

THE DETERMINANTS OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The competitive advantage in private universities represents an actual subject in Academia. This research try to study how learning organization, e-HRM and service quality affect the universities' competitive advantage. This research adopted the quantitative research method, using questionnaire as the research instrument. 555 questionnaires were commanded to students of private universities in Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia. The randomly selected respondents returned 155 copies of the questionnaires. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression. The tested hypotheses revealed that learning organizational factors, e-HRM, and service quality partially and simultaneously have a significant effect on universities' competitive advantage.

Keywords: Learning organization, e-HRM, Service quality, Competitive advantage

JEL Classification: I21

INTRODUCTION

Private universities as higher education institutions not only act as a vehicle for the educational process but also as a learning organisation that builds their capacity to adapt and change continuously to increase their competitive advantage. Currently, the competitive advantage is relatively low compared to other universities in different countries in Southeast Asia. The competitive advantage can be seen from the university rank conducted by the Ministry of Research and Technology Directorate of Higher Education (KEMENRISTEKDIKTI). The preliminary research found that only 5.5 % of private universities in North Sumatera got A accreditation in 2021. Organizational learning can form universities, so they have learning dynamics, the ability to transform organizations, empower people, apply knowledge management, and apply technology.

The development of science and technology requires individuals and organizations to learn and be ready for changes. Many things must be prepared to adapt to developments and maintain the organisation's continuity to remain competitive and survive. Technology is a tool that can help and facilitate access to the exchange of learning information. Through technological innovation, namely, e-HRM can reduce organizational costs,

improve service quality and increase productivity, all of which are organizational competitive advantages.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Learning Organization

Learning organization is an organizational behavior process that continuously grows and aims to change its capacity so that organizational goals can be achieved (Marsicks & Watkins, 2015). Meanwhile, according to Garvin (2019) Learning organization represents the ability of an organization to form, achieve, interpret and transfer knowledge to individuals and organizations with the aim of modifying actors to be able to describe new and unprecedented knowledge.

1.2 Learning Organization Dimension

Peter Senge (1994) developed five disciplines of organizational learning to develop the potential capabilities of individuals in organizations, as “The Fifth Discipline” :

1) System thinking

System thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools to clarify the full patterns and help us see how to change them effectively.

2) Personal mastery

Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our vision, focusing our energies, developing patience, and seeing reality objectively

3) Mental models

Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and take action.

4) Shared vision

If anyone's idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it's the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create. One is hard-pressed to think of any organization that has sustained some measure of greatness without goals, values, and missions that become deeply shared throughout the organization.

5) Team learning. The discipline of team learning starts with ”dialogue” the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine “thinking together”. The discipline of dialogue also involves learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning. Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations.

1.3 Learning Organizations Characteristic

The ideal learning organization has different characteristics (Phillips, 2003) such as strategic thinking and vision, will, leadership, communication, learning and development, innovation and decision making, change management, intellectual capital, and knowledge management, measurement and assessment, and rewards and recognition. They have also defined that Learning is divided into two main characteristics one is climate and the second one is culture. Jamali and Sidany (2008) identified five characteristics that are the strategic building blocks of a learning organization:

- 1) Clarity of vision and mission. The organization and each unit need to have a clear mission or goal. Employees need to understand this and how their work contributes to achieving it. In addition, the organization needs to advance the commitment of its employees to the purpose for which it is intended.
- 2) Leadership commitment and empowerment. Leaders must be committed to organizational goals, particularly learning goals. Leaders must help identify performance gaps and then encourage the search for knowledge that narrows and closes the gap. Almost all authors cite leadership as an important element of fostering a learning climate, through behaviors, such as seeking feedback, being open to criticism, admitting mistakes, and empowering their employees to make decisions and take risks (Garvin, 1993).
- 3) Experiments and awards. The problems faced by organizations provide opportunities for experimentation. Organizational structures and systems need to support this experimental practice. Freedom to experiment with new work methods and innovative processes should be supported and encouraged (Senge, 1990; Garvin, 1993).
- 4) Effective knowledge transfer. Communication must be clear, fast, and focused. Information relating to organizational problems and opportunities must be transferred across functional and structural boundaries within the organization.
- 5) Teamwork and group problem-solving. In today's complex world, individuals must help each other achieve organizational goals. Organizational structures and systems need to encourage employees' teamwork and group problem solving and reduce dependence on top management. Teams must also be able to work across multiple functions. Working in teams, organizational members can share knowledge and increase their understanding of other people in different parts of the organization, their needs, and how they work, encouraging knowledge transfer (Senge, 1990; Garvin, 1993).

2. Electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM)

Strohmeier and Kabst (2014) noted that the e-HRM can be also used in information technology for supporting and networking at least two (individual and/or collective) actors in their shared performance of HR jobs. Similarly, Ruël et al. (2007) suggest that the definition of e-HRM is a method of applying HRM strategies, procedures, and

practices in organizations through the conscious and directed backing of and with the full use of web technology-based channels.

The value of system automation is in its ability to improve efficiency; reduce wasted resources associated with rejects or errors; increase consistency, quality, and customer satisfaction; and maximize profit” (Kaur, 2013:36). Expectedly, e-HRM systems contribute to the simplification and reformation of various HR processes such as job analysis, recruitment, selection, training, compensation, performance management, and HR planning (Stone & Dulebohn, 2013). For this reason, electronic human resource management (e-HRM) has emerged to be a driving force behind HRM value creation (Ruël & Kaap, 2012).

2.1 Objectives of e-HRM Application

Accordingly, the objectives of using e-HRM can be summarized in the form of four aspects: the improvement of efficiency, the improvement of administrative processes, the improvement of customer services, and the improvement of strategic roles of human resources (Sahar Khiz, 2011). E-HRM functions are (Swaroop, 2012 and Zafar, 2012):

- 1) *E-selection*: most employers will recruit their employees from online job search engines. The new selection process is keeping tests online by testing their level of knowledge, behavior, and attitude; all those the employer will recruit it properly by conducting all the test online using strong IT, which helps reduce the cost.
- 2) *E-learning*: e-learning refers to any program of learning, training, or education where electronic devices, applications, and processes are used for knowledge creation, management, and transfer. E-learning covers a wide set of applications and processes, such as web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classroom, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via the Internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio-and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, CD–Rom, and more. The training program provides.
- 3) *E-training*: most companies start to think of online learning primarily as a more efficient way to distribute training inside the organization, making it available ”any time”, ”anywhere” reducing direct costs (instructors, printed materials, training facilities), and indirect costs (travel time, lodging and travel expenses, workforce downtimes).e-learning can offer a solution to training in remote or disadvantaged locations(Hirschman, 2001), as well as tailor-made learning that fits the particular needs of the learner (Mumford, 2003), but it can also create barriers to learning, due to lack of hardware, fear of technology and learner isolation.
- 4) *E-performance management system*: e-HRM can provide managers with information on how to conduct a performance appraisal, the specific criteria, and

measurements of given positions and roles as well as examples and models of effective appraisals. The penetration rate of computer-mediated communication, mainly e-mail, is higher than 75 percent in corporate environments and e-mail has emerged as the communication medium of choice. The email and electronic forms on the intranet of the company or a restricted website are used to gather information on training needs assessment, inducing benefits in terms of less paperwork, lower administration cost, shorter distribution and response time, and higher response rate.

- 5) *E-compensation*: all companies must engage in compensation planning, whether small or large. Compensation planning ensures that managers allocate salary increases equitably across the organization while staying within budget guidelines. As organizations have expanded their boundaries, the use of intranet and the internet has become vital. The usage of intranet and internet for compensation planning is called E-Compensation Management.
- 6) *Anywhere, anytime access*: As a web-based HR service system, e-HRM offers you the flexibility of accessing the program 24/7, from anywhere with an internet connection and IT.
- 7) *Eliminate the majority of HR paperwork*: With the growing awareness for environmental sustainability, many companies are looking for ways to “go green.” Implementing an e-HRM will help reduce almost all of the paperwork associated with HR tasks we can save money and time.
- 8) *E-leave*: it helps to reduce the cost by defining the workforce in advance and to review the past data records of the employee leave etc.

2.2 The Role of E-HRM

Ma and Ye (2015) clarify that the e-HRM technology delivers a portal that enables managers, employees, and HR professionals to view, extract, or alter knowledge which is essential for managing the HR of the organization. Heikkilä and Smale (2013) noted that the electronic human resource management (e-HRM) systems are argued to be transforming the role of HR by facilitating the transfer of transaction processing responsibilities to employees, managers, and other third parties. Organizational innovation is one of the major causes of managers’ headaches; therefore, electronic human resource management (e-HRM) strategies such as: (e-recruitment, e-selection, e-training, e-performance appraisal, and e-compensations) play a major role within organizations to benefit HR professionals.

2.3 Outcomes of E-HRM

- 1) *High commitment*: by high commitment, the workforce is motivated. Employees are willing to interact with the management about changes in the organizational

environment and the impact that this can have on the internal organization. For HR itself, this means that it should be able to play the role of change agent.

- 2) *High competence*: high competence points toward the capacities of employees to learn new tasks and roles if the circumstances require it.
- 3) *Cost-effectiveness*: cost-effectiveness refers to the competitiveness of pay levels and employee turnover rate, and to the acceptability of costs resulting from employee resistance such as strikes.
- 4) *Higher congruence*: higher congruence refers to the internal organization, the reward system, and the 'input, throughput, and output' of personnel, which need to be structured in the interests of all stakeholders (Soltani & Mirnanejad, 2012).

3. Service Quality

Growing demand for higher-quality services in an organization has become an important trend among consumers (Chen *et al.*, 2019; Osakwe, 2019). Quality services are essential to differentiate the organization and gain a competitive advantage (Mahmoud *et al.*, 2019). It is evident from the service quality literature that the most cited information came from the work of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) in the name of the SERVQUAL model. Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) defined service quality as "the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to customer expectation."

Kotler and Armstrong (2007) defined the term 'service quality as it is the ability of a service firm to hang on to its customer. That is, in their opinion customer retention is the best measure of service quality. According to Saghier, and Nathan (2013), service quality is an important concept in the service industry. It is more important for financial service providers struggling to show their customers' product differentiation.

Parasuraman (2001) suggests the concept of service quality related to satisfaction is determined by five elements commonly known as service quality "RATER":

- 1) *Responsiveness*: the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service
- 2) *Assurance*: as employee's knowledge, courtesy, and the ability of the firm and its employees to inspire trust and confidence in their customers.
- 3) *Tangible*: the appearance of physical facilities, types of equipment, communication materials, and technology.
- 4) *Empathy*: the caring, individualized attention provided by their banks or service firms to the customers.
- 5) *Reliability*: the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

4. Competitive Advantage

Kotler & Gary Armstrong (2012) state that competitive advantage is an advantage over competitors that offer a lower value or provide greater benefits because the price is higher. Every organization in competition has a desire to be superior to its competitors.

Hao Ma (2004) in his research describes the dimensions of competitive advantage into the 4C's Of Global Competitive Advantage:

- 1) *Creation and innovation* are essential in the process of creating a competitive advantage in organizations because to be able to compete in the global market an organization must excel in creation and innovation. Innovation in an organization is obtained from the organization's ability to provide facilities for employees to innovate, efficiently and learn continuously (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989; Williamson, 1991; Senge, 1990).
- 2) *Competition is a form of response to the competition that then becomes the organization's competitive advantage, which can be in the form of a strong market position or a superior distribution network.*
- 3) *Cooperation*, can be defined as the initiation and participation in collaborative arrangements with other competitors in the organizational environment. Cooperation usually aims to gain customer access, complement partners' resources and capabilities; learn and accumulate technical and organizational knowledge; and benefit from economies of scale and scope (Kontraktor and Lorange, 1988; Hamel *et al.*, 1989).
- 4) *Co-option*, strategically seeks to align the interests of the other party with the interests of the focused organization, providing the possibility of competitive advantage by opening windows of opportunity, removing external barriers, or neutralizing threats. This is often done through a third party to influence the organization's fight with rivals. It can also happen between rivals who secretly collude to deal with customers together or a third rival (Porter, 1980).

Competitive advantage can be achieved if the organization utilizes and develops organizational resources efficiently, effectively, and creatively to form superior human resources. According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, intellectual resources are important resources that organizations must own because they have a crucial role in creating competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The RBV approach emphasizes that to gain a competitive advantage, it is more critical for the organization's internal resources to be maximally empowered than external factors to achieve and maintain their competitive advantage (Sukma, 2018).

5. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach to the type of explanatory research. This research was conducted by taking a sample from a population and using a questionnaire as a data collection tool. The research population is the students of the Mandiri Bina Prestasi Medan Polytechnic class 2018-2020 with a total of 551 students. Referring to Sugiyono's opinion (2018), a population that is considered homogeneous can use a random sampling technique. Random sampling is taking samples from the population at random without considering the strata that exist in the population. According to Gay and Diehl (1992), the minimum sample for descriptive research is 10% of the population. So the number of samples used in this study was 55 students. The data collection technique used is by distributing questionnaires. This stage is related to developing hypotheses (based on theory) as the basis for linking latent variables with other latent variables and their indicators.

6. HYPOTHESIS

- H1: It is suspected that learning organization factors (X1), e-HRM (X2), service quality (X3) have a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y).
- H2: It is suspected that the learning organization factor (X1) has a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y).
- H3: It is suspected that the e-HRM factor (X2) has a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y).
- H4: It is suspected that the service quality factor (X3) has a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y).

The data describes the variables studied and serves as a means of measuring the hypothesis. A good instrument must meet two requirements, namely valid and reliable. For this reason, it is necessary to test the validity and test reliability.

Validity test

A validity test can be done by calculating the correlation value between the data on each question with the total score. Whether or not an item is valid can be determined by comparing the product-moment correlation index (r-count) with its critical/probability value. From this formula, the product-moment correlation value will be obtained, if the correlation coefficient value has a significance level of < 0.05 ($\alpha = 5\%$) or $r\text{-count} > r\text{-table}$ (95% confidence level, $= 0.05$), then the question item used in the research instrument is valid.

Reliability Test

The reliability test used is Alpha Cronbach. According to Arikunto (2012), if the alpha is 0.6 then it is said to be reliable.

To determine the effect of independent variables, namely organizational learning variables (X1), e-HRM variables (X2), and service quality variables (X3) on the dependent variable, namely competitive advantage (Y) both simultaneously and partially, linear regression analysis was used. This study used multiple linear regression analysis, SPSS software.

The test results show that the multiple correlation coefficients (R) value is 0.726. This shows that the relationship between organizational learning variables (X1), e-HRM variables (X2), and service quality variables (X3) on the competitive advantage variable (Y) is quite strong. Meanwhile, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.511 or 51.1% means that the organizational learning variable (X1), e-HRM variable (X2), and service quality variable (X3) which are used in this regression equation together contribute to the competitive advantage variable (Y) by 0.511 or 51.1%. By 48.9% is a contribution from other variables that are not included in this study.

Discussion of each independent variable that affects the dependent variable of competitive advantage:

1) Learning organizational (X1)

The results of the t-test show that organizational learning (X1) has a significant effect on the 95% confidence level partially on competitive advantage (Y), with a regression coefficient of 0.063. It can be concluded that organizational learning has a positive effect on competitive advantage. In other words, the better the organizational learning, the competitive advantage will increase, on

the contrary, if the organizational learning is bad, the competitive advantage will decrease.

2) E-HRM (X2)

Based on the results of the t-test, the e-HRM (X2) has a significant effect on the 95% confidence level partially on competitive advantage (Y), with a regression coefficient value of 0.054. This means that e-HRM has a positive effect on competitive advantage. In other words, the better e-HRM, the competitive advantage will increase, on the contrary, if e-HRM is bad, the competitive advantage will decrease.

3) Service quality (X3)

The results of the t-test state that the service quality (X3) has a significant effect on the 95% confidence level partially on competitive advantage (Y), with a regression coefficient value of 0.034. This means that service quality has a positive effect on competitive advantage. In other words, the better the service quality, the competitive advantage will increase, on the contrary, if the service quality is bad, the competitive advantage will decrease.

7. RESULTS

Hypothesis 1:

Organizational learning (X1), e-HRM (X2), service quality (X3) have a simultaneous effect on competitive advantage (Y) tested through the F-test. The calculated F-value generated is 31,641 greater than the F-table of 2.72, or sig. of 0.000 is smaller than of 0.05 then H_0 is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that organizational learning (X1), e-HRM (X2), and service quality (X3) simultaneously have a significant effect on the competitive advantage (Y).

Hypothesis 2:

Organizational learning factors (X1) has a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y) tested through t-test. The calculated t-value obtained is 4.761, which is greater than the t-table of 1.99 or sig. of 0.000 is smaller than of 0.05 so that H_0 is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that the organizational learning variable (X1) has a partially significant effect on competitive advantage (Y).

Hypothesis 3:

E-HRM factors (X2) have a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y) tested through t-test. The calculated t-value obtained is 2,346, which is greater than the t-table of 1.99 or sig. of 0.021 is smaller than of 0.05 so that H_0 is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that the e-HRM variable (X2) has a partially significant effect on competitive advantage (Y).

Hypothesis 4:

Service quality factors (X3) have a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y) tested through t-test. The calculated t-value obtained is 2.268, which is greater than the t-table of 1.99, or sig. of 0.026 is smaller than of 0.05 so that H_0 is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that the service quality variable (X3) has a partially significant effect on competitive advantage (Y).

8. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of multiple linear regression analysis, it can be interpreted that the research hypothesis states that there is a simultaneous influence between organizational learning variables (X1), e-HRM (X2), service quality (X3), on competitive advantage (Y). With the results obtained calculated F is greater than F-table that is equal to $31.641 > 2.72$ with a probability of 0.000 whose value is smaller than $= 0.05$. This means that if all the variables can be applied properly, it will simultaneously affect competitive advantage.

The results of partial regression analysis can be interpreted that it is proven that there is a significant partial effect between organizational learning variables (X1), e-HRM (X2), service quality (X3) on competitive advantage (Y). It can be seen from the t-count which is greater than the t-table, which is $2.252 > 1.99$ with a probability of 0.000 which is smaller than $= 0.05$. It can be interpreted that each variable has a significant influence on competitive advantage.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Organizational learning (X1), e-HRM (X2), and service quality (X3) simultants have a significant effect on the competitive advantage (Y). The calculated f-value is greater than the f-table, which is $3.641 > 2.72$ with a probability of 0.000 whose value is < 0.05 .

The effect of organizational learning (X1) on competitive advantage (Y) has a t-count greater than the t-table that is $4.761 > 1.99$ and a probability of $0.000 < 0.05$, it can be said that the significance test or H_0 is rejected, which means organizational learning (X1) has a significant effect on competitive advantage (Y) if the other independent variables are constant.

The effect of the e-HRM variable (X2) on competitive advantage (Y) has a t-count greater than t-table, namely $2.346 > 1.99$ and a probability of $0.021 < 0.05$, it can be said that the significance test or H_0 is rejected, which means that means that the e-HRM variable (X2) has a significant effect on the competitive advantage variable (Y) if the other independent variables are constant.

The effect of the service quality variable (X3) on student satisfaction (Y) has a t-count greater than t-table, namely $2.268 > 1.99$ and a probability of $0.026 < 0.05$, it can be said that the significance test or H_0 is rejected, which means the service variable quality (X3) has a significant effect on the competitive advantage variable (Y) if the other independent variables are constant.

10. SUGGESTIONS

Mandiri Bina Prestasi Polytechnic to operate a learning organization requires professional management. In practice, it takes the willingness and commitment of all parties involved in higher education management to actively participate in making learning organizations work optimally. In addition, it is expected to build a website for each work unit that is synergized into an organization portal to improve the institution's performance.

In the implementation of e-HRM, the problem that is most often found is loading certain applications, which sometimes take quite a long time. This long loading can be overcome

by increasing the server capacity used for the institution's e-HRM. HR management also needs to coordinate with IT regarding the stability of the connection used.

To increase stakeholders' satisfaction, Mandiri Bina Prestasi Polytechnic should make standard operating services that are integrated and documented in each major/department and carry out periodic and continuous satisfaction measurements.

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