Role of Brand Preference and Word of Mouth as mediation Effect of Brand Equity on Purchase Intentions

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ABSTRACT

This study aim is to examine the aspects of brand equity, brand preference and word of mouth to affects the level of customer purchase intention in PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) for product/service of Post Express, Pospay and Weselpos. The sampling will be conducted to obtain data consumer 160 PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Data were collected by questionnaire containing questions to postal customers in accordance with criteria of population. Distributing questionnaires carried out by means of direct encounter potential respondents in PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) East Java on services Monday-Saturday, when the office opening hours (8:00 to 17:00 pm) which is when the prospective respondent before making a transaction. The questionnaire measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The collected are analyzed by generalized structural Component Analysis with Visual GSCA 1.0 software. Research result show that brand equity has positive and significant effect on word of mouth and brand preference. But brand preference has insignificant effect on word of mouth. Word of mouth, brand preference dan brand equity has positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

INTRODUCTION

PT Pos Indonesia becomes one actor of logistics services business in Indonesia with good growth performance for year 2010 - 2012. Nevertheless, analysis results of Metta (2012) in transformation of PT Pos Indonesia (2013) mentions that market share of PT Pos Indonesia continue to undermine competitors. Market share fell sharply from 39% in 2001 to 14% in 2009, while other courier service company of TIKI/JNE as newcomer in courier business continues to grow. TIKI/JNE in 2009 become market leader a market share of 15%.

Hermawan Kartajaya (2012: 87) said that PT Pos Indonesia is a network company as differentiation Pos Indonesia that reaches over archipelago, coupled with integration with digital network, making the differentiation more solid. The network strength makes PT Pos Indonesia could be a connector for many parties. Items delivery management is supported by advance technology to track the shipments (track and trace). Money delivery and financial transaction also use information technology, as payment of electricity, water, telephone, credit and others. They are known as pospay services. Money delivery is known as weselpos services.

An analysis at Booz & Company by Metta (2012) in interviews with most company’s customers shows the customer perception to PT Pos Indonesia. Implicit main challenges of PT Pos Indonesia are follows:

1. Service quality is low. For example, consumers using TIKI for important documents because it is trusted. Consumers cannot rely on Pos Indonesia to send a letter in a timely manner because need longer time.
2. Marketing and branding are weak. For example, TIKI and JNE will advertise their products but consumers do not know that Pos Indonesia to provide printing services report.
3. Reputation is Weak. For example, Pos Indonesia is seen as old and traditional companies with limited product innovation. Pos Indonesia is not regarded as a provider of fast and reliable service.

Post office brand was very well known by public because has existed since the colonial with strategic location in center of town/districts. However, people only know the post office as a place to send letters and do not familiar with other postal products. Based on several previous studies, it is known that
introduction of product brand will affect on customer’s intention to make a purchase or transaction. Chaipoopirutana Thammawimutti (2005) show a positive and significant relationship between brand equity (brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty) on purchase intentions. Chen and Chang (2008) also explain that positive relationship between brand equity, brand preference and purchase intentions moderated by switching cost on brand equity and purchase intentions.

Brand equity of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) product has not been so strong in society minds. The offered service product has not been so well-known by community. Improvement of delivery transaction of documents/items/money and online payment transactions has very slow growth. Hadi Moradi and Azim Zarei (2011) explain a positive effect on brand equity, brand preference and purchase intention and brand preference on purchase intention. Jalilvand et al. (2012b) states that dimension of brand equity consist of brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived quality has a significant effect on purchase intention. Senthilnathan Tharmi also (2012) found that brand equity has a direct effect on purchase intention. PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) rare to makes product promotion activities. Product introduction activities are very limited and more use of media below the line, given the limitations of marketing budget allocated management of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Researchers suspect that customers know the information on products type through word of mouth. Xiaofen Ji, Zhang Yiling (2009) found that impression of online-WOM and comment the figures greatly affect consumers’ willingness to purchase the product, and suggest adjustments to display a website to display the response from buyers (WOM) in online website.

Kimet et al. (2011) states that brand personality perceptions have a positive effect on brand preference and loyalty attitude. Brand preference has a positive effect on loyalty attitude, and loyalty attitude has positive effect on positive word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. It is also found a direct relationship between brand preference and word-of-mouth behavior.

Chinho Lin and Yi-Shuang Wu (2013) found that quality, quantity and delivery expertise through electronic-WOM have positive effect on purchase intention. Some previous studies of brand products at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) are very rare. PT Pos Indonesia itself in very rare to research a survey involving many variables and brand products.

The above studies show gap research. Many researchers claim that dimensions of brand equity (brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived quality) have a significant effect on purchase intention. There are several other researchers, namely Bongran Jin Sun (2004) found that not all of dimensions of brand equity (brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations, brand awareness) affect on purchase intention. Brand loyalty is found only affect on purchase intention, and Cynthia and Tabitha (2014) found overall effect of brand equity on purchase intention, but only brand association and brand loyalty are individually affect on purchase intention. Therefore, this study aim is to examine the aspects of brand equity, brand preference and word of mouth to affects the level of customer purchase intention in PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) for product/service of Post Express, Pospay and Weselpos. This study novelty is the first study to examine the relationship between Brand Preference, Word of Mouth, Brand Equity and Purchase Intentions in PT Pos Indonesia (Persero).

Theories and hypotheses:

Keller (1993) states that brand equity is a person desire to continue to use of a brand or not. Brand equity measurement is strongly associated with loyalty and also the measurement of new users to become loyal users. Kotler and Armstrong (2001) explain brand equity as a positive differentiation effect that can be seen from the consumer’s response to goods or services. Brand equity is a brand strength that can increase or decrease the value of brand itself based on consumer response to goods or services sold.

Kotler (2003) states that purchase intention is consumer behavior that occurs when consumers are stimulated from external factors and come to buy based on their personal character and decision-making processes. Purchase Intention is a consumer’s tendency to buy a brand or taking actions related to purchase and is measured by consumer’s possibility to purchases (Assael, 2001). It is measured with a statement of want to purchase or not, will purchase or not, will re-purchase or not.

Research findings of Thammawimutti and Chaipoopirutana (2005), Chen and Chang (2008), Brady et al. (2008), Filho et al. (2010), Moradi and Zarei (2011), Jalilvand et al. (2012b), and Horng et al. (2012) show positive and significant relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions. Referring to theory and previous research above, the proposed research hypothesis is:

H1. Brand equity has positive and significant effect on purchase intentions.

Word of Mouth (WOM) is defined as a verbal conversation, communication between the individual and another individual, recipient of message and messenger, which is considered a non-commercial message related to brand, product or service (Arddt, 1967). WOM involves individual to share information with other individuals in form of verbal, including face-to-face, telephone and internet. Customers are generally more trust to opinion of their closest (family, friends, work friends, etc.) rather than a marketing communication (TV ads,
billboards, brochures, etc.). This is because the opinion of closest people has no reason hide real feelings and opinions. Therefore, WOM through personal sources (family, friends, and acquaintances) would become a critical factor to affect consumer’s decision making (Hawkins and Mothersbough, 2010).

Kotler and Armstrong (2001) states that brand equity is a positive effect of differentiation. It can be seen from the consumers response to goods or services, so it can be inferred that if the customer perceived brand equity better then the customer will pass on his experience to nearest/relatives (word of mouth). Kimet et al. (2011) asserts that there is effect of brand equity on word of mouth. Referring to theory and previous research above, the proposed research hypothesis is:

H2. Brand equity has positive and significant effect on word of mouth.

Brand Preference is a situation where consumers would choose one brand from many brands offered by competitors based on previous experience. One's ability to recall a brand will affect to selection of a brand among the many brands offered (Chiu et al., 2010). Customer values give direction to market on how best to meet the needs of their customers and increase brand preference (Chudy and Sant, 1993). These things define the core of a brand preference, so the brand becomes very strategic preferences to support the existence of brand because of benefits given to customer. Strong brand preference creates a strong degree of consumer preferences towards a brand. Companies with ability to develop brand preference would be able to defend attacks from competitors.

Aaker (1991) states that brand equity is a set of associations and customers behaviors to make the brand has a strength, durability and excellence as well as differentiate with competitors. It can be inferred that if the customer perceived brand equity is good then customers decide brand preference from the best offer by company. Chen and Chang (2008) and Moradi and Zarei (2011) show brand preference has positive effect on brand equity. Referring to theory and previous research above, the proposed research hypothesis is:

H3. Brand equity has positive and significant effect on brand preference.

Heller (2008) states that brand preference is the consumer desire level to services rendered by company based on benchmarking to other companies services by some discretion. It can be concluded that, if brand preferences felt good by customer, customer will pass on his experience to nearest/relatives (word of mouth). Kimet et al. (2011) state that brand preference has positive effect on word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. Referring to theory and previous research above, the proposed research hypothesis is:

H4. Brand preference has positive and significant effect on word of mouth.

Lundeen et al. (1995) and Zeithaml et al. (1996) stated that word of mouth provides important information related to a company to consumer and often helps the consumer to decide whether to subscribe or not to the company. It can be concluded that with positive word of mouth the customer will make transactions or subscribe to company (purchase intentions). This is supported by Fan and Miao (2012), Jalilvand et al. (2012a), Chinho Lin and Yi-Wu Shuang (2013) that word of mouth affects on purchase intentions. Referring to theory and previous research above, the proposed research hypothesis is:

H5. Word of mouth has positive and significant effect on purchase intention

Chiu et al. (2010) state that brand preference is a situation where consumers would choose one brand from many brands offered by competitors based on previous experience. One's ability to recall a brand will affect the brand selection among the many brands offered. We can conclude that if the customer has decided choice of brand (brand preference) then it will be followed by purchase intentions. Research findings of Chen and Chang (2008) also states that brand preference positively relates to purchase intentions. Referring to theory and previous research above, the proposed research hypothesis is:

H6. Brand preference has positive and significant effect on purchase intention

Research Methods:

This study uses a quantitative approach (positivism) to answer the problem formulation, variables studied are quantitative. Data collection process approach is used to facilitate the perception measurement. The research was collected in October 2013 until June 2014. The research location is the post office and post office branch of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Criteria to determine population are customers of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) East Java which is:

a. Customers use transactions service (Pos Express/Postal Payment/Weselpos)

b. End customers.

c. Aged between 18-60 years.

d. Has conducted transactions in post office at least 3 times.

Based on these criteria, study population is difficult to determine the exactly. Therefore, sample collection method uses non-probability sampling. Samples are decides by purposive sampling. Samples are selected in accordance with purpose of study and use expert judgment to select a representative sample of population or typical Solimun (2003). The sampling will be conducted to obtain data consumer 160 PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Data were collected by questionnaire containing questions to postal customers in accordance with criteria of population. Distributing questionnaires carried out by means of
direct encounter potential respondents in PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) East Java on services Monday-Saturday, when the office opening hours (8:00 to 17:00 pm) which is when the prospective respondent before making a transaction. The questionnaire measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The collected are analyzed by generalized structural Component Analysis with Visual GSCA 1.0 software. Generalized Structural Component Analysis (GSCA) developed by Heungsun Hwang, Hec Montreal and Yhosshio Takane in 2004. The characteristics are involving many variables (multivariate), latent variables/unobservable (qualitative), multi relationship /form systems of equations, model berjenjang/structure: not recursive, there is a reflexive indicator models and there is also a formative.

Research Result:
Overview of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero):
Indonesia first post office was established in Batavia (now Jakarta) by Governor General of GW Baron van Imhoff on August 26, 1746 with aim to better ensure the safety of resident’s letters. Pos Indonesia has several times to changes the status from the Bureau PTT (Post, Telegraph and Telephone). The development continues until the status of a State Enterprise of Posts and Telecommunications (Postel PN). Observing the times in which the postal and telecommunications sector is growing very rapidly, then in 1965 it is changed into a State Enterprise of Post and Giro (PN Post and Giro), and in 1978 turned into Perum Pos and Giro. This is confirmed as a single business entity in organizing giro postal service and good for relations within and outside the country. Perum status for 17 years, then in June 1995 turned into a limited liability company under the name of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero).

Respondents Characteristics:
Characteristics of respondents can be described in table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables/city</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25 year</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 25-40 year</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 40-50 year</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 50 year</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLTP-SLTA</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1-D3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privates employee</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNI/POLRI/PNS/BUMN</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other IRT</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data is processed, 2014.

Hypothesis Testing Results:
Results of hypothesis testing through GSCA presented in Table 2.

Based on Table 1 and Figure 1, the results of study hypothesis testing can be explained below.
1. Brand equity affect on purchase intention. GSCA result has path coefficient of 0.581 and CR = 7.28 (p = 0.0000) at significant level, so the hypothesis is accepted. Path coefficient is positive, it means that better brand equity of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos can improve customer's purchase intention.
2. Brand equity affect on word of mouth. GSCA results has path coefficient of 0.338 and CR = 3.40 (p = 0.0009) at significant level, so the hypothesis is accepted. Path coefficient is positive, it means that
better brand equity of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos product, then the customer will be more eager to word of mouth.

Table 2: Results of Hypothesis Testing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Relationship Among Variabes</th>
<th>Path Coefficient</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X1 = Brand Equity</td>
<td>Y1 = Word of Mouth</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.0009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X1 = Brand Equity</td>
<td>Y2 = Brand Preference</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Y2 = Brand Preference</td>
<td>Y1 = Word of Mouth</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.3140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Y1 = Word of Mouth</td>
<td>Y3 = Brand Preference</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.0102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Y2 = Brand Preference</td>
<td>Y3 = Purchase Intention</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.0023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>X1 = Brand Equity</td>
<td>Y3 = Purchase Intention</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data processed, 2014
Note: * = significant at α 5%

Graph of hypotheses test the in form of path diagram can be seen in figure 1 below.

Fig. 1: Path diagrams of Hypothesis Testing Results.

3. Brand equity affect on brand preference. GSCA results has path coefficient of 0.585 and CR = 7.47 (p = 0.0000) at significant level, so the hypothesis is accepted. Path coefficient is positive, it means that better brand equity of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos, post office product can improve brand preference in customer eyes with postal service.

4. Brand preference affect on word of mouth. GSCA results obtained path coefficient of 0.090 and CR = 1.01 (p = 0.3140) at insignificant level, so the hypothesis is rejected. This shows that Brand preference has insignificant effect on word of mouth.

5. Word of mouth affect on purchase intention. GSCA results obtained path coefficient of 0.188 and CR = 2.64 (p = 0.0102) at significant level, so the hypothesis is accepted. Path coefficient is positive, it can be interpreted that word of mouth can increase customer purchase intention to Postal Service Express, Pospay and Weselpos products.

6. Brand preference affect on to purchase intention. GSCA results obtained path coefficient of 0.206 and CR = 3.10 (p = 0.0023) at significant level, so the hypothesis is accepted. Path coefficient is positive, it means that better brand preference of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos products can improve customer purchase intention.

Discussion of results:

Effect of Brand Equity on Purchase Intention:

Hypothesis testing proved that brand equity directly has a significant effect on purchase intention of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Therefore, hypothesis that Brand equity has positive and significant effect on purchase intentions is proven. This means that brand equity is able to explain the increase of customers purchase intention.

The results are consistent with research of Thammawimutti and Chaipoopirutana (2005) that there is a positive and significant relationship between brand equity (brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty) and purchase intentions. The results support Chen and Chang (2008) that there is a positive relationship between brand equity, brand preference, and purchase intentions by moderating effect of switching cost to affects the relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions.

Adversely, study result do not support Cynthia and Tabitha (2014) who found that overall brand equity affect on purchase intention, but only brand association and brand loyalty affect on purchase intention.

5.9.2. Effect of Brand Equity on Word of Mouth:

Hypothesis testing proved that brand equity directly has significant effect on word of mouth for...
Post Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Thus the hypothesis that Brand equity has positive and significant effect on word of mouth is proven. This means that brand equity is able to explain variation change of word of mouth. The results support the research Kimet et al. (2011) who found a positive effect on brand preference attitudinal on brand loyalty and attitudinal has positive effect on positive word-of-mouth (WOM) communication.

**Effect of Brand Equity on Brand Preference:**
Hypothesis testing proved significant effect of brand equity on customer's brand preference of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Therefore, hypothesis that Brand equity has positive and significant effect on word of mouth is proven. This means that brand equity is able to explain variation change of customers brand preference. The results are consistent with research of Chen & Chang (2008) who found a positive relationship between brand equity, brand preference and purchase intentions by moderating effect of switching cost to affects the relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions. The results also support Moradi & Zarei (2011) who found positive effect on brand equity and brand preference on consumers purchase intention.

**Effect of Brand Preference on Word of Mouth:**
Hypothesis testing shows that brand preference directly has insignificant effect on word of mouth of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Therefore, hypothesis that Brand equity has positive and significant effect on brand preference is unproved. This means that brand preference is not able to explain variation change of word of mouth.

This hypothesis is unproved because of field condition at PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) has a market share of 13% in courier field. The rest is owned by private courier Service Company, and the market share currently dominated by JNE. Survey results in a few years by Frontier in 2013 and past several years for national courier service, PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) is still below TIKI and JNE.

**Effect of Word of Mouth on Purchase Intentions:**
The hypothesis testing found that word of mouth directly has a significant effect on purchase intentions of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Therefore, hypothesis that Word of mouth has positive and significant effect on purchase intention is proven. This means that word of mouth is able to explain variation change of customer purchase intention. The results support Fan and Miao (2012) that electronic word of mouth has a significant effect on acceptance of electronic word of mouth and purchase intentions. Jalilvand et al. (2012a) also added that electronic word of mouth has positive effect on destination image, tourist attitude and travel intention; tourist destination image and attitude have a significant relationship with intention to travel, destination tourist image positive effect on attitude, and social character demography affect on the use of electronic word of mouth, destination image, tourist attitude, and travel intention. Adversely, this study is inconsistent with Torlak et al. (2014) who found that word of mouth directly does not have significant effect on purchase intention.

**Effect of Brand Preference on Purchase Intention:**
Hypothesis testing found that brand preference directly affect on purchase intentions of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Therefore, hypothesis that Brand preference has positive and significant effect on purchase intention is proven. This means that brand preference are able to explain variation changes of purchase intentions.

The results are consistent with Chen and Chang (2008) who found a positive relationship between brand equity, brand preference, and purchase intentions by moderating effect of switching cost to affect on relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions.

**Conclusion:**
Based on analysis and discussion, the conclusions can be explained below.
1. Brand equity is able to explain the increase in purchase intention of customers of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero).
2. Brand equity is able to explain variation change of word of mouth for Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Research result showing that brand equity can directly increase word of mouth customers.
3. Brand equity is able to explain variations in customer brand preference of Pos Express brand, Pospay and Weselpos. Hypothesis testing results proved that brand equity directly able to increase customer brand preference.
4. Brand preference is not able to explain variation changes of customer word of mouth. Hypothesis testing found that brand preference does not able to increase word of mouth.
5. Word of mouth is able to explain variation changes of customer purchase intention of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Hypothesis testing results found that word of mouth able to increase customer purchase intentions.
6. Brand preference is able to explain the variation changes of customer purchase intention of Pos Express, Pospay and Weselpos. Hypothesis testing results found that brand preference able to increase customer purchase intentions.

**Suggestions:**
Based on this study results, it can be suggested to management of PT Pos Indonesia (Persero) and for further research.
1. Customers more interested to use Pospay than Postal Service Express and Weselpos. Therefore, Management should make efforts to make cross selling and service of Pos Express and Weselpos.
from existing Pospay customers. Teller should greet customers and creating promotional activities to encourage Pospay customer to recognize and interested to Post Express and Weselpo.

2. Majority customers of post office can be categorized loyal customers. They make transactions more than 10 transactions and have been a customer of more than 2 years. Only a few new customers make the transactions Pospay, Post Express and Weselpo, so the customer growth is slower. Therefore, management should increase the customer interest by involving them directly into promotional and other marketing activities.

3. Management should prepare an application to invite/guarantee customers to come back to the post office for transactions by setting up member card application form with the deposit system to bind the customer to always transact at the post office, providing discounts or marketing to attract customers to have a member card.

4. Further research should improve the accuracy of research model. This model only show 56.40% which can be explained from brand equity, word of mouth, brand preferences and purchase intentions. There is still 43.60% variation that can be explained by other variables. It needs to be investigated further.

Limitations of this study was selected respondents are customers of Post Express, Pospay and Weselpo with different types of services, namely customer service delivery letter/package and customer financial services. Customer’s characteristics are very different. It creates differences in customer perception of service provided by PT Pos Indonesia (Persero). Therefore, future researches can be examines each type of customers to increase the accuracy of research results.

REFERENCES


