The Application of Word of Mouth in Building Community Trust and University Brand Image on Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate

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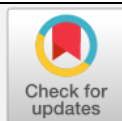[2] Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Khairun, 97719, Ternate, North Maluku Province, Indonesia
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the application of word of mouth to build community trust and university brand image on the community selection decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate. The samples were obtained from eight regencies in North Maluku Province through a survey method aided with Smart PLS 3.8 analysis. In addition to the insignificant effect of university image on community selection decision, the findings indicated that (1) university image has a significant effect on word of mouth, (2) community trust has a significant effect on word of mouth, (3) community trust has a significant effect on selection decision, and (4) word of mouth has a significant effect on community selection decision.

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1. Introduction

Open University is an Indonesian public university that conducts an open and long-distance higher education with unlimited students from different ages and educational backgrounds. It is located in various regencies/municipalities with study groups based on the areas of interest. The university is open to the public access to attend universities flexibly and affordably without compromising the demands of superior quality and competitive advantages. UPBJJ-UT Ternate is one of Indonesia's open universities providing distance learning systems with various advantages and disadvantages, enabling the government to give Indonesian citizens broad opportunities to take a tertiary education class. It aims to accommodate high school graduates who wish to attend higher education (Wahyono, n.d.).

At present, there is public opinion that the university's distance and open lecture system forms the independence and creativity of students as they are required to study the modules and ready to take unpredicted final exams. Besides, the public perceives that studying at the university is effortless yet hard to graduate and get good grades; it has no student organization. These decrease the community trust. Furthermore, the open distance classes are identical to universities with difficulty finding students and are compelled to open distance classes. Even several international-scale universities have proven to be fake.

The public postulates that distance education is just to cover the real program, selling and buying diplomas. This requires the universities' excellent facilities, widely varying faculties, courses, and accredited and competent lecturers. UPBJJ-UT Ternate exists to provide solutions with an open concept or distance education system by targeting people who want to continue their tertiary education in North Maluku Province.

Face-to-face and online tutorials are teaching and learning processes provided by qualified tutors according to their competencies to produce quality graduates for the workforce. As the quality of the learning process and services align with student expectations, they will tell others, families, or high school/vocational high school students as prospective students. The communication delivered is a form of word-of-mouth marketing strategy, with the graduate's recommendations increasing community trust. Word of mouth is believed to drive tertiary institution preference or selection decisions. It is a heartwarming and inexpensive promotional strategy to create a positive university brand image of educational services.

Community trust can be built through attractive website designs providing information about the university's ranking, student activities, lecturers' publications, and scientific works. Increasing website visitors show increasing community trust as they could easily access the information as the website is one of the barometers used to measure the quality of higher education.

The university's graduates working with strategic positions is important for new senior high graduates looking for jobs. Alessandri et al. (2006) stated that universities become more competitive to get the best students, providing the best opportunities. This is in line with Finch et al. (2013) asserting that inviting the best high school graduates creates a competitive advantage for universities.

This study examines the application of the word of mouth concept in UPBJJ-UT Ternate, affecting the community's preference. The preference starts from the WoM communication of the university graduates' recommendations to the community or third-grade high school students. The more positive word of mouth, the more tendency for the community to choose UPBJJ-UT Ternate. **Table 1** shows the research gap that community trust does not significantly influence word of mouth (Sichtmann, 2007), brand image has no significant effect on word of mouth (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Brand image and consumer trust do not significantly affect purchasing decisions (Suhaily & Darmoyo, 2017).

Table 1. Research Gap

No	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Results	Author(s)
1.	Trust	WoM	Not Significant	Sichtmann (2007)
2.	WoM	Purchase Decision	Significant	Zamil (2011)
3.	Brand image	WoM	Not Significant	Ismail & Spinelli (2012)
4.	University Image	WOM Intention	Significant	Jiewanto et al. (2012)
5.	Brand Image Brand Trust	Purchase Decision	Significant	Fianto et al. (2014)
6.	Overall Brand Image	WoM	Significant	Papadimitriou et al. (2015)
7.	Brand Image	Purchase Decision	Not Significant	Oladepo & Abimbola (2015)
8.	Brand Image	Consumer Purchasing Decision	Significant	Wang & Hariandja (2016)
9.	WoM	Purchase Decision	Significant	Basri et al. (2016)
10.	Trust	WoM	Significant	Harris & Khatami (2017)
11.	Brand image	Purchase Decision	Not significant	Aspan et al. (2017)
12.	Brand image	WoM	Significant	Yildiz & Demirel (2017)
13.	Brand Image Consumer Trust	Purchase Decision	Not significant Significant	Suhaily & Darmoyo (2017)
14	Trust	WOM	Significant	Jalilvand et al. (2017a)
15	Brand Image	Purchase Decision	Significant	Ambolau et al. (2018)
16	Brand Image Brand Trust	Purchase Decision	Significant	Amron (2018)
17	Brand Image WoM	Consumer Decision	Not Significant Significant	Ruhamak & Sya'idah (2018)
18	Brand Image	WoM	Significant	Yaman (2018)

Table 1 shows contradictory results of the phenomena. It is necessary to find a solution to change people's views through effective marketing communication by the graduates over regencies/municipalities in North Maluku to disseminate the information about the university. The difficulty lies not with promotion by brochures but in maintaining and enhancing the university's positive image and the excellence of distance education systems in producing quality students with highly competent lecturers.

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The university image and community trust determine student assessment of the overall way they receive. The more positive the image and trust, the more it encourages positive word-of-mouth communication. This suggests relational marketing as an embodiment of the interaction among consumers (Payne et al., 1995). Relational marketing in academics focuses on finding students and maintaining sustainable relationships by building trust in graduate output easily accepting positions in various fields.

In addition to community trust, the university image of educational services will form either positive or negative experiences. The more positive the services provided in the administration process, tutorials, and adequate facilities, the more positive the university image. This will encourage students'/graduates' recommendations (WoM) to their friends, family, and even others.

The previous research studies show contradictory results of the relationship between image and community trust on community selection decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate with word of mouth as a mediating variable. There is no significant effect on word of mouth, meaning that the lower the perceived image, the more it encourages negative word of mouth. In addition, the lower level of community trust does not encourage students'/alumni's recommendations.

Word of mouth communication is a form of comments and recommendations disseminated by students/alumni based on their experience. It strongly influences the community's decision to choose UPBJJ-UT Ternate as a place to obtain higher education. It could be applied as a highly affordable marketing strategy. Based on the theoretical and empirical background above, this study formulates the research questions:
1) Does the university image affect word of mouth?
2) Does community trust affect word of mouth?
3) Does community trust affect the community selection decision?
4) Does university image affect the community selection decision?
5) Does word of mouth affect the community selection decision?

2. Literature Review
2.1. Word of Mouth
The process of communication between people requires the word of mouth communication when each person daily interacts in the form of brainstorming, exchanging information, commenting, and other communication processes. This implies that information from parents, friends, or people who already feel the educational services of a university is more trustworthy than that in brochures or other advertising media. Also, it will reduce risky decisions to use higher education services. Assael (1992) stated that WoM is twice as effective in influencing purchases compared to advertising on radio, four times compared to personal sales, and seven times compared to advertisements in magazines or newspapers. Suvanmanee et al. (2020) underlined that WoM leads to higher sales and profit.

Brown & Dacin (1997) defined word of mouth as information about a target object from one individual to another either directly or indirectly through communication media. WOMMA (2005) described word of mouth as an act of consumers to convey information to or for other consumers positively and negatively based on functionally, emotionally, and expressively perceived benefits. Consumers talk about the brand of a product due to the quality and experience, encouraging them to share the experiences, recommend and reject the brand's negative image and influence the attitudes of other consumer's brands.

Hasan (2008) suggested word of mouth as a form of praise, recommendations, and comments made by customers based on the experience of the services and products influencing purchasing decisions. It becomes a reference that shapes customer expectations for the product or service. It is a marketing communication mix strategy that influences consumer decisions in using products or services. According to Kotler & Keller (2009), word of mouth refers to oral, written, and electronic communication among people related to excellence or perceived experience in buying or using a product or service. Sumardy et al. (2011) described word of mouth marketing as marketing activities allowing consumers to discuss, promote, and sell the brands to others. Furthermore, Keller (2013) asserted that word of mouth is an important aspect of brand development based on consumers' perceptions of likes or dislikes and experience when using a brand. Word of mouth trusted sources with credibility and relevance of product information are friends and family.

2.2. Community Trust

Trust creates comfort when exchanging views with honest and trustworthy work partners. Universities must effectively communicate with them, adopt their norms, and avoid negative ratings to gain community trust. Commitment is about a belief among related parties to maintain a continuous relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Community trust for a brand is consumer willingness to trust the brand with all its risks as they expect that the brand can provide positive results (Lau & Lee, 1999).

There are three main factors building brand trust: brand characteristics, company characteristics, and brand and consumer relation characteristics. Brand characteristics include brand reputation, predictable nature, and competency, and company characteristics comprise company to trust, reputation, motives, and integrity. While, brand-consumer relationship characteristics affect brand trust, including the suitability of consumers' expectations about the brand, satisfaction, experience, and the influence of friends or the social environment on the brand preference (Lau & Lee, 1999).

Luarn & Lin (2003) described trust as specific beliefs about integrity (the honesty of trusted parties and their ability to keep promises), benevolence, competency, and predictability (consistency of the behavior of trusted parties). Consumption experience is the most important source of brand trust through which a learning process enables the formation of relevant associations, thoughts, and conclusions. Trust can also be interpreted as a willingness to rely on someone involved and exchange what is believed. The belief of someone involved in the exchange provides consistent quality, honesty, and responsibility (Ball et al., 2006).

2.3. University Image

Image is interpreted as a combination of several thoughts that form the association of ideas connecting a person to a product, brand, company, or university. As stated by Kotler (2000), the brand condition has the power to build a brand image. A strong brand has the sharpness to posit a brand as a clear, distinguishable, and superior brand image compared to competitors' brands.

Some steps are needed to form a strong brand. First, outline a clear vision of the brand - what goal to achieve through brand management. Second, do a situation analysis. An analysis of consumer behavior and competitor and brand mapping is needed at this stage. Third, create a brand identity. This means that companies must design brands based on four factors: the

brand as an attribute, the brand as an organization, the brand as a person, and the brand as a symbol.

Furthermore, Keller (2013) emphasized brand image as an important concept in marketing studies since it is the consumer's perception embedded in their memory. Brand image refers to the memory scheme, which contains the consumer's interpretation of the attributes, features, uses, situations, users, and characteristics of the marketer or the manufacturer of the product/brand.

2.4. Selection Decision

Selection/purchase decision is a process of choosing an action from one or more choices. Two or more parties are involved in the exchange or purchase process in purchasing an educational service product. According to Schiffman & Kanuk (2000), purchasing decision is a selection process of two or more alternative purchasing decision choices, where a person can choose several choices. It leads to how the decision-making process is carried out. Before deciding on a purchase, consumers go through several stages of problem identification, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. This means that a purchase decision is a person's decision to choose one of several alternative options available.

Furthermore, Kotler (2000) described the purchase decision as a consumer action to buy the product or not. Many factors influence consumers in purchasing a product or service. They will consider the quality, price, and product. The purchase decision process ends where the consumer feels satisfaction or dissatisfaction affecting their subsequent behavior. If consumers are satisfied, they will show a tremendous opportunity to repeat purchases for the future and tend to recommend to others (Hasan, 2008). This is in line with Kotler & Keller (2016), stating that marketing management is an art and science that selects the target market and obtains, maintains, and increases the number of customers by creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value.

2.5. Hypothesis Development
2.5.1. The Relationship between University Brand Image and WoM

Image is a society's perception of the company or its products. The image is the impression of a person or group on a product or a company obtained from perceived experience. Shirley (1995) proposed four components to build a company and institution image: personality, reputation, values, and identity. Personality includes the characteristics of institutions such as trustworthiness and social responsibility. Reputation is a picture of someone's mind. Value is defined as management who cares for customers and employees who are responsive to customer requests and complaints. Identity is reflected in the logo, color, and slogan.

Some researchers argued that brand image positively affects word of mouth (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Anggraeni & Rachmanita, 2015; Harsono, 2014; Jalilvand et al., 2017b; Unal & Aydin, 2013; Wallace et al., 2014). However, Ismail & Spinelli (2012) found an insignificant relationship between brand image and word of mouth. This result difference allows the researchers to retest the chosen unit of analysis empirically. Differences in opinion regarding the relationship between brand image and word of mouth are a combination of thoughts and ideas a person relates to a product, company brand, or even a certain person. This means that the better the brand image, the more positive someone communicates to others.

Furthermore, Maisam & Mahsa (2016) developed a brand image relationship model for word-of-mouth studies in cosmetics consumers in Iran. The results showed a positive brand image effect on word of mouth. This means that the better the quality of the product and the experience in using the product, the more it encourages consumers to convey the product strengths to other consumers. This underlies our first hypothesis (H1): University brand image significantly affects word of mouth.

2.5.2. The Relationship between Community Trust and WOM

Trust is a set of knowledge that consumers have of an object, attribute, or perceived benefits. Trust is an embodiment of the process of one's experience when using a product or service. Kim et al. (2009) found that trust had a significant effect on word of mouth on the revisit intention in hospitality services. This means that trust encourages people's satisfaction and motivation to convey positive things about the services used.

Harsono (2014) showed that community trust in Perbanas Surabaya had a positive effect on WOM. This shows that a higher level of community trust encourages them to communicate WOM to others positively. Barreda et al. (2015) confirmed that consumer trust significantly affects word of mouth. This means that if consumers perceive a brand through tightly built relationships based on brand trust, they will voluntarily recommend the brand to other consumers. On this basis, this research proposes the second hypothesis (H2): There is a significant effect of community trust on word of mouth.

2.5.3. The Relationship of Community Trust on the Selection Decision

Morgan & Hunt (1994) stated that relational marketing is a form of commitment and trust. They increase profitability to create efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness. This means that the better the community trust, the better the commitment to build a healthy relationship with the community through honesty and willingness to work together.

Fianto et al. (2014) argued that trust significantly affects the selection decision of a private Islamic University in Java. This implies trust encourages students to make their choice. Kurniawan (2017) contended that the level of community trust drives purchasing decisions when the product quality is in line with expectations. This leads to our third hypothesis (H3): Community trust significantly affects selection decisions.

2.5.4. The Relationship between University Image and Selection Decision

University image reflects a person's attitude and belief in the existence of a service or product. The better the image, the more customer satisfaction will be created. Satisfied customers will increasingly trust to reuse the product or service. Fornell (1992) asserted that company image influences customer choices. The better the company's image, the higher it encourages customers to buy. This is in line with Fianto et al. (2014), stating that image significantly affects purchasing decisions.

Agustiani & Karini (2017) argued that the image of tertiary institutions significantly influences the decision to become a student of STKIP Pasundan Cimahi. This implies that the image is related to attitudes and beliefs in preferences in choosing a brand. The more positive the image, the higher it influences someone to decide on a purchase. Lesmana & Yustriani (2017) found a positive and significant influence of company image on purchase decisions. This emphasizes that university image becomes a foothold on students' understanding, trust, or

views associated with the consumer's mind when considering the university. This proposes our fourth hypothesis (H4): University image significantly affects community selection decisions.

2.5.5. The Relationship between Word of Mouth and Selection Decision

Word of mouth is part of marketing communication based on consumers' experience of a particular product or service. Word of mouth marketing communication could be either positive or negative depending on the experience. Özdemir et al. (2016) concluded that word of mouth has a significant effect on student preferences for university. Word of mouth occurs after previous references drive the decision to select the university. Aprianto (2016) argued that word of mouth communication significantly affects Rinnai gas stove purchase decisions.

Furthermore, Agustiani & Karini (2017) suggested that word of mouth marketing has a positive and significant effect on students' decision to choose STKIP Cimahi Pasundan. This signifies the value of word-of-mouth marketing for the university since the quality of service encourages them to convey the experience to other people. The better the communication, the higher the decision to choose the university.

Kurniawan (2017) found that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. If the experience goes in line with the expectations, positive word of mouth will be created. However, suppose it goes contrary to the expectations. In that case, it will produce a negative word of mouth, impacting consumers switching to purchasing products or services to other places. On this footing, this research proposes the fifth hypothesis: There is a significant effect of word of mouth on the selection decision.

Based on those five hypotheses, the research model is presented in **Figure 1** below.
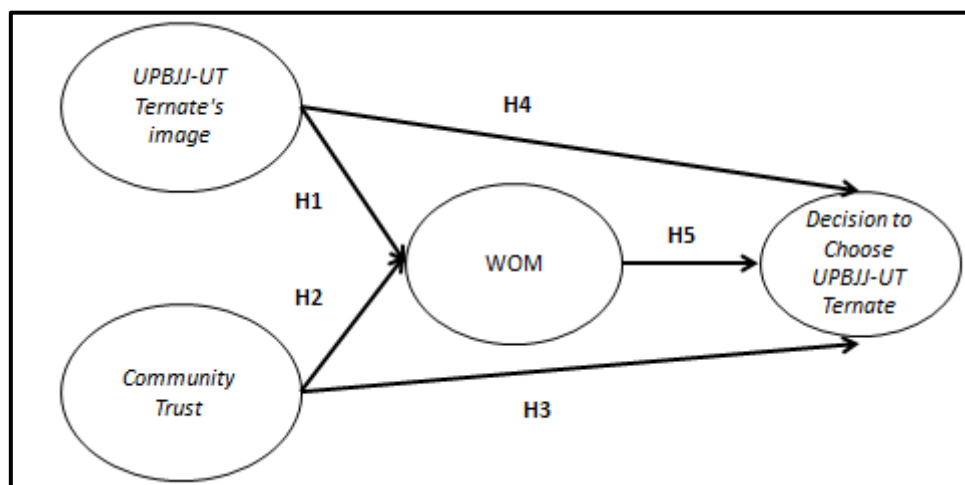
Figure 1. Research Model

This study examines the antecedent and consequent variables in applying the concept of word of mouth to build public image and community trust on community selection decisions for UPBJJ-UT Ternate. **Table 2** describes each indicator from each construct.

Table 2. Operational Variable

No	Variable	Indicator	Statements
1.	**The Image of UPBJJ-UT Ternate**	1) Benchmark position 2) Positive reputation	• Outstanding quality education programs

No	Variable	Indicator	Statements
	Brand image is an important part of a strong brand and allows manufacturers to differentiate their products from their competitors (Keller, 2013)	3) High evaluation from friends and lecturers 4) Unique image 5) High service efficiency	with ISO systems • Good reputation • Quality students and lecturers • Unique image • High-quality service
2.	**Word of Mouth** It is information about products, services, shops, and companies dispersed from one consumer to another. In a broader sense, WOM communication includes information about transferring objects from one person to another directly or through several communication media (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Keller, 2013).	1) Source attribute 2) Activity rate 3) Personal relevance 4) Polarity	• Willingness to get convincing information • The ability to regularly provide information • The ability to provide relevant and persuasive information • The ability to provide positive or negative information
3.	**Community Trust** It is consumers' willingness to trust the brand (university) with all its risks since there is an expectation that it can provide positive results (Lau & Lee, 1999)	1) Reputation 2) Predictability 3) Competence 4) Integrity 5) Characteristic	• Good reputation • Predictable results • Competent tutors in science • Honesty in the process • Characteristics in the process
4.	**Company Selection Decision** It is the public statement of selecting a tertiary institution (Kotler & Keller, 2009)	1) Transactional interest 2) Preferential interest 3) Exploratory interest	• Community's preference for choosing a product based on their interests • Community's willingness to ask friends or parents opinion about the chosen tertiary institution • People behavior with other comparisons before making a purchase • The behavior of people who always looks for information in advance about the product they are interested in

No	Variable	Indicator	Statements
			• Community's strong desire to pursue higher education

3. Research Methodology

This research used survey method by distributing a questionnaire of open and closed statements to high school and vocational school students and the community of eight Regencies in North Maluku Province: West Halmahera, Central Halmahera, South Halmahera, North Halmahera, Pulau Morotai, Pulau Sula, and Pulau Taliabu, as there is Open University in there. This study involved 750 respondents purposively selected by the probability sampling method. The targeted respondents included male and female gender, high school students, vocational high school students, and the community. The analytical method used was Smart PLS 3.8. This statistical analysis estimates several separate regression equations, yet simultaneously interconnected (Ghozali, 2014; Santosa, 2018).

The confirmatory factor analysis results show that full SEM model testing can provide valid and reliable indicators. The data were then analyzed by validity and reliability test. The validity test was conducted by face validity testing, a basic test of content validity that indicates that the items used to measure a concept (Sekaran, 2003). The Confirmatory Factor Analysis was also utilized as the test tool for the questionnaire items with SPSS 16. The value of the Rule of Thumb for CFAs should be ≥ 0.4 (Hair et al., 2010).

The reliability test is a measurement that reflects whether the measurement is error-free, thus providing consistent measurement results under different conditions and for each item in the instrument (Sekaran, 2003). The internal consistency of the question items in the questionnaire will be tested with Cronbach's Alpha. The rule of thumb for the Cronbach's Alpha value must be greater than 0.7, although 0.6 is also acceptable (Hair et al., 2010). The reliability of the questionnaire instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha formula with SPSS 16.

4. Results and Discussions

The research involved high school students, vocational high school students, and the community in eight regencies in North Maluku Province operating a UPBJJ-UT Ternate. The high school students are prospective graduates who will continue at the tertiary level. Among the nine regencies/municipalities in North Maluku Province, only Ternate City and Kepulauan Tidore City were not selected as there were several tertiary institutions in the area.

Table 3. Respondents in Eight Regency in North Maluku Province

No	Regencies	Number of Respondents				
		Vocational Students	Amount	High School Students	Amount	Public
1	West Halmahera	-	-	SMAN 1	50	-
		-	-	SMA ISLAM	50	-
2	Central Halmahera	-	-	SMAN 8	50	-
		-	-	SMAN 1	50	-
3	East Halmahera	-	-	SMAN 5	50	-

No	Regencies	Vocational Students	Amount	High School Students	Amount	Public
		-	-	SMAN 1	50	-
4	South Halmahera	-	-	SMAN1	50	-
		-	-	SMAN 7	50	-
5	North Halmahera	-	-	SMAN 2 Galela	50	-
		-	-	SMA Muhammadyah	50	-
6	Pulau Morotai	-	-	SMAN 1	50	-
		-	-	SMA Muhammadyah	50	-
7	Pulau Sula	-	-	SMAN 1	50	-
8	Pulau Taliabu	SMKN 1	43	SMAN 1	50	7
Amount			**43**		**700**	**7**

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

This research used a survey method in collecting data distributed to the respondents assisted by several enumerators for approximately three months, from July 22 to September 16, 2019. **Table 4** presents the questionnaire distribution summary.

Table 4. Questionnaires Distribution

Description	Amount
Distributed Questionnaires	750
Returned Questionnaires	750
Unanalyzable Questionnaires	156
Analyzable Returning Questionnaires	594

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

The respondent demographic includes gender, education, age, information source, faculty choices, and university preferred priority (see **Table 5**). By gender, the female respondents occupy the majority by 353 respondents. This shows woman's awareness and motivation to obtain higher education. By age, 16-20 years old respondents are in the highest position with 500 respondents. This implies that class XII of senior high students dominated the respondents since they were preparing to attend higher education.

Furthermore, by information sources, the majority of respondents stated that they obtained from friends and alumni. This suggests that friends and alumni give the strongest recommendation to choose UPBJJ-UT Ternate. Most respondents prefer the Faculty of Economics to the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education by faculty choices. By preferred choice, the majority of the respondents make UPBJJ-UT Ternate the first choice. This implies that the university's marketing strategies have successfully brought university brand awareness to the public.

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Table 5. Respondent's Demographic

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Respondent's Characteristics	Gender		Amount
	Male	**Female**	
Gender	241	353	594
Age			
15 years old	40	50	90
16-20 years old	256	244	500
21-25 years old	1	3	4
Level of Education			
High School	200	290	490
Vocational	47	50	97
Unmarried Person	2	5	7
Information Sources			
Friends	97	166	263
Newspaper	8	11	19
Website	21	18	39
Direct Visit	60	47	107
Alumni	31	73	104
Facebook	22	40	62
Faculty Preferences			
Faculty of Economics	67	114	181
Faculty of Law, Social, and Political Sciences	92	87	179
Faculty of Science and Technology	73	100	173
Faculty of Teaching Training and Education	17	18	35
Postgraduate	10	15	25
UPBJJ-UT Preferred Choice			
First Choice	115	117	232
Second Choice	100	93	193
Third Choice	45	65	110
Neutral	29	30	59

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Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

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To determine the convergent validity, the correlation between indicator scores and the variable scores is examined. An indicator is valid if it has an outer loading value above 0.60 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above 0.50. The convergent validity is good if the AVE value of each variable is above 0.5. Figure 2 below presents the results of the evaluation of convergent validity.
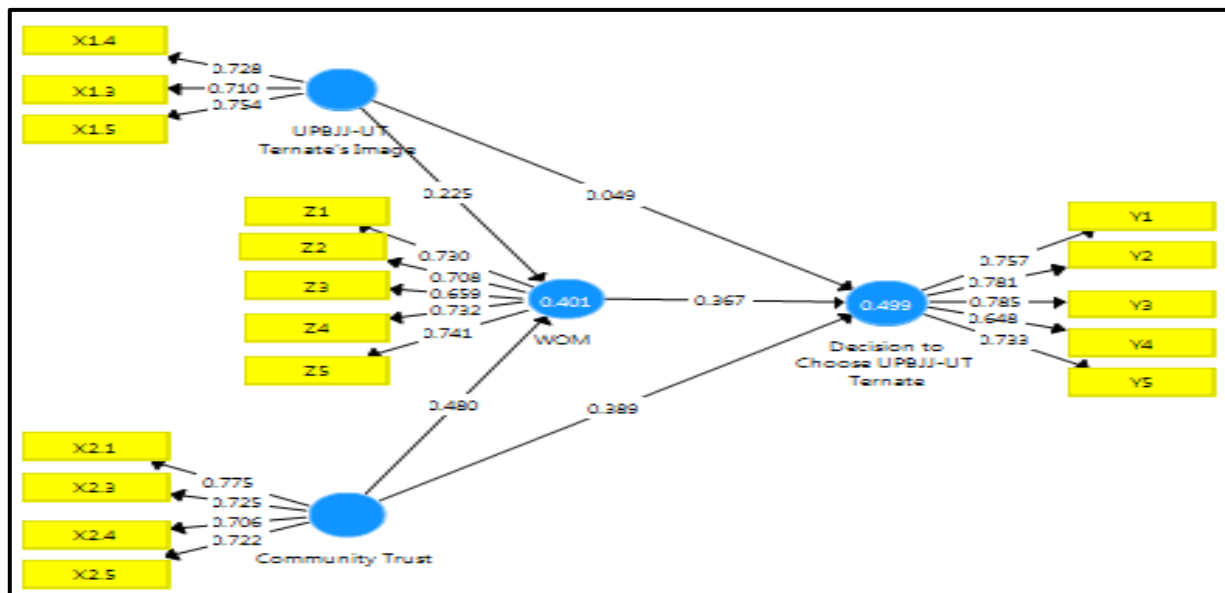
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Figure 2. Specified Model of Smart PLS

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

Based on **Figure 2** model specifications, all indicators have an outer loading value above 0.6. This concludes that all indicators meet convergent validity. The second criterion assesses the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value as presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6 indicates each variable has an Average Variance Extracted value (AVE) above 0.5, which means all indicators have measured each latent variable so that the test proceeds to the next stage.

Table 6. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image	0.534
Community Trust	0.536
Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	0.551
WoM	0.511

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

Besides, the discriminant validity can be established based on the cross-loading value of each indicator against each latent variable. If the correlation between constructs and measurement items is greater than the correlation with other latent variables, the latent construct predicts the latent variable better than the other latent variables. The cross-loading value of the analysis results is presented in **Table 7**.

Table 7 shows the correlation of each indicator with its construct is greater than the other constructs. This means that the latent construct predicts indicators in their column better than indicators in other columns.

Table 7. Discriminant Validity at Indicators Level (Cross Loading)

	UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image	Community Trust	Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	WoM
X1.3	0.710			
X1.4	0.728			
X1.5	0.754			
X2.1		0.775		
X2.3		0.725		
X2.4		0.706		
X2.5		0.722		
Y1			0.757	
Y2			0.781	
Y3			0.785	
Y4			**0.648**	
Y5			0.733	
Z1				0.730
Z2				0.708
Z3				**0.659**
Z4				0.732
Z5				0.741

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

Table 8. Discriminant Validity at Variable Level (Fornell Larcker Criterion)

	UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image	Community Trust	Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	WoM
UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image	**0.731**			
Community Trust	**0.743**	**0.732**		
Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	**0.660**	**0.770**	**0.743**	
WOM	**0.698**	**0.743**	**0.720**	**0.715**

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

The composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha determine the reliability or the degree of consistency and stability of the data or findings. The value of composite reliability must be higher than 0.70 to determine that the indicator is reliable, in addition to Cronbach's Alpha Value higher than 0.60. Table 9 below presents Composite Reliability Value and Cronbach's Alpha value.

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Table 9. Composite Reliability Value and Cronbach's Alpha Value

	Cronbach Alpha Value	Composite Reliability Value
UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image	0.563	0.775
Community Trust	0.713	0.822
UPBJJ-UT Ternate Selection Decision	0.795	0.859
WOM	0.760	0.839

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

Table 9 above highlights each construct has a Composite Reliability Value above 0.70 and a Cronbach's Alpha Value above 0.60. Thus, it concludes that each construct in the estimated model has good reliability.

To evaluate the structural model in this study, the value of R Square for the dependent construct and the Stone-Greisser Q-Square test for predictive relevance are examined. The evaluation of structural models was established with the bootstrap resampling method. The results of the structural model analysis are presented in **Figure 3**.

In assessing structural models, the first method is to calculate the value of R Square for each endogenous latent variable. If the value of R Square is bigger (close to 1), the model can explain the effect of the exogenous latent variables on the endogenous latent variables. Conversely, if the value of R Square is smaller (close to 0), the model cannot explain the influence of the exogenous latent variables on the endogenous latent variables substantively. **Table 10** presents the R Square value.
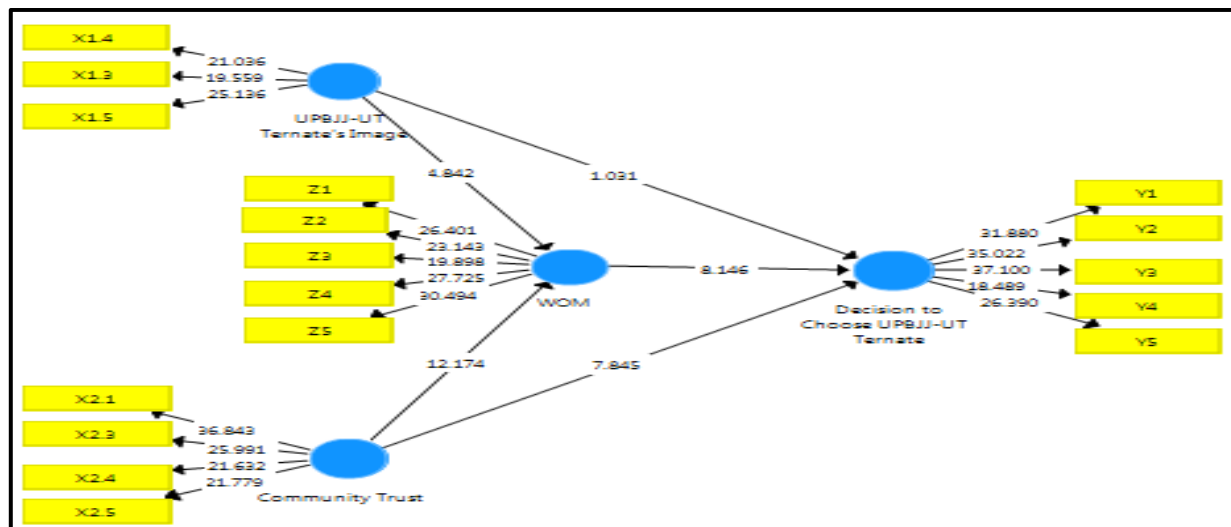

Figure 3. Structure Model (Inner Model)

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

Table 10 shows the value of R Square for WoM is 0.600, and the R Square Adjusted value is 0.646. This means that UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image and Community Trust can explain 60.0% of WoM while WoM can explain 64.4% of Selection Decision, UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image, and Community Trust.

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Table 10. R Square Value

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Selection Decision UPBJJ-UT Ternate	0.646	0.644
WoM	0.600	0.599

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

The second method to assess structural models is to examine the value of Stone-Greisser Q-Square. As for calculating the Q-Square value, we use the formula:

Q2 = 1-(1 –R12) (1-R22)
Q2 = 1-(1-0.6002) (1-0.6462)
Q2 = 1 - (1-0.36) (1-0.42)
Q2 = 0.6288

The calculation results indicate the Q-Square value is 0.6288, greater than zero (0). This concludes that the model has a strong predictive relevance value.

Additionally, we conducted hypothesis testing to determine the significance of the exogenous latent variable effect on the endogenous latent variables. To test the hypothesis between the influence of exogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variables (γ) and the influence between endogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variables (β), this study examined the output path coefficient of the bootstrapping resampling results. At the same time, the indirect effect is seen in the output-specific indirect effects. The hypothesis testing compared the value of t statistics and t tables. The statistic t value was obtained from the bootstrapping results with smartPLS application version 3.8, while the t table value for Alpha 5% was 1.96. **Table 11** and **Table 12** below presents the hypothesis testing results of direct and indirect effects.

Table 11. Output Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image-> Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	0.049	0.050	0.048	1.014	**0.311**
UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image -> WoM	0.225	0.229	0.046	4.857	**0.000**
Community Trust-> Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	0.389	0.385	0.050	7.697	**0.000**
Community trust -> WoM	0.480	0.480	0.039	12.171	**0.000**
WoM -> Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	0.367	0.369	0.048	7.717	**0.000**

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

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Table 12. Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image -> WoM -> Selection Decision for UPBJJ-UT Ternate	0.082	0.081	0.019	4.378	**0.000**
Community trust -> WoM -> UPBJJ-UT Ternate Selection Decision	0.176	0.176	0.027	6.436	**0.000**

Source: Primary Data, analyzed (2019)

The direct and indirect causality test results between variables aided with the Smart PLS model are presented in **Table 12**. The results signify that four hypotheses are accepted, and one hypothesis is rejected.

Table 11 shows the t-statistic value of the first hypothesis (H1) is 4.857, greater than the t table (4.857> 1.96) with a p-value of 0.000 less than 0.05. This concludes that hypothesis 1, a significant effect of university brand image on word of mouth, is accepted.

The path coefficient (original sample) is 0.225. This shows the direction of the relationship between the UPBJJ-UT Ternate image and word of mouth is positive. In other words, if the UPBJJ-UT Ternate image increases by one point, the word of mouth increases by 0.225.

This result implies that the better the UPBJJ-UT, the higher it encourages positive word of mouth. This also increases community interest to choose UPBJJ-UT Ternate as a place to obtain an education. This finding is in line with some research (e.g., Albert & Merunka, 2013; Anggraeni & Rachmanita, 2015; Harsono, 2014; Jalilvand et al., 2017b; Unal & Aydin, 2013; Wallace et al., 2014). However, this is inconsistent with Ismail & Spinelli (2012), suggesting an insignificant relationship between brand image and word of mouth. This means that an incomprehensible brand image will not encourage word-of-mouth communication. Nevertheless, Amron (2018) proved that brand image has a significant effect on word of mouth. This implies that universities should improve their brand image and trust to encourage voluntary consumer word of mouth.

Table 11 also shows the t-statistic value of the second hypothesis (H2) is 12.171, greater than the t table (12.171> 1.96) with a p-value of 0.000 less than 0.05. This concludes that the second hypothesis, a significant effect of community trust on word of mouth, is accepted.

In addition, the path coefficient value of the second hypothesis is 0.480. This means that the direction of the relationship between community trust and word of mouth is positive. In other words, if the community trust increases by one point, word of mouth increases by 0.480.

This finding signifies that the better the community trust, the higher it encourages the community/UPBJJ-UT Ternate alumni to communicate positively by word of mouth. This is not consistent with Sichtmann (2007), showing that trust does not significantly affect word-of-mouth communication behavior for customers and non-customers. Since customers who do not understand the credibility and competencies do not form a trust, that eventually does not affect consumers' word of mouth. The customers' word-of-mouth communication behavior is different from that of non-customers. This emphasizes that building customer trust needs to focus on the university's credibility and competence so that it will be easier to get new students.

The results of this study corroborate with Harsono (2014), arguing that community trust in Perbanas Surabaya has a positive effect on WoM. This means that the higher the community trust, the more it encourages their positive WoM. Furthermore, Barreda et al. (2015) asserted that the level of consumer trust has a significant positive effect on word of mouth. It means that if consumers perceive a brand well through relationships built-in brand trust, they will voluntarily recommend the brand to other consumers. Similarly, Amron (2018) contended that brand trust has a significant effect on women's behavior. This means that the higher consumer trust, the higher it encourages consumer word of mouth.

Subsequently, **Table 11** shows the t-statistic value of the third hypothesis (H3) is 7. 697, smaller than the t table (7. 697>1.96) with a p-value of 0,000 less than 0.05. This concludes that the third hypothesis (A significant effect of community trust on selection decision) is accepted.

Also, the path coefficient value of the third hypothesis is 0.389. This highlights that the relationship between community trust and selection decisions for UPBJJ-UT Ternate is positive. This indicates that if community trust increases by one point, the selection decision increases by 0.389.

This result implies that the higher the community trust, the stronger the decision to attend UPBJJ-UT Ternate. This is in line with Kurniawan (2017), contending that community trust drives purchasing decisions, emphasizing that the product quality in line with consumer expectations creates trust. This finding confirms that community trust increases as the university students represented North Maluku Province in the Indonesian women's selection event and several other regional and national events.

Besides, **Table 11** shows the t-statistic value of the fourth hypothesis is 1.014, smaller than the t table (1.014 <1.96) with a p-value value of 0.312 greater than 0.05. This means that the fourth hypothesis, a significant effect of university image on community selection decisions, is rejected.

Addedly, the path coefficient value of the fourth hypothesis is 0.049. This concludes that the direction of the relationship between UPBJJ-UT Ternate Image and decision selection is positive. This signifies that if the university image increases by one point, the selection decision increases by 0.049.

As the fourth hypothesis is rejected, university image has no significant effect on selection decisions. This means that the UPBJJ-UT Ternate positive image is not promoted to the public by a variety of excellent strategies. They tend to produce negative perceptions of the university. This finding contrasts with Fornell (1992), arguing that company image significantly influences customer choices; the better its image, the more it influences purchase decisions. Also, Fianto et al. (2014) concluded that image has a significant effect on purchase decisions. Nevertheless, this finding confirms Ruhamak & Sya'idah (2018), concluding that brand image does not affect student decision to attend an English course institution in Kampung Inggris Pare Kediri.

Lastly, **Table 11** also shows the t-statistic value of the fifth hypothesis is 7.717, greater than the t table (7.717> 1.96) with a p-value of 0,000 less than 0.05. It concludes that the fifth hypothesis (H5), a significant effect of university image on community selection decision, is accepted.

The hypothesis testing also obtained the path coefficient value of the fifth hypothesis is 0.367, implying that the direction of the relationship between word of mouth with selection decision is positive. This emphasizes that if word of mouth increases by one point, selection decision increases by 0.367.

This finding suggests that the better the student's/alumni experience of the university's learning process and facilities, the higher it encourages their behavior of WOM. The selection decision occurs if someone gets positive information. This finding supports Özdemir et al. (2016) contending that word of mouth has a significant effect on student preferences of university selection. This behavior occurs after considerable experience from previous references. Furthermore, Aprianto (2016) showed that word of mouth has a significant effect on the purchase decision of Rinnai in Cereme Taba village. Ruhamak & Sya'idah (2018) also believed that word of mouth made students select Kampung Inggris Pare Kediri.

5. Conclusion

The analysis produces that among the five hypotheses tested, four are accepted, and one is rejected. The evidence from this study points towards the idea that the image of Ternate's UPBJJ-UT has a significant influence on word of mouth. This means that the better the image of Ternate UPBJJ-UT encourages the community more to communicate to others voluntarily. This research also highlights that community trust in UPBJJ-UT Ternate has a significant effect on word of mouth. This means that the level of trust will be driven by the experience felt by students or alumni and the social responsibility of UPBJJ-UT Ternate. This highly will encourage them to tell others voluntarily.

Addedly, community trust has a significant effect on the decision to choose UPBJJ-UT Ternate. This means that the higher the community's trust, the higher it encourages them to join UPBJJ-UT Ternate. Subsequently, the image of Ternate UPBJJ-UT does not significantly influence the selection decision. This means that the lower the UPBJJ-UT Ternate image embedded in public minds, the lower it encourages them to join UPBJJ-UT Ternate. Also, word of mouth has a significant effect on the selection decision. This means that the better the recommendation, the higher it encourages the students/alumni to promote UPBJJ-UT Ternate to obtain a tertiary education.

About the conclusions, there are several issues to deal with. Many students and the public do not recognize the existence of Ternate UPBJJ-UT and its learning methods. This demands the university's maneuverability for creative promotion strategies. The university should also interact more with the community by arranging a talk show with successful alumni to enhance its image as the alumni were absorbed in the worldwide employment. The successful alumni encourage the community to recommend UPBJJ-UT Ternate to their children and families.

The application of word of mouth improves the quality of services, tutorial facilities, timely modules, competent tutors, student organization, and community services since the university holds no community service or internship program as other universities do.

However, providing students with a stimulus to become entrepreneurs is beneficial to make them well prepared after graduating because they already have jobs or expertise on their passions. Alumni gatherings are important to synergize in social activities and provide literacy on lecture mechanisms at the university. Therefore, future researchers should put more focus on public awareness of the existence of UPBJJ-UT Ternate.

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7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article,

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