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Comparative Analysis of Promotion Media and Brand Identity on University Interest: A Cross-National Study Among Indonesian and Taiwanese Students

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Abstract: The globalization of higher education has intensified competition among universities across Southeast and East Asia. This study aims to comparatively analyze the influence of Promotion Media and Brand Identity on University Interest, with Motivation serving as a mediating variable among prospective students in Indonesia and Taiwan. Adopting a quantitative approach with a cross-national comparative research design, data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to 400 respondents (200 Indonesian students and 200 Taiwanese students). Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA) via SmartPLS 4. The empirical findings reveal that Promotion Media and Brand Identity exert positive and significant effects on both Motivation and University Interest across the overall sample. Motivation is confirmed as a significant partial mediator. Furthermore, MGA testing indicates significant structural differences between the two countries: Promotion Media has a stronger impact on shaping Motivation and University Interest among Indonesian students, whereas Brand Identity and Academic/Career Motivation play a more dominant role among Taiwanese students. The practical implications offer strategic guidance for higher education managers in designing international marketing strategies tailored to cultural and contextual dimensions.

Keywords: Promotion Media, Brand Identity, Motivation, University Interest, Multi-Group Analysis (MGA), Higher Education Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the rapid expansion of globalization and technological integration has drastically transformed the competitive landscape of higher education. Higher education institutions are no longer competing merely at local or national levels; instead, they are forced to formulate agile, culturally adaptive international marketing strategies to attract prospective students across borders (Salsabilla & Nurhajati, 2022). Southeast Asia and East Asia have emerged as two of the most vibrant higher education hubs globally. Within these regions, Indonesia and Taiwan represent strategically contrasting yet highly interconnected educational landscapes.

Indonesia, as a prominent emerging economy in ASEAN with a massive youth demographic (youth bulge), serves as a major target market as well as a significant source of international students. Indonesian prospective students are characterized as highly digital-native, relying heavily on interactive digital content, peer engagement, and dynamic social media platforms during their university search process. Conversely, Taiwan has established itself as a high-tech regional higher education hub, supported by advanced research infrastructure, generous government scholarship programs, and strong industry-academic linkages. Despite their geographic proximity within Asia, these two nations exhibit distinct socio-cultural values, technological adoption behaviors, and economic considerations among prospective students when evaluating higher education options.

The decision-making process of prospective students in selecting a university is a multi-faceted cognitive and affective journey influenced by both external promotional stimuli and internal psychological drivers. Educational marketing mixes—particularly digital promotion media such as official institutional websites, social media marketing (eg, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube), and virtual education fairs—act as primary information channels that reduce information asymmetry (Larasati & Halisa, 2024). Concurrently, brand identity—encompassing academic reputation, perceived institutional quality, visual identifiers, and corporate values—creates long-term differentiation in a saturated educational market (Yogantari & Ariesta, 2021). However, external marketing stimuli rarely translate directly into behavioral interest without the activating role of internal organismic states, namely student motivation (Hafizh, 2022).

Despite the growing body of literature on educational marketing and student choice, previous empirical studies suffer from notable limitations. First, existing studies overwhelmingly focus on single-country settings (eg, Larasati & Halisa, 2024; Salsabilla & Nurhajati, 2022), which inherently limits the cross-cultural generalizability of their structural models. Second, limited empirical research has systematically examined whether external marketing stimuli (Promotion Media and Brand Identity) operate uniformly across disparate cross-national cohorts or if cultural and economic contexts moderate these structural relationships..

To bridge this empirical and theoretical gap, this study extends the conceptual model of Larasati & Halisa (2024) by integrating the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) into a cross-national comparative research design. Utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA), this study investigates the comparative impacts of Promotion Media and Brand Identity on University Interest, mediated by Motivation, among prospective students in Indonesia and Taiwan.

Literature Review And Hypothesis Development

Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model

This study adopts the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) as its primary theoretical foundation. In the context of higher education marketing, Stimulus (S) represents external environmental cues delivered by the institution, specifically Promotion Media and Brand Identity. Organism (O) refers to the cognitive, emotional, and motivational internal states of prospective students, operationalized as Motivation. Response (R) represents the final behavioral intention or attitude toward the institution, designated as University Interest.

Promotion Media and University Interest

Promotion media in the digital age encompasses social media platforms, official web portals, interactive brochures, and virtual campus tours (Salsabilla & Nurhajati, 2022). Clear, attractive, and easily accessible promotional content reduces uncertainty and enhances prospective students' interest in pursuing higher education at a specific institution.

H1: *Promotion Media has a positive and significant effect on University Interest.*

Brand Identity and University Interest

Brand identity comprises a unique set of institutional associations, visual symbols, values, and quality perceptions that university management strives to create and maintain (Yogantari & Ariesta, 2021). A strong, reputable brand identity signals academic prestige and social alignment, thereby increasing prospective students' institutional preference.

H2: *Brand Identity has a positive and significant effect on University Interest.*

Promotion Media and Brand Identity on Motivation

Informative and engaging promotional media activate both extrinsic motivation (eg, career opportunities, scholarship details) and intrinsic motivation among prospective students (Hafizh, 2022). Similarly, an established institutional brand identity instills pride, self-confidence, and academic aspirations, directly stimulating learning and achievement motivation..

H3: *Promotion Media has a positive and significant effect on Motivation.*

H4: *Brand Identity has a positive and significant effect on Motivation.*

The Mediating Role of Motivation

Motivation represents the psychological drive that energizes and directs goal-oriented behavior. When marketing stimuli resonate with prospective students' personal goals, strong internal motivation is cultivated, which subsequently amplifies their commitment and interest in enrolling at the target university (Larasati & Halisa, 2024).

H5: *Motivation has a positive and significant effect on University Interest.*

H6: *Motivation mediates the relationship between Promotion Media and University Interest.*

H7: *Motivation mediates the relationship between Brand Identity and University Interest.*

Cross-National Comparative Framework (PLS-MGA)

Cultural orientations, economic development, and educational system maturation moderate how prospective students evaluate promotional stimuli. Indonesian students tend to be heavily influenced by social media exposure and peer/collectivistic recommendations. In contrast, Taiwanese students are more inclined toward institutional reputation, global ranking, high-tech industry alignment, and long-term career outcome.

H8: *There are significant differences in the structural path coefficients between Indonesian and Taiwanese student cohorts.*

METHOD

Research Design and Sample

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design with a cross-national comparative approach. The target population consists of high school seniors and first-year undergraduate students in Indonesia and Taiwan. Purposive sampling was applied based on two inclusion criteria: (1) aged 17–22 years, and (2) actively seeking university enrollment information within the past 12 months. A total sample of 400 respondents was successfully collected, comprising 200 Indonesian respondents (INA) and 200 Taiwanese respondents (TWN), which satisfies the sample size requirements for PLS-SEM and PLS-MGA analyses..

Operationalization of Variables

All items were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree):

1. **Promotion Media (PM):** Measured using 4 indicators: Information Coverage (PM1), Visual Attractiveness (PM2), Digital Platform Accessibility (PM3), and Content Clarity (PM4) (Salsabilla & Nurhajati, 2022).
2. **Brand Identity (BI):** Measured using 4 indicators: Academic Reputation (BI1), Institutional Values Clarity (BI2), Visual Image/Logo/Slogan (BI3), and Perceived Campus Experience (BI4) (Yogantari & Ariesta, 2021).
3. **Motivation (M):** Measured using 4 indicators: Future Career Orientation (M1), Self-Development Drive (M2), Social/Parental Support (M3), and Scholarship/Facility Access (M4) (Hafizh, 2022).
4. **University Interest (UI):** Measured using 4 indicators: Primary Interest (UI1), Information Search Intention (UI2), Enrollment Decision/Intention (UI3), and Willingness to Recommend (UI4) (Larasati & Halisa, 2024).

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4. The evaluation proceeded in two main stages:

1. **Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model):** Convergent validity (Factor Loading > 0.70 , $AVE > 0.50$), construct reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70 Composite Reliability > 0.70), and discriminant validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio $HTMT < 0.85$).
2. **Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model) & MGA:** Assessment of R^2 , f^2 predictive relevance (Q^2), path coefficient significance via bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples), specific indirect effects (mediation), and Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA) using parametric and Welch-Satterthwaite tests.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

Table 1 outlines the demographic profile of visitors across both sub-samples.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=400)

Characteristic	Category	Indonesian=200	Taiwann=200	Total (N=400)
Gender	Male	44.0%	48.5%	46.25%
	Female	56.0%	51.5%	53.75%
Age	17–19 Years	62.5%	58.0%	60.25%
	20–22 Years	37.5%	42.0%	39.75%

Primary Information Channel	Digital Social Media	68.0%	42.5%	55.25%
	Official University Website	21.5%	45.0%	33.25%
	Recommendations / Fairs	10.5%	12.5%	11.50%

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The outer model evaluation for the overall dataset demonstrated robust convergent validity and construct reliability, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Construct Indicator /	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Promotional Media (PM)		0.854	0.901	0.695
PM1	0.832			
PM2	0.845			
PM3	0.819			
PM4	0.838			
Brand Identity (BI)		0.878	0.916	0.732
BI1	0.861			
BI2	0.850			
BI3	0.842			
BI4	0.869			
Motivation (M)		0.849	0.898	0.688
M1	0.825			
M2	0.841			
M3	0.812			
M4	0.839			
University Interest (UI)		0.889	0.923	0.750
UI1	0.872			
UI2	0.865			
UI3	0.858			
UI4	0.869			

As shown in Table 2, all factor loadings exceed\$0.70\$, Cronbach's Alpha and CR values exceed\$0.70\$, and AVE values exceed\$0.50\$. Discriminant validity was established as all HTMT ratios fell well below\$0.85\$.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) reveals that Promotion Media and Brand Identity explain 58.2% of the variance in Motivation ($R^2 = 0.582$). Concurrently, Promotion Media, Brand Identity, and Motivation collectively account for 67.4% of the variance in University Interest ($R^2 = 0.674$).The blindfolding procedure yielded Q^2 values of 0.398 for Motivation and 0.502 for University Interest, confirming strong predictive relevance.

Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing (Overall Model)

Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples at $\alpha = 5\%$ yielded the direct effect path coefficients presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Direct Hypothesis Testing Results (Overall Model)

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Path Coeff (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Dev.	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	PM $\rightarrow$ UI	0.285	0.283	0.048	5.937	0.000	Accepted
H2	BI $\rightarrow$ UI	0.312	0.315	0.051	6.118	0.000	Accepted
H3	PM $\rightarrow$ M	0.364	0.362	0.053	6.868	0.000	Accepted
H4	BI $\rightarrow$ M	0.448	0.450	0.050	8.960	0.000	Accepted
H5	M $\rightarrow$ UI	0.328	0.326	0.052	6.308	0.000	Accepted

All direct hypotheses (H1 to H5) are supported ($p < 0.05$, $T > 1.96$). Brand Identity exhibits the strongest direct influence on Motivation ($\beta = 0.448$).

Mediation Hypothesis Testing (Indirect Effects)

Table 4 presents the indirect effect analysis used to test H6 and H7.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Indirect Coeff (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Mediation Type	Decision
H6	PM $\rightarrow$ M $\rightarrow$ UI	0.119	4.612	0.000	Partial Mediation	Accepted
H7	BI $\rightarrow$ M $\rightarrow$ UI	0.147	5.140	0.000	Partial Mediation	Accepted

Motivation significantly mediates both PM $\rightarrow$ UI ($\beta = 0.119$, $p < 0.001$) and BI $\rightarrow$ UI ($\beta = 0.147$, $p < 0.001$). Since the direct paths remain significant, the mediation mode is classified as **complementary partial mediation**.

Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA: Indonesia vs. Taiwan)

To test H8, PLS-MGA was conducted between the Indonesian ($n=200$) and Taiwanese $n=200$ sub-samples.

Table 5. Cross-National PLS-MGA Comparison

Structural Path	$\beta_{\text{Indonesia}}$	β_{Taiwan}	$ \beta_{\text{INA}} - \beta_{\text{TWN}} $	p-value (MGA)	Difference Significance
$\text{PM} \rightarrow \text{UI}$	0.368	0.192	0.176	0.012	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
$\text{BI} \rightarrow \text{UI}$	0.235	0.398	0.163	0.024	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
$\text{PM} \rightarrow \text{M}$	0.452	0.268	0.184	0.008	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
$\text{BI} \rightarrow \text{M}$	0.358	0.524	0.166	0.018	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
$\text{M} \rightarrow \text{UI}$	0.284	0.382	0.098	0.042	Significant ($p < 0.05$)

The PLS-MGA results strongly support H8. Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were observed across all structural paths:

1. **Indonesian Cohort:** Promotion Media exerts a significantly stronger influence on Motivation ($\beta = 0.452$) and University Interest ($\beta = 0.368$) compared to Taiwan.
2. **Taiwanese Cohort:** Brand Identity exerts a significantly stronger influence on Motivation ($\beta = 0.524$) and University Interest ($\beta = 0.398$) compared to Indonesia. Additionally, Motivation plays a stronger direct role in driving enrollment interest ($\beta = 0.382$).

Discussion

The empirical results confirm the applicability of the SOR model in cross-national higher education marketing.

First, supporting Larasati & Halisa (2024) and Salsabilla & Nurhajati (2022), both Promotion Media and Brand Identity serve as crucial external stimuli. However, PLS-MGA reveals striking cross-cultural nuances. Indonesian prospective students exhibit high sensitivity to dynamic promotion media. This aligns with Indonesia's highly social digital ecosystem where short-form video content, peer recommendations, and interactive Q&A sessions significantly lower cognitive barriers and spark student motivation.

Second, Taiwanese students place far greater weight on Brand Identity and academic/career motivation. Driven by a competitive academic ecosystem and high-tech industrial integration, Taiwanese students evaluate higher education choices rationally based on global rankings, accreditation, laboratory infrastructure, and long-term employability. This corroborates Yogantari & Ariesta's (2021) emphasis on institutional prestige as a dominant driver of perceived value.

Third, Motivation functions as a key psychological bridge (Hafizh, 2022) across both cultures, but is fueled by different internal mechanisms—scholarships and social campus experience in Indonesia versus career trajectory and technical competency in Taiwan.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

This study successfully validates the SOR model in higher education marketing across two distinct Asian markets. External marketing stimuli (Promotion Media and Brand Identity) positively drive University Interest both directly and indirectly via Motivation. Crucially, PLS-MGA demonstrates cross-national structural variations: Indonesian students are more

responsive to digital Promotion Media, while Taiwanese students are primarily driven by institutional Brand Identity and career-oriented Motivation.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to educational marketing literature by confirming that the influence of marketing stimuli is context-dependent. It advances the generalizability of the SOR framework across developing (ASEAN) and developed (East Asia) educational markets.

Managerial Implications

1. **Targeting Indonesia:** Universities recruiting in Indonesia should deploy active social media campaigns (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube), highlight scholarship opportunities, and leverage peer testimonials.
2. **Targeting Taiwan:** Institutional marketers targeting Taiwan should emphasize global university rankings, research credentials, corporate industry partnerships, and graduate employment statistics.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited to sample cohorts from two Asian countries. Future research should expand the geographic scope to European or North American contexts and incorporate qualitative/mixed-method approaches to explore deeper socio-psychological nuances.

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