Insights into Generation Z's Perception of Social Media Marketing's Effectiveness on Faith-Based Private School Branding

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Abstract	The research aims to explore Generation Z's perceptions of social media marketing (SMM) effectiveness for brand building in religious-based private schools, addressing a crucial gap in the literature by examining how SMM influences various facets of brand perception and student behavior within this specific educational niche. Specifically, it investigates SMM's impact on brand attitude, image, intention, and recommendation, utilizing a quantitative descriptive design with primary data collected through surveys and employing probability sampling among 200 high school students via an online survey. Data analysis, conducted using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) with the assistance of the SmartPLS statistical program, reveals a positive and significant relationship between SMM and both brand attitude and brand image, as well as a significant positive correlation between SMM and students' intention to choose a faith-based educational institution and their intention to recommend it. Additionally, a significant positive relationship between brand attitude and brand image is observed, with brand image also displaying a significant positive association with students' intention to choose a faith-based educational institution and their intention to recommend it, thereby providing valuable practical and theoretical insights.
Keywords	Social Media Marketing; Education Institution; Brand Attitude; Brand Image; Brand Intention; Intention to Recommend

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a cornerstone tool for educational institutions in the rapidly evolving landscape of education marketing. Its multifaceted role encompasses communication, engagement, and marketing efforts, providing institutions unprecedented opportunities to connect with their audience (Marhareita et al., 2022; Ghorbanzadeh & Sharbatiyan, 2024). Through the strategic use of social media platforms, educational institutions can establish and nurture direct relationships with various stakeholders, including current students, prospective students, alumni, parents, faculty, and the broader community (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023; Jonathan et al., 2023). By cultivating an active presence on various social media platforms, institutions can disseminate timely updates, share engaging content, and facilitate meaningful interactions that foster community and belonging (Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023;

Sobaih et al., 2020).

Within the dynamic realm of education marketing, social media has emerged as an indispensable instrument for establishing higher learning. The platform's diverse functions include engagement, marketing, and communication, granting organizations unprecedented opportunities to connect with their target audience (Marhareita et al., 2022; Ghorbanzadeh & Sharbatiyan, 2024). By employing social media platforms strategically, academic establishments can cultivate and maintain direct connections with a wide range of stakeholders—present students, alumni, prospective students, parents, faculty, and the wider community (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023; Jonathan et al., 2023). Institutions can cultivate a sense of community and belonging through active participation on diverse social media platforms, where they can distribute timely updates, share thought-provoking content, and facilitate substantive interactions (Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023; Sobaih et al., 2020).

The perception of educational institutions is fundamentally transitioning due to the evolving education paradigm (Qasim et al., 2021; Kainde et al., 2023). They are recognized as organizations that must implement efficient marketing strategies to remain competitive. This underscores the criticality of upholding a favorable public perception and implementing cutting-edge marketing strategies, mainly via social media platforms (Marhareita et al., 2022). In addition, it is crucial to recognize the significant influence of brand attitude and image on decision-making processes, particularly among the technologically adept Generation Z (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). In order to maintain their pertinence and attractiveness in a progressively competitive environment, academic establishments must proactively foster a positive brand perception and disposition among prospective pupils and stakeholders (Marhareita et al., 2022; Ghorbanzadeh & Sharbatiyan, 2024; Pasuhuk & Mandagi, 2023).

It is crucial to comprehend the intricate ramifications of SMM on brand recognition in academic establishments, particularly concerning the distinctive setting of a faith-based private high school (Jonathan et al., 2023). The primary objective of this study is to address the existing research vacuum by investigating the perspectives of Generation Z regarding the efficacy of social media as a promotional instrument for academic establishments. The investigation will focus mainly on brand attitude, intention, and image. By utilizing quantitative analysis and conducting a survey among members of Generation Z, this research aims to provide valuable insights that can aid in enhancing digital marketing strategies within educational environments and illuminating these dynamics. The overarching objective is to leverage the capabilities of social media in order to captivate potential students and increase enrolment, thus strengthening the institution's influence and dissemination.

This research focuses on researching religious private schools. According to Marhareita et al. (2022), marketing educational services is a way of doing something where students, parents, schools, and the community view schools as community support institutions aiming to serve educational service customers. Even though they are not business-oriented institutions, schools also need marketing strategies. The emergence of superior schools with unique characteristics and the birth of private schools that offer a variety of facilities, even at competitive costs, have added to the rise in educational competition (Ghorbanzadeh & Sharbatiyan, 2024). Education providers must be more creative in exploring the uniqueness and advantages of their schools so that they are needed and sought after by educational service customers.

For this reason, marketing strategies for educational services are needed to increase public interest in schools. We cannot deny that schools also need financial support, most of which comes from public funds. Sometimes, we do not have the right footing to make a plan when carrying out promotional activities. Faith-based schools offer complete facilities compared to state schools but at relatively high costs. Schools must promote facilities and achievements to attract students and their parents.

While recent studies acknowledge the increasing importance of SMM in brand building (e.g., Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Sijabat et al., 2022; Waworuntu et al., 2022; Poluan et al., 2022; Warbung et al., 2023; Wulus et al., 2022; Sidik et al., 2022), particularly in the context of education branding (e.g., Anjel

et al., 2022; Marhareita et al., 2022; Kainde & Mandagi, 2023), understanding the nuanced impact of SMM on brand within the unique context of a faith-based private high school is imperative and requires in-depth exploration (Jonathan et al., 2023; Marhareita et al., 2022).

This study's implications are profound, offering strategic insights into refining marketing approaches for educational institutions, particularly faith-based private high schools, by analyzing the impact of social media on brand attitude, image, and intention. These insights provide a competitive advantage and contribute to increased enrollment, improved stakeholder engagement, and long-term reputation management. By leveraging social media effectively, institutions can differentiate themselves, attract prospective students, foster community, and cultivate trust and credibility, ultimately contributing to their sustained success and impact.

Generation Z is distinguished by its heavy reliance on technology for communication and decision-making, digital proficiency, and voracity for instant information (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; McHaney, 2023; Sanjeev et al., 2022; Waworuntu et al., 2022). It is crucial to remain cognizant of the preferences of Generation Z in the current competitive environment, given that their digital proficiency and demand for promptness are fundamentally transforming educational marketing (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). Hence, to cultivate significant relationships and connect with this technologically proficient demographic, academic establishments must consistently improve their approaches by adopting novel technologies and platforms (Sobaih et al., 2020; Kainde & Mandagi, 2023).

Social Influence Theory underscores the significant impact of social environment, including interactions on social media platforms, on individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (e.g., Thomas & Vinuales, 2017; Sirola et al., 2021; Naeem, 2020). Exposure to positive messages and brand interactions on social media can lead to a more favorable brand attitude, a positive brand image, and increased intentions to recommend and choose a school (Poluan et al., 2022; Kainde et al., 2023; Marhareita et al., 2022). This aligns with the findings that effective utilization of social media platforms by educational institutions can shape perceptions and influence decision-making processes, particularly among Generation Z (Sanjeev et al., 2022; Pasuhuk et al., 2023). By leveraging proficient social media marketing strategies, educational institutions, including faith-based ones, can capitalize on the power of social influence to enhance brand perception and attract students who resonate with their values and ethos (Marhareita et al., 2022; Waworuntu et al., 2023).

H1: Social media marketing positively affects the school's brand attitude.

H2: Social media marketing positively affects a school's brand image.

H3: Social media marketing positively affects the intention to choose a school.

H4: Social media marketing positively affects the intention to recommend a school.

The Reasoned Action (TRA) theory posits that individuals' behavior is guided by their intentions, shaped by attitudes towards the behavior and subjective norms, representing social pressures. In school choice, attitudes towards a school's brand may influence intentions to select it. A positive brand attitude fosters a favorable intention to choose the school and directly impacts the brand's image. Brand attitude, reflecting consumers' overall brand evaluation, influences perception, emphasizing its values and mission as a faith-based entity. Maintaining a positive brand image is crucial for faith-based institutions, conveying trust and adherence to shared values. Positive experiences and interactions shape brand attitudes, as seen in the literature (Walean et al., 2023; Marhareita et al., 2022). Faith-based private schools provide opportunities for religious engagement within an educational setting, appealing to students and parents seeking integration of religious principles in education (Adams & Kecskes, 2020; Jun & Aronson, 2021; Jonathan et al., 2023). Students' decisions about higher education are influenced by perceived value and a desire for deeper religious connection (Marhareita et al., 2022; Jonathan et al., 2023). These positive brand attitudes also contribute significantly to the institution's reputation and visibility within the community and beyond, increasing the likelihood of active advocacy by students

(Abin et al., 2022; Yodpram & Intalar, 2021; Walean et al., 2023; Kainde et al., 2023). This theoretical and empirical foundation leads to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H5: Brand attitude positively affects brand image.

H6: Brand attitude positively affects the intention to choose a school.

H7: Brand attitude positively affects intention to recommend.

The Theory of Reasoned Action posits that behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes toward the behavior and subjective norms surrounding it. A positive brand image in educational institutions, particularly faith-based ones, contributes to favorable attitudes toward choosing and recommending a school, thereby shaping behavioral intentions. This notion underscores the pivotal role of brand image in attracting students and maintaining a positive reputation. Wang et al. (2019) delve into the spiritual dimensions of faith, passion, and devotion, offering insights into perceived brand sacredness and holistic brand equity measurement. Additionally, research by Walean et al. (2023) provides a framework for understanding the interplay between brand image, place attitude, and intention to choose, applicable to positioning educational institutions effectively. Moreover, previous studies by Kainde et al. (2023), Abin et al. (2022), and Waworuntu et al. (2022) underscore the significant impact of institutional brand image on student intention to choose and recommend a school. Consequently, the following hypotheses were introduced:

H8: Brand image positively affects the intention to choose a school.

H9: Brand image positively affects the intention to recommend a school.

The relationship between the variables in this study and their corresponding hypotheses is summarized in Figure 1.
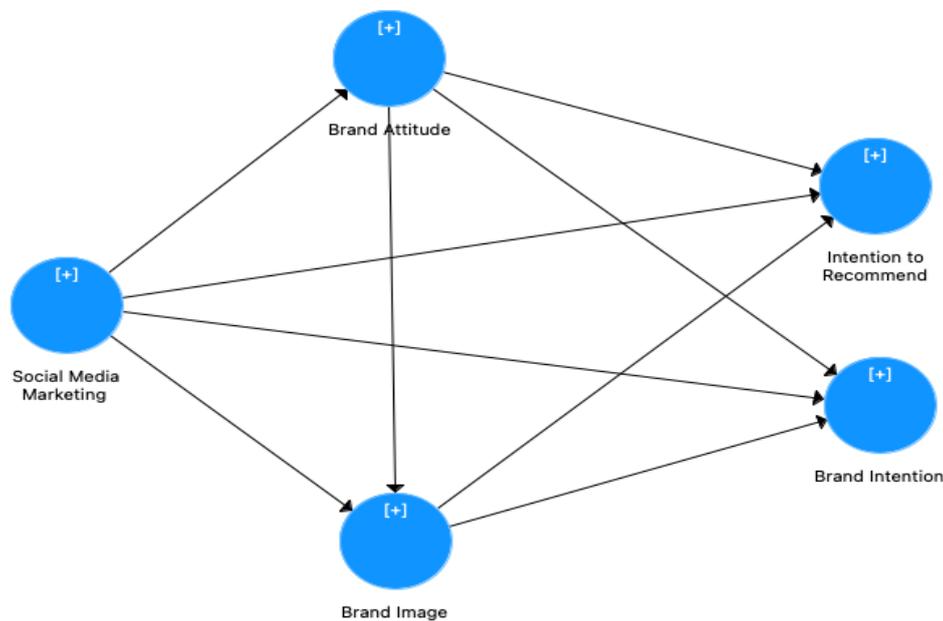

Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

2. METHODS

The research design employed in this study encompasses both descriptive and explanatory methodologies strategically selected to address the research question with methodological rigor and scholarly depth. Descriptive research serves the fundamental purpose of furnishing an overarching

portrayal of respondents' engagement with the variables under investigation. In contrast, the explanatory design aims to delve into the intricate interplay between variables, delineating causal relationships. Notably, the independent variable scrutinized in this study is SMM, while the dependent variables encompass brand attitude, brand image, brand intention, and recommendation intention.

The data collection process involved the dissemination of questionnaires through Google Forms, targeting active high school students hailing from a private, faith-based institution in Manado, Sulawesi Utara, who belong to Generation Z. After data collection, rigorous analysis was conducted utilizing SPSS version 26 for descriptive analysis, and Smart PLS version 3.2 for validity, reliability testing, as well as hypothesis testing.

This research employs probability sampling, specifically simple random sampling, as its sampling technique. The sample size for this study comprises 200 participants, surpassing the minimum recommended sample size for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which is calculated by multiplying the number of indicators by five (Hair et al., 2017). In this instance, the number of indicators amounts to 35, resulting in a minimum recommended sample size of 175. Therefore, the sample size of 200 participants in this study exceeds the established threshold, ensuring robustness and reliability in analyzing structural relationships.

Measurement for the variables was adopted from previous studies. Variable SMM was measured by a seven-item scale adopted from previous studies (Kim & Ko, 2017; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). Measurement for the variable brand image was derived from (Abin et al., 2021). Variable brand attitude was measured by five items adopted from previous studies (Mandagi et al., 2023). Brand intention consists of seven items adopted from previous studies (Arora et al., 2021; Kervyn et al., 2012), while an intention to recommend has five items adapted from previous studies (Prayag et al., 2017; Hosany & Prayag, 2013). Table 1 displays all the variables with their descriptions and indicators. After checking and translating, the scale items were copied into a 5-point Likert scale and presented as a questionnaire complete with instructions.

Table 1. Variabel Penelitian

Variable	Item Indicators	Code	Source
Sosial Media Marketing	1. Content quality	Y1	(Kim & Ko, 2017; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021)
	2. Engagement	Y2	
	3. Audience targeting	Y3	
	4. Marketing Coverage	Y4	
	5. Response management	Y5	
	6. Frequency of post	Y6	
	7. Alignment with interests	Y7	
Brand Attitude	1. Perceived quality	X11	(Faircloth et al., 2001; Park et al., 2010)
	2. Perceived value	X12	
	3. Relevance	X13	
	4. Emotional connection	X14	
	5. Enthusiasm	X15	
Brand Image	1. trustworthiness	X21	(Malik et al., 2012; Abin et al., 2021; Faircloth et al., 2001)
	2. Prestige	X22	
	3. Responsibility	X23	

	4. customer focus	X24	
	5. exclusivity	X25	
Brand Intention	1. Brand consideration	X31	(Arora et al., 2021; Kervyn et al., 2012)
	2. Brand preference	X32	
	3. Brand seeking	X33	
	4. Inclination to engage	X34	
	5. Purchase likelihood	X35	
Intention to recommend	1. Recommendation likelihood	X41	(Prayag et al., 2017; Hosany & Prayag, 2013)
	2. Inclination to endorse	X42	
	3. Advocacy willingness	X43	
	4. Encouragement of trial	X44	
	5. Confidence in recommendation	X45	

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistic

Descriptive statistics were conducted to analyze the findings obtained from the research questionnaire administered to a sample of 200 individuals representing the population. The descriptive analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the data collected, revealing critical insights into the characteristics and trends within the dataset. Table 2, presented below, encapsulates the outcomes of the descriptive analysis, presenting a detailed summary of the central tendencies, variability, and distribution of the variables under investigation. These descriptive measures give a deeper understanding of the research findings, laying the foundation for subsequent inferential analyses and interpretations.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance
Brand Attitude	200	1	5	3.80	0.82	0.67
Brand Image	200	1	5	4.07	0.73	0.53
Brand Intention	200	1	5	3.92	0.75	0.56
Intention to recommend	200	1	5	3.95	0.83	0.69
SMM	200	1	5	3.82	0.80	0.64

Table 2 presents a descriptive statistical overview of the variables examined in the study, including Brand Attitude, Brand Image, Brand Intention, Intention to Recommend, and SMM. With a sample size of 200 respondents, the table showcases the range of scores observed across each variable, from the minimum to the maximum. The mean values provide insights into the average perceptions or attitudes held by respondents towards each variable, indicating, on average, positive attitudes towards the brand, favorable perceptions of brand image, moderate intentions to engage with the brand and recommend it to others, and a moderately positive perception of the brand's SMM efforts. Standard deviations highlight the variability in responses around the mean, suggesting differing levels of agreement or perception among respondents.

Measurement Model

Before testing the hypothesis, examining the measurement model is essential. The purpose of the measurement model is to ensure that the research model's validity and reliability criteria are met. The validity test involves assessing both convergent and discriminant validity. Meanwhile, reliability is evaluated through measures such as Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) values. Figure 2 illustrates a measurement model produced using SmartPLS 3.2. Five items were removed after eliminating indicators with poor factor loading (i.e., <0.7). These removed items are X24, X25, X31, X34, and X35. Based on the measurement model test results depicted in Figure 2 and Table 3, it is evident that all variable indicator items already exhibit a factor loading value exceeding 0.7. Thus, convergent validity has been established.
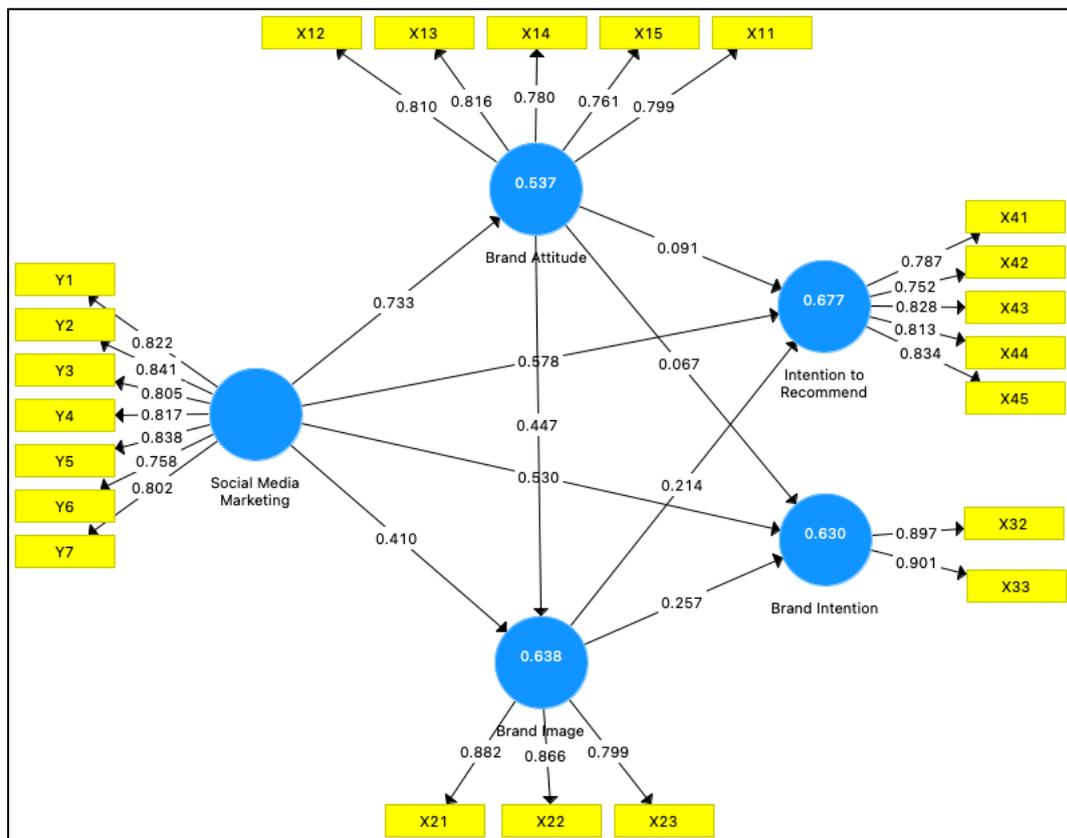
Figure 2. Measurement Model

Table 3. Variables, Indicators, and Factor Loadings

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading
Social Media Marketing	Y1	0.82
	Y2	0.84
	Y3	0.81
	Y4	0.82
	Y5	0.84
	Y6	0.76
	Y7	0.80
Brand Attitude	X11	0.80

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading
	X12	0.81
	X13	0.82
	X14	0.78
	X15	0.76
Brand Image	X21	0.88
	X22	0.87
	X23	0.80
Brand Intention	X32	0.90
	X33	0.90
Intention to Recommend	X41	0.79
	X42	0.75
	X43	0.83
	X44	0.81
	X45	0.83

Subsequently, discriminant validity testing is conducted by employing the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. This involves comparing the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlations between constructs in the model. A construct can possess good discriminant validity if its AVE is more significant than other constructs' correlations. The discriminant validity results based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion are presented in Table 4. These findings indicate that discriminant validity is achieved, as the square root of the AVE exceeds the corresponding inter-construct correlations.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Brand Attitude (1)	0.79				
Brand Image (2)	0.75	0.85			
Brand Intention (3)	0.65	0.70	0.90		
Intention to Recommend (4)	0.68	0.71	0.60	0.80	
Social Media Marketing (5)	0.73	0.74	0.77	0.80	0.81

Furthermore, the cross-loading values are examined, with the results presented in Table 5. These findings reveal that each item exhibits the highest cross-loading value when linked to its corresponding endogenous construct, as opposed to its association with other endogenous constructs. This underscores the appropriateness of each indicator in elucidating its respective endogenous construct, thus affirming the validity of discriminant validity for all items.

Table 5. Cross-Loading Test Results

Indicators	SMM	Brand Attitude	Brand Image	Brand Intention	Intention to Recommend
X11	0.60	0.80	0.53	0.54	0.51
X12	0.60	0.81	0.60	0.51	0.54
X13	0.64	0.82	0.70	0.57	0.59
X14	0.51	0.78	0.55	0.52	0.47
X15	0.54	0.76	0.59	0.42	0.57
X21	0.64	0.66	0.88	0.60	0.62
X22	0.68	0.68	0.87	0.68	0.60
X23	0.55	0.55	0.80	0.49	0.59
X32	0.68	0.58	0.63	0.90	0.51
X33	0.70	0.59	0.63	0.90	0.57
X41	0.72	0.58	0.67	0.53	0.79
X42	0.57	0.48	0.50	0.46	0.75
X43	0.64	0.54	0.56	0.50	0.83
X44	0.65	0.52	0.52	0.45	0.81
X45	0.63	0.57	0.58	0.46	0.83
Y1	0.82	0.62	0.64	0.66	0.63
Y2	0.84	0.62	0.64	0.70	0.61
Y3	0.81	0.64	0.63	0.61	0.67
Y4	0.82	0.57	0.58	0.56	0.69
Y5	0.84	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.71
Y6	0.76	0.51	0.54	0.56	0.66

Reliability tests were conducted on the measurement model, assessing Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), rho_A, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results are displayed in Table 6. The test findings indicate that all variables have values greater than 0.7 for CA, CR, and rho-A, while AVE values exceed 0.5. These results suggest that the reliability criteria are satisfied.

Table 6. Reliability Test Result

	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Social Media Marketing	0.914	0.916	0.931	0.660
Brand Attitude	0.853	0.856	0.895	0.629
Brand Image	0.807	0.816	0.886	0.722
Brand Intention	0.762	0.763	0.894	0.808
Intention to Recommend	0.862	0.866	0.901	0.645

Structural Model

After verifying the measurement model and confirming that the reliability and validity indicators

are met, test the structural model to examine the research hypotheses. The results of this data analysis were conducted utilizing the Bootstrapping feature in SmartPLS to assess the significance of latent variable indicators on second-order constructs. These results are presented in Figure 3 and Table 7.
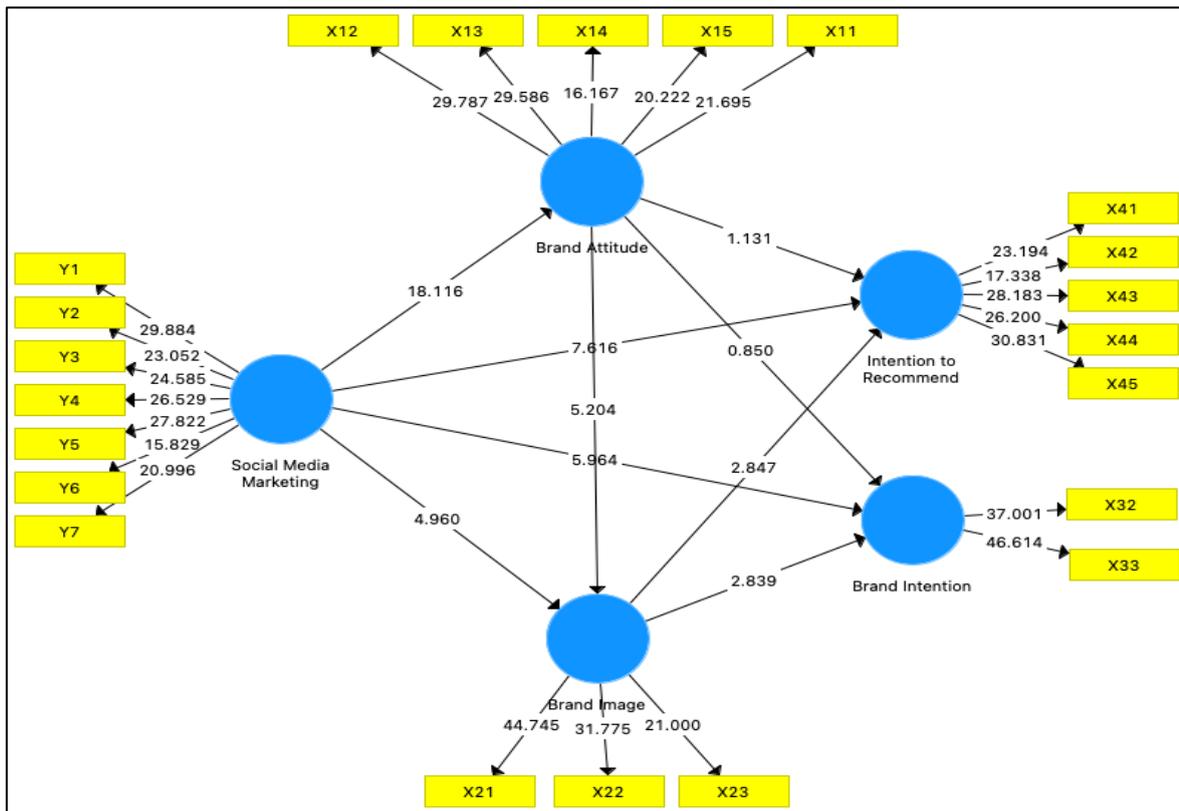

Figure 3. Structural Model Testing Results

Table 7. Hypothesis Test Results

Path Relation	Hypothesis	Estimate	P Values	Significant?
SMM -> Brand Attitude	H1	18.116	0.000	Yes
SMM -> Brand Image	H2	4.96	0.000	Yes
SMM -> Brand Intention	H3	5.964	0.000	Yes
SMM -> Intention to Recommend	H4	7.616	0.000	Yes
Brand Attitude -> Brand Image	H5	5.204	0.000	Yes
Brand Attitude -> Brand Intention	H6	0.85	0.396	No
Brand Attitude -> Intention to Recommend	H7	1.131	0.258	No
Brand Image -> Brand Intention	H8	2.839	0.005	Yes
Brand Image -> Intention to Recommend	H9	2.847	0.005	Yes

Figure 3 and Table 7 present the results of hypothesis testing for various paths in the structural model. Each row represents a specific hypothesis (H1-H9) and provides information on the estimated path coefficients, p-values, and whether the relationship is statistically significant.

The results of Hypotheses 1 and 2 underscore SMM's substantial impact on brand attitude and brand image. The robust positive relationships between SMM and brand attitude (β=18.116, p-value < 0.001) and between SMM and brand image (β=4.96, p-value < 0.001) confirm the significance of strategic

social media engagement in cultivating favorable impressions among prospective students.

Moving on to Hypotheses 3 and 4, The results indicate a significant positive relationship between SMM and students' intention to choose a faith-based educational institution (β=5.964, p-value < 0.001) and their intention to recommend it (β=7.616, p-value < 0.001).

Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 explore the interplay between brand attitude, brand image, brand intention, and students' intentions. The results provide insights into the underlying mechanisms shaping students' perceptions and behaviors. While a significant positive relationship between brand attitude and brand image is observed (β=5.204, p-value < 0.001), suggesting that a favorable brand attitude contributes to an enhanced brand image, the study reveals interesting nuances regarding students' intentions. Despite the positive influence of brand attitude on the intention to choose a faith-based educational institution (β=0.85, p-value = 0.396), this relationship was found to be non-significant. Similarly, the relationship between brand attitude and intention to recommend (β=1.131, p-value = 0.258) was also insignificant.

The results of Hypotheses 8 dan 9 show that brand image has a significant positive relationship with students' brand intention to choose a faith-based educational institution (β=2.839, p-value < 0.005) and their intention to recommend it (β=2.847, p-value < 0.005).

Table 8. Goodness of Fit Model

	Saturated Model	*Estimated Model*
SRMR	0.062	0.062
d_ULS	0.957	0.974
d_G	0.564	0.569
Chi-Square	627.532	632.127
NFI	0.799	0.797

Finally, a Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) model test was conducted to validate the Saturated and Estimated models' combined performance. According to the test results in Table 8, the NFI (Normed Fit Index) for the Saturated Model was 0.799, and for the Estimated Model, it was 0.797. Both indices surpass the threshold of 0.36, indicating a significant degree of GoF. Consequently, it can be inferred that the research variables aptly describe the research sample.

Discussion

The results of Hypotheses 1 and 2 underscore SMM's substantial impact on brand attitude and brand image. As defined by Tuten (2023), social media facilitates the sharing text, images, video, and audio between customers and businesses. In today's digital era, social media serves as a communication platform and a channel for branding and promotion. The results have shown a significant positive correlation between SMM and brand attitude, indicating that a robust social media presence increases brand visibility and familiarity. The more users see and interact with a brand on social media, the more likely they will develop a positive attitude towards it (Poluan et al., 2022). Moreover, when users share content related to the institution on their social media, it serves as an implicit endorsement, contributing to positive brand associations and attitudes among a broader audience. The result is aligned with the previous research by Safitri et al. (2022), and Poluan et al. (2022) have shown similar positive correlations between SMM, brand attitude, and brand image, indicating that a robust social media presence positively influences perceptions among younger demographics.

Hypotheses 3 and 4: The results indicate a significant positive relationship between SMM and students' intention to choose a faith-based educational institution and their intention to recommend it. In today's competitive educational landscape, a strong brand image significantly influences Generation

Z's decision-making process when selecting an educational institution. As digital natives, members of Generation Z are deeply entrenched in the online sphere, relying heavily on social media platforms for information and engagement. This influence is particularly noteworthy in faith-based educational institutions, whose values and ethos are crucial in decision-making. The role of SMM in shaping student interest in such institutions is paramount. By maintaining a solid social media presence and providing engaging content, these institutions can ensure they capture prospective students' attention who may be seeking educational opportunities aligned with their values and beliefs (Jonathan et al., 2023). Furthermore, the observed positive impact of SMM on brand image resonates with the findings of previous research (e.g., Waworuntu et al., 2021; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Ghorbanzadeh & Sharbatiyan, 2024; Safitri et al., 2022) which highlighted the role of social media in shaping the brand image and fostering positive associations with educational institutions. The results underscore the effectiveness of SMM in enhancing brand perception and reputation, which is consistent with the broader literature on the subject.

Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 explore the interplay between brand attitude, brand image, brand intention, and students' intentions. At the same time, a significant positive relationship between brand attitude and brand image is observed. The relationship between brand attitude and brand intention was found to be non-significant. Similarly, the relationship between brand attitude and intention to recommend was insignificant. A positive brand attitude is likely to enhance the perception of the institution's image, emphasizing its values, mission, and identity as a faith-based entity (Marhareita et al., 2022). However, the brand attitude here does not affect student intention and intention to recommend, and this could be because students do not understand the attitude within the school compared to the brand image known to outsiders. Previous research in marketing and branding has established a strong link between brand attitude and brand image across various industries and contexts (e.g., Yodpram & Intalar, 2020; Abin et al., 2022; Marhareita et al., 2022; Poluan et al., 2022; Waworuntu et al., 2022).

However, this research does not align with previous research regarding the influence of brand attitude and intention to recommend (Kainde et al., 2023; Marhareita et al., 2022). The contradictory results between our research and previous studies regarding the influence of brand attitude, brand intention, and intention to recommend may be attributed to the specific focus on faith-based educational institutions in our study introduces unique considerations that may influence students' attitudes and intentions differently compared to other types of educational institutions examined in previous research. Despite these differences, our findings offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of brand perception and intention formation within the context of faith-based educational institutions, highlighting the need for further exploration to understand these discrepancies fully.

Hypotheses 8 dan 9 results show that brand image has a significant positive relationship with students' brand intention to choose a faith-based educational institution and their intention to recommend it. Brand image in the context of educational institutions, especially faith-based ones, plays a crucial role in attracting students and maintaining a positive reputation. A strong brand image encompasses elements such as reputation, perceived quality of education, values, and overall image projected by the institution. This research is in line with previous research, which underscores the impact of institutional brand image on student intention to choose and recommend a school (Kainde et al., 2023; Abin et al., 2022; Waworuntu et al., 2022)

4. CONCLUSION

This study comprehensively examines the intricate relationships between SMM, brand attitude, brand image, and students' intentions regarding faith-based educational institutions. Specifically, the study unveils the significant impact of strategic SMM on shaping favorable impressions among prospective students, highlighting the importance of effective social media engagement in cultivating brand attitude and brand image. Additionally, the research provides nuanced insights into the interplay

between brand attitude, brand image, and students' intentions to choose and recommend a faith-based educational institution. While the positive relationship between brand attitude and brand image reinforces the importance of favorable brand perception, the study uncovers interesting nuances in students' intentions, revealing non-significant relationships between brand attitude and intention to choose or recommend. Furthermore, the significant positive relationships found between brand image and students' brand intentions to choose and recommend underscore the pivotal role of brand image in influencing students' decision-making processes. Overall, the research contributes novel insights into the complex dynamics shaping students' perceptions and behaviors towards faith-based educational institutions, shedding light on previously unexplored aspects of brand perception and intention formation in the context of higher education.

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