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Student Satisfaction or University Reputation? What Is More Important for A Memorable Student Experience?

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to examine the factors that can predict students' memorable experience in a private university in Padang, West Sumatera. More specifically, it aims to examine the direct and indirect relationship between university reputation, student satisfaction and students' memorable experiences. In addition, this study also aims to know what the most important predictor of students' memorable experience is.

The study employed a quantitative survey to collect data as the questionnaires of the study were distributed to 300 students from a private university in Padang. Smart PLS-SEM version 3.2.8 was used as the software tool to analyze the data of the study.

The results showed that university reputation had a positive and significant effect on students' memorable experiences and was a strong predictor of students' memorable experiences. University reputation was also found to be an important variable for memorable student experiences. This study gives the contribution to the body of knowledge through the theoretical framework that established the link between memorable student's experience and its determinants; student's satisfaction and university reputation. Additionally, this study provides the opportunity to scholars to theoretically connect student's satisfaction, university reputation, on memorable student's directly or indirectly through the mediating effect of university reputation. This present study is distinct from others by identifying, filling, and examining gaps, and provides new academic and practical contributions to the body knowledge. The research highlights the important role of university reputation in establishing memorable student's experience, and this indicates that for a private university students in "one" private university in Padang are more concerned about university reputation rather than any other factors that are examined in this study. Therefore, it is highly recommended for private education providers to concentrate more on university reputation by establishing good accreditation and positive image at the top of university management concern and as a priority strategy to generate a high memorable student experience.

Keywords: Satisfaction, Reputation, Memorable Experience

INTRODUCTION

The service sector continues to dominate economic growth, (CNBC Indonesia.com, 2023). The service sector includes hotels, restaurants, health providers, education, transportation,

finance, government, and personal services (World Bank, 2016). Education is part of the service sector and is considered one of the drivers of a country's economy. Globally, according to the World Bank (2023), each

additional year of education will lead to an additional 9% increase in income. Given the importance of education to the well-being of society. In Indonesia, the number of universities has continued to fluctuate since 2012.

Competition among universities for the enrolment of new students is becoming increasingly fierce (Appuhamilage & Torii, 2019; Rehman, Woyo, Akahome, and Sohail, 2022). Many universities are experiencing a decline in the number of new students enrolling, which automatically leads to a decline in the number of students graduating. For example, in the 2022 academic year, LLDIKTI X closed two private universities in West Sumatra because they failed to carry out the learning and teaching process and were unable to meet the standards of the Indonesian Ministry of Education. Deputy Chairman of Commission X DPR RI Dede Yusuf (2022) revealed that around 90 per cent of the total 3,128 private universities in Indonesia are not in good condition and face daily operational problems (Prastiwi and Ihsan, 2022).

Although previous authors in this context have focused on university reputation as a mediator that would shape student satisfaction, leading to a memorable student experience. As not many studies were found on this topic, it still opens opportunities for authors to revisit this topic (Rehman, Woyo, Akhome, Sohail, 2022). Several authors bring several constructs that can generalize satisfaction and loyalty (Casidy & Wyemer, 2015, Woyo et al., 2020). However, in this study, the authors reexamined the variables of memorable student experience, university reputation and student satisfaction. This is very important considering that service provision is a differentiating factor in industry

(Tuzovic and Finsterwalder, 2017), which influences purchasing behaviors and attitudes (Kim et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2022). This is particularly true for business sectors that focus on providing services, such as the education sector, hospitals and restaurants. In this education service university reputation, student satisfaction, and memorable customer experience are as the strategy for public and private university to win the competition in educational world.

This study has five research objectives: (1) to determine whether student satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on memorable student experience, (2) to determine whether student satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on university reputation, (3) to determine whether university reputation has a positive and significant effect on memorable student experience, (4) to determine whether university reputation mediates the relationship between student satisfaction and memorable student experience, and (5) to know whether student satisfaction or university reputation has the greater effect on memorable student experience.

Memorable Experience

The experience of the service received has a strong influence on the behavior and willingness of customers to return, and even to spread the word. Especially if the experience that is remembered and recorded is a pleasant one. Customer experience includes both cognitive and affective evaluations that influence consumer behaviour (Lemke et al. 2011, Verhoef et al. 2009).

Understanding the customer experience and its supporting factors is very important. In particular, the factors that support the memory of the service experience, because customers will transact with service providers that can provide a memorable experience (Pekovic and Rolland, 2020). Service

marketing research suggests several elements that build memorable experiences, such as: emotion, hedonism, novelty, involvement, knowledge, surprise, commitment and/or social connections (Sharma et al., 2022). Therefore, a memorable customer experience is a memory that is clearly stored, coherent, accessible and emotionally intense. While the attributes of the memorable service experience itself are surprise, emotion, difference and meaning (Moliner-Tena et al., 2023).

Memorable experiences are underlined by the theory of autobiographical memory. This theory states that memorable experiences are subjective in nature, involving the individual's subjective experience of a specific moment and context (Asperholm et al., 2019; Herz and Brunk, 2017). Autobiographical memory, or also known as episodic memory, is a component of long-term memory in which associations of an autobiographical event are stored in terms of emotions, time, space, or another situational context (Herz and Brunk, 2017).

In the context of higher education, the student experience refers to the valuable experiences that students gain throughout their time at university (D'Uggento et al., 2023). It is a student's educational journey at every touch point in the university. Therefore, each student will have a different perception of their experience, and it is subjective.

Reputation

A university's reputation plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining existing students, gaining the trust of the public and stakeholders, and forming partnerships with other universities. As a source of competitive advantage for a provider, a good reputation represents the high quality and reliability of

services or a product (Amarat, Bas, Akbolat, & Unal, 2019; Raithel & Schwaiger, 2015; Turay et al., 2017). Therefore, accreditation and positive quality perception of the university relate to positive reputation of the university. If the university has a good reputation, it will increase the trust of the community and the number of prospective students (Irfan et al., 2020).

Universities with a good reputation also produce high quality graduates because they are more selective in the admission of new students, as the number of students enrolled is higher than the available lecture benches (Hagrave, Schmidt, Perez, 2023). Moreover, the higher reputation that the university has, it will provide more benefits and value to the students through skills, knowledge and career opportunities (Wilkins, 2020). In the light of this, university reputation will increase student satisfaction (Braunack-Mayer et al., 2020).

In signaling theory, reputation sends signals to the public about the firm's performance (Smith, Smith, & Wang, 2010; Walker, 2010). It provides the public with a quality signal about the firm. In this respect, the excellent performance of a university sends a signal to the public that the university has a positive reputation. A university with a good reputation can be differentiated by its accreditation and the quality of its graduates. According to the strategic approach, reputation is an asset that differentiates firms and can protect them from competition (Caruana & Ewing, 2010).

Satisfaction and Student's Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction can be interpreted as a global assessment of the customer's perception of the service received. If the service received is in line with expectations, the customer can be said to be satisfied. Customers will feel

more satisfied (delighted) if the service they receive and feel exceeds their expectations. Conversely, if the customer's expectations exceed the service received service, the customer will feel disappointed.

In the service context, customer satisfaction is related to customer attitudes and the perception of service received (Cronin and Taylor,1992; Preziosi at al.,2022). Students' satisfaction is a crucial factor for the university's success. University students who are satisfied have high involvement with activities and high motivation to attend the lecture and will give high support to their institution, It is worth to know that students are ambassadors of university, and they represent the university as well. If the students have low satisfaction, they will refuse to be involved in academic or non -academics activities (Hassani and Wilkins, 2022). Therefore, it is important for the university provider to maintain students' satisfaction since it could give the memorable experience that gain from student's educational journey.

From the literature review above, there are four hypotheses are established: (H1) Students' satisfaction has positive and significant effect on student's memorable experience, (H2) Student's satisfaction has positive and significant influence on university reputation, (H3) University reputation has positive and significant effect on memorable students' experience, (H4) University Reputation mediates the relationship between student's satisfaction and memorable student's experience. This study will also determine which variable is the best predictor of a memorable student experience

Research model

The picture below shows the conceptual framework of the study. Reputation of university and student's

satisfaction are the predictor of students memorable. In this study, university reputation mediates the relationship between student's satisfaction and memorable experience of the student.

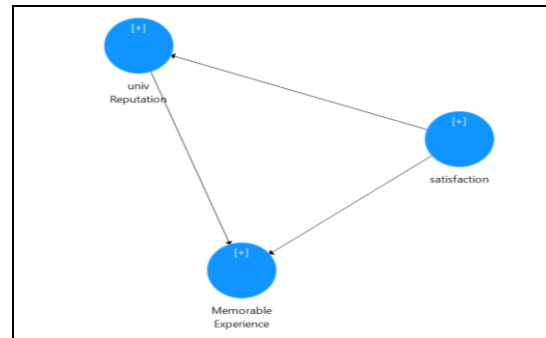


Figure 1
Research Model

RESEARCH METHODS

This is a quantitative based study, emphasizes the quantitative research approach to assess the structural relationships among three variables in memorable student's experience construct namely satisfaction, student's reputation, and memorable experience of the student.

This study conducted a survey research method where the technique used to collect data through questionnaires that were filled out independently by 300 students from private university in Padang who has enrolled in this university for at least 2 semesters, as this paper aims to evaluate the factors that predict students memorable experience, therefore, the students who have already experienced the journey of educational and campus life journey were eligible to complete the questionnaire.

The name of universities remains anonymous ("X "University), to avoid misperception of the public and stakeholder. This research combines nonprobability with purposive sampling techniques. Where the researcher will select a sample based on the researcher's

judgment regarding the sample that falls within the research criteria (Sarstedt, Bengart, & Shaltoni, 2017).

The questionnaire was designed by adopting and adapting from previous research. Therefore, questionnaires are considered appropriate for testing hypotheses (Zikmund & Babin, 2010). All statements were adapted using a 7-points Likert scale. This Likert scale was chosen because it will provide a variety of options that will increase the likelihood of respondents giving their opinions. The 5-item scale of university reputation adapted from Petrick (2004), 3 items scale of Student’s satisfaction adapted from Athiyaman (1997) and; Rehman et.al. (2020). While measurement of memorable student’s experience was adapted form Moliner-Tena et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model

Measurement models describe the relationships between a construct and its indicator (Hair et al., 2020). In measurement model the validity and reliability of the indicators that used in the constructs are tested to make sure the indicators that measure the construct are valid and reliable.

To make sure the model has good quality criteria, convergent validity and discriminant validity must be tested. To achieve convergent validity of the first order construct of this study, the loadings of the items must be greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019), Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) should be greater than 0.70, and in addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) must be greater than 0.50 (Ali et al., 2018).

After running convergent validity test of this study, the result proved that the first order construct of this study has established it convergent validity with

the loading items between 0.734 and 0.925, while the composite reliability was above 0.70, and the AVE was between 0.598 and 0.701.

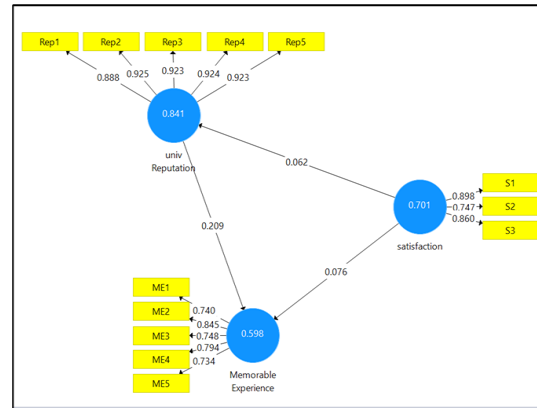


Figure .2
Research Model with items loading and AVE

Table 1
Convergent Validity

| Construct | Indicators | Loading | Cronbach Alpha | CR | AVE |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Memorable Student’s Experience | ME1 | 0.740 | 0.834 | 0.881 | 0.598 |
| | ME2 | 0.845 | | | |
| | ME3 | 0.748 | | | |
| | ME4 | 0.794 | | | |
| | ME5 | 0.734 | | | |
| University Reputation | Rep1 | 0.888 | 0.953 | 0.963 | 0.841 |
| | Rep 2 | 0.925 | | | |
| | Rep 3 | 0.923 | | | |
| | Rep 4 | 0.924 | | | |
| | Rep 5 | 0.923 | | | |
| Student’s Satisfaction | Sat 1 | 0.898 | 0.789 | 0.875 | 0.701 |
| | Sat 2 | 0.747 | | | |
| | Sat 3 | 0.860 | | | |

$\alpha > 0,70$, CR 0,70, AVE > 0,598 (Hair et al, 2019)

Table 2 shows the discriminant validity of the variables in the study. Discriminant validity is when a construct can be distinguished from other constructs (Hair et al., 2020). If the loading of an indicator on its assigned construct is higher than all its cross-loadings with other constructs, this means that the discriminant validity of the construct is established. To confirm discriminant validity, Fornell-Lacker (Fornell & Lacker 1981) criterion assessment needs to be evaluated

Table 2
Forner And Larcker

| Constructs | Memorable Experience | Satisfaction | univ Reputation |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Memorable Experience | 0.773 | | |
| satisfaction | 0.089 | 0.837 | |
| univ Reputation | 0.214 | 0.062 | 0.917 |

Note: Diagonals (in bold) represent the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) while the off diagonals are correlations among constructs. Diagonal elements should be larger than off-diagonals element.

Another way to establish discriminant validity is to assess the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017) and Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) advise using HTMT to examine discriminant validity, and the value should be less than 0.90.

Assessment of Structural Model

Once the measurement model has been established, it is time to evaluate the structural model prior to hypothesis testing. The tests such as collinearity (VIF), coefficient of determination (R²), significance of path coefficient, effect size (f²) and cross-validated redundancy (Q²) (Hair et al.,2016). The VIF value must be less than 5 (Hair et al., 2011). The R² value for memorable student experience is 0.045 and the R² value for university reputation is 0.001. In term f², the effect of student satisfaction on memorable experience is 0.006, university reputation on memorable experience is 0.046, and the f² of student satisfaction on university reputation is 0.004. While this study has a predictive model of 0.027, which is higher than zero (Hair et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

All respondents in this study were students who are registered active students in a private university (“X”) in Padang. The result of descriptive analysis showed that 181 (60%) of the

respondents were female, while 119 (40%) respondents were male. 12 (43%)8 respondents are in 4th semester, 11 (38%)4 respondents are active students in 6th semester, while only 58 (19%) students are in 8th semester.

Concerning the school of the respondents, 98 (33%) respondents are students of S1 Management, 55 (18%) respondents are students of D3 Management, 94 (31%) respondents are students of S1 Accountancy School, and 53 (18%) respondents are students of vocational accounting.

As shown in table 3 and table 4 this study has 3 direct effect hypotheses, coded H1, H2, H3, that need to be tested. Hypothesis four (H4) tests whether university reputation mediates the relationship between student satisfaction and students' memorable experiences. However, the test of a direct relationship is not to confirm the mediation effect of this study, but rather to empirically prove the ongoing discussion regarding the direct relationship of these constructs, namely university reputation, student's satisfaction and memorable experience of the students. As suggested by Memon et al. (2019), to avoid assessing the direct relationship between X and Y to ensure the mediation effect.

The test of direct relationship using the PLS-SEM algorithm to evaluate the value of the path coefficient and using the bootstrapping of 5,000 subsample iterations at the 0.05 confidence level and one-tailed. As shown in Table 1.4, The only variable that explains students' memorable experience is university reputation (H3) with β-value (0.209) and t-value=3.635 < 1.645, with P-value=0.000<0.05. The final evaluation deals with university reputation as a mediating variable between student satisfaction and students' memorable experience. After assessing the significance of direct relationship, then

the mediation effect was analyzed. The mediation analysis follows the procedure suggested by Hair et al. (2017). The β -value of 0.013, T-value=0.710<1.645, with P-value=0.239>0.05, indicates that university reputation does not mediate the relationship between student satisfaction and students' memorable experience.

Table 3
The significance of Direct Relationship

| Hypothesis | Path | β | Standard Error | T Values | P Values |
|------------|---|---------|----------------|----------|----------|
| H1 | satisfaction -> Memorable Experience | 0.089 | 0.071 | 1.076 | 0.141 |
| H2 | satisfaction -> univ Reputation | 0.062 | 0.08 | 0.775 | 0.219 |
| H3 | univ Reputation -> Memorable Experience | 0.209 | 0.058 | 3.635 | 0.000 |

Significant at T-value>1.645, one-tailed, P-Value<0.05

Table 4
Significance of Indirect Relationship

| Hypothesis | Path | β | Standard Error | T Values | P Values |
|------------|--|---------|----------------|----------|----------|
| H4 | satisfaction -> univ Reputation-> Memorable Experience | 0.013 | 0.018 | 0.710 | 0.239 |

Significant at T-value>1.645, one-tailed, P-Value<0.05

As the objective of this study is to determine whether the reputation of the university and students' satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on the memorable experience, in addition to know whether the university reputation mediates the relationship between student's satisfaction and memorable student's experience. Through the empirical test, this study found that only university reputation has positive and significant impact on student's memorable experience in "X" university in Padang. This is in line with the theory of memorable experience and reputation is about the subjective evaluation of stakeholder about the organization

(Fombrun & VanRiel, 1997) and its constructed based on the perception whether it be negative or positive (Walker, 2010). According to autobiography theory memorable experience is also a subjective matter based on the individual experience on specific moment in time.

As the purpose of this study is to determine whether university reputation and student satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on memorable experience, in addition to knowing whether university reputation mediates the relationship between student satisfaction and memorable student experience. Through the empirical test, this study found that only university reputation has a positive and significant effect on students' memorable experience in a private university in Padang. This is consistent with the theory of memorable experience and reputation is about the subjective evaluation of stakeholders about the organization (Fombrun & VanRiel, 1997) and it is constructed based on the perception whether it is negative or positive (Walker, 2010). According to autobiography theory, memorable experience is also a subjective matter based on the individual experience at a particular moment in time.

Based on the findings of this study, it is highly recommended that University X continues to work on improving the university's reputation and student satisfaction. To establish a good reputation, it is suggested that the university should continue to improve its accreditation and keep working on building a positive image to create a memorable experience for its students. In terms of achieving student satisfaction, the university's management needs to understand the student's expectation towards service and academics.

This research is not without limitations. This research evaluates the relationship between student satisfaction, university reputation and memorable student experience with case study in "X" University in Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia. This limitation calls for future research suggestions to expand the variable of the study, such as adding students' trust and loyalty as variables. It is also suggested that for future research to expand the scope, population and methodology.

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