

## High School Student Considerations in Choosing Economic Faculty in Private Colleges at Pekanbaru City

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### Abstract

Business competition among universities that provide study programs in Economics in Pekanbaru is quite competitive. Several universities that are popular among prospective students are Lancang Kuning University (UNILAK), Riau Islamic University (UIR), Riau Muhammadiyah University (UMRI), Pelita Indonesia College (PI), Riau School of Economics (STIE RIAU) and Persada Bunda School of Economics (STIE PB). Each university possesses its own strengths and weaknesses that will influence the prospective students' consideration in making their choices. The population of this study was high school students in the city of Pekanbaru. Twenty people were taken as samples from each school by using questionnaires and interviews. This study found that based on the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, the students chose UIR in terms of quality. In terms of tuition, the students chose UNILAK and STIE. Finally, in terms of campus location, they chose UMRI which was more strategic since it is located in downtown Pekanbaru City.

**Keywords:** college, quality, location, tuition

### Introduction

It has been a common phenomenon that educational institutions, especially private universities, has indirectly become a part of the business world. The same phenomenon occurs in the city of Pekanbaru where the competition among educational institutions is quite competitive, especially among universities that have study programs in the field of Economics, such as Lancang Kuning University (UNILAK), Riau Islamic University (UIR), Riau Muhammadiyah University (UMRI), Pelita Indonesia College (PI), Riau School of Economics (STIE RIAU) and Persada Bunda School of Economics (STIE PB). Those colleges and universities are popular among prospective students. Each university has different strengths and weaknesses that influence prospective students' consideration in choosing certain universities.

The economics study program is the most popular study program because the graduates have the opportunity to work in various sectors such as Civil Servants (PNS), banking, insurance, leasing, contractors, automotive, industry and even become entrepreneurs. Therefore, universities in Pekanbaru compete to build and provide a positive image of their institutions by utilizing their strengths. It is not uncommon to see promotions and advertisements about those universities on various media such as print, electronic media, and pamphlets. The universities also conduct various events in schools in order to approach prospective students. Some of them do it six months before the admission of new students, while some even started when the new students just began their studies.

Although the universities have made various efforts to attract high school students' interest, the final decision depends on the students and sometimes their parents. Many students who have graduated from high school do not continue their studies immediately due to financial problems (Widayat, 2018: 67-75) which forces them to work in order to raise money for their education in college. Those who are constrained by financial problems often have to consider whether they are going to work or continue their studies at college. This phenomenon is perceived as a business opportunity by several universities in Pekanbaru which then open evening and night classes to accommodate the desires of workers to study.

Basically evening classes are a part of business strategies since the tuition of these classes is typically higher than the morning classes. Actually, it is also influenced by a number of additional costs of opening the evening class. The lecturers who teach the evening classes should be given extra wages in addition to their salary to teach the regular morning classes. Not to mention, the greater electricity load at night means that there are additional costs for evening and night class operations. However, higher tuition does not stop the workers to study because they are financially more stable than regular morning class students.

Based on the previous description, it is important to study high school students' consideration in choosing universities with an Economics study program. Can they be influenced by advertisements and promotions carried out by the universities? Or do the universities already have their image among the public?

## Methods

This research employs qualitative descriptive methods. Sugiyono (2011) suggests that the qualitative method describes and comprehends the meaning behind the visible data. Later, it will look at the extent of consideration of high school students in Pekanbaru to choose a higher education institution with a course in Economics. Primary data were collected by distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews with students who are prospective students. The study was conducted at twenty high schools in Pekanbaru, in August until September 2019. The population is students in twenty-three high schools in Pekanbaru. Twenty students per school were taken as samples.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

Based on the research on the consideration of high school students in the city of Pekanbaru in choosing the Faculty of Economics, Lancang Kuning University, the respondents of this study came from several schools in the city of Pekanbaru, namely:

**Table 1 List of schools visited**

Numb.	Name of School	Number of Respondents
1	SMAN 7 Pekanbaru	10
2	SMAN 1 Pekanbaru	10
3	SMA PGRI Pekanbaru	10
4	SMAN 6 Pekanbaru	20
5	SMK PGRI Pekanbaru	20
6	SMK Keuangan	20
7	SMK 1 Muhammadiyah	20
8	SMA Nurul Falah	20
9	SMK Nurul Falah	20
10	SMA Seirama YLPI	20
11	SMAN 8 Pekanbaru	20
12	SMAN 9 Pekanbaru	20
13	SMAN 10 Pekanbaru	20
14	SMAN 16 Pekanbaru	20
15	SMKN 5 Pekanbaru	20
16	SMKN 7 Pekanbaru	20
17	SMAN 2 Pekanbaru	20
18	SMA Budi Luhur	20
19	SMAN 13 Pekanbaru	20
20	SMKN 4 Pekanbaru	20
21	SMAN 12 Pekanbaru	20
22	SMKN 3 Pekanbaru	20
23	SMA Plus Binabangsa	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>

*Source: processed data 2019*

Based on table 1 above, there were 23 high schools visited and 460 respondents who were all taken randomly from those schools. This study did not include all high schools in Pekanbaru because of time and cost limitations. Moreover, 460 respondents from 23 schools were sufficient to conduct the research.

### **Favorite Private Universities**

In order to see the interest of high school students in Pekanbaru, we conducted a survey which can be seen in Table 2 below:

**Table 2 Private Campus Choices**

Numb.	Campus Name	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau (UMRI)	71	15
2	Universitas Lancang Kuning (UNILAK)	74	16
3	Universitas Islam Riau (UIR)	104	23
4	STIE Riau	32	7
5	STIKES	21	5
6	STIE Prakarti	22	5
7	Universitas Abdurrah	25	5
8	STAI Diniyah	21	5
9	Politeknik Caltex Riau	22	5
10	Amik Mahaputra	25	5
11	STIE Persada Bunda	23	5
12	STIE Pelita Indonesia	15	3
13	STIFAR	5	1
Total		460	100

*Source: processed data 2019*

Table 2 above shows that from 460 responses, the favorite private university among high school students is UIR with 23 %, then followed by UNILAK with 16 % and then UMRI with 15 %. These are the top three universities based on prospective students' perceptions in Pekanbaru City. While 5% of the students choose Economics Schools.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of Unilak**

Universitas Lancang Kuning's strengths and weaknesses can be seen in Table 3 below:

**Table 3 Rating about UNILAK**

Measuring instrument	Score	Weight	N x B
Quality	3	0,11	0,33
Location	3	0,15	0,45
Cost	4	0,20	0,80

*Source: processed data 2019*

From Table 3, it can be seen that most respondents rated unilak as having advantages in terms of low tuition fees. However, in terms of location and quality Unilak is still inferior compared to UIR and UMRI.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of UIR**

Strengths and weaknesses of UIR can be seen in Table 4 below:

**Table 4 Assessment of UIR**

Measuring instrument	Score	Weight	N x B
Quality	4	0,20	0,80
Location	3	0,15	0,45
Cost	3	0,11	0,33

*Source: processed data 2019*

From table 4, it can be seen that the strength of UIR is that their quality is better compared to UNILAK and UMRI, while the weakness is that the costs are more expensive compared to UNILAK and UMRI.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of UMRI**

Strengths and weaknesses of UMRI can be seen in Table 5 below:

**Table 5 Assessment of UMRI**

Measuring instrument	Score	Weight	N x B
Quality	3	0,15	0,45
Location	4	0,20	0,80
Cost	3	0,11	0,33

*Source: processed data 2019*

Table 5 shows that Umri has advantages in terms of its strategic location in downtown Pekanbaru. The weakness is that the quality is still below UIR and UNILAK, whereas the tuition fees are almost equal to UNILAK.

**Discussions**

**Students’ Favorite Private Campus**

Table 2 shows that the top three private universities in Pekanbaru are the Islamic University of Riau (UIR) 23 %, Lancang Kuning University (UNILAK) 16 % and Muhammadiyah University Riau (UMRI) 15 %. It means that high school students still perceive UIR as the best private university in Pekanbaru. This is inseparable from the strategy of constructing an image. UIR has been known to hold national scale events and invite national figures. These events appear to be an attraction for prospective students. On the other hand, Unilak and UMRI rarely hold such kinds of events.

**Direct Visits to Schools**

Nagel (1997: 101) argues that the costumer-based approach is needed in order to study the desires of consumers. In this case, the costumers are the prospective students. Therefore, there is a need to come directly to schools as the base of the costumers.

Dao (2015: 675) argues that the marketing process also plays a role in influencing prospective students in choosing a university. Students of the graduate program are more sensitive to the cost of their tuition while undergraduate students are still dependent on their parents. Hanssen (2017: 755) mentions that the Higher Education Institution (HEI) is used to recruit outstanding students from each school so that the prospective students can feel respected by respecting their intelligence. Visiting the schools is expected to be able to recruit excellent students as well as to explain the Environmental Literacy Requirement (ELR) that is needed to promote the campus environment and can be included in the curriculum of the campus (Moody, 2007: 368). Tsinidou (2010: 242) argues that curriculum structure is needed to direct the specialization desired by students so that graduates have good career prospects.

State campuses such as UI, ITB, and UGM also apply the same thing. Their own students visit the schools to meet prospective students since direct explanation will be different from just reading from the website.

**Online Marketing Through the Website**

Brown (2007: 321) mentions that some universities that market their institutions openly because of high demand, but some others do passive marketing via the internet so that it can be accessed by anyone

In the digital age, it is very important for a university to provide online services; all information must be available to the general public so that anything related to campus is available.

**Table 6 Information Sources**

Numb.	Source	Frequency	Percentage
1	Website	167	36,30%
2	Senior	80	17,39%
3	Pamphlet	31	6,74%
4	Relatives	55	11,96%
5	Billboard/brochure	30	6,52%
6	Advertisement	30	6,52%

Table Cont...

7	Friend	56	12,17%
8	Newspaper	6	1,30%
9	Other	5	1,30%
Total		460	100%

*Source: processed data 2019*

Table 6 above shows that 36.30 % of the samples found information about higher education through the website. Then they asked their seniors who had already studied in college.

The website gives an indication of interest. In order to attract visitors, it is also necessary to present content that attracts millennials since they are the ones who drive the trend. They are the golden generation who understand technology. These people are very critical of the change. If they find the websites unattractive, the universities will not leave a positive impression on them. For this reason, it is necessary to design websites that are more attractive and have more value than other universities.

This is where the role of leadership in making a breakthrough or innovation in order to make innovation to maintain the commitment to improve the faculty (Suryaningsih, 2019: 117-118). The universities will be left behind in the competition if they implement old strategies.

### **Quality**

Riau Islamic University (UIR) successfully established itself as a campus that is above UNILAK and UMRI in terms of quality according to the assessment of high school students. Although they are not necessarily studying at UIR, at least if they have to choose between private higher education institutions especially in the field of economics, they prioritize UIR because according to them the accreditation is better.

Consideration related to accreditation (Widayat, 2018: 199-207) is also important because every university is required to have accreditation as a form of recognition of quality. Cheng (2003: 210) argues that universities must be able to guarantee internal quality and provide value in the future, in addition to current needs. Pham (2016: 387) states that national accreditation standards are needed in measuring the quality of an educational institution. Srikanthan (2004: 278) also states that institutional synergy is needed to build a clear standard of education quality. All private universities strive to improve their quality, but surely they will face some obstacles. As expressed by Odhiambo (2008: 428), the dilemma faced by the educational field as a whole is to improve quality, increase efficiency, while not increasing the cost. These problems may hinder the development of professionals and quality education.

The quality of education is not only limited to academic achievements but also to provide excellent service to stakeholders. It is in line with Angell (2008: 251) who states that the quality of services is also an inseparable part of a process. Cheng (2003: 210) states that universities must be able to guarantee internal quality and provide value in the future so that it does not only address current needs. Garwe also argues that (2015: 396) improving the quality of education requires external quality assurance. Motwani (1997: 135) the application of TQM in improving the quality of teaching so that improvement is carried out sustainably.

Indeed, this quality standard is based on perceptions of prospective students and not DIKTI standards, but the perception of prospective students means that the campus has been able to create a quality image in the eyes of prospective students. It is possible that in the national ranking they are not very good but they are still on a campus that is able to compete, meaning that they are able to carry out creative and innovative promotions.

Odhiambo (2008: 428) states that in the dilemma faced by the education world, in general, is to improve quality, increase efficiency and while maintain stable costs. This condition may make professional development and quality of education will be difficult to achieve. Pham (2016: 387) states that national accreditation standards are needed in measuring the quality of an educational institution.

Here, universities continue to compete to be the best in terms of quality because the existence of competitors is natural in the business environment (Widayat. 2018: 43).

### **Location**

Of the several universities in the city of Pekanbaru, the location of the University of Muhammadiyah Riau (UMRI) is considered the most strategic. The location of UMRI is very strategic because it is located in

the center of the city which is close to trading centers, warehousing, shopping centers, and government offices so UMRI will be the most feasible choice for those who work and take classes from evening tonight. Besides being not far from where they work, they can also relax at the shopping malls to release their stress.

The ability of UMRI to find strategic locations has a positive result because they have strategic locations and we're easily accessible from various angles.

### **Tuition Fee**

The students perceive Unilak as the option that offers the most affordable tuition which provides opportunities for students from lower economic class. It is the strength of this university as students with difficult economic conditions will choose private universities that offer more affordable tuition fees.

The economical limitation is one of the factors put into consideration when someone wants to continue education to college. Some students are fortunate to receive government and private scholarships. However, the scholarships cannot accommodate all students who are in need. Families who live in poverty prefer to fulfill their basic needs first rather than support their children to go to college. Most families who are living in poverty have a low educational background. Data from BPS regarding educational background of the head of poor households indicate that 40.57% did not finish elementary school; 37.89% did not finish elementary school; 12.33% did not finish junior high school; 8.56% did not graduate from high school and 0.65% did not graduate from college. This phenomenon does not only happen in Indonesia. Checchi (2000: 199) finds that in Italy that children with poorly educated parents will be less likely to go to college. It is because educational, financial, and occupational factors are socially dominant.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that high school students or prospective students in Pekanbaru still consider that UIR is better when compared to UNILAK and UMRI in terms of quality and image. In terms of location, the high school students consider UMRI to be more strategic since the campus is accessible from several corners of the city. In terms of cost, UNILAK is superior compared to other campuses because tuition fees are more affordable by the lower middle class.

This study is the perspective of prospective students who will choose a private university that provides courses in economics in Pekanbaru. Their consideration is inseparable from their observations from social media including websites, their seniors and references from family.

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