

# The Importance Factors That Students Consider in Choosing a University

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## The Importance Factors That Students Consider in Choosing a University

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effect of university image and quality of lecturers on students' decisions to choose a university. To achieve the proposed goals, a model is applied that reflects the effect of university image and quality of lecturers on student decisions to choose universities. This model was tested through the use of multiple linear regression equations and the sample was 388 student candidates. The results show that the image of the university and the quality of the lecturers have a significant influence on student decisions to choose a campus. The conceptual model shows that the image of a university is the most influential construct on student decisions to choose a campus, followed by the quality of lecturers. This implies that in the future higher education leaders pay more attention to the image of the university and the quality of lecturers that can build public trust and prospective students determine the choice of place to continue their studies. In this paper, the university image of 0.918 and a lecturer quality of 0.937. Further research is needed in order to find more reliable measurements of indicators of university image and quality of lecturers.

**Keywords:** University Image, Lecturer Quality, Student Decisions, Choosing a Campus, Indonesia.

### I. Introduction

Higher Education Management needs to market their institutions to build uniqueness, highlight strengths and provide strong reasons for prospective students to choose an institution. Therefore, many researchers have demonstrated that marketing plays an important role in student enrollment, and these researchers have tried to exemplify how students choose HE (Ellis & Moon, 1998; Kittle & Ciba, 2001; Ivy, 2001; Goff, Patino, & Jackson, 2004; Judson, James, & Aurand, 2008; Tapp, Hicks, & Stone, 2004; Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervin, 2006). But this is not an easy matter for every university to develop higher education institutions in Indonesia, given the tighter competition with other universities (Harahap, Hurriyati, Gaffar, & Amanah, 2018).

Studies that have been documented in some literature that focus on higher education (HE), there are many factors that influence students' decisions to choose a particular college, namely the cost of education (Xiaoping, 2002), ethnicity and achievement (Ahmad, 2001; Gibson & Bhachu, 1988; Tomlinson, 1991), attitudes towards

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extracurricular activities in a higher education institution (Belikova, 2002), and perceptions about the quality of educational programs (Zain & Nik-Yacob, 1995).

In other literature it shows that in many studies, the high ranking factor that becomes the reason why students choose a particular college is the characteristics of the institution (Chen, 2006; Cubillo et al., 2006; Gutman & Miaoulis, 2003; Price, Matzdorf, Smith, & Agahi, 2003; Seneca & Taussig, 1987). Institutional characteristics include image, geographic location, academic programs and facilities, social life and social facilities, accommodation and dining facilities, safety, lighting and security, sports facilities (Absher & Crawford, 1996; Discenza, Ferguson, & Wisner, 1985; Hooley & E., 1981; Sevier, 1994; Tackey & Aston, 1999), and the possibility for students to live close to home or family (Jackson, 1982). Academic program offerings, in terms of entry requirements, structure, flexibility and length of study (Bourke, 2000; Ford, Joseph, & Joseph, 1999; Holdsworth et al., 2006; Nagaraj, Munisamy, Jaafar, Wahab, & Mirzaei, 2008; Shanka, Quintal, & Medman, 2006; Qureshi, 2008; Yusof, Ahmad, Tajudin, & Ravindran, 2008), is also a reason for prospective students to choose certain universities. Ford et al. (1999), stated that students are attracted to institutional factors such as degree program flexibility, academic reputation and prestige that reflect national and international recognition, physical aspects of the campus such as the quality of infrastructure and services, and the time required for program completion. In addition to these characteristics, Maringe (2006), found that the availability of equipment, for example computers, the quality of library facilities, the quality of lecturers, research reputation, cleanliness, part-time work opportunities, employee attitudes, availability of telephones and quiet areas for learning and opportunities for graduates to get jobs influence the choice of college.

From the literature review on previous tertiary institutions, there are many factors and studies that examine students' decision to continue their studies at university. However, there are still few studies investigating the effect of tuition fees, university image and lecturer quality on university selection. These factors are important to research because in Indonesia these three factors are very influential for society, students and parents in choosing certain universities as places to continue their studies. Circumstances or conditions that are not in accordance with what the community expects, will raise doubts which can result in the decision not to choose university, in this case the decision not to continue the study in the desired place, so research is needed to see the effect on the choice of university. This research involves 2 (two) factors that influence the decision of students to choose a university to continue their studies, namely the image of the university and the quality of the lecturers.

## II. Literature review and hypotheses development

### *University Image*

According to Kotler (2008), image is a set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has about an object. So, people's attitudes and actions towards certain objects are largely determined by the object's image. According to Alma & Hurriyati (2008), the image of a university is one of the key elements of intangible resources which will be a source of creating conditions for sustainable competitive advantage. This image is obtained by the college through a series of accumulated activities and experiences so that the college has the best performance for stake holders. The university image can be defined as the sum of all beliefs that individuals have towards the university (Arpan, Raney, & Zivita, 2003; Landrum, Turrisi, & Harless, 1998). Helgesen & Erik Nettet (2007), show that student satisfaction has a positive impact on student perceptions of university image. From some of the theoretical explanations above, the writer can conclude that the definition of the image of a university is an assessment given by the community or prospective students to the university, or the perception of all activities carried out by the university.

According to Hoeffler & Keller (2003), indicators of image are: professional impression, modern impression, serving all segments and attention to consumers. The indicators used to measure the image of the university according to Helgesen & Erik Nettet (2007), are: recognition of campus qualifications, career and job potential, student perceptions of campus and perceptions of college service users on campus. In this study, the image of the university is measured using the following four measurement indicators, namely: 1) Good name, namely the impression the university has, 2) Career and job potential, 3) Serving all segments, the products produced by the university are able to reach various groups of people, and 4) Attention to consumers, universities are able to prove concern for their students. To investigate the image of the university towards student decisions, this study proposes a second hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis # 1 (H1): university image will significantly influence students' decision to choose a college.

### **Lecturer quality**

Lecturers are professional educators and scientists with the main task of transforming, developing and disseminating science, technology and art through education, research and community service (UU, 2005). According to Narimawati (2005), the main key to improving the quality of higher education is that institutions or leaders must improve the quality of lecturers, which will result in increasing motivation and job satisfaction and further commitment to the organization or institution.

Many institutions have or are developing competency requirements for lecturers. However, in most cases, this requirement is only for a group of lecturers and not the entire higher education industry (Hellison, 2003). According to Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnik (1985), the existence of a system-wide consensus stating the minimum requirements and competence of lecturers makes it difficult to maintain and guarantee quality education. Lecturers who are well equipped with relevant knowledge in their field, this specialization determines the quality of teaching.

Teaching experience, on average, is positively related to student achievement throughout the lecturer's career (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). The significant positive correlation between teaching quality and student achievement and between in-service training and student outcomes is consistently evidenced by research (Angrist & Lavy, 2001; Darling-hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Rivkin, Nushek, & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004). Measuring the quality of teaching becomes very complex because it involves teaching preparation and self-confidence (Darling-hammond et al., 2005), experience and knowledge (Goe, 2007; Schmidt & Hunter, 1983), pedagogical skills, positive attitudes and classroom management skills so that they can be organized (Hamid, Hassan, & Ismail, 2012; Waxman, Lin, & Michko, 2003).

Baird (1967), concluded that good teaching, high academic standards and special programs are what students are looking for. Bowers & Pugh (1972), identified good faculty and high standards as the most important factors, while Chapman (1979), identified institutional quality and cost as the most important elements in university selection. Murphy (1981), recognized academic reputation and cost as determinants of college choice, while Maguire & Lay (1981), cited financial assistance, peer influence, special programs, size of institution, location, sports facilities and social activities as the most important factors in choosing a college. Other researchers such as (Discenza et al., 1985; Hossler, 1985), cited academic reputation, peer influence, financial assistance, and location as the most important factors.

Indicators of the quality of lecturers (UU, 2005), are: 1) Lecturers have many qualifications of S2 / S3, 2) Lecturers have expertise in their respective fields, 3) Lecturers are broad-minded according to scientific disciplines, and 4) Lecturers have

prepared learning materials with ripe. To investigate and see to what extent the influence of lecturer quality on student decisions, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis # 2 (H2): lecturers quality will significantly influence students' decisions to choose a college.

### **Decision to Choose a University**

According to Kotler & Keller (2012), decision making is an individual activity that is directly involved in obtaining and using the goods offered, including the decision-making process in the preparation and determination of these activities (Swastha & Handoko, 2008). Consumer behavior will determine the decision-making process in purchasing and before deciding to purchase goods or services, consumers usually go through various stages (Kotler, 2008). The definition of a purchasing decision above is assumed to be a student's decision to choose a university.

In their study of the decision of prospective students to choose a university, Agrey & Lampadan (2014), found factors that influence the decision-making process, namely: 1) a support system that includes physical (bookstores and counseling offices) and non-physical (scholarship availability, value transfer, etc.), 2) learning environment related to the existence of modern learning facilities, institutional reputation, libraries, laboratory computers, affordable tuition fees, etc., 3) prospects for graduates to be accepted into work after graduation, 4) strong student programs such as health care, housing, accommodation and extra-curricular activities, 5) a safe and friendly environment associated with a safe campus and supportive campus employees. The factors above are also highlighted in the research of (Baharun, Awang, & Padlee, 2011; Hagel & Shaw, 2007; Çokgezen, 2014; Ciriaci & Muscio, 2011). In another study, (Kusumawati, Yanamandram & Perera, 2010; Proboyo & Soedarsono, 2015), found that parents play an important role for their children in choosing universities to continue their studies.

The indicators in this study were adapted from the research of Harahap, Hurriyati, Gaffar, Wibowo, & Amanah (2017), namely the student's decision to choose a university is measured using the following five measurement indicators, namely: 1) Introduction to universities, 2) Search for university information, 3) Evaluation of the alternative to choosing a university, 4) the decision to choose a university, and 5) behavior after choosing a university. From several previous studies in Indonesia, research has never been conducted on the effect of education costs, university image and quality of lecturers simultaneously on student decisions to choose to study. The author seeks to explore the reciprocal effects of student decisions in choosing universities and proposes a third hypothesis:

Hypothesis # 3 (H3): university image and lecturers quality will significantly influence the student's decision to choose a university.

## **III. Research method**

### **Method**

This study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the effect of cost, university image, and lecturer quality on students' decision in attending a university. Data were collected from a private university in Bandung, West Java Province, Indonesia. The university is one of the biggest private universities in the province, with total of 13,750 graduate and postgraduate students. In addition, this research university holds an A accreditation from the national board of higher education in Indonesia, offers a wide-ranging study programs, and having research partnerships with many public and private parties and both national and international institutions.

#### Sample definition

This study was limited to one private university in West Java due to limited access to gather data from private universities in the province. The target population of the study was graduate students in the selected university. There were 12,474 graduate students attending study programs in ten faculties. Four hundred graduate students studying in different programs were randomly selected as the participants. They were given access to online survey and asked to complete it, and only 388 responses were finally collected.

#### Data collection

Data were collected using a questionnaire measuring students' perceptions when selecting the university. The questionnaire had been refined in the pre-testing and pilot testing stage administered to first- to four-year students. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak limiting the access to face-to-face and paper-based survey administration, the final questionnaire was made in an online form using Google form. The link was sent to students' email and the duration of survey completion was three months from May to August 2020.

There were two parts of the questionnaire. The first part asked individual background, including gender, ethnicity, and faculty they attended to. There were six options of ethnicities: Sundanese, Bataknese, Javanese, Minangese, Betawi, and others; ten options of faculties: Syaria Da'wah, Tarbiya, Law, Psychology, Economics and Business, Communication, Technical Studies, Mathematics and Science, and Medical Studies. The second part of the questionnaire included items measuring education cost, university image, quality of lecturer, and students' decision to study. Meanwhile, there were twelve items measuring the construct of university image and developed based on Helgesen & Erik Nettet (2007) (i.e., 'This university has a good image on the community'). The quality of lecturer construct was measured by ten items developed from (UU, 2005) (i.e., 'The lecturers in this university are knowledgeable and high quality'), and the decision to choose a university was developed from Harahap, Hurriyati, Gaffar, Wibowo, & Amanah (2017) consisting of ten items (39), 'I study in this university because it offers a program that fulfils my needs.'). Those items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 5 'Strongly Agree' and 1 'Strongly Disagree'.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted descriptive statistics to describe the data collected without making a generalization of the data. Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the association and the effect of education cost, university image, and lecturer quality on student choice in studying at the university. A statistical software, IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software, was used to analyze the data.

#### Results

Reliability test was conducted to measure the consistency and stability of each questionnaire item (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). This is to ensure that the questionnaire items are error free and produce consistent results. Table 1 shows that the university image has an alpha value of 0.918 with 12 observed items, the quality of lecturers has an alpha value of 0.937 with 10 items being observed and student decisions have an alpha value of 0.891 with 10 items being observed. Sekaran & Bougie (2013), suggest that Cronbach's Alpha is less than 0.600, the questionnaire or data items are said to be bad and vice versa. Therefore, the data collected was considered usable for further analysis.

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Table 1. Reliability Test Result

Variables	No. of Item	Cronbach's Alpha
University Image (UI)	12	.918
Lecturer Quality (LQ)	10	.937
Decision to Choose a University (DCU)	10	.891

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The detailed demographic attributes of the 71 respondents are shown in Table 2. The majority of respondents were female (61.9%), students were spread across the following faculties ( $n = 388$ ). The faculty that has the most students is the Faculty of Economics and Business (21.1%), and the least is the Faculty of Da'wah (2.1%). The majority of students come from West Java province (77.58%), and the rest (22.42%) come from various regions spread across Indonesia and several islands in Indonesia and other countries such as Java and its surroundings, Jakarta, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, Nusa Tenggara, Thailand and England.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Number of Respondens	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	38.10
	Female	240	61.90
Faculty	Sharia	31	8.00
	Da'wah	8	2.10
	Tarbiyah & Teacher Training	23	5.90
	Law	31	8.00
	Psychology	27	7.00
	Mathematics & Science	39	10.10
	Technique	58	14.90
	Communication Studies	66	17.00
	Economics and Business	82	21.10
	Medicine	23	5.90
Etnich	Java	38	9.80
	Sundanese	301	77.58
	Betawi	5	1.29
	Minang	16	4.12
	Batak	5	1.29
	Malay	10	2.59
	Aceh	2	0.50
	Maluku	2	0.50
	West Nusa Tenggara	1	0.30
	Kalimantan	4	1.03
	Sulawesi	2	0.50
	Overseas	2	0.50

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The research data shows the value of the coefficient (b) of each variable consisting of the student's decision to choose to study (DCU), the image of the university (UI) and the quality of the lecturers (LQ) with a constant ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.053, then we get a multiple linear regression model, namely,  $Y = 0.053 + 0.625 UI + 0.287 LQ + e$ , which can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Coefficient

Variables	B	S.E	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.053	.135	.396	.693
University Image (UI)	.625	.047	13.185	.000
Lecturer Quality (LQ)	.287	.048	6.033	.000

The results of the partial test analysis on the variable of the university image variable (UI) is 13.185 (greater than the t-table value of 1.645), so Ho1 is rejected and Ha1 is accepted. This means that the image of the university has a significant effect on student decisions to choose a university. Whereas in the lecturer quality variable (LQ), the t-count value is 6.033, greater than the t-table value of 1.645, so Ho2 is rejected and Ha2 is accepted, meaning that the quality of the lecturer has a significant effect on the student's decision to choose a university. All results are shown in Table 3.

#### Descriptive statistics

##### University Image

University image is a description of prospective students' assessment of the overall impression or overall experience felt by the community, prospective students and students towards a university. Respondents' responses to the university's image are shown in Table 4. below:

Table 4. Respondents' Responses to the Image of the University

No	Item	Strongly Disagree	Do not agree	Enough	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1.	XYZ University has a good image in society	3	22	113	171	79	388
2.	XYZ University is better known than other campuses	11	61	148	124	44	388
3.	XYZ University is more religious than other campuses	22	43	118	124	81	388
4.	XYZ University graduates always get the job they want	8	48	201	101	30	388
5.	XYZ University graduates are always sought after by top companies	4	63	209	93	19	388
6.	The career path of XYZ University graduates is always increasing in the workplace	1	36	224	106	21	388
7.	XYZ University is more chosen by students than other campuses	14	66	207	74	27	388
8.	XYZ University reaches various circles of society compared to other campuses	5	24	189	120	50	388
9.	XYZ University can be accepted by all segments of society	0	15	164	140	69	388
10.	XYZ University produces quality graduates	3	13	163	146	63	388
11.	XYZ University always	19	51	158	115	45	388



	fixes its shortcomings						
12.	XYZ University always maintains and improves its quality	9	31	140	143	66	388

According to respondents' responses to the university's image shown in Table 4 above, it is known that respondents who answered strongly agreed, the highest score on instrument 3 was "XYZ University is more religious than other campuses" as many as 81 people and those who answered agreed, the highest score was on instrument 1, namely "XYZ University has a good image in society" as many as 171 people.

### **Lecturer Quality**

Lecturer quality is a description of prospective students' assessments of the overall cognitive abilities of lecturers, lecturers' personality or interpersonal skills (soft skills) as a whole that is felt by prospective students and students towards a lecturer. Respondents' responses to the quality of lecturers are shown in Table 5. below:

Table 5. Respondents' Responses to the Quality of Lecturers

No	Item	Strongly Disagree	Do not agree	Enough	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1.	Lecturers at XYZ University are knowledgeable and insightful	2	11	100	182	93	388
2.	The majority of lecturers at XYZ University have Master's degrees	1	3	55	178	151	388
3.	Many lecturers at XYZ University have doctoral degrees	1	13	105	170	99	388
4.	Lecturers at XYZ University have different scientific expertise according to their fields	1	6	102	175	104	388
5.	Lecturers at XYZ University are always looking for ways to deepen their knowledge	2	10	126	167	83	388
6.	Many lecturers at XYZ University are continuing their studies to deepen their knowledge	0	8	133	167	80	388
7.	Lecturers at XYZ University are always looking for sources to support learning materials	0	14	139	165	70	388
8.	Lecturers at XYZ University are always updated with the latest information	0	14	140	161	73	388
9.	Lecturers at XYZ University make thorough preparations before teaching	2	20	138	164	64	388
10.	Lecturers at XYZ University deliver learning materials that are easy for students to understand	8	25	169	140	46	388

According to respondents' responses regarding the quality of lecturers shown in Table 5 above, it is known that respondents who answered strongly agreed, the highest score on instrument 2 was "The majority of lecturers at XYZ University have Master's degrees" as many as 151 people and those who answered agreed, the score value The highest score on instrument 1 is "Lecturers at XYZ University are knowledgeable and insightful" as many as 182 people.

#### Decision to Choose University

The decision to choose a university is a description of the prospective student's assessment of the overall behavior of students continuing their studies and determining a university that is in accordance with the wishes and needs of students in studying. Respondents' responses regarding the decision to choose a university are shown in Table 6. below:

**Table 6.** Respondents' Responses to the Decision to Choose a University

No	Item	Strongly Disagree	Do not agree	Enough	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1.	I want to study at XYZ University because it suits my needs	11	45	131	133	68	388
2.	I want to study at XYZ University because it has many faculties	33	69	171	95	20	388
3.	I know the quality of the faculty at XYZ University	8	49	144	146	41	388
4.	I want to study at XYZ University because of the interesting promotion	38	104	176	57	13	388
5.	I like studying at XYZ University because the lecture rooms use AC	77	82	125	65	39	388
6.	I like studying at XYZ University because it has a library	26	67	160	93	42	388
7.	I like studying at XYZ University because the lecturers have postgraduate and doctoral qualifications	9	26	165	130	58	388
8.	I like studying at XYZ University because the lecturers are able to transform knowledge well	7	23	168	143	47	388
9.	I feel satisfied studying at XYZ University	11	34	146	157	40	388
10.	I will spread the positive news about XYZ University to others	2	14	130	128	114	388

According to respondents' responses regarding the decision to choose a university shown in Table 6 above, it is known that respondents who answered strongly agreed, the highest score on instrument 10 was "I will spread the positive news about XYZ University to others" as many as 114 people and those who answered agreed, The highest score on instrument 9 is "I feel satisfied studying at XYZ University" as many as 157 people.

Table 7. The Test F Result

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	115.917	2	57.959	323.766	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	68.920	385	.179		
Total	184.837	387			

Table 7 shows the F-test to test all independent variables on the dependent variable simultaneously. The results of the simultaneous test analysis (F-test) obtain the F-count value of 323.766 and the F-table is 2.57. F-count > F-table, therefore Ho3 is rejected and H<sub>3</sub> is accepted, it means that the university image and the quality of lecturers together have a significant effect on student decisions to choose a university.

Table 8. Coefficient of Determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.792 <sup>a</sup>	.627	.625	.42310

Table 8 shows that the R square value is 0.627. This result means that the image of the university and the quality of the lecturers explain the student's decision to choose a university by 62.70% in this study, while the remaining 37.30% is explained by other variables outside of this study.

## Discussions

### The Effect of University Image on Decision to Choose a University

Table 3 shows that the image of the university has a positive relationship and affects students' decisions to choose a university. The coefficient of 0.625 indicates that a 100% change in the university's image will cause the level of student decisions to choose a university to increase by 62.50%. This means that the image of a university that is owned by a university has a positive or negative impact on everyone, both for society in general and for prospective students in particular. The attractiveness and interest of prospective students can be seen from how good the image of the university is, so that prospective students do not hesitate and even create pride in the college they are going to enter continue their studies to a higher level at a well-known university. In research (Harahap et al., 2020; Harahap et al., 2021; Harahap et al., 2022), stated that the importance of the image of the university for students in choosing studies in college. Research by Khan, Mridha, & Barua (2009), found that the image of a university is the second highest important factor after teaching quality. According to Kewell (2006), a name or position that is constructive and recognized for value, achievement and reliability represents overall reputation. It represents a symbol of the image of the university, therefore it plays an important role in promoting the visibility of an organization to the public (Kewell (2006). In line with research (Hoyt, Jeff E.; Brown, 2003; Briggs, 2006; Stevenson, Ancheh, Krishnan, & Nurtjahja, 2007; Ho & Hung, 2008; Wiese, Heerden, Jordaan, & North, 2009; Afful-Broni & Noi-Okwei, 2010; Beneke & Human, 2010), that the reputation and image of the university is a consideration for students choosing to study in higher education.

### The Effect of Lecturer Quality on the Decision to Choose a University

Table 3 shows that the quality of lecturers has a positive relationship and affects students' decisions to choose universities. The coefficient of 0.287 shows that a 100% change in the quality of lecturers will cause the level of student decision to choose university to increase by 28.70%. This is supported in other studies (Harahap, Amanah, et al., 2021; Harahap, Shaikh, et al., 2022), the quality of lecturers influences the student's decision to choose a university to continue their studies. This means that the quality of lecturers who

are knowledgeable and highly insightful and have scientific expertise is an important parameter for society, parents and prospective students in deciding the selection of a particular university, because it will be related to the teaching quality of the lecturer and the knowledge expectations that students will get when taking studies. Furthermore, it is hoped that after graduating from the tertiary institution, students will become qualified graduates and can easily get jobs in well-known companies. Metzler & Woessmann (2010), study found that the quality of lecturers is directly related to student achievement and is very important for lecturers to develop strong teaching competencies to provide quality teaching. One of the competencies they specifically mention in their studies is subject knowledge because without having subject knowledge, lecturers cannot understand students with the relevant knowledge and skills required for a particular subject. Therefore, subject knowledge is basically important for lecturers so that students can meet the desired learning outcomes and are satisfied with their learning (Long et al., 2014).

The Effect of University Image and Lecturer Quality on the Decision to Choose a University

Table 8 show that the image of the university and the quality of the lecturers together have a positive relationship and influence student decisions to choose a university. The results of the analysis of the value of determination in this study obtained 0.627, which means that the percentage of tuition fees, image of the university and the quality of the lecturers in explaining the student's decision to choose a university was 62.70% and the remaining 37.30% was explained by other variables not examined. This means that the three factors mentioned above are the determining reasons for society, parents and prospective students in deciding to choose to continue their studies at a university. Keling (2006) found that the image and reputation of the university, tuition fees and academic programs have an influence on prospective students in deciding to choose a university. Hsieh (2010), also found that the importance of the influence of the quality of lecturers, types and variations of academic programs on students' decisions in choosing universities to continue their studies.

### Conclusions and implications

This study identifies that the cost of education, image of the university and the quality of lecturers have a statistically significant effect on student decisions to study. Private universities must continue to strive to be more professional in fulfilling the necessary facilities and infrastructure which will have an impact on the tuition fees that will be charged to students, improving the quality and qualifications of their lecturers. The study program that is managed is more creative and prioritize study programs based on specific skills according to what the job market needs (Harahap, Hurriyati, Gaffar, Wibowo, & Amanah, 2017; Harahap, Hurriyati, Gaffar, Wibowo, & Amanah, 2017b; Harahap, Hurriyati, Gaffar, & Amanah, 2018; Harahap & Amanah, 2019). The intense competition in the era of digitalization of the 4.0 industrial revolution in all sectors including universities requires universities to always build a good image and reputation both internally and externally related to student satisfaction which greatly affects the image and reputation of the university.

This study included the image of the university, the quality of the lecturers and the student's decision to continue their studies for analysis. It was found that the education cost construct and the decision to choose a university had a high level of reliability compared to other constructs (university image and lecturer quality), namely 0.918 and 0.937, respectively. For this reason, it is hoped that future research can carry out further research to try to find alternative indicators to measure the constructs of prospective student decisions in order to obtain a reliability level above 90 percent in all constructs. Further researchers are expected to be able to include other factors such as university

accreditation variables, lecture facilities, study programs, location, promotion, service, safety and comfort that can influence student decisions to choose to continue their studies in tertiary institutions. Thus making a good contribution to further research on student decisions to choose certain universities.

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