Social Media and Foreign University Collaboration: A Multi Perspective Descriptive Analysis for Indonesian Private Universities

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ABSTRACT

The importance of social media for universities is an important tool for marketing purposes by adopting aggressive marketing strategies. The existence of foreign-based Higher Education Institutes (HEI) in Indonesia is almost non-existent. The government of Indonesia through the education ministry requires any foreign HEIs that will operate in Indonesia to have a formal collaboration with the government accredited Indonesian HEIs. The paper empirically studies the multiple-perspective (management role and students’ role) descriptive approach in evaluating social media usage and the importance of foreign university collaboration. The data collected from 34 universities (management perspective) and the 5 most populated universities (for student perspective). The data analyzed and compared using graphs to draw some meaningful conclusions. The paper concludes with empirical findings based conclusions to managers to effectively using social media to its optimum benefit and gaining potential assistance from foreign university collaboration. Some meaningful suggestions to the management as to how strategically social media should be managed.

Keywords: Foreign University Collaboration; Higher Education Institutes; Multi-perspective analysis; Private Universities; Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

For all the stakeholders either in the private or in the public sector, digital technologies have changed the landscape and capabilities at every level. With an increase of 15% internet users in Indonesia since the previous year (“Tech in Asia - Connecting Asia’s startup ecosystem”, 2019), technical skills in the form of social media (an increase of 10%) have launched a new model of communication and arrangement, which can be strategically employed by higher education institutes.
As Indonesia has 4,438 universities and more than seven million college students (Post, 2019), not only has Indonesian higher education experienced intense competition but it has also forced these higher education institutes to adopt aggressive marketing strategies. A university’s website now is an important tool in gathering information in the consumer decision-making process. Potential students’ first impressions are influenced electronically via the website. A university’s web presence is extremely important because visiting the website first can be a precursor to visiting the campus. Webometrics intend to motivate both scholars and institutions to gain a web presence reflecting accurately on their activities.

The existence of foreign-based HEIs in Indonesia is almost non-existent. The government of Indonesia requires any foreign HEIs that will operate in Indonesia has to have a formal collaboration with the accredited Indonesian HEIs. For this reason, the import and export of HEIs have not yet been a major issue. A stronger collaboration amongst ASEAN and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries is very important to promote a mutual understanding, also QA standards or criteria equivalency are important to open the access of HEIs amongst the nations.

With the number of private higher education institutes available in Indonesia and specifically in DKI Jakarta, the better use of technology can enhance the quality of service provided by the higher education institutes. A review of the literature identifies few research studies that have been conducted to analyze the general impact of marketing in higher education (Quatroche, 2016) especially in social media usage and foreign university collaboration.

In this paper, the author empirically presents the descriptive findings from broader research and contributes to the literature by studying the effective use of social media and the collaboration with foreign universities that can enhance the cooperation between local and foreign private universities in DKI Jakarta.

The paper constitutes a discussion of the literature review for social media and foreign university collaboration, followed by the research design and findings for the multiple perspectives of management and consumers (students) from the private universities in DKI Jakarta. The paper concludes with a theoretical and managerial contextual implication discussion.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Several social media applications such as YouTube, blogs, Flickr, Facebook, MySpace, and others are available for consumers to stay connected without any influence from marketers or commercial firms and it also helps them to share and exchange their experiences of certain products and services (Hashim & Ariffin, 2016). Social media platforms allow the creation and development of new activities and provide powerful capabilities to create a cybernetic environment where users and potential users and resources used brought together (Erdem & Cobanoglu, 2010; Kim & Hardin, 2010; O’Connor, 2010).

Universities can also benefit from the advantage of social media as large numbers of students between the age group of 18-25 have social media at their disposal, and information sharing and seeking is an important reason for people to use social networking sites. Major universities like Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Oxford, Cambridge, and London School of Economics have reached out to their students and prospective students via social media channels, realizing that a robust social media campaign along with creative activities can attract viewers (Lin & Lu, 2011).

Mardi, Arief, Furinto, & Kumaradjaja(2016) mentioned that social media is not about just communicating; it must involve the top management in social technology as a critical success factor. Social media facilitates the universities to communicate directly with their customers and listen to what their customers are saying about them, their programs, and services.

Different aspects of the current global network of higher education challenge strict post-colonial patterns as the academic representations of the western culture continue to be followed in earlier societies. Moreover, countries that were never colonized, such as Japan, China, and Thailand, have also followed the Western academic models.

Sutrisno (2016) mentioned that the internationalization of Indonesian universities mainly aims to improve the quality of education to accommodate domestic demands and to increase international contour. Indonesia is unable to build itself as a leading destination for international students. The number and proportion of
international students in Indonesia are minimal. The universities’ international standing and benchmarking with international standards are more important in the Indonesian internationalization effort to improve the quality of education. A case study analysis conducted by Umboh, Arief, Furinto, & Hamsal, (2015) shows that different strategies sought for internationalization by two universities that started at the same level resulted in fast performance and superior global acknowledgment achieved by one university through more rigorous internationalization efforts compared to the other university.

Indonesian universities are trying to internationalize themselves aiming to become world-class universities. The concept of world-class universities differing from one university to the other (Hashim et al., 2009) several Indonesian universities may barely understand what a world-class university rank means that being included in international university ranking systems, such as QS World University Ranking and The Times HE Supplement. Some universities consider increasing research output in international journals as a way of achieving higher world university ranking.

The study of literature shows that there is limited research on foreign university collaboration, especially from an empirical perspective. This research will fill in the gap by providing some descriptive analysis of the foreign university collaboration for private universities in DKI Jakarta.

**METHODS**

The exploratory research design was used in this research. A well-structured questionnaire was used to obtain specific information from 52 private universities in Jakarta, Indonesia. A multi-item Likert scale with anchor points of 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree was used to measure each construct in this research. The items assessing each construct were adapted from literature. The questionnaires were translated into the Indonesian language by professional translators.

From 52 private universities that are currently operating in DKI Jakarta, the data gathered from 34 universities. The response rate was 65.39% from those 52 universities. From the consumer perspective, the data was gathered from 5 biggest private universities that are currently operating in DKI Jakarta. These 5 universities accumulated to 103,963 students representing 45% of those students (232,137 students
from 34 universities). From 52 universities, the total number of students aggregated to 308,367 students, therefore these 5 universities collectively represented 34% of the total population of students in DKI Jakarta. Total 211 valid and filled responses were received.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

For the Management Perspective, based on the survey, the universities were categorized as small-scale university (less than or equal to 10,000 students), medium-scale university (more than 10,000 but less than equal to 20,000 students), and large-scale university (more than 20,000 students). Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Universities Categories.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Universities Categories

| UNIVERSITIES CATEGORIES | UNIVERSITIES THAT RESPONDED | UNIVERSITIES THAT DID NOT RESPOND |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                         | No. of Students | Total No. | Total Faculty | No. of Students | Total No. | Total Faculty |
| S Small-scale           | 74,682          | 25        | 3,516         | 35,087          | 16        | 1,290         |
| M Medium-scale          | 103,162         | 7         | 2,824         | 11,865          | 1         | 322           |
| L Large-scale           | 54,293          | 2         | 1,787         | 29,278          | 1         | 825           |
| TOTAL                   | 232,137         | 34        | 8,127         | 76,230          | 18        | 2,437         |
| PERCENTAGE              | 75.28%          | 65.38%    | 76.93%        | 24.72%          | 34.62%    | 23.07%        |

Table 1 above shows the universities that have responded and the ones that have not responded in the categories of small, medium, and large-scale universities. The response rate from small-scale universities was 61% (39% did not reply), the medium-scale university was 87.5% (12.5% did not reply), and the large-scale university was 67% (33% did not reply). Thus the total responses received represented a 65.38% response rate and the universities that did not respond represented 34.62%. Therefore, the response rate is higher compared to similar studies conducted in the higher education sector that conducted a quantitative survey analyzed 42 leading U.S. public colleges and universities as ranked by U.S. News & World Report out of a possible 82 complete surveys with a response rate of 51.2% (Edmiston-Strasser, 2009).

From the perspective of the students, 52 universities catered for 308,367 and 10,564 faculty members. The data gathered from 34 universities represents 232,137 students
and 8,127 faculty members. Thus the responses generated from 34 universities that represent a total of 65.38% response rate, represent a healthy student contribution rate of 75.28% and 76.98% for faculty.

Social media is considered an important and efficient way to communicate with the existing and prospective students by the universities, therefore analysis was conducted to check the effectiveness of social media on the small, medium, and large-scale universities.

**Figure 1:** Social Media Percentage Based on Student Population

![Social Media Percentage](image)

The social media responses generated in figure 1 showed that as the size of the university increases, the management feels more need for effective use of social media technology for their university. There is a strong agreement (more than 50%) for medium and large-scale universities compared to less than 40% for small-scale universities the general agreement is more than 50% in small-scale universities but less than 30% in medium and large-scale universities. Therefore, concluded that the management in medium and large-scale universities consider
social media is an important tool for their university. Small-scale universities also do consider social media as a necessary tool but not as highly important. Some disagreements were noted for small-scale universities (2%).

The findings for Foreign University Collaboration (FC) for the management responses are categorized based on small, medium, and large-scale universities.

**Figure 2**: FC Response Percentage Based on Student Population

The foreign university collaboration responses generated in figure 2 showed that large-scale university management staff pay a lot of importance and attention towards foreign university collaboration with 81% of the strong agreement to the statements presented in this research. The level of strong agreement was less than 40% for small and medium-scale universities but these universities have more than 50% agreement that foreign university collaboration can enhance competitiveness through research opportunities, marketing, and resource allocation. There was a 4% disagreement also recorded for small-scale university management staff towards the foreign university collaboration.

From the *Consumer Perspective*, based on the survey data that collected and the universities were chosen for the students’ perspective, the 5 biggest universities operating in DKI Jakarta were chosen and are represented by alphabets A – E. The
ascending order of the universities represents the maximum number of students and the size of the university. Table 2 shows that universities (A & B) are located in the West of DKI Jakarta and are categorized as large-scale universities due to the number of students being more than 20,000. Universities C, D, and E are located in the South of DKI Jakarta and due to the number of students in those universities (less than 20,000), categorized as medium-scale universities.

**Table 2: Attributes of the 5 Universities for Consumers’ Perspective**

| Univ. | Category | Location | # Of Faculty | # Of Students |
|-------|----------|----------|--------------|---------------|
| A     | LARGE    | WEST     | 1,037        | 29,225        |
| B     | LARGE    | WEST     | 750          | 25,068        |
| C     | MEDIUM   | SOUTH    | 448          | 18,027        |
| D     | MEDIUM   | SOUTH    | 415          | 17,508        |
| E     | MEDIUM   | SOUTH    | 351          | 14,135        |
| 5     | TOTAL    |          | 3,001        | 103,963       |

These universities in DKI Jakarta have 103,963 students and 3,001 faculty members. From the management perspective, the 34 universities for which the data collected amounted to 232,137 students and 8,127 faculties, thus these 5 universities represent 45% of those students and 37% of the total faculty. At a broader scope, from 52 universities, the total number of students aggregated to 308,367 students and 10,564 faculties, therefore these 5 universities collectively represent 34% of the total student population and 28% of faculty population in DKI Jakarta.

**Figure 3: Social Media Response Percentage Based on University**
In the analysis depicted in figure 3, it is evident that university B has outperformed all the other universities in terms of the clarity of responses generated by their students on social media with 91% in general agreement and 0% in disagreement with their social media usage and policies. University A although had 59% agreements but it also generated 22% disagreement towards the usage and policy statements that were inquired in this research. Universities C and D had somewhat similar responses to the general usage and policy statements inquired in this research but university E showed high agreement but the level of neutrality (somewhat agree) in their responses was the highest (26%) among all the other 4 universities and this university also showed 6% disagreement as well. Therefore, universities should work closely with their students on the effective usage and monitoring of social media messages, so the fruitfulness of this technology is to fully utilize and can work towards the benefit of their university policies and procedures.

The importance of developing relationships with foreign universities, the development of new technologies, innovations, and theories, conducting research, producing knowledge, and publishing academic literature were the factors identified as the important measures for foreign university collaboration. The following analysis provides a guideline for other universities as to how these 5 universities look at those measures that were considered critical for foreign university collaboration.

**Figure 4:** FC Response Percentage Based on University

![Figure 4: FC Response Percentage Based on University](image-url)
In figure 4 that all the universities were in general agreement by 80% on the measures used for foreign university collaboration, which shows that these universities do pay special attention toward the development or future implementation of foreign university collaboration. Almost all of these universities had foreign university collaboration in one way or the other. University A showed the highest level of strongest agreement to the measures of foreign university collaboration by 38% and next to follow was university E with 30%. All universities strongly agreed on foreign university collaboration by approximately 32%. The highest general agreement was recorded by university B by 71% followed by university C, D, and E. The least level of general agreement is shown by university A. The neutrality was recorded within the 20% range but it was interesting to see how some universities had some disagreements. The highest level of disagreements was recorded by university A at 5%, followed by 2% each for university C and D and a minimum of 1% for university E. University B did not record any disagreements. In general, it was encouraging to see that all the universities considered the measures of foreign university collaboration as important.

As in the previous sections, the researchers have discussed the management-based perspective and consumer-based perspective, therefore, it would be interesting to analyze both the side of the perspective by side for more meaningful analysis. This multi-perspective analysis is based on medium and large-scale universities for which the data collected and processed.

**Table 3**: Multi-Perspective Analysis Details for Medium and Large Universities

| Category | Location | Management Perspective | Consumer Perspective |
|----------|----------|-------------------------|----------------------|
|          |          | No. of Students | Total No. | Faculty | No. of Students | Total No. | Faculty |
| M        | South    | 103,162        | 7         | 2,824  | 49,670        | 3         | 1,214   |
| L        | West     | 54,293         | 2         | 1,787  | 54,293        | 2         | 1,787   |
| TOTAL    |          | 157,455        | 9         | 4,611  | 103,963       | 5         | 3,001   |

In this study, the data was collected from 34 universities and all of the 5 biggest universities were included in those 34 universities. Surprisingly all of the medium-scale universities were located in the south of DKI Jakarta and both of the large-scale universities were located in the west of DKI Jakarta. From 7 medium-scale universities
from a management perspective, the consumer's perspective from 3 of the universities (out of 7) was also collected.

Establishing the data collected, the analysis was conducted comparing both the medium and large-scale universities based on multi-perspective i.e. management and consumer perspective. This kind of analysis can be useful for universities to bridge the gap between what the students have to say and what the management is responding. Major gaps would represent margins for improvement for universities in those areas and rational gaps would mean that what the management is committed to providing is what the students anticipate.

**Figure 5: Multi-Perspective Social Media Analyses**

The **multi-perspective social media** analysis presented in figure 5 shows that the medium-scale universities yield that 74% of the students have shown confidence in their universities' social media policies compared to 88% of the management staff have shown general agreement. The neutrality (somewhat agree) was relatively higher for students (21%) compared to the management staff (13%), therefore, the universities need to be more vigilant with their social media messages. The disagreement level was 5% for students and none of the management staff showed disagreement towards the university's social media policies and adoption.
The multi-perspective social media analysis on the large-scale universities showed that 94% of the management staff were in general agreement with their university's social media policies but this percentage was quite low (78%) for students' perspective. The neutrality was 13% for students and 6% for management with 9% of students disagreeing with the universities' social media adoption and policies.

**Figure 6**: Multi-Perspective Foreign University Collaboration Analyses

The multi-perspective foreign university analysis presented in figure 6 on the medium-scale universities indicates some similar responses from the staff and students, thus the 2 perspectives have yielded similar results. This is the only analysis, where the students and staff have shown similar concerns or importance to the statements raised in this research. The general agreement levels are at 85% for students and 88% for management staff. The neutrality shown is also somewhat close i.e. 14% by students and 13% by staff. Only 2% of the students have shown disagreement towards the foreign university statements.

The multi-perspective foreign university analysis on the large-scale universities confirms that the general agreement towards the foreign university collaboration is similar as students showed a 91% general agreement and staff showed a 94% agreement. What was interesting to see here was that 81% of the staff think that it is
important for the university to establish foreign university collaboration, whereas students strongly agreed to that percentage by 32%. There was a high level of students that agree by 59% that foreign university collaboration is important and staff agreed by 13%. In the agreement levels, these 2 categories show some opposite results, which can both hold.

From the students’ perspective, they might have shown general satisfaction with their university and at the same time realizing the importance of foreign university collaboration. From the management’s perspective, they strongly think that foreign university collaboration can further strengthen their university’s brand equity and they strongly agree to have foreign university collaboration. Therefore, both of these two perspectives are accepted and considered satisfactory. The level of neutrality was somewhat similar at 7% for students and 6% for management. Only 3% of the students have shown their disagreement with the statements for foreign university collaboration.

CONCLUSION, MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study confirmed that from the perspective of the management, the university departments are not strategically targeting their social media responses, thus leading to a weak utilization of such technology to gain competitive advantage, although the management of the private universities did recognize social media as an important tool for marketing their university. The study also confirmed from the consumer perspective that students agreed that their universities have active social media sites but their university is not strategically targeting those social media messages and their utility found to be of a concern for the universities. Universities need to send useful social media messages to their students on regular basis. Foreign university collaboration was found out to be the most important and high-performance variable in creating a long-term competitive advantage for both management and consumer perspective.

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