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# The Influence of Learning Experience, Student Satisfaction and Loyalty on Word of Mouth and The Decision of Choosing a Private College

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| ARTICLE INFORMATION | ABSTRACT |
|---|---|
| **Section** <br> Research Articles <br><br> **Article History** <br> Article Submitted: <br> Accepted: <br> Available online: <br><br> **Keywords** <br> student course experience <br> student satisfaction <br> student loyalty <br> word of mouth <br> college decision | This research aims to test and analyze the influence of course experience, satisfaction and loyalty student on word of mouth and the college decision. The research approach used in this research is quantitative. This collection technique in this research was by distributing questionnaires online via google form to 135 respondents. The method used in this research is PLS-SEM using SmartPLS software. The results of this research are that student course experiences have a positive and significant effect on word of mouth, student satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on word of mouth, student loyalty does not have a positive and significant effect on word of mouth and word of mouth has a positive effect on college decisions. |

## INTRODUCTION

Social media is one of the strategic tools used to market a product. Social media itself is side by side with humans and cannot be separated from everyday life. On social media we get extensive information about what we need. Social media can be widely accessed by the public and is an influential source of information in improving relations between universities, recruiting students and managing public relations more broadly. According to Guilbault (2016), marketing for higher education is characterized by increased marketing efforts and expenditures to recruit prospective students who want to continue their education in higher education (Wong *et al.*, 2022). Competition is a key word that must be faced by every country in the world today and in the future. The coming globalization will increase competition. To win the competition, every country must have quality human resources.

Education plays a very central and strategic role, especially in efforts to improve the quality of human resources (HR). Because with quality human resources we can truly increase human dignity (Krisnandi, Efendi and Sugiono, 2019). A prospective student's decision when deciding to continue their education to college is something that plays a very important role in their success in the future (Harahap *et al.*, 2018). The decision to choose a college is influenced by various factors such as the student's personality, characteristics of the college or sources of information which can influence prospective students when making decisions.

The learning experience felt by students plays a role in deciding on a university (Le, Robinson and Dobele, 2020). Student satisfaction has become an important subject for universities due to increasing competition (Osman and Saputra, 2019). Student loyalty has a good influence on the development of higher education, this can help universities achieve long-term success for the higher education itself. The loyalty that arises within students will influence students' trust in higher education  (Lim, Jee and Run, 2020).

There are several previous studies that discuss students' decisions in choosing a university. However, some of this research is based on the influence of university marketing activities and promotions (Erinawati and Syafarudin, 2021; Ir, Prihartini and Abdullah, 2023). Based on research by (Rehman *et al.*, 2022) which examined student learning experiences, satisfaction and loyalty which have a positive influence on word of mouth in college decisions. This research study aims to analyze the relationship between the variables of learning experience, student satisfaction and loyalty to word of mouth in college decisions. The motivation for this research is to find out how influential students' learning experiences, satisfaction and loyalty are to word of mouth in making a decision to choose a private university.

## LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS

### Theory of Planned Behavior

This research uses Azjen's theory of intention and behavior, namely The Theory of Planned Behavior (hereinafter abbreviated as TPB). TPB has been successfully used to explain and predict behavior in various areas of behavior. TPB reveals that an intention to carry out a behavior is determined by three factors, namely attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms about the behavior and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (2020) assumes that most behavior of interest to social behavior researchers tends to be under strong volitional control and perceptual control.

### Student Course Experience

Experience is part of the interactions that consumers have with product and service providers. For consumers, products and services are not just about meeting their needs but must also provide an interesting experience to consumers (Godovykh and Tasci, 2020). The student experience in higher education is one of the important factors in determining the success of a university, therefore universities must strive to retain students and attract new students (Mateus, Rincón and Acosta, 2023).

### Student Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an important element in business that can influence the success of a business. Therefore, universities really pay attention to the satisfaction felt by their students (Rehman *et al.*, 2022). The satisfaction felt by students will make them recommend their

university to other people who have the desire to continue their education at university (Osman and Saputra, 2019).

## Student Loyalty

Student loyalty leads to a long-lasting relationship between universities as service providers and students as service recipients. Student loyalty depends on the relationship between students and universities that provide educational services. And also student loyalty is influenced by the experience and satisfaction felt by students towards higher education. In the field of education, student loyalty in service is based on strong relationships with universities. Successful higher education institutions are able to provide students with a competitive advantage, ensure student satisfaction and guarantee a positive image of higher education (Alves and Raposo, 2007; Gallegos and Vasquez, 2019)

## Word of Mouth

Word of Mouth Promotion is considered as one of the elements of marketing tools to build good relationships with customers and gain a competitive advantage over competitors. Personal interactions that occur between students and prospective new students provide easy access to share information related to the quality and services provided by the university. This exchange of information will influence the decision of prospective new students in choosing a university (Ambarwati and Sari, 2024). Student trust, satisfaction, loyalty, perceived quality and perceived value are also drivers of Word of Mouth (Sun, Foscht and Eisingerich, 2021).

## College Decisions

The change from student status to student is something that is very interesting for them. They will experience many changes and begin to adapt to their new life in the world of college. Students usually realize how important choosing their college is as one of the most important decisions in their lives. Because choosing a university is a decision that can predict their path in the future (Eldegwy, Elsharnouby and Kortam, 2023).

*$H_1$: Student Learning Experiences Have a Positive Influence on Word of Mouth.*

*$H_2$: Student Satisfaction Has a Positive Effect on Word of Mouth.*

*$H_3$: Student Loyalty Has a Positive Effect on Word of Mouth.*

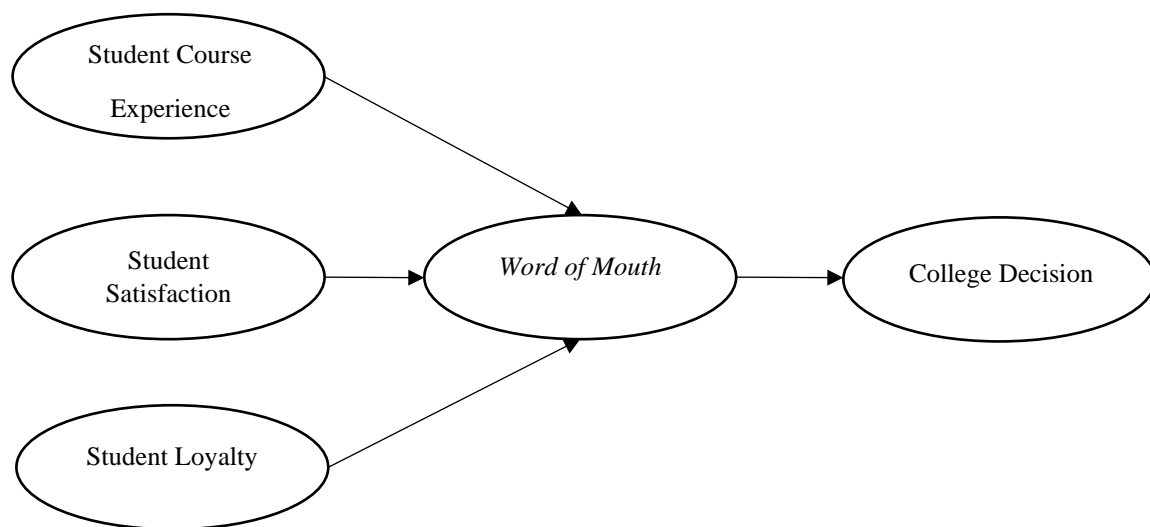*$H_4$: Word of Mouth Has a Positive Influence on College Decisions*

**Figure 1.** Framework

Source: (Rehman *et al.*, 2022; Ambarwati and Sari, 2024)


## RESEARCH METHODS

The data used in this research is primary data. Primary data was obtained from original sources or respondents in this study. The data collection technique in this research uses a quantitative approach by distributing online questionnaires via google form. The convenience sampling method is used as a sampling technique where the author can distribute selected questionnaires to people who meet the respondent criteria via social media such as Whatsapp, Line and E-mail. The purpose of using this method is to make it easier for the author to obtain research samples. The location of the research is in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. This is because the subjects in this research are new students from the class of 2023 at the Islamic University of Indonesia.

The variables that will be examined in this research include three independent variables, namely student learning experience, student satisfaction, student loyalty and word of mouth and one dependent variable, namely College Decision. This variable is measured using six likert scale values. This psychometric scale is usually used to collect respondents' responses at a certain level of agreement (Kandasamy *et al.*, 2020). This research will later be analyzed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM). To achieve the target, the minimum sample is calculated from the number of indicator questions asked plus the latent variable then multiplied by five. Meanwhile, to achieve the target, the maximum sample is calculated from the number of indicator questions asked plus the number of variables then multiplied by ten (Hair Jr. *et al.*, 2021). This research uses 18 question indicators and 5 latent variables. The number of respondents obtained ranged from $5a \leq x \leq 10a$ where a is the sum of the proposed indicators and the number of latent variables and x is the number of respondents. Based on the results of these calculations, this research must have a minimum target of 90 respondents and a maximum target of 180 respondents or new students from the class of 2023 at the Islamic University of Indonesia.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Variables

| Demographic Variables | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | |
| Male | 61 | 45,2 |
| Female | 74 | 54,8 |
| *Umur* | | |
| 15-20 Age | 132 | 97,8 |
| 21-25 Age | 3 | 2,2 |
| More 25 Tahun | 0 | 0 |
| *School* | 58 | 43% |
| Private | 77 | 57% |
| Country | | |
| *Pocket Money Month* | | |
| Rp500.000-<Rp1.000.000 | 3 | 2,2 |
| Rp1.000.000 -<Rp2.000.000 | 27 | 20 |
| Rp2.000.000-<Rp3.000.000 | 54 | 54,1 |
| Rp3.000.000-<Rp.4.000.000 | 32 | 23,7 |
| *Faculty* | | |
| Faculty of Business and Economic | 41 | 30,4 |
| Faculty of Law | 12 | 8,9 |
| Faculty of Islamic Religious Scienes | 1 | 0,7 |
| Faculty of Medical | 2 | 1,5 |
| Faculty Mathematics and Natural Sciene | 11 | 8,1 |
| Faculty of Psychology and Cultural Sciences | 35 | 25,9 |
| Faculty of Civil Engineering and Planning | 24 | 17,8 |
| Faculty of Technology and Industry | 9 | 6,7 |
| *The Person Who Most Influences The Decision* | | |
| Self | 102 | 75,6 |
| Parents | 24 | 17,8 |
| Relation | 9 | 6,7 |
| *Entrance Options* | | |
| First Choice | 42 | 31,1 |
| Second Choice After Failing to Tenter PTN | 93 | 68,9 |
| *Registration Scheme* | | |
| CBT (Computer-Based Test) | 29 | 21,5 |
| PBT (Paper-Based-Test) | 9 | 6,7 |
| PSB (Achievement Student Search) | 27 | 20 |
| SIBER (Report-Based Selection) | 70 | 51,9 |

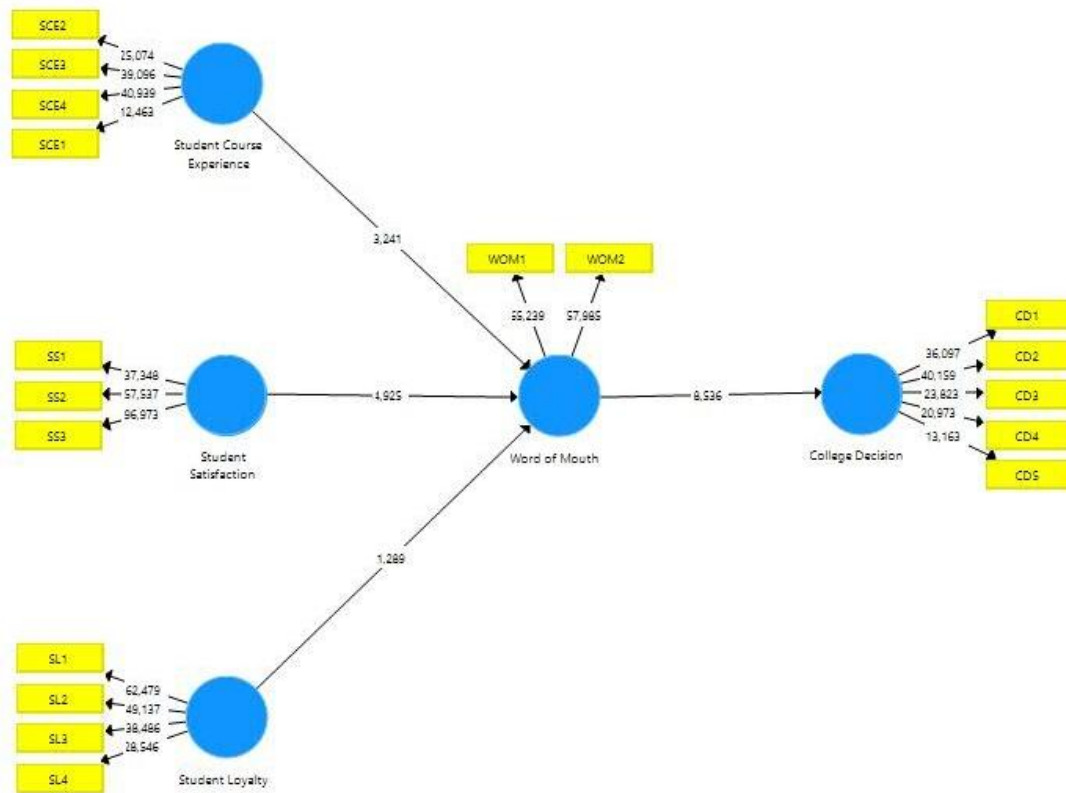Source: Primary Data Processed (2024)

## ANALYSIS RESULTS



**Figure 2.** Path Analysis Test Results

Source: Primary Data Processed (2024)

**Table 2.** Hypothesis Test Results

|     |      |     | Sample Mean | STDEV | T | P | Label |
|-----|------|-----|-------------|-------|---|---|-------|
| SCE | <--- | WOM | 0,245 | 0,076 | 3,241 | 0,001 | Accepted |
| SS  | <--- | WOM | 0,354 | 0,073 | 4,925 | 0,000 | Accepted |
| SL  | <--- | WOM | 0,111 | 0,080 | 1,289 | 0,198 | Rejected |
| WOM | <--- | CD  | 0,575 | 0,067 | 8,536 | 0,000 | Accepted |

Source: Primary Data Processed (2024)

Based on the hypothesis table, it shows that $H_1$, $H_2$, and $H_4$ are supported while $H_3$ is not supported. This is because it is in line with the principles of Hair *et al.* (2016),which says that the T-statistics value must be more than 1,96; and the P-value must be less than 0,05. Therefore, $H_1$, $H_2$, and $H_4$ are supported.

### Discussion

Student learning experiences play a role in word of mouth in college decisions. The results of this study are supported by research by Özmen and Ögel (2020) which states that student learning experiences have a positive influence on word of mouth. The results of previous research also have a positive influence between student satisfaction variables and word of

mouth variables (Pandey and Deshwal, 2018). Based on the results of the analysis, this happened because students felt a good learning experience during the learning process resulting in positive word of mouth. Student satisfaction plays a role in word of mouth in college decisions. The results of this study are supported by research Mesra B *et al.* (2021) which states that student satisfaction has a positive influence on word of mouth. The results of previous research also have a positive influence between student satisfaction variables and word of mouth variables (Katukurunda, Khatibi and Azam, 2018; Rehman *et al.*, 2022). Student loyalty does not play a role in word of mouth in college decisions. The results of this study contradict research Kaushal and Ali (2020) which states that student loyalty has a positive influence on word of mouth. The results of this study do not have a significant and positive influence because students who are loyal to higher education prefer to keep the positive experiences they feel rather than sharing them with others. Word of mouth plays a role in college decisions. The results of this study are supported by research Carvalho, Brandão and Pinto (2021) which states that word of mouth has a positive influence on college decisions. The results of previous research also have a positive influence between word of mouth variables on higher education decisions (Harahap *et al.*, 2018; Le, Robinson and Dobele, 2020). Based on the analysis, this occurs because students feel that the influence of word of mouth promotion is a trusted source for obtaining information about higher education, therefore word of mouth can have a good influence when considering university decisions.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that in this research there are three accepted hypotheses and one unacceptable hypothesis. The results of this research provide managerial implications for private university managers. The higher education community needs to improve facilities and infrastructure services to improve the learning experience, satisfaction and loyalty felt by students. Having a good learning experience, student satisfaction and loyalty will produce positive word of mouth which can have a good reputational impact on universities in accepting new students. It is important for university administrators to pay attention to student loyalty to the university.

Student loyalty will have a good impact on higher education. The author realizes that the results of this research have limitations. Limitations in this research lie in the research object. The objects of this research only come from one private university, namely students of the Islamic University of Indonesia class of 2023. So the objects of this research are only limited to students of the Islamic University of Indonesia class of 2023. Due to the limitations of the research discussed previously, the author has suggestions for improvements that can be made for further research. The author provides suggestions for involving many respondents from other private universities.

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