

# The Influence of Facilities, Study Program Image and Word of Mouth on Students' Decisions in Choosing a Management Study Program (S2) Faculty of Economics and Business Halu Oleo University Kendari

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine and explain the effect of facilities, study program image and word of mouth on student decisions to choose the Management Study Program (S2), Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University. The research opted for a quantitative study with explanatory research approach. The data was collected using a survey method using an instrument in the form of a questionnaire. The population of this study were all active students of the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business UHO, totaling 219 people. Determination of the sample using the Slovin formula with a precision of 10%, in order to obtain a total sample of 69 people. Analysis equipment used for testing the hypothesis was Multivariate Regression Analysis. The results showed that simultaneously facilities, image of the study program and word of mouth simultaneously had a significant effect on student decisions. Furthermore, facility partially has a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Then the image of the study program partially has a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Finally, word of mouth has a positive and partially significant effect on student decisions. Thus it can be concluded that changes in the improvement of facilities, the image of the study program and word of mouth that are described through equipment, symbolic images and recommendations have a positive and significant contribution to increasing student decisions is reflected in the quick decision,

self-selection, excellence of the study program and the conviction of selection.

**Keywords:** Facilities, Study Program Image, Word of Mouth, Student Decisions

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Economics was born at the same time as the inauguration of Haluoleo University, where the Faculty Economics is one of the faculties that has a good reputation among several faculties in Halu Oleo University Kendari, this can be seen from the success of the three departments consisting of the Department of Science Economy Studies Development, Major Management And Major Accountancy get evaluation Accreditation from Body Accreditation Country with ranking "A" And in frame expand services, then in 2008 the Faculty of Economics opened the Master of Management Study Program (MM). Development interest on faculty economy And business from year yearly experience improvement.

Based on data amount student Which obtained from manager Program Studies Master Management FEB-UHO, number of Study Program Students Master of Management FEB-UHO from year to year shows a fluctuating presentation. In 2015 the number of students was 128 students with two acceptances, in 2016 number of students 85 students the number has decreased, On year 2017 amount student 89 student the amount increase , Then year 2018 the amount increase become 116 . Whereas in the year of 2019, amount student as

much as 103 (Pustik UHO, 2020). This shows that in 2018 there was an increase in the number of students as big as from year previously. Improvement amount student from year to the year show fluctuating during the last five years. Prospective students certainly have considerations and reason different in choosing and deciding Faculty of Economics and Business as a place to continue education. Various aspects that are considered include facilities and infrastructure, and infrastructure, the quality of the lecturers teaching the courses and job prospects after obtaining a degree. Master Management on Faculty Economy And Business.

The increasing interest of prospective students to continue studying in the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, UHO cannot be separated from the role of marketing management carried out by the Master of Management Study Program, but initial observations made by researchers, there is a gap phenomenon that occurs in the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, UHO, including, (1) the quality of service in the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, UHO is still not optimal. Service to students is sometimes late which results in inefficient teaching and learning processes; (2) inadequate facilities and infrastructure in the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, UHO, for example, inadequate parking areas, inadequate educational activity rooms, LCD projector displays are sometimes blurry, fans available in the room are very minimal and the available chairs are still made of wood so that students are uncomfortable in the learning process, (3) there are still some teachers who are very difficult for students to access, especially during the final guidance assignment process. These phenomena have quite a lot of influence on the integrity of an institution and have an impact on the decline in the level of interest and trust of prospective students to register for the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, UHO. This requires the UHO Faculty of Economics and Business Masters of Management Study Program to continually improve the quality and service of its image so as to create positive Word of Mouth by students. This is done to attract the interest of prospective students in choosing the UHO Faculty of Economics and Business Masters of Management Study Program so that there is an increase from period to period.

Referring to Marketing Management theory to investigate and test the relationship between The construct in this study is focused on the decision to choose. The concept of the decision to choose is a the result or output of a mental or cognitive process that leads to the selection of a course of action between a number of alternative Which available. In studies This, theory Which used For explain The construct of student decisions is the Theory of Decision Making put forward by Kotler and Armstrong (2016); And Schiffman And Kanuk, (2012). More carry on measurement decision choose referring to the theory put forward by Schiffman and Kanuk, (2012) that the decision-making indicator The decision consists of nine indicators, namely: (1) quick in deciding, (2) choosing yourself, (3) act because of product superiority, and (4) confidence in the choice. There are several variables that very influence candidate student in decide continue studies, between other:

First, factors that can influence students' decisions in choosing a Masters Study Program Faculty of Economics and Business Management namely facilities. Facilities are physical resources that must exist before a service can be offered to consumers (Tjiptono, 2005). So the facilities will influence consumer in this case students to decide choose study in university the. Level facilities no can rated based on corner program view study but must viewed from the perspective of student assessment. Given the competition between universities that the more increase every college tall sued For continue to have lecture facilities Which high. The research results of Anwar & Putra (2020) have proven that facilities have a significant influence on a person's decision to choose. The results of previous research show a research gap in influence facilities on the decision to choose. Ardiansyah (2019) found that facilities have a positive effect And No significant to decision somebody.

Second, Image program studies. Kotler (1997) define image is a set beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has towards an object . The faculty that has A good study program certainly has a good image. If a study program is in If the faculty has a good/positive image in the eyes of the public, then thoughts will be formed in the minds of the public. prospective students that the study program has good quality. The results of Chen's research (2019) hasprove that image influential significant to decision somebody in choose. The results of previous research show a research gap regarding the influence of image on the decision to choose. program studies.

Wicaksono, et.al (2019) And Mr. et.al (2016) found that image no influential significant to decision somebody.

Third, factor other Which can influence decision student choose program studies Master Management that is word of mouth (WOM). Victory And Paramita (2014) to explain that WOM (Word of Mouth) play a role big in taking decision by consumer And in formation behavioral patterns consumer. Candidate student will keep doing search information to the stage of determination to register at the university that he thinks is right for him most good among others. The greater the risk that will be borne later, the greater Prospective students often share by word of mouth (Word of Mouth) . Research results Siahaan (2019) has proven that Word Of Mouth has a significant influence on decisions. someone in choosing a Study Program. The results of previous research show a research gap in the influence of Word Of Mouth on the decision to choose a Study Program. Purwanto&Afrizal (2018) found that Word Of Mouth influential positive And No significant to decision somebody.

Based on the research gap that has been explained, this study tests and explains the influence facilities, study program image and word of mouth on students' decisions in choosing study programs Good in a way partial and also simultaneously. Because That researcher interested or inspired For do study continued especially on study program Master Management FEB-UHO. Results theoretical review and findings study previously testing influence between variable Which under review in study This most have proven that the facilities, faculty image and good word of mouth are partially able to influence students' decisions to continue their studies. Although empirically it turns out results study previous Still there is contradictory. Because That researcher interested For do testing return from influence variable the in a way integrated

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Influence Facility, Image Program Studies And Word Of Mouth To Decision Student Selecting a Program Studies

Retrieval decision is a process election alternative Which best from a number of alternative with systematic And with consideration For used as method breakdown problem Which functioning For do action Which most appropriate. Retrieval decision in choose college tall on generally associated with problem And objective. Objective Which will achieved by somebody make somebody

make a plan in every decision Which taken. Take care (2015) explain that decision candidate student For continue studies on place studies Which wanted is a decision Where student do considerations Which customized with condition Which There is. In taking decision This there is two choice or more in set a choice Which want to in achieve for the sake of continue education in college tall (Kurnianto, 2016). The problem about decision studying is problem Which will always faced by party university, Because That need know factors Which affect it. Factors Which can influence decision studying the will make management university can take various policy Which required. Student in do taking decision based on on a number of consideration that is facility, image program studies And word of mouth . Based on description theoretical And results study in on, so hypothesis Which submitted as following:  
**Hypothesis 1: Facility, image program studies and word of mouth in a way simultaneous influential significant to decision student Select Program Studies Master Management FEB-UHO**

### 2.2. Influence facility to decision students choose program studies

The theoretical study that is used as the basis for testing the influence of facilities is the path-goal theory by Kotler (200); Tjiptono (2001) that the existence of good facilities will create a perception of consumers where consumers can make decisions in using a service. For the decision to meet customers in the service industry, facilities are very important to be managed properly. One of the factors that is relaxed by consumers in using a service in a company is facilities. With good facilities, of course, consumers will feel satisfied, with that satisfaction, of course, consumers will make a decision to buy services or use the service. Customer satisfaction can be created with good service facilities, in other words, the higher the level of facilities, the greater the customer satisfaction felt and vice versa, the lower the level of facilities, the smaller the customer satisfaction felt. The results of previous studies have proven that facilities have a positive and significant effect on student decisions by Anwar & Putra (2020). However, there are errors or contradictions in the results of research conducted by Ardiansyah&Mulia (2019) which found that facilities have a positive and insignificant effect on a person's decision. Based on the description of the research results or there is still evolution caused by the diversity of indicators of measurement facilities

and student decisions, objects studied, analysis methods, number of samples and theoretical basis used. The absence of a clear concept of the measurement indicators of facilities and student decisions is a gap for this researcher to re-test the relationship between facility construction and student decisions. Based on the theoretical description and research results above, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**Hypothesis: Facilities have a significant influence on students' decisions in choosing the FEB-UHO Masters of Management Study Program.**

### **2.3. The influence of study program image on students' decisions to choose study programs**

A good study program image can directly influence students' decisions. This statement is in accordance with the opinions expressed by Kotler (2000); Aaker (2008) and Satalaksana (1999) that brand image is something important in creating consumer choice decisions, a good brand image is a brand image that brings up positive values towards a brand, so that consumers will always think positively about the brand and will lead to consumer choice decisions in meeting consumer needs. In creating a good image for consumers, various strategies must be carried out to create new opportunities in the eyes of consumers by creating a brand image that can be accepted by consumers and producing something positive in the minds of consumers, in order to create consumer trust in the products sold by producers. If the brand image of the product has a positive value in the eyes of consumers, it will result in a high decision to choose the product desired by consumers. Research that has proven that the Image of the Study Program has a positive and significant effect on student decisions by Chen (2019). However, there is a gap or contradiction in the results of the study conducted by Wicaksono, et.al (2019) who found that image has no significant effect on a person's decision. Based on the gap in research results or there are still contradictions caused by the diversity of indicators for measuring the image of study programs and student decisions, the objects studied, analysis methods, number of samples and theoretical basis used. The absence of a clear concept of the indicators for measuring the image of study programs and student decisions is a gap for this researcher to re-test the Relationship between the Construct of Image of study programs and student decisions. Based on the theoretical

description and research results above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 3: The image of the study program has a significant effect on students' decisions to choose the FEB-UHO Masters of Management Study Program**

### **2.4. The influence of word of mouth on students' decisions in choosing study programs**

Theoretical references to test the influence of Word of Mouth on students' decisions in this study are in accordance with the path goal theory model that the influence of word of mouth on students' decisions proposed by Brown (2005); Tjiptono (2001); and Lupiyoadi and Hamdani (2008) that word of mouth behavior causes the collection of information about a product or service. This is in line with Kotler and Keller (2009; 174) that word of mouth marketing is oral, written, and electronic communication between communities related to the advantages and experiences of buyers using products and services. In fact, the greater the risk perceived by customers in buying a service, the more actively they seek and rely on word of mouth to help make their decisions. The results of previous studies that have proven that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions by Siahaan (2019). However, there is a gap or contradiction in the results of research conducted by Purwanto&Afrizal (2018) found that word of mouth has a positive and insignificant effect on a person's decision. Based on the gap in research results or there are still contradictions caused by the diversity of indicators for measuring word of mouth and student decisions, objects studied, analysis methods, number of samples and theoretical basis used. The absence of a clear concept of indicators for measuring word of mouth and student decisions is a gap for this researcher to re-test the relationship between the word of mouth construct and student decisions. Based on the theoretical description and research results above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 4: Word of mouth has a significant effect on students' decisions to choose the FEB-UHO Master of Management Study Program**

## **III. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research design uses a quantitative approach, with an explanatory research type. Explanatory research is intended to provide an explanation of the causal relationship between variables through hypothesis testing or aims to obtain appropriate testing in drawing conclusions

that are causal between variables and then choosing alternative actions (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). This research was conducted at the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University, Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Furthermore, the population of this study was all active students of the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, UHO, totaling 219 students. The sample size of this study was determined using the Slovin formula quoted from Uma Sekaran (2006), as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{219}{1 + 219(0.10)^2} = 68.6 = 69$$

At a precision level of 10%, from a population of 219 students, a sample size of 69 people was obtained. The sampling technique is carried out randomly (random sampling).

The data analysis method used in this study is descriptive and inferential statistics, namely Multivariate Regression Analysis. Descriptive analysis aims to interpret respondents' perceptions of the choice of statements and the frequency distribution of respondents' statements

from the data that has been collected. Furthermore, the analysis of this research data uses Multivariate Regression Analysis with the help of SPSS software. Multivariate Regression Analysis is tested with the intention of testing and explaining the influence of facilities, study program image, and word of mouth both partially and simultaneously on student decisions with an equation model that can be expressed mathematically as follows:

$$\text{Variatevalue}(Y) = W_1X_1 + W_2X_2 + W_nX_n$$

Hairetal.(2010:4)

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Results

In the previous discussion, it has been stated that in order to answer the problems and hypotheses proposed in this study, namely facilities, study program image and word of mouth on student decisions, both partially and simultaneously, multivariate regression analysis is used. The results of the multivariate regression analysis computation are presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. Multivariate Regression Analysis Computation Results**

The influence of independent variables on dependent variables	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	Sig. t
Facilities □ Student Decisions	0,231	3,351	0,001
Image of Study Program □ Student Decisions	0,449	5,767	0,000
Word of Mouth □ Student Decisions	0,289	3,464	0,001
R = 0.864 R square = 0.747 SEE = 0.454	F value = 63,841 Sig. F = 0.000 n = 69		

Based on the results of the multivariate regression analysis in Table 4.1, the multivariate regression analysis equation is obtained as follows:  
 $Y = 0.231X_1 + 0.449X_2 + 0.289X_3$

The results of the multivariate regression analysis in the regression equation above can be interpreted. The R value = 0.864 indicates that the correlation of the relationship between the independent variables of facilities, study program image and word of mouth on student decisions is strong because the value is above 0.50 (50%). Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) value = 0.747, which means that the diversity of the variables of facilities, study program image and word of mouth on student decisions can be

explained by the model by 74.70% and the remaining 25.30% is explained by other variables outside this research model. It can be concluded that from the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) value, this research model has good model accuracy or precision. Furthermore, the results of the F test obtained a significance or probability value = 0.000 > α = 0.05 at a 95% confidence level. These results show that simultaneously the variables of facilities, study program image and word of mouth influence students' decisions in choosing the Master of Management (S2) Study Program, FEB UHO.

The test results found that simultaneously the variables of facilities, study program image and word of mouth simultaneously have a positive and

significant effect on students' decisions to choose the Master of Management Study Program (S2) FEB UHO.

**Hypothesis 1: Facilities, study program image and word of mouth simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on students' decisions.**

The results of the study can be proven by the results of the F test where the significance value (p-value) =  $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$  was obtained. This shows that facilities, study program image and word of mouth simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on students' decisions to choose the Master of Management Study Program (S2) FEB UHO so that the fourth hypothesis in this study can be accepted. Furthermore, it can also be proven by the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value = 0.747 which means that the diversity of student decision variables can be explained by the model by 74.70% and the remaining 25.30% can be explained by other variables outside this research model. It can be concluded that from the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value, this research model has a fairly good accuracy or model precision. Finally, the results of this study can prove that from the coefficient value and significance t, the study program image variable is the dominant variable because it is greater than the facility and word of mouth variables. This means that the study program image is more dominant in influencing student decisions compared to facilities and word of mouth.

**Hypothesis 2: Facilities have a positive and significant effect on student decisions.**

The results of testing the influence of facilities on student decisions can be proven by the estimated path coefficient value of 0.231 with a positive direction. A positive path coefficient means that the influence between facilities and student decisions is in the same direction. Then it can also be proven by the significance value (p-value) of  $0.001 < \alpha = 0.05$ . The results of this test prove that facilities have a positive and significant effect on students' decisions to choose to continue their studies in the Master of Management Study Program (S2) FEB UHO. This means that increasing facilities has a positive and significant effect on increasing student decisions, so that the second hypothesis proposed in this study can be accepted or supported by empirical facts.

**Hypothesis 3: The image of the study program has a positive and significant effect on student decisions.**

The results of testing the influence of the image of the study program on student decisions can be proven by the estimated path coefficient value of 0.449 with a positive direction. The positive path coefficient means that the influence between the image of the study program on student decisions is in the same direction. Then it can also be proven by the significance value (p-value) of  $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ . The results of this test prove that the image of the study program has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions to choose to continue their studies in the Master of Management Study Program (S2) FEB UHO. This means that increasing the image of the study program is in a positive and significant direction towards increasing student decisions, so that the second hypothesis proposed in this study can be accepted or supported by empirical facts.

**Hypothesis 4: Word of Mouth has a positive and significant effect on Student Decisions.**

The results of testing the influence of word of mouth on student decisions can be proven by the estimated value of the path coefficient of 0.289 with a positive direction. The positive path coefficient means that the influence between word of mouth and student decisions is in the same direction. Then it can also be proven by the significance value (p-value) of  $0.001 < \alpha = 0.05$ . The results of this test prove that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on students' decisions to choose to continue their studies in the Master of Management Study Program (S2) FEB UHO. This means that the increase in word of mouth is positive and significant towards increasing student decisions, so that the third hypothesis proposed in this study can be accepted or supported by empirical facts.

#### 4.2. Discussion

**The influence of facilities, study program image and word of mouth on student decisions**

The results of simultaneous testing found that facilities, study program image and word of mouth together have a significant influence on student decisions. This means that changes in facilities, study program image and word of mouth simultaneously have a significant influence on student decisions. Changes in improving facilities, study program image and word of mouth described through the availability of places of worship, toilets and parking lots in the Master of Management

Program, the image offered by the institution is able to serve the internal needs of consumers to increase self-esteem, social roles and status, involvement with social groups including perceptions of social reputation, educational features and staff character, and recommendations of the Master of Management Study Program (S2) Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University and students to others can increase trust and desire to choose the Master of Management Study Program (S2) Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University to others has a positive and significant contribution to increasing student decisions which is reflected through students quickly deciding to continue their studies in the Master of Management Study Program (S2) Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University.

The focus of the study in this research is to analyze the factors that influence students' decisions in choosing the Master of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, UHO. Decision making is a process of solving problems in deciding to buy or choose a product consisting of several stages, namely analyzing or recognizing needs and desires, searching for information, assessing selection sources for purchasing alternatives, purchasing decisions and post-purchase behavior. Desmita (2008), decision making is a form of thinking and the result of that action is called a decision. Consistent with Suharnan (2005), decision making is the process of choosing or determining various possibilities among uncertain situations. Decision making occurs in situations that require someone to make predictions in the future, choose one of two or more options, make estimates (forecasts) regarding the frequency of predictions that will occur. In line with Baron & Byrne (2008), decision making is a process through a combination of individuals or groups and integrating existing information with the aim of choosing one of various possible actions. The results of this study show that facility competence, study program image and word of mouth have a significant effect together on student decisions. The findings of this study are able to prove the truth of the Marketing Management theory by Tjiptono (2011: 2), marketing management is a total system of business activities designed to plan, price, and distribute products, services and ideas that are able to satisfy the desires of the target market in order to achieve organizational goals. Consistent with the opinion of Kotler and Keller (2011: 6) marketing management is defined as the art and science of

choosing target markets and achieving, maintaining, and growing customers by creating, delivering, and communicating common customer value. Furthermore, Shultz (2005), marketing management is the planning, direction, and supervision of all marketing activities of a company or part of a company. Then Dickson (1997), marketing management is an organizational activity involved in understanding what consumers want and how they behave. In this study, the theory used to explain the construct of student decisions is the Theory of Decision Making proposed by Janis and Mann (1977); Terry and Brinckloe (2010); Kotler and Armstrong (2016); and Schiffman and Kanuk, (2012).

#### **The influence of facilities on student decisions**

The results of this study state that facilities have a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Thus, the results of this study prove that improving facilities can make a significant contribution to improving student decisions. This indicates that the better the facilities on campus, the better the student's decision in choosing a study program. The findings of this study reflect that good facilities described through spatial planning, room planning, equipment, and graphic messages have a significant contribution to student decisions reflected in aspects of quick decision-making, self-choice, study program excellence and confidence in choosing. Therefore, facilities are very important in determining students' decisions to choose to continue their studies. The better the facilities provided by the organization will certainly have an impact on students' decisions in choosing to continue their studies.

The theoretical study used as the basis for testing the influence of facilities is the path-goal theory by Kotler (200); Tjiptono (2004); Wyckof (2002) that the existence of good facilities will create a perception of consumers where consumers can make decisions in using a service. To meet customer decisions in the service industry, facilities are very important to be managed well. One of the factors considered by consumers in using a service in a company is facilities. With good facilities, of course, consumers will feel satisfied, with that satisfaction, of course, consumers will make a decision to buy services or use the service. Customer satisfaction can be created with good service facilities, in other words, the higher the level of facilities, the greater the customer satisfaction felt and vice versa, the lower the level of facilities, the lower the customer satisfaction felt. Based on the results of this study, good

facilities can significantly influence student decisions. Furthermore, the findings of this study obtained that the measurement of facility variables is more reflected by the completeness indicator according to respondents while student decisions are more reflected by the quick decision indicator. This means that the equipment reflected through facilities that provide comfort, as a display or as supporting infrastructure for the use of goods by students has a significant contribution and greatly determines student decisions which are reflected through students immediately registering to continue their studies in the Management Study Program (S2) Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University when they get information on the Halu Oleo University Website and get information from friends. The results of this study can prove that facilities have a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Thus, this study is supported and consistent with the results of Anwar & Putra's (2020) study which found that facilities have a positive and significant effect on student decisions. However, it is different or contradictory to the results of Ardiansyah&Mulia's (2019) study which found that facilities have a positive and insignificant effect on a person's decision.

#### **The influence of interpersonal study program image on student decisions**

The results of this study state that the study program image has a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Thus, the results of this study prove that improving the image of a study program can make a significant contribution to improving student decisions. This indicates that the better the image of the study program, the better the student's decision in choosing a study program. The findings of this study reflect that a good study program image described through functional image, symbolic image and experiential image has a significant contribution to student decisions which are reflected through aspects of quickly deciding, choosing for themselves, study program excellence and confidence in choosing. Therefore, the image of the study program is very important in determining students' decisions to choose to continue their studies. The better the image of the study program provided by the organization will certainly have an impact on students' decisions in choosing to continue their studies.

A good study program image can directly influence student decisions. This statement is in accordance with the opinion put forward by Kotler (2000); Aaker (2008) and Satalaksana (1999) that

Brand image is something important in creating consumer choice decisions, a good brand image is a brand image that brings up positive values for a brand, so that consumers will always think positively about the brand and will create consumer choice decisions in meeting consumer needs. Kotler (1997) defines image as a set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has about an object. Image is a response or impression that arises in the minds of the public towards an object. Consistent with Amaliya (2018), the image of a study program is the response or impression of the public towards a study program. A faculty that has a good study program certainly has a good image too. Based on the results of this study, a good study program image can significantly influence student decisions. Furthermore, the findings of this study obtained that the measurement of the study program image variable was more reflected by the symbolic image indicator according to respondents while student decisions were more reflected by the quick decision indicator. This means that the symbolic image measured through the image offered by the institution is able to serve the internal needs of consumers to increase self-esteem, social roles and status, involvement with social groups including perceptions of social reputation, educational features and staff character have a significant contribution and greatly determine student decisions which are reflected through students immediately registering to continue their studies in the Management Study Program (S2) Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University when they get information on the Halu Oleo University Website and get information from friends. The results of this study can prove that the image of the study program has a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Thus, this study is supported and consistent with the results of Chen's research (2019) which found that the image of the study program had a positive and significant effect on student decisions. However, it is different or contradictory to the results of Wicaksono's research, et.al (2019) which found that image had no significant effect on a person's decision

#### **The influence of word of mouth on student decisions**

The results of this study state that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Thus, the results of this study prove that good word of mouth can provide a significant contribution to improving student decisions. This indicates that the better the word of



mouth, the better the student's decision in choosing a study program. The findings of this study reflect that good word of mouth which is described through talking about positive things, recommending, and encouraging has a significant contribution to student decisions which are reflected through aspects of quickly deciding, choosing for themselves, the advantages of the study program and confidence in choosing. Therefore, word of mouth is very important in determining students' decisions to choose to continue their studies. The better the word of mouth in an organization will certainly have an impact on students' decisions in choosing to continue their studies.

Theoretical references to test the influence of Word of Mouth on student decisions in this study are in accordance with the path goal theory model that the influence of word of mouth on student decisions proposed by Brown (2005); Tjiptono (1995); and Lupiyoadi and Hamdani (2008) that word of mouth behavior causes the collection of information about a product or service. The amount of positive information about a product can make consumers' perceptions positive about a product. This is in line with Kotler and Keller (2009; 174) that word of mouth marketing is oral, written, and electronic communication between people related to the advantages and experiences of buyers using products and services. In addition, according to Lovelock, et al. (2010; 216) recommendations from other customers are usually more trusted than promotional activities from the company and can greatly influence other people's decisions to use (or avoid) a service. In fact, the greater the risk perceived by customers in buying a service, the more actively they seek and rely on word of mouth to help them make decisions. Based on the results of this study, good word of mouth can significantly influence students' decisions. Furthermore, the findings of this study obtained that the measurement of the word of mouth variable was more reflected by the indicator of recommending according to respondents while students' decisions were more reflected by the indicator of quickly deciding. This means that recommendations are measured through students recommending and warning others to study in the Management Study Program (S2) FEB UHO, students recommending and warning my friends and family to study in the Management Study Program (S2) FEB UHO have a significant contribution and greatly determine the decision of students reflected through students immediately registering to continue their studies in

the Management Study Program (S2) Faculty of Economics and Business, Halu Oleo University when they get information on the Halu Oleo University Website and get information from friends. The results of this study can prove that word of mouth studies have a positive and significant effect on student decisions. Thus, this study is supported and consistent with the results of Siahaan's research (2019) which found that word of mouth had a positive and significant effect on student decisions. However, it is different or contradictory to the results of Purwantoro&Afrizal's research (2018) which found that word of mouth had a positive and insignificant effect on a person's decision

## V. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Some limitations of this study can be considered by subsequent researchers, namely: Respondents of this study were limited to active students of the Master of Management Study Program (S2), thus limiting the ability to generalize the findings of this study, especially in educational organizations, public organizations, private organizations and agencies in other regions. This study is limited to the analysis of survey data that presents causal influence analysis at one point in time (cross sectional). Furthermore, the data of this study uses employee perceptions through self-assessment. This study is limited only to data analysis based on research variables, while data based on respondent characteristics only describe based on the number and percentage. Further research can test and develop this study again by making respondent characteristics such as gender, age, occupation and type of income as control variables to see differences in the variables to be studied

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