STUDENT PARENT PERCEPTION TOWARDS CONSUMER BASED BRAND EQUITY

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Abstract

It can be argued that parental role in selecting which university should a student candidate take is instrumental. With the rapidly growing Indonesia higher education industries over the last ten years, study in brand equity area focussing on the parent's perception towards the brand equity of a university become more and more crucial. This study investigates student parent's perception using five variables of consumer based brand equity from Lassar *et al.* (1995) in a private university in Jakarta (University X). There are two different departments to be compared with in order to know whether there are differences in brand equity perception between student parents from both departments. The result shows most variables are indifference with exceptions in three questions and the three questions relate to performance and attachment concerning quality and long-term commitment. Implication and suggestion have been promoted according to the result.

Keywords: higher education, brand equity

Abstrak

Orang tua calon mahasiswa/i dapat diargumentasikan berperan penting dalam menentukan pilihan universitas tujuan belajar anak-anak mereka. Dengan berkembangnya institusi pendidikan tinggi di Indonesia selama kurun waktu 10 tahun terakhir, studi pada topik ekuitas merek yang difokuskan pada persepsi orang tua terhadap ekuitas merek pada sebuah universitas menjadi semakin penting dan kritis. Penelitian ini melakukan investigasi terhadap persepsi orang tua calon mahasiswa/i dengan menggunakan lima variabel ekuitas merek konsumen dari Lassar *et al.* (1995) pada sebuah universitas swasta di Jakarta (universitas X). Penelitian ini membandingkan dua department dengan tujuan mendapatkan informasi perbedaan persepsi ekuitas merek dari orang tua calon mahasiswa di kedua departemen tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukan sebagian besar variabel tidak menunjukan beda yang signifikan di kedua departemen, dengan perkecualian tiga poin pertanyaan terkait dengan performa dan keterikatan (faktor emosional) mengenai kualitas dan komitmen jangka panjang. Implikasi dan saran juga diberikan sejalan dengan hasil penelitian.

Kata kunci: higher education, brand equity

JEL classification: M31

1. Introduction

With numerous universities in Indonesia nowadays, competition rate among higher education increased and forced universitiy/higher education instituions providing a better education service in order to stay in the education market. The situation brings benefit to parents as well as potential college students as they have more options and they can choose selectively which university they should enroll. Unfortunately, the more choices also means they have to consider more things before making decision.

Among many decision making variables, it can be argued the vision and mission statement of one particular university can lead into good perception since it carries personal message to potential customers (De Gregorio and Sung, 2010; Guido et al., 2010). The vision and mission statement plays an important role to the decision of whether a potential student should enter the university or, it can be called good brand equity. A lot of extensive studies have been done in the brand equity area to determine relationship between brand equity and consumers over various kinds of industry in various countries, namely the most current such as Hu et al. (2010); Afzal et al. (2010); Chen and Tseng (2010); and Fetscherin and Toncar (2009).

Given that, having a good brand equity also can favor one university among its competitors. Lassar, et al. (1995) suggested to break down the brand equity concept into five variables, i.e.: performance, value, social image, trustworthiness, and attachment. This study aims to compare and contrast the degree of perception among parents of their students and find out the differences as well as the similarites between the two departments of a particular private university located in Jakarta. The five variables from Lassar et al. (1995) is used to compare two departments, Management and Accounting, at the university.While some similar studies about university's brand equity had been done previously, such as the work of Soelasih et al. (2010, the uniqueness of this study is focussing on student parents for their importance role in decision making makes this study unique. This study brings new perspective on put more emphasize on student parent since it is believed their role in determining which university should they children go is dominant, especially in Indonesia culture (Ubaydillah 2009; Hartaji and Sedjo, 2009; Saomah 2006). For ethical reason, the name of the university is not disclossed and replaced into "University X" instead.

The rest of this article starts with promoting issues in parental role and relevant brand equity theory, introducing method used in this research, presenting the results, discussing the implications and proposing some relevant suggestions.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Parental Role in Choosing a Place to Study

While it can be argued by different countries, it is a given fact that most students in Indonesia choose their field and place of study according to their relatives. Indeed, they may have discussion with their siblings and friends but most cases in Indonesia shows that the final decision will be made by the parents. For example, some motivation and encouragement from family group are acknowledged by the study of Hartaji and Sedjo (2009, or different parental style may lead to independency level of the students (Saomah, 2006). The dream of the parent immerse into their suggestion to what they expect their children should be (Psychology article 2009).

Furthermore, Ubaydillah (2009) found out that low level of independency in their children, in most cases is the reason why parent still have strong influence to the student's choice. Lack of knowledge leads the student to the point that they have to choose because of the social factors driven by the parent's perception. Ubaydillah (2009) claimed that the role of parents dominates in selecting the higher education for their children.

Next, the study of Alim (2009) indicated that strong or weak financial wealth takes part of the decision as well. Strong financial parents usually urge their children to choose a field of study that is belived can guarante their children future. In reality, as argued by Alim (2009, it is quite common when one student fails because he/she follows his/her parent suggestion. This situation also happens in most of the Indonesian universities, indicated by the high rate level of dropped out students every year.

Some studies accross nations also revealed the dominance of parental role in determining their children's education related to the their future. For example, a study from Ho et al. (2010) about parental role becomes more intense when the parents consider some actitivies were highly

beneficial to their children. Another similarity also presented by study from Zainal et al. (2009) which found out that most parents do have specific saving to finance their children higher education in Malaysia.

Given the importance role of parents in deciding which university should their children go imply a meaning that the knowledge of a university brand in the parent's perception becomes more important and very cruicial. It is important to cultivate such a good image to parent for creating positive aura in order to maintain sustainable growth of a university. Also, some of the student parents are also alumni from University X. Thus, it can be argued that the first step to maintain university market share in Indonesia should be started with the parents.

2.2. Brand and Brand Equity

Brand is important. American Marketing Association (AMA) defines brand as "*a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and differentiate them from those of competitors*" (Kotler and Keller, 2006). A good brand management creates better oppotunity and influence market perception towards a better financial position (Kapareliotis and Panopoulus, 2010). Competitors may produce similar product/service but brand equity of a product is different one from another. Given that, brand equity of one product is very specific. Its stength relies on its ability to be known by customers, to attract customers, and to influence repurchase action. As a result, there has been a theoretical development in brand theory to understand how the brand works for a product/service.

For example, Aaker (1996) suggested the concept of brand equity into several elements. First, brand awareness. It measures the ability of one person to recall or recognise one product brand (Rangkuti, 2008). Second, perceived quality. It measures customer perception to the overall quality or one particular advantage of a product/service (Rangkuti, 2008). Third, brand association. It covers everything about memory of a brand that collectivelly build an image of a brand or brand image (Rangkuti, 2008). A customer using one brand consistently has tendency to this brand image model. Last but not least is brand loyalty. It measures customer loyalty towards one brand (Durianto et al., 2004). Brand loyalty is the centre of brand equity model because it correlates between customer and brand.

Further, Keller (1993) introduces a technique to measure brand equity focussing on customer behavior called customer based brand equity. This model assumes that the strength of a brand is coming from what customer feels, sees, learns, and listen about the brand over time. Moreover, a brand is having a positive customer based brand equity if customer reacts in a positive direction toward the brand when is being marketed.

The concept has been tested in recent years to akcnowledge useful measurement for customer based brand equity. One important study is coming from Lassar et al. (1995). They developed a survey on this topic and they came with several measurement scales that they claimed can be used to measure customer based brand equity. They provides five dimension, i.e.: performance, value, social image, trustworthiness, and attachment. These five dimensions are the main measurement of this study.

Performance refers to customer perception about a brand from its functionality such as features, design, quality, etc. When a product brand can not fulfill its function, customers won't buy the product and theoretically the product would have a low value of brand equity. Next, value refers to customer perception about benefit given compared to its cost. Value is consider to be important because customer decision is also relied on balancing between price and benefit of a product. When the balance is not equal, it will affect the decision. Third, social image refers to understanding that a brand should create a sense of proud. Social image is also very often to be associated with ownership of one particular brand with specific purpose. For example, although Timex and Swatch watches give similar performance (display time) but Swatch is associated

more intensively with male teenager watch in the United States of America. Fourth, trustworthiness is customer's trust to brand's owner that the owner will perform on behalf on customer's interest. The bigger magnitude of trust will contribute to positive brand equity while the lesser will do the opposite. Finally, attachment represents customer positive perspective on a brand that can contribute to greater customer loyalty. Customers can identify and develop a sentimenal attachment towards particular strong brands, such as Apple brand, Rolex brand, Mercedes brand, etc.

2.3. Hypothesis

This research performs a comparative study using the five customer based brand equity introduced by Lassar et al. (1995) to compare Management and Accounting Departments from Faculty of Economics of University X. The aim is to find out what dimensions share similar importance as well as importance differences from these two departments.

As stated in the introduction, the importance of having good indicators of the five brand equity variables is important for universities, including University X. Having good brand equity correlates with the existence of a university and guarante its sustainability in the market. Arguably, it can be expected that both Management and Accounting Departments will expect good value in all variables.

Therefore, the null hypothesis of this study is the Management Department and Accounting Department share similar value of their brand equity while the tested hypothesis proposes the opposite. It is expected the best comparative result is similarity(ies) between the two departments while the difference(s) will indicate which elements one department stronger than another.

3. Research Method

This study targeted student parent population from each department. The given criteria is the parent must have at least one student in these two departments. Slovin with alpha factor is 10% (Umar, 2004) was used to determine the number of samples, given the population is the number of students in each department and we use 95% significance level. The data were collected using convenience sampling and the number of samples of each population is 100 participants, giving the total is 200 participants.

It should be noted that in doing a preliminary discussion to setup this study, it is revealed that the student parent consider "department" and "faculty" as one single entity in terms of the five used brand equity elements. It is assumed the difference between words department and faculty levels do not really apply to the parent's perception. Given that, all questions are proposed by word "faculty" instead of "department" but, in the analysis level, the word "department" was used as the unit of analysis.

Telling the data collection process in brief, the chosen parents were interviewed by telephone or by visitation (either both). They answered a collection of questions (see appendix) derived from five dimensions of customer based brand equity. Our questions used five scales (Likert Scale) starting from "strongly disagree" (scale 1) to "strongly agree" (scale 5). There are 23 questions derived from five dimensions from Lassar et al. (1995). These 23 questions have been established by quoting original questions from Lassar et al. (1995) with some adjustments necessary for this study. While the questions were being asked, the participants could raise questions to clarify the questionaire questions. In addition, validity testing (Pearson correlation) and reliability testing (Cronbach Alpha) have been performed with good result (above standardized expected test value) in order to ensure data integrity.

Next, the data processing was performed to accumulate answers from participants and calculate their mean score (Sudjiono, 2006). The result of data processing as described in result section consists of three sections. First, descriptive statistics result descibes about the participant

profiles and their answers. Second, mean scores and overall mean scores result from both groups were used to indicate whether the brand equity variable was good or bad, with notification that mean score higher than 3.40 – 5.00 (interval 0.8) is considered to be good (Sudjana, 2002). Last but not least, answers from both groups were compared statistically using Mann-Whitney according to the data characteristic (Uyanto, 2009). For result interpretation purpose, this study used confidence level 95% and SPSS to do data processing.

4. Results and Discussions
4.1. Descriptive Result

The descriptive result presents in two Tables. Table 1 displays participant characteristics in comparative age and gender, Table 2 displays dispersion characteristics from comparative occupation and expenses. Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents are males (58%) and consists of 54 male participants from Management Department and 62 respondents from Accounting Department. The most range group age lies between 46-55 years (criteria 2 and 3) indicating that most of them are in their peak of their working age period.

Table 1. Comparative age and gender of participants

Characteristics	Department		Total	%
	Management	Accounting		
Gender				
a. Male	54	62	116	58
b. Female	46	38	84	42
Total	100	100	200	100
Age				
a. ≤ 45 years old	15	10	25	12.5
b. 46 - 50 years old	26	37	63	31.5
c. 51 - 55 years old	43	22	65	32.5
d. ≥ 56 years old	16	31	47	23.5
Total	100	100	200	100

Next, Table 2 lists three different information about the participants. First information describes about types of occupation from the parents. Table 2 reveals that most of participants are enterpreneur (39%) and working in private sectors (29%). This pattern is similar between two departments. Second information is education level of the parents. Most parents are in the stage of undergraduate degree in the first place and followed by high school graduates in the second place. Fewer of them are postgraduate, whereas Accounting Department has more number of postgraduate degree parents compared to Management Department. Lastly, Table 2 describes information about expenses per month from the parents. Both groups shows that participant's majority montlhy expenses range mostly between IDR 4-10 millions. However, there is difference in detail from the two groups. Participants from Management Department mostly is coming from expenses range from 4 millions-6 millions while participants from Accounting Department is mostly coming from expenses range from 6 millions -8 millions.

Table 2. Comparative occupation and expenses

Charateristics	Department		Total	%
	Management	Accounting		
Occupation				
a. Private sector	32	26	58	29
b. Government	8	13	21	10.5
c. Enterpreneur	42	36	78	39
d. Others	18	25	43	21.5
Total	100	100	200	100
Education				
a. High school	41	35	76	38
b. Undergraduate	48	54	102	51
c. Postgraduate	6	10	16	8
d. Others	5	1	6	3
Total	100	100	200	100
Expenses per month (in IDR)				
a. 4,000,000 – 6,000,000	38	28	66	33
b. 6,000,001 – 8,000,000	28	35	63	31.5
c. 8,000,001 – 10,000,000	16	15	31	15.5
d. ≥ 10,000,001	18	22	40	20
Total	100	100	200	100

4.2. Mean Score Result

The mean scores and overall mean scores for each variables Table 3 summarizes participant answers from both groups into mean score and its overall mean score in every dimension of brand equity.

Conclusively from the result, the social image excels in both departments (Management Department OMS = 3.66 and Accounting Department OMS = 3.61) respectively. Given that, it can be infered that specific image on this university is a major factor for parents in both departments to choose. Such images such as "a good university", "a valuable university", or "a reliable university" contribute deeply on their decision. Also, reputation and peer evaluation are additional factors to be added to the impact.

Performance goes in the second place for Management Department and it can be seen in factors such as how to held a good teaching and learning process, providing good lecturers, good administration and infrastructure. In detail, however, there are some weak answers for this performance (Q2 and Q8).

It is also interesting to note that emotional dimension (represents in attachment dimension) is in the second place in Accounting Department and ranks #3 in Management Department. It confirms that parents from both groups positively consider Faculty of Economics of University X in high regard. This could be a strong motive to suggest university as a place of study for their children.

Finally, the least oveall mean score from both groups is value. The value dimension covers cost and benefit issue to pursue a degree in both departments. The lowest mean score from both groups is question 12, which covers about campus environment that considers as a part of cost and benefit to create supporting academic athmosphere. Indeed, the lowest score in this question is expected because the parents are not experiencing the campus athmosphere day by day.

Table 3. The Participant's Answers

Dimension	Question #	Management		Accounting	
		Mean Score	Overall Mean Score	Mean Score	Overall Mean Score
Performance	Q1	3.76		3.82	
	Q2	3.18		3.27	
	Q3	3.41		3.34	
	Q4	3.54	3.57	3.62	3.50
	Q5	3.78		3.71	
	Q6	3.71		3.66	
	Q7	3.79		3.35	
Value	Q8	3.38		3.2	
	Q9	3.39		3.37	
	Q10	3.55	3.40	3.46	3.37
	Q11	3.5		3.4	
	Q12	3.14		3.24	
Social Image	Q13	3.51		3.59	
	Q14	3.75	3.66	3.72	3.61
	Q15	3.68		3.53	
	Q16	3.71		3.61	
Trustworthiness	Q17	3.34		3.37	
	Q18	3.52	3.42	3.46	3.41
	Q19	3.49		3.47	
	Q20	3.33		3.35	
Attachment	Q21	3.6		3.3	
	Q22	3.56	3.52	3.6	3.50
	Q23	3.4		3.6	

4.3. Comparative Result

The comparative result (Mann-Whitney) is presented in Table 4 (with $\alpha = 5\%$). The result in overall performance shows that participants from Management Department has statistically equal compared to participants from Accounting Department in all five dimensions. Indeed, there are three siginificant difference in question 7 (performance – belief that university X has a good reputation, question 21 (attachment – proud and believe in University X's quality, question 23 (attachment – by time the feeling of liking will grow and deliver good recomendation to University X). Also, it has some "minor" significant difference in question 5 (performance – belief in education quality). All in all, null hypotheses can not be rejected in most questions with exception on the three questions.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney result

Dimension	Question#	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
	Q1	4708	0.402
	Q2	4599.5	0.258
	Q3	4742	0.495
	Q4	4802	0.59
Performance	Q5	4765.5	0.507
	Q6	4894.5	0.78
	Q7	3524	0
	Q8	4490.5	0.183
	Total Performance	4446	0.174
	Q9	4846.5	0.687
	Q10	4720	0.451
Value	Q11	4564.5	0.249
	Q12	4710.5	0.453
	Total Value	4771.5	0.572
	Q13	4609.5	0.288
	Q14	4882	0.745
Social Image	Q15	4443.5	0.117
	Q16	4579	0.248
	Total Social	4675	0.42
	Q17	4840.5	0.672
	Q18	4840.5	0.666
Trustworthiness	Q19	4894.5	0.776
	Q20	4907	0.804
	Total truswothiness	4872	0.752
	Q21	4115	0.018
	Q22	4724	0.452
Attachment	Q23	4212	0.034
	Total Attachment	4967	0.935

4.4. Implication and Suggestion

By and large, all values represented from Lassar, et al. (1995) confirm our participant's perception towards the University X. Hence, we conclude that in our participant's perception, most duties have been accomplished by University X in term of delivering its services, benefit equal to cost, having good reputation to be proud of, objective, and creating loyalty. The overall mean scores presented in both groups are larger than 3.4 with one exception in "value" in Accounting Department, which means that mostly the participant's perception is range from good to excellent. Indeed, some lower mean score values are also detected in the detailed questions but they are nearer to minimum good criteria (3.4) as the lowest scores are 3.17 (Management Department, question 2) and 3.2 (Accounting Department, Q8).

However, the lowest score in this research, which happens to be the same in both groups (3.4 for Management Department and 3.36 for Accounting Department) is expected to happen in this dimension. Value refers to understanding that what is delivered equals to what is to be paid and this is one common expected finding since economical reason is always the most reason

people bring disagreement. To deal with this issue, it is suggested that the university should keep the cost to be marking to the market while internally it still delivers the best performance. The lowest mean score on value is should also be taken into consideration as discussed above. It is suggested that the faculty management board (or even the university management board) can actively announce long term critical issues such as concern in academic quality, environmental issue, etc using above the line and below the line marketing media.

It is interesting to note that despite majority answers from each dimension are statitically indifferent for Management Department and Accounting Department, the three significant difference (with additional one "minor" significant difference) questions are talking about quality performance, and long term loyalty better than Management Deparment. Hence, it can be argued that Accounting Department delivers something that can keep its customer loyalty to be established better in the long run, as also indicated by Lassar, et al. (1995). Usually, liking the brand grows when the use of product proves the product to be solid, endured, and having good after sales services (Moisescu and Allen, 2010). As a result, the attachment perception could be influenced by the value of "after graduation" by the students such as proof of successfulness in the job market, and career path of its alumni.

According to the result, it is urged some personal/informal promotion should be initiated in addition to formal promotion. This informal promotion is instrumental in maintaining the longitudinal perception of parents in both groups. Such personal promotion can be done in creating meeting forum between university or faculty with parents. Also, some help to promote its alumni from each department to job market would create long term loyalty as the alumni becomes parent in the future and revolves the enrolment process in the future by puting their children into the same university.

This study contributes some thoughts about the importance to cultivate long term values for a university/faculty to strengthen its position in the market place. It is noted, however, the result of this study might be limited in local result and cannot be generalized over time and place.

In light of improving the quality of work in similar interest, some possible further studies can be proposed. For instance, a future study might consider taking students and their parents together to compare their answer and confirm each dimension from both different groups. Also, a periodic tracer study to its alumni would be good to keep update about their status, to confirm whether their perception about the university is intact, to investigate changing point of view from student perception to parent perception, and to confirm loyalty to their almamater. Finally, to improve generalisation of the result, the future study could use probability sampling technique with larger adequate sample size to represent the population.

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Appendix: Question List (in original languange)
Performance
1. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X mempunyai staf pengajar yang berkualitas
2. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X mempunyai karyawan yang terampil, komunikatif, dan informatif
3. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X dapat membawa nilai-nilai Katolik, seperti kedisiplinan dan kejujuran
4. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X mempersiapkan mahasiswanya dengan baik sehingga siap menghadapi dunia kerja
5. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X memiliki kualitas pendidikan yang baik
6. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X memiliki merek yang unggul dibandingkan dengan universitas lainnya
7. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X sudah mencerminkan sebagai sebuah institusi pendidikan yang baik
8. Universitas X memiliki sarana pendukung proses belajar yang lengkap dan memadai (wifi, internet, komputer, perpustakaan, laboratorium, dll)

Value
1. Lulusan Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X mudah mendapatkan pekerjaan
2. Saya menganggap biaya kuliah di Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X sesuai dengan manfaat dan hasil yang akan diperoleh oleh anak saya nanti
3. Banyaknya Unit Kegiatan Mahasiswa yang potensial akan membantu mahasiswa mengembangkan potensi diri mahasiswa tersebut
4. Universitas X memiliki lingkungan kampus yang asri, bebas asap rokok, dan NARKOBA

Social Image
1. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X sesuai dengan harapan dan visi saya maupun anak saya
2. Saya bangga dapat menyekolahkan anak saya di Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X
3. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X sangat dihargai oleh rekan-rekan saya
4. Sebagai UniversitasKatolik, Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X selalu berupaya mendidik mahasiswanya menjadi manusia yang cerdas, terampil, jujur dan berdisiplin

Trustworthiness
1. Saya menganggap bahwa jajaran karyawan Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X dapat bertindak secara jujur, profesional dan sesuai dengan kapabalitasnya
2. Saya percaya bahwa jajaran dosen Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X dapat mendidik dan mentransfer ilmu mereka dengan baik kepada para mahasiswa
3. Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X sangat memperhatikan kemampuan mahasiswa, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan kemampuan akademis dan pengembangan potensi diri mahasiswa
4. Saya percaya bahwa Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X tidak akan memanfaatkan atau mengelabui mahasiswa

Attachment
1. Setelah mengetahui Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X, saya merasa bangga dan semakin percaya dengan kualitas lulusan Universitas X
2. Saya memiliki pandangan dan perasaan yang positif terhadap Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X
3. Seiring perjalanan waktu, saya akan semakin menyukai dan merekomendasikan Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas X

INDEKS SUBJEK

INDEKS PENULIS