

## The Influence of Ethnic Identity and Brand Trust on College Choice Decisions (Case Study at IT&B Campus)

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### Abstract

This study seeks to examine the impact of ethnic identity and brand trust on the choice to enroll in an IT&B institution. Ethnic identification significantly influences individual preferences, particularly in educational choices. Brand trust denotes the degree to which potential students rely on the reputation and quality provided by educational institutions. This research adopted a quantitative approach, employing a survey method with prospective IT&B students as participants. We performed data analysis employing various linear regression methods to examine the impact of independent factors on the dependent variable. The study's findings demonstrate that ethnic identification and brand trust substantially affect prospective students' choices about an IT&B campus for their education. These findings have practical implications for marketing tactics in higher education, particularly in enhancing brand trust among various ethnic groups.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Trust, Voting Decision, IT&B.

### Introduction

In the contemporary age of globalization, higher education has emerged as a fundamental pillar in the cultivation of competitive human resources (Zhu et al., 2024). Universities function not alone as educational institutions but also as competitive entities striving to recruit potential students from various backgrounds. This rivalry compels educational institutions to perpetually innovate, both in academic quality and ancillary services, to satisfy the escalating demands and expectations of the community (Al-Faifi et al., 2023). Prospective students' choices regarding educational institutions are becoming increasingly intricate, shaped by several aspects, including internal elements like academic reputation, facilities, and teaching quality, as well as external influences such as social and economic conditions and worldwide educational trends.

A key element affecting prospective students' college selection is ethnic identification (Wang, 2022). In Indonesia, characterized by extensive ethnic variety, ethnic identity significantly influences numerous facets of life, including education (Naully et al., 2022). Ethnic identity encompasses cultural heritage, language, customs, as well as social affinity and membership within a certain group (Victoria, 2022). For individuals, ethnic identification constitutes a component of their overall identity, encompassing culture, values, language, and traditions passed down from their ethnic group (Hino, 2021). In the realm of education, ethnic identification might affect the college selection of prospective students. Ethnic identification frequently influences people's comfort and integration within a certain context (Brass, 2024). Prospective students often select universities that align with their ethnic identity, fostering comfort and a sense of belonging throughout their scholastic experience (Levy & Rozmann, 2023). This identity is crucial for fostering a profound sense of belonging and engagement within the selected academic milieu (Pirtle, 2023).

Ethnic identification significantly impacts college selection preferences, contingent upon the perceived representation of a certain ethnic group inside the school (Education, n.d.). The quantity of pupils, instructors, or administrative personnel with a shared ethnic background indicates ethnic representation (Sparks et al., 2023). Prospective students from that ethnic group may find universities with substantial ethnic representation more attractive, as they sense an increased probability of acceptance and support (Ching et al., 2023). Moreover, equitable and inclusive admissions procedures might enhance a college's attractiveness to specific ethnic groups (Waters, 2022). Prior studies have demonstrated that ethnic identification may affect individuals' opinions of educational institutions, particularly regarding comfort, acceptability, and cultural significance (Llamas et al., 2021). Prospective students typically select colleges that align with their ethnic beliefs and where they feel accepted and esteemed (Billings et al., 2021).



Conversely, brand trust is a crucial determinant in the selection of a college (Boeck, 2022). Brand trust is a crucial factor in consumer decision-making, particularly within the realm of higher education (Nasib, 2021). Confidence in an educational institution significantly influences the opinions and choices of potential students (Wantini & Eka Yudianta, 2021). Prospective students often select schools they see as capable of delivering on their claimed commitments, including superior education, favorable job opportunities, and an optimal learning environment (Husain et al., 2022). This trust instills a sense of assurance in prospective students that they would derive optimal benefits from their selected school, both academically and non-academically. Consequently, brand trust is a crucial determinant that affects the ultimate decision in selecting a college.

Confidence in the institution's reputation is a primary consideration (Nurhasanah et al., 2021). Reputable universities are typically linked to elevated academic standards, accomplished alumni, and sufficient resources (Hanaysha, 2022). Prospective students often select colleges that they see as capable of delivering great education and facilitating future job advancement (Ali, 2023). Moreover, prospective students' opinions of the educational experience they would get correlate with brand trust (Suleman et al., 2023). Universities with robust brand trust are typically seen as capable of offering a conducive learning environment, encompassing both academic and non-academic aspects (Perera et al., 2022). This encompasses encounters with esteemed professors, a curriculum aligned with industry requirements, and possibilities for participation in extracurricular activities that enhance the educational experience (Albayrak et al., 2023).

Alumni testimonials and community evaluations can impact brand trust (Schlesinger et al., 2023). Alumni experiences, whether favorable or unfavorable, might affect future students' faith in an institution (J. Guo et al., 2024). The institution's capacity to uphold alignment between its commitments and student results also affects brand trust (Khurana, 2024). When a college regularly fulfills students' expectations and requirements, trust in the institution's brand will augment, therefore affecting prospective students' decisions to enroll there (S. Guo et al., 2024). Prior research indicates that brand trust significantly influences the decision to pursue studies (Feng et al., 2024).

IT&B Campus, being a higher education institution in Indonesia, faces intense competition from several other universities. To foster growth and attract potential students, IT&B Campus must comprehend the dynamics and aspects that affect prospective students' choices regarding their educational institution. Nevertheless, scant study has directly investigated the influence of ethnic identity and brand trust on the decision-making process for university selection in Indonesia, particularly with IT&B Campus. Moreover, Indonesia's intricate and varied social and cultural landscape complicates the comprehension of potential students' choices. In certain areas, ethnic identification is highly influential and may greatly affect decisions, whilst in other areas, brand trust may take precedence. In this context, IT&B Campus must adopt a more nuanced strategy that acknowledges these distinctions. This study is essential for analyzing the influence of ethnic identity and brand trust on the choice to enroll at IT&B Campus. This study aims to enhance academic literature and assist IT&B Campus in devising more effective and inclusive marketing strategies and program development to attract a diverse array of potential students. By enhancing the comprehension of the impact of ethnic identity and brand trust, IT&B Campus can establish itself as an institution that excels in educational quality while valuing and embracing cultural and ethnic diversity. Foster student trust and allegiance to guarantee the institution's enduring sustainability and expansion.

## Theoretical Review

### The decision to choose

The selection of academic disciplines by prospective students substantially impacts the viability of private universities. Private institutions, functioning within a competitive educational landscape, depend significantly on annual new student enrollments to maintain operational sustainability and facilitate long-term expansion (Kurniawan et al., 2020). The choice of potential students to enroll in a private university strongly influences the institution's primary revenue stream, specifically tuition costs (Najib, 2020). In contrast to public universities that may obtain subsidies or financial assistance from the government, private colleges predominantly depend on tuition fees from students to fund operational expenses, including faculty salaries, building maintenance, and academic program

development (Ma`arif, 2021). Elevated enrollment rates guarantee a consistent revenue flow, which is crucial for the operational viability of private colleges (Adam, 2021).

The choice of students to attend a private university influences the institution's capacity to cultivate high-quality academic programs (Nasib, 2020). Private colleges that effectively attract numerous students often possess greater resources for curriculum development, facility enhancement, recruitment of high-caliber faculty, and research advancement (Onsardi et al., 2021). Consequently, the ability to attract new students can enhance the academic competitiveness of private colleges both nationally and internationally (Liu, 2022). The reputation and image of a private institution substantially impact students' decisions to enroll (Idris et al., 2020). Private institutions that continuously attract high-caliber students tend to have a strong academic reputation among the public (Ahlstedt Karlsson et al., 2024). A robust reputation not only draws more potential students in the future but also enhances confidence from many stakeholders, including industry, government, and the worldwide community. This can subsequently provide more chances for cooperation, funding, and assistance from diverse parties (Tejeiro et al., 2023).

The choice of college significantly influences long-term alumni involvement (Kalman-Lamb & Silva, 2024). Students who are content with their experience at a private university frequently become engaged and participatory alumni, contributing to the school through financial gifts, alumni networks, or by advocating for the college to potential new students (Sahoo et al., 2024). Alumni with significant social power can serve as effective ambassadors for the private university, aiding in the recruitment of prospective students and enhancing the institution's image (Song et al., 2024). The capacity of the private university to innovate and adjust to evolving market demands also impacts the decision to select a college. Private institutions that comprehend the trends and preferences of prospective students and adapt their academic programs and student services will have a greater likelihood of long-term survival (Abdulkareem et al., 2024). The viability of private higher education is significantly reliant on its capacity to consistently attract new students in a competitive landscape, with students' choices serving as a crucial metric for assessing the success of adaptation and innovation within these institutions.

### Ethnic Identity

Prospective students frequently experience greater ease in situations that acknowledge or honor their ethnic background (Leal & Ferreira, 2020). Institutions recognized for fostering an inclusive atmosphere and appreciating cultural variety, including ethnicity, are more inclined to attract students from certain ethnic backgrounds (Pana et al., 2020). Students should evaluate the availability of events or activities on campus that endorse their ethnic culture and values, such ethnic-based student organizations or cultural holiday celebrations (Barnes et al., 2021). The reputation of an institution for promoting ethnic diversity can impact the decisions of prospective students. Institutions that prioritize and advocate for diversity are more likely to recruit potential students from diverse ethnic origins (Bianchi, 2022). Prospective students typically select universities seen as equitable and inclusive, where their ethnic identity is acknowledged and esteemed.

Guidance and suggestions from family, friends, and cultural communities frequently impact the choice of college (Sparks et al., 2023). In specific areas, there is a propensity to select organizations that are already recognized and trusted by the populace (Levy & Rozmann, 2023). Prospective students may favor colleges that maintain strong connections with a certain ethnic community or those that boast successful graduates from that group. Prospective students may consider the degree of ethnic group representation at their selected college (Llamas et al., 2021). Significant ethnic representation can foster a sense of belonging and security for pupils (Gregorio, 2010). This encompasses the representation of students, teachers, and staff sharing the same ethnic origin, alongside the implementation of policies that promote diversity (Tan et al., 2022).

The impressions of prospective students regarding a college's handling of their ethnic group also affect their decisions (Ting & Ting, 2020). Prospective students from ethnic minority groups may refrain from attending universities known for a history or reputation of prejudice (Middel et al., 2022). In contrast, institutions regarded as equitable and dedicated to social justice are likely to draw a greater number of potential students (Freibott et al., 2022). Academic programs that pertain directly

to a student's cultural or ethnic identity, like the study of an ethnic language, history, or arts, appeal to certain prospective students. Institutions providing such programs may appeal more to students seeking to investigate and enhance their comprehension of their ethnic identity.

### Brand Trust

Perceptions of an institution's academic competence frequently establish brand trust (Parhizkar et al., 2023). Reputable universities are often linked to high-quality education, pertinent courses, and qualified professors (Abror, 2022). Prospective students often select colleges that they perceive would offer a quality education and facilitate future employment prospects (HS, 2022). Higher education constitutes a significant commitment, both temporally and financially. Brand trust instills a sense of assurance for potential students and their parents, affirming that this investment will yield the anticipated outcomes (Syah, 2020). Universities with strong brand trust are more likely to attract prospective students, as these students perceive that the institution will deliver value for their financial investment (Martin & Nasib, 2021).

Testimonials from alumni and their achievements can enhance brand confidence (Aman et al., 2023). Universities connected with successful and important alumni in the labor market tend to earn greater confidence from prospective students (Wijaya, 2024). A positive alumni reputation enhances the impression of a university degree's worth in the job market, hence encouraging prospective students to select the school (Setiawan, 2022). Consistency in delivering an experience that aligns with marketing commitments is crucial for establishing and sustaining brand trust (Pramono, 2024). Universities that consistently deliver great academic services, facilities, and support as promised tend to sustain a high degree of confidence (Luan, 2023). This trust is a major determinant in potential students' selection of the school (Nasib, 2021).

Brand trust encompasses the conviction that the institution will ensure a secure atmosphere and promote student well-being, both physically and psychologically (Agyei et al., 2020). Institutions that prioritize student welfare, offer sufficient facilities, and maintain efficient support services generally cultivate greater confidence, therefore impacting the choices of potential students (Le, 2022). The extent to which a college distinguishes itself from its competitors also affects brand trust (Cuong, 2020). Colleges with distinctive attributes, such as exceptional academic programs, creative pedagogical methods, or exclusive facilities, might enhance brand trust (Mvondo et al., 2022). This distinctiveness offers further incentives for potential students to select that university over alternatives (Kim, 2020).

### Methodology

This research utilizes a quantitative methodology and a survey technique. This study employs a descriptive and causal design, aiming to elucidate the impact of ethnic identity and brand trust on the choice to enroll at the IT&B campus, while also examining the causative link between these factors. The research's population consisted of all new students enrolled at the IT&B Campus throughout the academic year of the study. The sample method employed was purposive sampling, wherein participants were chosen based on certain criteria, specifically new students who had been formally enrolled at the IT&B Campus. The researcher identified 120 new students from the 2024-2025 academic year as the target sample for the study.

We collected data using a questionnaire that measures the variables of ethnic identity, brand trust, and college choice decision. This questionnaire consists of several parts:

1. **Ethnic Identity**The study employs a 5-point Likert scale to assess ethnic affiliation, pride in ethnic culture, and perceptions of ethnic representation on the IT&B campus.
2. **Brand Trust**The college's reliability, credibility, and integrity are evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale.
3. **The decision to choose college**The decision to choose an IT&B campus is influenced by factors like academic quality, reputation, and compatibility with personal values, all of which are measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

## Results and Discussions

### Results

#### Hypothesis Testing

**Table 1.** Hypothesis Testing

	Original Sample ( $O$ )	Sample Mean ( $M$ )	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	$T$ Statistics ( $ O/STDEV $ )	$P$ Values
Ethnic Identity ( $X_1$ ) → Decision to choose a college ( $Y_1$ )	0.684	0.729	0.482	3.284	0.001
Brand Trust ( $X_2$ ) → Decision to choose a college ( $Y_1$ )	0.566	0.632	0.428	2.862	0.003

The chart indicates that the ethnic identification variable significantly influences the decision to select a college at the IT&B Campus. The significance value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05, illustrates this point. Similarly, brand trust substantially influences the decision to select a college at the IT&B Campus. The significance value of 0.001, being less than 0.05, substantiates this finding.

## Discussions

### The Influence of Ethnic Identity on Decision to choose a college

This study's results demonstrate that ethnic identification significantly influences the decision to select a college. This indicates that prospective students are inclined to select universities that are perceived by students as respectful or aligned with their ethnic identity. IT&B colleges that offer programs or surroundings promoting ethnic diversity attract students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Awareness and pride in ethnic identity appear to significantly influence academic choices, particularly in the choosing of colleges. IT&B universities might design marketing campaigns that emphasize students' dedication to diversity and inclusivity. Campuses may include testimonials from students and alumni of diverse ethnic origins in their marketing brochures aimed at prospective students. This might assist prospective students in feeling more connected and assured that the university would appreciate their ethnic identity. To enhance appeal, IT&B colleges may establish specialized programs that promote cultural diversity. Initiatives like scholarships for certain ethnic groups, cultural festivals, or classes that emphasize the histories and accomplishments of diverse ethnicities can enhance connections with potential students and expand the campus's allure.

The findings of this study align with other research, indicating that ethnic identification significantly influences decision-making in selection processes (Wibowo et al., 2022). The presence of ethnic representation on campus, in terms of professors, staff, or students, might impact the decisions of prospective students (DeLaney et al., 2022). Individuals may see universities with representation from diverse ethnic origins as more inclusive and supportive of diversity (Finley et al., 2024). This may offer a sense of inclusion and security for students who select the college (Stanton, 2023).

### The Influence of Brand Trust on Decision to choose a college

The choice of a college at the IT&B Campus was heavily impacted by brand trust. Students' faith in an institution can be influenced by its academic reputation, alumni testimonies, and the quality of its educational facilities and services, ultimately affecting their decision to enroll. The necessity for educational institutions to consistently cultivate and uphold public trust, both by academic accomplishments and via transparent and effective communication with prospective students and their parents. The beliefs of prospective students regarding their future possibilities post-graduation also affect brand trust. IT&B schools may possess robust connections with industry and internship providers, along with professional networks that may aid students in securing jobs post-graduation. The conviction that the institution offers superior employment prospects enhances brand credibility and draws potential students. Establishing favorable connections with alumni and engaging students in campus events can enhance brand trust. Robust alumni programs, networking events, and avenues for alumni participation in school activities will enhance the connection between the university and

the alumni community, so augmenting the institution's reputation and credibility among potential students.

The findings of this study are in line with other research, which shows that brand trust has a significant impact on the decision to choose a university (Effendi, 2019)(Nasib, 2021). Positive alumni experiences are critical in building brand trust (Martin & Nasib, 2021). Successful alumni who are satisfied with the quality of education at campus have significant potential to act as effective advocates, offering favorable endorsements to prospective students (Widy & HS, 2021). Alumni testimonials and recommendations that highlight positive learning experiences at the school can increase prospective students' confidence in the reputation of the campus, ultimately influencing their decision to continue their studies there (Nasib et al., 2023). This demonstrates that trust in an institution's brand stems from both internal factors like educational excellence and external support from a robust community of accomplished alumni (Lubis, 2020).

## Conclusions

Research and discourse provide the subsequent conclusions:

1. Ethnic Identity has a significant influence on prospective students' decisions in choosing IT&B Campus. A sense of pride and attachment to Ethnic Identity encourages prospective students to choose universities that they consider to value or reflect their cultural values. Campuses that demonstrate support and inclusiveness towards ethnic diversity are more successful in attracting prospective students from diverse backgrounds.
2. Brand trust was also shown to have a significant effect on the Decision to choose a college. Trust in the quality of education, campus reputation, and career prospects offered by IT&B campuses is an important factor in prospective students' decisions. Campuses that are able to build and maintain high brand trust are more likely to be chosen by prospective students.

This research recommends that the campus enhance its support program for ethnic diversity, encompassing scholarships and cultural activities. Additionally, prioritize enhancing the quality of education and services, along with fostering candid communication regarding campus excellence and accomplishments. Furthermore, execute marketing initiatives that emphasize the dedication to diversity and inclusiveness. Ultimately, enhance connections with alumni and leverage their testimonials for college marketing.

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