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Corporate Identity, Reputation, And Satisfaction as Determinants of Student Study Persistence (Case in One Private University)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the impact of corporate identity on student retention and satisfaction at the one of private university in North Jakarta, with corporate reputation serving as a mediating variable. The research framework is based on the Information Integration Theory and Behavior Change Theory as applied frameworks. Swails' model is useful for explaining the process of student resilience and illustrating the balance between students' internal resources and the institutional support provided by the university This study employs an explanatory survey approach, aiming to understand the reasons for a condition or the factors influencing an event. The population of this study was all new undergraduate students entering the undergraduate program in a private university in North Jakarta. The findings reveal that corporate identity has a direct but modest influence on student retention. it is recommended that private universities continue to improve the quality of their human resources, both in terms of services (including teaching) and facilities However, corporate identity significantly affects corporate reputation. Additionally, corporate identity influences student satisfaction. Corporate reputation strongly affects student satisfaction and also contributes to student retention. Lastly, student satisfaction moderately impacts student retention.

Keywords

corporate identity, corporate reputation, student satisfaction, student retention

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INTRODUCTION

An organization's identity and image don't always go hand in hand, so rebranding is often necessary to adjust the image to align with the evolving identity (Aruman, 2015). Corporate identity itself is formed internally through the contribution of organizational stakeholders. Initially, the concept of corporate identity was understood only in terms of visual elements such as logos and graphic design. Strategies for promoting corporate identity also consider the use of social media. This approach encompasses the use of social media, content marketing, websites, and video materials, all designed to enhance and strengthen brand awareness (Himawan and Sutikno, 2024).

However, this identity also includes visual cues, both physical and behavioral, that enable the public to recognize and differentiate a company from its competitors. Furthermore, it emphasizes that corporate identity is a strategic expression of a company, reflected in its vision and mission, supported by business strategy, and represented in its daily activities and operations.

Emphasizes the importance of ethical values, culture, history, and organizational philosophy in shaping corporate identity. Meanwhile, it outlines four main aspects of corporate identity construction, namely communication and visual identity, organizational behavior, corporate culture, and market dynamics. This study aims to analyze the influence of private higher education identity on corporate reputation and student satisfaction. In addition, this study also examines the relationship between corporate reputation and student satisfaction and its impact on the retention of new students' studies. Furthermore, this study examines the extent to which student satisfaction contributes to retention of studies, and simultaneously assesses the influence of institutional identity on retention of new students' studies.

In the context of an education market that positions students as customers, universities are required to formulate strategies that can maintain and enhance competitiveness. This effort requires developing competitive advantages derived from the institution's unique characteristics. Furthermore, these advantages must be consistently and effectively communicated to all stakeholders.

In this situation, universities are beginning to recognize the importance of corporate identity as a key source of competitive advantage. They understand that strategic identity management can be a key factor in building and maintaining an advantage over competitors (Gao and Jiang, 2025).

Brunninge (2023) asserts that corporate identity cannot be separated from the ethical values, culture, history, and philosophy adopted by the organization. Meanwhile, Foroudi, Melewar, Tzempelikos, Che Ha, & Tourky (2025) integrate corporate identity with social responsibility (ethical dimension) and reputation within a triadic framework for sustainable branding, emphasizing that ethics and social purpose are structural components of identity.

Figure 1. Corporate Identity Stakeholders
Source: Melewar and Akel, The Role of Corporate Identity in the Higher Education Sector, 2005

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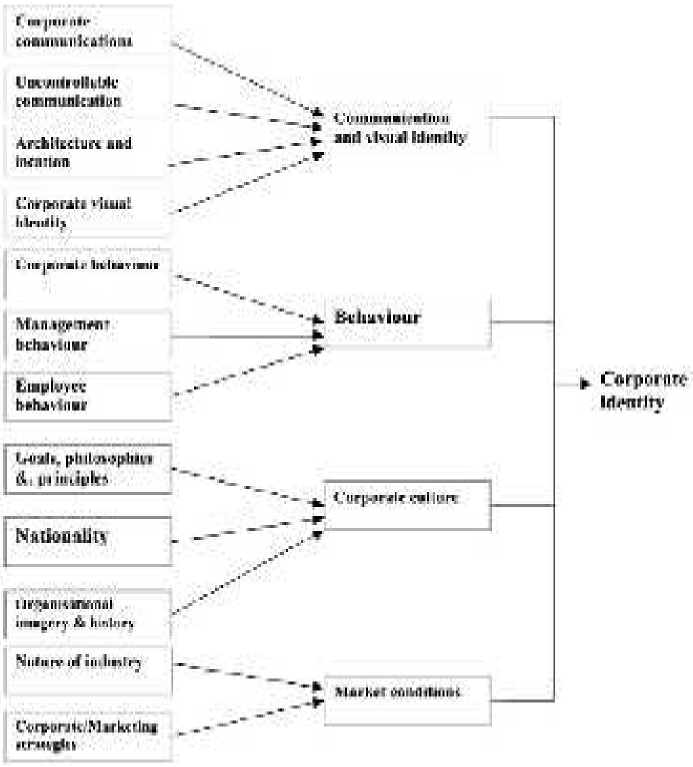

Figure 2. Corporate Identity Model

Fu & Zhu (2022) show how banks in the US and China build corporate identities on websites through an emphasis on socio-cultural values (culture) and environmental and social responsibility (ethics). Corporate image and reputation are often considered synonymous, namely as the overall impression a person forms of a company. As it developed, Fombrun (1996), Gray & Balmer (1998), and Helm (2004) (in Aruman, 2015: 35) interpreted reputation as the synthesis of various existing images, thus reflecting diverse attitudes that emerge simultaneously.

The good and bad reputation and image of a university also need to be considered in how influencers and journalists report in their media. Therefore, "University public relations should recognize and take into account journalists' perspectives when choosing and disseminating information via social media platforms" (Utami and Prastya, 2024). Numerous public relations practitioners continue to hold the mistaken belief that they possess the ability to determine their target audiences, regulate the messages delivered to them, shape how these audiences interpret organizational information, and direct changes in their attitudes and behaviors (Setiawan, 2024).

Students can be positioned as customers in the context of higher education. With increasingly fierce competition in the higher education sector, universities are often viewed as providers of educational services, while students act as recipients or customers. This increased freedom for students to choose educational institutions has consequences for both them and their universities. This view is also affirmed by Schmatz et al. (2015).

In the increasingly competitive higher education sector, universities are often viewed as providers of educational services to students, while students are positioned as customers. This greater freedom of choice in choosing institutions has various implications for both students and universities (Schmatz et al., 2015). On the other hand, Govender, K. K., Soni, S., & David, E. (2022) also view students as customers, as explained in their research findings: With the demands of economic accountability and increasing attention to consumer choice, higher education institutions are beginning to view both students and staff as customers.

Therefore, to maintain the expected quality of service, the relationship between administrative staff and academics, as well as between administrative staff and students, has become increasingly structured. As a result, management behavior in universities increasingly resembles the patterns applied in commercial enterprises (Alibašić, H., et.al, 2024). Retaining customers is seen as more important than simply attracting new ones.

Obtaining a quality education is no easy feat, requiring various sacrifices, both financially and time-wise. However, some students still fail to complete their studies and choose to drop out for various reasons, including service quality, the learning environment, course materials, and other factors. First-year students (or freshmen) are an important group to study, as they can provide insight into their future academic resilience.

In other words, the primary reason research on student retention focuses on the first year is because this is the period during which student attrition is significant, typically due to withdrawals during the first year of their program. If students are able to persist beyond the first year, their chances of successfully completing their studies and graduating significantly increase in subsequent years (Echegoyen et al., 2024).

Quincho et al. (2024) identified several factors that cause students to discontinue their studies (student attrition), including academic issues, financial difficulties, motivational issues, personal considerations, dissatisfaction with their university, military service obligations, and the demands of full-time employment. Academic factors are typically related to low grades, boredom, changes in career direction, or limited access to desired study programs.

This reason is generally more frequently cited by male students, those from technical institutions, high school graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds, students who dropped out in their first year, and those who transferred to another college or returned after dropping out. Meanwhile, financial hardship is often cited as a reason by minority groups, including women with poor high school records, students who dropped out early in their studies, and those who experienced a temporary dropout.

Furthermore, motivational issues relate to unclear educational and career goals, low interest in learning, and the inability or unwillingness to pursue studies. These reasons are rarely cited by female students with strong academic backgrounds in high school. Personal considerations, meanwhile, typically relate to emotional issues, difficulties adapting to college life, marriage, pregnancy, family responsibilities, or health conditions.

A student's ability to continue their education is often referred to as retention. Retention is defined as the number of students who remain enrolled and registered as students at an institution (Burge, J. G., 2023). Student retention rates are largely determined by positive and constructive interactions between individuals and the educational institution where they study (Crawford, 2023). In other literature, retention is also often understood as a form of institutional commitment.

Rahmani et al. (2024) suggest that there are various subpopulations of students who do not continue their studies until graduation. These subpopulations include dropouts, stop-outs, opt-outs, and transfer-outs. Each group has its own characteristics, experiences, and reasons that distinguish it. Drop-outs refer to students who were previously enrolled but did not re-enroll or failed to complete their study or training program. Meanwhile, stop-outs are students who initially began their studies as planned but then temporarily withdrew for various reasons, then returned to complete their degree (Quincho et al., 2024).

To gain a deeper understanding of student retention, researchers applied Swail's Geometric Model of Student Persistence and Achievement. This model emphasizes the cognitive and social aspects of students entering college, as well as how the institution influences their learning experience. This approach also helps explain the interaction between cognitive, social, and institutional factors that simultaneously occur within students.

These three aspects need to be integrated to create a solid foundation for student growth, development, and resilience. If stability is compromised, students risk experiencing a decline in academic and social integration with the institution, which could ultimately lead to discontinuation of their studies. This model is useful for explaining the process of student resilience and illustrating the balance between students' internal resources and the institutional support provided by the university (Swail, 2004).

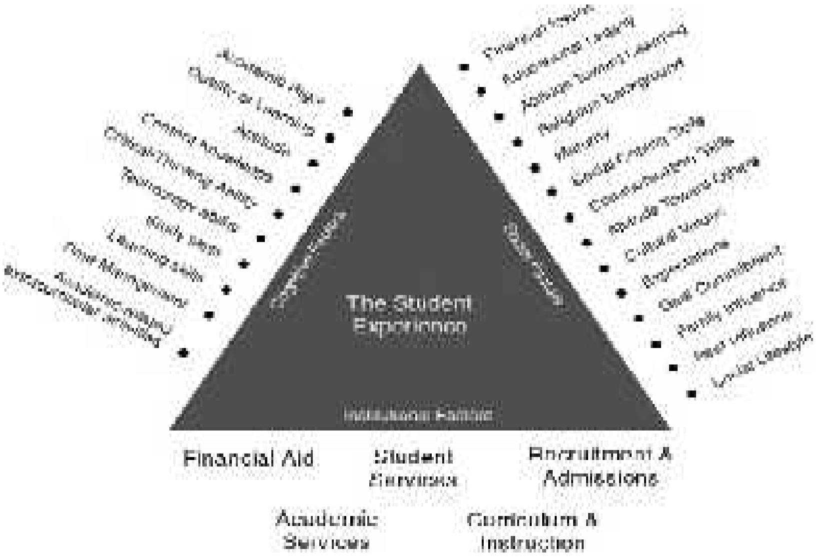

Figure 3. Swail's Geometric Model of Student Persistence and Achievement

***Source:* Swail, *The Art of Student Retention,* 2004**

There are three sub-constructs that need to be considered in the context of higher education and academic achievement: cognitive, social, and institutional factors. Cognitive factors reflect students' abilities and weaknesses in facing academic challenges, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. The second factor is the social aspect, which encompasses the ability to interact effectively with others, personal attitudes, and cultural background, which together shape an individual's external characteristics (Swail, 2004).

The third factor is institutional factors, which refer to the practices, strategies, and culture implemented by a college or university. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, these factors influence student retention and achievement. Examples include the quality of faculty instruction, academic support programs, financial aid, student services, recruitment and admissions processes, academic services, and curriculum and teaching methods. These three sub-constructs were then used as dimensions in this study. The hypotheses in this study are formulated as follows:

The hypothesis of this research is as follows:

Hypothesis 1

H1: Corporate Identity influences corporate reputation

Ho : Corporate Identity does not influences student reputation.

Hypothesis 2

H1: Corporate Identity Influences Student Satisfaction.

Ho: Corporate identity does not influences on student satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3

H1: Corporate reputation influences student satisfaction.

Ho: Corporate reputation does not influences on student satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4

H1: Corporate reputation influences student retention.

Ho: Corporate reputation does not influences on student retention.

Hypothesis 5

H1: Student satisfaction influences student study retention.

Ho: Student satisfaction does not influences student study retention.

Hypothesis 6

H1: Corporate Identity simultaneously influences the students retention

Ho: Corporate Identity simultaneously does not influences the students retention

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs an explanatory survey approach, aiming to understand the reasons for a condition or the factors influencing an event. This research not only describes emerging phenomena but also attempts to explain the causes and impacts of these phenomena (Kumyoung et al., 2024).

The population of this study was all new undergraduate students entering the undergraduate program in 2024 at a private university in North Jakarta. The population size was 340. The sample used in this study was a proportional stratified sample based on the six undergraduate study programs offered by the university. The resulting sample size was 183,7837, rounded up to 184 respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For this purpose, this study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS V3.2.4 software. The model applied was first-order confirmatory factor analysis. The following presents the initial model used in the study.

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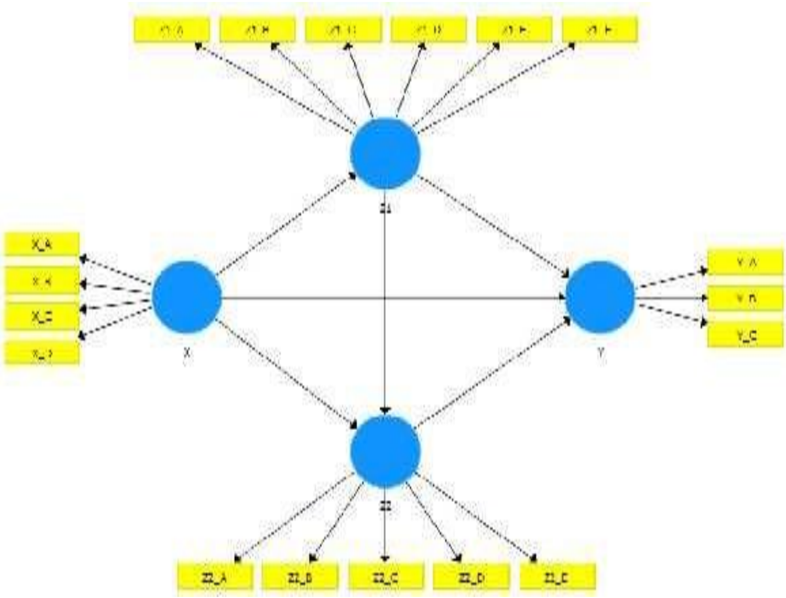

Figure 4. Initial Research Model

Information :

X : Corporate Identity/Identitas Korporat

X_A : *Communication and Visual Identity*

X_B : *Organizational Behaviour*

X_C : *Corporate Culture*

X_D : *Market Condition*

Z_1 : Corporate Reputation/ Reputasi Korporat

$Z_{1.A}$: *Emotional Appeal*

$Z_{1.B}$: *Products & Services*

$Z_{1.C}$: *Vision & Leadership.*

$Z_{1.D}$: *Workplace Environment*

$Z_{1.E}$: *Financial Performance*

$Z_{1.F}$: *Social Responsibility*

***Z_2 : Students Satisfaction/*Kepuasan Mahasiswa**

$Z_{2.A}$: Price Quality

$Z_{2.C}$: Service Quality/Kualitas Pelayanan

Z_{2D} : Emotional Factor

$Z_{2.E}$: Cost

Y : (1st year students) Study Persistance

Y_A : *Cognitive Factors*

Y_B : *Social Factors*

Y_C : *Institutional Factors*

Verification Hypotheis Testing (Structural Model)

Hypothesis 1 : Corporate Identity influences corporate reputation.

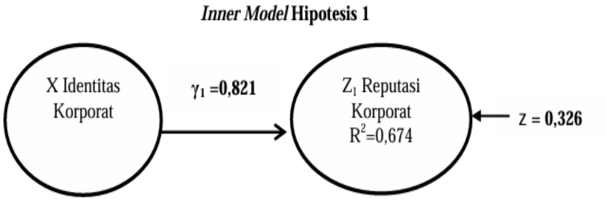

Figure 5. Inner Model Hypothesis 1

Table 1. R Square, T Count, T Tabel, and Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis	R^2	T Count	T Table	Info
The Influence of Corporate Identity on Corporate Reputation	67,4%	31,775	1,960	Reject H_0

Hypothesis 2: Corporate identity influences student satisfaction

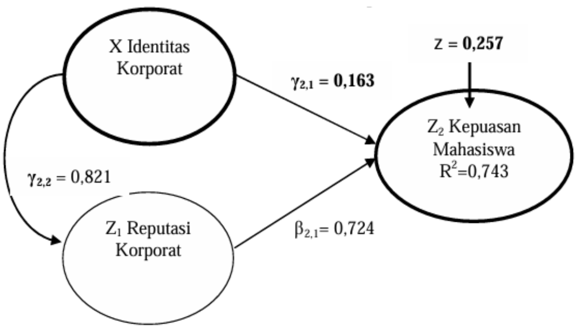

Figure 6. Inner Model Hypothesis 2

Table 2. R Square, T Count, T Tabel, and Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis	R^2	T Count	T Table	Info
The Influence of Corporate Identity on Students Satisfaction	12,4%	2,761	1,960	Reject H_0

Hypothesis 3: Corporate reputation influences student satisfaction.

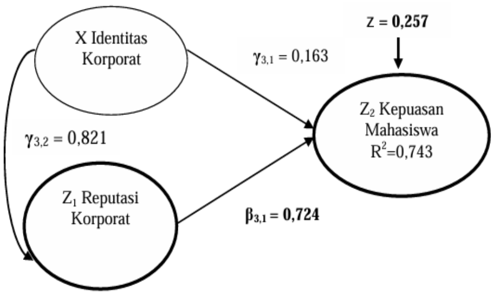

Figure 5. Inner Model Hypothesis 3

Table 3. R Square, T Count, T Tabel, and Hipothesis 3

Hypothesis	R^2	T Count	T Table	Info
Corporate reputation influences on student satisfaction	62,1%	13,769	1,960	Reject H_0

Hypothesis 4: Corporate reputation influences students' study retention.

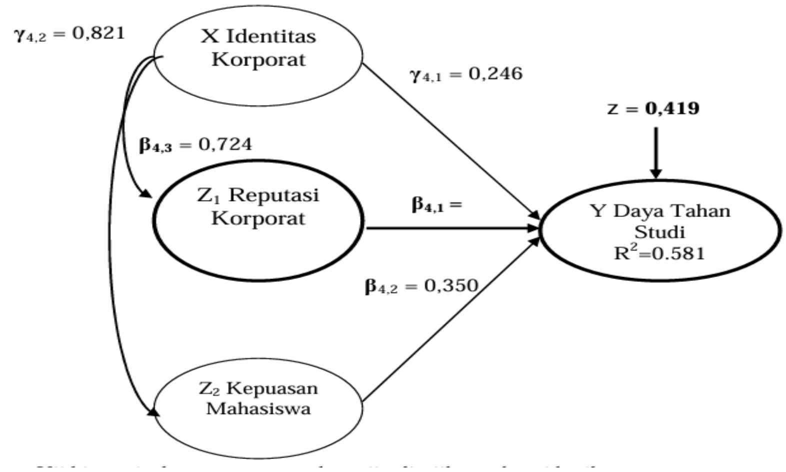

Figure 8. Inner Model Hypothesis 4

Table 4. R Square, T Count, T Tabel, and Hipothesis 4

Hypothesis	R^2	T Count	T Table	Info
Corporate Reputation Influences on the study retention of new student	14,8%	2,282	1,960	Reject H_0

Hypothesis 5: Student satisfaction influences student study retention.

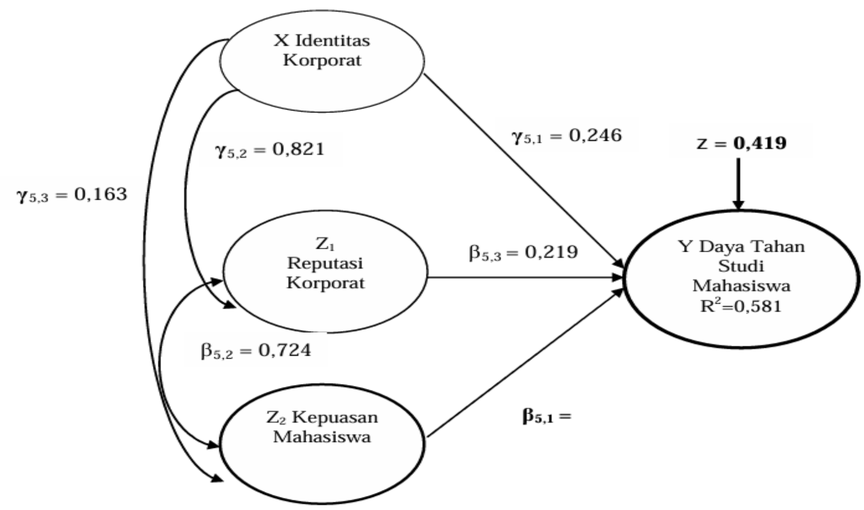

Figure 5. Inner Model Hypothesis 5

Table 5 R Square, T Count, T Tabel, and Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis	R^2	T Count	T Table	Info
Corporate Reputation Influences the study retention of new student	19,3%	3,186	1,960	Reject H_0

Hypothesis 6: Private university identity has a simultaneous effect on New Student Retention

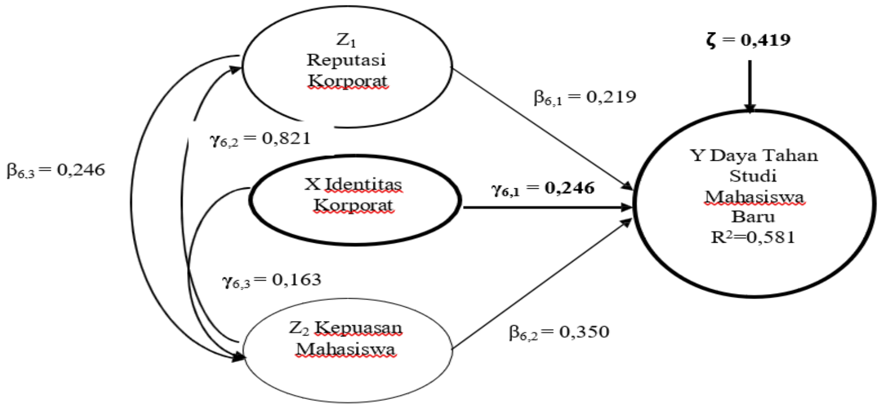

Figure 10. Inner Model Hypothesis 6

Tabel 6. R Square, t count, t tabel and Hipothesis 6

Hypothesis	R^2	T Count	T Table	Info
The Influence of Corporate Identity of Students Retention	11,9%	3,275%	1,960	Reject H_0

Based on the analysis and discussion, the researcher concluded that the identity of a private university (X) has a very significant influence on corporate reputation (Z1), amounting to 67.4%. This value is the highest compared to other factors not included in this study (32.6%). This is in line with the results of research conducted by Ricky and Nuraryo (2015) which stated that the identity of a business university has a significant influence on the reputation of the university itself as a corporation.

Meanwhile, the identity of private higher education institutions (X) also influences student satisfaction (Z2), but with a relatively weak influence, namely 12.4%, much lower than other factors not analyzed in this study (87.6%). Corporate reputation (Z1) was shown to have a significant influence on student satisfaction (Z2) of 62.1%, indicating that more than half of the influence comes from reputation compared to other factors not included in this study (37.9%). Meanwhile, corporate reputation (Z1) also influences the retention of students in the 2015 intake (Y), but with a relatively weak influence, namely 14.8%, while the remaining 85.2% is influenced by other factors outside this study.

Student satisfaction (Z2) is proven to influence the study retention of students in the 2015 intake (Y) with a moderate influence level of 19.3%, while 80.7% of other influences come from factors outside this study. Simultaneously, the Identity of Private Universities (X) also influences the study retention of students in the 2015 intake (Y), but with a relatively weak influence of 11.9%, while the remaining 88.1% is influenced by other variables not analyzed in this study.

Research findings indicate that corporate identity has a significant impact on reputation (67.4%), but its impact on student satisfaction is much lower (12.4%). This fact demonstrates a gap between the externally constructed institutional image and the actual experiences of students as internal customers. In other words, even if a university successfully communicates its identity through symbols, values, and branding strategies, this is not enough to guarantee a satisfying learning experience.

This gap aligns with criticisms of the higher education marketing paradigm, where identity and reputation are often directed more at external stakeholders (parents, prospective students, and the wider community) than at students already part of the institution. Consequently, student satisfaction is determined more by day-to-day operational factors—such as the quality of teaching, facilities, and administrative services—than by the corporate identity narrative.

Furthermore, this study confirms the role of reputation as a strategic mediating variable. Reputation was shown to contribute significantly to student satisfaction (62.1%), indicating that public perception of an institution's reputation can shape student expectations. Students tend to assess their experiences through the framework of reputation: the better the reputation of the university, the higher their perceived satisfaction. However, the effect of reputation on student retention (14.8%) was relatively weak. This suggests that while reputation can increase satisfaction, it is not strong enough to guarantee student continuation.

Student satisfaction alone contributed only 19.3% to retention. This figure is moderate and confirms that satisfaction is not the sole determinant of academic loyalty. Student retention is more complex, as it is also determined by cognitive factors (academic ability, study skills), social factors (peer support, family, campus community), and institutional factors (financial support, counseling services, curriculum flexibility). This finding is consistent with Swail's Geometric Model of Student Persistence and Achievement, which emphasizes the dynamic interaction between cognitive, social, and institutional dimensions.

From a strategic perspective, the findings of this study have important implications: corporate identity cannot remain limited to symbolic and external communications but must be integrated into the campus's daily practices. For example, if a campus emphasizes the value of "excellence" in its identity, then the quality of teaching, faculty-student interactions, and administrative services must truly reflect that value. Without this consistency, identity becomes little more than marketing rhetoric that fails to create meaningful experiences for students.

Furthermore, it's worth noting that 88.1% of student retention factors fall outside this research model. This means that identity, reputation, and satisfaction only explain a small portion of the retention phenomenon. Other factors, such as financial support, mental health, intrinsic motivation, and students' sense of belonging, contribute significantly but are not yet addressed in the model. This finding opens the door to further, more comprehensive and transdisciplinary research, incorporating perspectives from educational psychology, sociology, and higher education management.

Thus, this research discussion confirms that building identity and reputation is only the initial foundation. The primary challenge for universities is how to operationalize this identity through consistent learning experiences, tangible institutional support, and academic policies oriented toward student needs. Only in this way can universities increase student satisfaction and strengthen student retention.

CONCLUSION

Based on the interview results regarding the quality of services and facilities, it is recommended that private universities continue to improve the quality of their human resources, both in terms of services (including teaching) and facilities. This effort aims to ensure that the institution remains a priority and the top choice for prospective students and parents. This improvement can be monitored through competitor analysis, consumer analysis, and market analysis.

This study was limited to one educational institution, a private university. For further research, it is recommended to involve several educational institutions for comparison regarding student identity and retention levels. The results indicate that the influence of private university identity on new students' retention levels is less than twelve percent. Therefore, further research is expected to include other factors not yet analyzed in this study that influence the remaining factors.

The strengths of this research are: first, corporate identity is understood not only as a visual element, but also as an organization's culture, behavior, ethics, and strategic values. Second, the focus on first-year student retention aligns with global literature that emphasizes the critical period of student adaptation. Finally, the use of SEM allows for the identification of causal relationships between variables (identity → reputation → satisfaction → retention).

The weaknesses of this study include the following: First, the results indicate that the influence of identity on retention is only 11.9%, leaving approximately 88.1% of the retention factors unexplained. This indicates the need to include other factors such as financial support, intrinsic motivation, and the quality of academic interactions. Second, the study only involved one private university in North Jakarta, so generalizability is still weak.

Third, the finding regarding the weak direct influence of identity on student satisfaction needs to be explored further, for example: does branding have a greater impact on external image than on students' internal experiences? This presents a challenge for future researchers interested in examining the influence of private universities' corporate identity on student satisfaction and loyalty.

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