitative educational studies have applied probability sampling techniques to analyze factors influencing students' decisions in selecting educational institutions (Arifin et al., 2020; Napitupulu et al., 2024). Therefore, the total sample used in this study consisted of 75 students of SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru who were selected randomly from the research population.

3.3 Research Variables and Measurement

This study consisted of two independent variables, namely promotion (X1) and school image (X2), and one dependent variable, namely students' decisions in choosing schools (Y). The operationalization of each variable was developed based on previous theories and empirical studies related to educational marketing and consumer decision-making behavior.

Promotion (X1) refers to marketing communication activities conducted by educational institutions to deliver information regarding educational programs, facilities, achievements, and institutional advantages to prospective students. In the context of education, promotion functions as a communication strategy to increase institutional awareness and influence students' perceptions before making educational choices (Kango et al., 2021). The promotion variable in this study was measured through indicators related to promotional information delivery, attractiveness of promotional activities, accessibility of information, and effectiveness of school marketing communication. Previous studies have shown that promotional strategies significantly contribute to students' decisions in selecting educational institutions because promotion provides important information regarding institutional quality and available educational services (Kango et al., 2021; Napitupulu et al., 2024).

School Image (X2) refers to students' perceptions regarding the reputation, quality, credibility, and identity of an educational institution. A positive institutional image reflects public trust and influences how prospective students evaluate an institution compared with other educational alternatives (Suyono, 2017). The school image variable was measured through indicators including institutional reputation, educational quality, teacher competence, facilities, achievements, and public perception toward the school. Previous studies indicate that institutional image and brand image play important roles in shaping students' confidence and influencing their final decisions in selecting educational institutions (Arifin et al., 2020).

Students' Evaluation of School Choice (Y) refers to students' assessment of their existing educational choice based on perceived school characteristics, available information, confidence, and suitability with educational needs. As respondents were already enrolled, this variable represents a retrospective evaluation of school choice rather than a direct measurement of pre-enrollment decision-making (Suyono, 2017). The variable was measured through five indicators: school environment consideration, information availability, curriculum quality consideration, confidence in school choice, and suitability with educational needs. Each indicator was assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). These indicators reflect students' information assessment, evaluation of school attributes, and perceived suitability of their educational choice (Arifin et al., 2020; Handayani et al., 2024).

All variables in this study were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (score 1) to strongly agree (score 5). The Likert scale was selected because it enables researchers to quantitatively measure respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations regarding the investigated

variables.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection in this study was conducted through observation, questionnaires, and documentation. Observation was conducted during the initial research stage to identify phenomena related to students' decisions in selecting schools and to understand the existing conditions regarding school promotion activities and institutional image at SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru. Primary data were collected through questionnaires distributed to students as research respondents. The questionnaire consisted of statements developed based on indicators of promotion, school image, and students' decision variables. The questionnaire was distributed using digital media to facilitate data collection and improve efficiency in obtaining responses from participants.

Questionnaires are commonly used in quantitative educational research because they allow researchers to systematically collect perception-based data and analyze relationships among variables using statistical techniques (Kango et al., 2021; Alfiyah et al., 2025). Documentation was also used to obtain supporting information related to school profiles, promotional activities, institutional achievements, and other relevant documents. Documentation data were utilized to strengthen the contextual understanding of the research object and support the interpretation of quantitative findings.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Data analysis was conducted through several stages, including instrument testing, classical assumption testing, multiple linear regression analysis, and hypothesis testing. These analytical procedures were applied to examine the influence of promotion and school image on students' decisions in choosing schools.

The validity test was conducted using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis to determine whether each questionnaire item accurately represented the measured variable. An item was considered valid when the correlation coefficient met the required criteria and the significance value was below 0.05. Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the research instrument. A higher Cronbach's Alpha value indicates stronger reliability of the measurement instrument (Utami et al., 2024; Alfiyah et al., 2025). Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, classical assumption tests were performed, consisting of normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The normality test was conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, while multicollinearity was examined using tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser test to ensure that the regression model met statistical requirements. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect of promotion and school image on students' decisions in choosing schools. The regression equation applied in this study was:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + e$$

where Y represents students' decisions in choosing schools, X1 represents promotion, X2 represents school image, α represents the constant, β represents regression coefficients, and e represents the error term. Hypothesis testing was conducted through partial significance testing (t-test), simultaneous significance testing (F-test), and coefficient of determination analysis (R^2). The t-test was used to determine the individual effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, while the F-test was used to examine the simultaneous influence of promotion and school image on students' decisions. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to determine the extent to which independent variables explain variations in the dependent variable (Kango et al., 2021; Zainul et al., 2023).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Respondents' Characteristics

This study involved 75 students aged 16–18 years at SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru. Ethical approval or exemption and school permission were obtained through [specify the applicable procedures]. Informed consent and, where applicable, parental or guardian consent and student assent were obtained through [specify the actual procedures]. Participant confidentiality and voluntary participation were protected through [specify the measures implemented to prevent coercion and ensure independent responses]. The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

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Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40	53.33
	Female	35	46.67
Age	16 years old	26	34.67
	17 years old	43	57.33
	18 years old	6	8.00
Total		75	100.00

Source: Processed Data (2026)

The characteristics of respondents indicate that the majority of participants were male respondents (53.33%), while female respondents accounted for 46.67%. Based on age distribution, most respondents were 17 years old (57.33%), followed by respondents aged 16 years (34.67%) and 18 years (8.00%). The dominance of respondents aged 17 years indicates that most participants were students who had sufficient experience and understanding regarding the process of selecting their current school.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe respondents' perceptions regarding promotion, school image, and students' evaluations of their school choice at SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru. Each variable was measured using five questionnaire items based on predetermined indicators. Responses were assessed using a five-point Likert scale to determine respondents' levels of agreement with each statement. The percentage distribution provides an overview of respondents' perceptions and supports the interpretation of subsequent statistical analyses.

4.2.1 Promotion Variable (X1)

The promotion variable was measured through indicators including advertising, publicity, personal selling, and sales promotion. Items assessed information clarity, promotional message understanding, fee transparency, and promotional attractiveness. These indicators reflect students' perceptions of the school's promotional communication. The descriptive results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Results of Promotion Variable (X1)

Indicator	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Advertising information clarity	32.00	38.67	16.00	12.00	1.33
Promotional message understanding	26.67	30.67	32.00	8.00	2.67
Education fee information transparency	34.67	36.00	20.00	6.67	2.67
Promotional presentation attractiveness	36.00	21.33	34.67	6.67	1.33
Promotional offers attractiveness	36.00	22.67	24.00	17.33	0.00

Source: Processed Data (2026)

The results show that respondents generally perceived school promotion positively. The highest response was found in the statement regarding promotional information presentation, where 36.00% of respondents strongly agreed and 21.33% agreed. This indicates that promotional communication conducted by the school has been able to provide information regarding school advantages and programs effectively.

4.2.2 School Image Variable (X2)

The school image variable was measured through reputation, study program availability, accreditation, teacher professionalism, and service quality. The descriptive results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Results of School Image Variable (X2)

Indicator	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
School reputation	30.67	36.00	20.00	13.33	0.00
Study program options	25.33	36.00	29.33	9.33	0.00
Institutional accreditation	30.67	33.33	29.33	6.67	0.00
Teacher professionalism	33.33	29.33	26.67	10.67	0.00
Service quality	40.00	28.00	18.67	13.33	0.00

Source: Processed Data (2026)

The findings indicate that respondents had a positive perception of the school image. The highest evaluation was related to service quality, with 40.00% of respondents strongly agreeing and 28.00% agreeing. This indicates that educational services provided by SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru contribute positively to the formation of school image.

4.2.3 Students' Decision in Choosing School (Y)

The decision variable was measured through school environment consideration, information availability, curriculum quality, confidence in school choice, and suitability with

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educational needs. These indicators reflect students' assessments of their educational choice. The responses represent students' retrospective evaluations following enrollment. The descriptive results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Results of Students' Decision Variable (Y)

Indicator	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
School environment consideration	37.33	37.33	12.00	10.67	2.67
Availability of information	46.67	38.67	13.33	1.33	0.00
Curriculum quality consideration	41.33	41.33	16.00	1.33	0.00
Confidence in school choice	42.67	34.67	17.33	5.33	0.00
Suitability with educational needs	38.67	37.33	20.00	4.00	0.00

Source: Processed Data (2026)

The results demonstrate that students' decisions in choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru were strongly influenced by the availability of information and school quality considerations. The highest response was found in the information availability indicator, where 46.67% of respondents strongly agreed.

4.3 Instrument Testing

4.3.1 Validity Test

Validity testing was conducted to ensure that each questionnaire item accurately measured the intended research variables. The validity test results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Validity Test Results

Variable	Item Range	r-count Range	Result
Promotion (X1)	X1.1–X1.5	0.652–0.807	Valid
School Image (X2)	X2.1–X2.5	0.708–0.769	Valid
Decision (Y)	Y1–Y5	0.627–0.842	Valid

Source: Processed SPSS Data (2026)

The questionnaire items showed positive correlation coefficients ranging from 0.627 to 0.842, exceeding the critical Pearson correlation value of approximately 0.227 (n = 75, df = 73, α = 0.05, two-tailed). Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.730 to 0.772, indicating acceptable internal consistency. However, these results provide preliminary evidence of item validity and reliability rather than comprehensive construct validity. Given the limited sample size and the absence of reported factor analysis, further instrument validation is recommended.

4.3.2 Reliability Test

Table 6. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Standard	Result
Promotion (X1)	0.730	0.60	Reliable
School Image (X2)	0.772	0.60	Reliable
Decision (Y)	0.751	0.60	Reliable

Source: Processed SPSS Data (2026)

The reliability test results indicate that all variables obtained Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.60. Therefore, all research instruments demonstrated adequate internal consistency.

4.4 Classical Assumption Testing

4.4.1 Normality Test

Table 7. Normality Test Results

Test	Value
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.156
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.138

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test yielded Z = 1.156 and p = 0.138, indicating no statistically significant departure from normality. However, this result supports the regression normality assumption only if the test was applied to regression residuals and interpreted alongside the residual P–P plot. Further assessment of linearity, influential observations, and error independence is necessary to establish the adequacy of the regression assumptions.

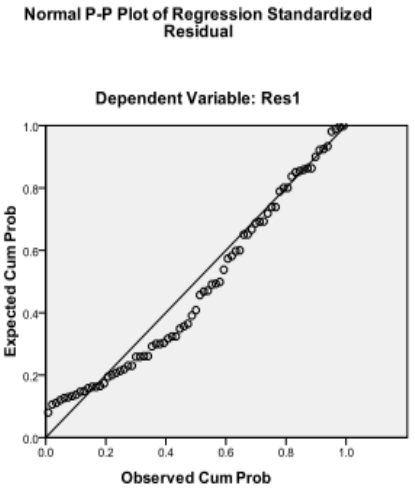

Figure 1. Normal Probability Plot (P-P Plot)

The P-P Plot shows that the data points are distributed around the diagonal line, indicating that the regression model satisfies the normality assumption.

4.4.2 Multicollinearity Test

Table 8. Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Promotion	0.756	1.322
School Image	0.756	1.322

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

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The tolerance values are greater than 0.10 and VIF values are below 10, indicating that the regression model does not experience multicollinearity problems.

4.4.3 Heteroscedasticity Test

Table 9. Glejser Test Results

Variable	Sig.
Promotion	0.491
School Image	0.203

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The significance values of both independent variables are greater than 0.05, indicating that the regression model does not contain heteroscedasticity problems.

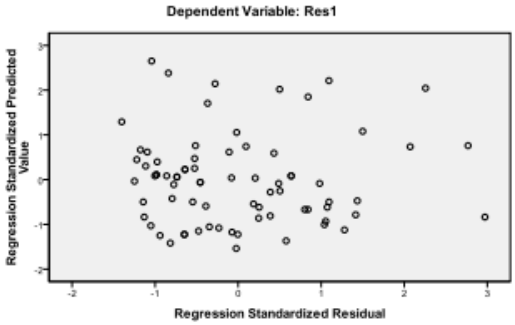

Figure 2. Scatterplot Test

The scatterplot demonstrates that residual points are randomly distributed around zero, confirming that the regression model meets the homoscedasticity assumption.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 10. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Variable	B	t-value	Sig.
Constant	6.163	3.843	0.000
Promotion (X1)	0.387	5.129	0.000
School Image (X2)	0.372	4.269	0.000

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The estimated multiple linear regression equation is presented below. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 72) = 43.727$, $p < 0.001$. Both promotion ($B = 0.387$, $SE = 0.075$, $t = 5.129$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.237, 0.537]) and school image ($B = 0.372$, $SE = 0.087$, $t = 4.269$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.198, 0.546]) were positively associated with students' evaluations of their school choice.

$$Y = 6.163 + 0.387X1 + 0.372X2 + e$$

The results indicate that promotion has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions, supporting H1. School image also has a positive and significant effect, supporting H2.

Simultaneous Test (F-Test)

Table 11. F-Test Results

F-value	Sig.
43.727	0.000

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The F-test results indicate that promotion and school image simultaneously influence students' decisions in choosing schools, supporting H3.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 12. R^2 Test Results

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.741	0.548	0.536

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.536 indicates that promotion and school image explain 53.60% of variations in students' decisions, while the remaining 46.40% is explained by other factors outside this research model. The regression model demonstrated statistically significant associations between promotion, school image, and students' evaluations of their school choice ($F(2, 72) = 43.727$; $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.548$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.536$). However, the model did not include other potentially relevant factors, such as educational costs, school location, parental preferences, peer influence, and academic performance, which may introduce confounding. Furthermore, collecting all variables from the same enrolled students at a single time point may introduce common-method bias. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than causal evidence or a comprehensive explanation of actual school enrollment decisions.

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 The Effect of Promotion on Students' Decisions in Choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru

Promotion was positively and significantly associated with students' evaluations of their school choice ($B = 0.387$; $t = 5.129$; $p < 0.001$). This association may reflect the role of promotional communication in reducing information uncertainty, particularly as 85.33% of respondents positively evaluated information availability. While promotion facilitates access to school information, school image may strengthen perceived institutional credibility through a distinct mechanism. This finding is consistent with previous research on promotional activities and educational preferences in secondary schools, although differences in respondents and measurement approaches limit direct comparisons (Pujilestari et al., 2021; Napitupulu et al., 2024). However, because respondents were already enrolled, their evaluations may have been

influenced by post-enrollment experiences. Therefore, the findings indicate a statistical association rather than establishing a causal influence of promotion on pre-enrollment school choice.

Promotion influences students' decisions because prospective students require adequate information before determining their educational choices. Information regarding school programs, facilities, achievements, and educational services helps students evaluate available alternatives before making their final decision. Previous studies in educational marketing have demonstrated that promotional activities provide important information and influence prospective students' perceptions toward educational institutions (Handayani et al., 2024; Amelia et al., 2024).

Students' decisions in choosing schools represent a decision-making process involving information searching, evaluation of alternatives, and selection of educational services. In this process, promotion functions as a communication strategy that introduces institutional advantages and strengthens students' understanding of the educational services offered. Research conducted by Arifin et al. (2020) shows that marketing activities, including promotional strategies, contribute to shaping students' perceptions and influencing educational choices.

In the current digital era, school promotion has expanded through digital platforms such as websites, social media, and online publications. Digital-based promotional strategies allow educational institutions to communicate their programs and achievements more effectively to prospective students and parents. Effective communication strategies combined with institutional branding activities can strengthen public awareness and increase students' interest in selecting an educational institution (Handayani et al., 2024).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research showing that promotion has a positive influence on educational decision-making. Promotional activities are not only limited to delivering information but also function as a strategic approach to build institutional attractiveness and influence students' preferences toward a particular school (Napitupulu et al., 2024; Amelia et al., 2024).

4.6.2 The Effect of School Image on Students' Decisions in Choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru

The results of this study show that school image has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions in choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru. This result is indicated by the regression coefficient value of 0.372, with a t-value of 4.269 > 1.957 and a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05. These findings demonstrate that a stronger school image increases students' confidence in selecting SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru.

School image reflects students' perceptions of institutional reputation, educational quality, and credibility, which may contribute to their evaluation of school choice (Arifin et al., 2020). However, conceptual overlap may exist between school-image indicators, such as service quality and study-program options, and choice-related indicators, including curriculum quality and suitability with educational needs. Promotional information may also contribute to the formation of school image. As all variables were measured using the same questionnaire and respondents, common-source measurement bias may have inflated the observed associations.

Therefore, the findings should be interpreted cautiously, and further research should establish discriminant validity and refine overlapping measurement indicators. A positive school image reduces uncertainty among prospective students because it reflects institutional credibility and the quality of educational services provided. Schools with strong reputations tend to receive higher trust from stakeholders because they are perceived as capable of providing better educational experiences. The development of institutional image through quality improvement, achievement development, and effective communication becomes an important strategy in increasing institutional competitiveness (Napitupulu et al., 2024; Amelia et al., 2024).

The results of this study indicate that SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru has developed a positive institutional image through aspects such as school reputation, teacher professionalism, educational services, and institutional performance. Positive perceptions from respondents demonstrate that internal school quality contributes to strengthening the image of the institution.

School image is developed through continuous improvement of educational quality, strengthening institutional identity, and maintaining positive relationships with

stakeholders. A strong institutional image becomes an important competitive advantage because it differentiates schools from other educational alternatives and influences prospective students' preferences (Arifin et al., 2020). The findings of this study support previous research showing that institutional image significantly influences students' decisions in selecting educational institutions. This confirms that reputation, credibility, and public perception are important components in educational choice behavior (Napitupulu et al., 2024).

4.6.3 The Effect of Promotion and School Image on Students' Decisions in Choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru

The results of simultaneous hypothesis testing show that promotion and school image significantly influence students' decisions in choosing SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru. This result is supported by the F-test value of 43.727 > 3.12 with a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05. These findings indicate that promotion and school image simultaneously contribute to strengthening students' decisions in selecting the school.

Promotion and school image are complementary components in educational marketing strategies. Promotion provides information regarding institutional programs, facilities, and achievements, while school image strengthens students' confidence regarding educational quality and institutional reputation. The combination of effective promotional communication and a positive institutional image can create stronger perceptions and encourage students to select a particular educational institution (Handayani et al., 2024).

The coefficient of determination value indicates that promotion and school image explain 53.60% of the variation in students' decisions, while the remaining 46.40% is influenced by other factors outside this research model. These factors may include educational costs, location, facilities, family influence, and personal preferences. Previous research confirms that students' educational choices are influenced by multiple factors, including institutional characteristics, marketing strategies, and perceived educational value (Arifin et al., 2020).

The findings demonstrate that schools need to manage promotional strategies and institutional image simultaneously. Effective promotion without a strong institutional image may not sufficiently build long-term trust, while a positive image requires appropriate communication strategies to be recognized by prospective students. Therefore, integrating marketing communication with continuous improvement of educational quality becomes an important strategy for increasing institutional competitiveness (Napitupulu et al., 2024; Amelia et al., 2024).

This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that promotional strategies and institutional image simultaneously influence educational decision-making. The integration of promotion, branding, and institutional quality development represents an important approach for educational institutions in attracting prospective students and maintaining competitiveness (Handayani et al., 2024).

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that promotion (B = 0.387; t = 5.129; p < 0.001) and school image (B = 0.372; t = 4.269; p < 0.001) are positively and significantly associated with students' evaluations of their school choice at SMA Swasta Yapim Biru-Biru. Both variables jointly demonstrate a statistically significant association ($F(2, 72) = 43.727$; $p < 0.001$), with $R^2 = 0.548$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.536$. However, the cross-sectional research design does not establish temporal precedence or causal relationships. The findings suggest that school management should evaluate the clarity, accessibility, and consistency of promotional information while strengthening institutional credibility and educational service quality. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these strategies in increasing future student enrollment requires further empirical investigation.

This study is limited by its single-school setting, sample size of 75 respondents, potential recall bias, survivorship bias, and common-source measurement bias. Future research should employ longitudinal or prospective designs, involve multiple schools and prospective students, and incorporate additional variables such as educational costs, school location, parental influence, and digital marketing effectiveness. Further instrument validation is also recommended to improve construct differentiation and the generalizability of the findings.

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