

## **Impact of IIUM's Brand Personality on Students' Institutional Identification: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach**

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### **Abstract**

Malaysia is striving to become an educational hub as reflected in Malaysian Education Blueprint (2015-2025). However, due to the severe competition, declining university going population and decreasing support from the Government, universities look for additional resources. Considering students and alumni the most important stakeholders, this research looks into the phenomenon of institutional identification which motivates students/alumni to contribute back to their alma maters. Importantly, this study is more interested in examining what causes/develops institutional identification among students/alumni. Drawing on Social Identification Theory (SIT), brand personality construct in the context of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) has been validated using confirmatory factor analysis followed by testing its causal effect on institutional identification through structural equation modelling (SEM). Using questionnaire survey gathered from 237 students, results

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provide model fit both in first and second order CFA. Among the six dimensions of IIUM's brand personality model, competence was found to be the most important dimension. The causal relationship between brand personality of IIUM and institutional identification was also found significant. This research benefits IIUM with its branding strategies where emphasis can be given to the underlying dimensions of brand personality model. It is also the source of developing higher institutional identification among students/alumni which ultimately can attract more support in order to become sustainable.

**Keywords:** Islamic, Brand Personality, University, Institutional Identification, Malaysia

**Introduction:**

Ministry of Education, Malaysia has been taking serious strategic decisions for Malaysian higher education sector and the objective is to get 250,000 international students till 2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). The contribution from students has been expected to reach by 15.6 billion Ringgits by the end of year 2020 (Chin, 2019). In parallel with the optimistic action plans, Malaysia is also facing several challenges. The expense that Government is incurring on higher education has been growing at an annual rate of 14%, largely comprising of subsidies. Two important aspects are under consideration. One is developing endowment and waqf funds and second is about developing improvised funding formula for public sector universities (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Support from Government alone may not be sufficient. Higher Education Institutions (HEI) should also develop their own strategies to become sustainable. In this regard, existing students and alumni can play an important role in terms of financial gifts, donations, public relations, and developing positive word of mouth (Myers, Davis, Schreuder, & Seibold, 2016; Ransdell, 1986). However, such support from the students/alumni depends to what extent they are associated (belongingness) with their institution, in other words, their institutional identification. Institutional/organizational identification is defined as "perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own". Institutional

identification motivates students/alumni to contribute back to their alma maters (F. Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

Past studies on institutional/organizational identification have been done focusing on both its antecedents as well as consequences. This research sheds light on branding of an institution that is believed to have a potential impact on students' identification in such a way that they become ambassadors (Wilkins, Butt, Kratochvil, & Balakrishnan, 2016). Under the domain of branding, focus has been given to the brand personality and the reasons are twofold, one because it enables students associate themselves with the university and to express their personality (Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016a) and two because there is a lack of research on university brand personality. For this purpose, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) has been selected due to its unique characteristics that are reflected in its vision, curriculum and practices. Recently, Ahmed and Ali (2020) have developed brand personality model of IIUM using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) . This study further enhances the validity of existing model, while applying confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) followed by investigating the impact of this model on students' institutional identification using structural equation modelling (SEM).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Organizational/Institutional Identification**

Organizational identification (OID) refers to "the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent" (Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970, pp. 176-177). Patchen (1970) described it in terms of "shared characteristics, loyalty, and solidarity". Later on, F. Mael and Ashforth (1992) have linked OID with social identity theory (SIT) and defined it as "perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own". This definition has been prominent among all and followed by most of the scholars so far (Edwards, 2005; McDearmon, 2012; Myers et al., 2016).

The focus of present research is an educational institution i.e. IIUM. Therefore, the term 'institutional identification' (IID) has been used instead of organizational identification (OID). Institutional Identification (IID) has been used by Bornman and Potgieter (2015, p. 3) with a few changes in Mael and Ashforth's (1992) definition of

OID. They have defined it as “the perception of oneness or belongingness to a particular institution where individuals tend to define themselves in terms of their membership of institutions”.

In organizational studies, identification has been theorized as the extent to which an organization’s spirit is perceived by a member as self-defining (Ashforth et al. 2008). Organizational Identification increases the feeling of self-efficacy and esteem (Prati & Zani, 2013, Zhao et al., 2020). People who have strong Organizational Identification, tends to participate more in the organizational activities. It ultimately enhances their feeling of empowerment and upholds their self-concept (Prati & Zani, 2013). According to Martin and Epitropaki (2001), people with great organizational identification tend to follow the organizational goals, norms and values. However, people with low organizational identification focus on self-interest rather than collective good. Organizational Identification plays an important role in shaping the workplace behavior and attitudes (Zhao& Liu, 2020).

Organizational Identification is defined as the “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, p. 626). Many studies have found out the organization identification is dynamic and growing with time (Corley and Gioia 2004, Clegg et al. 2007, Bubenzer 2009). Organizational identification is often considered as “deeply rooted” and comparatively steady and persistent in nature (Ashforth et al. 2008, p. 332). Various process models of organizational identification has been created (Sillince and Golant, 2018; Ashforth and Schinoff 2016; Brown 2017), which have focused on sense giving and sense making while ignoring the apparent vitality of identification over a larger historical sweep of organizational membership. In the view point of employees, organization identification is strong when there is a positive image among the stakeholders (Afsar et al., 2018).

## **2.2 Brand Personality: An Overview**

Brand personality is defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Jennifer Lynn Aaker, 1997, p. 347). The model of brand personality was first established by Jennifer Lynn Aaker (1997) with the motive to define and develop its scale because of its need in the consumer behavior domain (Kassarjian, 1971). Five

dimensions involved in the model are namely; Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. A brief explanation of these dimensions is as follows.

A sincere brand/organization is one that reflects being fair and just while keeping its promises (Jennifer Lynn Aaker, 1997). Excitement is wrapped up with emotional reactions i.e. 'being excited' (Sung & Kim, 2010). It demands a brand to be spirited, imaginative, independent, and up-to-date (Thomas & Sekar, 2008). Competence caters the extent to which a brand is knowledgeable, intelligent, and reliable (Coulter & Coulter, 2002). Sophisticated brand is looked at being upper class (glamorous) and charming (gentle, feminine). Lastly, ruggedness relates to a brand which is outdoorsy (masculine, western) and tough i.e. rugged and strong (D. A. Aaker, 1996). Aaker's brand personality framework with underlying five dimension have been depicted graphically in Figure 1 below.

Over the years, Aaker's brand personality model has attracted both the proponents as well as the opponents. Supporting what Jennifer Lynn Aaker (1997) claimed, the proponents for example, Traci H Freling, Crosno, and Henard (2011) agree that the scale is still valid and prevalent. Additionally, the notability of brand personality construct has been illuminated due to its strong relationship with the brand related correlates such as brand attitude (Chung & Ahn, 2013), brand image (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011), and brand trust (Ha & Janda, 2014). Importantly, scholars have claimed that brand personality is one of the most useful techniques to create differentiation among the competitors (Traci H. Freling & Forbes, 2005; Plummer, 1985; Rauschnabel, Krey, Babin, & Ivens, 2015).

On the other hand, opponents question the generalizability of the scale (Lee & Kang, 2013). Findings from various studies emphasize that brands in different countries and cultures reflect distinct dimensions, for instance passive likeableness and ascendancy in Korea (Sung & Tinkham, 2005), peacefulness in Japan and passion in Spain (J. L. Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001). Likewise, a few pre-existing dimensions e.g. ruggedness and excitement were found unrelated to brand personality and brand related concepts (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Thomas & Sekar, 2008).

In addition to the generalizability issue, there are three meaningful gaps that have appeared in the literature and hence, require attention. Firstly, majority research on brand personality has been done on the

manufacturing sector (e.g. Nike, Ford, Colgate) where there is a dearth of knowledge from the service industry (Wang, Yang, & Liu, 2009). Secondly, brand personality research has largely been conducted in the western countries and less has been reported from the eastern countries. It can be implied that research foci pertaining to brand personality have been inclined towards individualistic cultures rather than collectivist cultures. Importantly, the third gap corresponds to religion especially Islam (part of culture) that has been understudied in the context of brand personality. Next section illuminates the need of associating Islam with branding and brand personality.

Branding has bigger responsibilities than to highlight the practical characteristics for brands and products, it pretends to materialize the business needs to leave product and Corporate anonymity (Ivens and Valta, 2012). The brand is linked with trust and quality offered by the entrepreneurs (Geuens, Weijters and De Wulf, 2009). The consumption decisions of customers mainly depend upon their own brand image (Hanna and Rowley, 2019). According to Hence, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), the choosing of brand is done in the same way as choosing the social circle of friendships. Brand exists because they offer products of their customers by emotionally associating them to their brand and by making room in marketing management to the concept of brand personality (Sung and Kim, 2010).

Brands and their associated personalities are derived from distinguish the control from their relative significance in the setup of self-images and concepts from the consumers (Hanna and Rowley, 2019). Therefore, according to Ivens and Valta (2012), brand personality has attained importance in marketing administration and research, from the understanding of consumption trends and has become a big differentiation factor. Brand personality is a vital asset for managing the corporate brand equity (Kum et al., 2012). Brands that found their value proposition, have high levels of competitiveness in the market, including international scenarios (Yao, 2019). Brand personality is useful to the customers and companies. Firms that develop personality for their brands, induce emotions in customers and enhances their loyalty and trust thus building up consumer usage and preference (Rojas-Méndez, Murphy, & Papadopoulos, 2013; Swaminathan, Stilley, & Ahluwalia, 2008; Venable, Rose, Bush, & Gilbert, 2005).

### **2.3 Brand personality and institutional identification**

Now a days, many universities have moved from traditional to modern institutions. They have started to realize the importance of market share, ways to survive in the market place, strong brand personality that will differentiate them from competitors and importance of hiring high quality faculty members and administrators (Bennett & Choudhury, 2009). By having a strong brand personality, universities will be able to have a strong identification, enable alumni to have a sense of belonging, reduce risk through legitimacy and quality, facilitate emotional and rational decisions and help students to associate themselves with the organization (Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). Strong brand personality and image can build loyalty and maintain sustainable profitability in the long run (Pinar et al., 2011).

Studies on brand have enormously been conducted; however very less work have been done in the scope of university branding. Most of the researches have studied the relationship of university branding on university's brand identification Fazli-Salehi et al., 2019; Heffernan et al., 2018; Pinna et al., 2018; Foroudi et al., 2017, Balaji et al., 2016; Goi et al., 2014; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014; Khanna et al., 2014; Kantanen, 2012; Balmer & Liao, 2007; Kim et al., 2001; and Baker & Balmer, 1997), reputation (Plewa et al., 2016; Williams & Omar, 2014; and Aula & Tienari, 2011).and brand equity (Herrero-Crespo et al., 2016; Pinar et al., 2014; and Mourad et al., 2011). Furthermore, in today's global market place, the university is not only facing competition in the country but also across the globe, therefore understanding university brand personality can be the key strategy to strengthen institutional identification in the market and to compete with the rest. Realizing the importance of brand personality, this study aimed to explore its impact on Students' Institutional Identification. From a managerial perspective, this study also seeks to outspread brand personality research into the academic institutions. Specifically, the current study attempts to explore the impact of IIUM's Brand Personality on Students' Institutional Identification. The main focus of a university should be motivating the students, building strong identification and preparing them for future careers (Polyorat, 2011). As a result, the brand personality dimensions of competence and sincerity will have more influences on student's identification with their academic institutions.

## **2.4 Social Identity Theory (SIT), Institutional Identification (IID) and Brand Personality**

Foundational to the notion of organizational/Institutional identification is the social identity theory (SIT) which was put forward by Henri Tajfel (1978) and Henri Tajfel and Turner (1979). SIT has been recognized among the most important theories of social psychology that illuminate the bond concerning the self and the group (Hogg, 2006). As per its underlying assumptions, people generally classify themselves as members of a group (“us”) and put others into their own membership grouping (“them”). Social identity theory (SIT) comprises of personal and social constituents. Earlier is concerned with one’s distinct personal traits whereas later is related with the level of familiarity, importance and value one associates with his/her membership of social group (H. Tajfel, 1981). Henri Tajfel and Turner (1986) explain that the relationship between a person and a group, to which he/she belongs with, can be examined in several contexts for example, organizational membership, religious attachment etc. Lars Moksness (2014) renders these contexts as ‘social categories’ that may cover nationality, sports team, or a work group. However, such social categories should be perceived important by the members because for any member, the ultimate purpose is to increase his/her self-concept or self-esteem (Henri Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Ever since Mael and Ashforth (1992) have defined and developed organizational identification based on social identity theory (SIT), large number of studies has been conducted concerning OID (Cannella, Jones, & Withers, 2015; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Elsbach, 1999; Glavas & Godwin, 2012; Loi, Chan, & Lam, 2014). Similarly, the notion of institutional identification has also been studied especially in the context of universities and colleges (Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016b; Borden, Shaker, & Kienker, 2013; Bornman & Potgieter, 2015; Jiménez-Castillo, Sánchez-Fernández, & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2013; McDearmon, 2012). With regards to the institutional identification per se, this research is more inclined towards evaluating social identity which F. Mael and Ashforth (1992) described as “the sense of belongingness to a group/organization”. According to SIT, people are strongly and emotionally attached with a certain group when social identification with that group is central to their self-concept (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017).



Interestingly, apart from institutional identification, brand personality has also been reported based on social identity theory (SIT). For example, Kim, Han, and Park (2001) examined attractiveness of brand personality with its impact on the level of brand identification in the Korean cellular phone market. They found that attractiveness of brand personality positively affects brand identification. Moreover, they claimed that most of the prior studies looked into the notion of 'organizational identification' and therefore, they filled the gap while investigating 'brand identification'. Recently, brand identification construct was also applied in the university context by Balaji et al. (2016b) who empirically tested its antecedents and consequences. Building on social identity theory (SIT), they have found a positive relationship between university brand personality and university identification. However, instead of utilizing full brand personality scale, only four items i.e. friendly, stable, practical, and warmth were used to measure brand personality construct. Another research pertaining to brand personality resting on social identity theory was conducted to test the impact of athlete human brands on consumers' identification and a positive significant relationship was found between them (Carlson, Donavan, Cumiskey, & Dietz, 2015).

The above discussion rests on the relationship between brand personality and institutional identification with their roots in social identity theory. Much has been done on the organizational identification where majority studies have been conducted in the context of organizations, focusing on mergers and acquisitions (pre and post situations) as well as turnover intentions among employees (Jos Bartels, Prun & de Jong, 2009; de Moura, Abrams, Retter, Gunnarsdottir, & Ando, 2009). However, there is a dearth of knowledge with respect to evaluating institutional identification, especially of an Islamic institution (in this case, IIUM). On the other hand, brand personality framework of an Islamic institution itself is still a black box and has not been proposed so far. This research fills both the above gaps by proposing brand personality framework for International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and examining its impact on institutional identification (IID). Hence, the relationship between both constructs can be hypothesized as follows.

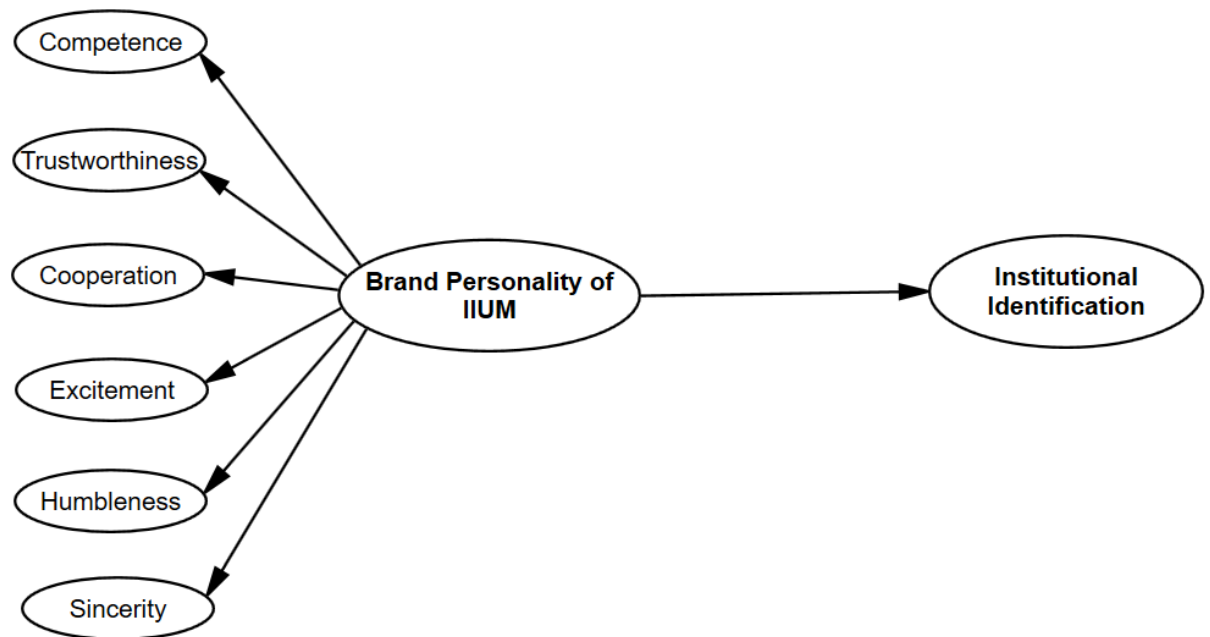


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

### 3.0 Methods

Our study holds a quantitative worldview where positivist paradigm is used to conduct analysis later. The current investigation in this study is made on our hypothesized relationship between IIUM brand personality and institutional identification among university's students. For this, we collected a response from 237 (IIUM) university students both undergraduate and postgraduate albeit we used a different data set for a previous study akin to probe university brand personality solely (Ahmed & Ali, 2020). A self-administered survey questionnaire was used to collect responses from students across various departments within IIUM. We employed structural equation modelling to test relationship between latent constructs i.e. university's brand personality and students' institutional identification. The responses were collected from a likert scale from one to five where 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree.

To measure institutional brand personality, we used a tested version of IIUM brand personality scale effectively tested in our previous research (Ahmed & Ali, 2020). Though the original scale from Aaker's

brand personality. Jennifer L Aaker (1997) contains five dimensions, another dimension was added when we adapted it for testing university's brand personality. The total of six dimensions used in this study includes competence, cooperation, excitement, humbleness, sincerity and trust. Sample item for this scale includes "IIUM gives credit to students' efforts." "My current perception is that IIUM is reliable". Similarly, for students' institutional identification the scale was adapted from F. Mael and Ashforth (1992) and F. A. Mael and Tetrick (1992). Sample item for this scale includes "When someone criticizes IIUM, it feels like a personal insult." "When I talk about IIUM, I usually say "we" rather than "they". We employed both first order and second order analysis before testing causal relationship between university brand personality and students' institutional identification. AMOS version 24 was employed to test data after following normality protocols.

#### **4.0 Results & Analysis**

This research applies structural equation modelling in order to employ inferential statistics. The reasons for choosing SEM was to investigate the relationships among the variables involved concurrently (J. F. Hair, 2006). It is because SEM has the capability to handle composite models with strong as well as rigorous approaches (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). As per systematic approach of SEM, measurement model was calculated first followed by the structural model.

#### **4.1 Measurement Model (CFA)**

For the purpose of developing measurement model, finalized items from exploratory factory analysis which was conducted in the previous research (Ahmed & Ali, 2020) were taken in to consideration and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. Both first & second order analysis were applied.

##### **4.1.1. Measurement Model (First Order)**

First order model was assessed using different parameters such as normed chi square, CFI, TLI, RMSE and the correlations. The results of these parameters are shown below in Table 1 and Table 2 along with pictorial view of first order measurement model at Figure 2.

**Table 1: CFA Results (First Order)**

Goodness-of-fit Statistics	Modified Model	Threshold Values for the Fit Indices	Comments
Normed Chi-square	1.568	< 5	Required level achieved
CFI	.950	> 0.9	Required level achieved
RMSEA	.053	< 0.08	Required level achieved
TLI	0.942	> 0.9	Required level achieved

**Table 2: Correlations**

	Estimate
Comp <--> Coop	.649
Excit <--> Coop	.596
Excit <--> Humble	.600
Sincere <--> Trust	.560
Sincere <--> Humble	.593
Comp <--> Excit	.649
Comp <--> Humble	.620
Comp <--> Sincere	.659
Comp <--> Trust	.672
Humble <--> Coop	.568
Sincere <--> Coop	.567
Coop <--> Trust	.590
Excit <--> Sincere	.578
Excit <--> Trust	.545
Humble <--> Trust	.718

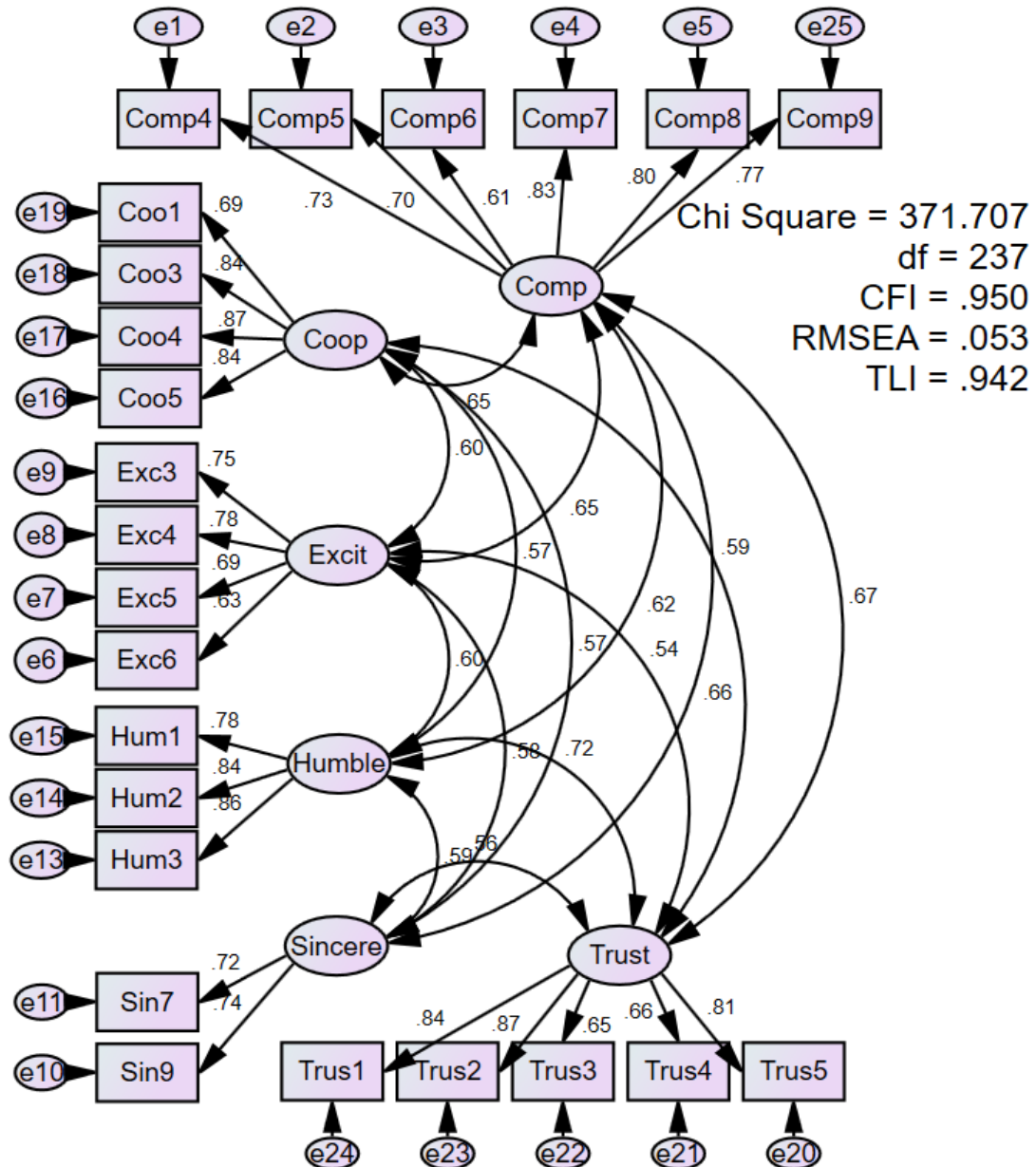


Figure 2: CFA (First Order Model)

#### 4.1.2 Reliability & Validity (First Order)

Before calculating causal relationships, it is always recommended to test reliability and validity of the model. Composite reliability has been applied to check reliability whereas validity (Convergent & Discriminant) was measured through Average Variance Extracted, Maximum Squared Variance, and Average Squared Shared variance were employed. According to J.F. Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), in order to assess convergent validity, CR value should be higher than AVE value and AVE value should be more than 0.5. On the other hand, the discriminant validity is established when both MSV and ASV values are less than AVE value. Results satisfy both convergent and discriminant validities of threshold values. Similarly, composite reliability is satisfying in all dimensions except sincerity i.e. 0.695 which is close to the threshold value of 0.7. Results are depicted in the Table 3 along with their threshold values:

Table 3: Reliability & Validity of Measurement Model (First Order)

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Humble	0.866	0.683	0.516	0.387
Comp	0.880	0.552	0.452	0.423
Coop	0.888	0.667	0.421	0.354
Trust	0.878	0.594	0.516	0.385
Excit	0.807	0.513	0.421	0.354
Sincere	0.695	0.532	0.434	0.351
<b>Statistics</b>				
Composite Reliability (CR)				
Average variance extracted (AVE)				
Convergent Validity				
Discriminant validity				
<b>Source:</b> Author's Computation (2020)				

#### Threshold

Above 0.7

Above 0.5

CR>AVE

MSV<AVE

ASV<AVE

#### 4.1.3. Measurement Model (Second Order)

According to J.F. Hair et al. (2010), the second-order model is not much different from the first order model. The only difference is that in the second-order model, a researcher needs to consider the first-order constructs as measurement items. CFA was applied on the second order model. Results indicate that the all values fulfil the threshold requirements, hence the model is fit. Results of measurement model (second order) are depicted in the Table 4 below. Pictorial view is also shown in Figure 3.

**Table 4: CFA Results (Second Order)**

Goodness-of-fit Statistics	Modified Model	Threshold Values for the Fit Indices	Comments
Normed Chi-square	1.561	< 5	Required level achieved
CFI	.949	> 0.9	Required level achieved
RMSEA	.053	< 0.08	Required level achieved
TLI	0.942	> 0.9	Required level achieved

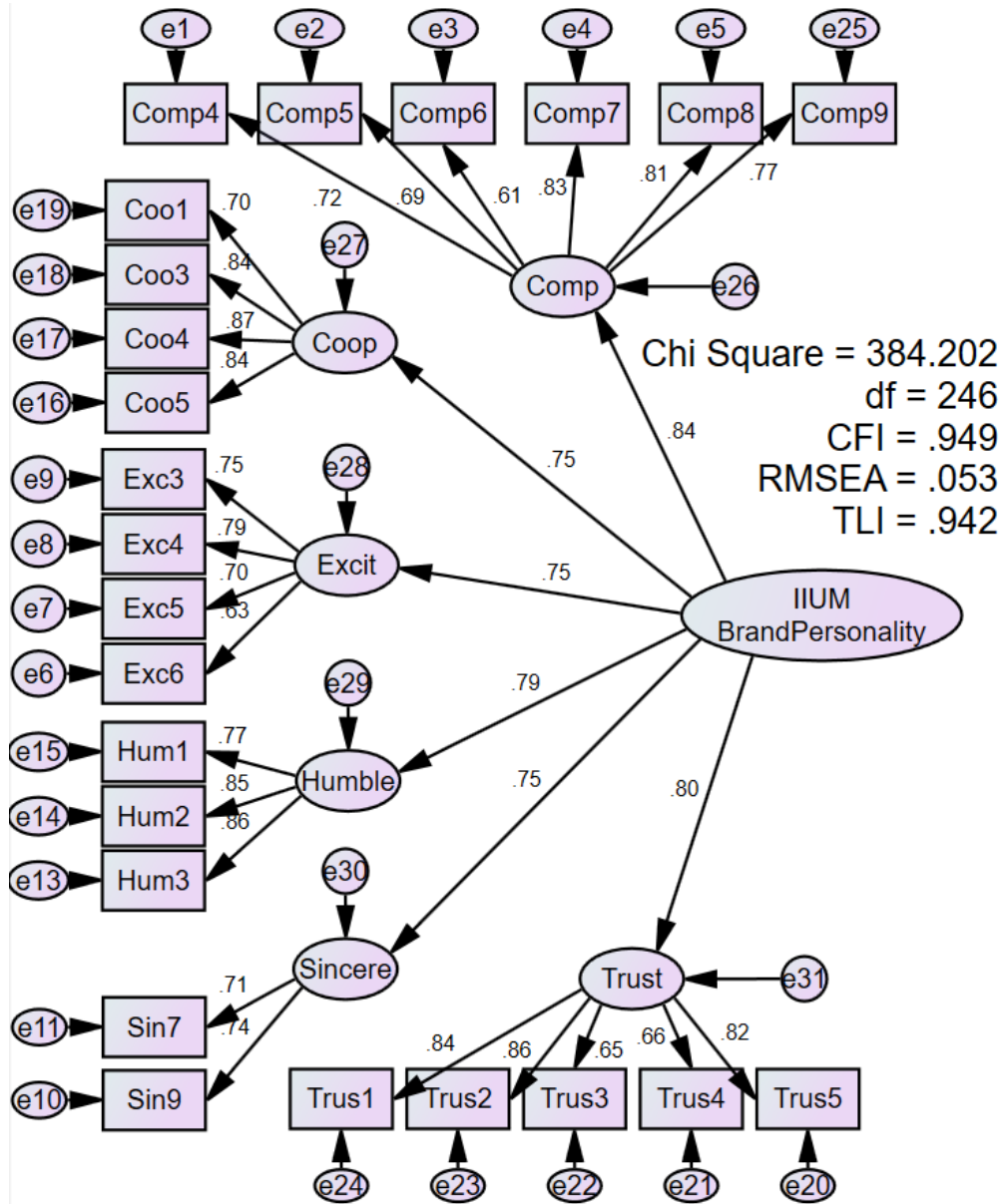




Figure 3: CFA (2nd Order Model)

## 4.2 Structural Model

### Evaluation

After confirmatory factor analysis, structural model evaluation was carried out. This part evaluated causal relationships among the variables using AMOS software. The causal relationship was drawn based on the theoretical framework depicted in literature review. As per the diagram depicted below, the construct of university brand personality (UBP) being independent variable acted as exogenous variable. Since it was a second order construct, it also contains latent sub constructs. The dependent variable or endogenous variable was students' institutional identification. Model fit was tested through Normed Chi Square, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. Value of Normed Chi Square was 1.553 which was below the threshold value of 5. Similarly, values of CFI i.e. 0.939 and of TLI i.e. 0.933 were above the threshold value of 9. Finally, RMSEA was found to be 0.053 which is below the threshold of 0.08. Hence the model was found fit. For causal relationship between independent and dependent variable, structural path was evaluated. The causal relationship between university brand personality and organizational identification was found significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Results in Table 5 along with pictorial view of structural model in Figure 4 are depicted below:

**Table 5: Estimates of the Hypothesized Model**

Structural Paths	Std. Reg. Weight	S.E.	C.R.	P
OID $\leftarrow$ UBP	0.495	0.120	4.137	***

**Note:** Std. Reg. Weight = Standardized regression weight

S. E. = Standardized error of regression weight

C. R. = Critical ratio of regression weight

P = Level of significance for regression weight

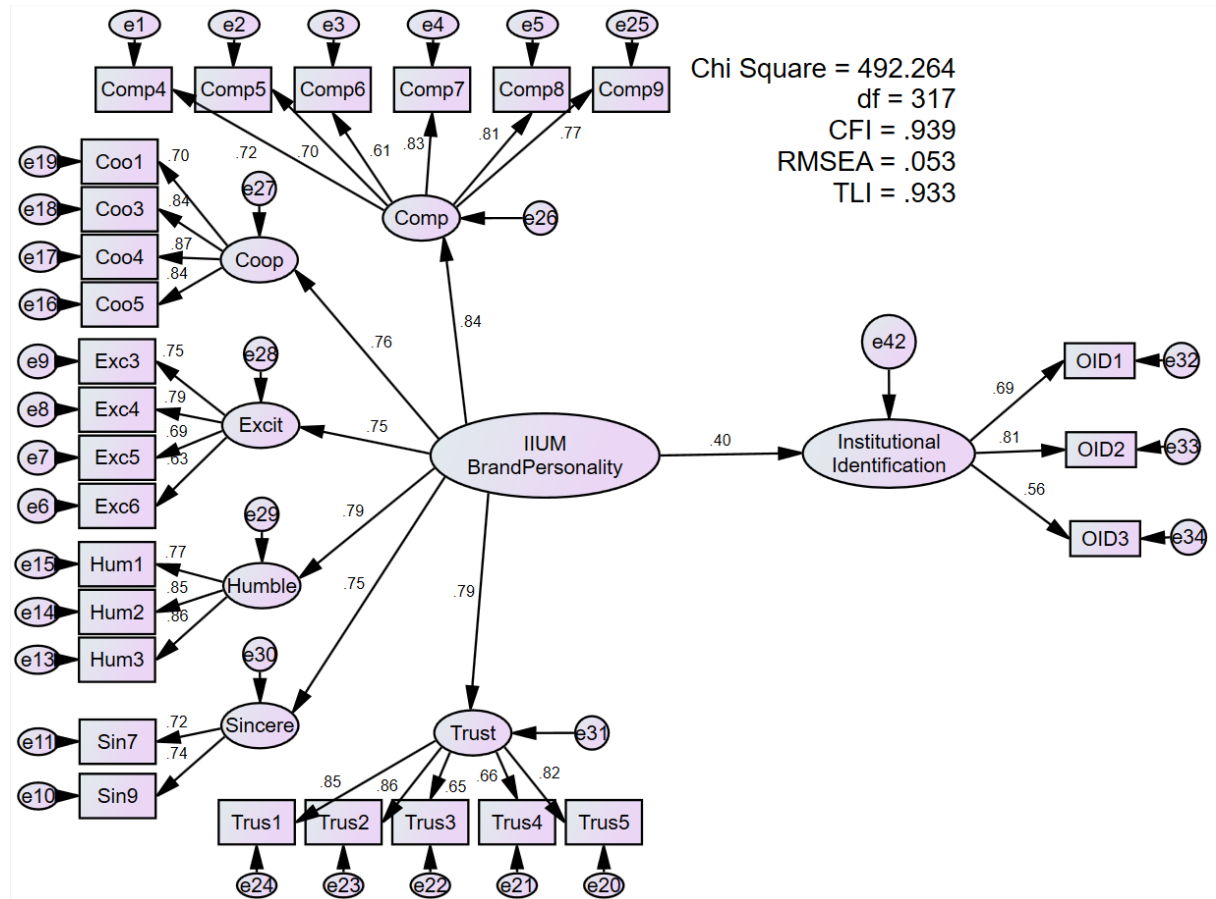


Figure 4: Structural Model

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

### 5.1 General Discussion

The increasing competition between the universities has enhanced the need for institutions to manage, understand and leverage a strong brand position (Celly & Knepper, 2010). Therefore, more and more universities are applying common marketing techniques to increase the brand personality (Chapleo, 2011, Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). As a result, it will lead to better student's institutional identification. This is evident through one of our research objectives where university brand personality is found to significantly impact students' institutional

identification. In a similar vein, previous studies affirm our results where university brand personality was found significantly effecting students' loyalty (Kaushal & Ali, 2019). A university brand personality represents the feelings and perceptions that stakeholders associate with the particular institution (Ali-Choudhury, Bennett, & Savani, 2009; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). A strong brand personality will ultimately lead to respectable brand identification in the market. According to Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005), there is equity that comes with strong brand personality whether it is brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived or brand association.

Furthermore, students want to identify with institutions with strong brands exclaiming their identification to other stakeholders including current and prospective students, parents and extended family members and people at large in their social context. The argument is congruent with our research findings alike Myers et al. (2016) where students valued their membership with the university while reflecting their trust and quality of relationship. Such institutional identification is vital not only in external affairs but also in structuring campus community (Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley, 2005). Hence, the managers try to create brand personality with their own identity and position them in the mind of the customers (Devlin, 2003), especially when brand is the identity of a service and where the competition is very high (López-Rodríguez, Acosta-Molina, Pérez-León, Sarmiento-Pérez and Tafur-Serrano, 2018). Akin to organizational identification where employees feel privileged to introduce their affiliation with a reputed organization, students too are found to exhibit similar demeanor of identification (see figure 2).

Contextually, as the results suggest, IIUM alumni were found to rely heavily on their institution's competence that is reflected by 'trust' (another dimension) albeit rest of the dimensions are significantly contributing to form IIUM's brand personality. It reflects students' identity and the relationship with their alma mater induced due to supporting behaviors (Travis, 2013) by their respective institute (IIUM). Theoretically speaking from a social identification lens, students consider IIUM as a competent organization whom they trust and want to be known and identified with a repute IIUM has earned over the years. A significant factor loading (above 0.7) for each of the dimensions also translate reliability and confidence that can be seen through a continuous improvement in the university's international

ranking and stature during the last three years (see QS Asia ranking 2020). Getting back into top 150 universities in Asia is another hallmark that depicts IIUM's gradual improvement in regaining attention by establishing an international brand amidst highly competitive educational revolution worldwide.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

It is important to harken back to the relationship between IIUM's (university) brand personality and its students' institutional identification that is largely dependent upon six dimensions. These six dimensions such as competence, cooperation, excitement, humbleness, sincerity and trust form a formidable relationship through which students idealize membership with their alma mater. It is evident from both first and second order analyses and the measurement model highlighted the causal relationship between university's brand personality and students' identification with IIUM. However, different moderators can be tested in future between UBP and OID such as students' empowerment, supervisors' trust and administrative fatigue that can potentially impact students' identification with their respective institutes.

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