Chapter 13

# Influence of Perceived Quality of Official University Websites to Perceived Quality of University Education and Enrollment Intention

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to analyze the impact of a university's website quality to the intentions of prospective students to enroll at the university. The proposed model was tested by distributing questionnaires to third-year senior high school students around Jakarta. Respondents were asked to follow a series of instructions to access the websites of two universities, the University of Muhammadiyah Malang and the Indonesian Islamic University. After completing the task, respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire to evaluate website quality. Based on the analysis of 117 valid questionnaires, it is concluded that website quality influences the perception by prospective university students of quality university education, which subsequently affects the intention of prospective students to enroll at the university. The finding confirms that the quality of official websites can be used as an extrinsic attribute to signal the quality of education at the university; thus, its optimal maintenance must be endeavoured.*

## INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has rapidly revolutionized the world. The commercialization of the Internet, web technology, and its application in the 1990s have brought about the development of the phenomenon in business-to-consumer (B2C) electronic commerce (Chen, Rungruengsamrit, Rajkumar, & Yen, 2013; Lin & Lu, 2000; Scaglione, Schegg, & Murphy, 2009). The emergence of electronic commerce or commonly referred to as e-commerce has provided a powerful marketing channel for commercial organizations (Maity & Dass, 2014; Ramanathan, Ramanathan, & Hsiao, 2012; Samiee, 2008). Via the web, organizations can engage consumers, and not only provide information but also sell products and services online.

However, e-commerce marketing channels have their limitations. All trading activities conducted through websites, as well as all interactions are mediated by technology offered on websites (referred to as a technology-mediated environment). All interactions are facilitated by the website, leaving consumers unable to directly evaluate products and services to be purchased or traded as can be done in a conventional store. Therefore, the ability of consumers to assess the quality of traded products and services is reduced. This channel limitation impacts product experience. Experience products are products whose quality can be accurately evaluated only after the products are purchased and used for a specific time period that is relatively shorter than the products' total life usage (Ford, Smith, & Swasy, 1988). Examples of experience products include clothing, food, electronics, and others. Consumers need to interact directly with the product before they can determine its quality, such as the need to be first, felt, executed, and so on.

Services differ from products. Not like products which can be measured quantitatively, services are intangible, cannot be measured, counted, and tested. Service is heterogeneous and its value changes from one consumer to another (Bateson, 1977; Zeithaml, 1981). Most previous research work investigated quality of services in a traditional situation, i.e., transactions occur in the real world. Various models to measure service quality have also been developed. These measurement models typically use facilities, personnel quality, service delivery, service providers' management, and others as indicators of service quality (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Shi, Prentice, & He, 2014; Vera & Trujillo, 2013). Many services are currently offered online (e-services) for example translation services, e-learning, e-government services, etc. Hence, limitations encountered in e-commerce marketing channels are encountered in the context of e-services.

Some previous researchers have investigated how virtual product experience (VPE) available via the web interface can deliver visual product attributes better (Chen, Hsu, & Lin, 2010; Coyle & Thorson 2001; Jiang & Benbasat, 2004; Lee, Kim, & Fiore, 2010; Li, Daugherty, & Biocca, 2003; Liu, Li, & Hu, 2013; van Noort, Voorveld, & van Reijmersdal, 2012). However, e-commerce channels still have limitations in delivering experiential product attributes compared to physical stores, especially the attributes of services. There were some efforts to improve customer perception of product quality, one of them through signaling theory. Signal theory is effective to understand signals that consumers use to make an accurate assessment of quality when faced with limited information about a product or service. The signals commonly used in the sale or transaction in the real world or a conventional store are brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Magnini, Karande, Singal, & Kim, 2013; Rubio, Oubiña, & Villaseñor, 2014; Wu, Yeh, & Hsiao, 2011), seller reputation (Chu & Chu, 1994; Das, 2014), price (Dawar & Parker, 1994; Kukar-Kinney, Ridgway, & Monroe, 2012; Marian, Chrysochou, Krystallis, & Thøgersen, 2014; White & Yuan, 2012), and store environment or transaction place (Baker, Grewal, & Parasura-

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