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## Brand Distribution Service and Its Effect on Customer Value

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### Abstract

**Purpose** - The purpose of the research is to further explore the understanding of the nature of the brand distribution service (i.e., service brand) by undertaking a quantitative investigation. We focus on the role of customer's perception of service brand on the customer value creation process.

**Research design, data, and methodology** - This study used single cross-sectional design and 137 airline passengers as respondents using a convenience random sampling. We distributed the online questionnaires by email address. The empirical setting for this research is airline service in Indonesia with a consideration that airline service has the useful context for this research as the service delivery process involve extensive customer interactions with the airline and its employees. We then analyzed the data using multiple regression (step-wise) method to fulfill the research objectives.

**Results** - Using the step-wise regression method, the result shows that the influential factors to create customer value are cost and company image. The result suggests a company to improve its costs components and its company image in order to increase the customer value.

**Conclusions** - The research shows that costs play a critical role, and completed with the company image to form the customer value variable. This shows that mostly customer formed their value based on costs they sacrificed. Mainly, this evaluation is monetary cost based, while Indonesian customers tend to have a high value for money demands.

**Keywords:** Customer Perception, Brand Distribution Service, Customer Value.

**JEL Classifications:** C31, D11, D12, M31.

### 1. Introduction

The size of service sector contribution in world's economy is growing rapidly. The Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that in 2014, 68% of American GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is generated from the service sector. This condition gives us a picture of how large the service sector has grown and become important to the world's economy. This success drives companies serving in the service sector to put some efforts in differentiating their services. One of their efforts is by giving the brand to their service, popularly known as branding service. Quoting from Stephen King, "A product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is made in customer perception. A product can be copied by competitors, but not for a brand. A

product can be quickly outdated, a successful brand is timeless", by then, a good knowledge about its brand for a service provider becoming much more essential. The term of brand distribution service (i.e., service brand) used to present a broader perspective, where brand interfaces not just with end customers but the company, its employees and a network of stakeholders (Padget & Allen, 1997). Hence, the concept of service brand is integrative where "service" is superordinate to the branding of goods and/or services (Brodie et al., 2006).

The purpose of the research is to further explore the understanding of the nature of the service brand by undertaking a quantitative investigation. Previous research about the nature of the service brand is largely qualitative (Brodie RJ et al., 2008) or largely focused on the effects of brand equity to consumer's responses at the brand's marketing mix (Keller, 1993). Although brand equity was stated as being influenced by the brand awareness, brand "meaning" that the customers derive from their service experience is more important (Berry, 2000). Then, the company becomes the primary brand rather than the product. It implies that the consumers' experiences with the

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organization and its employees delivering the service offer are the major determinants of brand meaning (Brodie RJ, et al., 2008).

The empirical setting for this research is airline service (based on previous research by Brodie RJ et al., 2008) with a consideration that airline service has the useful context for this research as the service delivery process involve extensive customer interactions with the airline and its employees. The airline service in Indonesia has grown rapidly in past few years. Several names could be seen, whether it is an old player surviving in the industry or a new name craving for its place in the game. The author has chosen Garuda Indonesia (the biggest airline in Indonesia) for several reasons. First, Garuda Indonesia already settled its stable position in Indonesia's airline industry and second, the extensive advertising and communication campaigns where the image of Garuda Indonesia is differentiated from its competitors.

## 2. Theoretical Framework, Conceptual Model And Hypotheses

In airlines service, as similar with other services categorized as people processing, there are intensive interactions within the customer and organization's company and its employees. Previous research conducted by Brodie RJ et al. (2008) has resulted from a theoretical framework of customers' brand perception consist of the brand image, company image, employee trust and company trust. Each aspect of the brand is hypothesized to have a separate influence on customers' perception of service quality and value of the brand to the customers' perception.

### 2.1. Customer Value, Service Quality and Costs

The nature of customer value in this research adopts a cost-benefit view, which assesses value on the basis of a "get for give" view. The benefits are what the customer gets, and costs are what the customer gives up (Zeithaml, 1988; Sutarso, Halim, Balqiah, & Tjiptoherijanto, 2017). Within a pricing theory context, Monroe (1990) refers to this as the "worth what paid for" trade-off. This study uses the "worth what paid for" approach. Gronroos (1990) argued that customer' services quality perceptions consist of what they get (the technical outcome) and how they get it (the service process). Although we can continue to regard services brands as clusters of functional and emotional values, nevertheless, because of their intangible nature, it is especially important to capitalize on clues associated with their physical evidence in order to communicate their values (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). Cost, defined as monetary and non-monetary cost paid by customers to obtain service offer (Zeithaml, 1988). According to Peter and Olson (2008), there are four sources of the cost that has to be paid by

customers. There are money, time, cognitive activity and behavior effort. Commonly, the cost is associated with the amount of money that customer spend in order to obtain a product or a service. Time, on the other hand, is associated with the amount of time that has to be paid by the customers to obtain the service offer. The time cost is strongly related to behavior effort, which is the effort that has to be done by the customers to obtain the service offer.

### 2.2. Service Brand

Customer Brand Relationship can be seen as a process of mutual exchange and the process of fulfilling promises made by a company. Successful services brands also depend on good internal communication programs enabling greater consistency delivering the service experience, regardless of the customer's point of contact (de Chernatony, 2000). The term of service brand does not mean the same thing as the branding of services. Here, the term of service brand can also be defined with Vargo and Lusch use the term service marketing; "where the service center represents a reoriented philosophy that is applicable to all marketing offerings, including those that involve tangible output (goods) and the process of service provision."

### 2.3. Conceptual Framework

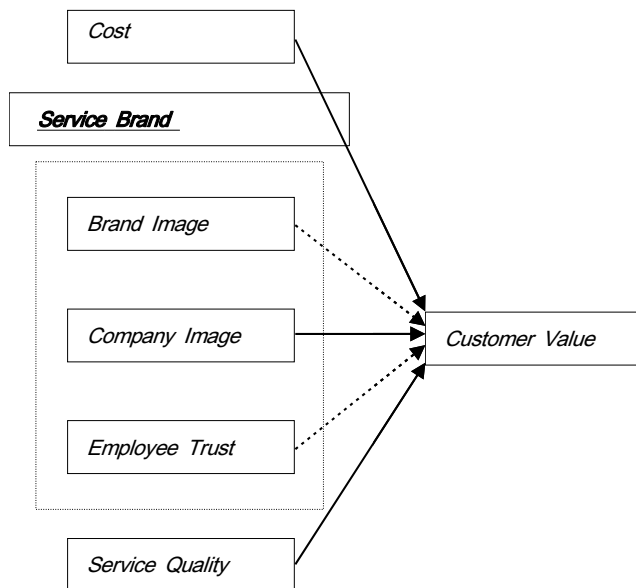
The definition of service brand above is suitable with conceptual framework about service brand that firstly developed by Calonus (1986) and refined by Bitner (1995); Gronoos (1996, 2006, 2007). Brodie RJ, Whittome, and Brush (2008) found that the customers' perception of service brand directly affected by two types of marketing. They are external marketing and interactive marketing. The definition of the two types of marketing is First, External marketing, communication between the organization and customers making promises about the service offer. Second, Interactive marketing, interactions between people working within the organization/network and end customers creating the service experience associated with the delivery of the promises about the service offer.

The external marketing activities are associated with the "making of promises". These activities include advertising or sponsorship that organizations do in order to build awareness of the brand name, creating distinctive service offers, and building the organizations' reputation. The result of these activities is brand image and company image. The interactive marketing activities can be associated with "delivering promises". The process of delivering promises involves direct interaction and experience between the customers and the organizations' employees. This process is closely aligned with building customer trust in customers' mind. The result of these activities is employee trust and company trust.

<Figure 1> presents the conceptual model and the

hypotheses for this study. The customers' brand perceptions consist of the brand image, company image, and employee trust. Each aspect of the brand is hypothesized to have a separate influence on customers' perception of value. In addition, the customer value is also influenced by service quality and costs. This research eliminated some factors of the conceptual framework from previous research such as one of the service brand, which is company trust. It is done because pre-research shows that there is little differentiation between the employee trust and employee trust in the customers' perception.

There are also some limitations in this research. Some other modification, such as the elimination of indirect effects of service brand to customer value through service quality is also done to analyze deeper the individual effects of customer brand perception to customer value. Beside that, this approach can also be helpful to managerial to get the clearer view of which variable of service brand that mainly influences customers' value, so the treatment can be more specific.



**<Figure 1>** Conceptual framework of Customer Perception of Service Brand to Customer Value Process

## 2.4. Brand Image

Keller (1993) defined brand images as the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumers' memory. Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) added that these associations include the emotional perceptions consumers attach to a brand and (Padget & Allen, 1997) symbolic meanings attached to specific attributes of the product or service. Hence, a brand's image integrates functional and symbolic brand beliefs forming the consumer's overall impression of the brand (Low & Lamb, 2000). This

impression is formed by Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) efforts done by the organization, such as advertising and sponsorship.

To provide a more specific understanding of the brand image, Thakor (1996) suggests that brand image can be thought of as benefits, attributes or personality traits. This concept is relevant to brand personality. While Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as a set of a human characteristic associated with a brand, sets of confrontation with the brand directly or indirectly influence the process of brand personality building in consumers' mind.

From the theoretical view, the research by Erdem and Swait (1998) argued that brand personality will influence consumers' perception of customer value. Dawar and Parker (1994) supported this argument and stated that brand personalities will hold an intrinsic value that draws consumers experience and influenced consumers' perception of service quality and consumers' value.

## 2.5. Company Image

In some of marketing and management pieces of literature, the term corporate image, corporate reputation, company image and company reputation are used interchangeably (Balmer, 2001; Halim & Zulkarnain, 2017). In order to be consistent with the use of the brand image, this study uses the term company image. Brown and Dacin (1997) show the company's image derives from customers' perceptions of its capability and its social responsibility. While corporate capability deals with the company's expertise in producing product/service offerings, corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to the company's management of societal issues.

A range of studies illustrates the benefits of a strong image and reputation. The benefits include increasing customers' buying intentions (Yoon et al., 1993), promoting higher rates of customer retention (Preece et al., 1995), enabling price premiums to be charged (Greyser, 1995), attracting investors (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990) and helping a firm survive in a time of crisis (Shrivastava & Siomkos, 1989).

The previous theory provides a framework to explain the empirical link between company image and the customer value-loyalty process (Erdem & Swait, 1998).

## 2.6. Employee Trust

Employee trust is defined as a reflection of customers' experience when they interact with the employees in service delivery process. It can also be seen as customers' experience and trust in the employee's behavior.

The research by Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) and Halim (2017) are the most relevant to the study as it focuses specifically on the influence of customers' trust on customer value and customer loyalty. They distinguish between

customers' trust in the behavior of employees and trust in the company's management policies and practices. The theoretical framework developed by Sidershmukh et al. shows that there was a positive influence of employee's trust in the customer value creation process.

## 2.7. Hypotheses

Based on the definition above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- <H1> Brand image positively influences customer perception of customer value.
- <H2> Company image positively influences customer perception of customer value.
- <H3> Employee trust positively influences customer perception of customer value.
- <H4> Service quality positively influences customer perception of customer value.
- <H5> Costs positively influences customer perception of customer value.

## 3. Method

In this study, the sampling frame is made of customers that had flown with Garuda Indonesia before. This ensured that the respondent is familiar with the airline's service delivery. This study used single cross-sectional design and convenience random sampling done by 137 respondents (airline customers). The majority of the respondents are in the 20-29-year-old group (67%), and the gender balance is reasonable (females 59%, versus males 41%). The sample exhibits that most of the sample occupation are students, with spending below 2 million rupiahs each month.

### 3.1. Measures

The author used two types of questions, which is an unstructured question and structured question. All of the variable (Brand Image, Company Image, Employee Trust, Service Quality, Costs and Customer Vale) are measured using the itemized rating scale, each of the items is measured by a 1-5 Likert-type scale. The responses categories are: very disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and very agree. All of the variables are measured using the same scale in order to simplify the process of data analysis. The questions used to develop the measures are given in Appendix A.

### 3.2. Brand Image

Based on the theoretical framework, customers' perceptions of the service offer or as known as brand image is influenced by external marketing communication such as

advertisement and sponsorship. Then, following previous research by Brodie RJ et al. (2008), four of Aaker's (1997) personality items that are closely aligned with the airline's image. The personality items used are: "are daring", "are spirited", "are imaginative" and "are up-to-date". The four items were used and the questions are introduced with: "Please consider your attitudes towards the airline's marketing and advertising campaigns from all media such as TV, internet, magazines, radio and sponsorship activities. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about Garuda Indonesia."

### 3.3. Company Image

Just like the brand image, the theoretical framework showed that controllable external marketing communications (particularly from advertising and sponsorship) influence the customers' perception of the organization that is offering the service. Then, following previous research by Brodie RJ et al. (2008), five items were chosen to reflect the promises about company's image. The items used are: "being involved with the community", "being well managed", "keeping you informed about what is happening in the company", "being a good corporate citizen", and "being successful". The five items were used and the questions are introduced with: "Thinking about Garuda Indonesia company reputation, as a customer, how would you rate Garuda Indonesia on:"

### 3.4. Employee Trust

Within the theoretical framework, the aspect of employee trust and company trust are derived from the customers' experience with the service delivery process with the people working within the organization when delivering the service. The measures used here were being replicated from the journal written by Brodie RJ et al. (2008). The measures used here are the customers' feelings about the "reliability", "competence", "integrity", and "responsiveness". The questions are introduced with: "Overall I feel that Garuda Indonesia's employees are:"

### 3.5. Service Quality

Following the previous research, the service quality variable was measured using several items that are considered as suitable for Garuda Indonesia's service. The items are: "the seat comfort", "good atmosphere (includes food, entertainment, atmosphere)", "and the friendliness of the cabin crew and the helpfulness of the cabin crew". The questions are introduced with: "Please consider How much do you agree or disagree to these following statements:"

### 3.6. Costs

In costs variable, four items were used to measure customers' perception. Two of the items that form customers'

perception is adapted from the airline study by Sidhershukh et al. (2002). They are: "setting the appropriate price of the flight ticket" and "setting the appropriate price in the amount of taxes, levies, and surcharges paid". The other two items were derived from the definition of Costs given by Zeithaml (1998) where costs are defined as the monetary and non-monetary cost of the services, paid by the customers. The two items are: "appreciating the time preciousness" and "giving the customer easiness to obtain the service offer". The questions are introduced with: "Please consider the costs associated with flying with Garuda Indonesia. How much do you agree or disagree with these following statements:"

### 3.7. Customer Value

The customer value items are derived from the definition given by Zeithaml (1988), where he defined the customer value as a trade-off between customers' benefits and costs. The items mainly comparing the service quality with costs factors such as money, time, efforts, value, and appropriateness plus positive experience. The questions are introduced with: "thinking about the service features in comparison to the costs associated with flying to Garuda Indonesia, how much do you agree or disagree with these following statements."

## 4. Analysis And Findings

This study uses a two-stage modeling approach. The first stage involves the evaluation and refinement of the measures being used. The second stage involves estimating the model and testing hypotheses.

### 4.1. Measurement evaluation and refinement

The reliability test used to measure the consistency and reliability of each question in the questionnaire used in this research. Looking at table 1, it can be examined from the Cronbach's Alpha numbers for each variable, which is bigger than 0.6 (Malhotra, 2004), it means that all items in each variable are reliable, so the research can be analyzed further.

The validity test used to ensure that the survey instruments accurately measured what it is designed to measure how well the formative indicators relate to the variable being measured. The result of validity test can be used in the section Corrected Item-Total Correlation, with the threshold of 0,361 for the sample used in this pre-test is 30 (n=30, with 95% confidence level). The result shows a bigger number than the threshold and demonstrated adequate validity. Therefore, the item measures for each variable are used further to form indices for the constructs.

<Table 1> Result of reliability and validity test

| Variables       | Questions                         | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Alpha |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Brand Image     | Adventurous                       | 0.691                            | 0.710 |
|                 | Spirited                          | 0.693                            |       |
|                 | Daring                            | 0.747                            |       |
|                 | Imaginative                       | 0.748                            |       |
| Company Image   | Involved with community           | 0.792                            | 0.792 |
|                 | Well management                   | 0.758                            |       |
|                 | Good information                  | 0.747                            |       |
|                 | Good corporate citizen            | 0.785                            |       |
|                 | Being successful                  | 0.753                            |       |
| Employee Trust  | Reliable                          | 0.762                            | 0.880 |
|                 | Competent                         | 0.812                            |       |
|                 | Integrity                         | 0.733                            |       |
|                 | Responsive to consumer            | 0.751                            |       |
| Service quality | Seat comfort                      | 0.702                            | 0.845 |
|                 | Good atmosphere                   | 0.697                            |       |
|                 | Friendliness of cabin crew        | 0.660                            |       |
|                 | Helpfulness of cabin crew         | 0.666                            |       |
| Cost            | Monetary cost of ticket           | 0.554                            | 0.744 |
|                 | Surcharge, tax, levies            | 0.533                            |       |
|                 | Waiting time                      | 0.554                            |       |
|                 | Facilitating efforts              | 0.609                            |       |
| Customer Value  | Service quality > monetary costs  | 0.905                            | 0.894 |
|                 | Service quality > time effort     | 0.821                            |       |
|                 | Service quality > behavior effort | 0.817                            |       |
|                 | Worth between get and give        | 0.803                            |       |
|                 | Overall positive experience       | 0.807                            |       |

Source: Data proceed by authors.

### 4.2. Model estimation and hypothesis tests.

Multiple regression analysis is a statistics method used to examine the relationships between two or more independent variable with one dependent variable. The purpose of this technique is to predict how much are the effects of independent variable to dependent variable (Hair et al., 2006). In this research, the equation proposed is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + e$$

Where:

- Y = Estimation of Customer Value
- $\beta_0$  = Constants of regression equation
- $\beta_1$  = Constant regression from variable  $X_1$ (brand image )
- $X_1$  = Score dimension of brand image
- $\beta_2$  = Constant regression from variable  $X_2$  (company image)
- $X_2$  = Score dimension of company image
- $\beta_3$  = Constant regression from variable  $X_3$ (employee trust )
- $X_3$  = Score dimension of employee trust
- $\beta_4$  = Constant regression from variable  $X_4$ (service quality)
- $X_4$  = Score dimension of service quality
- $\beta_5$  = Constant regression from variable  $X_5$ (cost)
- $X_5$  = Score dimension of cost
- e = Error

<Table 2> shows the correlation matrix; diagonal right side shows person correlation value where diagonal left side shows the significant value. This table shows that all variables significantly related to Customer Value. It also shows that Brand Image, Company Image, Employee Trust and Service Quality have a weak positive correlation with the variable Customer Value. The cost variable is the only one that has a positive correlation with Customer Value.

Using the step-wise regression method, there are two models that can be used to predict customer value, showed in <Table 3>. The second model generated a bigger R Square (0,472) and smaller Standard Error of Estimate (0,743406800). It means that this is the best model to predict the relation between dependent variable with its independent variables.

The multiple regression models is:

$$Y_1 = 0,543X_5 + 0,247X_2 + e$$

<Table 4> explain that constant of this regression equation is  $1,297 \times 10^{-16}$  and in at  $\alpha = 5\%$  level. Next, constant regression for costs variable is 0,543 and 0,247 for company image variable. Both significantly influence the customer value variable, in  $\alpha = 5\%$  level in this regression model. It means that every increase in 1 unit of costs will cause increase as much as 0,543 units in customer value variable. And every increase in 1 unit of company image, will cause increase as much as 0,247 units in customer value variable.

The hypothesis test can be summarized in the table below.

<Table 2> Correlation Matrix

|                     | Factor Score    | Customer Value | Brand Image | Company image | Employee Trust | Service Quality | Cost  |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Pearson Correlation | Customer Value  | 1              | 0.472       | 0.483         | 0.41           | 0.438           | 0.65  |
|                     | Brand Image     | 0.000          | 1           | 0.619         | 0.503          | 0.363           | 0.421 |
|                     | Company image   | 0.000          | 0.000       | 1             | 0.474          | 0.247           | 0.436 |
|                     | Employee Trust  | 0.000          | 0.000       | 0.000         | 1              | 0.474           | 0.538 |
|                     | Service Quality | 0.000          | 0.000       | 0.007         | 0.000          | 1               | 0.54  |
|                     | Cost            | 0.000          | 0.000       | 0.000         | 0.000          | 0.000           | 1     |

Source: Data proceed by authors.

<Table 3> Model Summary

| Model | R       | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .650(a) | .423     | .417              | .76368703                  |
| 2     | .687(b) | .472     | .461              | .73406800                  |

Source: Data proceed by authors.

<Table 4> Coefficients

| Model |                            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t-value | Sig.  |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---------|-------|
|       |                            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |         |       |
| 1     | (Constant)                 | -1.972E-16                  | .076       |                           | .000    | 1.000 |
|       | Factor Score Cost          | .650                        | .077       | .650                      | 8.470   | .000  |
| 2     | (Constant)                 | -1.297E-16                  | .073       |                           | .000    | 1.000 |
|       | Factor Score Cost          | .543                        | .082       | .543                      | 6.618   | .000  |
|       | Factor Score Company image | .247                        | .082       | .247                      | 3.011   | .003  |

<sup>a</sup> Dependent Variable: factor Score Customer Value

Source: Data proceed by authors.

<Table 5> Hypothesis test

| Hypothesis | Descriptions  | t-value | Conclusions                  |
|------------|---|---------|------------------------------|
| H1         | Brand image positively influenced customer value.     | < 1.96  | Removed from regression test |
| H2         | Company image positively influenced customer value.   | 3.011   | H2 accepted                  |
| H3         | Employee trust positively influenced customer value.  | < 1.96  | Removed from regression test |
| H4         | Service Quality positively influenced customer value. | < 1.96  | Removed from regression test |
| H5         | Cost positively influenced customer value.            | 6.618   | H5 accepted                  |

Source: Data proceed by authors.

## 5. Conclusion

From the theoretical framework, the study derives and tests a conceptual model. This model includes three variables from customer brand perception and service quality plus costs as the independent variables that form customer value variables. The research shows that costs play a critical role, and completed with the company image to form the customer value variable. This shows that mostly customer formed their value based on costs they sacrificed. Mainly, this evaluation is monetary cost based, while Indonesian customers tend to have a high value for money demands. Perception of getting an economical price for their ticket will increase their customer value since competition has brought some new player emphasizing in low-cost concept. As well as the easiness to obtain the service in terms of time and effort is considered important for the customers.

Findings on the importance of company image support the view that a company's image is also a salient intrinsic cue used to ascertain the quality associated with the potential marketing exchange process. The need of safety is important to the customers in consuming the airlines' service, hence company image is becoming important for the customers.

### 5.1. Managerial Implication

Garuda Indonesia as the airline service provider has to put more attention about its customers' value creation process. This research has proven that; Firstly, Customers mainly consist of students formed their customers' value from the economic cost charged by Garuda. This research shows that in order to gain potential customers from this characteristic type, Garuda has to maintain their ticket prices as low as possible to compete with other company. Besides, the other factors of costs such as time and efforts have to be repaired. For example by decreasing delay time and adding contacts to get the tickets such as online, by phone or directly in the ticket counter at the airport. Secondly, Garuda has to increase their company image by having a good internal management. Getting closer to the customers and providing relevant information needed by the website or another integrated marketing communication channel. Garuda will need to increase their sponsorship effort and maintain a good exposure to the events.

### 5.2. Further Research

It is recommended for further empirical research to enlarge the location and number of respondent in order to get a result that is more likely to reflect the real situation. This research is mainly focused on students and the result is limited to one type of similar characteristic. Hence, the

real situation hasn't been captured clearly, where mainly Garuda Indonesia's customers are focused on the high-level employee or entrepreneur. It is also recommended to conduct the further research using SEM (Structural Equation Model) in order to get a more accurate result and describing the two-way relation between variables. To enrich the research, I suggest adding more pieces of literature or conducting some in-depth interview to get the better view of each group characteristic and the effects in the creation of Customer Value. Developing others variables that are closely related to the next research is also suggested. The last is to conduct a deeper research to find the reason of why some variables have no effects to customer value.

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