

The Influence of Service Quality and Facilities on Student Satisfaction at Dr. Soetomo University with Brand Image as an Intervening Variable

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to examine the impact of service quality and facilities on student happiness at Dr. Soetomo University, utilizing brand image as a mediating variable. The context of this research is based on the challenges faced by Dr. Soetomo University in maintaining and increasing the number of students, amidst tight competition between universities. In order to fulfil student expectations, the quality of services and facilities must be improved, as evidenced by the recent fall in student enrolment. This study tests the association between variables using a quantitative approach and path analysis tools. Data were obtained through questionnaires distributed to students of Dr. Soetomo University, which were then analyzed using various statistical tests to determine the validity, reliability, and significance of the relationship between variables. The results indicated that student satisfaction is significantly influenced by the quality of service and the availability of facilities. Furthermore, brand image was demonstrated to mediate the association between service quality and facilities with student satisfaction. A positive brand image can increase student satisfaction even though there are shortcomings in service quality or facilities. These findings indicate that in order to improve student satisfaction, Dr. Soetomo University needs to focus on improving brand image in addition to improving service quality and facilities. This research makes a significant contribution to university management in understanding the factors that influence student satisfaction. The implication is that Dr. Soetomo University is advised to improve its brand image through effective communication strategies and overall service improvements.

Keywords: Service Quality, Facilities, Student Satisfaction, Brand Image, Higher Education, Marketing Management

INTRODUCTION

The development of the world of education which is currently growing rapidly, has made the government, especially the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) continue to make improvements to the education system every year. This is in line with the increasing awareness of the Indonesian people regarding the importance of the world of education as a process or path to be better and have quality for the nation's children in the future. (Owon et al., 2024) stated that there are several factors causing the low quality of education in Indonesia such as: poor facilities and infrastructure, unsatisfactory quality of teachers, low student achievement and increasing costs in education. Based on this, state and private universities are required to assist government programs in making improvements to the education



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system (Patandung & Panggu, 2022). These improvements are intended to meet the needs and desires of consumers of higher education, namely students.

The challenge of the current era of globalization for universities is to prepare their graduates to be able to compete openly in the job market and create innovative and creative graduates (Yasin, 2021). This is also proven by the quality of services available at universities because students will be satisfied if the quality of services provided meets the needs expected by students. Why is that? Because many new universities are emerging, competition between universities is getting tighter. To continue to exist and be in demand by prospective students, universities are required to provide quality services and adequate facilities. Dr. Soetomo University (UNITOMO) as one of the Private Universities (PTS) in Surabaya is also not immune from this competition. The quality of services and facilities offered by this university are expected to affect student satisfaction.

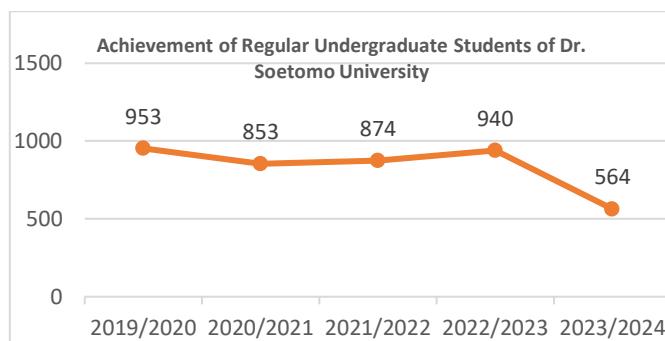


Figure 1. Regular Undergraduate Student Achievement in the Last 5 Years

Source : UPT TI Universitas Dr. Soetomo

From the data on the number of regular students at Dr. Soetomo University over the past five years, there has been a significant decline. In the 2019/2020 academic year, the number of students reached 953 people, but decreased to 853 in 2020/2021, increased slightly to 874 in 2021/2022, and reached 940 in 2022/2023. However, in the 2023/2024 academic year, the number of students decreased drastically to 564 people. Seeing this decline, the Chancellor of Dr. Soetomo University appealed to students to act as partners in attracting prospective new students. It is hoped that students will be able to bring prospective new students who want to register at Dr. Soetomo University.

Dr. Soetomo University Surabaya, which has been accredited B, has 9 faculties and is ranked among the 97 best campuses in Indonesia and the 9th best private campus in East Java according to UniRank in 2023. However, this achievement has not been optimally felt by students as internal consumers, especially in terms of the quality of services provided by UNITOMO. Based on the results of student evaluations and assessments carried out through the academic system for the last four semesters, it was found that the most complaints felt by students were related to existing physical facilities or better known as facilities & infrastructure, although since 2023 until now UNITOMO is in the stage of building and repairing physical facilities, in addition, service is also seen from the attitude of staff or education personnel (tendik), staff or tendik responses to student complaints, and the timeliness and accuracy of service. Based on the interim results, it can be said that there are still many students who are not satisfied with the quality of services at Dr. Soetomo University.

Student satisfaction can be improved by identifying the factors that influence it so that a university can improve its system in increasing consumer satisfaction, namely students. Previous studies explain that student satisfaction is influenced by several things, including the quality of service provided by service providers. The quality of a higher education institution is one of the important factors in the success of higher

education, especially private campuses (Prihartini & Abdullah, 2023). Service quality is the level of excellence expected and monitored by to meet student expectations. Higher education as a form of higher education must provide satisfactory service, namely being able to meet the needs of its students.

According to (Windasari et al., 2021) customer satisfaction is a critical factor in sustaining customer loyalty. In the context of higher education, students can be considered as customers who need satisfactory service. Therefore, it is important for universities to understand the factors that can influence student satisfaction, such as the quality of service and facilities provided. In addition to service quality, facilities are also another important consideration. Offering complete facilities will maximize comfort and happiness for students. Facilities must be available before providing a service to students, and the facilities offered must include everything that makes it easy for students to achieve satisfaction. In addition to educational facilities, According to the research conducted by (Putri et al., 2021), the character of service in the education sector must be evaluated in relation to the image or reputation of the campus. (Rahmawati & Kusumawati, 2023) concluded that the university's reputation will be influenced by student satisfaction. A good reputation of the university will influence public perception in determining the educational services they will choose. However, student satisfaction is also influenced by other factors, such as brand image or university brand image. Brand image is the perception that consumers have of a brand (Pandiangan et al., 2021). In this case, the brand image of Dr. Soetomo University can be an intervening variable that mediates the relationship between service quality, facilities, and student satisfaction. If the university has a good reputation and a satisfactory brand image, it is undeniable that the public will be willing to spend more on study costs at the university.

Thus, research on The impact of service quality and amenities on student satisfaction at Dr. Soetomo University with brand image as an intervening variable is relevant to be conducted. Through this research, it is expected to contribute to the development of higher education management, especially in increasing student satisfaction as the main consumers in the education industry, so this study aims to analyze the influence of the relationship between the three factors, namely service quality, facilities, and brand image on student satisfaction.

METHOD

A research technique is a systematic approach to acquiring data for a defined objective. This article uses an explanatory quantitative approach to explain the relationship between variables (Azhari et al., 2023). This study aims to describe and test hypotheses based on quantitative data collection. This study analyzes the influence of brand image as an intervening variable between service quality and facilities with student satisfaction at Dr. Soetomo University. The variables studied include: service quality and facilities (independent), brand image (intervening), and student satisfaction (dependent). The study was conducted at Dr. Soetomo University, Surabaya, Indonesia, with a time determined according to the university's approval.

Identification of Variables Three types of variables are defined: (1) Independent: Service quality and facilities, (2) Intervening: Brand image and (3) Dependent: Student satisfaction. Population sample is students of Dr. Soetomo University. Samples were taken from active students in semesters 4-8 with a total of 100 respondents. Quantitative data sources were collected through questionnaires, observations, and documents. Primary and secondary data were used for research purposes. Data collection was collected through online questionnaires. The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability before use. Path analysis was used to analyze the relationship between

variables. Validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure a good regression model. Multiple linear regression and Sobel test were used to test the effect of independent variables on dependent variables simultaneously and mediation of brand image. This analysis method provides an overview of the relationship between service quality, facilities, brand image, and student satisfaction, and identifies the influence of each variable.

RESULTS

To see the direct and indirect influence of variables in this study, it was searched using SPSS version 29, with regression analysis carried out 2 times because there are 2 equations which will later contain 2 path coefficient models.

Table 1 Results of Regression Test-Model I
Coefficients ^a

Model	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta		
(Constant)		1,803	0.075
Quality of Service	0.637	7,899	0,000
Facility	0.084	1,041	0.300
R = 0.665 ^a			Dependent Variable:
R Square (R ²) = 0.442			Brand Image
Adjusted R Square = 0.430			
e = 0.747			
F Calculate = 36.902			
Sig = <0.001 ^b			

Source: SPSS Version 29 processed by the author

According to table 4.15, the regression analysis indicates that Service Quality (X1) exerts a significant and favorable impact on Brand Image (Z). This is evidenced by a beta coefficient of 0.637 and a t-value of 7.899, with a minuscule p-value of 0.000, signifying substantial significance. This indicates that superior Service Quality correlates with an enhanced Brand Image among students. The influence is substantial at the 95% confidence level, signifying that the Service Quality variable is a crucial predictor for enhancing Brand Image.

The Facilities variable (X2) does not significantly impact Brand Image (Z). The beta coefficient for Facilities is 0.084, with a t-value of 1.041 and a p-value of 0.300. The p-value substantially surpasses 0.05, indicating that the influence of Facilities on Brand Image is statistically insignificant.

R Square value is 0.442 in the Model Summary table, indicating that the influence of X1 and X2 on Z accounts for 44.2% of the variance. Conversely, the remaining 55.8% represents the influence of variables not incorporated in the study. Simultaneously, the value of e can be determined using the formula $e=\sqrt{(1-0.442)} = 0.747$. Consequently, the path diagram for structural model 1 is presented as follows:

Table 2 Results of Regression Test-Model II

Model	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta		

(Constant)	-0.476	0.635
Quality of Service	0.307	3,472 < 0.001
Facility	0.170	2,476 0.015
Brand Image	0.469	5,343 < 0.001
R = 0.777^a	Dependent Variable: Student Satisfaction	
R Square (R²) = 0.604		
Adjusted R Square = 0.591		
e = 0.798		
F Calculate = 46.807		
Sig = <0.001^b		

Source: SPSS Version 29 processed by the author

The regression analysis results indicate that Service Quality, Facilities, and Brand Image significantly affect Student Satisfaction. Service Quality exhibits a beta coefficient of 0.307, a t-value of 3.472, and a p-value below 0.001, signifying a substantial and affirmative impact on Student Satisfaction. An enhancement in service quality directly correlates with an improvement in student happiness. Facilities significantly impact Student Satisfaction, evidenced by a beta coefficient of 0.170, a t-value of 2.476, and a p-value of 0.015. Despite its lesser impact compared to Service Quality, Facilities nevertheless positively and significantly contribute to Student Satisfaction.

The Brand Image exerts the most significant impact on Student Satisfaction, evidenced by a beta coefficient of 0.469, a t-value of 5.343, and a p-value below 0.001. This suggests that favorable opinions of brand image significantly influence student satisfaction levels. The coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.604, indicating that 60.4% of the variability in Student Satisfaction is attributable to the variables of Service Quality, Facilities, and Brand Image. The Adjusted R Square score of 0.591 signifies that the regression model effectively predicts the dependent variable, considering the amount of predictors included.

The F-value of 46.807, accompanied by a p-value below 0.001, signifies that the whole regression model is statistically significant. This signifies that Service Quality, Facilities, and Brand Image collectively exert a substantial impact on Student Satisfaction. Brand Image accounts for approximately 46.9% of Student Satisfaction, Service Quality for 30.7%, and Facilities for 17.0%.

DISCUSSION

The regression analysis and path map reveal significant findings about the impact of Service Quality, Facilities, and Brand Image on Student Satisfaction. The regression analysis results indicate that the Service Quality variable (X1) exerts a significant and favorable impact on Brand Image (Z). With a regression coefficient of 0.637 and a t value of 7.899 and a p-value of less than 0.001, this shows that increasing service quality is directly proportional to increasing brand image. This indicates that an enhancement in service quality correlates with a more favorable student impression of the brand image in question.

This substantial impact affirms the significance of service quality as a crucial element in establishing and sustaining a favorable brand image. The findings of this study align with other research by (Darojah et al., 2022) and (Nasution, 2024) which also indicated that service quality significantly influences students' brand views. This study reinforces the view that good student experiences, manifested through quality service, can strengthen positive associations with brands, increase loyalty, and strengthen brand positions in the market.

Service quality encompasses various aspects such as speed of service, staff friendliness, product knowledge, and ease of access to services. When all these aspects are well managed, they create a pleasant and satisfying student experience, which in turn enhances brand image. Therefore, companies need to continuously improve their service quality as a key strategy to enhance brand image and competitiveness in the market.

Thus, marketing managers and brand managers should pay special attention to service quality improvement strategies to maintain and enhance brand image. This step is not only relevant to maintaining existing customer loyalty but also to attracting new customers through a positive reputation built over time.

The regression analysis results indicate that the Facilities variable (X2) exerts no significant influence on Brand Image (Z), evidenced by a coefficient of 0.084, a t-value of 1.041, and a p-value of 0.300. This suggests that while the quality of the facilities has improved, the enhancement is insufficient to substantially affect students' opinions of brand image. This finding contradicts earlier research by (Siregar et al., 2023) and (Puspita et al., 2022) which identified a substantial impact of facilities on brand image.

These differences in results are due to differences in the context or preferences of the students studied. In some cases, especially in the service or education sector, students value the quality of interactions and services provided more than the quality of the physical facilities available (Lukman et al., 2024). This could mean that aspects such as staff friendliness, service effectiveness, and personal interactions have a greater impact on positive brand perceptions than the presence of luxurious or modern facilities (Iqbal, 2024).

In addition, it is possible that students already have certain basic expectations about facilities, so improving facilities beyond these expectations does not add significant value to the brand image. This highlights the importance of understanding students' priorities and tailoring marketing and brand management strategies to their needs and preferences (Hertanti & Giyana, 2025). While facilities are important, The primary objective should remain to enhance the quality of service and direct interaction with students in order to establish and sustain a positive and robust brand image (Dunggio, 2023).

The impact of service quality on student satisfaction indicates that service quality significantly and positively influences student satisfaction at Dr. Soetomo University. The coefficient of 0.307, t-value of 3.472, and p-value below 0.001 substantiate that high-quality service directly enhances student satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous studies by (Darojah et al., 2022), and (Nasution, 2024), which also found that service quality is an important factor in determining the level of student satisfaction, in this case students. In the context of educational institutions, aspects such as staff friendliness, efficiency of administrative services, and good academic support play a major role in creating a positive experience for students. The quality of interactions with staff, ease of administrative processes, and access to effective academic assistance are key elements that increase students' positive perceptions of the institution.

Therefore, educational institutions need to focus on improving service quality as a primary strategy to increase student satisfaction, which not only enhances their learning experience but also strengthens their loyalty to the institution (Susetyo et al., 2022).

The results of the analysis show that Facilities (X2) have a significant influence on Student Satisfaction (Y), with a coefficient of 0.170, a t-value of 2.476, and a p-value of 0.015. Although its influence is not as large as the Service Quality variable, the contribution of adequate facilities is still important in shaping student satisfaction. This finding is in line with previous studies by (Siregar et al., 2023) and (Puspita et al., 2022),

which also emphasized the importance of facilities in creating a supportive learning environment.

Good facilities, such as comfortable classrooms, well-stocked libraries, and adequate technology, play an important role in creating a positive learning experience. Ergonomic classrooms, easy access to learning resources, and up-to-date technology can increase comfort and ease in the learning process, thereby increasing student satisfaction. In addition, supporting facilities such as recreation areas, cafeterias, and good accessibility also contribute to the overall student experience at educational institutions.

Therefore, investment in the development and maintenance of facilities is essential for educational institutions. Although facilities are not the main factor in shaping brand image, as has been found, they still contribute significantly to student satisfaction levels (Puspitasari et al., 2022). High levels of satisfaction can increase student loyalty and institutional reputation, which ultimately contributes to the attractiveness of the institution to prospective new students. This suggests that a holistic approach that considers all aspects of the student experience, including service quality and facilities, is an effective strategy for achieving long-term success.

The regression analysis results indicate that Brand Image (Z) exerts a highly significant and positive effect on Student Satisfaction (Y), evidenced by a coefficient of 0.469, a t-value of 5.343, and a p-value below 0.001. A favorable opinion of an educational institution's brand image significantly influences student satisfaction levels. This finding aligns with prior research conducted by (Darojah et al., 2022) and (Siregar et al., 2023), which also demonstrated that a positive brand image substantially influences student happiness.

A positive brand image reflects a good reputation and a high level of trust in an educational institution (Mubarok, 2024). Students who have a positive perception of a brand image tend to feel more proud to be part of the institution, which in turn increases their overall satisfaction. A good brand image is also often associated with better academic quality, facilities, and services, all of which contribute to a more satisfying learning experience.

In addition, a strong brand image can increase students' sense of ownership and loyalty to the institution. When students feel proud of their institution, they will recommend it to other prospective students and participate in campus activities, which strengthens their relationship with the institution (Budiasuti et al., 2022). Thus, maintaining and enhancing brand image should be a top priority for educational institution management, due to its significant impact on student satisfaction. This is not only important for retaining current students but also for attracting new students and enhancing the institution's reputation in the public eye.

The Sobel test analysis results indicate a strong mediating influence in the link between Service Quality and Student Satisfaction via Brand Image, with a Sobel statistic value of 4.29176678. The one-tailed probability value of 0.00000886 and the two-tailed probability of 0.00001773, both of which are much smaller than the significance threshold of 0.05, indicate that the possibility of this mediation effect occurring by chance is very small. Thus, we can conclude that Brand Image plays a significant mediating role in this relationship.

This study corroborates the conclusions of prior research conducted by (Siregar et al., 2023) and (Darojah et al., 2022) which similarly identified a mediating effect of brand image in enhancing the influence of service quality on student satisfaction. Enhancing the quality of service offered by educational institutions directly influences

student happiness and indirectly affects brand image. An effective brand image enhances students' impressions of the institution, hence leading to increased satisfaction levels.

This mediating role shows that brand image is a key element in marketing strategy and quality management (Pratiwi et al., 2022). Educational institutions that focus on improving service quality must also pay attention to how this can be articulated and reinforced through brand image. Thus, not only the functional aspects of the service are improved, but also the perception and emotional experience experienced by students. This ultimately creates a positive cycle in which high service quality strengthens the brand image, which in turn increases student satisfaction, strengthens loyalty, and enhances the institution's reputation in the eyes of the public.

The results of the Sobel test showed a Sobel statistical value of 0.74268219, with a one-tailed probability of 0.22883706 and a two-tailed probability of 0.45767411, indicating that Brand Image does not act as a significant mediator in the relationship between Facilities and Student Satisfaction. A probability value greater than 0.05 indicates that the hypothesized mediation is not significant, so there is no strong evidence to support that facilities affect student satisfaction through brand image.

This result is contrary to the findings of previous research by (Siregar et al., 2023) which found that Brand Image significantly mediates the relationship between Facilities and Student Satisfaction. This difference in results can be caused by various factors, such as differences in research context, population studied, or differences in variable measurement methods. In Hamidah et al.'s research, there are specific factors that make brand image an important element in mediating the influence of facilities on student satisfaction, such as an emphasis on strong institutional branding aspects or perceptions that have been formed among students about the importance of facilities in supporting the quality of education.

The absence of a significant mediation effect in this study indicates that while facilities have a direct impact on student satisfaction, the role of brand image as a mediator is not as strong as expected. This could mean that students judge their satisfaction more based on their direct experience with the facilities and services received, rather than brand perceptions formed by other factors such as academic reputation or institutional promotion. Therefore, institutional management needs to focus on directly improving the quality of facilities and services to improve student satisfaction, rather than relying solely on brand image enhancement efforts.

CONCLUSION

The quality of service markedly affects brand image (coefficient 0.637, p-value 0.001) and is vital for augmenting student contentment (coefficient 0.307, p-value <0.001), underscoring the necessity of strengthening service interactions. Although facilities do not substantially influence brand image (coefficient 0.084, p-value 0.300), they enhance student happiness (coefficient 0.170, p-value 0.015), underscoring the necessity for ongoing investment in supporting learning infrastructure. Furthermore, brand image significantly influences student satisfaction (coefficient 0.469, p-value <0.001), underscoring the importance of a favorable institutional reputation. The mediation analysis reveals that brand image enhances the relationship between service quality and satisfaction, while facilities exert a direct influence on satisfaction without notable mediation. Consequently, schools must promote service excellence, advance facility development, and execute successful branding efforts to enhance student experiences. Subsequent research ought to broaden variable parameters, incorporate additional institutions, and utilize mixed methodologies to achieve a whole comprehension of student happiness and brand perception.

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