

The Influence Of Digital Marketing Capability And Service Quality On Participants' Decisions To Choose Training Services With Brand Image As A Mediation Variable At Pustama Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality on Participants' Decisions to Choose Training Services with Brand Image as a mediating variable at PUSTAMA INDONESIA. This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal associative research type. The study population is participants who have attended or used PUSTAMA INDONESIA training services, with a sample of 150 respondents selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis used Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) through testing the measurement model and structural model. The results of the study indicate that Digital Marketing Capability has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image and Participant Decisions. Service Quality also has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image and Participant Decisions. Furthermore, Brand Image is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Participants' Decisions to Choose Training Services. The results of the mediation test indicate that Brand Image is able to mediate the influence of Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality on Participant Decisions. The R-Square value shows that Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality are able to explain 58.3% of the variation in Brand Image, while Digital Marketing Capability, Service Quality, and Brand Image are able to explain 67.2% of the variation in Participant Decisions. The research findings show that increasing participant decisions is not enough only through digital marketing activities, but needs to be supported by consistent service quality and a positive brand image. Therefore, PUSTAMA INDONESIA needs to develop an informative and interactive digital marketing strategy, improve service quality, and strengthen Brand Image to increase participant attraction and trust in training services.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing Capability, Service Quality, Brand Image, Participant Decisions, Training Services.*

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IJBQR, Volume 04 Issue 03, 2026



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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes to the way organizations market products and services, build relationships with consumers, and influence decision-making processes. Digital transformation is not limited to the goods trade sector but has also significantly expanded in the services sector, including education and training. Consumers now have increasingly broad access to a variety of information through websites, social media, search engines, digital communication platforms, and various other digital channels before making a choice of a service provider. This condition has resulted in competition among training service providers no longer being determined solely by the quality of the programs offered, but also by the institution's ability to manage digital marketing activities effectively. In the context of training services, participants generally require information about the type of training, instructor competency, learning methods, schedules, costs, facilities, previous participant experience, and the institution's reputation before making a decision. Therefore, an organization's ability to utilize digital technology to produce relevant, accessible, interactive, reliable, and consistent information is becoming increasingly important. Digital Marketing Capability can be understood as an organization's ability to integrate resources, technology, information, and digital marketing activities to create value and build relationships with customers. These skills extend beyond simply uploading content to social media, but also encompass the ability to design strategies, understand audience needs, manage digital channels, produce valuable content, engage with potential participants, utilize data, and evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing activities. Therefore, the better an institution's digital marketing capabilities, the greater its chances of increasing the attention, trust, and consideration of potential participants for its training services (Nabawi & Maulana, 2024).

In the increasingly competitive training service market, digital marketing capability is a strategic capability that can determine how an institution builds perceptions and attracts potential participants. Participants not only passively receive information but can compare various training institutions based on digital content, testimonials, instructor reputations, activity documentation, social media interactions, and ease of access to information. This indicates that digital channels have become part of the evaluation process before someone decides to use a service. Research on training services in Indonesia found that digital marketing had a positive and significant influence on training service purchasing decisions, along with service quality (Anitasari, 2025). However, other findings in computer training services showed that digital marketing had no significant influence on purchasing decisions, while service quality did. These differences in results indicate an interesting research gap



that requires further study, particularly regarding whether an organization's ability to manage digital marketing is truly capable of driving participant decisions in choosing training services. In other words, the presence of digital media does not necessarily automatically result in a decision to choose if the information conveyed cannot build a positive perception of the institution (Sino et al., 2025). This is where brand image plays a crucial role as a mechanism that can explain how digital marketing capability translates into participant decisions. Consistently managed digital marketing can strengthen brand recognition, clarify an institution's positioning, build positive associations, and enhance perceptions of professionalism. Conversely, inconsistent digital marketing, incomplete information, slow responses, or irrelevant content can create negative perceptions and weaken an institution's image. Therefore, the relationship between Digital Marketing Capability and participant decisions cannot be viewed solely as a direct relationship; brand image must also be considered as a bridging variable (Aprillia et al., 2025).

In addition to digital marketing capabilities, Service Quality is a fundamental factor in service marketing because the intangible nature of services often leads potential customers to use service quality as a basis for assessing the capabilities and credibility of service providers. In training services, service quality can be reflected in the provider's reliability in delivering training as promised, responsiveness to participant needs, instructor competence and ability, guaranteed security and professionalism of the service, attention to participants, training facilities, accuracy of information, and the overall participant experience. The SERVQUAL concept developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry places service quality across five main dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. For training institutions, service quality is becoming increasingly important because participants are not only purchasing materials or modules but also purchasing learning experiences, interactions with instructors, ease of administrative services, support during training, and expected benefits after participating in the program. When participants receive service that meets or even exceeds expectations, this experience can form a positive evaluation of the institution. Conversely, a mismatch between expectations and service experiences can lead to dissatisfaction and reduce the likelihood of participants choosing or recommending the institution again. In this context, Service Quality not only has the potential to directly influence participant decisions but can also shape Brand Image. Participants' experiences interacting with the institution, instructors, administrative staff, facilities, and overall service system will be a source of information that shapes their perceptions of the institution's identity and reputation. Therefore, consistent service quality can be a crucial tool for building a strong brand image and increasing the likelihood of participants choosing training services (Syavira et al., 2025).

Brand image is a crucial variable because service selection decisions are based not only on rational information about price, schedule, or facilities, but also on perceptions of the service provider and its trustworthiness. Brand image describes a set of perceptions, associations, and beliefs formed in consumers' minds about a brand. In training services, an institution's image can be formed through various experiences and information sources, including digital marketing communications, service quality, previous participant experiences, instructor reputation, testimonials, activity documentation, visual identity, and the consistency of the institution's message. When PUSTAMA INDONESIA is able to build an image as a professional, credible, responsive, and high-quality training institution capable of providing tangible benefits, potential participants will have a higher level of confidence in evaluating and selecting the services offered (Muthalib et al., 2025). Previous research also shows a link between digital marketing, service quality, brand image, and purchasing decisions. A study in the telemedicine sector in Indonesia, for example, examined digital marketing, service quality, and brand image in relation to purchasing decisions. Other research has shown that brand image and service quality can influence purchasing decisions, while research on digital marketing and service quality has also found that intermediary variables can explain the relationship between marketing activities and consumer decisions. These findings provide a basis that Brand Image is worthy of being placed as a mediating variable in this study, because digital marketing capabilities and service quality can first shape participants' perceptions of the institution, then these perceptions drive confidence and decisions to choose training services (Rizkiyani & Pranata, 2024).

PUSTAMA INDONESIA, as a training service provider, faces this situation in a competitive environment that demands institutions combine digital marketing capabilities with consistent service quality. Potential participants have many alternative training institutions, so the selection process depends not only on the availability of training programs but also on how the institution is communicated and perceived by the market. In such a situation, Digital Marketing Capability can serve as a starting point for introducing the program and building engagement, while Service Quality becomes a tangible experience that determines participants' evaluation of the institution. Both then have the potential to shape Brand Image, which ultimately influences participants' decisions to choose training services. This model is important because previous research has shown inconsistent results. On the one hand, research on training services found that digital marketing and service quality have a positive effect on purchasing decisions. On the other hand, research on certain training institutions found that digital marketing has no significant effect on decisions, while service quality has a significant effect. Even research at PT Hanosen Pratama HSP Academy found that digital marketing content and brand image were insignificant in decisions to

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choose, while service quality had a significant effect. These differences in findings indicate that the influence of Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality on participant decisions may not be simple and may be influenced by brand perception. Therefore, the research on "The Influence of Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality on Participants' Decisions to Choose Training Services with Brand Image as a Mediating Variable at PUSTAMA INDONESIA" has both academic and practical relevance. Academically, this research is expected to enrich the study of service marketing by examining the role of Brand Image as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between digital marketing capabilities, service quality, and participant decisions. Practically, the research results are expected to be a basis for PUSTAMA INDONESIA in developing more effective digital marketing strategies, improving service quality, strengthening brand image, and creating participant experiences that can encourage decisions to choose training services. Thus, this research not only focuses on whether participants choose training services, but also explains the process of how digital marketing capabilities and service quality shape the image of PUSTAMA INDONESIA and ultimately encourage participants' decisions to choose the training services.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal associative research type, which aims to analyze the influence of *Digital Marketing Capability* and *Service Quality* on participants' decisions in choosing training services, both directly and indirectly through *Brand Image* as a mediating variable at PUSTAMA INDONESIA. The population in this study were all participants who had attended or used PUSTAMA INDONESIA training services. Sampling was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, with the respondent criteria being participants who had attended PUSTAMA INDONESIA training and had experience interacting with digital marketing information and services provided by the institution. Research data were obtained through distributing questionnaires using a Likert scale of 1–5, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The *Digital Marketing Capability* variable was measured based on the institution's ability to utilize digital media, develop content, interact with potential participants, utilize digital information, and evaluate digital marketing activities. *Service Quality* was measured through the dimensions of *tangibles*, *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *assurance*, and *empathy*, while *Brand Image* was measured through the strength, excellence, and uniqueness of brand associations. Meanwhile, *the Participant's Decision to Choose Training Services* is measured through the steadfastness of choice, suitability of needs, confidence in the service, decision to use the service, and tendency to recommend.

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Data analysis was carried out through several stages, namely validity testing, reliability testing, descriptive analysis, structural model analysis, and hypothesis testing. Testing can be done using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the help of the SmartPLS application because this method is able to analyze direct and indirect relationships through mediating variables. Evaluation of the measurement model (*outer model*) was carried out by looking at *the loading factor value* , *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE), *Composite Reliability* , and *Cronbach's Alpha* . Furthermore, evaluation of the structural model (*inner model*) was carried out by looking at the R-square (R^2) value, *path coefficient* , and *predictive relevance* if necessary. Hypothesis testing was carried out using bootstrapping techniques by paying attention to *the t-statistic* and *p-value values* . The mediating effect of *Brand Image* was analyzed by looking at the indirect effect of *Digital Marketing Capability* and *Service Quality* on *Participants' Decisions to Choose Training Services through Brand Image*. With this method, the research can provide an empirical picture of the extent to which digital marketing capabilities and service quality are able to improve participant decisions, and whether this influence is strengthened through the formation of a positive brand image of PUSTAMA INDONESIA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity Test

Validity testing is conducted to ensure that each indicator is capable of measuring the construct being studied. In SEM-PLS-based research, convergent validity can be seen from *the outer loading* and AVE values. An indicator is considered valid if *the loading factor value* is >0.70 and the AVE value is >0.50 .

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test Results

Variables	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Information
Digital Marketing Capability (X1)	X1.1	0.812	0.657	Valid
	X1.2	0.846		Valid
	X1.3	0.793		Valid
	X1.4	0.824		Valid
	X1.5	0.785		Valid
Service Quality (X2)	X2.1	0.801	0.644	Valid
	X2.2	0.823		Valid
	X2.3	0.790		Valid
	X2.4	0.842		Valid
	X2.5	0.766		Valid
Brand Image (Z)	Z1	0.821	0.672	Valid
	Z2	0.855		Valid

	Z3	0.814		Valid
	Z4	0.802		Valid
Participant Decision (Y)	Y1	0.834	0.681	Valid
	Y2	0.817		Valid
	Y3	0.849		Valid
	Y4	0.801		Valid
	Y5	0.823		Valid

Based on Table 1, all indicators in the variables of Digital Marketing Capability, Service Quality, Brand Image, and Participant Decision in Choosing Training Services have *outer loading values* above 0.70. This value indicates that each indicator has a good ability to reflect the construct being measured. The AVE value of each variable is also above 0.50, namely Digital Marketing Capability of 0.657, Service Quality of 0.644, Brand Image of 0.672, and Participant Decision of 0.681. Thus, all constructs have met the criteria for convergent validity. These results indicate that the research instrument is able to describe aspects related to digital marketing capabilities, service quality, brand image, and participant decisions in choosing PUSTAMA INDONESIA training services.

Reliability Test

Reliability testing aims to determine the consistency of indicators in measuring each research variable. A construct is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values are greater than 0.70.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Information
Digital Marketing Capability	0.869	0.906	Reliable
Service Quality	0.861	0.900	Reliable
Brand Image	0.837	0.891	Reliable
Participant Decision	0.882	0.914	Reliable

The test results show that all variables have a Cronbach's Alpha value > 0.70 and Composite Reliability > 0.70. Digital Marketing Capability obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.869 and a Composite Reliability of 0.906. Service Quality had values of 0.861 and 0.900, respectively. Brand Image obtained values of 0.837 and 0.891, while Participant Decision obtained values of 0.882 and 0.914. These results indicate that all indicators have good internal consistency. Thus, the questionnaire used on 150 respondents can be declared reliable and suitable for use in further analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to provide an overview of 150 respondents' perceptions of the research variables. Measurements were made using a 1–5 Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Category
Digital Marketing Capability	150	2.60	5.00	4.12	0.51	Tall
Service Quality	150	2.80	5.00	4.18	0.48	Tall
Brand Image	150	2.75	5.00	4.15	0.50	Tall
Participant Decision	150	2.80	5.00	4.21	0.46	Very high

Based on Table 3, respondents' perceptions of all research variables ranged from high to very high. The Digital Marketing Capability variable had an average score of 4.12. This indicates that most participants assessed PUSTAMA INDONESIA as effectively utilizing digital media to convey information about training programs. Easily accessible information, engaging content, digital communication, and the institution's ability to provide information quickly were factors that supported respondents' positive perceptions.

The Service Quality variable obtained an average score of 4.18, categorized as high. These results indicate that participants tended to give positive assessments of the services provided by PUSTAMA INDONESIA. Reliable service, responsiveness to participant needs, the competence of organizers and instructors, and attention to participants were factors that contributed to a good service experience.

Meanwhile, Brand Image achieved an average score of 4.15. This score indicates that PUSTAMA INDONESIA has a relatively positive image among participants. Participants tend to view the institution as a professional training service provider with the ability to deliver training programs. This positive image is important because training services are products that cannot be fully evaluated before consumption, so the institution's reputation and image are among the participants' considerations.

The Participant Decision variable obtained the highest average score, namely 4.21. These results indicate that participants' tendency to choose PUSTAMA INDONESIA training services is in the very high category. Participants felt that the program offered was in line

Structural Model Analysis

Structural model analysis is used to determine the ability of independent variables to explain dependent variables and to assess the strength of the relationships between variables. In SEM-PLS, structural model evaluation can be seen through the R-Square (R^2) value and path coefficients.

Table 4. R-Square Value

Endogenous Variables	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted	Information
Brand Image	0.583	0.577	Moderate
Participant Decision	0.672	0.665	Moderate-strong

The R-Square value of Brand Image of 0.583 indicates that Brand Image can be explained by Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality by 58.3%, while the remaining 41.7% is explained by other factors not included in the research model. These results indicate that digital marketing capabilities and service quality have a significant contribution in shaping the image of PUSTAMA INDONESIA. The better the digital communication built and the higher the quality of service provided, the greater the likelihood of forming a positive institutional image.

Furthermore, the R-Square value of Participant Decision of 0.672 indicates that Digital Marketing Capability, Service Quality, and Brand Image together are able to explain 67.2% of the variation in Participants' Decision to Choose Training Services, while 32.8% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. This value indicates a fairly strong explanatory ability of the model. Thus, participants' decisions in choosing training services are not only influenced by digital marketing activities or direct service quality, but also by participants' perceptions of the image of PUSTAMA INDONESIA.

With their needs, were confident in the quality of the service, and were inclined to use or recommend the training services. This condition indicates that the combination of digital marketing, service quality, and institutional image has been able to create perceptions that support participants' decisions.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Information
Digital Marketing Capability → Brand Image	0.386	4,215	0,000	Positive and significant
Service Quality → Brand Image	0.421	4,873	0,000	Positive and significant
Digital Marketing Capability → Participant Decision	0.218	2,487	0.013	Positive and significant
Service Quality → Participant Decision	0.329	3,762	0,000	Positive and significant
Brand Image → Participant Decision	0.367	4,126	0,000	Positive and significant
Digital Marketing Capability → Brand Image → Participant Decision	0.142	2,963	0.003	Significant mediation
Service Quality → Brand Image → Participant Decision	0.154	3,217	0.001	Significant mediation

Based on Table 5, the results of the study indicate that Digital Marketing Capability has a positive influence on Brand Image. This finding indicates that an institution's ability to utilize digital technology is not only related to increasing promotional reach but also related to how the institution is perceived by participants. PUSTAMA INDONESIA, which is able to present content consistently, informatively, professionally, and in accordance with the needs of target participants, will more easily build positive associations. Digital media ultimately represents the institution because potential participants often gain their first experience of an institution through digital channels. These results align with Day's (2011) view that marketing capability is an organization's ability to use marketing resources to understand the market and create value. In the context of PUSTAMA INDONESIA, this capability can be realized through the management of social media, websites, digital communications, educational content, and the utilization of participant data and feedback (Oktavianti et al., 2025).

The finding that Service Quality has a positive effect on Brand Image demonstrates that an institution's image is built not only through marketing communications but also through the actual experiences received by participants. When participants receive service

that meets their expectations, this experience will form the basis for forming a positive perception of the institution. Conversely, slow service, inconsistent information, lack of attention to participants, or unprofessional instructors have the potential to damage the institution's image even if its marketing activities have been carried out well. This finding reinforces the SERVQUAL concept by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, which places *tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy* as important dimensions in evaluating service quality. Therefore, improving PUSTAMA INDONESIA's image needs to be done not only through external communication strategies, but also by improving the overall quality of the participant experience (Arzaqiyah & Krisnawati, 2024).

The positive influence of Digital Marketing Capability on Participant Decisions indicates that digital marketing has become part of the participant decision-making process. Prospective participants can use digital information to compare various alternative training institutions before making a decision. The better the quality of the information provided, the easier it is for participants to understand the advantages of the program offered (Astuti et al., 2025). These results support research on training services that found the influence of digital marketing on training service purchasing decisions. However, these findings are also important when compared with other studies that obtained insignificant results. These differences indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing can depend on the quality of the strategy, the relevance of the content, the characteristics of the participants, the credibility of the information, and the institution's ability to integrate digital marketing with service quality (Gitania et al., 2025).

Service quality, which has been proven to influence participants' decisions, indicates that training participants assess the service experience as part of the value of the service they purchase. Participants need assurance that the institution is capable of delivering services according to what was promised. When the information received before the training matches the experience during the training, the level of trust will increase. This finding has important implications for PUSTAMA INDONESIA because increasing the number of participants is not enough to be achieved through promotion alone. Marketing strategies must be accompanied by improvements in service quality, starting from the initial communication process, registration, program implementation, instructor services, provision of facilities, and follow-up after the training (Bagus et al., 2024).

The results of the study also show that Brand Image acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality on Participant Decisions. The indirect effect of Digital Marketing Capability through Brand Image of 0.142 indicates that some of the influence of digital marketing on participant decisions occurs through the formation of the institution's image. This means that participants do not simply

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view digital information as a source of information, but also use it to assess the professionalism, credibility, and quality of PUSTAMA INDONESIA. Similarly, the indirect effect of Service Quality through Brand Image of 0.154 indicates that service experience can shape an image that subsequently improves participant decisions. Thus, Brand Image becomes a psychological mechanism that connects marketing stimuli and service experiences with participant decisions (Irmasari et al., 2025).

Overall, the research results provide an overview that participants' decisions in choosing training services at PUSTAMA INDONESIA are formed through a combination of digital marketing capabilities, service quality, and brand image. Digital Marketing Capability serves as a means to reach and convince potential participants, Service Quality provides a real experience that strengthens trust, while Brand Image becomes an overall perception that helps participants evaluate the institution before making a choice (Bagaskara et al., 2025). Therefore, the most appropriate strategy for PUSTAMA INDONESIA is not only to increase the intensity of digital promotions, but to build an integration between credible digital marketing, superior service, and a consistent brand image. The integration of these three aspects will strengthen PUSTAMA INDONESIA's position in the competition for training services and increase the likelihood of participants choosing, reusing, and recommending training services to others (Munas, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the Influence of Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality on Participants' Decisions to Choose Training Services with Brand Image as a Mediating Variable at PUSTAMA INDONESIA, it can be concluded that Digital Marketing Capability has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image. PUSTAMA INDONESIA's ability to utilize digital media, present training information in an interesting and informative manner, build communication with potential participants, and manage content consistently is able to form a positive perception of the institution. Thus, digital marketing not only functions as a promotional medium, but also becomes a strategic tool in building the identity and image of PUSTAMA INDONESIA.

Furthermore, Service Quality has a positive and significant impact on Brand Image. Service quality, which includes reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and the physical aspects of service, can create a positive experience for participants. This experience then shapes the perception that PUSTAMA INDONESIA is a professional, trustworthy training institution capable of meeting participants' needs. Furthermore, Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality have been proven to have a positive and significant impact on

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Participants' Decisions to Choose Training Services. This indicates that good digital information and quality service can increase participants' confidence in choosing training services.

Brand Image has also been shown to have a positive and significant influence on Participant Decisions, indicating that the more positive the image of PUSTAMA INDONESIA, the greater the tendency of participants to choose the training services offered. Brand Image has also been shown to mediate the influence of Digital Marketing Capability and Service Quality on Participant Decisions. This means that digital marketing capabilities and service quality not only have a direct influence on participant decisions but also work through the formation of the institution's image. Therefore, PUSTAMA INDONESIA needs to integrate effective digital marketing strategies with quality and consistent services to strengthen Brand Image, increase participant trust, and encourage decisions to choose training services on an ongoing basis.

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