

Personal Branding of Lecturers and Word of Mouth: Effective Education Strategy in Increasing the Attractiveness of Entrepreneurship Study Program and Reputation of Pelita Bangsa University

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study is to evaluate the influence of lecturers' personal branding and community conversations on the attractiveness of the Entrepreneurship Study Program and the reputation of Pelita Bangsa University. **Method:** The sample surveyed was 150 students of the Pelita Bangsa University Entrepreneurship Study Program. With the help of the SmartPLS program, research data were collected from filling out questionnaires and analyzed quantitatively using the SEM PLS analysis technique. **Results:** This study shows that (1) Personal branding of lecturers has a significant effect on the attractiveness of study programs, (2) positive WOM increases the attractiveness of study programs, (3) Personal branding of lecturers does not have a significant direct effect on university reputation, (4) WOM has a significant effect on university reputation, (5) The attractiveness of study programs functions as a mediator that connects personal branding of lecturers and WOM with university reputation. **Novelty:** This study creates an integrative model that links lecturer personal branding, word of mouth (WOM), study program attractiveness, and university reputation. Unlike previous studies that addressed each of these factors separately, this study emphasizes that lecturer image and WOM do not directly improve university reputation. In addition, this study incorporates the concept of academic marketing into higher education, which was previously used more in business studies. This opens new eyes.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of global competition in the higher education sector, university reputation is a crucial factor in attracting new students, building industry partnerships, and enhancing academic competitiveness. However, many educational institutions face challenges in maintaining a positive image amidst increasing information transparency and the spread of public opinion through digital media. According to the latest data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2025), Indonesia has around 3,422 universities, with very diverse accreditation statuses. Although some have obtained superior and good accreditation, there are still hundreds of universities that have not been accredited or have experienced a decrease in status. This phenomenon indicates a serious challenge in maintaining the quality of higher education, including in terms of governance, accountability, and public trust (Kristian Bonanio Pardede, 2024; Widi, 2024). The decrease in accreditation has a broad impact on the quality of graduates, the interest of new students, and the reputation of the institution. However, there is still little research that explores the relationship between factors such as lecturer personal branding, word of mouth (WOM), and university reputation in this context. This gap is

an important gap that needs to be studied to understand how perceptions of lecturers and informal communication help shape public trust in higher education institutions.

Cikarang is one of the largest industrial centers in Indonesia, with thousands of national and multinational companies. This creates intense competition in the world of work, where university graduates must be able to compete with graduates from other, more reputable institutions. Thus, university reputation becomes an important factor in the competitiveness of graduates in the job market. In addition, the rapid development of the higher education sector in Cikarang, with the emergence of various new academic institutions, makes competition between universities even more intense, making it important to analyze how university reputation affects students' choices and their employment opportunities. Five colleges or universities located in Bekasi Regency include: President University, Pelita Bangsa University and MIC Cikarang College of Informatics and Computer Management, Stiami and BSI (Jababeka, 2024). And only Pelita Bangsa University has an Entrepreneurship Study Program (Putri, 2023). This university was established in 2019 and is an entrepreneurship university that applies the importance of entrepreneurship education in the era of digital transformation. The need for universities to be able to adapt to the era of digital transformation in order to prepare students to have entrepreneurial skills to face the world of work that utilizes digitalization technology. The Entrepreneurship Study Program itself was established in 2021 with a total of 250 students in 2024 (RedaksiUPB, 2024).

In today's era of increasingly fierce global competition, universities must continue to increase the attractiveness of their study programs and build a strong institutional reputation. One emerging strategy is the integration of lecturer personal branding and word of mouth (WOM) as a strategic communication tool to attract and retain prospective students (Nur Fitria, 2023). Lecturer personal branding refers to the process by which educators shape their professional image through their expertise, visibility, teaching style, and public engagement (Herlita et al., 2024). WOM, on the other hand, functions as an informal yet persuasive communication channel that significantly influences public perception of the quality of study programs and the credibility of institutions (Rahayu & Marka, 2024). Recent research supports this view by showing that lecturer personal branding contributes significantly to how prospective students assess the relevance, modernity, and prestige of a program (Achmad et al., 2025; Harisandi et al., 2024). For example, (Fakhrudin et al., 2024; Minh & Mai, 2024) found that faculty with a strong online and academic presence tend to increase students' self-confidence and belief in the institution's capabilities, leading to increased enrollment intentions. Similarly, (Chapleo, 2015; O'Sullivan et al., 2024) emphasized that faculty personal branding is a key determinant of university reputation in an era dominated by digital visibility and global competition.

In addition, WOM has become a powerful force in shaping university image, especially among Gen Z students who rely heavily on peer reviews, alumni testimonials, and online community plans before making enrollment decisions (Haroon et al., 2025). Thus, universities that leverage positive WOM and promote faculty branding effectively can position themselves as more attractive, modern, and credible in the eyes of prospective students.

The increasing adoption of digital platforms has provided faculty with unprecedented opportunities to manage and broadcast their personal brand images. This is in line with strategic branding theory, which states that individual-level branding within an institution can collectively shape the image of the organization (Subbarayalu,

2022). In this context, the role of lecturers goes beyond traditional academic duties, evolving into branding assets that contribute to broader institutional visibility and trust.

While this approach is promising, challenges remain. Not all lecturers have the digital literacy or branding acumen to engage in effective personal branding (Kaushal & Ali, 2020; Manzoor et al., 2020). Furthermore, while theoretical models suggest positive effects, empirical studies in the Indonesian context, especially in newer study programs such as entrepreneurship study programs, are still relatively few. In addition, further research is needed to measure the effect of word of mouth on increasing student numbers and university reputation. Therefore, further research is needed to find out how effective this strategy is in universities, especially the Entrepreneurship Study Program at Pelita Bangsa University.

This study innovatively bridges the fields of educational marketing, personal branding, and digital-era communications, offering empirical insights into how faculty branding and WOM strategies can be institutionalized to enhance the reputation and marketability of a particular study program – in this case, entrepreneurship education in a digitally transformed industrial ecosystem.

The purpose of this study is to empirically evaluate how lecturers' personal branding and public conversations influence the attractiveness of the Entrepreneurship Study Program and the overall reputation of Universitas Pelita Bangsa. More specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- Evaluate how much lecturers' personal branding influences students' interest in the Entrepreneurship Study Program at Universitas Pelita Bangsa.
- Examine how public perception of the study program and the influence of word of mouth (WOM).
- Assess the combined effects of lecturers' personal branding and WOM on enrollment decisions and institutional reputation.
- Find the most influential elements of school branding in attracting students
- Examine how alumni and current students engage in WOM communication and how effective it is in promoting the program.
- Make actionable recommendations to improve academic marketing strategies by integrating personal branding and WOM in higher education..

RESEARCH METHOD

Population and Sample

The quantitative approach in the survey method used in this study allows researchers to collect large amounts of data and systematically analyze the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2014). This study involved all undergraduate students of the Entrepreneurship Study Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Pelita Bangsa University. Students who have taken at least one Entrepreneurship course in this study have direct experience with the educational process and how lecturers influence entrepreneurship.

Purposive sampling technique a sampling method based on research objectives – was used to select a sample of 150 active students (Sugiyono, 2019). This sample selection was based on the belief that Entrepreneurship course students are better able to provide credible assessments of the influence of lecturers' personal branding and oral information on their perceptions of the study program.

(Roscoe, 1975) guidelines, which state that a good sample size for quantitative research ranges from 30 to 500 respondents, depending on the complexity of the model

and the number of variables studied, refer to the choice of 150 respondents. This number is considered comparable to the number of entrepreneurship students at Universitas Pelita Bangsa, which is 250 students in 2024 (UPB Editorial Team, 2024). This sample has a high level of representativeness so that it can be generalized internally for this study program, because it covers 60% of the population.

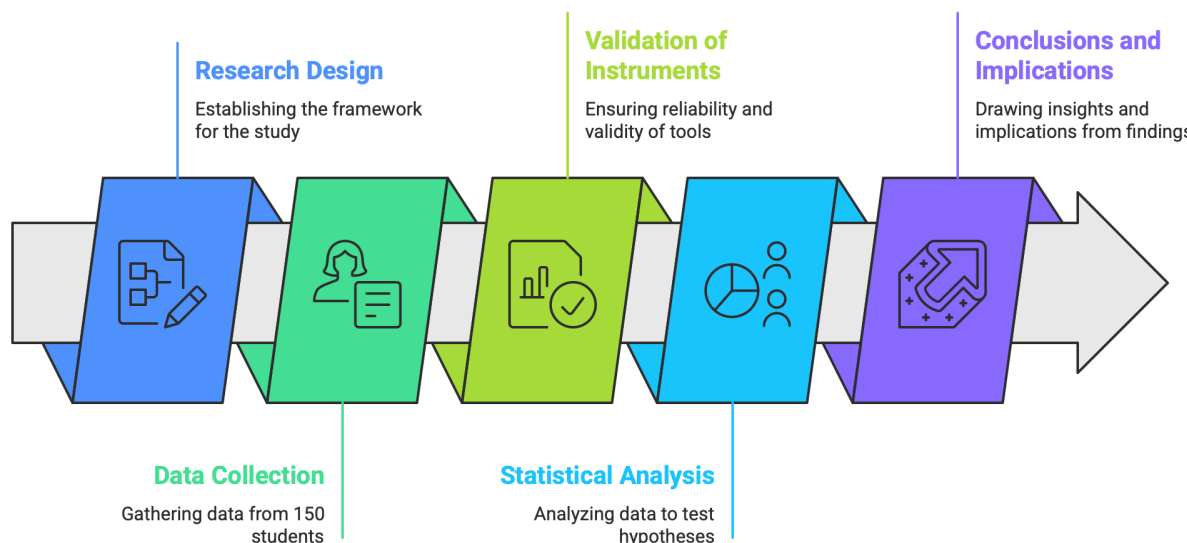


Figure 1. Research methodology.

In this study, a quantitative approach was used to analyze data collected from a sample of 150 students, as shown in Figure 1. The stages in this methodology include research design, data collection, instrument validation, and statistical analysis, which ends with conclusions and consequences of the findings. The indicators of each variable in this study will be shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Indicators

CODE	INDICATOR
PBL1	Lecturer Expertise
PBL2	Lecturer Reputation
PBL3	Lecturer Publications
PBL4	Responsiveness of Lecturers
PBL5	Quality of Material
PBL6	Lecturer as Speaker
WOM1	Positive Recommendation
WOM2	Student Recommendations
WOM3	Experience Sharing
WOM4	Information trust
WOM5	Influence of Friends/Family
SPA1	Interesting Curriculum
SPA2	Relevant Courses
SPA3	Adequate Facilities
SPA4	Job Prospects
SPA5	Unique Advantages
SPA6	Differentiating Factor

CODE	INDICATOR
RU1	Academic Quality
RU2	High Accreditation
RU3	University Reputation
RU4	Industry Cooperation

Data Analysis Techniques

The SEM PLS analysis method with the help of SmartPLS version 3 was used to analyze the data of this study. This was chosen because the research model to be estimated is quite complex, as it involves moderation and mediation variables. In addition, SEM PLS does not require a minimum or maximum sample size, which is advantageous in cases where the sample collected is quite small. But PLS SEM works well on large samples (Rutter et al., 2016). In addition to these reasons, researchers also want to avoid analysis bias caused by data abnormalities. One method of analyzing data abnormalities is SmartPLS and SEM PLS.

Descriptive Statistics

This study involved 150 respondents, all of whom were undergraduate students at the Faculty of Economics and Business in the Pelita Bangsa University Entrepreneurship Study Program. Based on the data collected in this study, the following is a description of the characteristics of respondents according to gender, age and semester. The majority of respondents are women (60%), while men are only 40%. The largest age group is 19-20 years old (35%), followed by 21-22 years old (33%), then 17-18 years old (27%), and finally 23 years old and above (6%). The distribution of students by semester shows that 1st semester is 10%, 2nd semester (17%), 3rd semester (13%), 4th semester (21%), 5th semester (13%), 6th semester (13%), 7th semester (7%) and 8th semester (6%). 60% of the respondents were female, and most of them were within the age range of 19-22 years old, which is the typical age of mid-level students. 4th semester students were the largest group (21%), followed by 2nd semester students (17%). The higher the semester, the fewer respondents participated, as seen in semesters 7 and 8. Although the majority of respondents were second and third year college students, they came from various demographic groups.

SEM PLS Analysis

PLS SEM Analysis: SmartPLS software will be used to conduct path analysis to see the influence between variables in the research model. The path analysis stage of this software consists of the fit testing stage. In the out-of-model testing stage, construct validity and reliability are examined, and in the in-model testing stage, the research hypotheses are tested.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Convergent Validity

The outer load value or loading factor is calculated to determine convergent validity. Indicators of research instruments are considered valid if the outer load value is more than 0.7 (Hustima Sahara & Armelia Windasari, 2022). Convergent validity is very important during the research process as it ensures that the indicators used to measure the

constructs are highly correlated and effectively represent the intended variables. Since each indicator of the research variable has an outer load value of more than 0.7, Table 2 shows that all indicators have good validity and can be evaluated further. Table 2 shows that the PBL2 indicator is the dominant factor in forming the variable *Personal Branding of Lecturer* with a contribution of 79.75%. Meanwhile, the WOM3 indicator has the highest influence in forming the variable *Word of Mouth* amounted to 76.04%. The SPA4 indicator is the main factor in forming the variable *Study Program Attraction* with a contribution of 73.61%. As for the variables *Reputation of University* is most influenced by the RU2 indicator, which has a contribution value of 74.65%.

Table 2. Outer Loading Values of research indicators

Variable	Indikator	Outer Loading	Validity
Personal Branding of Lecture (X1)	PBL1	0.777	Valid
	PBL2	0.893	Valid
	PBL3	0.802	Valid
	PBL4	0.814	Valid
	PBL5	0.784	Valid
	PBL6	0.800	Valid
Word of Mouth (X2)	WOM1	0.820	Valid
	WOM2	0.870	Valid
	WOM3	0.872	Valid
	WOM4	0.803	Valid
	WOM5	0.846	Valid
Study Program Attraction (Z)	SPA1	0.849	Valid
	SPA2	0.846	Valid
	SPA3	0.782	Valid
	SPA4	0.858	Valid
	SPA5	0.732	Valid
	SPA6	0.752	Valid
Reputation University (Y)	RU1	0.844	Valid
	RU2	0.864	Valid
	RU3	0.798	Valid
	RU4	0.861	Valid
	RU5	0.712	Valid

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity analysis is used to ensure that the model constructs or latent variables are not identical. This study looks at the AVE value, HTMT ratio, and Fornell-Larcker criteria. An AVE value above 0.5 indicates a good model (Hustima Sahara & Armelia Windasari, 2022). All PED, SQ, and CS variables have AVEs above 0.5, as shown in Table 2. This indicates that each variable has high discriminant validity and is a good model.

Table 3. Average variant extracted (AVE) for the research variable

Variable	AVE	Validity
Personal Branding of Lecture (X1)	0.648	Valid
Word of Mouth (X2)	0.660	Valid
Study Program Attraction (Z)	0.669	Valid
Reputation University (Y)	0.710	Valid

There is no significant multicollinearity between latent variables in this model. The results of the analysis using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion method show that the model

meets the discriminant validity requirements because the square root of the AVE of each construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs (Huit et al., 2018). In table 3 All constructs meet discriminant validity, because the square root value of AVE is greater than the correlation between constructs. The highest correlation is between Study Program Attraction (Z) and University Reputation (Y) (0.711), which indicates a close relationship but still within acceptable limits.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion result

Variable	Personal Branding of Lecture	Reputation University	Study Program Attraction	Word of mouth
Personal Branding of Lecture (X1)	0.813			
Word of Mouth (X2)	0.624	0.818		
Study Program Attraction (Z)	0.616	0.704	0.845	
Reputation University (Y)	0.592	0.671	0.711	0.843

The HTMT value in this PLS test is below the recommended limit (0.85 or 0.90), which indicates discriminant validity (Huit et al., 2018). This indicates that in the model there is no multicollinearity problem between the latent variables, so each construct is clearly distinct from each other. Discriminant validity is confirmed, as all HTMT values are below the 0.90 limit. The research model does not experience discrimination problems between constructs, so it can be used for further analysis.

Table 5. HTMT result

Variable	Personal Branding of Lecture	Reputation University	Study Program Attraction	Word of mouth
Personal Branding of Lecture (X1)				
Word of Mouth (X2)	0.682	0.754	0.794	
Study Program Attraction (Z)	0.680	0.690		
Reputation University (Y)	0.656			

Composite Reliability & Cronbach's Alpha

To evaluate the reliability of the research instrument, both composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were employed. Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a research instrument in measuring a construct across different conditions and time, without being influenced by random errors or bias. A composite reliability value of at least 0.7 for each variable indicates that the instrument meets the required reliability standards and demonstrates a high level of internal consistency. Similarly, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each variable was also required to exceed 0.7, confirming that the instrument is reliable and that the items within each variable are homogenous in measuring the intended construct. Based on the results, all variables in the study fulfilled both composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha thresholds, indicating that the instruments used are highly reliable.

Table 6. Composite Reliability & Cronbach's Alpha for the research variable result

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Validity
Personal Branding of Lecture (X1)	0.921	0.897	Reliable
Word of Mouth (X2)	0.660	0.874	Reliable
Study Program Attraction (Z)	0.917	0.890	Reliable
Reputation University (Y)	0.924	0.898	Reliable

Inner Model Evaluation

The results of testing the internal model, also known as the structural model, are used to examine each hypothesis test. The model consists of R² output, coefficient parameters, t-statistics, and p-values. After Informed Consent Statement: All research subjects have consented to the information. Data Availability Statement: Figure 1 shows the initial contributions of the research obtained. It includes the output R² values, coefficient parameters, t-statistics, and p-values. The general statistical guideline for this study is $t > 1.96$, and the corresponding author may ask additional questions. beta coefficient is positive, with a p-value of 0.05 (5%).

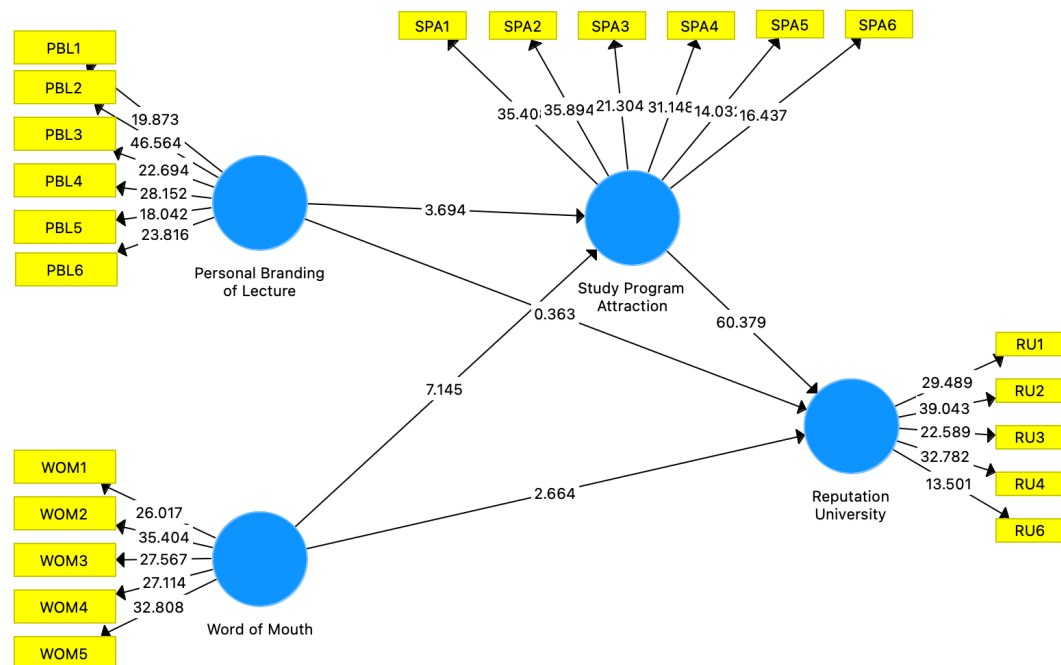


Figure 2. Bootstrapping results with t-statistics

The bootstrapping results on figure 2 of the model show the relationship between the variables Personal Branding of Lecturer, Word of Mouth, Attraction of Study Program, and University Reputation. The path from Personal Branding of Lecturer to Study Program Attraction has a coefficient of 3.694, indicating a significant influence. Likewise, Word of Mouth has a significant influence on Study Program Attraction with a coefficient of 7.145, and University Reputation with a coefficient of 2.664, which is also significant. Study Program Attraction itself has a significant influence on University Reputation with the highest coefficient of 60.379, indicating a significant influence. However, the direct influence of a lecturer on university reputation is relatively small (coefficient 0.363), indicating that its direct influence on university reputation is more mediated by the attraction of the study program. Overall, these findings indicate that methods through strengthening word of mouth and increasing the attraction of the study program are very important for building university reputation.

Path Coefficient Test

Some of the main indicators that can be used to explain the evaluation of the Inner Model in Partial Least Squares (PLS) can be seen in the figure. These include the path coefficient (path coefficient) and t-statistic, both of which are commonly used in bootstrapping to evaluate the significance of the relationship between latent variables.

According to the visual results in figure 2, the relationship between lecturer personal branding to study program attractiveness, (Path Coefficient: 3.694), shows that lecturer personal branding has a positive effect on study program attractiveness. The relationship between study program attractiveness to university reputation, (Path Coefficient: 60.379) is the strongest relationship in the model, indicating that study program attractiveness has a significant impact on university reputation. According to the relationship between Word of Mouth and Path of Study Attraction Coefficient: 7.145, word of mouth has a significant role in increasing the attractiveness of study programs.

According to the relationship between word of mouth and university reputation (Path Coefficient: 2.664), word of mouth also has a direct impact on university reputation, but this impact is smaller than other relationships. The relationship between Personal Branding of Lecturer and university reputation (Path Coefficient: 0.363) still has a relationship with university reputation. For bootstrapping evaluation, we usually look at the t-value to know whether the path is significant or not. If the t value is more than 1.96, the relationship is significant at the 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$), and if the t value is more than 2.58, the relationship is significant at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$).

Goodness of Fit

The R square value indicates how well the independent variables in the model are able to explain the dependent variable. The R² value increases with the ability of the model to predict the dependent variable. which should be more than 0.75 in a structural model, indicates the variation that can be explained by the endogenous (dependent) structure of the model. It indicates how well the exogenous or independent variables affect the dependent variable (Sarstedt, 2019). Table 8 shows the result ($R^2 = 0.976$), which indicates that 97.6% of the variability in university reputation can be explained by the independent variables of the model; this suggests that the independent variables have significant predictive power over university reputation. Other factors not included in the model affect the final 2.6% of variability. Furthermore, program study ($R^2 = 0.555$) shows that the value of 0.555 indicates that the independent variables in the model can explain 55.5% of the variability in program study, suggesting that the model has sufficient predictive power to anticipate. However, 44.5% of the variability is still influenced by other factors.

Table 7. R² Value of research variables

Variable	R ² Value
Study Program Attraction (Z)	0.555
Reputation University (Y)	0.976

F² or effect size is used to assess the relative influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable in the PLS-SEM model. Based on Cohen (1988), the F² effect size is interpreted as follows: 0.02 = Small effect, 0.15 = Medium effect, 0.35 = Large effect (Huit et al., 2018). In Table 8, the results of F square above 0.35 so that all independent variables have a large effect on the dependent variable, Personal Branding of Lecture has a large effect (0.340) on Study Program Attraction, indicating that word of mouth contributes significantly to attracting students to study programs, then Word of Mouth has a large effect (0.393) on Study Program Attraction, indicating that word of mouth contributes significantly to attracting students to study programs. Finally Study program attraction has a large effect (0.438) on University reputation, indicating that study program attraction contributes significantly to improving university reputation.

Table 8. F^2 values of research variables

Variable	Personal Branding of Lecture	Reputation University	Study Program Attraction	Word of mouth
Personal Branding of Lecture (X1)			0.340	
Word of Mouth (X2)			0.393	
Study Program Attraction (Z)		0.438		
Reputation University (Y)				

Model Fit Indeks

Table 9 shows the model fit evaluation results for the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation analysis. The results show that SRMR = 0.072, which indicates the difference between the observed and predicted covariance matrices. An SRMR value of less than 0.08 is considered a good model (Page et al., 2018). The value of 0.072 indicates that the model is acceptable and suitable. The least squares-based model fit test used $d_ULS = 2.124$. A lower value indicates a better model fit; the value of 2.124, which is relatively small, indicates a good fit. NFI (Normed Fit Index) = 0.601, which indicates that the tested model is better than the base model (null model). The NFI value can range from 0 to 1, and a value higher than 0.90 is considered a good model fit. In this case, the NFI of 0.601 indicates that the model fit has improved, but it still does not reach the optimal limit of 0.90. With SRMR below 0.08, the model has a good fit category, d_ULS indicates that the model fits the data reasonably well, and PLS-SEM does not have a high Chi-Square problem. The NFI is 0.601, which indicates a fairly good fit category.

Table 9. Model Fit index result

Parameter	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.072
d_ULS	2.124
d_G	10.807
Chi_Square	3318.720
NFI	0.601

Direct and Indirect Effects

Table 10 shows the results of the direct relationship, which indicates how much influence the independent variable has on the dependent variable without using intermediate variables. With a value of $T = 3.841$ (> 1.96) and $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05), problem-based learning (PBL) has a positive and significant impact on SPA. The PBL-SPA relationship is 0.282, $p = 0.000$. This indicates that the application of PBL is related to the value of SPA. WOM leads to SPA (0.536, $p = 0.000$). In addition, word of mouth (WOM) has a positive and significant effect on SPA ($T = 7.036$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that SPA will increase significantly with better WOM. PBL leads to RU (-0.006, $p = 0.719$). With a T value of 0.360 and $p = 0.719$, the relationship between PBL and RU is not significant. In other words, PBL does not affect RU directly. WOM on RU (-0.060, $p = 0.005$): WOM has a negative and significant influence on RU. This suggests that greater WOM may slightly reduce RU. Between SPA and RU (1.034, $p = 0.000$). The effect of SPA on RU is very large ($T = 63.755$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that SPA is critical to the advancement of RU.

Table 11 shows the indirect relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable through an intermediary, known as SPA. PBL yields SPA to RU (0.291, $p = 0.000$). PBL has a positive and significant indirect effect on RU through SPA ($T = 3.843$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that although PBL does not have a direct impact on RU,

it can positively impact RU by increasing SPA. Furthermore, WOM leads to SPA and then to RU (0.552, $p = 0.000$). In addition, WOM has a significant and positive indirect effect on RU through SPA ($T = 6.997$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that better WOM will increase SPA, which in turn will increase RU. This model suggests that to increase RU, it is more important to increase SPA through PBL and WOM, rather than relying on a direct link from PBL or WOM to RU.

Table 10. Dirrect effect and moderation effect.

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standart Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistic (O/STDEV)	P Value	Conclution
PBL => SPA	0.282	0.280	0.073	3.841	0.000	Accepted
WOM => SPA	0.536	0.539	0.076	7.036	0.000	Accepted
PBL=>RU	- 0.006	-0.007	0.017	0.360	0.719	NOT Accepted
WOM => RU	-0.060	-0.059	0.021	2.828	0.005	Accepted
SPA=>RU	1.034	1.034	0.016	63.755	0.000	Accepted

Table 11. Indirrect Effect.

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standart Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistic (O/STDEV)	P Value	Conclution
PBL => SPA => RU	0.291	0.290	0.076	3.843	0.000	Accepted
WOM => SPA => RU	0.552	0.557	0.079	6.997	0.000	Accepted

Discussion

Based on the results of this study, the highest implementation factor that forms personal branding of lecture is lecturer reputation at 79.75%. Meanwhile, the factor of sharing student experience is the highest factor that forms the word of mouth variable at 76.04%. In the study program attraction variable, the highest factor that forms is the employment prospects of graduates by 73.61%. The highest factor that forms university reputation is the high accreditation of universities at 74.65%. These findings indicate that aspects of reputation, student experience, employment prospects, and institutional accreditation have a significant role in shaping the perception and attractiveness of study programs and higher education institutions as a whole. Therefore, efforts to improve academic quality, strengthen relationships between students and alumni, and manage institutional reputation need to be a major concern in higher education development strategies.

The Influence of Personal branding lecture on Study Program Attraction

Personal branding of lecturers has a significant effect on the attractiveness of study programs. This indicates that the better the image of the lecturer, the more attractive the study program is to potential students. According to (Doyle et al., 2020; Na et al., 2019). Lecturers' personal branding plays an important role in building academic appeal and increasing student engagement.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Study Program Attraction

Positive WOM increases the attractiveness of a study program. Students who receive positive information from alumni or other students are more likely to choose the study program. (H. Al-Dmour et al., 2021) found that electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has a significant influence on prospective students' interest in choosing an academic

destination, similar to travel preferences. Trust and other people's experiences are the main drivers. (Li et al., 2018; Pauwels et al., 2016) shows that word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing is more effective than conventional advertising in building brand image and attracting audience interest. This proves that WOM plays an important role in shaping perceptions of a study program.

The Influence of Personal Branding Lecture on Reputation University

This study found that lecturers' personal branding has no direct impact on university reputation. This shows that, although lecturers' image is important, it is not strong enough to directly shape positive perceptions of university reputation without being supported by other factors, such as academic performance, good educational services, and scientific publications. According to (Keller & Brexendorf, 2019) individual personal branding can only improve organizational reputation if combined with high-quality services and significant academic achievements. In addition, the absence of this direct influence can also be explained by the tendency of the public and prospective students to judge university reputation based on larger factors, such as university accreditation, national and international rankings, campus facilities, and international cooperation networks. As a result, although lecturers' personal branding contributes to attracting students' interest in study programs, its impact on university reputation is more indirect and indirect.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Reputation University

WOM has a significant effect on university reputation. If the information spread is positive, the university's reputation increases, but if it is negative, the reputation can decrease. Study by (Siqueira et al., 2019) shows that WOM has a greater impact than traditional marketing strategies in building the reputation of academic institutions.

The Influence of Study Program Attraction on Reputation University

The results of the retest show that the lecturer's personal branding has a significant influence on the attractiveness of the study program. (Eldegwy et al., 2018; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2019; Rutter et al., 2016) in his research found that the attractiveness of the study program functions as a key factor in improving the reputation of the university.

The Indirect Influence of Personal branding lecture on Reputation University mediated Study Program Attraction

WOM indirectly affects the reputation of the university through the attractiveness of the study program. That is, if the study program is attractive, students are more satisfied and ultimately improve the image of the university. (Gorbatov S et al., 2018; Philbrick & Cleveland, 2015) found that personal branding can improve perceptions of the institution or organization where the individual is located. (R. Al-Dmour et al., 2024; Dandis et al., 2022) in an academic context, lecturers with strong personal branding have the potential to increase the attractiveness of study programs, which in turn can strengthen the reputation of the university. (Khedher, 2019; Steven P. Vallas & Emily R. Cummins, 2015) emphasizes that personal branding functions as an individual marketing strategy that can increase the credibility and competitiveness of educational institutions.

The Inderect Influence of Word of mouth on Reputation University mediated Study Program Attraction

Although the lecturer's personal branding does not have a direct impact on the university's reputation, through the attractiveness of the study program, its influence becomes significant. This emphasizes the importance of the role of the study program as a mediator. (Kundu & Rajan, 2016; Pongjit & Beise-Zee, 2015) states that high levels of satisfaction increase word of mouth activity, which ultimately contributes to the reputation of an organization or institution. (Harahap et al., 2018; Mahmoud & Grigoriou, 2017) in an academic context, positive experiences from students while studying will encourage them to recommend the study program to others, which has an impact on increasing the reputation of the university. (Li et al., 2018; Pauwels et al., 2016) found that word of mouth has a greater long-term impact than traditional marketing strategies in improving an institution's image.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings: The results of this study reveal several main findings: (1) Lecturers' personal branding has a significant influence on the attractiveness of study programs, (2) Positive WOM increases the attractiveness of study programs, (3) Lecturers' personal branding does not have a significant direct influence on university reputation, (4) WOM has a significant influence on university reputation, (5) The attractiveness of study programs functions as a mediator that connects lecturers' personal branding and WOM with university reputation. **Implications:** Universities should increase the attractiveness of study programs by encouraging lecturers to build strong personal branding through scientific publications, industry involvement, and other academic activities, as well as managing word of mouth (WOM) effectively through digital communication strategies and student/alumni testimonials. Lecturers need to understand that personal branding is not only related to individual image, but also real contributions to academic quality and student experience, which can be strengthened through research, innovative teaching, and industry collaboration. University management should focus on marketing strategies that strengthen positive WOM by involving alumni and students in sharing academic experiences and developing study programs to be more attractive, relevant to industry needs, and have competitive advantages in order to increase university competitiveness. **Further Research:** This research opens up opportunities for further exploration, such as analyzing additional factors that influence university reputation, including the quality of academic services, campus facilities, and industry partnerships, and conducting cross-cultural studies to test whether the results of this study are universally applicable. In addition, research is needed on the influence of digital marketing and social media on WOM in attracting students, given the increasing role of digital platforms in shaping the image of study programs and universities. Quantitative and qualitative approaches, such as surveys and in-depth interviews, are also needed to explore students' experiences in more detail to understand how they assess the attractiveness of study programs and university reputation.

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