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An Analysis of University Social Responsibility on Brand Loyalty, Brand Equity, and Brand Trust, Mediated by Brand Reputation, at Ciputra University in Surabaya

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University Social Responsibility; Brand Loyalty; Brand Trust; Brand Equity; Brand Reputation.

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Abstract

Increasing competition among higher education institutions, particularly private universities, has necessitated strategic approaches to strengthen competitiveness and attract prospective students, including the implementation of University Social Responsibility (USR) initiatives. USR aligns with the principles of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) and plays an important role in shaping institutional reputation, stakeholder trust, and brand equity. The disparity between the large number of private universities and their relatively lower share of new student enrollment compared with public universities underscores the importance of socially responsible initiatives in influencing stakeholder perceptions. This study aimed to examine the effects of USR on brand loyalty, brand equity, and brand trust, with brand reputation serving as a mediating variable, among postgraduate students at Ciputra University in Surabaya, Indonesia. A quantitative research approach was employed, involving a population of 373 Master of Management students enrolled in the 2022–2025 cohorts. A final sample of 139 respondents was selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The study sought to contribute to the theoretical understanding of USR within the context of Indonesian private higher education institutions and provide practical managerial insights into developing effective USR strategies to strengthen institutional reputation, brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand equity amid intensifying competition in the higher education sector.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing competition among universities to attract prospective students has encouraged higher education institutions to strengthen their competitive strategies and institutional reputations, including through University Social Responsibility (USR) initiatives. According to the Overview of Higher Education Data published by the Ministry of Education and Culture for the 2022–2023 academic period, Indonesia had 785 universities, of which 95 (12.1%) were public institutions and 690 (87.9%) were private institutions. However, among the 1,815,166 newly enrolled students, 57.5% entered public universities, while only 42.4% enrolled in private universities. This disparity indicates that the substantial

number of private universities is not matched by a proportionate share of student enrollment. One possible contributing factor is the Uang Kuliah Tunggal (UKT) tuition fee system implemented at public universities, which may make higher education more affordable for certain students. In contrast, private universities generally establish their tuition fees independently and receive different levels of government financial support, potentially resulting in higher educational costs (Husni, Zuhriya, & Diani, 2024; Rara & Trivena, 2022). Consequently, private universities face two major competitive challenges: attracting students who might otherwise choose public institutions and competing with the considerably larger number of private universities. These conditions highlight the need for effective strategies to maintain institutional competitiveness and attract prospective students in an increasingly competitive higher education environment.

The implementation of USR aligns with the principles of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education), which encompass education, research, and community service as the fundamental responsibilities of Indonesian higher education institutions (Chudzaifah, Hikmah, & Pramudiani, 2021). USR initiatives may include scholarship programs, institutional collaborations to support student achievement, and contributions to environmental sustainability and community development (Ilhami, Sulistyowati, & Saiman, 2023). These initiatives may also involve internal organizational practices, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and employee welfare programs (Iryadana, 2024). Such activities can contribute to establishing a distinctive institutional brand identity amid increasing competition (Deccasari, Andiani, & Sudiarto, 2024) while strengthening public interest in and favorable perceptions of universities (Wijaya & Krismiyati, 2020).

Ciputra University in Surabaya was selected as the research setting because of its characteristics as a private university emphasizing entrepreneurship education while actively engaging in social and environmental initiatives. Through its Entrepreneurial Sustainability Management (ESM) program, the university promotes green entrepreneurship and sustainable economic practices (Pramitha, 2024). Meanwhile, the Real Business Solution (RBS) program engages students in addressing practical challenges faced by partner companies while developing their critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation capabilities. In community engagement, Ciputra University has implemented the Desa Sejahtera Mandiri (DSM) program to support village empowerment in East Java and collaborated with the Ministry of Social Affairs through the Empowered Village Partner Program to address community economic and social challenges (Ciputra University, 2024). Collectively, these initiatives illustrate the integration of entrepreneurship education, community engagement, and institutional social responsibility.

Intensifying competition among private universities has positioned USR not merely as a means of fulfilling the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi but also as a potential strategic marketing approach for strengthening institutional image and communicating educational quality to stakeholders. Declining student interest and enrollment may adversely affect institutional financial stability and long-term operational sustainability. Therefore, strengthening institutional reputation and stakeholder trust has become increasingly important for maintaining competitiveness and supporting sustainable university development.

Postgraduate students, particularly those pursuing master's degrees and possessing prior academic or professional experience, may evaluate university social responsibility initiatives from more critical and informed perspectives (Guo, Balaraman, & Mackie, 2023). Previous studies have indicated that USR can enhance brand loyalty by fostering positive perceptions of a university's commitment to societal well-being, strengthen brand trust by demonstrating consistency between institutional commitments and stakeholder expectations, and improve brand equity and brand reputation through the social and emotional value perceived by stakeholders (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2022; Huo et al., 2022). However, much of the existing research has examined universities outside Indonesia or focused on public higher education institutions. Consequently, empirical investigations into USR within Indonesian private universities, particularly those examining the mediating role of brand reputation in the relationships between USR and brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand equity, remain relatively limited. Moreover, inconsistencies in previous findings indicate the need for further investigation into these relationships across different institutional contexts. Given the substantial number of private universities and their comparatively smaller share of student enrollment, understanding the potential contribution of USR as an institutional differentiation strategy represents a relevant and important research priority.

Based on these considerations, this study aimed to examine the effects of USR on brand reputation, brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand equity at Ciputra University in Surabaya. Specifically, the study investigated the relationships between brand reputation and the three brand-related outcomes and evaluated the mediating role of brand reputation in the relationships between USR and brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand equity.

Theoretically, this study was expected to contribute to the existing literature by advancing the understanding of USR as a strategic mechanism influencing stakeholder perceptions and attitudes toward university brands. It also sought to provide a conceptual and empirical foundation for future research examining the relationships among USR, brand loyalty, brand equity, brand reputation, and brand trust across different higher education contexts. Practically, the findings were intended to provide valuable insights for university administrators, marketing practitioners, and academics in developing more adaptive and socially responsible institutional strategies. In particular, the study sought to inform efforts to optimize USR initiatives to strengthen brand loyalty, enhance brand equity, foster stakeholder trust, and establish a sustainable institutional reputation amid increasing competition in the higher education sector. Furthermore, the findings could assist universities in understanding how USR initiatives contribute to students' perceptions of institutional reputation, loyalty, brand value, and trust, while providing a foundation for developing marketing policies and strategies that emphasize social value creation and long-term institutional sustainability.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach to objectively test the relationship and influence between variables through statistical analysis (Syahroni, 2022).

Population and Sample

The research population is 373 students of the Master of Management Study Program at Ciputra University Surabaya (S2) of the Master of Management Study Program, Ciputra

University Surabaya, which totals 373 students (Machali, 2021). The number of samples was determined using the Slovin formula with an error rate of 5%, so that the sample needs of 193 respondents were obtained. Sampling was carried out using convenience sampling, which is selecting respondents who meet the criteria and are easily accessible to researchers (Asrulla et al., 2023). The questionnaire was distributed online via WhatsApp and succeeded in obtaining 139 respondents who met the research criteria. This amount results in a margin of error of around 6.8% and is still considered adequate for prediction-oriented PLS-SEM analysis (Saifudin, 202; Adawiyah & Nuryana, 2024) and (Trisnadi et al., 2025; Sari & Nurhadi, 2025).

Data Collection Techniques

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through an online questionnaire using Google Form, while secondary data was obtained from books, scientific journals, and relevant academic sources. The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale, namely 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Doubtful, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree.

Data Analysis Methods

Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to test the relationship between independent, dependent, and mediated variables. This method was chosen because it is suitable for complex and prediction-oriented research models (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Saragih et al., 2024).

The SEM-PLS analysis was carried out through two stages, namely the outer model and the inner model. The outer model is used to test the quality of instruments through convergent validity, composite reliability, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed based on the AVE value > 0.50, composite reliability was declared reliable if > 0.70, while discriminant validity was assessed using HTMT with a < value of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2021).

The inner model is used to test the relationships between variables through the values of R^2, F^2, Q^2, and path coefficients. R^2 indicates the ability of the variable to explain endogenous variables, F^2 indicates the large contribution of the predictive variable, Q^2 indicates the predictive ability of the model, and the path coefficient indicates the direction and strength of the relationship between variables (Hair et al., 2021).

Hypothesis testing was carried out using bootstrapping by looking at T-statistic and p-value. The relationship was declared significant if the T-statistic > 1.96 at a significance level of 5% (Hair et al., 2021). Direct effect testing is used to determine the direct influence between variables, while indirect effect is used to test the influence through mediation variables. The effect of mediation is further categorized into full mediation, partial mediation, or no mediation based on the significance of direct and indirect influences (Hair et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Model Testing Analysis

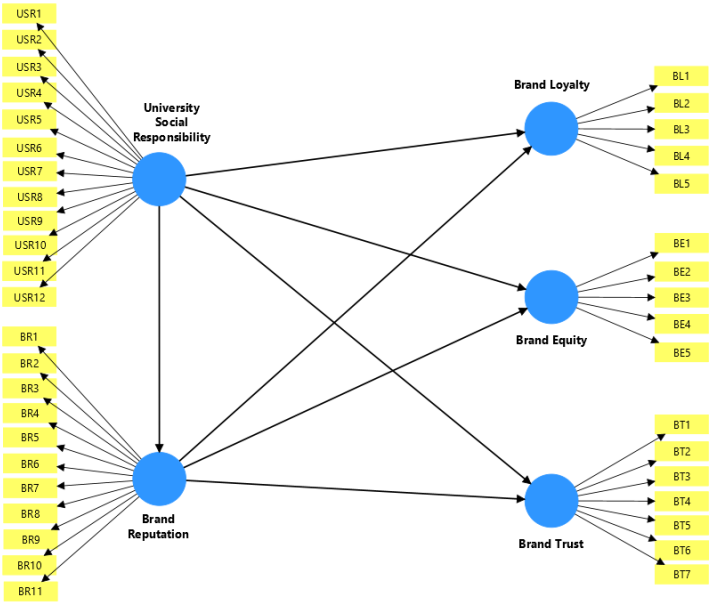


Figure 1. Latent Model of Research Variables

The structural model analysis in this study was carried out using the PLS-SEM approach with the help of SmartPLS software version 4.0. This method is used to analyze the pattern of relationships between latent variables that are complex, namely the relationship between University Social Responsibility (USR), brand reputation, brand trust, brand equity, and brand loyalty at Ciputra University. The structural model tested illustrates the interrelationships between latent constructs that are the main focus of this study, as shown in Figure 1 which shows the framework of the variables relationships analyzed.

Evaluation of Measurement Models

This study uses Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the validity and reliability of each variable. The outer loading test was carried out with a minimum value limit of 0.70 (Solihin & Ratmono, 2020).

Stage 1 showed four invalid indicators due to a loading factor < 0.70, namely BL2 (0.692), BL3 (0.460), BL4 (0.557), and USR3 (0.648), so all four were removed and the test was repeated.

Stage 2 produces all valid indicators (≥ 0.70), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Test Results via Outer Loading Stage 2

Indicator	Brand Equity	Brand Loyalty	Brand Trust	Brand Reputation	USR	Ket.
BE1–BE5	0.883 / 0.888 / 0.825 / 0.840 / 0.891					Valid
BL1, BL5		0.906 / 0.849				Valid
BR1–BR11				0.848–0.869 (range)		Valid
BT1–BT7			0.750–0.902 (range)			Valid
USR1,2,4–12					0.724–0.851 (range)	Valid

Reliability was tested through Cronbach's alpha (lower limit estimated) and composite reliability (upper limit estimated), both with a minimum value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021; Solihin & Ratmono, 2020).

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Ket.
Brand Equity	0.916	0.937	Reliable
Brand Loyalty	0.707	0.871	Reliable
Brand Trust	0.926	0.941	Reliable
Brand Reputation	0.950	0.956	Reliable
USR	0.933	0.943	Reliable

All variables were reliable because they were ≥ 0.70 in both tests.

Convergent validity was tested via Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a minimum limit of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 3. AVE Test Results

Variable	AVE	Ket.
Brand Equity	0.749	Valid
Brand Loyalty	0.771	Valid
Brand Trust	0.695	Valid
Brand Reputation	0.667	Valid
USR	0.599	Valid

All variables are valid because they are able to represent ≥ 50% of the indicators.

The validity of the discriminant was tested through the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) with a limit of < 0.90 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test (HTMT)

Variable Relationships	HTMT
Brand Loyalty ↔ Brand Equity	0.793
Brand Trust ↔ Brand Equity	0.839
Brand Trust ↔ Brand Loyalty	0.693
Brand Reputation ↔ Brand Equity	0.898
Brand Reputation ↔ Brand Loyalty	0.853
Brand Reputation ↔ Brand Trust	0.866
USR ↔ Brand Equity	0.734
USR ↔ Brand Loyalty	0.610
USR ↔ Brand Trust	0.687
USR ↔ Brand Reputation	0.769

All HTMT values < 0.90, so that the discriminant validity is met and there is no overlap between variables. The highest score was found in the relationship between brand reputation and the other three bound variables (0.853–0.898), but still below the threshold; while USR shows values well below the threshold against all bound variables, confirming USR is completely constructively different.

Structural Model Evaluation

The multicollinearity test was carried out through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) with a limit of < 5 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 5. VIF Test

Variable Relationships	VIVID
Brand Reputation → Brand Equity	2.132
Brand Reputation → Brand Loyalty	2.132
Brand Reputation → Brand Trust	2.132
USR → Brand Equity	2.132
USR → Brand Loyalty	2.132
USR → Brand Trust	2.132
USR → Brand Reputation	1.000

All VIF values < 5, so that the model does not experience multicollinearity disturbances and the evaluation of the structural model can be continued.

The estimated path coefficient was tested through bootstrapping (5,000 samples), supplemented with R^2 values (the model's ability to explain bound variables) and Q^2 predict (the model's predictive ability outside the sample, through a blindfolding procedure) (Hair et al., 2017; 2021; Solihin & Ratmono, 2020).

Table 6. Test Path Coefficient

Variable Relationships	Original Sample (O)
Brand Reputation → Brand Equity	0.729
Brand Reputation → Brand Loyalty	0.721
Brand Reputation → Brand Trust	0.747
USR → Brand Equity	0.153
USR → Brand Loyalty	-0.016
USR → Brand Trust	0.103
USR → Brand Reputation	0.729

Brand reputation was the most dominant variable, with a strong influence on brand equity, brand loyalty, and brand trust (0.721–0.747). USR had the strongest influence on brand reputation (0.729), but its direct influence on brand loyalty was negative and close to zero (-0.016), and relatively weak on brand equity (0.153) and brand trust (0.103) — indicating that USR affects brand loyalty, trust, and value primarily indirectly through reputation, rather than directly

Table 7. R^2 and Q^2 Predict Test

Variable	R-square	Q^2 Predict
Brand Equity	0.718	0.431
Brand Loyalty	0.503	0.199
Brand Trust	0.681	0.352
Brand Reputation	0.531	0.472

Brand equity and brand trust have strong R^2 (71.8% and 68.1%), while brand loyalty and brand reputation are in the medium category (50.3% and 53.1%). The entire value of $Q^2 > 0$, indicating that the model has relevant predictive capabilities.

Table 8. Test f-square (f^2)

Variable Relationships	F-Square
Brand Reputation → Brand Equity	0.884
Brand Reputation → Brand Loyalty	0.491
Brand Reputation → Brand Trust	0.823
USR → Brand Equity	0.039
USR → Brand Loyalty	0.000
USR → Brand Trust	0.016
USR → Brand Reputation	1.132

Brand reputation had a large effect on all three bound variables (0.491–0.884), while USR had a very strong effect only on brand reputation (1.132) and a small-to-zero effect on brand equity, brand trust, and brand loyalty (0.039; 0.016; 0.000). This pattern confirms that USR's influence on brand loyalty, trust, and value is indirect—strong only when mediated by university reputation.

The inner model describes something similar: USR has a strong effect on brand reputation (0.729) but not significantly directly on brand loyalty (-0.016) or brand trust (0.103), while brand reputation has a strong and consistent effect on all three bound variables (0.721–0.747; R^2 ranges from 0.503–0.718). These findings affirm the central role of brand reputation as a link between USR and student values, trust, and loyalty — so Ciputra University needs to maintain its reputation so that the impact of USR can be channeled optimally.

Hypothesis Test

1. Direct Effect Hypothesis Test

This study tested the hypothesis using bootstrapping to produce reestimation data used to calculate standard errors, statistical T-values, and P-values as the basis for testing the significance of the relationship between the variables tested. In this test, a T-statistic reference of > 1.96 and a P-value of < 0.05 was used at a significance level of 5%, so that the relationship between variables can be considered significant (Hair, et al., 2021).

Table 9. Direct Hypothesis Test Results with T-Statistic and P-Value

	T *statistics*	**P *values***
Brand_Reputation -> Brand Equity	11.534	0.000
Brand_Reputation -> Brand Loyalty	6.401	0.000
Brand_Reputation -> Brand Trust	6.594	0.000
University_Social_Responsibility -> Brand Equity	2.424	0.015
University_Social_Responsibility -> Brand Loyalty	0.142	0.887
University_Social_Responsibility -> Brand Trust	0.829	0.407
University_Social_Responsibility -> Brand_Reputation	7.846	0.000

The results of the hypothesis test in table 5.20 show that the brand reputation variable has an important role in shaping perception, trust, and loyalty. This is evidenced by the relationship between brand reputation and brand equity, brand loyalty, and brand trust having a T-statistic value of > 1.96 and P values < 0.005. This shows that the university's reputation

will be higher and will have an effect on increasing the value, loyalty, and trust felt by students. However, the USR variable only has a significant effect on the brand equity and brand reputation variables, and does not have a direct effect on brand loyalty and brand trust. This is because the relationship between USR and brand loyalty and brand trust has low statistical T values, namely 0.142 and 0.829, and high P values of 0.887 and 0.407. This shows that brand reputation has an important role as a mediator between USR and these two variables. This result can be concluded that brand reputation is the most influential factor in the model, while USR only exerts a strong influence on brand reputation with a statistical T value of 7.846 and a P value of 0.000, but does not have a direct impact on the bound variable.

Based on the results of the direct effect, it can be concluded that USR does not have a direct influence on brand loyalty and brand trust, but still has a direct effect on brand equity. This pattern proves the role of brand reputation mediators to explain the mechanism by which USR can affect student loyalty and trust in the university.

2. Mediation Test (Indirect Effect)

The mediation test in this study used a bootstrapping procedure to obtain more accurate parameter estimation results. The values obtained showed the indirect influence between latent variables in the tested research model (Hair, et al., 2021).

Table 10. Indirect Effect Test Results

	Original sample (O)	**T statistics**	**P values**
University_Social_Responsibility -> Brand_Reputation -> Brand Equity	0.531	6.120	0.000
University_Social_Responsibility -> Brand_Reputation -> Brand Loyalty	0.525	4.866	0.000
University_Social_Responsibility -> Brand_Reputation -> Brand Trust	0.545	6.116	0.000

Table 10 shows that brand reputation is an important mediator variable that links the influence of USR to brand equity, brand loyalty, and brand trust. This is due to the results of the original sample (O) test on the three relationships with positive values, namely 0.531, 0.525, and 0.545. In addition, all mediated relationships in this study showed a T-statistical value of > 1.96 and a P-value of 0.000. This result can be interpreted that the brand reputation variable mediates significantly the influence of USR on brand equity, brand loyalty, and brand trust. This result can also be interpreted that the implementation of USR does not directly increase loyalty, value, and trust, but through increasing brand reputation that is able to increase loyalty, value, and trust for students.

Judging from the results of direct effects and indirect effects, brand reputation is proven to play a role as a mediator in two forms, namely partial mediation and full mediation. Brand reputation is categorized as a partial mediator in the relationship between USR and brand equity because the direct influence of USR on brand equity is still significant, and the indirect influence through brand reputation is also significant. In contrast, in the relationship between USR and brand loyalty and brand trust, brand reputation plays a role as a full mediator because the direct influence of USR on the two variables is not significant, while the indirect influence through brand reputation is proven to be significant.

The role of brand reputation as the main mediator can be explained because reputation represents a student's overall assessment of the quality, credibility, and image of the university. USR activities are not directly interpreted as the basis for the formation of loyalty or trust, but first form the perception of reputation which then becomes the psychological foundation in the evaluation of the brand by students. The difference between partial and full mediation in this model shows that the influence of USR on brand equity can still be felt directly, even though it is reinforced through reputation. In contrast, to form brand trust and brand loyalty, USR does not stand alone enough and is entirely dependent on reputation as a connecting mechanism. This confirms that reputation serves as the main bridge that translates the social activities of the institution into the perception of student values, beliefs, and commitment.

The Influence of USR on Brand Reputation

The results of the analysis show that University Social Responsibility or USR plays a very large role in shaping brand reputation, with a path coefficient value of 0.729 and a p-value of 0.000. This figure shows a high level of significance and indicates that the stronger and more consistent the implementation of USR at Ciputra University, the more positive the students' perception of the university's reputation. In practice, Ciputra University does not just stop at the concept. Various initiatives are carried out in a sustainable manner, ranging from Entrepreneurial Sustainability Management and Real Business Solution, to community service programs such as Independent Prosperous Villages and Empowered Village Partners. These programs give a real picture that UC's concern for the social environment is not a formality. There is a conscious effort to connect entrepreneurship education with social impacts that can be felt directly by the community. These findings are in line with the results of research by Tan, et al. (2022) which affirmed that USR has a direct and significant influence on brand reputation in the context of higher education, especially in private universities. In other words, what UC does does not stand alone, but rather reflects a pattern that is also found in various similar institutions.

In the perception of graduate students who became respondents, USR UC's activities strengthened the perception that the university has a strong, modern, and long-term image to the wider community. The majority of respondents are 23-27 years old and older and have work experience, so they are able to assess the quality of the USR program more critically and objectively. They see that USR activities are not just a formality, but produce measurable social impact. This is in accordance with the cognitive stages in the Hierarchy of Effects Model (HEM), where students form positive knowledge and beliefs about the university based on information and experiences related to USR. This makes USR an important factor in building UC's reputation as an ethical and responsible entrepreneurial university.

The Influence of USR on Brand Loyalty

Although USR has a strong effect on reputation, the results of the study show that USR does not have a direct effect on brand loyalty. This can be seen from the p-value of 0.887 which is far above the significance limit. This means that while students appreciate UC's social contributions, it doesn't automatically make them more loyal to the university. Graduate student loyalty is more influenced by direct academic experience, such as the quality of teaching, relationships with faculty, relevant curriculum, and the effectiveness of the campus administration system. These findings are different from the research of Huo et

al. (2022) and Bajracharya, et al (2024) which found that USR has a significant direct effect on brand loyalty, suggesting that university contexts and respondents' characters can produce different dynamics.

This condition is very natural at the level of graduate students who have more rational and critical thinking in evaluating the university. Most of the respondents are students of the 2024–2025 class who are still actively undergoing lectures and daily interactions with universities. Therefore, they judge loyalty more based on the quality of services they receive, rather than from the university's social activities. Thus, USR only provides added value emotionally, but is not the main factor that shapes student brand loyalty. From the perspective of HEM theory, this suggests that USR affects only the cognitive stage and is slightly affective, but not strong enough to induce the conative stage that produces loyalty without the role of reputation as a liaison.

The Influence of USR on Brand Equity

The results showed that USR had a positive but weak effect on brand equity, with a path coefficient value of 0.153. This means that the university's social activities do slightly increase the perception of UC brand value and quality, but the contribution is relatively small. Brand equity for postgraduate students is greatly influenced by the university's core values, such as BAN-PT's superior accreditation, graduate reputation, entrepreneurship-based curriculum innovation, and academic facilities that support learning. These results are not entirely in line with the findings of Tan et al. (2022) and Ahmad, et al. (2022) who found that USR has a significant direct effect on brand equity, so that the context of S2 UC students shows different patterns of influence.

USR activities still have a contribution that cannot be ignored. Programs that engage students directly, such as RBS or community empowerment projects, enrich students' experiences in social and professional contexts. This creates the perception that UC is a university that has more value than other institutions. However, the academic aspect is still the main determinant of brand equity, so USR is only a supporter, not the main determinant in shaping the perception of brand value. This weak influence suggests that graduate students place academic quality as the primary basis in assessing the value of a university's brand, while USR activities are perceived as an additional added value. These findings are also in line with the results of mediation which showed that USR is more effective in increasing brand equity through strengthening brand reputation, rather than as a dominant direct factor. Thus, reputation serves as a reinforcing mechanism that transforms the university's social contribution into a stronger perception of brand value in the eyes of students.

The Influence of USR on Brand Trust

USR was also found to have no direct effect on brand trust, with a p-value of 0.407. This shows that students have not been able to feel an increase in trust only from the university's social activities. For UC graduate students, trust is more formed through daily learning experiences, such as the credibility of lecturers, the quality of material delivery, the accuracy of administrative services, and the consistency of the education system. USR is not powerful enough to influence student confidence without the support of the university's reputation. This is in contrast to the research of Huo et al. (2022) and Bajracharya et al. (2024) which found that social responsibility activities had a positive effect on belief, which showed that UC students' beliefs were more influenced by academic aspects than social ones.

The characteristics of the respondents, who are mostly adults and have work experience, make them more critical in assessing trust. They need direct evidence that the university can provide quality education and professional services. So, even though they appreciate USR UC's activities, they still assess trust based on academic aspects that are directly felt. In addition, these findings reinforce the results of a structural model that shows that the influence of USR on brand trust is indirect through brand reputation. This shows that USR first forms the image and reputational assessment of the institution, which then becomes the psychological basis for students to develop trust. Without a strong reputation as a signal of academic quality and institutional professionalism, USR is not enough to be the foundation for the formation of brand trust. This explains why USR does not have a significant influence on brand trust directly. In HEM theory, trust is at an affective stage so it cannot increase without a strong perception of reputation.

The Influence of Brand Reputation on Brand Loyalty

The results of the study show that brand reputation has a strong and significant influence on brand loyalty, with a path coefficient value of 0.721. These findings indicate that Ciputra University's reputation is the main determinant in the formation of postgraduate student loyalty. When students view Ciputra University as a superior, innovative, achievement, and well-accredited institution, the tendency to maintain attachment to the university, participate in various institutional activities, and recommend it to others becomes higher. These results are in line with the findings of Liu and Newell as cited in Rasoolimanesh et al. 2021 who affirm that brand reputation plays a strong role as a strong predictor of brand loyalty.

For graduate students, a university's reputation reflects the quality of their education and future prospects. UC's strong reputation in entrepreneurship, innovation, and business development gives students confidence that the university is able to provide sustainable added value to graduate students' careers. Therefore, a good reputation not only creates pride, but also affects the long-term loyalty of students. These findings also explain why USR has no direct effect on brand loyalty. USR's activities will only have an impact on loyalty when it succeeds in establishing a positive and credible university reputation in the eyes of students. Thus, brand reputation acts as the main connecting mechanism that transforms institutional activities, including USR, into commitment and loyalty of postgraduate students.

The Influence of Brand Reputation on Brand Trust

Brand reputation was also found to have a great influence on brand trust, with a path coefficient value of 0.747. UC graduate students have a higher level of trust when the university has a strong and positive image, both in academics and entrepreneurial practices. UC's reputation as an entrepreneurial university oriented towards quality, innovation, and social impact reinforces students' perception that UC is a trustworthy institution. These findings are in line with various previous studies by Dennis, Han, and Pavlou (in Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021) that affirm that reputation is a major factor in forming trust.

This perception is reinforced by the profile of respondents who are mostly adults and have had professional experience. They tend to judge trusts based on the university's institutional reputation and track record. With a good reputation, students feel more confident that UC is able to provide an education that is relevant, stable, and in line with the demands of the industry. This shows that the university's reputation is an important foundation for the

formation of brand trust. In HEM theory, trust is part of the affective stage that is directly influenced by reputation perception.

The Influence of Brand Reputation on Brand Equity

The results of the study show that brand reputation has a strong effect on brand equity, with a path coefficient value of 0.729. These findings illustrate that the perception of a university's brand value is determined by how good UC's reputation is. Students assess that reputable universities have higher quality education, better career opportunities, and the potential to provide long-term benefits in their professional lives. These results are in line with research by Wulandari et al. (2023) which states that reputation increases brand equity.

In the context of UC, the university's superior reputation in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation is the main factor that increases brand equity. This reputation is built through BAN-PT's superior accreditation, project-based learning programs, and tangible contributions to society. Graduate students who have high expectations consider reputation as a key indicator in assessing the value and quality of a university's brand. This makes brand reputation an important component in the formation of brand equity. In HEM theory, brand equity is the end result (conative) of a strong reputation perception.

The influence of Brand Reputation mediates the relationship between USR and Brand Loyalty

Research shows that brand reputation significantly mediates the relationship between USR and brand loyalty, with an indirect effect value of 0.525 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that USR does not increase student loyalty directly, but loyalty will increase if the USR activity can strengthen UC's brand reputation first. USR programs such as RBS, ESM, DSM, and Mitra Desa Berdaya show that UC cares about the community and the business world. When students value these activities as valuable, the university's reputation increases, ultimately creating loyalty. This is consistent with the research of Tan et al. (2021) which proves its reputation as an important mediator of USR relationships with brand loyalty.

Graduate students value universities that have a strong reputation, not just those that run social activities. When USR UC is interpreted as a tangible form of the university's commitment to sustainability, it significantly enhances UC's image and reputation. This increased reputation is what triggers the emergence of student loyalty. This finding confirms that the role of reputation in the relationship is full mediation, because without the formation of a positive reputation, USR activities have not been able to be perceived by students as a long-term commitment and loyalty to the university. Thus, reputation becomes an important bridge that connects USR with loyalty. In the HEM theory, USR is at the cognitive stage, reputation at the affective stage, and loyalty at the conative stage which proves that the pattern of this research relationship is in line with the structure of the theory.

The influence of Brand Reputation mediates the relationship between USR and Brand Trust

Brand reputation also mediated the relationship between USR and brand trust very significantly, as shown by an indirect effect value of 0.545. These findings suggest that USR does not directly build student trust, but USR is able to strengthen UC's image as a quality and responsible university, which ultimately increases student confidence. Graduate students feel confident in institutions that have a positive reputation and a good track record of making social and academic contributions. These findings support the research of Han, et al., 2015;

Ngo, et al., 2020; Roshana, et al., 2023; Ali & Asim, 2023 (in Shafiq, et al., 2023) that reputation is an important factor that connects CSR/USR with brand trust.

As a more critical generation, S2 students need proof that USR is not just an image. When they saw that USR UC's programs were running consistently and impactfully, they judged the university's reputation to be getting better. It is this good reputation that leads them to believe that UC has integrity, social commitment, and high academic quality. Thus, reputation is a key factor that connects USR with brand trust. This is according to HEM's theory, that trust as an affective response is only formed through the perception of reputation. These results suggest that reputation serves as a key psychological mechanism that transforms cognitive perceptions of institutional social activities into student confidence. Without a strong reputation as a signal of academic quality and institutional credibility, USR's activities are not enough to be the basis for direct trust formation.

The influence of Brand Reputation mediates the relationship between USR and Brand Equity

The indirect influence of USR on brand equity through brand reputation was also found to be significant, with an indirect effect value of 0.531. This shows that the perception of brand value towards UC is not formed directly from USR activities, but from the university's increased reputation as a result of these activities. When students see that UC is actively contributing to society, they consider the university to have a high commitment and capacity. This assessment strengthens the university's reputation, and ultimately increases brand equity in the eyes of students. These findings support the research of Ahmad et al. (2022) and Tan et al. (2022) that reputation acts as a mediator between CSR/USR and brand equity.

Graduate students highly value universities that have social and academic added value. When USR UC is considered effective and has a positive impact, it reinforces their belief that UC is a quality institution. The increased reputation of USR reinforces their perception of brand equity, which includes belief in the quality of education, career prospects, and overall credibility of the university. In HEM theory, this reflects that brand equity is the final conative stage built from reputation (affective) in response to USR (cognitive).

Implications

This study enriches the study of university branding by showing the relationship between University Social Responsibility (USR), brand reputation, brand equity, brand trust, and brand loyalty in the context of private universities in Indonesia. The results of the study show that USR does not directly form brand loyalty and brand trust, but the influence takes place through brand reputation. These findings confirm that reputation is an important mechanism that transforms university social activities into positive perceptions of student values, trust, and loyalty. Thus, this study provides an understanding that in the context of higher education, especially entrepreneurship-based universities, USR is not only related to social responsibility, but can also support the formation of reputation and brand strengthening of institutions.

Managerially, brand reputation needs to be the main concern of Ciputra University because it has proven to play an important role in increasing brand equity, brand trust, and brand loyalty. Reputation strengthening can be done through improving the quality of

academic and administrative services, the competence of lecturers and staff, the relevance of the curriculum to industry needs, learning facilities, and student experience. USR programs such as Entrepreneurial Sustainability Management (ESM), Real Business Solution (RBS), Independent Prosperous Villages (DSM), and Empowered Village Partners need to be developed sustainably and communicated consistently through social media, websites, and various publication media so that their benefits and impacts are better known by students and the community. USR should also provide a space for active involvement for students through applied research, MSME mentoring, social entrepreneurship, and community-based projects so that students can experience the benefits of the program directly. For graduate students with professional experience, activities relevant to career and business development can increase a sense of belonging and loyalty to the university. In addition, universities need to maintain student trust through responsive service, clear communication, periodic evaluations, and the use of student feedback. Integrated communication strategies that connect entrepreneurship, education, and sustainability also need to be strengthened through storytelling, publication of student and alumni achievements, and alumni involvement as part of branding. Thus, USR can be positioned not only as an additional social activity, but as part of the institution's strategy to build a strong and sustainable reputation, which ultimately supports increasing brand trust, brand equity, and brand loyalty as well as strengthening the competitiveness of Ciputra University.

Research Limitations

This research has several limitations that need to be considered in interpreting the research results. The number of respondents obtained was only 139 students, lower than the ideal sample of 193 respondents, so the results of the study were not fully representative of the postgraduate student population of Ciputra University. In addition, the respondents only came from the Master of Management Study Program, so the findings could not be generalized to all postgraduate students and undergraduate students because each study program has different characteristics, experiences, and perceptions. The use of questionnaires as the only data collection instrument also allows the emergence of subjective biases because respondents' answers can be influenced by personal experiences, emotional states, and perceptions. This study also only uses USR variables, brand reputation, brand trust, brand equity, and brand loyalty, so it does not consider other factors such as service quality, brand experience, lecturer competence, academic culture, and campus facilities that have the potential to affect the results of the research. Therefore, further research is recommended to increase the number of respondents, expand the characteristics and scope of the study program, use a mixed methods approach through a combination of questionnaires and interviews, and add other relevant variables so that the research results are more comprehensive, representative, and accurate.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrated that University Social Responsibility (USR) had a positive and statistically significant effect on brand reputation and a positive but weak effect on brand equity, while no significant direct effects were observed on brand loyalty or brand trust. Meanwhile, brand reputation had positive and statistically significant effects on brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand equity and mediated the relationships between USR and

these three variables. These findings indicated that USR initiatives at Ciputra University contributed to strengthening brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand equity primarily through improvements in institutional reputation. Accordingly, Ciputra University was encouraged to develop more targeted, sustainable, and student-centered USR initiatives while enhancing the communication and dissemination of program achievements through social media platforms and official university websites, particularly because social media was identified as the primary information source among respondents. Furthermore, integrating USR into the university's overall branding strategy could reinforce its positioning as an entrepreneurship-oriented institution. Such integration could involve greater participation from students and alumni, campus ambassador programs, student and alumni testimonials, and collaborative initiatives with local communities and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Future USR initiatives could prioritize digital sustainability, green innovation, and community empowerment to strengthen institutional reputation and stakeholder engagement. Future research should consider larger and more representative samples, adopt mixed-methods approaches, and incorporate additional variables, such as perceived value, student satisfaction, brand experience, and brand image, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships examined. Comparative studies involving undergraduate (S1) and master's (S2) students or multiple private universities could further enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide deeper insights into the relationships among USR, institutional reputation, brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand equity in the higher education sector.

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