

PUBLIC RELATIONS BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL CLASS PRIVATE UNIVERSITY BRAND

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Abstract

Many universities, especially private ones, provide a climate of intense competition. This phenomenon must make private universities have to work hard to stimulate the interest of prospective students to study on campus through improving academic quality and more varied promotional activities. Globalization also demands university graduates who meet international needs. Moreover, today's world is also increasingly open to the flow of professional exchange. The impact is competition, especially in private universities. Every private university strives to put forward its advantages to get students. Competition is no longer at the national level but internationally. One of the strategies is to strengthen the brand as an international class university. Brand as an international class university can attract prospective students to study at a private university. Private universities require the involvement of public relations in communicating the brand to the public, especially for prospective students. This study uses a constructivist paradigm with qualitative methods that produce descriptive data to explain public relations building as an international private university. To strengthen the brand is through communication conducted by public relations. The brand that is put forward is the identity as an international-class university, namely using an international curriculum; Having lecturers and students from abroad; have cooperation with foreign universities and institutions; International standard facilities; and Using English (another foreign language) as an introduction. Private universities try to apply all or at least some elements of what are claimed to be international standards. Then this international standard is communicated by the university's public relations to become a brand with selling points. Private universities seek to display the brand through a characteristic or identity of an international standard.

Keywords: Brand, International Class University, Public Relations

INTRODUCTION

According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, 633 universities in Indonesia and 553 are private. Many universities, especially private ones, provide a climate of intense competition. The number of SMA/SMK graduates in 2017/2018 from the Ministry of Education and Culture data is 9,672,781. Meanwhile, 110,946 students entered state universities through various channels. This means that most students continue their studies at private universities.

Atwar Bajari stated that interest in entering state universities has never subsided. The interest of prospective students continues to show an increasing or at least stable trend. This phenomenon must make private universities have to work hard to stimulate the interest of prospective students to study at private universities through improving academic quality and more varied promotional activities.

Atwar Bajari also wrote that there is a shift between public universities and private universities where prospective students are starting to choose universities with reputable study programs (accredited) and a promising job market. This means that public universities and private universities are no longer a mere consideration.

The impact is competition, especially in private universities. This reason can be understood because it is different from state universities that receive government budgets. Private universities rely heavily on the number of students. Therefore, every private university seeks to prioritize its respective advantages to obtain students. One strategy is to strengthen the brand.

A brand is identical to the identity that an institution wants to highlight to distinguish one institution from another. Therefore, the brand will prioritize the advantages of the product or service provided to the public. For educational institutions such as universities, what is usually used as a brand is the quality of education.

The issue of globalization also influences the quality of education. The development of an increasingly fast and competitive world impacts the demands for capable human resources. Every job field and profession has strict conditions for its recruitment. The demand is to win the national competition and regionally and even internationally. Moreover, today's world is also increasingly open to the flow of professional exchange. Competition is no longer at the national level but internationally.

As one of the producers of professional workers, universities also make this global situation a challenge and an opportunity. More and more industries require young workers who have global skills and standards. This reason makes competition between universities even more fierce. Universities in developed countries already have a strong brand to become the main destination for students who want to continue their studies, including Indonesia. Competent parents want their children to get an education abroad.

The reasons for parents to send their children to foreign universities can be an illustration of their desire so that their children can compete globally. To prepare for this, it must be prepared from the time of education, especially in college.

Almost all aspects of education are always associated with the readiness of graduates to compete at the international level. As a result, every parent wants their child to get an international standard education so that it will be easier for him to find a job in the future.

A growing issue is the readiness of human resources, especially in Indonesia, to compete at least at the ASEAN level. Private universities capture this as an opportunity to attract prospective students.

Referring to what has been said above, an educational institution considered to be of international standard must have international standards, including in the process of using bilingualism, namely English and Indonesian.

Universities in the country also face the current situation and development of the world of education by adapting to global needs. Many prospective students and parents want their children to get an education with international standards. Of course, the main reason is to be able to compete internationally.

Of course, sending their children abroad requires not only material skills but also psychological aspects. Many parents are still worried about letting their children live away from their families, especially in countries whose culture is very different from Indonesia.

Private universities that were born in the period of the 1990s began to capture this increasingly global trend of the world. The university was established with the aim that its graduates could compete in the international arena. In order to attract prospective students to continue their studies, these universities strengthen their brand as international universities, including in various promotions.

The brand strengthens the university's positioning in the public's eyes as stated by Clifton that the brand must look striking to create an impression that is not easily forgotten by the public.

Private universities need branding to strengthen the image of their institutions, especially in the era of intense competition between private universities in Indonesia. The role of Public Relations is very necessary in order to form an image as an international-class university as a brand for attractiveness. The role of Public Relations in managing brands is twofold, namely as a narrative creator for example, in conversation and as an intermediary that facilitates conversation for example in social media.

Grunig in Heath (2012; 310) states Suppose Public relations is practiced according to strategic management, public responsibility, and the two-way symmetrical model. In that case, it is an important element of the global communication system-facilitating communication that helps (to) build relationships among organizations and publics and develop policies responsible to those publics. All the negotiation tactics mentioned earlier are practical tools that build such relationships and help establish the branding of an organization's reputation.

Grunig's statement quoted by Heath reflects that Public Relations helps strengthen branding on an organization's reputation. Public Relations makes communication efforts so that the public recognizes the university's image as an international-class university.

Public Relations plays a role in shaping the brand that private universities do. In addition to marketing, public relations at private universities are given the responsibility of branding their institutions to be better known to the public. In the world of education, branding seems to identify educational institutions as commercial profit organizations.

There are several previous studies related to this research, including Desmipian, Dindra, et al. (2014) who researched the branding of State Universities (Case Study of General Sudirman University Marketing Public Relations Strategy). In this research, marketing public relations

uses branding through campaigns, by campaigning/communicating various achievements, and campaigning for brand identity as a state university.

Meanwhile, Wiwitan and Yulianita (2018) discuss the construction of the meaning of PR Marketing at Islamic private universities. the construction of the meaning of PR Marketing, namely: 1) the art of influencing stakeholders in the framework of human relations, 2) the intention of worship because of Allah SWT which is based on patience, honesty, and exemplary, 3) aims to increase the number of prospective students and build a positive image, and 4) PR Marketing put forward Islamic values that contain the value of da'wah and Islamic symbols.

Another study that also provides an overview of public relations in universities is that proposed by Kriyantono (2015). The researcher explores the construction of PR, in the communication governance of higher education institutions related to the principles of the theory of Excellence.

The studies above provide the same perspective on how public relations in universities and its efforts in building a brand.

In this study, we will see how the public relations of private universities builds brands as international-class universities.

METHOD

Paradigm Uses constructivists because they want to see that public relations management in private universities has its uniqueness. The tug of war between social work as an educational institution and trying to survive by looking for elements of profit impacts the emergence of uniqueness compared to Public Relations in existing organizations.

To provide profit, efforts are made in that direction, including branding. This effort is not easy because of the condition of private universities in Indonesia, which must also comply with various government regulations. Through the constructivism paradigm, it can be seen that the constructed reality of Public Relations management in private universities can be seen.

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The qualitative method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Bogdan and Taylor in Moleong, 2006). Researchers try to explain branding according to private university Public Relations. This research departs from assumptions regarding Public Relations efforts in building the brand of an international-class private university. The formation of an international class brand through a process carried out by Public Relations from an international private university.

The selection of informants in this study was adjusted to the research objectives to be achieved. The selection of informants was carried out using a purposeful sampling strategy with criterion sampling type by setting certain criteria according to the topic and research case. The data collection technique used in this research is in-depth interview as the primary data collection. In-depth interview is a method of collecting data or information by directly meeting the informants in order to obtain complete and in-depth data.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Currently, private universities are intensively making various efforts to attract new students. This business is also motivated by the increasingly competitive competition between existing private universities. One of the values of excellence in competition is promoting the brand as an international class university. Branding can be one way to attract new students.

The brand that many private universities want to appear is that the college is an international class. This identity is packaged into a brand that is attached as the selling point of the university. There are efforts made by the university to strengthen this brand by showing its identities as an international campus.

Regarding the status as an international class university, it is necessary first to understand the meaning of "International Class University". Mastuki HS (2012) in an article entitled World Class-University: Obsession or Dream? Stated that it is also often defined in international-scale assessment, ranking, and recognition at universities or campuses in various countries. In a study conducted by Levin, Jeong, and Ou quoted by Mastuki as mentioning several benchmarks for the scale of international recognition of a world class university as follows: 1) Research excellence (excellence in research), among others, is indicated by research quality, research productivity and creativity, publication of research results, the number of donor agencies willing to help with research, the existence of patents, and the like. 2) Academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement. 3) Strong self-management. 4) Adequate facilities and funding, including collaborating with international institutions. 5) Diversity, including the campus, must include various social domains that are different from students, including the diversity of scientific fields. 6) Internationalization, for example, program internationalization by increasing student exchanges, entry of international or international students, curriculum internationalization, international connections with other institutions (campus and companies around the world) to establish world-class programs. 7) Democratic leadership, namely by open competition between lecturers and students and collaboration with external constituents. 8) Use of information and communication technology (ICT). 9) Quality of learning in lectures. 10) Connection to the community or community needs. 11) Campus internal collaboration.

International standards in education, in general, are also conveyed by Sudarsana (2018) that international standards required in international standard schools are graduate competency standards, curriculum, teaching and learning processes, human resources, facilities, management, financing, and international standard assessment. In international standard schools, the teaching and learning process is delivered in two languages, namely English and Indonesian.

Cattaneo, Meoli, Paleari (2016. 331) stated that the reasons for tertiary institutions to internationalize are twofold: on the one hand, university internationalization strengthens higher

education by providing students with global insights, increasing their ability to work in teams, and preparing students to interact with others. Culture from other countries. On the other hand, internationalization contributes to the university's international reputation, has a positive impact on the institution's core structure and activities, and enables new initiatives that local resources cannot.

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"The way to build a brand is through Public Relations" is a phrase conveyed by Al Ries (Ries and Ries, 93: 2003). He highlighted the development of the Public Relations world that is currently happening where the role of Public Relations is expanding, including in building a brand. This explanation also provides an overview of the relationship between brand and Public Relations in an institution.

Another opinion related to the role of Public Relations with brands was expressed by Mary M. Devereux and Anne Peirson-Smith (2009: 64). Public Relations is now getting the credit for successful brand building and for breathing life into the brand, and it's none for early. This evaluation of PR's branding role is recognized as a coming of age for industry and wider indication of the relevance of relationship building between an organization and key audiences based on credible communication.

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The relevance of Public Relations in branding efforts in various views. Michael Lenvin (2003; 16) said the concept of branding and public relations are closely inter wind. The job of PR is to encourage the public to have positive thoughts about a particular company, products, service, or individual. Branding is the idea that particular set of attributes will encourage the public to have positive thoughts about a particular company, product, service, or individual. It's a subtle distinction but an essential one.

Lenvin said, "Public Relations works behind the scenes, but its impact on branding is enormous... (p.17). Meanwhile, Prayudi (2016.209) emphasized that Public Relations practitioners help the "relationship" aspect and develop messages in the form of Public Relations programs that are in line with the integrated marketing communications (IMC)

strategy. In his book *Strategic Public Relations*, it is stated that to build a brand relationship, it becomes an inseparable part of the activities carried out by Public Relations practitioners.

From the above opinion it is clear that public relations plays a role in branding efforts. Branding is not only done in the realm of marketing as it has been understood so far. Of course the part that public relations does in branding is an effort to raise public awareness, namely by building communication about the university's brand.

One of the 10 rules for branding presented by Tai and Chew in *Desmipian, Sulthan, and Bestari S.R (Journal of Acta Diurna vol. 10 no. 2 of 2014)* is to use public relations to build a brand. This emphasizes that university public relations is an important component to play a greater role in building a brand in the institution.

Rita Clifton (2009:15) explains that the visual distinctiveness of a brand can be a combination of the following: name, letter, symbol, signature, shape, slogan, color, certain typeface. But the name is the most important element of the brand because of its universal use.

The perception of the world of education that is sterile from commercialization is still deeply embedded in the public's mind. Whereas in reality private universities must be able to exist by managing financial income through students. This means that private universities must also think about the profit element if they want to continue to grow. This element of profit is very synonymous with managing a company. Meanwhile, private universities must prioritize educational entities. This is what makes private universities unique.

Trisna Wiwitan (2017: 9) states that higher education is no longer a non-profit institution that only operates in the field of knowledge and transfer of knowledge but more than that. Universities develop into profit institutions instead of transferring knowledge and knowledge into products that are traded in the image of a university.

Universities, especially private universities, have an educational function that is far from commercialization. However, in order for private universities to continue to "live", they must be managed like a company. Muktiyo quoted by Sinatra and Darmastuti (2008) stated that private universities required to be self-funded and self-managed are still burdened by considering morals, ethics, and status full of demands. This means that higher education institutions' business activities are not as free as those of manufacturing companies or other service industries.

Public relations observer Prayudi, Ph.D (interview) said that private universities carry a social mission but as a private institution it seems impossible if private universities do not think about the profit factor. According to him, private universities are still required to generate profits.

This opinion clarifies the position of private universities which have social functions but their existence and sustainability as an organization must still exist. This is what makes private universities have to look for business efforts to run. And according to him, this is done by public relations in carrying out the role of branding in its capacity as a reputation maker for the institution.

Setio Budi Hendro Hutomo – an assessor of the public relations profession and once a public relations practitioner at Atmajaya University Yogyakarta-m if private universities do not carry out branding, the public will eventually forget about it. This is the era of branding in the midst of competition from private universities where the distinguishing element is crucial.

Various literature and discussions about organizations always divide two organizations into two major types, namely profit and non-profit (non-profit). Profit organizations are always identified with corporations, while non-profit organizations are always equated with governments or organizations that carry out public policies. Lattimore et al (2010: 373) state that the easiest way to differentiate between a for-profit organization and a non-profit organization is to find out where and for what use any money that is not spent on operational costs. In profit organizations, money is called "profit" and is distributed equally among the owners of the company. In addition, from the same book, it is stated that to distinguish them is to look at the goals of the organization. In profit organizations, the goal is to develop products or services that make money for their owners, while in non-profit organizations (non-profit) activities are focused on fulfilling the organization's mission in the field of education and other benefits. In Lattimore's book it is explained that the non-profit organizations include, among others, hospitals, museums, research centers, shelters, rehabilitation centers, etc.

Iqbal, Rasli and Hasan (2012) state that the university brand is, in fact, a perception and reputation that develops in the public's mind about a university or institution. This is the reaction that comes to people's minds when they hear or see the name or symbol of some university or institution.

If a university wants to become an international-class university, the above requirements should be a requirement that must be met. And if you want to use it as an added value to differentiate your university from others, you need to make branding efforts which are usually done by Public Relations. The goal is to make it known to the public.

Based on field observations, an assigned Public Relations manager can interpret branding in accordance with university policies. He builds his institutional identity in order to make a profit but still prioritizes education as his main value. Matters related to ethics and propriety as an educational institution cannot simply be eliminated in order to obtain economic benefits.

To support the brand as an international-class university, from observations and interviews with several Public Relations practitioners at private universities, it is known that the international standards communicated to the public are; Using an international curriculum; Having lecturers and students from abroad; Have cooperation with foreign universities and institutions; International standard facilities; and Using English (another foreign language) as an introduction.

A strong University brand can be built by providing quality services, creating an emotional connection with students, and a unique set of communications and services.

The opinion above explains that Public Relations plays a role today in building the success of a university brand. This was not originally in Public Relations. Public Relations also plays a

role in building relationships between organizations and their audiences through credible communication.

The results of observations of various private universities in branding as international-class universities have the following characteristics:

1. Using an international curriculum
2. Having lecturers and students from abroad and used as a promotional tool
3. Have cooperation with foreign universities and institutions
4. International standard facilities
5. Use English (another foreign language) as an introduction.

CONCLUSION

The meaning of international standards is a representation of the readiness of an educational institution to produce graduates who also have the skills needed and are ready to compete globally. Therefore, many universities try to apply all or at least some of the elements that claim to be international standards. Then this international standard is communicated by the university's public relations to become a brand that has selling points. Private universities seek to display the brand through a characteristic or identity that has become an international standard.

Private universities put forward international identity as their university brand. This identity can be observed and the most visible is the use of English, facilities, the university's physical appearance, and the presence of foreign lecturers and students.

Public relations is the most important element in building the brand reputation of a private university that is known to the public as an international class university. Therefore, it is necessary to have the right communication strategy and adapt it to the current conditions of society.

International standards that become brands should also be accompanied by the appropriate quality of learning. Not just a brand to get new students.

The community must get the quality of learning that is in accordance with the desired expectations.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This article is research in progress. This research is also limited to private universities around Jakarta and has not shown the condition of private universities in other big cities.

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