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The Effect of Brand Image and Self-Efficacy on Interest in Attending University in Majalengka

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: To determine the effect of family support, brand image, and self-efficacy on students' interest in studying at Majalengka University, acknowledging the growing importance and openness of education service marketing in developing human resources. **Design/methodology/approach:** This study uses a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression analysis. The population consists of 18,575 12th-grade high school (SMA) students in Majalengka Regency during the even semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. The sampling technique applied is Nonprobability Sampling with Incidental Sampling. The data evaluation process includes instrument testing (validity and reliability), classical assumption tests, model feasibility tests, and hypothesis testing. **Findings:** Family support, brand image, and self-efficacy all have a positive and significant effect on the interest of high school students in Majalengka Regency to pursue higher education. **Research limitations/implications:** The study's scope is geographically limited to Majalengka Regency and focuses specifically on the interest in studying at Majalengka University, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or institutions. Universities and higher education marketers should actively incorporate family-targeted communications and brand-building strategies into their open marketing efforts to boost enrollment. **Originality/value:** This research provides value by contextualizing the paradigm shift in higher education marketing transitioning from being considered a "taboo" or purely profit-oriented business practice to an openly recognized necessity for developing the quality of human resources, specifically mapped to the local demographic of Majalengka Regency.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary foundation in the development of high-quality human resources. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 explains that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere so that students can optimally develop their potential, encompassing spiritual, personality, intelligence, and skill aspects. Higher education plays an important role in this process, as it serves as a platform for the development of science, technology, and national character.

In the era of globalization, the challenges faced by higher education institutions are increasingly complex. Universities are not only required to produce academically excellent graduates but must also be able to build public trust through a positive image in the eyes of society. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2016), brand image is the public's perception or view of a product or institution formed through experience, information, and the values inherent in it. In the context of education, a university's image is one of the main factors influencing students' decisions when choosing a place to study (Dedy Ansari Harahap, 2020).

This phenomenon is highly relevant to the dynamics of new student admissions at Majalengka University (UNMA). In recent years, the trend in the number of new students at UNMA has shown fluctuations that demand a strategic evaluation. Based on student admission data, there was a 5% decrease in the number of applicants for the 2023/2024 academic year compared to the previous period. This challenge becomes even more apparent when comparing UNMA with other higher education institutions in the Majalengka area and its surroundings, such as Universitas Terbuka or STIKes YPIB. These campuses have been observed to show a fairly aggressive upward trend in applicants because they offer the flexibility of distance learning and more competitive tuition fees. This tight competition emphasizes that UNMA must continuously and proactively strengthen its institutional image to maintain its position as the top choice for prospective students in Majalengka Regency.

According to (Kotler & Keller, 2006) in *Marketing Management*, brand image is the perception formed in consumers' minds regarding a brand or institution based on experiences and information received. In an educational context, a university's brand image plays a crucial role in shaping public perception regarding the institution's quality.

(Dedy Ansari Harahap, 2020) state that a positive university image increases prospective students' interest in choosing the institution. Factors influencing university image include academic reputation, lecturer quality, educational facilities, and student activities. According to (Gutiérrez-Villar, Alcaide-Pulido, & Carbonero-Ruz, 2021), the image of an educational institution can be measured through three main indicators: functional, affective, and reputation. Functional covers aspects of services and facility quality. Affective relates to students' positive feelings or attitudes toward the university. Reputation refers to public recognition of the institution's achievements and credibility. Thus, a good university brand image can be a primary strategy in increasing students' interest in pursuing higher education. Self-efficacy was first introduced by (Bandura, 1997) as an individual's belief in their ability to execute specific actions to achieve desired results. According to (Zhao & Ma, 2025), self-efficacy reflects a person's belief in their own capability to overcome challenges and achieve goals.

Research by (Zhang & Qian, 2024) shows that students with a high level of self-efficacy are more motivated to continue their education to a higher level because they feel capable of facing both academic and social obstacles. The three main dimensions of self-efficacy, according to (Peiffer, Ellwart, & Preckel, 2020), include: *Magnitude* (level of difficulty): an individual's perception of task difficulty. *Generality* (level of confidence): the extent to which self-belief applies across various situations. *Strength* (power of belief): an individual's determination and resilience in facing challenges. In the context of interest in attending college, self-efficacy helps students feel confident in their ability to adapt to the higher education environment and successfully complete their studies.

According to (Nanda Eka Putri, 2022), interest is an internal drive that creates a desire to participate in a preferred activity. In education, the interest in continuing to college can be

understood as a student's tendency to choose a specific higher education institution as a continuation of their studies after high school.

(Lockl, Attig, Nusser, & Wolter, 2021) asserts that academic interest is influenced by cognitive, affective, and motivational factors. External factors such as institutional image, family support, and economic conditions also play a role in determining a student's decision to pursue higher education (Chhor, Sek, Norng, Hoeurn, & Sam, 2024)

Aside from external factors such as university image, there is an internal factor that also influences the interest in pursuing higher education, namely self-efficacy. This concept was introduced by (Bandura, 1997), who defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute the actions required to achieve certain results. A person with high self-efficacy will have the confidence to face academic and social challenges and will be motivated to continue their education to a higher level (Muhammad Faisal Ramadhan Nasution, 2024)

Majalengka University (UNMA), as one of the private universities in West Java, faces fluctuations in the number of new students every year. Internal data indicates a dynamic in students' interest in applying, which is presumably influenced by their perception of the university's image and their level of self-confidence in facing college challenges. Fierce competition among universities, both public and private, requires UNMA to strengthen its communication strategies and reputation development to attract the interest of prospective students.

Based on this background, this research is focused on analyzing the effect of brand image and self-efficacy on the interest in studying at Majalengka University. This study is expected to provide empirical contributions for university administrators in formulating strategies to improve the image and motivation of prospective students.

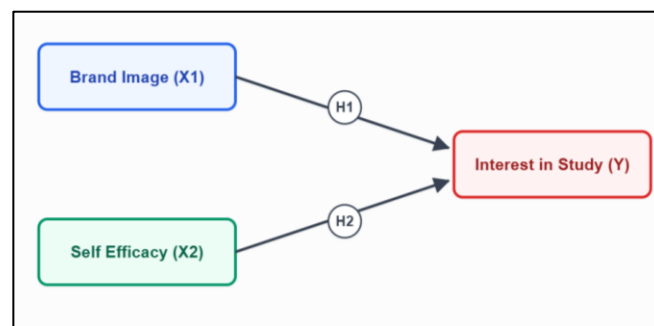


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

1. Literature Review

Interest in Study

Interest is a psychological drive from within an individual that focuses attention and directs action toward a specific object or activity accompanied by a feeling of pleasure. According to , (Nanda Eka Putri, 2022) in an educational context, the interest in continuing studies is a student's strong tendency and desire to choose and enroll in a higher education institution after graduating from high school (SMA). This interest does not emerge suddenly but is influenced by a complex interaction between external factors (such as the environment and institutional image) and internal factors (such as motivation and self-belief) (Yang & Qian, 2024).

Brand Image

Amidst the fierce competition among higher education institutions, brand image has become a crucial intangible asset. Referring to (Kotler & Keller, 2016), brand image is a set of perceptions, impressions, and beliefs held in the public's mind regarding an institution. In the higher education sector, this image is shaped through direct experience, marketing communications, and word-of-mouth. (Gutiérrez-Villar et al., 2021) classify university image into three main dimensions: functional (the quality of academic facilities and services), affective (emotional attachment and a sense of pride), and reputation (the institution's credibility and achievements in the public eye).

Self-Efficacy

While brand image acts as an external stimulus, self-efficacy is an essential internal driver. This concept, introduced by (Bandura, 1997), refers to an individual's belief in their own capability to organize and execute the actions necessary to achieve specific academic outcomes. Afifah (2022) outlines self-efficacy into three dimensions: *magnitude* (the perception of the difficulty level of academic tasks), *generality* (the breadth of self-belief across various situations), and *strength* (resilience and commitment when facing pressure). In the transition from secondary to higher education, self-efficacy determines the amount of effort students will exert to achieve their academic goals.

2. Hypotheses Development

The Effect of Brand Image on Interest in Study

A positive perception of a higher education institution plays a strategic role in reducing uncertainty for prospective students. When Majalengka University (UNMA) possesses a good reputation, adequate facilities, and positive public recognition, the institution is perceived as an assurance of a quality future. This aligns with the research by (Dedy Ansari Harahap, 2020), which found that a strong university image directly increases the institution's appeal and students' preference to choose the campus. Students tend to avoid institutions with doubtful track records and instead direct their interest toward institutions with a superior brand image. Therefore, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on prospective students' Interest in Study.

The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Interest in Study

Beyond institutional appeal, the interest in pursuing further studies heavily relies on students' mental readiness and self-confidence. Higher education demands a greater level of independent learning compared to high school. Students with a high level of self-efficacy believe they are capable of managing the academic workload, adapting to the campus environment, and successfully completing their studies. Conversely, students with low self-efficacy tend to be hesitant and hold themselves back from continuing their education to a higher level. This condition is supported by the findings of (Chhor et al., 2024), who state that internal motivation in the form of self-confidence is directly proportional to the intention to attend college. Therefore, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: Self-Efficacy has a positive and significant effect on prospective students' Interest in Study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a quantitative approach with descriptive and verificative methods. The quantitative approach was chosen because it aims to objectively analyze the effect of the independent variables (brand image and self-efficacy) on the dependent variable (interest in studying) using numerical data. The descriptive method is used to provide an overview of the respondents' perceptions regarding each variable, while the verificative method is used to test the truth of the previously formulated hypotheses through statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2013).

The population in this study was all 12th-grade high school (SMA) students in Majalengka Regency for the 2022/2023 academic year, totaling 18,575 students. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with an incidental sampling method. This is a sampling technique based on chance, where anyone who is accidentally met and fits the research criteria can be used as a respondent (Sugiyono, 2013).

The sample size taken in this study was 100 respondents. The respondents were 12th-grade high school students who had plans to continue their studies at higher education institutions, whether public or private. The questionnaires were distributed *online via Google Forms and offline directly to the schools* with the assistance of school counseling teachers (*Guru BK*). The data was collected from 5 (*five*) high schools located in Majalengka Regency. Due to the nature of the incidental sampling method used, the distribution of respondents was not strictly proportional across all districts (*kecamatan*); rather, it was based on the availability and willingness of the students who were encountered during the data collection period.

Research Variables

This study consists of two independent variables and one dependent variable, namely:

- a. Brand Image (X_1): The respondents' perception of Majalengka University's image, which includes functional, affective, and reputation dimensions (Gutiérrez-Villar et al., 2021)
- b. Self-Efficacy (X_2): The respondents' belief in their own capabilities to face academic challenges, consisting of three dimensions: magnitude, generality, and strength.
- c. Interest in Studying (Y): The individual's desire and drive to continue their studies in higher education, characterized by a sense of pleasure, attention, and high motivation.

Primary data was collected through a questionnaire using a Likert scale with a value range of 1–5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Each variable was measured using several indicators compiled based on theories and previous research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 100 respondents who were 12th-grade high school students in Majalengka Regency. According to the survey results, the majority of respondents were from Majalengka District (15%), followed by Jatiwangi, Bantarujeg, and Rajagaluh, each accounting for 8%. By gender, the majority of respondents were female (70%), while males accounted for 30%. In terms of age, the respondents were predominantly in the 18–20 age group (54%), with the remainder aged 15–17 (46%). Validity testing showed that all items in the brand image, self-efficacy, and interest in college variables had calculated r -values > 0.196 (table r), thus being

deemed valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed that all variables had values above 0.60, indicating that the entire instrument is reliable and suitable for use.

Table 1. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Coefficients ^a		Collinearity Statistics			
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance VIF
1	(Constant)	2.455	1.186		2.071	.041	
	Brand	.268	.100	.251	2.693	.008	.789 1.267
	Image						
	Self Efficacy	.497	.097	.474	5.121	.000	.799 1.251

Dependent Variable: Interest in Higher Education

Data source: compiled

a. The Effect of Brand Image on Interest in Study

The partial test results show a t-value (t-count) of 2.693 with a significance level of $0.008 < 0.05$, which means that brand image has a positive and significant effect on the interest in studying at Majalengka University. The regression coefficient of 0.268 indicates that a one-unit increase in the perception of the university's image will increase the interest in studying by 0.268 units, assuming other variables remain constant.

This finding supports the research by Ruslan & Situngkir (2019), which states that the image of an educational institution has a significant impact on students' decisions when choosing a university. A positive university image creates a perception of academic excellence, lecturer professionalism, and institutional reputation, which serve as an attraction for prospective students.

b. The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Interest in Study

The t-value of 5.121 with a significance of $0.000 < 0.05$ indicates that self-efficacy also has a positive and significant effect on the interest in studying. The regression coefficient of 0.497 means that every one-unit increase in self-efficacy will increase the interest in studying by 0.497 units.

This finding is in line with the research by Hanim and Puspasari (2021), which found that an individual's self-confidence in their own abilities is an important factor in the decision to continue studies to a higher level. Students with high self-efficacy tend to have strong motivation, an optimistic attitude, and resilience against obstacles faced during the educational process.

The results of this study indicate that self-efficacy has a greater contribution to the interest in studying compared to brand image. This signifies that an individual's internal psychological factors play a more dominant role in determining the decision to pursue higher education. Nevertheless, university image remains a crucial factor influencing prospective students' perceptions of the institution's quality.

On a practical level, Majalengka University can strengthen its institutional image through effective communication strategies, the improvement of study program accreditations, and promotions highlighting academic achievements as well as student activities. Furthermore, there is a need for career guidance and motivational programs at the high

school level to enhance students' self-efficacy in making the decision to continue their education.

This research supports consumer behavior theory within the context of higher education, where the decision to choose a university is influenced by psychological factors (internal) and perceptions of the institution's reputation (external). These findings also align with the study by (Gutiérrez-Villar et al., 2021), which emphasizes that a strong university image enhances loyalty and positively influences prospective students' decisions in choosing their place of study.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, this study concludes that brand image and self-efficacy have a positive and significant effect on students' interest in studying at Majalengka University. The most prominent finding is that self-efficacy (an internal factor) makes a much larger and more dominant contribution compared to brand image (an external factor). This indicates that in the decision-making process to pursue higher education, psychological readiness and an individual's belief in their capacity to handle the academic workload are the primary determinants. Nevertheless, brand image continues to function as an essential catalyst; a positive institutional image helps reduce the doubts of prospective students and provides a perception of quality assurance (lecturer competence, facilities, and graduate career prospects).

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on consumer behavior within the higher education services sector. The study confirms that the decision to choose a university is a complex cognitive process, where the external evaluation of an institution's reputation must align with the student's internal motivational drive. This further strengthens the findings of (Gutiérrez-Villar et al., 2021) and (Bandura, 1997) regarding the importance of integrating institutional and psychological factors.

Practical Implications

1. For Majalengka University (UNMA): Given the importance of both variables, conventional promotion is no longer sufficient. Marketing strategies must be directed at building the self-confidence of prospective students. This can be achieved through marketing campaigns featuring testimonials from successful alumni, interactive open house programs, or new student adaptation mentorships. Additionally, improving accreditation, modernizing campus facilities, and maintaining active communication on social media are crucial to sustaining a positive brand image in the eyes of Generation Z.
2. For High Schools (SMA): Considering the dominant role of self-efficacy, schools (especially Guidance and Counseling teachers) need to design comprehensive career intervention programs. Activities such as motivational seminars, campus tours, and higher education simulations are urgently needed to dismantle students' fears and foster the belief that they are capable of succeeding in college.

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