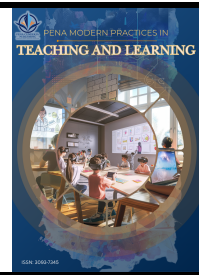




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A Conceptual Paper: Enhancing Brand Equity in Malaysian TVET - A Case Study of Selayang Community College

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received 11 October 2025 Received in revised form 10 November 2025 Accepted 16 November 2025 Available online 21 November 2025 Keywords: Brand equity; TVET institution; Selayang Community College	Malaysia's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector is becoming increasingly dynamic and competitive, making it essential for Malaysian TVET institutions to strengthen their brand equity. Although TVET plays a vital role in national development and workforce readiness, the industry continues to grapple with issues such as societal stigma and fragmentation among providers. This concept paper introduces a framework based on three core dimensions—brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations/image—to examine brand equity in Malaysian TVET. Selayang Community College, a TVET program provider, has been chosen as the case study. A quantitative survey will be conducted among both prospective and current students to gauge their perceptions of the college. The study seeks to evaluate the current state of brand equity at Selayang Community College, pinpoint key drivers and gaps, and formulate evidence-based strategies for improvement. The results are expected to provide valuable guidance on how TVET institutions can enhance brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations/image to better attract students. Ultimately, this research will contribute to reinforcing the competitive position of Selayang Community College and supporting Malaysia's overarching TVET objectives.

1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a crucial role in national development by cultivating a highly skilled workforce and is gaining increased recognition. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) plays a significant role, overseeing numerous polytechnics and community colleges, and is uniquely positioned to drive the modernization of TVET education through strategic partnerships and curriculum development [4]. Da [16] revealed a challenge within the ministry regarding TVET's perceived lower status compared to universities, which often leads students to consider TVET a secondary option. This perception has resulted in low enrollment numbers at TVET institutions [7,11]. To stimulate student interest in TVET, the government must consistently offer current and comprehensive information, enabling students to make well-informed decisions about their higher education [11]. In a highly competitive educational

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environment, prospective students are presented with numerous choices and an overwhelming amount of information; therefore, higher institutions must establish strong brand equity to effectively distinguish themselves [8].

1.1 Problem Statement

As one of Malaysia's TVET institutions, Selayang Community College plays a vital role within this essential ecosystem by focusing on the development of industry-ready talent. In a dynamic environment, merely delivering educational programs is not enough for long-term sustainability and impactful contributions. Institutions must strategically cultivate and strengthen their brand equity. Aaker [1] and Ismail *et al.*, [8] introduced brand equity as the value a strong brand name confers upon a product or service. A previous study by Ismail *et al.*, [8] indicates that perceived quality, greater student appeal, more robust industry partnerships, and heightened alumni loyalty are all benefits of strong brand equity. TVET is currently in high demand to support employment in industrialization. Despite this, the significant societal stigma associated with TVET programs means their potential remains largely untapped. Both students and parents often perceive traditional education as a more reliable path to better job prospects and academic achievement. This pervasive belief, combined with existing stigma, significantly discourages participation in TVET programs [6]. This concept paper focuses on brand equity within Malaysian TVET institutions and proposes a comprehensive research methodology to investigate and inform strategies for building a competitive edge in the TVET sector, using Selayang Community College as a case study.

2. Literature Review

This section examines previous studies on brand equity, specifically brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and adapts their core insights to the unique context of higher education and TVET institutions.

2.1 Brand Equity in Educational Contexts

The study of brand equity was initiated by Aaker [1]. Keller [9] extends this theory to the customer-based brand equity. [1] described brand equity as the value a strong brand name adds to a product or service. [9] explained brand equity as the added value a brand gives to a product or service. Brand equity comprises brand loyalty, recognition, perceived quality, and associations, and these elements are developed through consumer familiarity and positive emotional and cognitive connections with the brand.

This research will adopt and adapt Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model (1993) as its foundational framework. This model proposes that brand equity is built in a hierarchical manner, starting from basic awareness and culminating in deep brand loyalty and resonance. From the perspective of education, students have more bargaining power due to ample choices and options before deciding. This study investigates how brand awareness, brand image, and perceived brand quality of higher education institutions influence student enrollment choices. The previous framework by Shamsudin *et al.*, [14] and Akadi *et al.*, [2] will be applied to Selayang Community College. The research will specifically focus on the key dimensions of brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association/image within this context.

2.1.1 Brand awareness

Brand awareness involves consumers' decision-making process and increases the possibility for a brand to be chosen. Brand awareness assesses the extent to which customers can identify a company's name, products, or services apart from those of its competitors [12]. Brand awareness is essential in any marketing strategy, as it helps establish a connection between consumers and the brand by making it easier for them to recall and recognize it when they have previous understanding or exposure [5]. Brand awareness can significantly influence a customer's final decisions [15]. In the realm of education, brand awareness is effectively built through the experiences and recommendations of current university students, which can foster both awareness and trust among prospective students [15]. The significant influence parents have on their children's educational decisions within TVET education [6]. Their study revealed that negative parental perceptions are a major factor in children's reluctance to consider TVET.

2.1.2 Perceived quality

The perceived quality is considered an essential and direct impact on brand equity in the higher education sector [15]. In addition, they believed that students' accomplishments serve as compelling evidence that their education system effectively equips them for future success [14]. This study posits that prospective students, parents, and local industries' familiarity with Selayang Community College includes their ability to recall its name and the fundamental layer of the institution's brand equity.

2.1.3 Brand associations/image

Shamsudin *et al.*, [14] highlighted the importance of private universities cultivating a strong brand image. Their research indicates that students tend to prioritize brand image over other considerations. Asri *et al.*, [3] found that an institution's brand image plays a crucial role in preparing vocational graduates for the workforce and fostering their satisfaction with the institution. This brand image can be assessed through educational attributes such as the quality of lecturers, available facilities, curriculum design, and industry collaboration. Institutions may adopt the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model as a strategic framework for developing and sustaining brand equity. Its structured approach facilitates meaningful engagement with target audiences, thereby promoting enduring loyalty and encouraging brand advocacy [8]. Therefore, the community college is suggested to have its own brand equity.

2.2 The Malaysian TVET Landscape and Selayang Community College

Malaysia's commitment to TVET is enshrined in key policy documents, most notably the National TVET Policy 2030, launched in May 2024. This policy underscores a national aspiration to streamline and elevate the TVET sector, promoting it as a premier choice for career development and economic contribution [16]. The policy seeks to address long-standing issues such as the historical perception of TVET as a "second-class" option. Therefore, comprehensive information must be provided to students to encourage informed decisions about their tertiary education [11].

Selayang Community College, as one of the numerous community colleges under the Ministry of Higher Education, plays a crucial role in providing accessible and industry-relevant vocational training at the certificate and diploma levels. These institutions are designed to meet local community needs by bridging the skills gap by offering practical and hands-on learning experiences. However, similar to other TVET institutions, Selayang Community College faces intense competition from other public polytechnics, vocational colleges, and private skills training centers [16]. In this highly competitive

and evolving environment, simply delivering programs is not enough. Selayang Community College must strategically build its brand to resonate with prospective students, reassure parents, and attract critical industry partnerships. A strong brand can differentiate the college, highlight its unique value proposition, and signal its commitment to producing high brand equity.

Based on the above discussion, the proposed hypotheses are postulated:

H1. Brand awareness is significant with Brand Equity in TVET institutions.

H2. Perceived quality is significant with Brand Equity in TVET Institutions

H3. Brand Image is significant with Brand Equity in TVET Institutions

3. Methodology

This concept paper suggests using a quantitative approach to examine the influence of brand equity on prospective students' perceptions of Selayang Community College as a TVET institution. This method aligns with similar studies by Tran *et al.*, [15] that successfully used survey instruments to assess brand perception in the context of higher education. The target population for this study is prospective and current students of Selayang Community College. This population is selected because they represent the primary decision-makers or influencers when it comes to choosing post-secondary education pathways. The perceptions of current students also allow for valuable insights into their experiences, which can further inform the institution's brand equity evaluation and positioning strategy.

Based on variables in the conceptual model, the research instrument will be a structured questionnaire adapted from established models of brand equity, such as Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity framework and previous instruments used by Akadi *et al.*, [2] and Ruangkanjanases *et al.*, [12]. The questionnaire will measure key dimensions, including brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand image. Items will use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" to capture the intensity of respondents' perceptions and attitudes. All data collected will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize respondents' demographic information. The reliability of the instrument will be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha; meanwhile, factor analysis will be conducted to confirm construct validity. To test relationships among variables, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis will be employed.

4. Conclusions

More experiments are needed to verify this complicated flow topology. This concept paper emphasizes the importance of brand equity as a strategy to enhance the visibility and competitiveness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Malaysia. Using Selayang Community College as a reference point, it proposes brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand image as dimensions that are adapted from the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model by [9] that has been used as the central influence on students' intention to enroll. The proposed dimensions have been well-studied in university contexts [12,15]; however, their application in Malaysian TVET remains limited. The TVET institutions, community colleges, and polytechnics are often overlooked in existing literature related to TVET. Therefore, the government should continue promoting TVET among students to improve understanding and encourage enrollment [7], including in community colleges and polytechnics.

Engaging current students as respondents will provide a deeper understanding of TVET branding. This approach will reveal the influence of institutional reputation on student attraction and how actual experiences cultivate loyalty and advocacy. The insights gained will be valuable for refining both marketing strategies and service delivery. Consequently, TVET institutions, as well as community colleges and polytechnics, could be viewed as a strategic necessity, not a supplementary effort, for TVET institutions that actively invest in branding, public engagement, and industry partnerships are better positioned to overcome stigma and align with Malaysia's workforce development agenda. Ultimately, this study seeks to address a clear research gap by providing practical guidance for TVET leaders. The goal is to help them improve their institution's image, increase enrolment, and significantly contribute to the nation's economic transformation. In conclusion, strengthening brand equity in TVET institutions is not merely a marketing exercise, but it is also a strategic imperative to position TVET as an attractive, credible, and future-driven educational pathway that meets both student aspirations and national workforce needs.

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