



Students' Decisions to Choose Public Senior High Schools in A School Digital Information Ecosystem Based on Reputation, Service Quality, and Accessibility

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ABSTRACT

Students' decisions to choose public senior high schools are increasingly shaped by school reputation, service quality, accessibility, and the quality of digital information used by students and parents. However, integrated syntheses mapping the relationships among these four factors in the context of school digital information ecosystems remain limited. This study aims to synthesize empirical evidence on the factors explaining students' decisions to choose public senior high schools based on reputation, service quality, accessibility, and digital information. A systematic literature review was conducted using the PRISMA guidelines. Articles were identified from the Scopus database using relevant Boolean keywords. From 555 initial documents, screening was conducted based on publication year from 2021 to 2026, journal article type, English language, open access status, abstract relevance, DOI validity, and thematic suitability. The findings show that school choice is not formed by a single factor, but by the interaction of institutional image, evidence of academic quality, service quality, physical and digital access, information usefulness, source credibility, and students' information adoption. School digital channels should be managed as informative services that are transparent, easy to navigate, and relevant to prospective students' needs. This study contributes to strengthening the conceptual foundation for preliminary studies on students' decisions to choose public senior high schools within school digital information ecosystems.

INTRODUCTION

Students' decisions to choose schools are increasingly influenced by changes in admission governance, the availability of public information, and perceptions of educational institutional quality. In Indonesia, the label of "favorite school" has persisted because a positive image has long been established in the public sphere, although zoning policies have been directed toward expanding equitable access (Arlinwibowo et al., 2024). In other contexts, the presentation of academic performance data has been shown to guide families in evaluating schools, but it may also reinforce segregation when quality information is interpreted alongside the social composition of schools (Houston & Henig, 2023). Access to schools is also not determined solely by distance, but by the relationship among admission policies, transportation, and students' real opportunities to reach educational options (Nichols & Ryan, 2023). Therefore, school choice should be understood as an evaluative process that brings together reputation, service quality, physical and digital access, and information credibility.

Recent research maps show that school and educational institution choice has moved along three main streams, namely area-based access, perceived quality, and students' social experience. A study on socioeconomic-based school zoning confirms that both school choice and neighborhood characteristics influence the educational value perceived by families (Cheung et al., 2022). In elite secondary schools, scholarship students reflected on academic and social benefits, as well as the adaptive costs attached to choosing prestigious institutions (Feldman & Wallace, 2021). In Indonesia, the new student admission policy has been reported to expand access for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, but learning quality and readiness for inclusion have not improved proportionally (Santoso et al., 2025). In school choice policies, students with disabilities also require attention because formal access does not always guarantee equal services (Senese & Winters, 2025). Thus, school choice research still requires a framework that connects equitable access, institutional reputation, and service quality as genuinely experienced by students.

The development of digital channels has added a new layer to the school choice process because institutional information is now evaluated through websites, social media, and online learning sources. Website and social media quality has been shown to influence satisfaction and decisions to choose private higher education institutions through user experience (Mesra et al., 2023). In school management, big-data-based quality evaluation has been used to assess compulsory education management performance more systematically (Min et al., 2023). The accessibility of open educational resources is also important because digital repositories are not always easy to find, use, or access by all users (Perifanou & Economides, 2023). In e-learning ecosystems, recommendation parameters and information quality determine the suitability of learning services (Shibani et al., 2023), while high-quality information can affect academic performance through perceived usefulness (Badr et al., 2024). Therefore, school digital information should be positioned as a strategic service that builds trust, facilitates comparison, and guides students' educational decisions.

However, a knowledge gap remains due to the limited synthesis specifically linking students' decisions to choose public senior high schools with reputation, service quality, accessibility, and school digital information ecosystems. Studies on educational choice are generally still centered on higher education, university attributes, satisfaction, and student loyalty (Manishimwe et al., 2025; Juhaidi, 2024). Information sources and prospective students' needs have been prioritized through the AHP approach, but the context of public senior high school students and school information channels has not been explained in an integrated manner (Ürer Erdil et al., 2021). In addition, "Why Choose" pages of educational institutions have been examined as spaces of marketing discourse, but their integration with access and service quality in secondary schools remains limited (Zhang et al., 2022). This study aims to examine empirical evidence on the factors influencing students' decisions to choose public senior high schools. The research question is directed at identifying the most consistent factors explaining these decisions, while the contribution is placed on providing a conceptual basis for preliminary studies.

METHOD

This study employed a systematic literature review using a PRISMA-based selection flow. The article search was conducted in the Scopus database using the Boolean string: school AND choice AND student AND information AND QUALITY AND accessibility AND reputation*. The initial search yielded 555 documents. After limiting the publication years to 2021–2026, 333 documents remained. Screening for the document type "journal article" resulted in 156 articles. The English-language restriction left 155 articles, and the All Open Access filter produced 71 articles. At the eligibility stage, these 71 articles were selected based on abstract relevance, DOI availability, thematic suitability, and construct proximity to students' decisions to choose schools in a digital information ecosystem based on reputation, service quality, and accessibility.

The inclusion criteria were English-language journal articles published from 2021 to 2026, open access articles, articles with DOI, and studies containing empirical data, primary data, original administrative data, or analysis of primary digital sources. Articles were also required to discuss at least one core construct. These constructs included student decisions or choices, digital information, institutional reputation, academic service quality, accessibility, educational institutional attractiveness, and user experience with educational information sources. Articles were excluded if they focused on non-educational domains, did not address student choice or educational institutions, were purely systematic reviews, were irrelevant to the research constructs, had duplicate DOIs, or had retracted status. No DOI duplication was found among the 71 candidate articles, and no retracted articles were retained at the final stage.

The final selection resulted in 10 highly relevant articles. Higher education articles were retained when they contained mechanisms of student choice, institutional reputation, service quality, accessibility, and digital information that could be analytically transferred to the context of students' decisions to choose public senior high schools. The DOI metadata of the included articles were matched with article pages, publishers, or open indexes that displayed DOI and

core bibliographic information. The same verification procedure was applied to articles addressing high school students' career decisions, major choice behavior, higher education mobility, institutional choice management, and asynchronous online learning.

In the initial identification stage, 555 articles were found through Scopus. In the initial screening stage, 222 articles were excluded because they were outside the 2021–2026 publication range, leaving 333 articles. Subsequently, 177 documents were excluded because they were not journal articles, leaving 156 articles. One article was excluded because it was not written in English, leaving 155 articles. After the All Open Access filter was applied, 84 articles were excluded, leaving 71 articles. At the eligibility stage, 61 articles were excluded because they did not meet thematic relevance, did not contain core constructs, or did not provide an adequate empirical basis. At the inclusion stage, 10 articles were retained as the final articles for narrative synthesis.

PRISMA Flowchart

The following section presents the article selection flow according to PRISMA guidelines, from identification in the Scopus database to the final inclusion of articles that met the eligibility criteria for further analysis. This flow describes the number of records at each stage and the reasons for systematic exclusion, as shown in Figure 1.

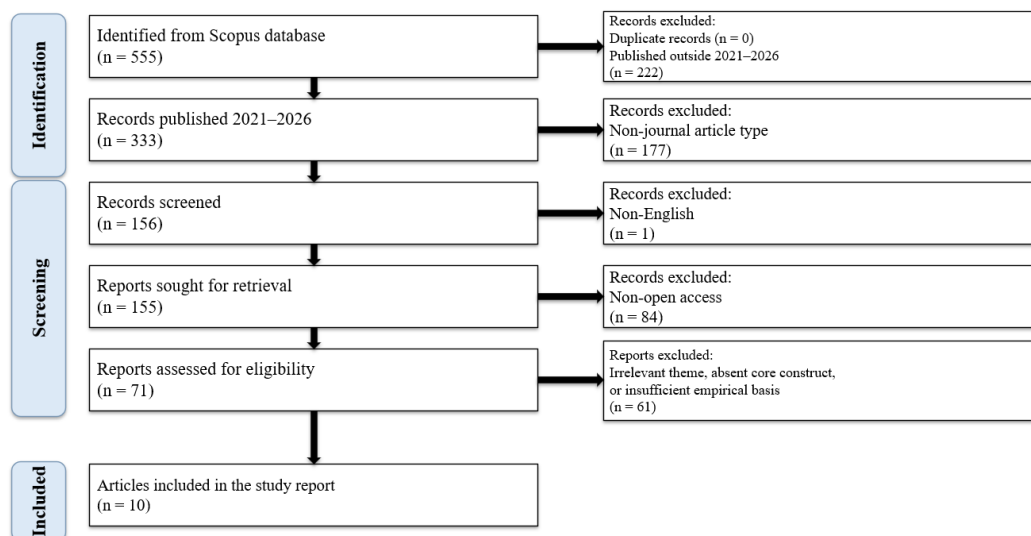


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

RESULTS

The included articles showed four main thematic clusters, namely digital information and source credibility, reputation and attractiveness of educational institutions, accessibility and mobility of choice, and the quality of learning experience or educational services. The final screening results showed that 10 of the 71 open access Scopus articles were most relevant to the topic of students' decisions to choose public senior high schools within a school digital information ecosystem.

Table 1. Article Review Results

No	Author(s)	Findings
1	Mariñas et al. (2025)	Trust, intention to use, accuracy, and attitude were identified as the main predictors of ChatGPT use as an academic information source whose credibility must be assured for university students.
2	Al-Qahtani (2021)	University websites represented prestige and uniqueness, but information on admission, programs, campuses, and financial aid remained limited for prospective users and decision-making searches.
3	Ghosh and Tripathi (2025)	University attractiveness was shaped by research, program diversity, branding, placement, alumni, and curriculum supporting institutional sustainability and student admission.
4	Aziz et al. (2025)	Academic quality and institutional reputation were important attributes and necessary conditions in international students' sustainable decisions to choose Malaysian universities.
5	Tseng et al. (2024)	Growth creative mindset and flow experience increased the value of OER. The design quality of learning resources strengthened students' online learning experience and engagement.
6	Stoica et al. (2025)	A valid two-factor scale was established. Resource access and career self-efficacy were sensitive to the educational pathway context of high school students in needs assessment.
7	Kotamena et al. (2024)	Self-congruity, social influence, and behavioral intention affected students' use behavior. Information usefulness worked indirectly through information adoption before major choice was decided.
8	Kosztván et al. (2021)	Location, institution, and economic inequality mediated higher education choice and students' spatial mobility patterns from birthplace to work at the national level.
9	Baliyan and Mokoena (2024)	Institutional choice was influenced by extracurricular activities, job prospects, program quality, campus accessibility, electronic media, cost, financial support, and personal contact in recruitment strategies.
10	Huang and Liu (2024)	Experience confirmation increased learning continuance intention. Usefulness and enjoyment mediated participants' decisions to continue flexible and meaningful asynchronous online learning.

DISCUSSION

The synthesis indicates that students' decisions to choose educational institutions cannot be understood as a simple rational act. These decisions are formed through the convergence of institutional image, information usefulness, and social influence received through digital channels. University websites, for example, do not merely function as information media, but also serve as spaces for representing reputation through promotional language, emphasis on prestige, and claims of institutional excellence (Al-Qahtani, 2021). At the same time, information perceived as useful does not always directly drive choice behavior because its influence may operate through information adoption and students' behavioral intention (Kotamena et al., 2024). In digital ecosystems, trust in the accuracy and credibility of information also determines students' willingness to use certain information sources to support decision-making (Mariñas et al., 2025). Therefore, school choice becomes stronger when digital information is perceived as credible, relevant, easy to adopt, and aligned with students' self-image regarding their choices.

Reputation and service quality appear as two main axes that connect school promotion with students' decisions. In the context of international university choice, institutional reputation and academic quality have been shown to be important attributes and necessary conditions in enrollment decisions (Aziz et al., 2025). Similar findings are evident in research on university attractiveness, which places publication, research excellence, program diversity, branding, alumni, curriculum, and placement prospects as factors supporting institutional sustainability (Ghosh & Tripathi, 2025). From the perspective of choice management, program quality, facilities, campus accessibility, electronic media, personal contact, cost, and financial support also shape students' reasons for enrollment (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024). These findings confirm that prospective students evaluate institutions through comparable evidence of services rather than only through attractive promotional messages. Thus, reputation is not merely a prominent name, but an accumulation of academic quality, services, facilities, and evidence of future benefits.

Accessibility should be interpreted in two layers, namely physical access to institutions and cognitive access to choice-related information. Among high school students, access to resources and exploration of career choices have been shown to be important dimensions in the decision-making process, together with career choice self-efficacy (Stoica et al., 2025). At the higher education level, spatial mobility shows that location, institution, and economic inequality can shape application preferences and student mobility pathways (Kosztyán et al., 2021). However, access to information does not automatically become a decision when students do not internalize such information into intention and major-choice behavior (Kotamena et al., 2024). Campus accessibility and facilities also emerge as components of institutional choice that can be managed strategically (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024). Therefore, effective accessibility is not only geographical proximity, but also students' ease in understanding, comparing, and using school information meaningfully before making a conscious decision.

The digital dimension of educational decisions shows that the quality of information sources is strongly shaped by user experience. The value of OER for students is not determined solely by the availability of open resources, but also by engagement, learning flow, control, curiosity, and interest in learning materials (Tseng et al., 2024). In asynchronous online learning, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment mediate the relationship between experience confirmation and learning continuance intention. Accessibility alone is insufficient when the learning experience is not enjoyable and is not considered useful (Huang & Liu, 2024). Findings on ChatGPT reinforce the role of trust, accuracy, intention to use, and attitude as the main predictors of students' use of digital information tools (Mariñas et al., 2025). Schools seeking to compete need to ensure that their digital channels provide answers, evidence of quality, and concise search experiences. Therefore, school digital information ecosystems should be designed as service experiences that are credible, easy to navigate, enjoyable, and relevant to students' needs.

Conceptually, students' decisions to choose public senior high schools can be positioned as the result of interactions among reputation, service quality, accessibility, and digital information quality. Institutional representation that is excessively promotional but lacks substantive information may create uncertainty for prospective students (Al-Qahtani, 2021). Conversely, reputation supported by academic quality, branding, prospects, and institutional attributes provides a stronger evaluative basis for educational choice (Aziz et al., 2025; Ghosh & Tripathi, 2025). Access to choice resources and mobility structures also shows that students' decisions are influenced by opportunities, location, and their capacity to explore the future (Stoica et al., 2025; Kosztyán et al., 2021). The synthesis of the ten included articles shows a gap in the integration of school choice, reputation, service quality, accessibility, and digital information in the context of public senior high schools. This gap confirms the importance of the topic because it can serve as a basis for preliminary studies and as an academic foundation for developing research focus and direction. A strong school choice model should integrate real reputation, measurable service quality, physical and digital accessibility, and information that helps students make decisions based on their academic and social needs.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students' decisions to choose public senior high schools within school digital information ecosystems can be explained through the integration of institutional reputation, service quality, accessibility, and information quality. Reputation does not stand merely as a symbolic image, but is built through evidence of academic quality, program quality, future prospects, facilities, and service consistency that can be compared by students and parents. Service quality should be displayed concretely through information on programs, facilities, achievements, admission pathways, learning support, and student development opportunities.

Accessibility is also not limited to physical distance, but includes ease in finding, understanding, comparing, and using school information. In digital contexts, students' decisions are increasingly influenced by the credibility of

information channels, clarity of school narratives, ease of navigation, and quality of user experience when accessing information. The most relevant conceptual model for explaining decisions to choose public senior high schools is a model that positions reputation, service quality, physical and digital accessibility, information credibility, and information adoption as interrelated processes. Thus, school strategies should not rely only on promotion, but should be directed toward developing evidence of quality that is transparent, relevant, accessible, and usable by students in educational decision-making processes

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