

The Role of Advocacy as Mediating Influence between Brand Trust and Institutional Commitment toward Student Loyalty in Private University

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Abstract. This research investigates the role of advocacy as a moderating factor between brand trust and institutional commitment to student loyalty in a private university setting. In the study's quantitative technique, a survey questionnaire is utilized to collect information from a sample of students enrolled in a private institution. To examine the data and test the proposed theoretical model, structural equation modeling (SEM) is used. According to the research framework, brand trust positively promotes institutional commitment, which in turn improves student advocacy and leads to better levels of student loyalty. The findings show that advocacy plays an important mediating function between brand trust and institutional commitment, implying that students with greater levels of brand trust are more likely to establish a stronger commitment to the institution and engage in advocacy behaviors. In addition, the study shows that both brand trust and institutional commitment have a direct positive impact on student loyalty.

Keywords: Advocacy, Brand Trust, Institutional Commitment, Student Loyalty

1 Introduction

The growth of higher education institutions in Indonesia, along with the inclusion of a variety of study options inside those institutions, suggests that tuition costs are continuing to rise despite the country's sizable student population. Even though the number of private tertiary schools has tended to decline (merge or collapse), study programs at these institutions have continued to rise between 2015 till the present. Consequently, the level of competitiveness in the higher education sector will increase [10]. In addition, the Higher Education Database (PDDikti) also states that study programs in private universities in the Java islands region (DKI Jakarta, Banten, West Java, Central Java, DI. Yogyakarta, and East Java), experienced a 9% increase in 2018 when compared to 2017 (pddikti.kemdikbud.go.id, 2018). Furthermore, in 2020 the number of study programs at private tertiary institutions on the island of Java will experience a growth of 1%.

Naturally, the growth of study programs at private higher education (PHE) will have an influence on the number of graduates from each program at PHE. In order to effectively compete in the world of business and industry, most PHE will face further challenges, including attempts to

maintain the standard of student admissions. Despite the fact that there was still cooperation in the autonomous campus learning program, these two factors ultimately resulted in concurrence between PHE (Ildikti6.id). Collaboration among PHE and rivalry in attracting the best students within PHE have led to an increase in the implementation of marketing strategies to draw them in and guarantee the achievement of long-term goals [8]. The results of other studies related to PHE marketing state that the internal campus marketing environment further contributes to and enhances a PHE's competitive edge [6].

In addition to providing outstanding instruction, PHE needs to possess a plan to ensure long-term student loyalty and sustained development. As a result, students and/or alumni are able to help educational institutions in obtaining funding, partnerships for research projects, industry placements, and promotions, particularly good word of mouth in aiding new student admissions ([12]; [1]; [2]). The only way to ensure current students assume the PHE is capable of living up their personal expectations might such long-term partnerships be created, and if PHE fails to win their trust, the system will eventually collapse.

Through efficient service delivery supported by institutional commitment, Private Higher Education (PHE) endeavors to uphold public confidence (brand trust). The commitment promised by the college remains the only way to create student loyalty and lower the cost of subsequent acquisitions [3]. Universities that have good quality with all aspects attached to the institution, will not be conveyed properly and widely to the public, if there is no good brand management [9].

Research on brand trust and institutional commitment states that these two variables have an influence on student loyalty [3]. Some of the results of previous studies, including [11]; [9]; [5]; [7] also stated that brand trust has an effect towards loyalty, although each of these studies has varying significance (p-value). The researcher additionally has the opportunity the responsibility of conducting investigation into other factors that could function as a direct or indirect mediator between brand trust and loyalty.

2 Literature Review And Hypothesis Development

Brand Trust

Trust is defined as belief in reliability and integrity at the time of exchange (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Universities, as service institutions, are no exception. The notion of brand trust has been scientifically explored in marketing literature because to the concept's ability to really help businesses create healthy connections with customers to achieve long-term organizational goals. (Hegner *et al*, 2014 ; Srivastava *et al*, 2015). Universities, in this case private higher education (PHE), are very interested in continuing to increase brand trust in order to maintain its continuity and existence in society. Even a brand is able to function as an indicator of quality and assurance in the development of trust for any behaviors that result in intangible trust and may accomplish the same without requiring an individual's involvement (Bart *et al*, 2005).

In the research of Schilke *et al* (2017), there are two categories that have an impact on how beliefs are formed. First, process-based, where trust can be formed from an interaction or experience that is owned (for example, history of education in tertiary institutions). Second, characteristics-based, where trust is based on the characteristics and attributes of a person or organization (for example, attributes and personalities in a college). Brand trust is conceptualized in three dimensions, namely competence, benevolence, problem-solving (Carvalho & Mota,

2010). The previous concept was developed by Hoy & Moran (1999) which stated that brand trust has five dimensions consisting of benevolence, reliability, competence, credibility, and integrity. This fifth dimension will be used as the basis for developing the model in this study. Despite extensive study, brand trust continues to be viewed as a one-dimensional construct, therefore it will be subject to many different kinds of interpretations (Yousaf *et al.*, 2020).

The proxies of brand trust are derived into four variables, namely reliability, credibility, integrity, and benevolence, adapted from Hoy & Moran, 1999 (in Yousaf *et al.*, 2020). Reliability is measured by four indicators, namely (1) conforming to student expectations, (2) making students confident, (3) tertiary institutions never disappoint, and (4) student satisfaction with the quality of tertiary institutions. Then, credibility will be measured by indicators (1) providing students with a sense of security from legal and other aspects, (2) students believe in the quality of tertiary institutions, and (3) supporting future careers. Integrity has three indicators, including (1) providing sincerity in service, (2) being honest and keeping institutional promises, and (3) providing full support for improving student skills. Finally, benevolence consists of five indicators, namely (1) always having good plans for students, (2) providing constructive solutions to every problem, (3) caring about student needs, (4) providing a sense of security regarding the future of students, and (5) always improve the best response to students.

Positive perceptions of brand trust from students will have an influence on student intentions to provide advocacy to others (Fullerton, 2011). So the hypothesis to be analyzed is as follows.

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): Positive perception of reliability has a positive effect on student advocacy.

Hypothesis 1b (H1b): Positive perceptions of benevolence have a positive effect on student advocacy.

Hypothesis 1c (H1c): Positive perceptions of credibility have a positive effect on student advocacy.

Hypothesis 1d (H1d): Positive perceptions of integrity have a positive effect on student advocacy.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): Positive perceived reliability has a positive effect on student loyalty.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): Positive perceptions of benevolence have a positive effect on student loyalty.

Hypothesis 2c (H2c): Positive perceptions of credibility have a positive effect on student loyalty.

Hypothesis 2d (H2d): Positive perceptions of integrity have a positive effect on student loyalty.

Institutional Commitment

Commitment is a promise of continuity between two parties who are relationally connected in certain respects (for example, a college is connected to a student). It can also be thought of as the attachment one party has to another in a context of exchange. (Gruen *et al.*, 2000). When one person wishes to keep a connection going, there is commitment. In essence, commitment is an attitude towards the act of maintaining relationships with partners, for example between colleges and students (Fullerton, 2011). Related to marketing relationship management, commitment has become one of the variables studied and developed significantly. From a construct that had a limited definition, it is now considered a complex construct that includes many components (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Commitment must be known and measured with certain parameters. The indicators used to measure commitment are (1) institutional commitment that will make students feel secure for their future careers, (2) institutional commitment that can make students help increase positive public perceptions of institutions, and (3) institutional commitment that make students will defend the institution.

Student Advocacy and Student Loyalty

The term advocacy is still widely not used, because some researchers and students/academicians/marketing practitioners also use other dictions, such as positive word of mouth (PWOM), or with the term willingness to provide recommendations (willingness to recommend). Advocacy is also described as PWOM which can encourage someone to provide recommendations to others (Keller, 2007). Advocacy is a distinctive and detailed form of PWOM, differentiated by the potency of the message and its influence on the general public or society. Advocacy is not always implied by compliments or by merely recommending a service (Hill *et al*, 2006), and vice versa, according to Fullerton (2011), advocacy must include strong recommendations and praise. Advocacy also involves persuasive efforts, whereas PWOM can involve positive comments without the aim of influencing others (Mazzarol *et al*, 2007).

While related to student loyalty, it is indicated by three things, namely (1) students have a strong desire to always be connected with their study program/faculty, (2) students will continue at a higher level at their alma mater tertiary institution, and (3) students will take role in the alumni association. So it is hoped that this research will be able to provide recommendations and a positive contribution to the branding strategy of private tertiary institutions.

The relationship between brand trust, institutional commitment, and student advocacy will be analyzed for its effect on student loyalty in tertiary institutions (student loyalty). Here are the hypotheses to be tested.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Student advocacy has a positive effect on student loyalty.

Hypothesis 4a (H4a): Positive perception of reliability has a positive effect on student loyalty through the role of student advocacy.

Hypothesis 4b (H4b): Positive perceptions of benevolence have a positive effect on student loyalty through the role of student advocacy.

Hypothesis 4c (H4c): Positive perceptions of credibility have a positive effect on student loyalty through the role of student advocacy.

Hypothesis 4d (H4d): Positive perceptions of integrity have a positive effect on student loyalty through the role of student advocacy.

3 Research Methods

The research methodology is a process that is used in science to gather data for certain goals and purposes. (Hair *et al*, 2019). Quantitative research techniques based on positivism, or the philosophy that observes reality, symptoms, and phenomena as they actually exist, will be used to perform this study.

3.1 Data collection and analysis

The population in this study were students studying at private higher education in Central Java, there were 419,660 (bps.go.id, 2022). The sample is subsequently calculated using the Slovin formulation and a non-probability sampling approach. The convenience sampling method was adapted to collect data, and the online survey was distributed to respondents.

3.2 Analysis methods

As this study especially explores flash sale characteristics in Indonesian online marketplaces affecting impulse buying behavior, which has not been done much (exploratory research), Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized as a methodology. Smart PLS 3 was the program utilized for data processing with PLS-SEM.

4 Results And Discussion

4.1 Convergence Test Validity

Because they are regarded as unreliable and inconsequential, the convergence test validity results of indicators with values less than 0,500 must be removed from the model. A re-estimation of the model is also carried out. The findings of this study are all indicators of variables that can be utilized as measurement tools and have values greater than 0.500.

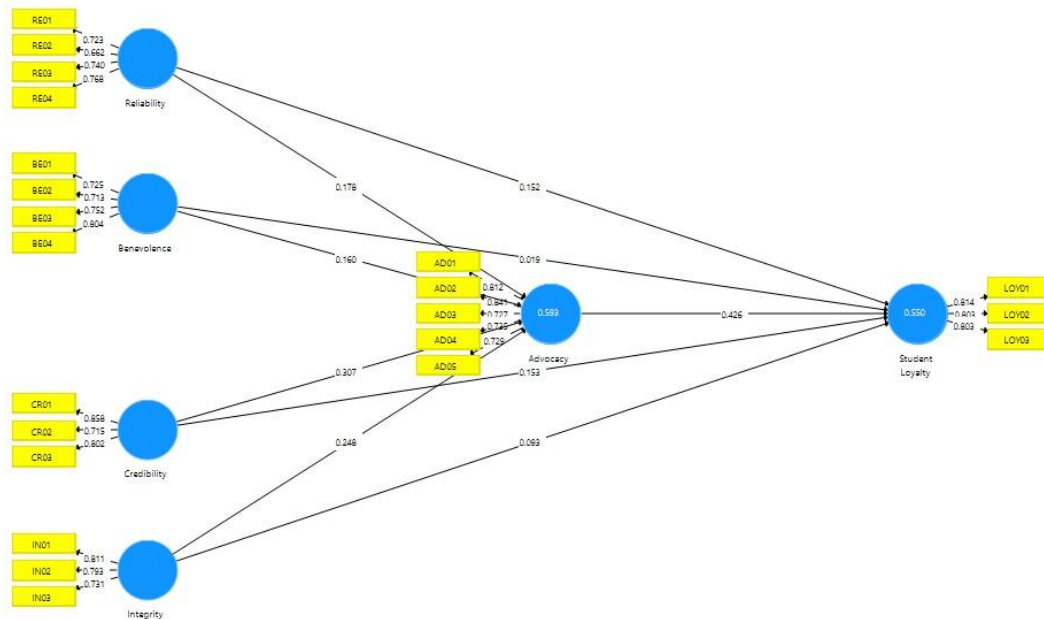


Fig. 1. Research Framework

4.2 Discriminant Validity Test

Table 1. Discriminant Validity Test

Variables	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Advocacy	0.593
Benevolence	0.561
Credibility	0.631
Integrity	0.607
Reliability	0.525
Student Loyalty	0.651

The degree of disagreement between features that the measuring tool shouldn't be used to measure and theoretical ideas about the variable is referred to as discriminant validity. It can be argued that discriminant validity has been attained if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.500.

Table 2. Composite Reliability Test

Variables	Composite Reliability
Advocacy	0.879
Benevolence	0.836
Credibility	0.836
Integrity	0.822
Reliability	0.815
Student Loyalty	0.848

If the composite reliability value is more than 0.700, the reliability composite test is said to be dependable. The information in table 2 demonstrates that all of the composite reliability values for the variables are valid.

4.3 Structural Model Analysis

By assessing the outcomes of computed path coefficient parameters and their level of significance, the structural model analysis is calculated. (less than 0.005). The test results for the significance of the path coefficient of each variable can be seen in table 3, and indirect effect in table 4.

In accordance with the results shown in table 3, there is no effect between benevolence and students' loyalty; credibility to student loyalty; and integrity toward student loyalty (P values in excess of 0.005).

Table 3. Parameter Coefficient and Statistical Values among Variables

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Advocacy -> Student Loyalty	0.426	0.426	0.068	6.272	0.000
Benevolence -> Advocacy	0.160	0.162	0.070	2.290	0.022
Benevolence -> Student Loyalty	0.019	0.015	0.077	0.242	0.809
Credibility -> Advocacy	0.307	0.302	0.077	3.966	0.000

Credibility -> Student Loyalty	0.153	0.159	0.078	1.951	0.052
Integrity -> Advocacy	0.248	0.243	0.069	3.605	0.000
Integrity -> Student Loyalty	0.093	0.089	0.073	1.271	0.204
Reliability_ -> Advocacy	0.178	0.187	0.065	2.736	0.006
Reliability_ -> Student Loyalty	0.152	0.156	0.065	2.336	0.020

Table 4. Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Benevolence -> Advocacy -> Student Loyalty	0.068	0.069	0.033	2.089	0.037
Credibility -> Advocacy -> Student Loyalty	0.131	0.128	0.035	3.712	0.000
Integrity -> Advocacy -> Student Loyalty	0.105	0.104	0.036	2.902	0.004
Reliability_ -> Advocacy -> Student Loyalty	0.076	0.080	0.031	2.486	0.013

Table 4 showed that P values of specific indirect effects less than 0.005, which means that the benevolence has an influence on students' loyalty through advocacy. Then, advocacy had the role as a mediating variable between credibility towards students' loyalty. The correlation between integrity and reliability also mediated by advocacy.

5 Conclusions

The result showed that advocacy become the mediating variable between benevolence, credibility, integrity and reliability toward students' loyalty, respectively.

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