



## Marketing Strategies for Universities: What are Factors in Affecting Student Decisions to Study? (Case Study in Universitas Negeri Malang)

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### Abstract

The increasing public interest in higher education makes universities in Indonesia faced with opportunities and challenges to compete. Every university needs to understand the needs of students and provide optimal service to students in order to have a competitive advantage. The purpose of this study was to analyze the factors that influence students in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang through independent variables, namely perception of cost, perception of facilities and resources, university reputation, student received information, advice of relatives, and the dependent variable student decision. The type of data used in this research is quantitative with the SEM-PLS method with a research sample of 134 respondents from Universitas Negeri Malang students. The results of this study indicate that there is a significant positive effect on the perception of facilities and resources and university reputation on student decision. While in the perception of cost, student information, advice of relatives there is no influence on student decision.

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## Strategi Pemasaran untuk Universitas: Apa Saja Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Keputusan Mahasiswa untuk Berkuliah? (Studi Kasus di Universitas Negeri Malang)

### Abstrak

Meningkatnya minat masyarakat terhadap pendidikan tinggi membuat perguruan tinggi di Indonesia dihadapkan pada peluang dan tantangan untuk bersaing. Setiap perguruan tinggi perlu memahami kebutuhan mahasiswa dan memberikan pelayanan yang optimal kepada mahasiswa agar memiliki keunggulan bersaing. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi mahasiswa dalam memilih Universitas Negeri Malang melalui variabel independen yaitu *perception of cost*, *perception of facilities and resources*, *university reputation*, *student received information*, *advice of relatives* dan variabel dependen *student decision*. Jenis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kuantitatif dengan metode SEM-PLS dengan sampel penelitian sebanyak 134 responden mahasiswa Universitas Negeri Malang. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat pengaruh positif signifikan pada persepsi fasilitas dan sumber daya dan reputasi universitas terhadap keputusan mahasiswa. Sedangkan pada persepsi biaya, informasi mahasiswa, saran kerabat tidak terdapat pengaruh terhadap keputusan mahasiswa..

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The quality of a country's human resources is measured through education. *Program Pendidikan Menengah Umum (PMU)* program launched by the Indonesian government requires Indonesians to follow the learning process for 12 years. However, nowadays people's awareness about education has grown. Many students who have completed high school/vocational school continue their education to higher education. In 2022 the number of students in Indonesia was 9.32 million people, this number increased by 4.02% compared to 2021 which was 8.96 million people (Ministry of Education and Culture Research and Technology, 2022). The number of students in Indonesia tends to continue to increase in the last decade with a significant increase during the 2019/2020 academic year of 1.77 million with a percentage of 20.1% (GoodStats, 2022).

This growth driver is due to the increasing public awareness of the importance of education as one of the factors to gain a competitive advantage in obtaining better job opportunities, to explore a wider range of subjects, and to improve career prospects and a more prosperous quality of life (Vincenthio et al., 2021). Higher education is the last level of education to prepare students to become someone who has the academic and professional capabilities and is able to apply, develop, create science, technology or art in society. Higher education is a means to organise and develop education that can improve the lives of the community, nation and state (Harahap & Amanah, 2019).

Currently in Indonesia there are 3,107 universities with the majority dominated by private universities by 95.97% and the remaining 125 units of state universities (Databoks, 2022). The increasing interest of the community makes universities in Indonesia faced with opportunities and challenges to compete. Universities need to understand the needs and desires of students in order to provide the right programmes so that

they have a competitive advantage in the competition (Vincenthio et al., 2021).

Universitas Negeri Malang is one of the state universities that has high competitiveness and always prioritises the quality of education in order to be able to provide optimal service to students. Good quality is one of the factors that influence student interest in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang. This is in accordance with the study conducted (Harahap et al., 2023) shows that the factors that influence decisions in choosing a university, namely the cost of education, the image that the university has, perceptions of the quality of lecturers have a significant influence on students' decisions to study in college. In addition, there are various other factors that influence students' decisions in choosing universities, including motivation that arises, advice from family, strategic location, affordable prices and costs, and the image of the institution being considered by students in determining the universities (Puspitasari et al., 2018).

Based on previous research, there are various factors and research that examine students' decisions to continue their studies in higher education. The number of factors that influence students' decisions to choose this college is also due to the variety of choices of universities, both public and private, in Indonesia (Harahap & Amanah, 2019). Therefore, an analysis is needed both theoretically and empirically to summarise the factors that influence students in choosing a college, especially Universitas Negeri Malang. This study was conducted so that the Universitas Negeri Malang has a competitive advantage and is able to compete in the midst of high growth in the education sector.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Student's Decision of Choosing University

According to Kotler & Keller (2012) decision making is an activity that involves individuals

directly in obtaining and using the goods offered, including the decision-making process in the preparation and determination of these activities. Student decisions in choosing a university are actions that require a complex process and consist of many stages (Do & Le, 2020). A student's decision to continue his/her studies is taken after the student has made an assessment based on the conditions of several alternative university choices. Students' hesitation in choosing a university will arise when conditions do not match their expectations. The determination of choice has many factors and the impact of choosing is part of the effort and part of the decision-making process (Harahap & Amanah, 2019). Students' decisions determine the sustainability of the university because students are the university's assets.

### **Perception of Cost**

Cost is defined as the amount of money provided or allocated to be used or incurred in the implementation of activities to achieve objectives in the framework of the management process (Mulyono, 2010). In higher education, costs can be identified as the total amount of money that students have to pay to educational institutions (Do & Le, 2020). Education cost is vital part in learning process in university. If there is no cost support, the education process will be hampered (Harahap & Amanah, 2019). Educational costs that need to be paid include registration fees per semester, building donation fees, living costs, costs of developing curricular and extra-curricular activities, book fees, equipment costs and other costs that support lectures. Meanwhile, according to Padlee et al. (2010) cost perception is divided into several scales, namely a reasonable tuition policy, reasonable living costs, the existence of financial support policies such as scholarships, grants, loans, and flexible payment or fee collection policies. The large amount of costs that

must be incurred by students is also a big consideration in choosing a university.

### **Perception of Facilities and Resources**

Perceptions of university facilities and resources include 2 categories: physical elements and non-physical elements (Shurestha et al., 2011). Physical elements can be interpreted as facilities and infrastructure that support student learning such as study rooms, places to exercise, places of worship, libraries, laboratories and other learning resources needed to support the learning process including the use of information and communication technology (Isnaini et al., 2016). While non-physical elements are human resources such as lecturers. The main key to the quality of higher education depends on the quality of its lecturers. Qualified lecturers will have an impact on increasing motivation and job satisfaction and further commitment to an institution (Narimawati, 2005). A significant positive correlation between lecturer quality and student achievement has been consistently demonstrated by research, the teaching experience provided by quality lecturers is on average positively related to student achievement (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). The availability of adequate facilities and resources is a consideration for students to decide to study at a university because these two things will support and facilitate the learning and teaching process.

### **University Reputation**

University reputation can be defined as a person's beliefs, opinions, and impressions of the university (Padlee et al., 2010). According to Irfan & Sulaiman (2020) and Singh & Weligamage (2010) if a university wants to have a good reputation, it needs to understand the needs of stakeholders of educational institutions which include students, alumni, academic staff, non-academic staff, parents, government and society. Universities must be able to provide quality

education, appropriate academic guidance, a comfortable academic environment, provision of work skills, as well as learning and achievement experiences so as to meet the expectations of various stakeholders. Previous research conducted (Sultan & Yin Wong, 2012) showed that a graduate in the world of work will always be associated with the reputation of his university. In addition, students feel that studying at a particular university makes it easier for them to get a job, makes it easier to get a wage increase after graduation, companies prioritise graduates from certain universities in the job market, being a pride for students in the job market. Therefore, university reputation is one of the important things that students consider in choosing a university.

#### **Student Receive Information from the University**

Communication is the means used to convey information to target customers. The communication must make customers understand the benefits and value they receive (Do & Le, 2020). The communication of information that universities provide to prospective students is to answer questions and fulfil the information needs that students need to make a decision to choose a university. Universities provide information to students and parents about their goals, activities, support, and interest in the university (Shanka et al., 2005). If the university is able to communicate well to students such as providing information on learning and enjoyable experiences, students will make this basis for deciding to choose a university (Harahap & Amanah, 2019). Information about the university received by students will affect students' decisions in choosing to study at the university.

#### **Advice of Relatives**

In this age of strong technological and scientific development, students have many opportunities to connect directly or indirectly with many people through various forms such as telephone, email, chat so that students can get recommendations or advice from many people (Do & Le, 2020). According to Ramayah et al. (2010), there are 6 scales that influence students' decisions in choosing a university, namely advice from friends, advice from classmates, advice from previous students, alumni advice, advice from high school teachers, advice from new admissions counsellors. Parents also have a very important role in influencing student decisions. According to Lestari (2012) the role of parents is a way used by parents related to the view of the duties that must be carried out in caring for children including in providing proper education, parents tend to actively participate in deciding which university students choose with various considerations determined in accordance with the goals to be achieved. In this study, the indicators of advice given by the closest people such as parents, classmates, and high school teachers can influence students in choosing a university.

#### **METHOD**

This study aims to examine the relationship between perception of cost, perception of facilities and resources, university reputation, students receive information from the university, advice of relatives on student decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang. The researcher uses quantitative approach with statistical process. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with some criteria: (1) active students in Universitas Negeri Malang, (2) take the bachelor degree, and (3) Not a double degree student with another university. Data collection using a closed questionnaire distributed via Google form. In this study there were 23 question items adapted from previous research

(Do & Le, 2020) with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data analysis method uses Structural Equation Modelling - Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software which aims to test the research model which is divided into two categories, namely measurement models and structural models.

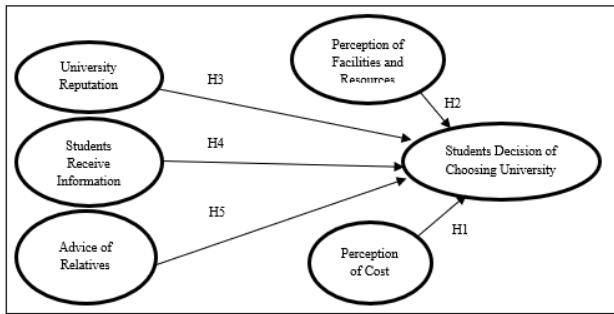


Figure 1. Research Model

H1: Perception of cost Reputation has a positive effect on student decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang

H2: Perception of Facilities and Resources has a positive effect on student decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang

H3: University Reputation has a positive effect on student decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang

H4: Student Receive Information from the University has a positive effect on student decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang.

H5: Advice of Relatives has a positive effect on student decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang

**RESULTS**

**Respondent Characteristics**

This study used a sample of 134 students from Universitas Negeri Malang. Based on gender, respondents in this study were dominated by 70.1% women and 29.9% men. The majority of respondents were aged 17-20 years by 89.8%, lower than 17 years by 4.4% and more than 20 years by 5.8%. Based on origin, 65% of

respondents came from outside Malang Raya while 35% of respondents came from Malang Raya (Malang City, Malang Regency, Batu City). Based on information, 37.2% of respondents mostly get information about Universitas Negeri Malang through friends/family, 32.8% of respondents get information through social media, while 20.4% of respondents get information about Universitas Negeri Malang through teachers/schools, only 5.8% of respondents get information from websites and the rest get information about Universitas Negeri Malang from other sources.

**Descriptive Statistics**

The mean value is used to see the central tendency. While standard deviation is used to measure the difference from the average value itself. Data processing is done using SPSS software. From the results of data processing, it shows that most of the means have a high category and only one variable has a medium category mean value. In Table 1, Perception of Cost has the highest mean value (Mean=4.537; SD=0.558) followed by University Reputation (Mean=4.362; SD=0.616). Advice of Relative has the lowest value of mean (Mean=3.218; SD=1.211).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

| Variable | Min | Max | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|----------|-----|-----|-------|----------------|
| UR       | 1   | 5   | 4.362 | 0.616          |
| SRI      | 2   | 5   | 4.272 | 0.671          |
| AR       | 1   | 5   | 3.218 | 1.211          |
| PFR      | 1   | 5   | 4.246 | 0.627          |
| PC       | 3   | 5   | 4.537 | 0.558          |

Source: Data Processed by SPSS, note: UR=University Reputation, SRI= Student Receive Information, AR= Advice of Relatives. PFR= Perception of Facilities and Resources, PC= Perception of Cost

**Validity and Reliability Testing**

Outer model is a measurement model that aims to analyse the relationship between latent variables and measurement items. In the outer model measurement, there is a validity test to determine

the capacity of the tool through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Meanwhile, reliability is a testing model to assess instruments to measure concepts. In this study, all question items are declared valid if the outer loading value is above 0.7. The results of outer loading with the value of all indicators > 0.7 except for two items, namely one item each from the student decision variable and one item from Student Receive Information.

**Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test**

| Variable | Cronbach's alpha | CR    | AVE   |
|----------|------------------|-------|-------|
| AR       | 0.789            | 0.830 | 0.699 |
| PC       | 0.838            | 0.869 | 0.668 |
| PFR      | 0.799            | 0.806 | 0.624 |
| SD       | 0.822            | 0.824 | 0.739 |
| SRI      | 0.816            | 0.823 | 0.730 |
| UR       | 0.847            | 0.854 | 0.685 |

Source: SmartPLS Processing Results, 2023 Note: SD=Student Decision, UR=University Reputation, SRI= Student Receive Information, AR= Advice of Relatives. PFR= Perception of Facilities and Resources, PC= Perception of Cost

To evaluate validity, researchers use Cronbach alpha, composite reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicators. Table 2 shows that the AVE value is more than 0.5, so the value is accepted according to Ghozali (2012). The value that fulfils composite reliability if it gets a value > 0.7 according to Ghozali (2012).

**Goodness of Fit**

SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) is how well the model can explain the level of how well the model is able to explain the variation between the observation variable and the model prediction variable. Hair et al. (2019) suggests that the SRMR value which is below 0.08, indicates that the model can be categorized as a good fit. In table 5, there is an SRMR value of 0.070 which indicates a suitable and good model fit.

**Table 3. Goodness of fit model**

|      | Saturated model | Estimated model |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|
| SRMR | 0.070           | 0.070           |

|            |         |         |
|------------|---------|---------|
| d_ ULS     | 1.119   | 1.119   |
| d_ G       | 0.440   | 0.440   |
| Chi-square | 360.763 | 360.763 |
| NFI        | 0.756   | 0.756   |

Source: SmartPLS Processing Results, 2023

**Hypothesis Test**

**Table 4. R square**

|                  | R-square | R-square adjusted |
|------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Student Decision | 0.372    | 0.348             |

Source: SmartPLS Processing Results, 2023

In the table above, it can be seen that the R-Square value of the student decision variable is obtained at 0.372. This shows that the perception of cost, perceived of facilities, university reputation, students receive information and advice relatives influence by forming a student decision of 37.2% while 62.8% is influenced by other variables not explained in this study.

**Table 5. Hypothesis Test**

|          | Original sample (O) | T-statistics | P values | Decision    |
|----------|---------------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| PC → SD  | 0.103               | 1.566        | 0.117    | H1 rejected |
| PFR → SD | 0.280               | 2.779        | 0.005    | H2 accepted |
| UR → SD  | 0.233               | 2.124        | 0.034    | H3 accepted |
| SRI → SD | 0.139               | 1.426        | 0.154    | H4 rejected |
| AR → SD  | 0.025               | 0.375        | 0.708    | H5 rejected |

Source: SmartPLS Processing Results, 2023, Note: SD=Student Decision, UR=University Reputation, SRI= Student Receive Information, AR= Advice of Relatives. PFR= Perception of Facilities and Resources, PC= Perception of Cost

Direct effect test which is useful for testing hypotheses related to the direct effect between exogenous latent variables and endogenous latent variables. Significant influence between research constructs using the t-statistic value derived from the bootstrapping procedure in the SmartPLS software. In testing the H1 hypothesis, the p value is greater than 0.05 so it is concluded that the perception of cost is not proven to have an effect on student decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang. Different results occur in testing the H2 hypothesis where the p-value is 0.005 (<0.05) so that the perception of facilities and resources has a significant effect on student

decisions in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang or H2 is accepted. The relationship shown is a positive relationship where the coefficient value is 0.280 where the greater the student's perception of facilities and resources at the Universitas Negeri Malang, the greater the student chooses the Universitas Negeri Malang. In line with these results, the study also confirmed the relationship between university reputation and students' decision to choose Universitas Negeri Malang where the p-value is 0.034 ( $<0.05$ ) so that H3 is accepted. However, this study was unable to confirm the effect of students receiving information and advice relatives on students' decision to choose Universitas Negeri Malang.

## DISCUSSION

This study proves that two hypotheses are accepted and three hypotheses are rejected. The first hypothesis, perception of cost does not have a positive influence on student decisions. Previous research conducted Amaliya (2019) explains that perception of cost has no effect on student decisions in choosing a university. However, there are other studies that have opposite results where the cost of education affects students' decisions in choosing a university (Suryani, 2018). Changes in tuition fees will not affect student decisions, but if the changes are too significant, it will make students consider the decision to choose a university. Meanwhile, Perception of facilities and resources has a positive effect on student decisions in choosing the Universitas Negeri Malang. These results are supported by previous findings conducted Wulandar et al. (2019) that facilities have a positive and significant influence on student interest in choosing a university. In addition, research conducted Do & Le (2020) also shows the same results that educational facilities have a positive and significant influence on student decisions in choosing a university. Completeness of educational facilities is very important for

educational institutions because adequate facilities and resources will facilitate and support learning activities and become a special attraction for students to choose a university (Amaliya, 2019).

The third hypothesis between university reputation on student decision is proven to have a positive influence. This is in line with previous research conducted (Harahap et al., 2023) where university reputation has a statistically significant effect on student decisions to study at a university. This result is reinforced by the findings conducted Keling (2006) explained that the image and reputation of the university have an influence on students in deciding to choose a university. The better the reputation of the university, the higher the student's decision to choose the university. So that the Universitas Negeri Malang needs to continue to improve its reputation. Furthermore, student received information is proven to have no influence on student decision. This research has opposite results to previous research conducted by Do & Le (2020) which explains that student receive information has an influence on student decisions in choosing a university. Information conveyed from the university shows efforts in conducting promotional and communication activities in the field of education to provide information to students about the goals and activities of the university (Shanka et al., 2005).

The fifth hypothesis is rejected which explains that the advice of relatives has no influence on student decisions in choosing a university. This result is in accordance with previous findings conducted Koe & Saring (2012) which proves that advice of relatives which includes family / peers has a negative influence on student decisions. However, research conducted Yusuf et al. (2017) explained the opposite results where there was a significant influence between advice of relatives (family, friends, peers) on student decisions to choose a university. Students tend to consult with friends or parents before making decisions, then the opinions they get will

be taken into consideration in choosing a university.

### **Managerial Implication**

Reputation is a valuable asset for universities. A good reputation can attract prospective students, increase cooperation with industry, and strengthen the university's image in the eyes of the public. Marketing plays a vital role in building and improving the university's reputation. Strong branding is key to creating a positive university reputation. The university must identify its core values and competitive advantages and communicate them consistently to the target audience. The university needs to target its marketing strategy to the right audience. This can be done by conducting market research to identify the characteristics and needs of prospective students.

Digital marketing can be an effective strategy to improve reputation and attract prospective students to universities. Universities can create various marketing content, such as blog articles, videos, and infographics. Content marketing is a strategy to attract and retain target audiences by creating and sharing informative and valuable content. Digital advertising can reach a more specific target audience and increase the university's brand awareness. Universities can use various digital advertising platforms, such as Google Ads, Facebook Ads, and Instagram Ads. Universitas Negeri Malang can optimize the social media: IG=@universitasnegerimalang and Youtube: @UM-UniversitasNegeriMalang. The role of social media has advantages in building relationships with consumers, namely two-way communication.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) is one of the essential strategies for building and improving a university's reputation. eWOM is a form of word-of-mouth communication conducted online through various digital platforms, such as social media, websites, and

online forums. The application of eWOM in improving a university's reputation is to increase brand awareness, build credibility, increase the interest of prospective students, increase cooperation with industry, and strengthen the image of the university. Several strategies can be applied to maximize the benefits of eWOM in improving university reputation: building online communities, encouraging students and alumni to give positive reviews, responding appropriately to online reviews, utilizing influencers, and conducting monitoring and evaluation.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to examine the factors that influence students in choosing Universitas Negeri Malang. The results showed that perception of facilities and resources and university reputation have a positive influence on student decision. While the perception of cost, students receive information, advice of relatives has no effect on student decision. In the midst of the increasingly massive growth of the education sector, Universitas Negeri Malang needs to maintain its existence and have the ability to compete to attract students by improving several things such as developing quality facilities and resources to support student comfort in learning and increasing its reputation. Because the higher the reputation of a university, the higher the student's decision to choose the Universitas Negeri Malang. This research cannot be separated from limitations. Therefore, in the future it is hoped that researchers can focus on variables that have not been examined in this study so that it can be a comparison regarding the analysis of factors that influence students in deciding on a university

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