

## **Student's Decision to Choose University: Building Brand Image**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the dimensions of brand image to strengthen the student's decision to choose a private university. The research method used is a qualitative method with a literature study of several journals related to this issue. Based on the results of previous journal discussions, it is known that brand image is the added value or incremental utility of a product given through its brand name which is determined by the dimensions of the brand image, namely product quality, brand loyalty, and brand associations. So the image is formed based on the impression that a person feels about an educational institution.

**Keyword : Brand Image, decision to choose, private university,.**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The implementation of Private Higher Education as a non-profit institution is an activity whose main purpose is not to make profit, so that all remaining business results from these activities must be returned and reinvested in Higher Education in an effort to increase the capacity and/or quality of education services. However, for private universities that are not able to get the optimal number of students in accordance with the capacity of the infrastructure they have, the PTS operations will be hampered and experience difficulties in increasing the capacity and/or quality of its services.

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was proven that the number of new student admissions from private universities had decreased. There are many other factors that influence this, it could be due to economic factors, specialization, PTS quality, competition and the PTS Brand Image. It must be admitted that if the Minded State dichotomy is still strong in people's perceptions in determining their school, private universities are the second alternative, except for private universities that have a strong brand image.

To be able to strengthen the brand, what will be needed is Branding. Branding is an activity to be able to make a brand more known and famous,

including through various promotions, campaigns, or other activities. It is certain, as well as universities, if they don't build a 'brand', they may sink. Universities are increasingly aware of the importance of marketing and branding, several public and private universities that are favorites are now aggressively advertising on various media channels.

Regarding the brand, Roy and Banerjee (2007) explained that basically the brand image describes what consumers think and feel about the brand. While Delgado-Ballester and Jose Luis (2005) explain that building a strong brand is the goal of many organizations because it will bring benefits to the company, including reduced vulnerability to act in competitive marketing, larger margins, greater intermediary cooperation. and support branding. So in this case is how potential consumers describe what they think and feel from the PTS brand.

The managers of private universities are now increasingly aware that to be able to compete, private universities must be able to be distinguished from its competitors by its branding. So what must also be done is branding activities so that the universities they manage must be distinguished from competitors so that they become unique and easily recognizable. This will have the implication that there may be a shift in the previously known favorite universities, which will begin to be abandoned. When private universities have a competitive advantage because of their uniqueness, nowadays, for example, their branding is becoming a world-class university. Basically, college as a brand will be built from the identity it displays. So, for example, if a private university wants to be known as a world-class university, the identity that must be displayed is its international identity, dual degree program, starting from the composition of students, logos, language of instruction, lecturers, activities and achievements of institutions and students and others. Likewise, for example, if the private university wants to be known as an entrepreneur-printing university, the identity that must be displayed is the entrepreneurial identity by proving the large percentage of graduates who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurs. This means that the jargon or tagline of higher education must be in line with the outcomes of its graduates.

Branding does not only apply to companies or products but also to educational institutions. For educational institutions, branding can also function as a strength and a differentiator (duta.co: 2018). Likewise private universities, in introducing and displaying their existence in the community and prospective students, a Branding Strategy is needed in order to strengthen their identity in competing with other campuses in Bangkalan district. Like a company that produces goods, universities as educational institutions must also make efforts to face increasingly fierce competition in the world of education. Every university should be able to read in order to see the opportunities that exist in the midst of the public. People tend to choose universities that are not only well accredited, but also have a good brand image.

A perfect brand image, whether attached to a product or educational institution in the long term, can have a good impact on higher education. Therefore, it is very important for university managers to make strategies and improve the image that has been formed by always evaluating the performance of the university.

Branding is an inculcation of value in consumer memory, unlike the process of buying and selling, which is transactional (the process only requires the seller, the buyer, the goods being traded, and the medium of exchange), after the transaction is complete, everything is done. But branding presents a sense of need by consumers for branded products, good branding makes products last very long in people's minds, whether the products themselves are still there or even no longer available, the brand (brand) will always be remembered by the public. If in the past branding was only applied to the business-economic world, now branding is applied to more aspects of life, culture, politics and education using branding as a strategy to win, to develop, at least to maintain its existence in the midst of its competitors. Today, marketing communication has become an important part of an organization, both business and educational. Marketing communication helps an organization or educational institution to form and build a positive brand awareness in the eyes of consumers. In a sense, consumers interpret product information submitted by the organization in the form of perceptions about the product and the position of the product in the market

In the world of education, to win the hearts of the people, it is not only the quality that determines, but the 'image' of what is in the minds of the people when they hear the name of the institution being mentioned. It is the image that is managed so that it is constructed according to what we want through the branding process later, messages and media are arranged in such a way. Bighley in 1952 reviewed several studies that compared the effects of messages conveyed by well-organized and structured messages into messages that were easier to understand. (Jalaluddin R, 2012:290)

## **METHOD**

This research is a research using literature study method or literature review. A literature review is a comprehensive overview of research that has been done on a specific topic to show the reader what is already known about the topic and what is not known, to seek rationale from research that has been done or for further research ideas (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013). ). Literature studies can be obtained from various sources, both journals, books, documentation, internet and libraries. The literature study method is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading and taking notes, and managing writing materials (Zed, 2008 in Nursalam, 2016). The type of writing used is a literature review study that focuses on the results of writing related to the topic or variable of writing.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Some of the previous studies that serve as the basis for the discussion are as follows:

Table 1 Journal Reference

| Nama Peneliti   | Judul  | Hasil Penelitian   |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Sidra Shehzadi,<br>Qasim Ali Nisar,<br>Muhammad Sajjad | <i>The role of digital learning toward students' satisfaction and university</i> | The results showed that ICT, e-service quality and e-information quality |

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| <p>Hussain,<br/>Muhammad<br/>Farhan Basheer,<br/>Waseem Ul<br/>Hameed dan<br/>Naveed Iqbal<br/>Chaudhry (2020)</p>                           | <p><i>brand image at<br/>educational institutes of<br/>Pakistan: a post-effect of<br/>COVID-19</i></p>  | <p>contributed positively to students' e-learning which in turn led to the creation of positive e-word of mouth and student satisfaction. The results also identified that e-word of mouth and student satisfaction resulted in a positive brand image for the university.</p>   |
| <p>2. Sumartias and<br/>Nuraryo (2017)</p>   | <p><i>Student Satisfaction,<br/>University Brand Image<br/>and Its Impact on<br/>electronic Word of Mouth<br/>Communication</i></p>   | <p>The results showed that student satisfaction and University brand image impacts eWOM communication by mediating university brand loyalty</p>  |
| <p>3. Daisy Lee, Peggy<br/>M. L. Ng and<br/>Svetlana<br/>Bogomolova<br/>(2019)</p>   | <p><i>The impact of university<br/>brand identification and<br/>eWOM behaviour on<br/>students' psychological<br/>well-being: a multigroup<br/>analysis among active<br/>and passive social media<br/>users</i></p> | <p>The research results show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- University brand image has a significant positive effect on eWOM behavior in social media</li> <li>- University brand image has a significant positive effect on students' psychology</li> <li>- The survival of the university has a significant positive effect on the university's brand image</li> </ul> |
| <p>4. Sharifah Alwi,<br/>Norbani Che-Ha,<br/>Bang Nguyen,<br/>Ezlika M. Ihazali,<br/>Dilip M. Mutum<br/>dan Philip J.<br/>Kitchen (2020)</p> | <p><i>Projecting university<br/>brand image via<br/>satisfaction and<br/>behavioral response<br/>Perspectives from UK-<br/>based Malaysian students</i></p>   | <p>The results show that brand experience and brand image follow a rational thought process before the affective component is taken into account, resulting in electronic word of mouth and loyalty. This study identifies several important cognitive brand image attributes and experiences that guide brand positioning for the Malaysian market, linking them to satisfaction</p>  |

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| 5. Teddy Chandra,<br>Layla Hafni,<br>Stefani Chandra<br>and Astri Ayu<br>Purwati (2019) | <i>The influence of service<br/>quality, university image<br/>on student satisfaction<br/>and student loyalty</i>  | <p>and e-WOM.</p> <p>The results showed that there was a positive and significant effect of service quality on student satisfaction attitudes, there was a positive and significant effect of service quality on student satisfaction attitudes. and the attitude of satisfaction has a significant effect on the attitude of student loyalty, the quality of service does not have a positive or significant effect on the attitude of student loyalty, and the image of the university has a positive and significant effect on the attitudes of student satisfaction and loyalty.</p> <p>The research findings reveal that Brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer attitudes.</p> <p>Consumer attitudes have a significant positive effect on products or services that are extended by the parent Brand Image. Use of appropriate marketing strategies in developing and increase consumer's positive attitude towards the extended brand by the company</p> <p>The results of the study show that brand image is a shaper of student attitudes in making international students' decisions in choosing universities</p> |
| 6. Lawal, Azeez<br>Tunbosun. and<br>Yunusa, Al-Imran<br>Jubril (2020)                   | <i>Brand Image And<br/>Consumer's Attitude: An<br/>Evaluation Of The Brand<br/>Extension Strategy Of Al-<br/>Hikmah University Table<br/>Water</i>   |  |
| 7. Rasha Qawasmeh,<br>Husam Kokash,<br>Jamal Ahmed Al-<br>Douri (                       | <i>Effect of Destination<br/>Brand Quality on<br/>Students' Decision on<br/>Determining A Country of<br/>Their Study: A Case of<br/>Internationals at<br/>Jornadian Private<br/>Universities</i> |  |

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| 8. Ismail Erkan,<br>Sevtap Unal &<br>Fulya Acikgoz<br>(2021) | <i>What affects university<br/>image and students'<br/>supportive attitudes: the<br/>4Q Model</i> | The results show that<br>academic quality, education<br>quality, research quality,<br>and physical condition all<br>have a positive impact on<br>the university's brand<br>image. In addition, it was<br>found that university brand<br>image has a strong impact<br>on students' supportive<br>attitudes |
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### **Brand Image**

Brand image by Rangkuti (2013: 43) is defined as a collection of associations of various types of brands in the market whose existence is in the minds of consumers. The picture of a product and its associations as well as their belief in a particular brand that is formed in memory can be said to be a brand image (Tjiptono, 2015: 49). Dimensions in brand image can be categorized into three parts, namely: the strength of brand associations or brand associations where consumers actively think about a particular brand and in their minds there is a strong association of information on a product or service, brand superiority or brand favorability where the attributes of a product or service. the product or service is believed by consumers to be able to bring benefits and results commensurate with the effort given by consumers and the uniqueness of the brand or brand uniqueness where a product or service has a distinctive identity or unique characteristics that distinguish them from other similar products so as to motivate consumers to make a purchase

Brand image is the impression that a brand gets from its market share, often the image about the brand is associated with an abstract picture of the product. Such an image may be the result of a pre-planned marketing action or simply an outcome of market interactions and perceptions. Building a brand image is very important, because the brand is seen as a way for managers of educational institutions to allocate the potential value that exists in educational institutions to convince the public. By building a brand image, the institution can build its reputation to be trusted by the community and able to be competitive in accordance with the needs of the community. In general, competitiveness has two words, namely power and competitiveness which means a strength, while competitiveness means competing or competing to be better with others. Being competitive here is a way to compete to improve an educational institution to be better and is a condition that must be addressed by educational institutions with various strategies so that the existence and development of the institution can continue to run.

According to Dehesht et al. (2016), brands are tools of corporate identity and their influence in the market. This is a perceptual representation that can be interpreted, namely the impression of the customer on the company, which is known as the brand image. Brands and images can make a company's service

tangible and help differentiate a company through quality and resources from the competition. The dimensions that compose the brand image (Shehzadi, et al. 2020. Sumartias and Nuraryo (2017) Alwi, et al (2020)) , namely:

1. Brand Strength. The strength of the brand image depends on the quantity. How often does someone think about information on a brand or quality in processing all information received by consumers. The deeper a person thinks about the information of a brand, and relates it to previous knowledge of the brand, the stronger the brand image he has. The strength of the brand image is created by marketing programs that carry information that has to do with consumers in good consistency throughout the ages.
2. Brand Favorability. Brand liking, trust and affinity with a brand evoke warmth in consumers' feelings. It will be difficult for other brands to attract consumers who already love the brand to this stage. In this element base, the main thing is to try to convince consumers with the performance of the attributes and benefits of products and services. This stage is also the stage of forming positive brand judgments
3. Brand Uniqueness. Creating a unique impression and a meaningful difference between other brands and making consumers have no reason not to choose that brand. The uniqueness can come from the attributes and benefits of the product or non-product.

Based on the results of the research above, brand image has an important role in the formation of a general perception which will affect trust in a brand. Furthermore, research by Erkan, Unal & Acikgoz (2021) and Lawal and Jubril (2020) suggests that brand image is a predictor that matches brand trust and can influence it. Through improving the company's brand image, companies can win customers' trust in their products. By paying more attention to the atmosphere of the shops, adding more variety to products, and improving product quality, the company managed to win the trust of their customers. This research is supported by research conducted by Chandra et al (2019). Campuses or colleges which are academic institutions must also look at competitors from the brand image generated by other Islamic universities.

Daisy Lee, Peggy and Bogomolova, Svetlana (2019), Erkan, Unal & Acikgoz (2021) Lawal and Jubril (2020) and Qawasmeh, et al (2021) state that brand loyalty is divided into five levels, as follows:

1. Switchers are a group that doesn't care about brands, they like to switch brands. Their motivation to switch brands is the low price because this group is price sensitive switcher.
2. Habitual buyers are groups who are loyal to a brand where the basis of loyalty is not satisfaction or familiarity and pride.
3. Satisfied buyers are groups of consumers who are satisfied with a brand. They are loyal, but the basis of their loyalty is not based on pride or familiarity with a brand but rather based on the calculation of profit and loss or switching costs when switching to another brand.
4. Liking the brand is a group of consumers who have not expressed their pride to others, love for new products is limited to commitment to themselves, and they feel familiar with the brand.

5. Committed buyers are consumers who feel proud of the brand and express their pride.

### **Brand Trust**

Brand trust is obtained through the achievement of commitment from consumers to make a purchase decision for a product or service and the consumer is satisfied with the product or service that obtained so that in the future the consumer will feel a sense of loyalty to the product (Tjiptono et.al, 2005). Top measurement brand trust using the dimensions created by Cheng (2016), which is the result of grounded theory research where there are three dimensions which is considered to represent brand trust, namely the level of product trust or trustworthiness, the level of trust and the value or price of company offering product or enterprise trustworthiness and the high level of trust and value or price of the brand offered or brand trustworthiness. Indicators covering product quality, service, personality product, product origin and product cost are included in the dimensions product trustworthiness. As for enterprise trustworthiness, it has indicators consisting of company image, credit, excellence, culture And Responsibility. The brand trustworthiness dimension has indicators consisting of product history, position, reputation, advertising and representation product. Research by Chao (2016) supports the proof of the existence of influence of brand image on purchasing decisions. Research that conducted by Aydin, Akdeniz, and Taskin (2014) got the results that brand trust increases the purchasing decisions of consumers.

According to Lau and Lee (1999), there are three factors used to measure brand trust. The three factors are:

1. The brand itself (brand characteristic) Brand characteristic has a very important role in determining consumer decision making to trust a brand. This is because consumers make an assessment before buying. Brand characteristics related to brand trust include predictability, reputation, and competence.
2. Company characteristics (company characteristics) The characteristics behind a brand can also affect the level of consumer confidence in the brand. Consumer knowledge about the company behind the brand of a product is the basis of consumer understanding of the brand of a product. These characteristics include a company's reputation, desired company motivation, and company integrity.
3. Consumers (consumer-brand characteristic). These are two groups that influence each other. Therefore, consumer-brand characteristics can affect brand trust. These characteristics include the similarity between the consumer's emotional concept and brand personality, brand preference, and brand experience. Self-concept is the totality of individual thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object, so that in the context of marketing a brand is often analogous to a person. A brand can have an impression or personality. Brand personality is the association associated with a brand that consumers remember and that consumers can accept. Consumers often interact with brands as if they were human. Thus, the similarity between



consumer self-concept and brand personality is closely related to consumer confidence in the brand.

### **Brand Identity**

Brand identity or brand identity is a form that is created from an impression in recognizing a product not only from the beginning of the product even to the end of the product so that it is clear and understandable from the product. words, impressions, and a collection of forms of consumer perceptions of the brand. Meanwhile, according to Aaker (2008), brand identity is a unique brand association that shows promise to consumers. To be effective, a brand identity needs to resonate with consumers, differentiate the brand from competitors, and represent what the organization can and will do over time. The same thing is also stated by Kotler & Keller (2006) which defines brand identity as a unique set of brand associations created by brand strategists. These associations reflect the standing of a brand and are a promise to customers from members of the organization. Brand identity will help strengthen the relationship between the brand and customers through a value proposition that involves functional benefits, emotional benefits or self-expression.

### **Purchase Decision**

The decision to make a purchase can be interpreted as a form of behavior from consumers who make decisions to use a certain product or service with the aim of being used for personal consumption (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012: 133). Before a purchase decision is made, there are several stages that prospective consumers go through in determining their choice, such as the need identification process, searching for information about products or services, the process of evaluating existing alternatives until finally consumers make purchasing decisions and evaluate their decisions after making the purchase (Ferrell & Hartline, 2003). 2011:154).

University selection decisions can be said to be a form of behavior consumers (Chen & Zimitat, 2006). Students can be said to be consumers of a company A university that has a need to gain knowledge and also a degree from a university the course he took. A consumer needs various kinds of information so that the best alternative to meet their needs (Fakhri et al., 2017). Therefore Therefore, information about related universities is needed before prospective students decide where to study. The university selection decision-making process will go through three main stages (Sidin, Hussin, & Soon, 2003). First, a prospective student realizes that having interest in continuing to study at the university level. Second, prospective students looking for important information about the college they want to go to. Third, a prospective students decide to enroll in a particular college. In the process The decision making will be influenced by many factors. Ambarwati, Sunarti, and Mawardi (2015) states that there are external stimuli in the form of marketing and environment that can influence a person in making decisions

### **Strategy to Build Brand Image**

Strategy is a long-term program of an organization related to the way the organization maximizes its strengths and overcomes its internal weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities and overcoming various external threats to maintain competitive advantage. The right strategy can lead educational institutions to success in achieving their goals and still have a competitive advantage. Strategy can also be interpreted as a consideration as a reference for determining an action in a way (tactics) that must be carried out in an integrated manner so that activities can be carried out properly in accordance with predetermined goals. In organizational systems, strategies are used by managers to carry out activities with the aim of running them effectively and efficiently. Likewise in educational institutions, strategies or tactics are the most important part to carry out all existing activity processes.

According to Sumartias and Nuraryo (2017) tactics can also be interpreted as a way of doing the right thing (doing the thing right). So, if in the organization of educational institutions, tactics are the efforts used by the head to regulate and manage an institution by planning, organizing, mobilizing, and evaluating in a way that the goals of educational institutions can be achieved effectively and efficiently. Strategy is part of strategic thinking in addition to values, mission, and vision. Therefore, according to Morrisey, strategy is seen as a process that shows a direction that should be directed by an organization as a driving factor, and other major factors that will help organizational managers determine products, services, and markets for the organization in the future.

In the Total Quality Management (TQM) paradigm, strategy is seen as a systematic approach to quality improvement, so that its existence in the world of education is called the same as the world of industry and business. Therefore strategy in Total Quality Management is also referred to as a strategic plan, which means "the formulation of long-term priorities, and it enables institutional change to be tackled in a rational manner". can bring change to institutions based on a rational approach". Chandra et al (2019)

In the basic concept of marketing strategy includes three main principles, namely value which contains brand, service, process and strategy which contains segmentation, targeting and positioning while tactics include differentiation, marketing mix and selling. The ultimate goal of applying these nine principles is not only to get market share but also to win mind share and the ultimate is heart share. So it is clear that when referring to the various concepts put forward by some thinkers in the field of strategy, strategy is a thinking process that is formulated together with the determination of the vision, mission, and values that will be developed by an educational institution/organization.

Therefore, as a thinking process, strategy is built on three basic elements, namely starting with strategic thinking, strategic planning, and finally taking strategic action. It can also be said that strategy is an action that contains strategic thinking, strategic planning and strategic action. Image is the impression, feeling or image that exists in the community regarding an organization or institution that is objective about the actions and behavior and ethics of educational institutions related to their existence in society.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, according to R. Abratt's image

in the context of institutional strategy is related to corporate image management. Image in the minds of audiences is the accumulation of messages recorded in their minds. Image is formed not only because of the experience of using educational services, but also because of the interaction with the institution. The growth of a positive image takes a long time, there are many factors that influence the formation of an image, which include academic reputation, school appearance, costs, personal attention, location, career placement, social activities, and study programs. All of these components will later form the image of educational institutions and should receive special attention for school management. (Shehzadi, et al. 2020).

Meanwhile, according to Shehzadi, et al (2020), and alwi et al (2020) the image is obtained in accordance with monitoring the results of a person's observation of something. In an organization, an educational institution must be able to build its image in order to be able to create a good impression on the general public. Meanwhile, if drawn in educational institutions, Buchari Alma divides the elements of the image into three parts, namely:

1. Mirror image is an impression that is embedded by leaders, educators, and educators in their institutions and tends to feel in a good position. For this reason, educational institutions must be able to see for themselves or evaluate how the image they display in educational institutions by referring to the impression of the general public.
2. Multi-image (multiple image) Impressions related to the aspect of introducing (awareness) to the identity of educational institutions. The image contained in the public's mind about educational institutions is related to how many are satisfied, whether it is good, whether there are still many shortcomings, and are not satisfied with some forms of educational services.
3. Image Now (current image) The impression obtained from the community about the institution in terms of the quality of education. This impression is indeed in accordance with the reality that occurs in educational institutions based on the impression of the general public. This current image needs to be known by all educators and teaching staff in an institution, so that where there is a possibility this general image can be improved.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the descriptions above, it is known that brand image is the added value or incremental utility of a product given through its brand name which is determined by the dimensions of the brand image, namely product quality, brand loyalty, and brand associations. Product quality is the product's ability to carry out its duties which include durability, reliability, progress, strength, ease of packaging, and product repair and other characteristics. So the image is formed based on the impression that a person feels about an educational institution. The impression in question is an impression of the quality of quality education so that it ultimately forms a mental attitude. Mental attitude is an attitude that makes people's actions to take a decision. Quality in educational institutions in question is a relative concept, especially with regard to customer satisfaction.

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