

Digital Reputation of Private Universities Through Google Maps Reviews: An Analysis of Ratings, Sentiment, and User Experience Themes at Matana University and Pradita University

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Article History

Received: 21-07-2026

Revised: 05-08-2026

Published: 30-08-2026

Keywords: Digital Reputation, Google Maps Review, Private University, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Educational Service Quality

ABSTRACT

This study examines the digital reputation of private higher education institutions through Google Maps reviews by comparing Matana University and Pradita University. The data were obtained from two Outscraper Excel files containing 468 review records, consisting of 218 Matana University reviews and 250 Pradita University reviews. A mixed-method approach was applied, combining descriptive rating analysis, star-rating-based sentiment classification, and thematic content analysis of 166 textual reviews. The findings indicate that both institutions receive highly positive digital perceptions, with an overall average rating of 4.64 and a dominant share of five-star reviews. Positive sentiment accounts for 92.1% of the dataset, while the Mann-Whitney test indicates no statistically significant difference in ratings between the two institutions ($p = 0.906$). Thematically, Pradita University is more prominent in campus facilities, campus environment, and recommendation-oriented image, whereas Matana University is stronger in academics and lecturers, strategic location, diversity, and industry networks. The study shows that location-based digital reviews can serve as an early evidence source for reputation management, higher education marketing, and internal quality assurance.

INTRODUCTION

The competition among private universities has shifted from merely competing in terms of study programs, tuition fees, and physical location to competing in terms of student experience, institutional reputation, and public trust. Prospective students and their families no longer rely solely on official brochures or institutional websites; instead, they increasingly seek social proof through the experiences of other users across various digital platforms. In this context, Google Maps reviews have emerged as an accessible source of information that

is directly linked to campus locations and frequently appears during the initial stages of the information-search process.

Digital reviews can be understood as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). In higher education, e-WOM plays a particularly important role because educational services are characterized as high-involvement, high-risk, and long-term decisions. Choosing a university requires careful consideration of academic reputation, faculty quality, career prospects, campus facilities, learning environment, tuition fees, accessibility, and administrative services. Since prospective students cannot fully evaluate the quality of education before enrollment, the experiences shared by previous users serve as important signals that shape their initial perceptions (Rabah et al., 2024; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2021).

Google Maps reviews differ substantially from formal institutional satisfaction surveys. Institutional surveys are typically designed by universities using structured instruments and target predetermined respondents. In contrast, Google Maps reviews are voluntary, spontaneous, concise, publicly accessible, and are often written by current students, alumni, parents, visitors, or members of the surrounding community. Although such reviews cannot replace internal quality assurance surveys, they provide valuable indicators of public reputation that are relevant for marketing strategies, service improvement, and quality assurance. Recent studies have demonstrated that review ratings, textual content, and the richness of online review information constitute essential components of e-WOM behavior and significantly influence decision-making on review platforms (Liu et al., 2024).

For higher education institutions, digital reputation extends beyond promotional activities. It also reflects the actual experiences perceived by users at various service touchpoints. Comments regarding lecturers, campus facilities, location, parking, staff services, administrative procedures, tuition fees, and the overall campus environment provide valuable feedback that can support the quality assurance cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, control, and continuous improvement. Therefore, the analysis of Google Maps reviews can be integrated with Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) practices and the PPEPP cycle, particularly in capturing users' voices in a timely and context-sensitive manner.

This study analyzes two Google Maps review datasets provided in Microsoft Excel format, consisting of reviews for Matana University and Pradita University. Both institutions operate within the urban private higher education ecosystem of the Greater Tangerang area, making them suitable for comparison from the perspective of digital reputation. The objective of this research is not to determine which university performs better overall, but rather to identify and compare patterns of public perception reflected in review ratings and textual comments.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How are the rating distributions and sentiment patterns of Google Maps reviews across the two universities? (2) What user experience themes appear most frequently in the reviews? (3) Are there statistically significant differences in the rating patterns between the two institutions?

and (4) What are the implications of these findings for digital reputation management, higher education marketing, and internal quality assurance? By addressing these questions, this study is expected to provide both empirical evidence and practical insights for administrators of private higher education institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using a descriptive-comparative research design. Quantitative analysis was conducted on star ratings, rating-based sentiment distribution, owner responses, and review time trends. Qualitative analysis was performed through thematic content analysis of the available review texts. This design enabled the study to capture both numerical patterns and the meanings embedded in users' experiences as expressed in review narratives, consistent with the principles of mixed-methods research that integrate the breadth of quantitative data with the depth of qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The data sources consisted of two Microsoft Excel files exported from Outscraper Google Maps Reviews. The Pradita University dataset contained 250 review entries analyzed from a total profile rating count of 316 and an aggregate rating of 4.7. The Matana University dataset included 218 review entries, corresponding to a total profile rating count of 218 and an aggregate rating of 4.6. Overall, the study analyzed 468 review entries, of which 166 contained written review texts.

The analysis was conducted in five stages. First, the data were cleaned by removing simple HTML tags and excessive whitespace. Second, star ratings were classified into positive sentiment (ratings of 4–5), neutral sentiment (rating of 3), and negative sentiment (ratings of 1–2). Third, the distributions of ratings and sentiments were calculated for each institution. Fourth, the review texts were coded into seven thematic categories: academics and lecturers; campus facilities and environment; location and accessibility; services, staff, and administration; cost and value; institutional image, pride, and recommendations; and diversity and industry networks. Fifth, the Mann–Whitney U test was applied to compare ratings between the two institutions, while the chi-square test was used to examine differences in sentiment distributions.

The thematic analysis adopted a dictionary-assisted approach, employing an initial list of keywords derived from the service quality literature and a preliminary reading of the review texts. A single review could be assigned to more than one theme because users frequently described multiple aspects of their experiences within the same comment. For example, one review might simultaneously discuss location, lecturers, and campus facilities. This approach was selected to enhance the clarity and consistency of the findings rather than to replace in-depth qualitative interpretation. Theme development continued to follow the principles of thematic analysis, emphasizing recurring patterns of meaning within the textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

From an ethical perspective, this study does not disclose reviewers' names, profile links, or any personally identifiable information. Any review excerpts included in the manuscript are presented as thematic summaries rather than as representations of individual identities. This precaution is essential because, although online reviews are publicly accessible, digital review data should still be managed in accordance with ethical principles of privacy protection and responsible data use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dataset Profile

Table 1. Dataset Profile of Google Maps Reviews for Matana University and Pradita University

Institution	Data Rows	Text Reviews	Average Rating	Profile Rating	Owner Responses	Date Range
Matana University	218	71	4.63	4.6	32 (14.7%)	November 16, 2015 – July 19, 2026
Pradita University	250	95	4.65	4.7	10 (4.0%)	September 12, 2020 – July 16, 2026

Both datasets contain a sufficient volume of reviews to support a preliminary descriptive analysis of users' perceptions and digital reputation. The Matana University dataset includes all 218 reviews available on its Google Maps profile, providing complete coverage of the accessible review population at the time of data collection. In contrast, the Pradita University dataset consists of 250 review records, representing a substantial proportion of the 316 reviews indicated in the profile metadata. Although the dataset does not encompass every available review for Pradita University, the number of collected records remains adequate to identify dominant rating patterns, sentiment distributions, and recurring themes in users' experiences. Consequently, the comparative analysis presented in this study emphasizes the patterns and trends observed within the collected datasets rather than attempting to generalize findings to the entire population of Google Maps reviews. The results should therefore be interpreted as descriptive evidence of digital reputation based on the available review data, while recognizing that additional reviews collected in the future may reveal further nuances in user perceptions.

Rating and Sentiment Distribution

Table 2. Distribution of Google Maps Ratings by Institution

Institution	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Matana University	12 (5.5%)	1 (0.5%)	6 (2.8%)	17 (7.8%)	182 (83.5%)
Pradita University	12 (4.8%)	2 (0.8%)	4 (1.6%)	25 (10.0%)	207 (82.8%)

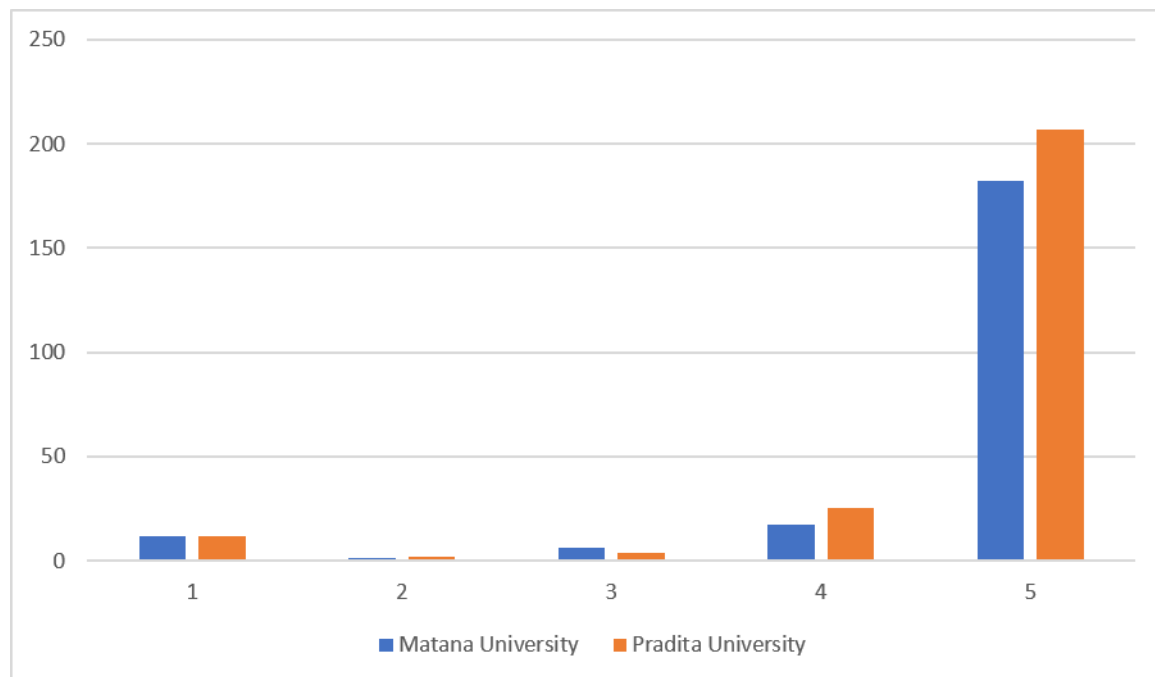


Figure 1. Distribution of Google Maps ratings for the two universities

Table 3. Sentiment Classification of Google Maps Reviews

Institution	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Matana University	199 (91.3%)	6 (2.8%)	13 (6.0%)
Pradita University	232 (92.8%)	4 (1.6%)	14 (5.6%)

The rating results indicate that the majority of reviews fall into the positive category. Overall, 431 out of 468 reviews (92.1%) were classified as positive. The Mann–Whitney test yielded $p = 0.906$, while the chi-square test for sentiment distribution produced $p = 0.677$. These findings indicate that the differences in ratings and sentiment between the two institutions are not statistically significant based on the available data. In other words, both universities maintain similarly positive digital reputations, with the more meaningful differences emerging from the themes of user experiences discussed in the reviews.

User Experience Themes

Table 4. Comparison of User Experience Themes Identified in Google Maps Reviews

Theme	Matana University	Pradita University
Academics and lecturers	22 (31.0%)	23 (24.2%)
Campus facilities and environment	19 (26.8%)	38 (40.0%)
Location and accessibility	12 (16.9%)	10 (10.5%)
Services, staff, and administration	9 (12.7%)	12 (12.6%)
Costs and value for money	5 (7.0%)	4 (4.2%)

Institutional image, pride, and recommendations	21 (29.6%)	37 (38.9%)
Diversity and industry networking	9 (12.7%)	2 (2.1%)

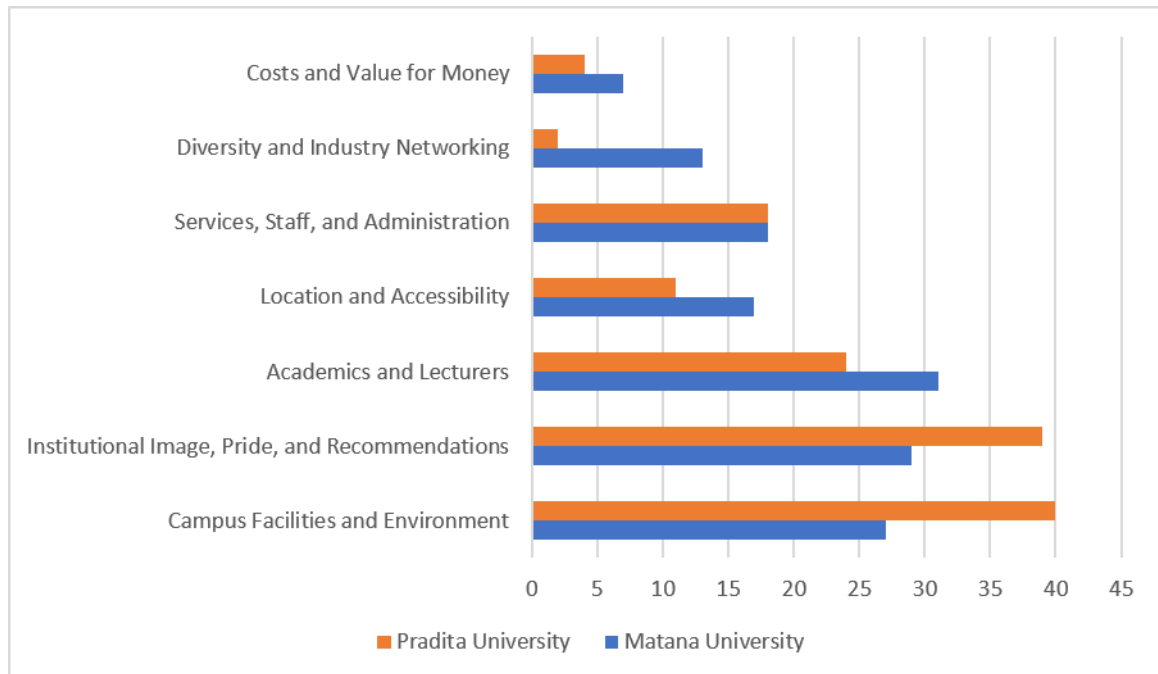


Figure 2. Comparison of Themes in Textual Reviews

The thematic analysis indicates that user experience themes differ between the two institutions. At Matana University, the academics and lecturers theme is relatively prominent, particularly through comments regarding teaching quality, lecturer competence, study programs, and graduates' career prospects. The location and accessibility theme is also notable, as several reviews mention the university's location in the Gading Serpong area and its connection to the surrounding industrial ecosystem. In addition, the diversity and industry networking theme appears more prominently at Matana University, mainly through narratives highlighting the diversity of students' backgrounds and the university's relationship with the Paramount Group ecosystem.

At Pradita University, the campus facilities and environment theme is the most dominant. Many positive reviews emphasize educational facilities, cleanliness, comfort, the library, the sports center, and the completeness of campus facilities. The institutional image, pride, and recommendations theme is also highly represented, indicating that many users express positive impressions directly through terms such as *best*, *suitable*, *well-prepared*, and *recommended*. However, several negative reviews highlight issues related to administration, parking, specific facilities, and the gap between promotional expectations and actual experiences.

Dominant Keywords

Table 5. Dominant Keywords Identified in Google Maps Textual Reviews

Institution	Dominant Keywords in Textual Reviews
Matana University	friendly, comfortable, Matana, study, facilities, campus, good, learning, location, strategic, new, clean, accounting, has
Pradita University	Pradita, facilities, study, students, clean, comfortable, friendly, that, campus, here, good, many, complete, adequate

The dominant keywords reinforce the thematic findings. At Matana University, words such as *friendly*, *comfortable*, *location*, *strategic*, *accounting*, *industry*, *lecturers*, and *Paramount* reflect a combination of service experience, location, academic quality, and industry networking. At Pradita University, keywords such as *facilities*, *study*, *students*, *clean*, *comfortable*, *friendly*, *complete*, *adequate*, *library*, and *green* emphasize the university's physical environment and campus facilities.

Negative Reviews as Signals for Service Improvement

Although the proportion of negative reviews is relatively small, they provide significant managerial value because they often reveal critical service pain points. At Matana University, the negative issues identified include tuition fees perceived as expensive, certain campus facilities, transportation access, elevators, the cafeteria, and parking experiences. At Pradita University, negative reviews primarily concern the perceived quality of academic content, security and parking services, student administration and scholarship services, communication from the marketing and finance departments, as well as several campus facilities. These issues should be interpreted as early warning signals that require further validation through internal surveys, focus group discussions, and formal complaint mechanisms.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the digital reputation of both universities can be categorized as strong. The dominance of five-star ratings suggests that a large proportion of users have had positive experiences. However, a high proportion of favorable ratings should not be interpreted as evidence of a problem-free institution. In service marketing, customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction often emerge from specific service encounters. Therefore, positive reviews can be leveraged to strengthen institutional positioning, while negative reviews should be utilized to identify areas requiring service improvement. These findings are consistent with recent studies highlighting satisfaction, educational quality, and brand knowledge as key determinants of positive word-of-mouth (WOM) in higher education (Lin et al., 2025; Rasheed & Rashid, 2024).

For Matana University, the primary strengths reflected in user reviews include academic quality, lecturers, strategic location, relatively affordable tuition in several comments, diversity, and industry partnerships. Narratives concerning academic programs, career prospects, professional faculty members, and industry connections can be further developed into more consistent reputation-building messages. From the perspective of educational

service marketing management, these strengths reinforce the university's value proposition as an institution closely aligned with labor market needs. Evidence from the Indonesian context also suggests that personal value, emotional attachment, and institutional experiences significantly influence both the intensity and valence of students' word-of-mouth behavior (Juhaidi et al., 2025).

For Pradita University, the most prominent strengths lie in its physical facilities, learning environment, library, campus atmosphere, and users' sense of pride. These findings indicate that the physical evidence of educational services plays a substantial role in shaping institutional reputation. In higher education, facilities function not only as supporting resources but also as quality signals that influence prospective students' trust. When campus facilities are perceived as complete, clean, and comfortable, the institution gains reputational capital that can be further strengthened through digital communication strategies.

The comparison between the two institutions also demonstrates that similar aggregate ratings may conceal important differences in the underlying narratives. Statistically, the overall ratings of the two universities do not differ significantly. Nevertheless, thematic analysis reveals that the sources of positive perceptions are not identical. This distinction is important for university leaders because reputation management strategies should not focus solely on achieving high numerical ratings. Instead, institutions need to understand the reasons behind these ratings so that quality improvement initiatives and promotional strategies can better reflect users' actual experiences. In the e-WOM literature, review texts and the diversity of information constitute essential layers for interpreting the meaning behind numerical ratings (Liu et al., 2024; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2021).

Owner responses also represent an important aspect of digital reputation management. Matana University exhibited a higher proportion of owner responses than Pradita University within the analyzed dataset. Responding to reviews signals that the institution actively listens to public feedback. However, the quality of these responses is equally important. Responses that are personalized, solution-oriented, courteous, and accompanied by appropriate follow-up actions are generally more effective than generic replies. In the context of digital reputation, the way institutions respond to criticism is often perceived by the public as being just as important as the criticism itself, since e-WOM platforms shape public perceptions through open interactions between users and organizations (Rabah et al., 2024; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2021).

The findings are also relevant to the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI/PPEPP). Digital reviews can be incorporated as supporting evidence for evaluating standards related to student services, facilities and infrastructure, institutional management, and partnership activities. Negative reviews can serve as a valuable source for identifying service deficiencies, while positive reviews can provide evidence of best practices. Nevertheless, these data should be integrated with student satisfaction surveys, tracer studies, internal quality audits, and service reports to produce more robust conclusions. Strengthening continuous feedback

systems is also consistent with previous findings demonstrating that educational quality and satisfying campus experiences enhance students' willingness to engage in positive word-of-mouth communication (Lin et al., 2025; Zeqiri et al., 2023).

Managerial Implications

Table 6. Managerial Implications for Higher Education Institutions

Area	Implications for Higher Education Management
Educational Service Marketing	Develop communication strategies based on themes that genuinely emerge from users' experiences rather than relying solely on promotional claims. Matana University can emphasize its academic quality, strategic location, diversity, and industry partnerships, while Pradita University can highlight its facilities, learning environment, and overall campus experience.
SPMI/PPEPP	Integrate digital reviews as complementary data for evaluating standards related to student services, facilities and infrastructure, institutional management, and student affairs. Recurring issues should be systematically mapped to the responsible administrative units.
Services and Administration	Improve service touchpoints frequently mentioned in negative reviews, particularly parking, security, student administration, scholarship services, elevators, cafeteria services, transportation access, and communication regarding tuition fees.
Digital Reputation Management	Establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) for monitoring online reviews, responding within specified timeframes, escalating complaints, and documenting follow-up actions so that digital platforms become an integral component of the institutional quality assurance system.
Leadership Decision-Making	Develop a management dashboard that regularly monitors ratings, review themes, complaints, and owner responses to support leadership meetings and management review processes.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that Google Maps Reviews can serve as a valuable preliminary data source for assessing the digital reputation of private higher education institutions. Based on the analysis of 468 reviews collected from Matana University and Pradita University, the majority of ratings were positive, with a combined average rating of 4.64. Statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in either rating distributions or sentiment classifications between the two institutions, indicating that both universities maintain similarly strong digital reputations within the analyzed dataset.

The primary differences emerged from the themes of user experiences expressed in the textual reviews. Matana University was more frequently associated with themes related to academics and lecturers, strategic location, diversity, and industry networking. In contrast,

Pradita University received stronger recognition for its campus facilities, learning environment, and institutional image reflected through users' recommendations and expressions of pride. These findings demonstrate that effective digital reputation management should extend beyond numerical ratings by incorporating qualitative analyses of the experiences, expectations, and concerns expressed by users.

The study also highlights the practical value of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) as an important source of organizational feedback. Digital reviews not only reflect public perceptions but also provide actionable information that can support service quality improvement, institutional branding, and strategic decision-making. Therefore, integrating online review analysis into institutional quality assurance and marketing practices can contribute to continuous improvement and stronger stakeholder engagement.

Higher education institutions are encouraged to integrate Google Maps Reviews into their quality assurance and digital marketing strategies by regularly monitoring online feedback, identifying recurring service issues, and implementing measurable improvements based on users' experiences. Institutions should also establish systematic procedures for responding to reviews in a timely, professional, and solution-oriented manner to strengthen stakeholder trust and institutional reputation. Furthermore, future studies are recommended to include a larger number of universities, multiple online review platforms, and longitudinal data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital reputation management and the role of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in higher education.

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