

## UNIVERSITY IMAGE AND PERSONAL SELLING ON THE DECISION TO CHOOSE UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the influence of university image, personal sales, and price perceptions on the decision to choose a university with consumer attitudes as an intervening variable for Unitary Business Institute students. Data was collected through distributing questionnaires to respondents. The respondents of this research were 250 students from the Unitary Business and Informatics Institute. The research method uses hypothesis testing with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS software. The research results show that there is a significant and positive influence between university image and personal selling on the decision to choose a university. The results of this research imply that with the influence of IBIK's image on the decision to choose a university, IBIK management needs to innovate, both through taglines and good service quality by IBIK education staff and lecturers so that IBIK's image is easily known and always remembered.

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh citra perguruan tinggi, personal sales, dan persepsi harga terhadap keputusan memilih perguruan tinggi dengan sikap konsumen sebagai variabel intervening pada mahasiswa Unitary Business Institute. Data dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada responden. Responden penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa Institute Bisnis dan Informatika Kesatuan sebanyak 250 responden. Metode penelitian menggunakan uji hipotesis dengan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) menggunakan software SmartPLS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat pengaruh yang signifikan dan positif antara citra universitas dan personal selling terhadap keputusan memilih perguruan tinggi. Hasil penelitian ini mengimplikasikan bahwa dengan adanya pengaruh image IBIK terhadap keputusan pemilihan perguruan tinggi, maka manajemen IBIK perlu melakukan inovasi baik melalui tagline, hingga kualitas pelayanan yang baik oleh tenaga kependidikan dan dosen IBIK agar Citra IBIK mudah diketahui dan selalu diingat.



## INTRODUCTION

Competition that occurs in obtaining prospective students in practice is not only between private universities and state universities but also between private universities competing with each other to attract students of equal interest to then decide to continue their studies. A good marketing communication effort can help the university successfully market its brand to consumers. One of the universities in Bogor City, Indonesia is the Institute of Business and Informatics Kesatuan (IBIK). IBIK hopes that in the future it will become a tertiary institution that is able to produce graduates who have good morals and strong intellectual abilities, through the development of character education. IBIK also faces tough competition in getting new students every academic year. The problem with each new school year is that there is an increase in the number of students who do not decide to choose IBIK after being declared to have passed the selection. The number of new IBIK student applicants increased in 2020 to reach 1.195 students but decreased in 2021 to 964. This indicates that students are not fully convinced of the college. This phenomenon must be a concern because the number of students who pass the selection but decide not to choose a tertiary institution tends to increase, in the last 3 (three) years students have decided not to choose a tertiary institution even though they have already passed and are entitled to attend lectures.

The image of a tertiary institution is related to the institution's activities. When students feel dissatisfied with the services provided by the tertiary institution, they have an unfavorable perception of the institution (Mujahidin et al., 2018). Promotion is one way that is used and needed by the company to communicate with the market to increase sales volume. Therefore, this promotional activity must be carried out in line with the marketing plan and properly directed and controlled so that the promotion can really make a high contribution in efforts to increase sales volume (Rangkuti, 2018). Price is what consumers pay attention to when making a purchase. Consumers even identify price with value. According to Tjiptono (2019) states that price is a monetary unit or other measure (including goods and services) that is exchanged to obtain ownership rights or use of an item or service. Pricing activities play an important role in the marketing mix process because pricing is directly related to the revenue the company receives.

Not only the quality of tertiary institutions but also prospective new students are currently considering cost in choosing a tertiary institution. Not only state universities, currently several private tertiary institutions offer tuition fees at low and affordable prices, including 1) Nusa Bangsa University, 2) Pakuan University, 3) Ibn Khaldun University, 4) Djuanda University (Iliyini, 2022). Consumer decisions in choosing a tertiary institution can be seen from several studies, such as Anita (2020), with the independent variables of brand image, location, and facilities on students' decisions to choose a university. Suryani (2018) discusses the brand image and education costs that influence student decisions in choosing study programs. Samat et al. (2017) are concerned about the marketing mix in students' decisions to choose PTS in Palembang City, while Gazali (2017) is concerned about the service marketing mix in students' decisions when choosing a high school.

**Table 1. Development of Registrants and Registration Number of New Students**

| Study Program        | Registrants |      |      | Registration |      |      |
|----------------------|-------------|------|------|--------------|------|------|
|                      | 2019        | 2020 | 2021 | 2019         | 2020 | 2021 |
| Accountancy          | 460         | 246  | 224  | 297          | 188  | 144  |
| Management           | 552         | 610  | 398  | 411          | 371  | 244  |
| Bio-Entrepreneurship | 31          | 63   | 49   | 14           | 40   | 33   |
| Tourist              | 24          | 89   | 88   | 30           | 72   | 61   |
| Information Systems  | 27          | 93   | 100  | 28           | 69   | 72   |

|                        |      |      |     |     |     |     |
|------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Information Technology | 26   | 94   | 105 | 24  | 68  | 57  |
| Total                  | 1120 | 1195 | 964 | 807 | 808 | 611 |

Source: IBIK Marketing Unit, data processed (2021)

IBIK is in the last row (number 7) of the 7 best campuses in the City of Rain (Bogor) (Heriana, 2024). The row of the 7 best campuses describes assisting prospective students in determining steps to continue their education at tertiary institutions in Bogor. Thus, IBIK is still in last place in the recommendation of choosing a campus to continue their education in the world of lectures. This research is important to determine the effect of college image, personal selling, and price perceptions on the decision to choose a college for students of the Business Institute Kesatuan. The research method in this study was to test hypotheses through data collection and quantitative analysis (questionnaire) and testing with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS software.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Consumer Behavior

According to Firmansyah (2018), consumer behavior is a process that is closely related to the existence of a purchasing process, at that time consumers carry out activities such as conducting disbursement, research, and evaluating products and services (products and services). According to Kotler and Keller (2017: 179), consumer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants. Based on the notions according to experts, consumer behavior is all activities, actions, and psychological processes that encourage these actions at the time before buying, when buying, using, and consuming products and services after doing the things above or evaluating activities.

### Purchase Decisions

Kotler and Keller (2017) stated that "Purchase decisions are based on how consumers perceive prices and what they consider the current actual price to be—not on the marketer's stated price". Meanwhile, according to Tjiptono (2020), purchase decisions are a part of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is an action that is directly involved in obtaining and determining products and services, including the decision-making process that precedes and follows these actions. The decision to buy or not to buy is part of the inherent elements of the individual consumer called behavior, which refers to real physical actions. Based on some of the opinions of the experts above, researchers came to the understanding that purchasing decisions are the stage where consumers have alternative or more choices in deciding whether to buy an item or service. Purchasing decisions are inseparable from the nature of a consumer (consumer behavior) so each consumer has different habits in making purchases. Based on some of the references, the authors synthesize the decision to choose a tertiary institution as the process of choosing a tertiary institution which is characterized by feelings of pleasure, desire, attention, encouragement and willingness, needs and expectations, with indicators 1) product choice, 2) brand choice, 3) choice of dealer, 4) time of purchase, 5) purchase amount, and 6) method of payment.

### University Image

Kotler and Keller (2017: 338) define the image as a set of beliefs, ideas, and influences that a person gets from an object. Sutisna (2012) define image as the number and images, impressions, and beliefs that a person has towards an object, the object is in the form of an organization, meaning all beliefs, images and impressions of the organization of a person are images. Based on the explanation above, the authors synthesize the image of a tertiary institution as the perception and belief held by consumers, which is reflected or embedded in the minds and memories of a consumer himself with the measurements in this study being: 1) Common Product, Attributes or Benefits, namely educational services unitary Institute of

Business and Informatics, 2) People and Relationship includes service quality to students of the Unitary Business and Informatics Institute, 3) Value and Programs are a form of social activity/care carried out by the Unitary Business and Informatics Institute, and 4) Corporate Credibility is level of trust in the Unitary Institute of Business and Informatics.

**H<sub>1</sub>: University image has a significant influence on the decision to choose a university**

### **Personal Selling**

According to Armstrong & Kotler (2015), personal selling is a personal presentation by the company's sales force to make sales and build customer relationships. Meanwhile, according to Hasan (2013: 604), personal selling is a form of oral presentation with one or more prospective buyers to make a purchase. Personal Selling namely face-to-face sales, is direct communication by face-to-face between sellers and buyers to persuade potential customers and introduce the products being sold. Personal selling is also a form of two-way communication where the salesperson plays a role in helping and/or persuading consumers to buy the company's products or services. Based on the explanation above, the authors synthesize personal selling as two-way communication face to face, so that it can convey messages directly about the advantages or uses of the products/services offered and can answer questions from potential customers at that time, with the size in this study is: 1) prospecting and qualifying; 2) pre-approach; 3) approach; 4) presentation, and demonstration; 5) handling objection; 6) closing; and 7) follow up.

**H<sub>2</sub>: personal selling has a significant influence on the decision to choose a university**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The type of research used in this research is verification with the explanatory survey method, namely research used to test hypotheses and explain phenomena in the form of relationships between variables. This study aims to find an explanation for the influence of college image, personal selling, and price perceptions on the decision to choose a university in the unit of analysis, namely the Institute of Business and Informatics Kesatuan. The unit of analysis used in this study is individual, namely research on individuals or people in a group or organization, so that data is about or comes from the responses of each person or individual in a group or organization. The individuals in question are the people of the Institute of Business and Informatics Kesatuan Bogor City, Indonesia. The types of data that are examined are quantitative and qualitative data types, which are primary data and secondary data. Primary data collection was obtained through an online questionnaire made in a Google Form. Secondary data collection was obtained through literature studies, which contained supporting theories. A literature study was carried out by collecting data obtained from journals, literature, and articles.

The sampling method used in this study is simple random sampling. This method provides equal opportunities that are not limited to each element of the population to be selected as a sample. This method is relatively simple because it only requires one stage of the sample selection procedure. The target population is undergraduate students, especially Semester III for the 2021/2022 academic year, who are studying at the Unitary Institute of Business and Informatics as many as 653 students (including transfer students). The number of people in this study is quite large, so to determine the number of samples, researchers used the formula according to Slovin.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

$$n = \frac{653}{1 + 653 (0.1)^2}$$

$$n = 248,05 = 250 \text{ respondents}$$

Information: n is the number of samples required; N is the total population; e is the sample error rate (in this study, it was set at 10%). Data research was collected from various sources related to research, using primary and secondary data obtained from the company where the research was conducted.

**Table 2. Operational Variable**

| Variable                          | Indicator   | Scale   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------|
| Image University                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Common Product, Attributes or Benefits</li> <li>2. People and Relationship</li> <li>3. Value and Programs</li> <li>4. Corporate Credibility</li> </ol>  | Ordinal |
| Personal Selling                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prospecting and qualifying,</li> <li>2. Pre-approach</li> <li>3. Approach</li> <li>4. Presentation and demonstration</li> <li>5. Handling Objection</li> <li>6. Closing</li> <li>7. Follow up.</li> </ol> | Ordinal |
| The Decision to Choose University | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Product selection</li> <li>2. Brand choice</li> <li>3. Dealer selection</li> <li>4. Time of purchase</li> <li>5. Number of purchases</li> <li>6. Payment methods</li> </ol>                               | Ordinal |

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and compiling data that has been obtained from interviews, observations, and questionnaires by organizing it into categories, describing it in units, compiling it into patterns, choosing important names that will be studied, and drawing conclusions so that it is easily understood by oneself or others. To find out the level of validity of a research instrument, it is necessary to do a trial run first and then analyze the results. According to Sugiyono (2017), "validity" is the degree of accuracy between the data that occurs in the research object and the data carried out by researchers. To test the validity level of an instrument, researchers can use the product correlation formula with the following formula:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N(\sum xy) - (\sum x) \cdot (\sum y)}{\sqrt{(N \cdot \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(N \cdot \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}} \quad (2)$$

Information:  $r_{xy}$  is the correlation coefficient between variable X and variable Y;  $\sum xy$  is number of multiplications between variables X and Y;  $\sum x^2$  is total value of variable X;  $\sum y^2$  is sum of Y variable values;  $(\sum x)^2$  is sum of the values of X squared;  $(\sum y)^2$  is sum of the Y values is then squared; N = Number of samples. The decision rule is if  $r_{count} > r_{tab}$  means valid and if  $r_{count} < r_{tab}$  means invalid. The research model used in this study is a tiered structure model and to test the proposed hypothesis the SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis technique is used which is operated through the Linear Structural Relationship (LISREL) program. Analyzing the research model with SEM can identify the dimensions of a construct and at the same time measure the influence or degree of relationship between factors whose dimensions have been identified.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### Respondent Profile

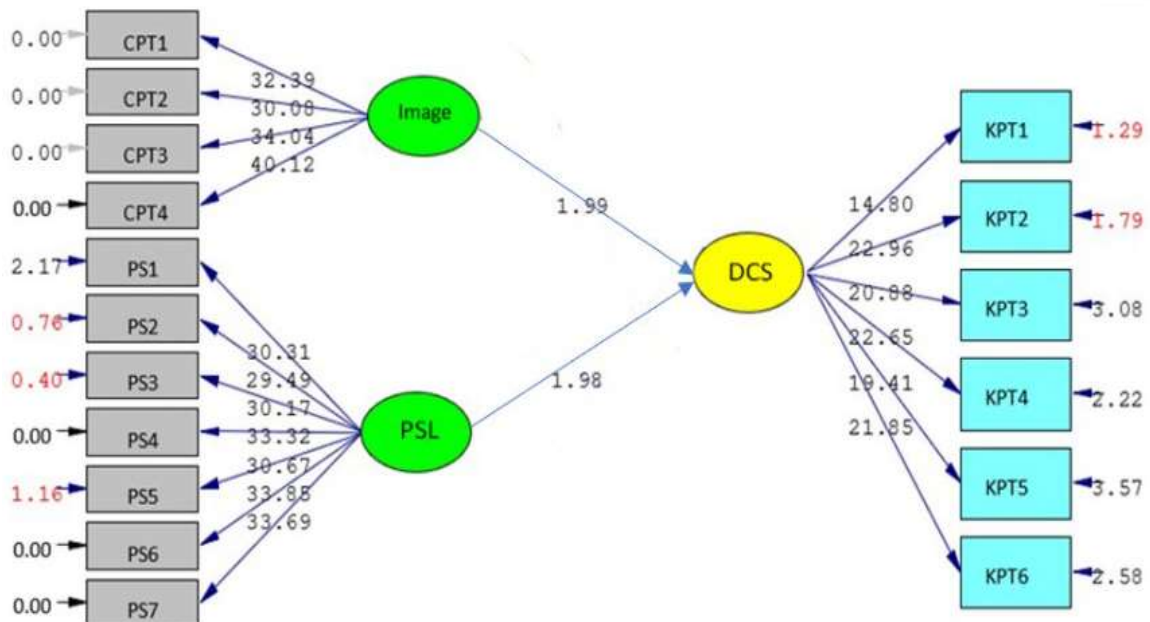
The highest age distribution of respondents was in the age range of 20-23 years as much as 51% and the distribution in the age range of 17-19 years was as much as 46% and the rest were more than 24 years as much as 3% with the most gender is female by 65% and the remaining 35% are male. Most respondents were in the 20-23 year age range and the majority were women who could help management in designing more effective marketing strategies. For example, focusing marketing efforts on products or services that are preferred by that age group and tailoring marketing messages according to their preferences and needs. In addition, based on the age distribution of respondents, management can consider developing products or services that appeal to the 20-23-year age group. Another thing, they can also conduct further research to understand the specific needs and preferences of this market segment to produce products that better suit their desires.

**Validity Test**

The results of the validity test showed that there was one statement item that was invalid, which is on the celebrity endorser dimension with statement advertising using celebrities with the relevant attributes. All validity test results show that all items in the measurement instrument are declared valid, which means that the instrument effectively measures the construct or variable in question in the way expected by the researcher. In this context, instruments can be considered as appropriate and reliable tools for collecting data.

**Structural Model Results**

To find out whether the proposed measurement model is fit, or not with the data, a measurement model suitability test is carried out. The measurement model is called fit with the data if the model can estimate the measurement matrix that is not different from the data covariance matrix. The size of fit is indicated by the goodness of fit test (GFT) as the CFI value is greater than 0,90. The p-count of the chi-square statistic produced by the model is greater than or equal to 0,05 and the RMSEA value is less than 0,08 (Hair et al., 2006).



Chi-Square=157.81, df=242, P-value=0.99999, RMSEA=0.000

Figure 1 Measurement models in SEM

| Variabel                      | Indikator | Standardized   |       | CR    | VE    |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
|                               |           | Loading Factor | Error |       |       |
| Image                         | CPT1      | 0,95           | 0,09  | 0,974 | 0,903 |
|                               | CPT2      | 0,93           | 0,14  |       |       |
|                               | CPT3      | 0,92           | 0,16  |       |       |
|                               | CPT4      | 1,00           | 0,00  |       |       |
| <i>Personal Selling</i>       | PS1       | 0,84           | 0,29  | 0,987 | 0,914 |
|                               | PS2       | 0,95           | 0,10  |       |       |
|                               | PS3       | 0,97           | 0,05  |       |       |
|                               | PS4       | 1,00           | 0,00  |       |       |
|                               | PS5       | 0,92           | 0,16  |       |       |
|                               | PS6       | 1,00           | 0,00  |       |       |
|                               | PS7       | 1,00           | 0,00  |       |       |
| Decision to Choose University | KPT1      | 0,91           | 0,17  | 0,928 | 0,682 |
|                               | KPT2      | 0,87           | 0,24  |       |       |
|                               | KPT3      | 0,77           | 0,40  |       |       |
|                               | KPT4      | 0,84           | 0,29  |       |       |
|                               | KPT5      | 0,73           | 0,46  |       |       |
|                               | KPT6      | 0,81           | 0,34  |       |       |

SFL = Standardized Factor Loading, a good SFL value  $\geq 0,50$ ; CR = Construct Reliability, a good CR value  $\geq 0,70$ ; VE = Variance Extracted, good VE value  $\geq 0,50$ .

#### University Image Influence on The Decision to Choose a University

The t-test results showed that the value of the t count is 1,99, which is greater than the t table (1,96), meaning that the Image has a significant and positive effect on the Decision. Thus the hypothesis stating that there is a positive influence on the image of a university on the decision to choose a university is accepted. Consumers have an attitude in determining the needs they need, so the impression they have is looking for goods or services with a good image. So that the image influences consumer attitudes in choosing. According to Kotler and Keller (2017), purchasing decisions are stages carried out by consumers before purchasing a product.

Corporate image is the image of an organization as a whole, not just the image of its products or services (Jefkins & Yadin, 2003). Corporate image is an important variable that helps customers understand the process and remember and recognize information so that customers benefit in other ways from long-term association with the organization. Brand image is a perception that lasts a long time, is formed through experience, and is relatively consistent. The image of a tertiary institution is related to the institution's activities. When students feel dissatisfied with the services provided by the tertiary institution, they have an unfavorable perception of the institution (Mujahidin et al., 2018). Based on several definitions of image from the experts above, it can be concluded that image is consumers' impression and perception of a product or company.

Brand image is a series of associations (perceptions) that exist in the minds of consumers towards a brand, usually organized into a meaning. The relationship with a brand will be stronger if it is based on experience and gets much information. Images or associations represent perceptions that can reflect objective reality or not. The brand image includes knowledge and beliefs about brand attributes (cognitive aspect), the consequences of using the brand, appropriate usage situations, and evaluations, feelings, and emotions that are perceived with the brand (affective aspect). Consumer attitudes have been influenced by a good product image, for example, because advertising significantly affects purchasing decisions. The positive attitude of consumers can be formed because of the good image that the product or company owns. Furthermore, a positive image forms a positive attitude of consumers choosing a college.

### **Personal Selling has a significant influence on the decision to choose a university**

The t-test results show that the t value of 1,98 is greater than the t table (1,96) meaning that Personal Selling has a significant and positive effect on decision. Thus, the hypothesis stating that personal selling positively influences the decision to choose a college is accepted. Various alternatives from various choices can be obtained from promotional activities carried out by many companies. So, it can be said that promotions influence consumer attitudes in purchasing actions. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), purchasing decisions are choosing from two or more choices for purchasing decisions, meaning that a person can make a decision, and several alternative colleges must be available. The positive attitude of consumers influenced by promotions causes consumers to visit and decide to choose a tertiary institution according to the promotions that have been offered to consumers.

According to Etzel et al. (2007), personal selling is sales personnel, which is the percentage of products for potential customers from sales representatives or organizations. Because of these characteristics, this method has advantages, including more flexible operations because sellers can observe customer reactions and adjust their approach, the wasted effort can be minimized, interested customers usually buy immediately, and sellers can build long-term relationships with customers. Personal selling or sales promotion consists of a variety of incentive tools, mostly to increase short and long-term sales, designed to stimulate faster or stronger purchases of certain products by consumers or traders. The importance of personal selling is increasingly recognized, especially in sharp market competition. Personal selling from competitors can reduce sales levels. Therefore, companies must always pay attention to the personal selling activities of their competitors and see how much influence they have on sales turnover. If personal selling activities from competitors have a large enough influence resulting in decreased sales, then personal selling activities must be further increased.

### **CONCLUSION**

There is a significant and positive influence between the image of a college and the decision to choose a college, and there is a significant and positive influence between personal selling and the decision to choose a college. IBIK is still not well known by the public, therefore with the influence of IBIK's image on the decision to choose a tertiary institution, IBIK's management needs to make innovations both through the tagline, up to good quality service by education staff and IBIK lecturers so that IBIK's image is easy known and always remembered. Personal selling activities through IBIK promotions still need to be increased because personal selling has a positive effect on the decision to choose a tertiary institution, including a) direct and active contact with prospective IBIK students, b) The IBIK promotion team explains in detail regarding the existence of discounts or discounts that IBIK routinely holds, c) The IBIK promotion team must make feedback or ask questions related to testimonials/comments to find out the satisfaction of prospective students, and d) make more attractive advertising posters/meme.



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