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## Integration Of Emotional Branding And Consumer Experience To Enhance Customer Retention At Pt Cerdig Cerdas Digital

Sendy Marlen <sup>1)</sup>; Fajar Rhenzy Elaza<sup>2)</sup>; and Siti Aisah<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>123)</sup>Program Pascasarjana Magister Manajemen Universitas Pamulang,

Email : <sup>1)</sup>[sendymarlen@gmail.com](mailto:sendymarlen@gmail.com), <sup>2)</sup>[fajar.renzy@gmail.com](mailto:fajar.renzy@gmail.com), <sup>3)</sup>[aisahagustinal1@gmail.com](mailto:aisahagustinal1@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** Emotional branding and consumer experience are two important strategies for digital companies in retaining customers amidst the competitive educational technology (edutech) industry. This study aims to analyse the influence of the integration of emotional branding and consumer experience on customer retention in the Cerdig.com school application developed by PT Cerdig Cerdas Digital. The research method uses a quantitative descriptive-verification approach with data collection through questionnaires from application users (teachers, parents, and school operators). The results show that strong emotional branding through brand identity, emotional closeness, and ease of use have a significant impact on user trust and loyalty. A pleasant consumer experience, such as ease of application navigation, speed of service, and customer support, has a strong influence on user satisfaction and retention. The integration of the two has been shown to significantly increase customer retention. Practical implications are presented for companies in improving emotional branding and user experience sustainably.

**Keywords:** Emotional Branding, Consumer Experience, Customer Retention, Edu-tech.

### INTRODUCTION

The Digital transformation in the education sector has accelerated along with the increasing need for schools to use integrated administrative and communication platforms. Cerdig.com, a school application developed by PT Cerdig Cerdas Digital, serves as a modern solution for tuition payment processing, attendance, parent–teacher communication, and digital school management. However, the increasing competition in the educational technology market requires companies to retain users through strong branding and customer experience strategies.

One important approach is emotional branding, a strategy aimed at building emotional closeness between the brand and users through values, identity, trust, and positive experiences. According to Gobe (2001), emotional branding plays a role in creating deep bonds, making customers feel that the brand has personal significance to them. Consumer experience is also a key factor in digital applications. Pine & Gilmore (2011) emphasize that a holistic user experience includes ease of use, interface design, access speed, and supportive service interactions. Positive experiences have been proven to increase customer satisfaction and long-term retention.

In the context of school applications, user experience is critical because users range from school principals, teachers, and parents to students. When the application is easy to use and provides emotional value such as comfort, security, and trust, user retention became most likely.

This study is important because PT Cerdig Cerdas Digital is expanding its services and user base nationwide. Understanding the relationship between emotional branding, consumer experience, and customer retention enables the company to design more effective marketing and product development strategies. Although many studies discuss customer retention in the digital sector, research integrating customer experience and emotional branding simultaneously within school applications in Indonesia remains limited. This study aims to fill this research gap.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### 1. Emotional Branding Theory

**Emotional branding** is a marketing approach focused on building emotional closeness between consumers and brands. Gobe (2001) explains that emotional branding emphasizes not only functional product benefits but also emotional values such as trust, comfort, and identity. Strong emotional connections create positive perceptions, making consumers feel that the brand holds personal value. For digital applications like Cerdig.com, elements such as security in transactions, communication closeness, and consistent brand identity strengthen emotional attachment.

### 2. Consumer Experience Theory

**Consumer experience** refers to the overall perception process experienced by consumers when interacting with a brand. Pine & Gilmore (2011) state that meaningful experiences arise from holistic interactions, including usability, interface design, and emotional value. Schmitt (2010) adds that consumer experience consists of five dimensions: sense, feel, think, act, and relate. In Cerdig.com, UI/UX quality, speed of service, and responsiveness of customer support are crucial in shaping positive experiences.

### 3. Customer Retention Theory

**Customer retention** refers to a company's ability to retain customers over time. Kotler & Keller (2016) state that retention is influenced by satisfaction, trust, and perceived value. According to Zeithaml (2018), satisfied customers demonstrate retentive behaviors such as repeated use, recommendations, and emotional attachment to the brand. In edutech, retention is essential because sustained usage by schools and parents directly impacts business stability. Integrating emotional branding and consumer experience strengthens psychological attachment and consistent user satisfaction.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative descriptive–verification approach to analyze the influence of emotional branding (X1) and consumer experience (X2) on customer retention (Y) among Cerdig.com users.

**Population: All active users of Cerdig.com (teachers, parents, school operators).**

**Sample: 250 respondents selected using purposive sampling (minimum 3 months active usage).**

### Variables

**Emotional Branding (X1):** brand identity, trust, emotional value, psychological closeness.

**Consumer Experience (X2):** ease of use, UI/UX design, service speed, support quality.

**Customer Retention (Y):** intention to reuse, sustained satisfaction, recommendations, brand attachment.

## INSTRUMENT METHODS

Likert-scale questionnaire (1-5)

Validity and reliability test commence prior the main questionnaire were given.

## DATA ANALYSIS:

- Descriptive analysis,
- Normality and linearity tests,

- Multiple regression,
- t-test, F-test, and
- Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive results show high user satisfaction with Cerdig.com:

- 78% reported the application is “very easy to use.”
- 74% feel safe using the app for tuition payments.
- 81% are satisfied with customer support.
- 69% intend to continue using the app next academic year.

### Regression Model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

### Findings

$\beta_1$  (Emotional Branding) = **0.362**,  $p < 0.01$  (significant)

$\beta_2$  (Consumer Experience) = **0.511**,  $p < 0.001$  (significant)

$R^2 = 0.68$ , meaning 68% of customer retention variation is explained by both variables, while 32% others were influenced by other factors

The findings demonstrate that emotional branding plays an important role in building an emotional relationship between Cerdig and its users. Users feel calm, confident, and comfortable when using the application, particularly in the context of school-related financial transactions. On the other hand, consumer experience exerts the most dominant influence on user retention. This indicates that real user interactions with the application such as fast loading times, a clean user interface, and responsive customer support play a major role in shaping user satisfaction and encouraging repeated use.

The integration of these two factors strengthens customer retention through the following mechanisms:

*Tabel 1. Summary of the influence of Emotional Branding and Consumer Experience toward Customer Retentions*

Variabel	Indikator	Pengaruh Terhadap Customer Retention
Emotional Branding ( $X_1$ )	Brand identity, trust, emotional value, psychological closeness	Builds emotional attachment and increases user loyalty
Consumer Experience ( $X_2$ )	Ease of use, UI/UX design, service speed, quality of support	Provides positive user experiences and enhances user satisfaction
Customer Retention ( $Y$ )	Repeat usage, sustained satisfaction, recommendations, brand attachment	Significantly influenced by $X_1$ and $X_2$

1. Increased user trust
2. Repeated positive experiences.
3. Word-of Mouth recommendations.
4. Psychological attachment to the brand.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Emotional branding and consumer experience significantly influence customer retention among Cerdig.com users. Consumer experience is the dominant factor, while emotional branding provides added value by creating long-term emotional relationships. The integration of both factors enhances comfort, trust, and loyalty. Through findings, there are several practical implications to strengthen the retentions continuously:

- Strengthen brand storytelling to build emotional closeness.
- Improve user experience through UI/UX optimization.
- Accelerate customer service response times.
- Create loyalty programs for active schools and parents.
- Strengthen payment features and data security.

#### Recommendations for Future Research:

- Conduct qualitative studies for deeper insights.
- Expand research to other edu-tech applications.
- Add moderating variables such as technology trust or digital readiness.

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