The Role of Brand on Educational Institution

Peran Merek pada Institusi Pendidikan

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Abstract

Brand is one of the strategies that can be carried out by educational institutions, including by building brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality on students' decisions in choosing SMK as a senior high school, both partially and simultaneously. The quantitative method with the type of causal descriptive research was implemented on 329 students of SMKN 1 Cianjur who were selected as samples. The results of the path analysis of the data show that brand awareness, brand associations and quality perceptions are proven to have a positive and significant influence, both partially and simultaneously on the purchasing decision process.

Keywords: Brand Association, Brand Awareness, Decision Making Process, Perceived Quality.

Abstrak

Merek merupakan salah satu strategi yang bisa dilakukan oleh lembaga pendidikan, diantaranya dengan membangun kesadaran merek, asosiasi merek dan persepsi kualitas. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pengaruh kesadaran merek, asosiasi merek dan persepsi kualitas terhadap keputusan siswa dalam memilih SMK sebagai sekolah lanjutan tingkat atas baik secara parsial dan simultan. Metode kuantitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif kausal diimplementasikan pada 329 siswa SMKN 1 Cianjur yang terpilih sebagai sampel. Hasil analisis jalur atas data menunjukkan kesadaran merek, asosiasi merek dan persepsi kualitas, terbukti memiliki pengaruh yang positif dan signifikan, baik secara parsial maupun simultan terhadap proses keputusan pembelian.

Kata Kunci*: Asosiasi Merek, Kesadaran Merek, Proses Keputusan Pembelian, Persepsi Kualitas.*

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INTRODUCTION

SMK is not a business or company that always pursues financial gain in general, but an educational institution that is managed effectively and efficiently in order to improve the level of education in the community. However, this does not prove that education and business are not an integral part of the fact that educational institutions are increasingly increasing facilities to attract prospective students with the aim of getting satisfaction from their users. In line with industrial revolutions 1 to 3 which support the direction of shifts in morality, values and also truth with practical values, economic benefits and competition in the real world (Doringin, 2018). Education is like a business that will set the criteria for success by placing cost effectiveness, input, process suitability and output which is a design system in a business.

Globalization encourages the emergence of very competitive competition in the world of education, both competition between educational institutions or others. For example, indirect competition that occurs between senior high schools and vocational high schools which compete with each other to develop all their potential and abilities to attract prospective students. There are 352 senior high schools in Cianjur Regency and it is known that the number of applicants for SMKN 1 Cianjur is fluctuating and every year there are always students who have been declared accepted but do not re-register, this proves that competition in educational institutions is true.

Competition between companies or institutions is a common thing in the business world, not least in educational institutions such as vocational schools. Each SMK strives to be the best with its own innovation and strategy. Either by participating in and being selected in various educational programs organized by the Directorate of Vocational Education or vocational education, including by strengthening the perception of quality from the community and increasing a good impression on the brand. Brand equity is defined as a set of brand assets and liabilities related to the brand, name and symbol, which can increase or decrease the value represented by a product or service to the company (Brochado & Oliveira, 2018); because through brand equity it can reflect the added value possessed by a brand from a product or service that can cause certain feelings in the consumer's personality. Creating brand equity by building a strong brand can plays a strategic role in creating a superior and competitive company (Brochado & Oliveira, 2018).

Therefore, to be able to face competition between educational institutions, preventive steps are needed to prevent negative things that may happen to educational institutions. Brand equity has increased the importance of brands in marketing strategy and provided a focus for managerial interests and research activities (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Marketers need to create brand equity by building the right brand knowledge structure to the right target consumers. A brand with high equity provides a relatively large probability of controlling market share and can make consumers not think too much about other problems (Ogbeide & Omoregbe, 2017; Zhafira & Rachmawati, 2020).

Brand equity is the added value of a product or service to consumers, which is obtained from how consumers think, feel, and act towards a brand in terms of price, market share and profitability of the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Educational institutions that have good brand equity in the minds of consumers are when consumers have a high level of brand awareness, an attitude of familiarity and good brand association and are of the view that a product or service produced by a brand has good quality (perceived quality) (Brochado & Oliveira, 2018). Table 1 showed of pre-questionnaire results from five statements obtained from 40 student respondents at SMKN 1 Cianjur regarding their decision in choosing a senior high school which was carried out in March 2022.

Table 1. Results of Pre-Questionnaires

No	Dimensions	Statement	Yes		No		Total
			R	%	R	%	
1	Need Recognition	I need a vocational high school as a senior high school in order to be able to work, continue or be an entrepreneur.	31	77.50	9	22.50	40
2	Information Research	I am looking for information about a Vocational High School in Cianjur	35	87.50	5	12.50	40
3	Evaluations of Alternatives	I prioritize SMKN 1 Cianjur with other SMA and SMK	15	37.50	25	62.50	40
4	Purchases Decision	I choose and entrust my education to SMKN 1 Cianjur	30	75.00	10	25.00	40
5	Post Purchases Behaviour	I will recommend SMKN 1 Cianjur to my family, friends and close relatives	26	65.00	16	35.00	40

Source: Primary data (processed), 2022.

Table 1 contains a number of statements related to the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur. It is known that only 37.50 percent or 15 students out of 40 students prioritize SMKN 1 Cianjur as a secondary school. This proves that in the dimension of evaluation of alternatives, there are still many students who don't prioritize SMKN 1 Cianjur in their school choices. These phenomena are thought to be influenced by ineffective brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality. Based on the above background, the authors are interested in analyzing and knowing the influence of brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality on students' decision processes in choosing vocational high schools. Research object on students of SMKN 1 Cianjur.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Brand Equity

One of the main tasks of the company is to create a brand that can be widely known by the public in order to stimulate the public to buy or use products or services from a company. Brand development must be the main focus of a company in order to survive in the competition that occurs. Brand is a name, symbol, design, or a combination of these, that identifies he product or services of one seller or group seller and differentiates them from those of competitors (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Brand is defined as an image, word name, letters, numbers, color arrangement, form, sound, hologram and scent, or a combination of these elements which have differentiation and are utilized in the activities of trading goods and services (Tjiptono, 2014). Brand is the perception felt by customers that is sourced or derived from experience and obtaining information about a company or product line (Duncan, 2005; Lee *et al*., 2015). Brands help consumers to define a product or service. If the brand does not fulfill the promise in accordance with the existing reality and the company denies it, then consumers will feel betrayed and make the brand image bad in the eyes of consumers (Steenkamp, 2017; Wheeler, 2018). A strong brand will be easier to see and recognize, this will make consumers pay attention to the brand, trust the brand and its advantages.

Brand equity is a set of assets and liabilities associated with a brand, name and symbol that can increase or decrease the value represented by a product or service to the company (Aaker, 2018). Brand equity is added value to the product or service provided to consumers. Added value is obtained through the way consumers think, feel and act towards a brand in terms of price, market share and profitability of the brand. Theoretically, brand equity reflects the way of thinking, feeling and acting related to the brand including the activity of considering the calculation of the brand price, market share and profitability of the company that owns the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Das & Mukherjee, 2016). Consumers in making decisions regarding the selection of a product or service is very subjective and influenced by several dimensions, namely brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association and brand awareness (Sumiati *et al*., 2016; Rangkuti, 2008). This statement is also reinforced by Aaker (2018) who reveals that there are five categories of brand equity elements that can be used to measure brand equity, i.e.: (1) brand loyalty; (2) brand awareness; (3) perception of quality; (4) brand association; and, (5) brand asset ownership.

However, in this study the elements of brand loyalty and asset ownership are not included in the measurement because brand loyalty cannot be perfectly measured, there is one indicator in loyalty where repeat purchases cannot be made at educational institutions and brand asset ownership are things that have the potential to become brand assets, such as the protection of things (trademarks).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the ability of consumers to recognize certain brand characteristics, and is also able to carry out the identification process in certain situations and conditions for the products or services of a brand (Aaker, 2018). The overall positive correlation in brand equity after a thorough measurement of consumer mindset and market outcomes stems from brand awareness (Chen *et al*., 2018). Brand awareness becomes a significant influence on brand choice in the context of consumer purchasing decisions because consumers show a strong tendency to consider brand awareness when making purchases (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). There are indicators in brand awareness that influence the purchasing decision process including brand recall, brand recognition, brand purchase and brand consumption (Aaker, 2018; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

H1: Brand Awareness has a positive and significant influence on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur.

Brand Association

Brand associations can be said to be memories of information from products or services that are embedded in the minds of consumers and have special meanings for consumers that reflect the characteristics or aspects of the products or services offered (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Brand association has the most significant role in building brand equity (Marques *et al*., 2020). With attributes, benefits, and attitudes as indicators of brand associations, brand associations have a positive influence on consumer choice decisions and willingness to buy and recommend them to others (Keller, 2013; Río *et al*., 2001).

H2: Brand Association has a positive and significant influence on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur.

Perceived Quality

A good perception of quality will be obtained if the scheme of the services provided has been well designed and will have a positive effect on purchasing decisions and consumer (Solomon *et al*., 2018; Tjiptono., 2014). Perceived quality is a form of consumer thinking about the overall superiority or priority of the product or service. Tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy as indicators of perceived quality make the perception of quality can be influenced in various ways in maximizing service quality (Keller, 2013; Solomon *et al*., 2018). Perceived quality has a positive and significant influence on brand equity; and, it has an effect on purchase decisions either partially or simultaneously along with the variables of brand loyalty and brand awareness (Pandiangan *et al*., 2021; Rantung *et al*., 2014).

H3: Perceived Quality has a positive and significant influence on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur.

Purchase Decisions

Purchase decision can be interpreted as a process that includes the input stage of consumer decision making which includes two influencing factors: the company's marketing efforts and socio-cultural influences (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). This stage also includes the method by which information from companies and socio-cultural sources is transmitted to consumers. The second is the process stage which focuses on how consumers make decisions. The last is the output stage consisting of two post-decision activities: purchase behavior and post-purchase evaluation. Purchase decision process consists of five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, the purchase decision, and postpurchase behavior (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). It means purchase decision is a problem solving process that consists of analyzing needs and wants, seeking information, evaluating alternatives, purchasing decisions, and behavior after purchase.

The results of previous research found that brand awareness has a strong influence on brand choice in the context of consumers deciding to buy (Chen *et al*., 2018; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000); brand association has a positive influence on consumer choosing decisions, willingness to buy and recommend them to others (Marques *et al*., 2020; Río *et al*., 2001); and perceived quality influences purchasing decisions both partially and simultaneously (Pandiangan *et al*., 2021; Rantung *et al*., 2014). Furthermore, brand awareness and brand association are related and are able to influence the decision making process positively and significantly (Perera & Dissanayake, 2013; Vazifehdoost & Negahdari, 2018; Wasil, 2017); brand awareness and perceived quality either partially or simultaneously have a positive and significant influence on the decision making process (Perera & Dissanayake, 2013; Rantung *et al*., 2014; Widjaja, 2019); and, perceived quality and brand associations have a positive influence (Chena *et al*., 2019; Rantung *et al*., 2014) and simultaneously significant to the decision making process (Hasanah & Mudiantono, 2008; Widjaja, 2019).

H4: There is a simultaneous positive and significant effect among brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur.

METHOD

This research was conducted on SMKN 1 Cianjur as an educational institution. The quantitative method was used with descriptive and verification method to provide a more detailed description of a symptom or phenomenon (Priyono, 2016). Population are students of SMKN 1

Cianjur with a total of 1.826 students. Furthermore, probability sampling technique with simple random sampling were used to select samples without regard to strata in the members of the population and is carried out if the members are considered homogeneous (Riduwan, 2016).. So that the sample is students of SMKN 1 Cianjur Class X, XI or XII, choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur on the basis of their own chooses and knowed that SMKN 1 Cianjur before becoming a student. Questionnaires were distributed to 329 respondents.

All questionnaire items after validity testing have a total score above 0.3, thus all instrument items brand awareness (X1), brand associations (X2), perceived quality (X3) and decision making process (Y) are declared valid. The reliability test results on brand awareness were 0.830, brand associations reliability was 0.844, perceived quality reliability was 0.905 and decision making process reliability was 0.815; thus all these scores are above 0.7 so that it can be said to be reliable and the results of the research can be used in measuring the data analysis (Sanusi, 2017). The data were then analyzed using multiple linear regression methods. The research hypothesis was tested partially (t-test) and simultaneously (F-test). Data processing using the help of SPSS 24 software.

RESULTS

Table 2 showed the results of correlation test of brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality. Based on the results, the correlation between variables has the same level of relationship, which is at the level of a strong positive relationship because the three correlations are in the coefficient interval between 0.60–0.799. This is in accordance with the theoretical basis that has been obtained in which brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality are related (Sugiyono, 2017; Heryanto & Triwibowo, 2018; Widjaja, 2019).

Multiple linear regression analysis is an extension of simple linear regression, namely increasing the number of independent variables that previously only had one variable into two or more independent or dependent variables (Sanusi, 2017; Sugiyono, 2017). Based on Table 3, the results of multiple regression can be interprete Based on the results of multiple regression analysis that summarize in Table 3, it can be interpreted the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable as follows.

First, the regression coefficient of brand awareness is 0.321. The number is positive, which means that when brand awareness has increased in intensity in its application to the company's marketing strategy, the consumer decision-making process will become more willing to make purchases of the company's products (Chen *et al*., 2018; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000), which in this case are educational services offered by SMKN 1 Cianjur. Conversely, if the company reduces the intensity of using brand awareness in its marketing strategy, it will cause a decrease in consumer desire to decide to buy the company's products. Assuming that the other two independent variables, that is brand association and perceived quality do not change.

Second, the regression coefficient of brand association is 0.480. The number is positive, which means that when brand association has increased in intensity in its application to the company's marketing strategy, the consumer decision-making process will become more willing to make purchases of the company's products (Marques *et al*., 2020; del Río *et al*., 2001). On the other hand, if the company reduces the intensity of using brand association in its marketing strategy, it will cause a decrease in consumer desire to decide to buy the company's products. Assuming that the other two independent variables, that is brand awareness and perceived quality do not change.

Table 2. Results of Correlation Analysis

Correlations

		X1	X2	X3
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	.724[**]	.695[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	329	329	329
X2	Pearson Correlation	.724[**]	1	.764[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	329	329	329
X3	Pearson Correlation	.695[**]	.764[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	329	329	329

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Primary data (processed), 2022.

Table 3. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.817	1.030		.794	.428
	X1	.321	.063	.238	5.071	.000
	X2	.480	.069	.366	6.986	.000
	X3	.258	.041	.313	6.239	.000
	R	=	.833			
	R Square	=	.693			
	Adjusted R-Square	=	.691			
	F	=	245.039			
	Sig.	=	.000			

a. Dependent Variable: Y.
Source: Primary data (processed), 2022.

Third, the regression coefficient of perceived quality is 0.258. The number is positive, which means that when perceived quality has increased in intensity in its application to the company's marketing strategy, the consumer decision-making process will become more willing to make purchases of the company's products (Pandiangan et al., 2021; Rantung et al., 2014). Conversely, if the company reduces the intensity of using perceived quality in its marketing strategy, it will cause a decrease in consumer desire to decide to buy the company's products. Assuming that the other two independent variables, that is brand awareness and brand association do not change.

It also can be seen in Table 3 that R value of 0.833 indicates a very high correlation (correlation) between the dependent variable namely purchases decision making process, and three independent variable (i.e. brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality) because it is in the range 0.80 - 1.00 (Sugiyono, 2017). R^2 value obtained is 0.693, that shows the percentage contribution or influence of the brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality, toward process decision making process in the regression model is 69.3 percent; while the rest of 30.7 percent is influenced by other variables that are not used in this study (Sugiyono, 2017). Finally, the

results on the Adjusted R-Square are interpreted as the form of the adjusted R^2 value, which is 0.693 or 69.3 percent. The results of this study are the same as the results of previous studies, although it was carried out at a different locus where brand awareness, brand associations, and perceived quality have an influence on the decision-making process (Perera & Dissanayake, 2013; Rantung *et al*., 2014; Vazifehdoost & Negahdari, 2018; Wasil, 2017; Widjaja, 2019).

Table 3 also states the partial hypothesis test results raised in this study. The results show that the value of Sig.t for brand awareness of 0.000. Because the value of Sig.t smaller than 0.05, it is stated that the effect of brand awareness on purchasing decision making is proven to be significant (Sanusi, 2017; Sugiyono, 2017). Thus, if it is connected with the regression coefficient value (B1 = .321) obtained, then the first hypothesis (H1) which states that brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur can be statistically proven true. Next, the value of Sig.t for brand association of 0.000 or smaller than 0.05. Thus, if it is connected with the regression coefficient value (B2 = .480) obtained, then the second hypothesis (H2) which states that brand association has a positive and significant influence on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur can be statistically proven true (Sanusi, 2017; Sugiyono, 2017). Based on Table 3, the value of Sig.t for perceived quality of 0.000 or also smaller than 0.05. If it is connected with the regression coefficient value (B3 = .258) obtained, then the third hypothesis (H3) which states that perceived quality has a positive and significant influence on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur can be statistically proven true (Sanusi, 2017; Sugiyono, 2017). Thus it can be stated that based on t-test, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality, partially, have a significant influence on consumer purchase decision making process (Chen *et al*., 2018; Marques *et al*., 2020; Susilowati & Sari, 2020; Pandiangan *et al*., 2021; Rantung *et al*., 2014).

Last but not least, the results of F-test in Table 3 showed that the value of Sig.F of 0.000 or smaller than 0.05; so it can be stated that based on F-test, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality, simultaneously have a significant influence on consumer purchase decision making process (Sanusi, 2017; Sugiyono, 2017). Thus, the fourth hypothesis (H2) which states that brand association has a positive and significant influence on the student's decision process in choosing SMKN 1 Cianjur can be statistically proven.

Discussion

Brand awareness proved to have a positive and significant effect on the decision-making process of students in choosing SMK as a secondary school at the top level. This is seen because consumers are able to recognize certain brand characteristics and are also able to carry out the identification process in certain situations and conditions for products or services from a brand (Aaker, 2018), These results prove that the respondent's knowledge of educational services or institutions is directly proportional to the consumer purchasing decision process. Furthermore, brand awareness proved to have a total effect on the decision-making process, both directly and indirectly, through brand association and perceived quality. Brand awareness is the first stage that leads to familiarity with the brand because it acts as a signal transmitter for consumers' thoughts so that they can consider buying (Kurniaputri & Usman, 2020). The results obtained from this study are directly proportional to the results of research conducted by Chen *et al*. (2018), which empirically found that brand awareness has a positive correlation and significantly influences the decision making process using the same dimensions based on Aaker's theory (2018).

Brand association also proved to have a positive and significant influence on the decision-making process of students in choosing SMK as a secondary school at the top level. This is assessed because the memory of information from products or services that has been embedded in the minds of consumers will have its own meaning for consumers that reflects the characteristics or aspects of the product or service offered (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Brand associations also remind consumers of brands that are capable of influencing the decision-making process (Kurniaputri & Usman, 2020). Brand associations have a total positive influence then, both directly and indirectly, on the decision-making process through brand awareness and perceived quality. These results are consistent with Marques *et al*. (2020) empirical findings which found that brand association has a positive and significant influence on the purchasing decision process. In this case, it can be concluded that the brand association carried out by SMKN 1 Cianjur is able to influence the decision-making process of students in choosing SMK as a secondary school at the upper level.

Third, based on this research, perceived quality proved to have a positive and significant effect on the decision-making process of students in choosing SMK as a secondary school at the top level. This condition occurs when consumers have perceptions of high brand quality, it will influence consumer preferences as a form of consumer thinking about the superiority or super priority of products or services as a whole so that perceived quality is able to encourage consumer thinking to build consumer interest in brands (Fenetta & Keni, 2020; Tjiptono., 2014). Perceived quality also prove to have a total effect both directly and indirectly between perceived quality on the decision making process through brand awareness and brand association. The results obtained from this study are directly proportional to the findings of Susilowati & Sari (2020), Pandiangan *et al*. (2021), and Rantung *et al*. (2014), which concluded that perceived quality has a positive and significant influence on process buying decisions.

Finally, consumers who have been able to recognize the brand or have knowledge of the brand are then able to identify the brand, and the SMKN 1 Cianjur brand is seen to have a good quality perception, so they will be able to influence the student's decision-making process in choosing SMK as an advanced school at the upper level. The results obtained are in accordance with the empirical findings by Chena *et al*. (2019), Pandiangan *et al*. (2021), Wasil (2017), Perera & Dissanayake (2013), Vazifehdoost & Negahdari (2018), and Widjaja (2019). These studies indicate that there is a positive and a significant influence between brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality on the decision-making process of students in choosing SMK as a secondary school at the top level. These results suggest that educational service institutions can use strategies that include brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality because the results obtained in the study show that there is a significant influence on the decision-making process of consumers.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis found that there was a significant and partially positive effect among brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality, on the purchasing decision process. The results also showed there is a simultaneous significant and positive influence between brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality on the purchasing decision process. Based on the results, three main things that must be considered about the brand in influencing the decision process of students in choosing a vocational school. First, in terms of brand awareness, on brand recognition where educational institutions must always introduce programs and products from their services so that consumers are able to identify brands. Second, in the brand association, educational

institutions should emphasize the benefits that will be obtained by service users. Third, in terms of perceived quality, it is necessary to pay more attention to the tangible aspects which always improve facilities, infrastructure and facilities.

Based on the conclusions, future researchers were suggested to use other sub-variables that can be used as a measuring tool for the purchasing decision process at educational institutions. The researcher also recommended to choose other media that have not been widely researched so that they can become new research for brand and marketing.

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