

Value Co-Creation Behaviour in Higher Education: Creating Brand Credibility through University Website Features

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ABSTRACT

The features of the university's official website play an important role in enabling prospective students to obtain information relevant to the institution, which in turn reinforces its brand credibility and value co-creation behaviors among the students. More intricate and dynamic models, which emphasise customer-based brand credibility, frequently lack empirical validation within the higher education sector, especially in Asia. This study conducted an empirical analysis of model development to examine how higher education institutions' website features can enhance students' value co-creation behaviors through brand credibility. This study employed a survey method to gather data from 317 students, utilizing a purposive sampling technique. Using structural equation modelling, it was found that website characteristics significantly impact brand credibility and the value co-creation behaviour. Findings also indicate that website usability, informational content, and interactive elements significantly affect students' perception of brand credibility. The relationship between website features and value co-creation behaviour are mediated through brand credibility, indicating that improving website attributes can foster students' involvement in university branding. This research represents a first step in comprehending how students engage in value co-creation through the role of website features. This study has many practical implications for educational marketers by highlighting the importance of enhancing website features to induce student engagement, which are essential for university promotion.

Keywords: *Website features, brand credibility, value co-creation behaviour, higher education, Indonesian universities.*

INTRODUCTION

The continual evolution of technology and the proliferation of knowledge have significantly transformed the academic landscape, rendering it increasingly competitive and complex. Institutions of higher learning now need to navigate an ever-changing environment that demands innovative pedagogical approaches and rigorous intellectual engagement (Noor et al., 2019). As the demand for higher education increases and competition to attract students intensifies, Sultan and Wong (2019) argue that universities now recognise the importance of branding in higher education. Universities employ branding strategies to attract, engage, and retain students amid a highly competitive higher education landscape (Ghorbanzadeh & Sharbatian, 2024). As a result, many institutions adopt both digital and traditional marketing approaches, including brand management, to compete effectively (Hart & Rodgers, 2023).

University branding can have broad social and economic impacts, as university graduates significantly contribute to national development. University websites serve as primary communication channels with students and stakeholders, providing essential information while creating an engaging and user-friendly experience. This interaction fosters positive perceptions of the university and enhances online experiences (Barnes, 2015).

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Despite its importance, limited data exist on the role of university websites in promoting students' co-creation behaviours and their influence on university performance, particularly in the context of international scholarships (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2022). There is also a lack of research on how university websites facilitate student interaction and participation, improve the university's brand credibility, and promote value-creating behaviours. Additionally, there is a lack of research on value co-creation within education (Grech et al., 2025). Therefore, exploring the impact of university websites on university success through students' value-creation behaviours is of great significance.

Despite doubts about the importance of branding activities for higher education, there are many reasons universities need to streamline their focus to build and maintain a unique and strong university brand image (Balaji et al., 2016). Among them are increasing competition in higher education, shrinking student supply, and public funding constraints (Eldegwy et al., 2018; Yousaf et al., 2020). Universities primarily operate in emerging markets and aim to attract prospective students by building a strong and favourable brand image over time (Lomer et al., 2018). Additionally, universities play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, emotions, and associations related to their brand, emphasizing the importance of effective brand management (Pringle & Fritz, 2019). The proliferation of similar degree programs across higher education institutions has resulted in a crowded sector, making it increasingly difficult for prospective students to discern differences among universities. Consequently, recent research advocates for the development of dynamic, compelling university brands to enhance differentiation and competitive advantage (Hashim et al., 2020).

According to Kusumawati (2018a), the higher education industry exhibits two primary characteristics that affect how marketing strategies are implemented. Firstly, in many countries, higher education operates as a non-profit sector, meaning that the marketing approaches suited for profit-driven businesses are not directly applicable. Secondly, since higher education provides a service, it shares all the distinctive features of service marketing. The long-term sustainability of a university—encompassing its organizational structure, campus management, and various core functions—positively influences its brand positioning among students and fosters a sense of loyalty and reputation enhancement related to prestige and brand image (Castro-Gómez et al., 2024).

Students will probably have a worse university experience if they don't put in such effort. Hedonic, cognitive, social, and personal gains are among the advantages that students who actively engage in service delivery by contributing experience, knowledge, skills, and a willingness to learn might experience, just like consumers (Syrdal et al., 2023). Outside of the classroom, students can adopt citizenship behaviours (e.g., feedback, advocacy, helpful behaviour, and tolerance) and participation (e.g., information seeking, information sharing, and cooperative behaviour) that have multiple positive effects on their university (Elsharnouby, 2015; Wilkins et al., 2012). Universities need to know what drives students to act in this way. Most studies have not thoroughly examined the relationship between university website features, perceived credibility, and student activities that contribute to value creation, such as active participation, information sharing, and citizenship behaviour, despite the fact that branding and marketing strategies in higher education have been the subject of numerous studies.

Given the diversity of audiences and sub-branding activities involved, applying traditional commercial branding strategies to higher education without adaptation is insufficient. Different audience segments have unique needs, expectations, and aspirations, adding complexity to brand management (Naheen & Elsharnouby, 2024). This complexity is

further compounded by the need for integrated marketing efforts across multiple levels within the institution, such as colleges, departments, programs, centres, and units. Universities often face challenges related to managing brand complexity due to their aim to target diverse groups—including current and prospective students, parents, employers, and government agencies—while limited differentiation in product offerings exists for each segment (Eldegwy et al., 2018). Furthermore, when communicating with diverse audiences, higher education is particularly challenged to decide what themes they should use in their messages to differentiate themselves from the crowd (Story, 2023). Additional internal factors, such as organizational structure, sub-branding initiatives, internal communication systems, and leadership support, also influence university branding complexity (Williams & Omar, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to examine how students' perceptions of website features and brand legitimacy may affect their value co-creation behaviour. It is anticipated that the results will have both theoretical and practical consequences to the scholarly literature on marketing in higher education. The study will theoretically advance knowledge of the relationship between students' value-creation practices and the institution's reputation and brand image, emphasising the critical role that university websites play in encouraging these practices. Last but not least, recognising various value-creation behaviours highlights students' values. From a pragmatic standpoint, this study encourages executives, policymakers, IT managers, and brand and marketing managers to incorporate shared values into brand strategy and enhance brand equity and image by offering recommendations for website functionality and design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Value Co-creation in Higher Education

The value co-creation approach has recently been studied in higher education (Monavvarifard et al., 2019). It is a business strategy emphasising the development and sustainability of shared values between universities and students (Foroudi et al., 2019). Value co-creation in higher education refers to integrating university activists' knowledge, skills, and capacities to improve educational services (Bao et al., 2023). In higher education, universities strive to encourage students to participate in creating and presenting their academic experiences to provide unique and memorable student experiences (Wang et al., 2023). Student participation in value co-creation helps universities adapt educational services to students' needs and demands. Thus, students' value co-creation behaviour can play an important role in helping them experience higher education uniquely and enjoyably (Elsharnouby, 2015).

Furthermore, the advent of the Internet has profoundly transformed how students access information and form perceptions about universities (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Emerging technologies—including a variety of websites, social media platforms, and review sites—have revolutionized brand engagement and communication strategies (Dolega et al., 2021). Data indicate a substantial increase in Internet usage across different age groups in Iran. For instance, recent figures from the Communications Regulatory Authority show that 40% of daily Internet users in Iran are aged between 19 and 29, primarily university students. This highlights the crucial role of the Internet in influencing consumer choices across various products and services (Jan & Ammari, 2016).

Higher education is no different. According to Hashim et al. (2020), selecting higher education courses and institutions are based on online exposure and experiences. Marketing theories and concepts, which have been effective in business companies, are now gradually being applied by many universities to gain a competitive advantage (Aledo-Ruiz et al., 2022). Higher education institutions must meet many needs as each stakeholder in higher education has a particular view of quality, depending on their specific needs (Cheng et al., 2022). The quality of higher education university services is important as a trigger for customer satisfaction (Kusumawati, 2018a). The academic brand reflects stakeholders' perceptions and feelings about the university (Sharipudin et al., 2024). Tangible elements like tuition costs and the calibre of instruction, as well as symbolic and emotional attributes like enthusiasm, passion, and entertainment, form the foundation of the university's brand (Pinna et al., 2023). Because students earn degrees and engage in intricate social and educational networks, universities are social institutions (Akour & Alenezi, 2022). The brand image and students' behavioural intentions are positively impacted by information about diversity, excellence, professors' personal branding, and virtual university website tours (Irshad, 2025).

Website Features and Brand Credibility

A university website functions as a digital platform showcasing the institution, providing essential information about its offerings and fostering a positive perception of the university and its brand (Martinez-Torres & Toral, 2019). An engaging and well-designed website enhances ease of navigation, user enjoyment, and efficient access to relevant information about the university's services or programs (Akram et al., 2025). Consequently, university websites are crucial communication tools, with features that include accessibility, usability, and clarity of information (Foroudi et al., 2019).

Website availability refers to the optimal technical performance of the website (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2022). Since university websites are visited by a diverse audience—including current and prospective students, faculty, administrative personnel, the general public, industry representatives, and government agencies—it is essential that the site's design accommodates the needs of all user groups (Ghorbanzadeh & Sharbatian, 2024). Usability, on the other hand, relates to how easy and convenient it is for users to navigate the website. This includes factors such as physical layout, functionality, efficient information search capabilities, and problem-solving (Rahman et al., 2025). While visual appeal and multimedia integration are important, evaluating the website's usability remains critical (Alsulami et al., 2021). Website marketing strategy is important for universities to increase student enrolment (Jayawardena et al., 2020). Websites can significantly impact users' mental health due to the spread and dissemination of fake news (Dan & Sannusi, 2024).

A strategically crafted academic website can enhance the university's overall image, reputation, and brand value (Htet, 2025), serving as a powerful marketing tool to attract, engage, and retain visitors (Melewar et al., 2017). The perceived brand image reflects students' beliefs, perceptions, and associations related to the university's identity (Schlesinger et al., 2023). This brand image can include tangible and intangible elements, encompassing cognitive and emotional evaluations, as well as emotional reactions (Ghorbanzadeh, 2023). Factors used to assess the university's brand image include innovation, educational quality, seriousness, commitment to ethical standards and social responsibility, opportunities for growth, and personalized attention (Islam et al., 2024). The accuracy and clarity of information presented on the website, known as information design, are also critical in ensuring user satisfaction by providing reliable, precise, and comprehensive

details about university services, thereby encouraging interaction with the site (Akram et al., 2025). Previous studies have shown that university website characteristics positively impact students' value-creation behaviour (Foroudi et al., 2019). Therefore, the following research hypothesis is formulated;

H1: Website features have a significant effect on brand credibility.

H2: Brand credibility has a significant effect on value co-creation behaviour.

This study conceptualises behaviour citizenship students as a multi-dimensional concept that includes four dimensions: bait back, advocacy, behaviour helpfulness, and tolerance (Yi & Gong, 2013). Based on their personal experiences, current students can provide valuable firsthand insights related to campus facilities, faculty, and administrative services to their peers and university staff. When institutions encourage students to share information openly, they can receive highly relevant and creative suggestions for enhancing their services (Zhao et al., 2023). Additionally, students can offer feedback aimed at improving the overall university experience for others. Advocacy involves students demonstrating loyalty to their university by recommending it to friends and family and expressing a strong sense of connection with the institution.

Khanna et al. (2025) emphasized that the main drivers of brand equity are the quality of services, the brand's image, overall brand value, and positive word-of-mouth. Students can act as brand advocates by actively participating in alumni networks, recommending their university to others, or re-enrolling for further studies (Dubber, 2024), recommending it to others, or choosing it again for future studies (Mendoza-Villafaina & López-Mosquera, 2024). Helping behaviour is shown when students volunteer to assist their peers with various tasks, reflecting a sense of social responsibility rooted in their earlier experiences as newcomers (Elsharnouby, 2015). When students recall their first-year experiences, they are more likely to help other students and exhibit a feeling of social responsibility. Sportsmanship is the source of tolerance, which is described as putting up with inevitable disturbances and difficulties without complaining (Olanrewaju, 2024). When they encounter service failures or performance that falls short of their expectations, students can show tolerance. Accepting modifications to class schedules, studying in uncomfortable settings, embracing new teaching methods, and embracing course syllabus changes are a few examples of tolerance (Bayley, 2024).

Shen et al. (2024) observe that consumers who see a brand as responsible and proactive correlate it with elevated quality standards. This perception may enhance satisfaction and trust, while an engaged brand presence cultivates heightened customer loyalty (Japutra & Molinillo, 2019). Naheen and Elsharnouby (2024) also found that the responsibility dimension significantly influences brand engagement. Therefore, when students appreciate the personality and values of a university brand, they are more likely to demonstrate participatory and citizenship behaviours that support the institution. Therefore, this study hypothesises:

H3: Website features have a significant effect on value co-creation behaviour

Value Co-creation Behaviour

Co-creation refers to a specific type of user engagement where active consumers contribute voluntarily to a company or organization by sharing their knowledge and experiences, particularly during innovation processes that can lead to more impactful market contributions (Oliveira et al., 2024). In the context of universities, the information that users share about

the institution on the website can shape how prospective students perceive the university. When potential students find the information shared by trusted sources or familiar users to be helpful, trustworthy, or convincing, they are more likely to follow these reviews and recommendations (Rynarzewska & Pelletier, 2025). Features on a university's website can foster co-creation behaviours, and active participation can enhance the institution's brand reputation and image. However, among different co-creation behaviours, citizenship behaviours do not seem to influence the university's brand image (Ghorbanzadeh, 2023). The idea of creating shared value through stakeholder collaboration and co-creating value has gained increased attention from both scholars and universities (Harandi et al., 2023). The idea of creating shared value through stakeholder collaboration and co-creating value has gained increased attention from both scholars and universities (Furrier et al., 2025). Therefore, this study hypothesises:

H4: Website features significantly affect value co-creation behaviour through brand credibility.

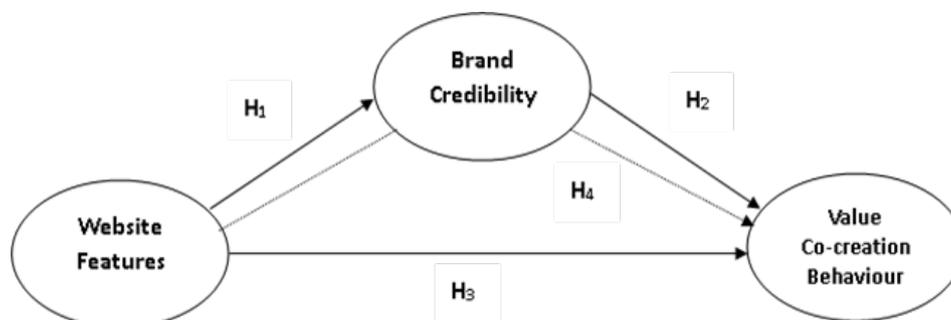


Figure 1: The conceptual model of the study

METHODOLOGY

This research uses explanatory research. Explanatory research aims to explain the relationship between variables, explain the position of variables, and test hypotheses for generalisation purposes (Malhotra et al., 2006). In this study, the purpose of using explanatory research design and quantitative research method is to test the influence of website features on brand credibility and its impact on value co-creation behaviour. The location of data collection in this study was conducted at Brawijaya University Malang City, East Java, Indonesia. The location was chosen because Brawijaya University is the largest university in Malang Raya, and it annually manages tens of thousands of students from various regions. Due to the large student population, it can produce relevant data to the research objectives in this study.

The sample design used in this study is non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique. The questionnaires were distributed online using Google Forms. There are seventeen main questions and respondents are asked to answer based on Likert scale for all statement items (table 1). According to Hair et al. (2017), the sample size can be set based on the number of indicators or item questions for each variable. Each indicator can be multiplied by 5-10 to get the final sample size. Data were finally collected from 317 respondents. To test the hypotheses in this study, the data analysis uses Partial Least Square (PLS). PLS is a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) equation model based on components or variants. According to Ghazali and Latan (2014), PLS is an alternative approach that shifts from a covariance-based SEM approach to a variance-based one.

Table 1: Items questionnaire

	Source
Website Features (X1)	
X1.1 When I navigate the University's website, I control what I can do.	(Foroudi et al., 2019)
X1.2 The University's website is interesting and engaging.	
X1.3 The University's website is easy to use.	
X1.4 The University's website is not stuck	
X1.5 Pages on this website do not <i>freeze</i> after I enter my order information	
X1.6 It is very easy to read the contents of the University's website.	
X1.7 The University's website makes me feel that I am a unique consumer	
X1.8 I believe that the University's website is tailored to my needs	
X1.9 The University's website has personalization characteristics	
Brand Credibility (Y1)	
Y1.1 This university is doing exactly what it promised	(Bougoure et al., 2016)
Y1.2 The quality carried by this university is trustworthy	
Y1.3 I can count on this university's brand	
Y1.4 This university reminds me of graduates who are equipped with enough skills and knowledge and know what they are doing	
Value Co-Creation Behavior (Y2)	
Y2.1 I say positive things about the university's services to others	(Yi & Gong, 2013)
Y2.2 I recommend my university services to other students	
Y2.3 I help other students if they need my help when getting/using university services	
Y2.4 I advise other students regarding university services	
Y2.5 I help other students if they seem to have a problem with the university's services	
Y2.6 I encourage other students to use the university's services	
Y2.7 I teach other students to use the university's services correctly	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial findings focus on the outer model, which explains the relationship between latent variables and their indicators, essentially demonstrating how each indicator relates to its corresponding latent construct. The convergence validity is assessed through factor loadings, with desirable values exceeding 0.7. The results indicate that all indicators have factor loadings greater than 0.7, confirming the validity of the measurement tool used in this research. Additionally, the correlations between website features, brand credibility, and value co-creation behaviour indicators with their respective constructs are higher than their correlations with other constructs, showing that each latent variable better predicts its own indicators. The composite reliability scores for these constructs are above 0.7, indicating that the indicators effectively represent their latent variables. Overall, these findings suggest that the measurement model in this study meets the required standards for validity and reliability.

Partial Least Squares (PLS) are used to simultaneously test the research hypotheses and assess both the measurement and structural models. The analysis produces two primary outcomes: the inner model and the outer model. The inner model illustrates the relationships among latent variables within a structural or path framework, while the outer model reflects the validity and reliability of the constructs. According to the guidelines of (Hair et al., 2019), this study determined that the model is both valid and reliable, as indicated by the outer loadings being above 0.5, with the composite reliability and AVE values for each construct exceeding 0.5 and 0.7, respectively. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha scores are higher than 0.7, showing internal consistency. The discriminant validity analysis confirmed that the correlations between different constructs are less than one, ensuring that each construct is distinct. The validity and reliability findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Validity and reliability result

Item	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Composite Reliability	Loading Factor	Decision
FW (X)	0.766	0.571	0.830		Reliable
X1.1				0.645	Valid
X1.2				0.635	Valid
X1.3				0.762	Valid
X1.4				0.329	Valid
X1.5				0.722	Valid
X1.6				0.680	Valid
X1.7				0.715	Valid
X1.8				0.548	Valid
X1.9				0.521	Valid
X1.1				0.645	Valid
BC (Y1)	0.717	0.502	0.797		Reliable
Y1.1				0.563	Valid
Y1.2				0.555	Valid
Y1.3				0.810	Valid
Y1.4				0.820	Valid
CCB (Y2)	0.832	0.502	0.875		Reliable
Y2.1				0.760	Valid
Y2.2				0.800	Valid
Y2.3				0.756	Valid
Y2.4				0.717	Valid
Y2.5				0.595	Valid
Y2.6				0.634	Valid
Y2.7				0.676	Valid

According to Table 2, the measurement model in this research demonstrates strong discriminant validity, as evidenced by AVE values above 0.5 across the board. The reliability of each construct, based on the Composite Reliability scores, is also satisfactory; this can be seen that the Composite Reliability value for the Website Feature variable (X) is 0.766, Brand Credibility (Y1) is 0.717, and Value Co-Creation behaviour (Y2) is 0.831 so it can be said to have high reliability because it has a value > 0.70. Overall, the inner and outer model analysis results indicate that the measurement model in this study meets the required reliability and validity criteria. Thus, the measured data can be used for the next stage, namely testing the structural model or testing further hypotheses using the bootstrapping method. Additionally, as shown in Table 3, all the hypotheses proposed in this study are supported, with p-values below 0.05 (<0.001), signifying significant relationships. This study confirmed the significant influence of the Fitur website on brand credibility and value co-creation behaviour. This confirms that website features positively influence both brand credibility and value co-creation behaviour. These findings align with prior research by Foroudi et al. (2019) which found that the features of university websites have a favourable impact on students' value-creation activities. A university website serves as a digital platform that introduces visitors to the organization and its offerings (Rahayu et al., 2024) and fostering a positive organizational image and reinforcing the brand (Kusumawati et al., 2022). The idea of value co-creation in higher education involves leveraging the knowledge, skills, and capacities of university stakeholders to enhance educational services (Geurts et al., 2024).

Table 3: Hypothesis test

Hypotheses	Estimates	SE	t	P	Decision
H ₁ FW → BC	0.762	0.025	30.121	0.000	Supported
H ₂ FW → CCB	0.414	0.062	6.627	0.000	Supported
H ₃ BC → CCB	0.401	0.063	6.369	0.000	Supported
H ₄ FW → BC → CCB	0.305	0.050	6.126	0.000	Supported

Website features and brand credibility were found to become significant antecedents towards co-creation behaviour, as proposed in the hypothesis of this research. The coefficient track shows that website features are a more direct predictor of co-creation behaviour (coefficient = 0.762) than brand credibility (coefficient = 0.401). In addition, website features significantly affect value co-creation behaviour through brand credibility (coefficient = 0.305). Brand credibility partially mediates the connection between website features and value co-creation behaviour, which means that part of the influence of website features on customer co-creation behaviour is mediated through brand credibility. Thus, enhancing website features not only directly influences co-creation behaviour but also indirectly promotes it through improved brand credibility. The results of this study indicate that university website features play a significant role in promoting student value-creation activities—such as advocacy and volunteering—through the indirect influence of brand credibility.

Educational institutions must strategically utilise digital technologies to drive student participation and enhance learning experiences and social activities, indirectly strengthening the institution's image and reputation. This idea aligns with the findings of Foroudi et al. (2019) who demonstrated that the features of university websites have a positive influence on students' engagement in value-creating behaviours. A university website serves as a virtual showcase, offering essential information about the institution and its services to visitors (Foroudi et al., 2020), while also helping to build a favourable image of the university and its brand. In higher education, value co-creation involves the active contribution of university stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and capacities to improve educational offerings (Monavvarifard et al., 2019). Students can advocate for their university by playing an active role in alumni groups (Naheen & Elsharnouby, 2024), recommending it to others, or selecting it again for future study (Mendoza-Villafaina & López-Mosquera, 2024). Voluntary assistance to peers for completing necessary tasks exemplifies helping behaviour among students (Elsharnouby, 2015). This research provides an initial step toward understanding how students engage with university identity through website features. The perception of brand credibility can be shaped by positive experiences with well-designed website features. Brand credibility can be formed through the experience of using satisfying website features. These results support Pang et al. (2024) as it shows that interactivity, customization, connectedness, and visibility can indirectly affect website atmosphere and customer attraction by mediating online flow status. In addition, this study identified that website features or attributes can significantly trigger customer attraction.

Brand credibility can have an impact on a university's reputation, which plays a significant mediating role in strengthening the relationship between recipient responses and co-creation behaviour (Vo et al., 2024). The quality of higher education services is an important factor that can trigger the level of satisfaction of students and other stakeholders. However, perceptions of this quality can vary depending on the needs and expectations of each stakeholder. Each individual involved in the world of higher education has a unique view

of what is considered an adequate indicator of quality, thus requiring educational institutions to understand and meet these various needs to ensure the satisfaction of all stakeholders. This research provides several practical implications for education marketers to promote higher education institutions. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide insight for university stakeholders regarding the importance of students in making university promotions successful through the positive values received regarding the university website features. Also, brand credibility has been proven to play an important role in influencing value co-creation behaviour. Universities can consider this when carrying out promotional activities through websites, and the designed website features must be able to create brand credibility. In website promotion and management strategies, universities must prioritise brand credibility through relevant, transparent content that can increase positive perceptions.

Student engagement in value co-creation through university websites can have a positive impact on the institution's overall performance and contribute to the continuous improvement of its services over time. The findings suggest that when students participate in value creation activities via the university's digital platforms, it can enhance the university's long-term development and operational success. Such participation indicates a strong sense of loyalty and connection to the university community. An effective and innovative website design can motivate students to actively contribute to shaping the university's brand, whether by advocating for the institution, recommending it to others, or re-enrolling in the future. Moreover, students' helpfulness and tolerance behaviours demonstrate their social responsibility and patience in facing challenges. Nonetheless, not all students engage in these value-adding activities, particularly if their expectations regarding learning conditions or website functionality are not met. These insights highlight the critical role of digital tools and quality academic experiences in fostering student engagement in value co-creation and strengthening the university's reputation. This study is relevant to Kasnakoğlu and Mercan (2020), who states that students' participation in value creation reflects their commitment to being part of the university community.

These findings align with those of Ghorbanzadeh and Sharbatian (2024) indicating that an innovative and thoughtfully designed website motivates users to participate actively in shaping and enhancing the university's brand image. Students who engage in value co-creation often advocate for their university by participating in alumni networks, recommending the institution to others, or re-enrolling for further studies. They tend to exhibit a sense of social responsibility, offering assistance to their peers based on their own experiences as freshmen. Tolerance is also demonstrated when students endure situations where their expectations are not met or when they face service issues. However, not all students partake in co-creation activities despite performing well academically; factors such as the quality of the website and overall learning experience are also influential (Zamora-Ramos et al., 2023).

The findings of this study also support the results of research conducted by Tran et al. (2025), which found that education level can also influence value co-creation, especially in Generation Z. The study's results also show that other factors outside the variables can influence value co-creation (Zamora-Ramos et al., 2023). Students' behaviour in co-creating value emphasises the need to adopt a long-term perspective rather than seeking immediate student satisfaction, indicating the importance of designing more sustainable educational policies and strategies. As highlighted by Osorno-Hinojosa et al. (2022), innovation is also important in creating value co-creation.

CONCLUSION

In this study, it is found that university website features can positively and significantly influence students' co-creation behaviour directly and through brand credibility mediation. Innovative and attractive website features can increase students' trust in the institution, encouraging them to be actively involved in value-added activities such as becoming university ambassadors, recommending to others, or participating in social and volunteer activities. In addition, this study shows that website features function as information media and strategic tools in building a positive image and strengthening the reputation of higher education institutions. Students can search for information and introduce university identity through the website. Students can offer relevant direct details about facilities, faculties, and administrative tasks to colleagues and employees. When universities facilitate free sharing of information, students can provide valuable, innovative suggestions for improving services. The development of a university's brand personality is influenced by students' interactions with staff, faculty, peers, and institutional branding efforts, which collectively draw positive public attention and reinforce a favourable image.

The mediating role of brand credibility underscores the importance of continuously fostering trust through website features that are both relevant and transparent. Overall, active student participation in value co-creation can have lasting benefits for the organization's performance and perception. Students tend to express their personality through the university image, especially when they respect and admire the institution's branding efforts. The university image, which includes education, facilities, infrastructure, and image communication, has been shown to positively influence alums' support behaviour, such as giving personal recommendations and being willing to act as advocates, ambassadors, mentors, and donors. In website promotion and management strategies, universities must prioritise brand credibility through relevant, transparent content that can increase positive perceptions. Building and maintaining a consistent, strong university image not only deepens relationships with current students and alumni but also plays a key role in fostering ongoing engagement, which is vital for the long-term success and reputation of higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, the focus of this study is only limited to website features and brand credibility factors. In contrast, other factors influencing co-creation behaviour, such as learning experience, service quality, and student psychological factors, have not been explored in depth. The data obtained are cross-sectional, so they do not provide a dynamic picture of changes in student behaviour over time. Future research can expand the scope of the study to various types of higher education institutions and regions to increase the generalisability of the results. Future research can include other factors influencing student value co-creation behaviour, such as learning experience and perceptions of online services. In addition, a longitudinal approach is highly recommended to observe changes in student behaviour over time and their impact on the institution's image. More in-depth mediation analysis is also expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the influence of university feature websites on co-creation behaviour. With these steps, it is hoped that future studies can provide more complete and in-depth insights into the optimal strategy for developing university websites to improve the success and reputation of institutions.

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