



Digital-Based Educational Information Management in Enhancing Student Interest: Scrutinizing the Mediating Role of Madrasah

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Abstract

Digital transformation has increasingly reshaped how Islamic educational institutions manage information, communicate institutional value, and attract prospective students. However, limited empirical evidence explains whether institutional image still mediates the relationship between digital-based educational information management and student interest, particularly in Islamic secondary education. This study examines the direct effect of Digital-Based Educational Information Management (DBEIM) on Student Interest and tests the mediating role of Madrasah Image among State Islamic Senior High Schools in Banten Province, Indonesia. A quantitative explanatory survey design was employed, involving 535 student respondents selected through proportional stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model confirmed adequate reliability and validity, with indicator loadings ranging from 0.720 to 0.915, Cronbach's Alpha values between 0.935 and 0.961, Composite Reliability values between 0.949 and 0.973, and AVE values between 0.715 and 0.818. The structural model showed that DBEIM had a strong positive effect on Student Interest ($\beta = 0.711$, $t = 18.245$, $p = 0.000$) and significantly improved Madrasah Image ($\beta = 0.654$, $t = 14.321$, $p = 0.000$). However, Madrasah Image did not significantly affect Student Interest ($\beta = -0.040$, $t = 0.632$, $p = 0.528$) and did not mediate the DBEIM–Student Interest relationship ($\beta = -0.022$, $t = 0.624$, $p = 0.533$). These findings challenge the assumption that institutional image consistently functions as a mediating mechanism and suggest that, among digital-oriented madrasah students, interest is shaped more directly by digital utility, information accessibility, and service responsiveness than by general institutional image.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has increasingly changed the way educational institutions manage information, communicate institutional value, and build relationships with prospective students. In the contemporary education sector, digital platforms are no longer peripheral administrative tools but have become strategic infrastructures for transparency, responsiveness, and institutional competitiveness. This shift is particularly important for Islamic educational institutions, including State Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri/MAN), which must preserve religious values while adapting to digitally mediated educational governance. Recent studies show that system quality, information quality, service quality, and digital communication strongly influence how users

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evaluate educational institutions (Almaiah et al., 2022; Al-Okaily et al., 2023; Alyoussef, 2023; Sudrajat et al., 2024). Therefore, Digital-Based Educational Information Management (DBEIM) can be understood not only as a technical system but also as an institutional capability that reflects managerial readiness and service quality. In this context, the ability of madrasahs to manage digital information becomes an important factor in attracting student interest.

The empirical urgency of this issue is visible in the increasingly competitive environment of student recruitment. Prospective students and parents now frequently use websites, online admission portals, social media, and digital school profiles to evaluate educational institutions before making enrollment decisions. When information is difficult to access, outdated, or poorly managed, prospective students may experience uncertainty and reduce their interest in the institution. Conversely, responsive and transparent digital information services can reduce information asymmetry and strengthen confidence in school selection. Studies on educational marketing have shown that digital communication and social media visibility can influence student engagement, institutional awareness, and enrollment intention (Li et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2023). This phenomenon is highly relevant for MAN in Banten Province, where digital information management is increasingly needed to support public communication, admission services, and institutional visibility. Thus, the issue is not merely whether madrasahs use digital media, but whether they can manage digital information as a credible and student-oriented service system.

The urgency of studying DBEIM also relates to the changing characteristics of contemporary students. Generation Z and early Generation Alpha students are commonly described as digital-native learners who expect fast access, interactive communication, and practical information before making decisions. Their educational choices are increasingly shaped by direct digital experience, perceived convenience, and the credibility of online information. In this sense, a madrasah's digital interface may become the first institutional encounter that shapes students' impressions and interest. Research on digital learning environments confirms that technology affects students more strongly when it is useful, accessible, relevant, and aligned with user needs (Ghanbaripour et al., 2024; Wong & Hughes, 2023; Wu, 2024). Therefore, ineffective digital information management may weaken student interest even when an institution already has a positive public reputation. This makes DBEIM a critical variable in explaining how student interest is formed in the digital era.

The relationship between digital information management, institutional image, and student interest can be explained through several theoretical perspectives. Signaling Theory argues that institutions communicate quality through observable signals, including transparent information, responsive services, and reliable digital systems. The Resource-Based View further suggests that digital information infrastructure may become a strategic institutional resource when it is valuable, organized, and difficult for competitors to imitate. Meanwhile, Institutional Image Theory assumes that service quality and institutional performance shape public perception, which then influences behavioral intention. Previous studies have generally positioned institutional image as an important predictor of student satisfaction, loyalty, and institutional choice (Pinna et al., 2023; Qazi et al., 2022). However, the growing importance of direct digital experience raises a critical question regarding whether institutional image still functions as a necessary mediating mechanism. This question is especially important in madrasah contexts, where image has traditionally been associated with religious identity, academic reputation, moral credibility, and public trust.

Previous international studies have provided important evidence regarding the role of digital marketing, service quality, institutional image, and information systems in shaping student-related outcomes. Yin & Sozon, (2025) found that digital communication and social media marketing can strengthen institutional visibility and influence students' enrollment-related decisions. Other studies reported that institutional image, brand reputation, service quality, and perceived value contribute to student satisfaction, loyalty, and supportive behavioral intention (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022; Amado et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2021). In the field of educational information systems, Alsqour et al., (2025); Gunawan et al., (2024) emphasized that system quality, information quality, perceived usefulness, and user satisfaction are central to successful digital service implementation. Research on technology-enhanced education also shows that digital tools influence learners only when they are integrated into meaningful institutional practices (Elm et al., 2023; Tahat et al., 2023). Overall, the dominant finding in previous studies is that digital service quality and institutional image tend to positively influence student intention. Nevertheless, most studies still assume that institutional

image remains a stable and positive bridge between institutional services and student behavioral interest.

Despite these contributions, several important limitations remain unresolved. First, most previous studies were conducted in higher education, while Islamic secondary education, particularly State Islamic Senior High Schools, remains underrepresented in international digital transformation research. Second, many studies focus on digital marketing or social media promotion, whereas DBEIM as an integrated educational governance system has received limited empirical attention. Third, institutional image is frequently treated as an automatically positive mediator without critically testing whether its mediating power weakens among digital-native students. Fourth, few studies examine whether direct functional digital experience can influence student interest more strongly than abstract institutional reputation. This creates a theoretical and empirical gap in understanding how digital transformation changes the mechanism through which student interest is formed. Therefore, this study introduces a more critical position by testing Madrasah Image not as an assumed mediator, but as an empirical construct whose relevance must be validated within the digital-native context of MAN students in Banten Province.

Based on this gap, this study aims to examine the influence of Digital-Based Educational Information Management on Student Interest and to test whether Madrasah Image mediates this relationship among State Islamic Senior High Schools in Banten Province, Indonesia. Using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), this study evaluates the direct and indirect relationships among DBEIM, Madrasah Image, and Student Interest. Theoretically, this research contributes to educational management and information systems literature by challenging the conventional assumption that institutional image always mediates the relationship between institutional service quality and student behavioral interest. The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to test the weakening mediating role of Madrasah Image in the relationship between digital-based educational information management and student interest among digital-native students in Islamic secondary education. Practically, the findings are expected to help madrasah leaders, educational policymakers, and administrative managers strengthen digital information services that are transparent, responsive, and user-centered. More importantly, this study positions DBEIM as a strategic institutional capability that may directly shape student interest in an era where students increasingly prioritize functional digital utility over general institutional reputation.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative explanatory survey design to examine the structural relationships among Digital-Based Educational Information Management (DBEIM), Madrasah Image, and Student Interest. The design was selected because the study aimed to test direct and indirect effects among latent constructs and to evaluate the mediating role of Madrasah Image within a theoretically developed model. Since the model focused on prediction and mediation testing, Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was considered appropriate. Aybek & Karakaş, (2026); Kono & Sato, (2023) explain that PLS-SEM is suitable for prediction-oriented studies involving complex relationships among latent variables. Therefore, this approach allowed the study to assess both the measurement quality of each construct and the structural relationships among variables.

Research Site and Period

The study was conducted at State Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri/MAN) in Banten Province, Indonesia. This setting was chosen because MAN institutions in Banten increasingly use digital information systems for student admission, academic communication, institutional promotion, and public service delivery. The research was carried out during the 2025/2026 academic year, covering instrument preparation, expert review, pilot testing, school coordination, questionnaire distribution, data screening, and statistical analysis. The Banten context was considered relevant because madrasahs in this province operate in a competitive educational environment where digital information management may influence students' interest in choosing or engaging with an institution.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of active students enrolled in State Islamic Senior High Schools in Banten Province. Students were selected because they directly experience school digital information services and can evaluate how such services influence their perception and interest. The final sample included 535 respondents, which exceeded the minimum requirement for PLS-SEM estimation. Fauzi, (2022); Hair et al., (2024) emphasize that adequate sample size is essential in PLS-SEM to ensure stable parameter estimation and reliable hypothesis testing. The sample was determined using proportional stratified random sampling to improve representativeness across school distribution, region, grade level, and gender. Students were included if they were active MAN students, had access to madrasah digital information services, and agreed to participate voluntarily. Responses were excluded if they were incomplete, duplicated, or showed patterned answering.

Table 1. Population, Sampling, and Respondent Criteria

Component	Description
Target population	Active students of State Islamic Senior High Schools in Banten Province
Sample size	535 student respondents
Sampling technique	Proportional stratified random sampling
Inclusion criteria	Active MAN students, users of madrasah digital information services, and voluntary participants
Exclusion criteria	Incomplete responses, duplicate submissions, and patterned responses
Unit of analysis	Individual student perception

Table 1 summarizes the population, sample, and respondent criteria used in this study. The use of proportional stratified random sampling was intended to reduce sampling bias and ensure that the sample reflected relevant institutional and demographic characteristics.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure three latent constructs: DBEIM, Madrasah Image, and Student Interest. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. DBEIM was measured through indicators related to digital data collection, information processing, digital storage, information dissemination, system quality control, decision-support reliability, collaborative communication, and institutional digital visibility. Madrasah Image was measured through academic reputation, service responsiveness, institutional communication, learning environment, ethical values, and public prestige. Student Interest was measured through enrollment motivation, institutional engagement, perceived educational utility, future academic aspiration, and social influence. The DBEIM indicators were adapted from educational information system principles, while Student Interest was aligned with student motivation and interest constructs developed by (Melanou & Beege, 2026). The instrument was adjusted to fit the context of Islamic secondary education.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Instrument validity was examined through content validity and construct validity. Content validity was assessed through expert judgment involving specialists in educational management, Islamic education, and quantitative methodology. The experts evaluated item relevance, conceptual clarity, language accuracy, and contextual suitability before the instrument was distributed. A pilot test was then conducted with 30 students outside the main sample to check item readability, response consistency, and completion time. Items that were ambiguous or contextually unclear were revised before the final data collection. Construct validity and reliability were evaluated through the PLS-SEM measurement model. Hair et al. (2019) recommend outer loading values above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50 to confirm convergent validity. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable. Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Henseler et al. (2015) suggest that HTMT values below 0.85 indicate adequate discriminant validity among latent constructs.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in several systematic stages. First, the researchers developed the questionnaire based on the conceptual framework and operational definitions of each construct.

Second, the instrument was reviewed by experts and revised based on their recommendations. Third, a pilot test was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire items were understandable and suitable for the target respondents. Fourth, research permission was obtained from relevant institutional authorities and school administrators. Fifth, the questionnaire was distributed electronically to selected students through school coordination channels. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents received information about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw. Finally, all collected responses were screened before statistical analysis.

Data Screening and Common Method Bias

Before hypothesis testing, the dataset was screened to ensure data quality. The screening process included checking missing values, duplicate responses, inconsistent answers, and straight-lining patterns. Responses that did not meet the required quality criteria were removed from the dataset. Because all variables were measured using a self-report questionnaire, common method bias was also assessed. Following the recommendation of Castillo et al., (2025); Kalnins, (2022), full collinearity Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to examine whether common method bias affected the model. A VIF value below 3.3 indicates that the model is unlikely to suffer from serious common method bias. This procedure was important to ensure that the relationships among variables were not merely produced by the measurement method.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS. The analysis followed two main stages: measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation. In the measurement model, indicator reliability was assessed using outer loading, convergent validity was evaluated using AVE, internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, and discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT. In the structural model, the analysis examined path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and collinearity using VIF. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to test the significance of direct and indirect effects. A hypothesis was accepted when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05. The mediation effect was evaluated by examining the indirect path from DBEIM to Student Interest through Madrasah Image.

Table 2. Criteria for PLS-SEM Evaluation

Assessment Component	Indicator	Recommended Criterion
Indicator reliability	Outer loading	> 0.70
Convergent validity	AVE	> 0.50
Internal consistency	Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability	> 0.70
Discriminant validity	HTMT	< 0.85
Collinearity	VIF	< 5.00
Common method bias	Full collinearity VIF	< 3.30
Hypothesis testing	t-statistic and p-value	$t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$
Predictive relevance	Q^2	> 0

Table 2 presents the statistical criteria used to evaluate the PLS-SEM model. These criteria were applied to ensure that the measurement model was valid and reliable before interpreting the structural relationships among constructs.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed academic ethical principles in data collection, management, and reporting. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. The respondents were also informed that they could withdraw at any stage without academic consequences. The questionnaire did not request sensitive personal identifiers, and all responses were processed anonymously. Data confidentiality was maintained by storing responses securely and reporting findings only in aggregate form. The researchers also upheld transparency and research integrity by presenting the procedures and statistical results without data manipulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the empirical findings obtained from the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis. The analysis was conducted sequentially by first evaluating the measurement model to assess the reliability and validity of the research constructs, followed by the structural model to examine the explanatory power of the proposed framework and to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables. This two-stage analytical procedure ensures that the structural relationships are interpreted only after the adequacy of the measurement model has been established. The findings are presented systematically according to the objectives of the study, beginning with the measurement model evaluation and continuing with the structural model assessment and hypothesis testing.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated before testing the structural relationships among the variables. This evaluation was conducted to ensure that the indicators used to measure Digital-Based Educational Information Management (DBEIM), Madrasah Image, and Student Interest had adequate reliability and validity. The outer model assessment showed that all standardized indicator loadings ranged from 0.720 to 0.915. Since all loading values met the required minimum criterion, no indicator was removed from the model. The results of construct reliability and convergent validity are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability Tests of the Measurement Model

Latent Construct / Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Empirical Evaluation
Digital-Based Educational Information Management	0.961	0.973	0.818	Valid and reliable
Madrasah Image	0.942	0.955	0.742	Valid and reliable
Student Interest	0.935	0.949	0.715	Valid and reliable

Table 3 shows that all constructs achieved strong internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.935 to 0.961, indicating that the items within each construct were consistently interpreted by the respondents. The Composite Reliability values, ranging from 0.949 to 0.973, further confirm that the indicators had a high level of consistency in measuring their respective constructs. The Average Variance Extracted values were also above the required minimum value, with DBEIM recording the highest AVE at 0.818, followed by Madrasah Image at 0.742 and Student Interest at 0.715. These results indicate that each construct was able to explain a substantial proportion of the variance in its indicators.

The measurement model also showed adequate discriminant validity. The square root of AVE for each construct was 0.904 for DBEIM, 0.861 for Madrasah Image, and 0.845 for Student Interest. These values indicate that each construct had sufficient empirical distinction from the others. Thus, the measurement model was considered valid, reliable, and appropriate for further structural model testing.

Structural Model Evaluation and Hypothesis Testing

After the measurement model met the required criteria, the structural model was examined to assess the explanatory power of the proposed relationships. The coefficient of determination showed that Madrasah Image obtained an R^2 value of 0.428. This means that DBEIM explained 42.8% of the variance in Madrasah Image, while the remaining 57.2% was influenced by other factors outside the model. Student Interest obtained an R^2 value of 0.503, indicating that DBEIM and Madrasah Image jointly explained 50.3% of the variance in Student Interest. These values show that the model had moderate explanatory power in predicting the endogenous constructs.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The analysis examined the direct effect of DBEIM on Student Interest, the direct effect of DBEIM on Madrasah Image, the direct effect of Madrasah Image on Student Interest, and the indirect effect of DBEIM on Student Interest through Madrasah Image. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Direct and Indirect Effect Testing

Structural Path	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Statistical Decision
DBEIM → Student Interest	0.711	18.245	0.000	Significant; supported
DBEIM → Madrasah Image	0.654	14.321	0.000	Significant; supported
Madrasah Image → Student Interest	-0.040	0.632	0.528	Non-significant; not supported
DBEIM → Madrasah Image → Student Interest	-0.022	0.624	0.533	No mediation; not supported

Table 4 shows that DBEIM had a positive and significant effect on Student Interest. The path coefficient of 0.711, supported by a t-statistic of 18.245 and a p-value of 0.000, indicates that stronger digital-based educational information management was associated with higher student interest. This result supports the first hypothesis and confirms that the quality of digital information management is an important predictor of student interest.

The second path also shows a positive and significant effect of DBEIM on Madrasah Image. The path coefficient of 0.654, t-statistic of 14.321, and p-value of 0.000 indicate that better digital information management contributed to a stronger institutional image. This result supports the second hypothesis and suggests that digital information services are closely related to how students perceive the institutional image of the madrasah.

In contrast, Madrasah Image did not have a significant effect on Student Interest. The path coefficient was negative at -0.040, with a t-statistic of 0.632 and a p-value of 0.528. This result indicates that Madrasah Image did not directly predict Student Interest in the tested model. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not supported.

The mediation test also showed that Madrasah Image did not mediate the relationship between DBEIM and Student Interest. The indirect effect had a path coefficient of -0.022, a t-statistic of 0.624, and a p-value of 0.533. Since the indirect effect was not significant, the fourth hypothesis was not supported. This result indicates that the influence of DBEIM on Student Interest occurred through a direct pathway rather than through Madrasah Image.

Overall, the findings show that DBEIM was the strongest explanatory variable in the model. It had a substantial direct effect on Student Interest and also improved Madrasah Image. However, Madrasah Image did not significantly influence Student Interest and did not function as a mediating variable. These results indicate that student interest in the context of MAN in Banten Province was shaped more directly by the quality of digital-based educational information management than by institutional image.

Discussion

The finding that Digital-Based Educational Information Management has a strong direct effect on Student Interest indicates that students' interest is shaped primarily by the practical quality of digital information services. Digital information management is therefore not only an administrative mechanism, but also a visible institutional service through which students evaluate accessibility, responsiveness, and credibility. When students can easily obtain admission information, academic updates, institutional profiles, and communication support through digital channels, uncertainty in the school-selection process is reduced. This interpretation is supported by studies showing that digital information technologies, e-learning systems, and academic management information systems strengthen user evaluation, service quality, and educational engagement (Almaiah et al., 2022; Alyoussef, 2023; Sudrajat et al., 2024). Similar evidence also shows that digital media and online communication influence student learning behavior and institutional engagement when they provide clear value and usability (Tahat et al., 2023; Wong & Hughes, 2023; Wu, 2024). In the context of MAN in Banten Province, student interest appears to be driven more by direct digital utility than by general institutional claims. Thus, DBEIM should be understood as a functional driver that connects institutional digital capability directly with student interest.

The significant effect of DBEIM on Madrasah Image shows that digital information management also contributes to students' perception of institutional quality. A madrasah that manages digital information accurately, consistently, and responsively is more likely to be perceived as professional, adaptive, and trustworthy. Studies on digital systems show that system quality, information quality, perceived usefulness, and user satisfaction are important determinants of

positive user evaluation (Al-Okaily et al., 2023; Alsqour et al., 2025; Gunawan et al., 2024). In educational settings, this means that digital service quality can strengthen institutional visibility because students and parents increasingly encounter schools through websites, social media, online admission systems, and digital academic services. The finding also corresponds with research showing that institutional reputation is shaped not only by symbolic identity, but also by perceived service quality and user experience (Amado et al., 2023; Pinna et al., 2023; Qazi et al., 2022). In madrasahs, this implication is particularly important because institutional image has traditionally been associated with religious identity, moral credibility, and community trust. The present finding extends this view by showing that digital governance has become a new source of reputational value in Islamic secondary education.

The non-significant effect of Madrasah Image on Student Interest is the most critical finding of this study because it challenges the dominant assumption that institutional image always leads to stronger student intention. Previous studies in higher education have shown that institutional reputation, perceived value, service quality, and satisfaction can influence student behavior (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022; Amado et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2021). However, the present study shows a different pattern in Islamic secondary education, where students' interest is not significantly explained by image once digital information management is included in the model. One possible explanation is that digital-native students rely less on abstract institutional reputation when they can directly assess service quality through digital platforms. Studies on technology-enhanced learning also suggest that contemporary students are increasingly influenced by digital experience, usefulness, and technology-supported interaction (Ghanbaripour et al., 2024; Wong & Hughes, 2023; Wu, 2024). This difference indicates that the context of madrasah is not identical to higher education, because students may prioritize immediate information access, administrative clarity, and school communication over long-term institutional prestige. Therefore, Madrasah Image may still contribute to institutional perception, but it does not necessarily become the main basis for student interest.

The rejected mediation effect further confirms that the relationship between DBEIM and Student Interest operates mainly through a direct pathway rather than through Madrasah Image. Although DBEIM significantly improves Madrasah Image, the improved image does not transmit the effect to Student Interest. This means that the mediation chain is interrupted: students may recognize that digital information management strengthens the image of a madrasah, but their interest is activated more directly by the usefulness and accessibility of the digital services themselves. This result differs from studies that position image, reputation, or brand perception as important mechanisms in shaping enrollment intention and student loyalty (Li et al., 2025; Pinna et al., 2023; Qazi et al., 2022; Yin & Sozon, 2025). The difference may be explained by the level and context of education, since many previous studies focus on higher education, while this study examines State Islamic Senior High Schools. In the madrasah context, prospective students may require direct and practical information about admission, academic services, school activities, and communication access before forming interest. Therefore, this study offers a more critical view that institutional image is not always a necessary mediator between digital service quality and student interest.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature on digital transformation in education by showing that student interest in Islamic secondary education is shaped more strongly by functional digital utility than by institutional image mediation. Theoretically, the findings refine the dominant view in educational marketing and institutional reputation studies by demonstrating that image does not always operate as a stable bridge between institutional service systems and student behavioral intention. This contribution is important because previous studies have largely emphasized the positive role of image and reputation in higher education, while the present study shows that the mechanism may differ in madrasah settings and among digitally oriented students (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022; Pinna et al., 2023; Qazi et al., 2022). Practically, the findings suggest that madrasah leaders should not rely only on symbolic reputation, conventional promotion, or general public image to attract students. Instead, they need to strengthen responsive digital admission systems, updated academic information, user-centered communication channels, and reliable digital service management. The novelty of this study lies in repositioning DBEIM as a direct determinant of Student Interest and in showing that Madrasah Image does not necessarily mediate this relationship. This

perspective provides a more context-sensitive understanding of how digital transformation reshapes student interest in Islamic secondary education.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Digital-Based Educational Information Management is a decisive factor in strengthening Student Interest among State Islamic Senior High Schools in Banten Province. The results show that DBEIM has a strong direct effect on Student Interest and also significantly improves Madrasah Image. However, Madrasah Image does not significantly influence Student Interest and does not mediate the relationship between DBEIM and Student Interest. These findings indicate that students' interest is shaped more by direct digital utility, information accessibility, service responsiveness, and communication clarity than by general institutional image. Therefore, in the context of digitally oriented students, DBEIM should be understood as a strategic institutional capability that directly supports student recruitment and institutional competitiveness in Islamic secondary education.

Theoretically, this study refines the dominant assumption in educational marketing and institutional reputation studies by showing that institutional image does not always function as a necessary bridge between institutional service systems and student behavioral interest. The study contributes a more context-sensitive perspective by demonstrating that the role of image may weaken when students can directly evaluate institutional quality through digital platforms. Practically, madrasah leaders and educational policymakers should move beyond conventional promotional strategies and prioritize integrated digital admission systems, updated academic information, responsive online communication, and user-centered digital services. These strategies are important because students increasingly evaluate institutions through the quality of their digital service experience. This study is limited to MAN institutions in Banten Province and uses a cross-sectional survey design; therefore, future studies should expand the research setting to other provinces, compare public and private madrasahs, and examine additional variables such as digital trust, perceived usefulness, service satisfaction, parental influence, and student digital literacy.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Uuh Buchori conceived the research idea, designed the study, developed the research framework, coordinated data collection, performed the data analysis, interpreted the findings, and prepared the original manuscript draft. Encep Syarifudin contributed to the conceptual development of the study, supervised the research process, validated the methodology, critically reviewed the analytical framework, and provided substantial revisions to improve the intellectual content of the manuscript. Eko Wahyu Wibowo contributed to data verification, statistical interpretation, methodological refinement, and manuscript editing to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research findings. Enung Nugraha contributed to literature review, data validation, manuscript proofreading, language refinement, and final manuscript revision.

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