# Brand Image, Emotions, and Student Loyalty of Universitas Terbuka Indonesia

**Shine Pintor Siolemba Patiro [a], Usman Mika'il Usman[b], Kabul Wahyu Utomo[c*], Endi Rekarti[d], Faizul Mubarok[e], Joko Rizkie Widokarti[f]**

[a] Magister Management, Universitas Terbuka, Jakarta, Indonesia, shinepintor@ecampus.ut.ac.id
[b] Departement of History and International Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Yusuf Maitama Sule University, Kano, Nigeria, uumikail@yumsuk.edu.ng
[c] Magister Management, Universitas Terbuka, Jakarta, Indonesia, kabulwahyu@ecampus.ut.ac.id
[d] Magister Management, Universitas Terbuka, Jakarta, Indonesia, endirekarti@ecampus.ut.ac.id
[e] Magister Management, Universitas Terbuka, Jakarta, Indonesia, faizul.mubarok@ecampus.ut.ac.id
[f] Magister Management, Universitas Terbuka, Jakarta, Indonesia, jokorw@ecampus.ut.ac.id

*Correspondence: kabulwahyu@ecampus.ut.ac.id

**Abstract**

This article explores the concept of brand image and its significance in consumer behavior and marketing strategies in the context of Universitas Terbuka Indonesia. Brand image is defined as the perception of a brand in the minds of consumers, shaped by experiences, marketing communications, and interactions with the brand. The study examines the components that contribute to a strong brand image of Universitas Terbuka, including brand identity, consistency, and emotional connection. Through a review of relevant literature and case studies, the article highlights how a positive brand image of Universitas Terbuka can enhance student loyalty, differentiate products in competitive markets of education industry, and drive overall business performance. Additionally, the research addresses the challenges brands face in maintaining a favorable image of Universitas Terbuka in the digital age, where people opinions can spread rapidly through social media. The sample size in this study is 471 which dispersed to three big cities (Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya) in Indonesia. The sampling technique is purposive. By the supporting of IBM SPSS AMOS, data analysis was conducted with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in this study. The findings underscore the need for brands to engage authentically with their audience and adapt to changing perceptions to sustain their image in a dynamic marketplace

## 1. Introduction

In today's competitive marketplace, brand image has emerged as a critical factor influencing consumer behaviour and business success (Cova, 1997; Fournier, 1998). It encompasses the perceptions, associations, and beliefs that consumers hold about a brand, often formed through direct interactions, marketing efforts, and external influences (Park & MacInnis, 2006). As brands vie for attention in an increasingly crowded environment, understanding and managing brand image becomes paramount.

Universitas Terbuka, established in 1984 as the 45th state university in Indonesia, has experienced remarkable growth over the years. As of the 2023 spring semester, UT recorded a significant increase in student enrollment, with 525,419 students; 551,030 students in the 2024 fall semester; and 668,776 students in the 2024 spring semester. This indicates that UT has become one of the preferred universities for Indonesians seeking to pursue higher education. Furthermore, since 2022, UT has changed its status to a Legal Entity State University (PTNBH), which highlights its presence in the competitive landscape of Indonesia's education industry.

This change places additional demands on UT to provide educational services that are not only affordable but also of high quality for the Indonesian community.

That's why UT has to maintenance its brand image in order to pursue and keep the community trust. Brand image is vital for universities for several key reasons. A strong brand image helps universities stand out, making them more appealing to prospective students who seek quality education and a reputable institution (McGinnis, 2016; McCarthy, 2019). A positive brand fosters trust among students, parents, and employers, assuring them of the institution's commitment to academic excellence (Hemsley-Brown, & Oplatka, 2015). In a crowded educational market, a distinct brand image sets a university apart from competitors, helping it to capture a larger share of potential applicants. A well-established brand can enhance a university's reputation, influencing perceptions positively and mitigating negative feedback during crises (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). A strong brand encourages alumni to remain connected, leading to greater involvement, networking opportunities, and financial support for the institution (Kocak & Arditi, 2009). Universities with a solid brand image are more likely to attract partnerships with businesses, other educational institutions, and community organizations (Suh & Lee, 2017). A clear and compelling brand image enhances marketing efforts, allowing the university to communicate its unique value proposition effectively (Alharbi & Drew, 2014). A positive brand can improve student satisfaction, leading to higher retention rates and a more vibrant campus community (Hemsley-Brown, & Oplatka, 2015). Overall, brand image is essential for a university's long-term success, influencing everything from student enrollment to funding opportunities and community relationships (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Brand image is crucial for Universitas Terbuka (UT). A strong brand image helps UT stand out in a competitive higher education landscape, attracting prospective students who are looking for reputable institutions. A positive brand image fosters trust among potential students and their families, reassuring them of the quality and value of the education provided (González & GarcíA, 2018). A well-established brand image enhances UT's reputation, making it more likely for employers and other institutions to recognize and respect its degrees. A strong brand image can facilitate partnerships with local communities and businesses, leading to collaborative opportunities and support (Fischer, 2016). A positive brand encourages alumni to stay connected and contribute to the university, whether through donations, mentorship, or networking opportunities (Alves & Raposo, 2007). In times of crisis or negative publicity, a strong brand image can help UT maintain its standing and reassure stakeholders of its commitment to quality education. A well-defined brand image enhances marketing initiatives, making them more effective in communicating UT's unique offerings and values. In summary, brand image plays a vital role in shaping perceptions, driving enrollment, and fostering long-term success for Universitas Terbuka.

The significance of a strong brand image cannot be overstated. It serves as a differentiator, setting a brand apart from its competitors and fostering customer loyalty (Bridger, 2008; Bennett, 2006). Consumers are more likely to choose brands that resonate positively with their values and experiences, leading to repeat purchases and advocacy (Bridger, 2008; Bennett, 2006). In this context, businesses that invest in cultivating a robust brand image are better positioned to navigate market fluctuations and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Gummesson, 1999).

However, maintaining a favorable brand image poses significant challenges, especially in the digital age (Aaker, 1996; 1997). The rapid dissemination of information through social media and online reviews can quickly alter public perception, making it essential for brands to engage authentically and proactively manage their reputation (Aaker, 1996; 1997). This article delves into the multifaceted nature of brand image, exploring its components, implications for

marketing strategy, and the evolving landscape in which brands operate. By examining these elements, we aim to provide insights into how businesses can effectively build and sustain a positive brand image that resonates with consumers.

### Research Gaps

Despite the extensive body of literature on brand image, the research gaps in this study remain that warrant further exploration, namely: Current literature often emphasizes either emotional or rational factors in shaping brand image (Abdelwahab et al., 2022). More research is needed to explore the interplay between these dimensions and how they collectively influence consumer decision-making processes (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). Thus, Thus, this research will reveal and analyze the role of the brand image of Universitas Terbuka in shaping emotions that influence student loyalty.

### Literature Review and Hypotheses development

### Brand Image

Brand image is a multifaceted construct that encompasses the perceptions, associations, and beliefs that consumers hold about a brand. It is formed through various touchpoints, including marketing communications, product experiences, and social interactions. A strong brand image can enhance customer loyalty, differentiate offerings in competitive markets, and foster emotional connections with consumers (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2001). Research has shown that positive brand image leads to increased trust and commitment, ultimately driving consumer loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

### Emotional Connection

Emotions play a critical role in consumer behavior, influencing decision-making processes and brand loyalty. Brands that evoke positive emotions can create deeper connections with consumers, enhancing their overall experience and satisfaction (Thomson et al., 2005). The Emotional Branding framework posits that emotional responses to a brand can significantly impact consumer loyalty and advocacy (Gobé, 2009).

### The Interplay Between Brand Image and Emotion

The relationship between brand image and consumer emotions has been explored in various contexts. Studies suggest that a favorable brand image can elicit positive emotions, which in turn can strengthen loyalty (Batra et al., 2012). Conversely, negative brand image can lead to adverse emotional reactions, diminishing consumer trust and commitment (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2005). However, there remains a need for more empirical research to elucidate the specific mechanisms through which brand image influences emotional responses and, subsequently, loyalty. This hypothesis posits that as the brand image of Universitas Terbuka improves, students will experience more positive emotions, such as pride and satisfaction, associated with their affiliation with the institution.

### Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

### Hypothesis 1: A positive brand image of Universitas Terbuka is positively correlated with the emotional responses of students.
### Emotions in Consumer Behavior

Emotions are integral to consumer decision-making and behavior, influencing how consumers perceive brands and make purchasing choices. Research has demonstrated that

emotions can significantly impact consumer satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Emotional responses, such as joy, trust, and pride, often drive consumers to form strong attachments to brands, enhancing their overall experience (Richins, 1997).

**The Role of Emotion in Loyalty**

Loyalty is defined as a consumer's commitment to repurchase or continue using a brand or service (Dick & Basu, 1994). Emotional loyalty, distinct from behavioral loyalty, arises when consumers feel a deep emotional connection to a brand. Studies indicate that emotional bonds can lead to higher retention rates, increased word-of-mouth referrals, and a greater willingness to pay a premium for a brand (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014).

**The Relationship Between Emotion and Loyalty**

The interplay between emotions and loyalty has been explored in various contexts, demonstrating that positive emotional experiences often lead to increased brand loyalty. For instance, loyalty can be enhanced through emotional engagement, where consumers feel valued and understood by the brand (Fournier, 1998). Additionally, emotional responses can buffer against negative experiences, helping to sustain loyalty even when issues arise (Pappu & Quester, 2006). However, there is still a need for more nuanced research to clarify how different types of emotions—both positive and negative—affect loyalty in specific settings. This hypothesis posits that students of Universitas Terbuka who experience positive emotions, such as happiness and satisfaction, will demonstrate higher levels of loyalty towards a brand of Universitas Terbuka.

**Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:**

**Hypothesis 2: Positive emotional responses significantly enhance customer loyalty.**
**Based on the literature and hypotheses development, the research figure is:**
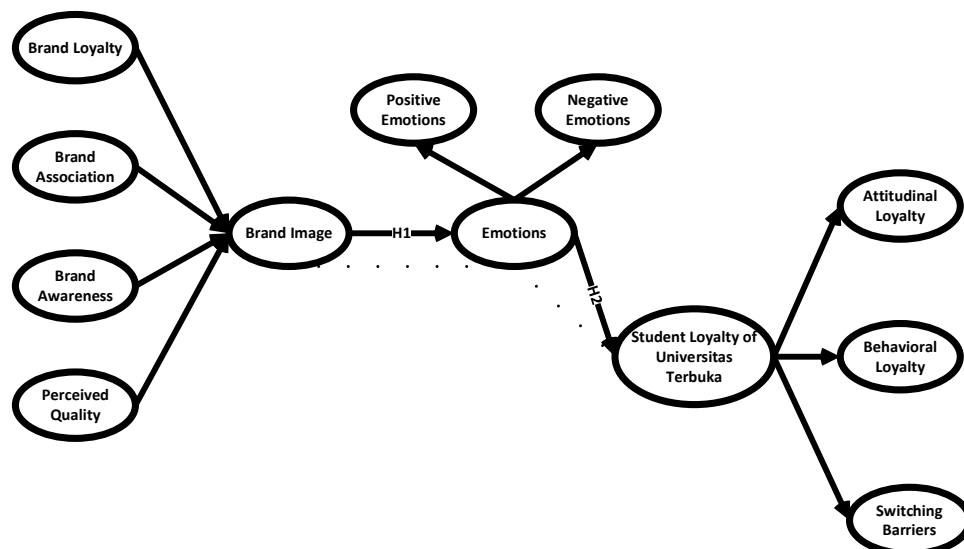


**Figure 1. Research Models**

## 2.  Method
**Research Design**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, utilizing a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships between brand image, emotional responses, and student

loyalty within the context of Universitas Terbuka. The survey method allows for the collection of data from a large sample, enabling statistical analysis of the proposed hypotheses.

**Sample and Population**

The target population for this study includes current students enrolled at Universitas Terbuka. In this study, the author selected a sample of students from three regional branches of Universitas Terbuka: UT Jakarta, UT Bandung, and UT Surabaya. The reason for focusing on these three regional branches is that they have the highest number of students compared to other branches. The author applied a purposive sampling technique, establishing a sample size of 500 respondents. This choice is related to the data analysis technique used in this research, which is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). There is no clear guideline regarding the minimum sample size when using SEM techniques. There are no clear guidelines for determining the appropriate sample size when using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). However, Hulland et al. (1996) stated that a sufficient sample size for SEM typically ranges from 100 to 200. According to Chin (1995), the minimum sample size for research using SEM should be five to ten times the number of indicators. In this study, the total number of indicators is 34, so the minimum sample size for this research is 34 x 10 = 340 respondents (Chin, 1995). According to Aaker et al. (2013), larger sample sizes lead to better research outcomes by reducing sampling error. Therefore, the sample size for this study is set at 500 respondents.

**Data Collection**

Data will be collected using a structured online questionnaire designed to measure the key constructs of the study: brand image, emotional responses, and student loyalty. The questionnaire will consist of three main sections:
1. Brand Image: Respondents will evaluate their perceptions of Universitas Terbuka using a modified version of Aaker's Brand Equity Scale, which includes dimensions such as brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Jacobson, 2001; Keller, 2003; Kapferer, 2008)
2. Emotional Responses: The emotional response scale will be adapted from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson & Tellegen, 1988) to capture students' emotional experiences related to their university affiliation. Items will assess emotions such as pride, satisfaction, happiness, frustration, and disappointment.
3. Student Loyalty: Loyalty will be measured using a combination of attitudinal and behavioral items, based on Dick and Basu's loyalty framework (Dick & Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1999; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Questions will focus on students' intentions to continue their studies, recommend the university to others, and engage in positive word-of-mouth.

**Data Analysis**

Data will be analyzed using statistical software (IBM SPSS AMOS) to test the proposed hypotheses and evaluate the relationships between brand image, emotional responses, and student loyalty. SEM will allow for the assessment of direct and indirect effects among the constructs.

**3.   Results and Discussion** ← 12pt, Times New Roman, Bold
**3.1 Results**
The number of questionnaires distributed in this study was 500. However, only 471 questionnaires were returned and deemed suitable for further analysis. The response rate

achieved is 94.20 percent, which is still considered good. As stated by Aaker et al. (2013), a minimum response rate of 80 percent is considered acceptable in consumer behavior research.

**Table 1. Respondents Profile**

| Demographic Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 281 | 59.66 |
| | Female | 190 | 33.27 |
| Age Group | 18-24 years | 100 | 21.23 |
| | 25-34 years | 100 | 21.23 |
| | 35 years and above | 271 | 57.54 |
| Grade | Freshman | 100 | 21.23 |
| | Sophomore | 171 | 36.31 |
| | Junior | 100 | 21.23 |
| | Senior | 100 | 21.23 |
| Occupation | ASN | 171 | 36.31 |
| | TNI/POLRI | 200 | 42.46 |
| | Other | 100 | 21.23 |
| Location | Jakarta | 250 | 53.08 |
| | Bandung | 100 | 21.23 |
| | Surabaya | 121 | 25.7 |
| Expenses (IDR) | < 1000000 | 87 | 18.47 |
| | 1000001 – 5000000 | 99 | 21.02 |
| | 5000001– 10.000.000 | 217 | 46.07 |
| | >10.000.000 | 68 | 14.44 |
| Marital Status | Single | 173 | 36.73 |
| | Married | 298 | 63.27 |

**Descriptive Statistics**
A total of 500 surveys were distributed, with a response rate of 94.20%, resulting in 471 usable responses. The sample consisted of diverse demographic backgrounds, with 33.27% female and 59.66% male participants. The majority of respondents (57.54%) were 35 years and above. Most of the respondents are married (63.27%). The respondents in this study are predominantly second-year students (36.31%). The majority of the respondents work as members of the military/police (42.46%). Most of them are students from the University of Terbuka Jakarta (53.08%). The monthly expenditure of the majority of respondents ranges from 5 million to 10 million rupiah (46.07%). Participants were evenly distributed across various academic programs, including social sciences, technology, and business.

Validity analysis
The construct validity test in this study showed good results. The discriminant validity obtained from this test indicates that each indicator is distinct from the others in accordance with the construct it represents or measures. The factor loading values range from 0.7 to 0.9. As stated by Hair et al. (2014), factor loading values exceeding 0.7 indicate that these indicators are well confirmed or, in other words, capable of measuring what they are intended to measure.

The results of the convergent validity test were obtained through calculations using the formula proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). This calculation formula aims to produce the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. If the AVE value is greater than 0.5, it indicates that the convergent validity of each construct is good.

The formula for Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is: $\sum \text{factor loading}_i^2 / n$

Where:

- n is the number of items (indicators) for the construct.
- Factor Loading$_i$ represents the factor loading of the $i^{th}$ indicator.

**Reliability Analysis**

The internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed using Composite Reliability. The calculation of construct reliability in this study uses the formula proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

$$CR = (\sum \text{factor loadings})^2 / ((\sum \text{factor loadings})^2 + (\sum \text{Error variance}))$$

Where:

- **CR** is the composite reliability.
- The numerator is the square of the sum of the factor loadings of the indicators.
- The denominator includes the same numerator plus the sum of the error variances of the indicators.

The results of this calculation indicate that the composite reliability values for each construct are satisfactory, with values ranging from 0.8 to 0.9. The results indicated high reliability for the brand image scale (0.87), emotional responses scale (0.90), and student loyalty scale (0.85), indicating that the constructs were measured consistently.

**Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**

Structural Model

Once the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory fit, the structural model was tested to examine the relationships between the independent variables (Brand Image) and the dependent variable (student loyalty) with emotions as a mediation variable.
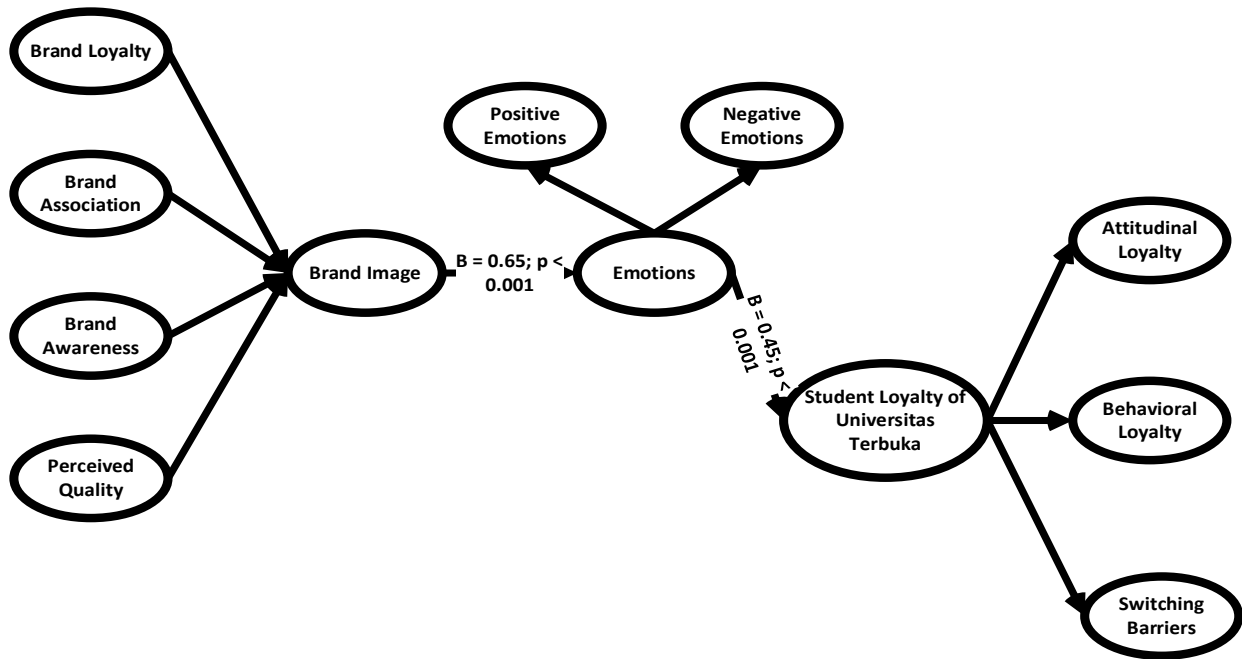
**Figure 2. Structural Model**
CMIN/DF = 3.799; GFI = 0.901; AGFI = 0.900; RMSEA = 0.077; CFI = 0.913

Model fit indices such as the chi-square statistic ($\chi^2$), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to assess the adequacy of the model fit, with CFI values above 0.90 and RMSEA values below 0.08 indicating a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is a statistic used to assess how well a proposed model fits the observed data in structural equation modeling (SEM) (Hair et al., 2014). A GFI value above 0.90 is generally considered indicative of a good fit, while values above 0.95 suggest an excellent fit. The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is an adaptation of the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) that accounts for the number of parameters in a model, providing a more nuanced assessment of model fit in structural equation modeling (SEM). AGFI values range from 0 to 1. A value of 0.90 or higher is generally considered acceptable, and values above 0.95 are indicative of a good fit. CMIN/DF, also known as the chi-square divided by degrees of freedom, is a widely used fit index in structural equation modeling (SEM) that helps assess the goodness of fit of a model. A CMIN/DF value less than 3 is typically considered indicative of a good fit, while values less than 5 can still be acceptable, depending on the context (Wheaton et al., 1995). Lower values suggest a better fit between the model and the observed data (Wheaton et al., 1995).

Based on the description, the values of the model fit indices are still within the good category. In other words, the research model used in this study is parsimonious. This research model is    Efficiency, A parsimonious model achieves a good balance between fit and simplicity, meaning it provides a reasonable fit to the data without overfitting. Second, the model is Interpretability,  Such models are easier to interpret and understand, making it simpler for researchers and practitioners to draw conclusions and make decisions based on the findings. Third, the model in this study is  Theoretical Basis, Parsimony is often aligned with theoretical principles, where simpler models that are theoretically sound are preferred over more complex ones.

The SEM analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between brand image and emotional responses ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Further analysis indicated that emotional responses affected student loyalty ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Lastly, emotional engagement was found to significantly mediated the relationship between emotional responses and student loyalty ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$), validating Hypothesis 3. emotional engagement intensified the positive impact of emotions on loyalty. The bootstrapping results confirmed the mediation effect, with a 95% confidence interval not including zero.

### 3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the crucial role of brand image in shaping emotional responses and student loyalty within the context of Universitas Terbuka. The significant positive relationship between brand image of Universitas Terbuka and emotional responses highlights the importance of cultivating a strong and favorable brand image to evoke positive emotions among students. This is consistent with prior research suggesting that a well-managed brand image can lead to enhanced emotional connections (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2001). A strong brand image of Universitas Terbuka enhances recognition and recall, evoking positive emotions associated with past experiences. Brands that cultivate a relatable and appealing image can create emotional connections with consumers, leading to feelings of trust, loyalty, and attachment (Park, & MacInnis, 2006). The way a brand is perceived, whether it's seen as luxury, reliable, innovative, or friendly, shapes consumers' emotions (Patterson, & Smith, 2003). For instance, a luxury brand might evoke feelings of exclusivity and aspiration, while a friendly brand may elicit warmth and comfort. Consumers may feel a sense of belonging or pride associated with a brand, influencing their emotions and self-esteem (Aaker, 1996). In this study, The overall experience with a brand of Universitas Terbuka, ranging from advertising to students service, impacts emotions. Positive experiences reinforce a favorable brand image of Universitas Terbuka, while negative experiences can lead to disappointment or frustration. Advertisements that evoke specific emotions (e.g., happiness, nostalgia) can strengthen the brand image and enhance emotional responses, making the brand more memorable (Keller, 2003). A positive brand image of Universitas Terbuka can lead to students advocacy, where students share their positive emotional experiences with others, further reinforcing the brand's image.

This study further confirms that positive emotional responses are essential for fostering student loyalty of Universitas Terbuka. This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the emotional dimensions of loyalty (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014). As students experience emotions such as pride and satisfaction related to their university, they are more likely to remain committed and advocate for the institution. The effect of emotions on student loyalty is a crucial aspect of educational institutions and their ability to retain students. Positive emotional experiences, such as feelings of belonging and satisfaction, can significantly enhance student loyalty (Kocak & Arditi, 2009). When students feel emotionally connected to their institution, they are more likely to remain enrolled and advocate for the school (Suh & Lee, 2017). Positive interactions with faculty, staff, and peers can evoke emotions like happiness and trust, which strengthen a student's commitment to the institution (Astin, 1993). Supportive environments foster loyalty. Events, extracurricular activities, and social opportunities contribute to students' emotional experiences. A vibrant campus life can enhance feelings of community and attachment, leading to greater loyalty. The emotional perception of the institution's brand, how students view its reputation, values, and mission, can influence their loyalty (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). A strong, positive brand image of Universitas Terbuka resonates emotionally with students. Access to effective support services (academic

advising, counseling, etc.) can evoke feelings of security and care, enhancing students' emotional ties to the institution. Positive emotions can help students navigate challenges and setbacks, fostering resilience (Alharbi & Drew, 2014). This resilience contributes to their loyalty to the institution, even during difficult times. Satisfied students who have positive emotional experiences are more likely to recommend the institution to others, reinforcing their loyalty and attracting new students (Alharbi & Drew, 2014). Institutions that prioritize emotional well-being through initiatives like mentoring programs, wellness resources, and community-building efforts can effectively enhance student loyalty (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015).

The mediation analysis illustrates that emotional responses act as a significant link between brand image and loyalty. This insight indicates that improving brand image of Universitas Terbuka is not sufficient on its own. Furthermore, Universitas Terbuka must also focus on eliciting positive emotional experiences to build loyalty effectively. A strong and favorable brand image of Universitas Terbuka can evoke positive emotions in students, such as pride, trust, and satisfaction. When students perceive a brand positively, it can lead to enhanced feelings of belonging and commitment (González, & GarcíA, 2018). Emotions serve as a bridge between brand image of Universitas Terbuka and student loyalty. For instance, a positive brand image may lead to emotions like happiness and excitement, which in turn foster loyalty (Fischer, 2016). Emotional responses can enhance feelings of trust and attachment, making students more likely to remain loyal to the institution (Ramsay, 2015). Emotions can significantly impact students' decisions to choose and remain with a particular educational institution (Fischer, 2016). Positive emotions associated with a strong brand image can help students cope with academic challenges, reinforcing their loyalty (Patterson & Smith, 2003). Students who have strong emotional connections to their institution due to a favorable brand image are more likely to advocate for it and recommend it to others (Patterson & Smith, 2003). Emotional ties foster a sense of community and belonging, further enhancing loyalty. Institutions, like Universitas Terbuka, can leverage emotional branding strategies to create positive brand images that resonate with students. Focusing on emotional engagement through supportive environments and enriching experiences can strengthen the link between brand image and loyalty (Kocak & Arditi, 2009).

## 4. Conclusion

In summary, this study highlights the interconnectedness of brand image, emotional responses, and student loyalty. By understanding these relationships, Universitas Terbuka can implement strategies to enhance its brand image and foster emotional connections, ultimately leading to greater student loyalty and long-term success. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to explore the dynamic nature of these relationships over time and across different contexts. Emotions play a critical mediating role in how brand image affects student loyalty. Understanding this relationship can help educational institutions develop strategies to enhance their brand image and foster deeper emotional connections with students, ultimately leading to greater loyalty and retention.

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