

TRUST SCHOOL PROGRAM: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED VALUE ON COMPANIES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PROGRAM AND WILLINGNESS TO SPONSOR

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ABSTRACT: *The Malaysian Government has initiated a Trust School Program to enhance education quality through the public-private partnership platform. This present study aims to i) examine the impact of perceived value on the companies' attitudes towards the program and, ii) to investigate the influence of attitude on willingness to sponsor the program. Data were obtained from 30 companies in Malaysia. The results of the regression analysis indicated that perceived value was positively influenced the participants' attitudes towards the program, and this positive attitude strongly predicted the participants' willingness to sponsor the program. The findings of the study indicated the significant roles of perceived value in creating the potential sponsors' favorable attitudes for the program. Managerially, in building the marketing communication contents, emphasis may be given on the social benefit and quality offered by the program.*

Keywords: Public-Private Partnership; Trust-School Program; perceived value; attitude, willingness to sponsor

1. INTRODUCTION

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) promotes participation of the private sector in setting up public facilities. Globally, PPPs have gained popularity for delivering large-scale public infrastructure [1,2]. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education (MOE) initiates a Trust Schools Program to improve the quality of education in public schools. Demographically, 70% (22.8 million) of the total Malaysian population belongs to the age group of 15 - 64 years, and the second-largest age group (23%) is 0 - 14 years [3]. The current and forecasted population age structure indicates a higher demand for education at various levels. The Trust Schools Program aims to accelerate the development of holistic education experience for children [4]. The program has started since the year 2011, and as of 2018, there were 83 Trust School nationwide. The MOE plans to expand the program throughout the nation [5]. The main target sponsors of the program are companies, non-profit organizations, and alumni associations [4].

From the marketing perspective, the trade-off between benefits and sacrifices, the 'give' and 'take' is referred to as consumers' perceived value [6]. Conceptually, [6, p. 14] defined perceived value as a 'consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of "what is received" and "what is given." A multi-dimensional concept of perceived value outlines four dimensions of perceived value, namely, perceived quality, perceived price, perceived emotional, and perceived social value [7]. Based on the theory of planned behavior, favorable attitudes towards the program will then lead to a positive response, which in this study was measured by their willingness to sponsor the program. Thus, this study was carried out 1) to examine the impact of perceived value on the companies' attitudes towards the program, 2) to assess the influence of the companies' attitude towards the program on their willingness to sponsor the program. The findings of the study may provide inputs to the Ministry of Education and the relevant agencies in approaching and strengthening the PPP collaboration with the potential sponsors of the program.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sponsorship is one of the elements in integrated marketing communication, and it has taken a vital role as a strategic approach to marketing and corporate strategies [8]. Sponsorships refer to an arrangement in which a company contributes to the expense of a cause or event to increase the perceived value of the sponsor's brand in consumers' minds. The sponsorships can take place in the form of financial contributions or donations of supplies and services [9]. Most of the previous studies were looking at the antecedent and outcome of brand sponsorships from the consumer's perspective [10, 11]. The present study focused on assessing the value of the program and its result from the potential sponsors' perspective.

According to [7], perceived value consists of four distinct dimensions, termed as emotional, social, quality, and value for money. Based on their study [7, p. 211-212], perceived quality is defined as the utility derived from perceived quality and expected performance of the product. Perceived price is determined as the utility derived from the product due to a reduction of its perceived short-term and long-term costs. This dimension is also known as the perceived value for money. A sponsorship program will observe highly of a sponsor's value if the program is established with a high perceived functional value [12]. The emotional value dimension refers to the utility derived from the feelings or affective states that a product generates. On the other hand, the social value dimension represents the utility derived from the product's ability to enhance social self-concept.

[13] states that the sponsors will make an effort to form a self-image by consuming the uniqueness of the program in obtaining social approval. Should the program have secure connections with the social groups, then the program will attain a high perceived social value. In the case of a trust school program, the social groups are the government itself, the society, the parents of the pupil, the teachers, and the industry associations.

The previous study [14] indicated that customer value was positively related to customer satisfaction and perceived switching costs. Other benefits or outcomes of high customer value include strong customer loyalty and higher post-

consumption intentions [15]. According to [16, p. 6], attitude is "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable manner concerning a given object." The past studies [17, 18] indicate that a favorable attitude toward sponsors is expected to lead to positive behavioral intentions. Applying this finding to the company's perspective, i.e., the potential sponsor, it is postulated that the company's favorable attitude towards the program may lead them to sponsor the program voluntarily.

Given the above, it is predicted that:

H1: The companies' perceived value on the trust school program will significantly and positively influence their attitudes towards the program.

H2: The companies' attitudes towards the program will positively influence their willingness to sponsor the Trust School Program.

Figure 1 presents the research framework for this study.

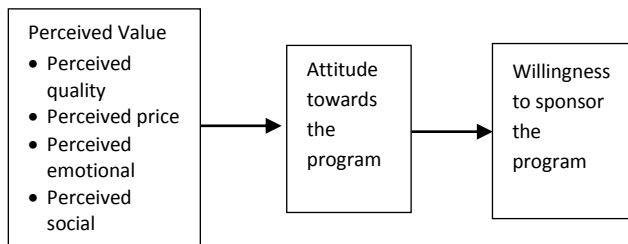


Fig (1) Research framework
(Source: Adapted from [19])

3. METHODOLOGY

The method of inquiry used in this study is a survey. The unit of analysis was the potential sponsors, which are the companies of various industries operating in the Central Region of Malaysia. The survey utilized a combination of convenience and purposive sampling techniques. The questionnaire was emailed and personally distributed to the personnel of the corporate communication department of the companies. The total responses obtained was 30. Perceived value was measured by four dimensions. They are perceived quality, perceived price, perceived emotional value, and perceived social value. The items of each dimension were adapted from PERVAL scale items developed by [7]. The attitude construct was measured by four items adapted from [20, 21]. The companies' willingness to sponsor the program was measured by three items, adapted from [22].

The items were measured using a five-point Likert Scale (1 as 'Strongly Disagree' to 5 as 'Strongly Agree'). The recorded Cronbach alpha for the constructs of perceived value (16 items), attitudes towards Trust School Program (4 items), and willingness to sponsor the program (3 items) were 0.93, 0.90, and 0.87, respectively.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings showed that companies that participated in this survey were from diverse business sectors ranging from banking, transportation, construction, healthcare, and others. Most of the companies (50%) have more than 1000 employees, and 53.3% of the companies recorded annual revenue of more than RM 100 million. 36.7% of the companies have been in the business between 10 to 50 years. 30% of the companies were established in less than ten years.

A vast majority of the participated companies (90%) agreed that CSR is essential to any company, and they were among the companies.

The recorded mean score of perceived value construct was 3.47 (SD = 0.5). By dimensions, the highest mean score was recorded for the perceived social value (M= 3.61, SD= 0.72). Next was the perceived quality value dimension (M=3.56; SD = 0.77). The mean score for attitude and willingness to sponsor was 3.41 (SD = 0.75) and 3.33 (SD= 0.69), respectively.

The result of regression analysis indicates a significant positive influence of perceived value on the potential sponsors' attitudes towards trust school sponsorship (R square of 0.650, p <.001) (Table I). The result suggests that 65% of the attitudes are explained by how the participants viewed the value of the program. The higher their perceived value towards the program, the stronger their positive attitudes towards the program sponsorship will be. Thus, H1 was supported.

Table I. Regression analysis results on companies' perceived value and attitudes towards Trust School Program

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.255	.513		-.496	.624
Perceived value	1.055	.146	.806	7.210	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Attitude					
R-Square (0.650) / DF(1, 28) = 51.978, p < 0.05					

As shown in Table II, the result of linear regression provides the support that the participants' favorable attitudes towards the trust school sponsorship lead to their willingness to sponsor the program. The recorded R square of this model is 0.778 (p <. 001). The result provided support for H2.

Table II. Regression analysis results on attitude and willingness to sponsor

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.562	.285		1.972	.059
Attitude	.813	.082	.882	9.902	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Willingness to sponsor					
R-Square (0.778) / DF (1, 28) = 98.056, p < 0.05					

Education is one of the key sectors to support nation-building. As highlighted, the Trust School is one of the programs established by the Ministry of Education to promote quality education. The result of the present study showed that perceived quality and perceived social value are the two highly essential dimensions of perceived value. In designing the marketing communication contents, it is useful to communicate the actual performance, and the standard of quality governed the program. These may improve future sponsors' perception of the quality of the program. According to [23], the public partner's capability in managing any issues related to performance management of the project is vital in ensuring the intended value for money outcomes of the project are achieved.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study has shown that the higher the companies' perceived value on the program, the more positive they feel about the program, and this favorable attitude will lead to greater willingness to sponsor the program. In other words, should the companies see a little benefit of the program, they may form unfavorable attitudes towards the program, and the possible outcome is, this may discourage them from sponsoring the program. A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be to highlight the elements of perceived quality and perceived social value as the key benefits of the program to the potential sponsors.

A limitation of this study is that the number of companies participated in the survey was relatively small. The study also did not include existing sponsors. One of the possible areas of future research would be to assess the impact of perceived value on satisfaction and loyalty for the program among the existing sponsors. The findings of the study may provide more information to the policymakers in understanding and meeting the sponsors' expectations.

7 REFERENCE

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