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The falling in love with the brand: A study on automotive products

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Abstract

This study is written to investigate the relationship between antecedents (favorability, strengthens, and uniqueness of brand love) and subsequently, its impact on brand loyalty. A total of 400 respondents were participated and collected using purposive sampling. It should be noted that the sample considered meets with the appropriate characteristics. The result shows that the strength and excellence that exist in the brand (brand image) will lead consumers to a sense of happiness (love) towards the brand, and it subsequently generates brand loyalty.

Keywords: Brand favorability, Brand Strengthens, Brand Uniqueness, Brand love, Brand Loyalty.

El enamoramiento con la marca: Un estudio sobre productos automotrices

Resumen

Este estudio está escrito para investigar la relación entre los antecedentes (flotabilidad, fortalecimiento y singularidad del amor por la marca) y, posteriormente, su impacto en la lealtad a la marca. Se participaron y recolectaron un total de 400 encuestados utilizando un muestreo intencional. Cabe señalar que la muestra considerada cumple con las características apropiadas. El resultado muestra que la fuerza y la excelencia que existen en la marca (imagen de marca) llevarán a los consumidores a un sentido de felicidad (amor) hacia la marca y, posteriormente, generarán fidelidad a la marca.

Palabras clave: favorabilidad de la marca, fortalezas de la marca, singularidad de la marca, amor a la marca, lealtad a la marca.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to make customers loyal to what they choose. There are many challenges in realizing customer loyalty. These challenges include customers who face having broad knowledge in term of the products/services offered. Customers also have an absolute decision to determine their choice of products or services, they want to buy/consume it with the availability of the same types of products/services offered by competitors even though different brands. However, brand love is a factor that can strengthen brand loyalty over time. This is in line with the new marketing era point of view which states that in essence, the effort to build a consumer loyalty is not enough to be satisfied, they must be more than satisfied. Loyal consumers will create a special relationship between these consumers and the brands they use. Assuming consumers who feel

satisfied will feel love for the brand; and subsequently, it produces its brand loyalty.

There has been growing research interest in the area of brand loyalty. Despite strong attention to brand loyalty in the marketing literature, it looks like there has not been a clear-cut way of defining concepts. Some research shows that Brand image is the consumer perception of a brand consisting of a set of brand associations that exist in the minds of consumers which connects the consumer thinking toward a brand (Vogt, 2003). Perceptions formed by personal experience that consumers can become stronger if consumers experience the positive experience of the product (Durrani, 2003). Customer loyalty is the customer who has a tendency to make repeat purchases of the products/services of the same company, has high consistency in the company, and have immunity against others. The further study explains that the image of the brand depicted from the superiority, strength, and uniqueness of the product is not enough to increase brand loyalty (Nandan, 2005; Chen, 2015). So it takes insertion of brand love to increase brand loyalty (Ahuvia, 2000; Batra, 2012; Ameen et al., 2018) which are called brand love. In the new era of marketing (new era marketing) as it is today, attention to brand love is like a building that can be seen with the growing relationship between consumers with the brand.

On that statement, it can be concluded that brand love has become the most important part that must be realized by many industries and companies because brand love can build consumer attachment to the brand. This research aims to explore the relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty through brand love, especially on automotive products.

Looking at the phenomenon, there is a possibility in the future, the down position of a car brand can catch up to the top if the top brand manufacturer is not able to retain customers. This is based on previous research that has been conducted in the context of the car industry that links to brand loyalty. Some previous research presents the conclusion that car manufacturers and practitioners have long regarded brand loyalty due to brand image, brand trust, or customer satisfaction and customer value to brand loyalty (Durrani, 2003; Whang et al., 2004; Nandan, 2005; Riegelsberger et al., 2005; Yousefi et al. 2016; Raei, 2018) The study suggests that to increase brand loyalty to automobile customers in Aceh, a mediating factor is required to strengthen loyalty to the brand in the future. Therefore, incorporating brand love is essential in order to produce a stronger brand model. Referring to the above background of this study, a limited understanding of whether brand image components can be antecedent of brand love to increase brand loyalty or not and limited understanding of whether there is an indirect influence between the brand image to brand loyalty through brand love or not. As a novel strategy, this study also has a mediation variable, brand love, so that there is a need to test the mediation effect as suggested by McAlister (1995).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the most expected outcome of a study on consumer behaviour (Sekaran, 2010). There are many definitions of brand loyalty in terms of different perspectives. However, in general, loyalty is divided

into two categories — namely, attitude loyalty and behavioural loyalty. In reality, however, the commonly used definition is the explanation that brand loyalty is a consistent consumer preference to purchase the same brand on a specific product or service category. Concerning to the point of view, the most common definition of loyalty is something that consumers can be a reflection of a product, service, store, product category (e.g. cigarette), and activity (e.g. swimming). Here, it will use brand loyalty terminology. Thus, customer loyalty is part of someone, not something that attaches to the brand. Unfortunately, there is no universally agreed definition (Schneider & Bowen, 1999). Based on the above description, it can be concluded that brand loyalty consists of attitude and behaviour. In terms of attitude loyalty, it is related to all perceptions and feelings of consumers about the product and brand to show commitment to the extent to which a consumer's loyalty to a brand. On the other hand, behavioural loyalty is the loyalty of the brand based upon the actions and buying behaviour, i.e. Customers repeat their purchases regularly and buy product and service lines, referring to others and showing immunity to competitors' attractions.

2.2 Brand Love

Brand love has become the most important part, in which the companies need to recognize due to it can build consumer attachment to brands and it sometimes can grant forgiveness to its mistakes and some brand failures (Kiuru, 2014). According to Carrol & Ahuvia (2006) consumers who love the brand, it will make the consumer more loyal or spread positive words about the brand to various parties. Thus, it can be

concluded that although there are differences in defining brand love; however, previous studies define brand love as the attitude of satisfied consumers after they bought the brand (Ahuvia, 2002). Ahuvia (2002) further develops the definition of brand love as the level of emotional love of a satisfied consumer on the brand. As mentioned above, several theories of love between individuals have been used and expressed to have the ability to be applied in consumer behaviour research (Batra, 2012; Albert et al., 2008).

2.3 Brand Image

In the business context, brands have been defined as names, terms, signs, symbols, or designs or combinations of them intended to identify the goods or services of a person or group of sellers to distinguish them from competitors' products or goods (Zeithml& Bitner 2012). This is in line with Aaker's (2005) viewpoint, a brand is defined as a name, sign, symbol, or design that is created to mark or identify products offered for the customer. Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the mark is the name, term, sign, symbol, or design or combination of them that all intended to identify the products or services of a person or group of sellers to distinguish them from competitors'. The differentiation will then create a brand image.

In the competitive market dynamics, brand image has a very important role because it differentiates a company or product from others, because the brand images contain some things that explain about the brand as a product and also an organization; therefore, brand as a symbol. Brand

image can also be created from other factors. Brand image can be created in a very long time and also in a short time. Additionally, Based upon Nandan's (2005) viewpoint, the brand image consists of dimensions that are consistent with Vogt's (2003) whereas the dimensions are as follows:

- Brand favorability

One of the factors that make up the brand image is the superiority of the product, where the product is superior in competition. Brand favorability is seen as when consumers believe that the attributes and benefits provided by the brand will be able to meet or satisfy their needs and desires so that they form a positive attitude toward the brand.

- Brand Strengthens

The power of the brand depends on how information enters the customer's memory and how the process endures as part of the brand image. The strength of this brand association is a function of the amount of information processing received through the encoding process. When a consumer actively describes the meaning of information of a product or service, it will create an increasingly strong association in consumer memory.

- Brand Uniqueness

Uniqueness is the association of a brand inevitably that must be divided with other brands. Therefore, it must be created as a competitive advantage that can be used as a reason for consumers to choose a

particular brand. By positioning the brand more leads to experience or benefit themselves from the image of the product. By the existing differences, both from products, services, personnel, and channels expected to make a difference from competitors'. It then can provide benefits for producers and consumers. In other words, it is the uniqueness owned by the product/brand (Prihastiwi, 2019).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Concerning with the above point of view; therefore, it can be derived a research model as follows:

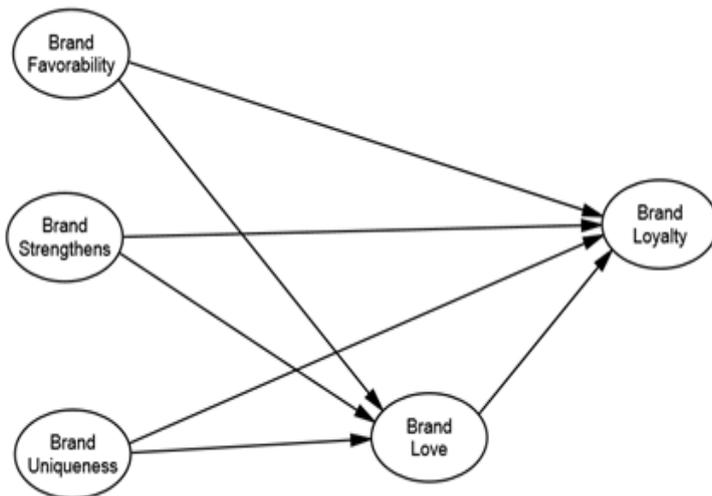


Figure 1: Theoretical Model

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the research objectives described in the previous part, this research can be classified into two categories: qualitative and quantitative. Research is based on qualitative methods is to understand social or human problems from various perspectives. Thus, qualitative research is an inductive method in which it focuses on the mind to investigate the problem in depth and detail. As the purpose of this research is to know the influence of brand love on brand loyalty to car customers in Aceh Province therefore, this method is also based on quantitative.

3.1 Samples

The sample is part of the population whose characteristics are to be investigated and considered to represent the entire population (fewer than the population). According to the number of population, the following will show the samples in the table below:

Table 1: Number of Sample-Based on Car User Center in Aceh

Centre in Aceh	Populations	Samples
Banda Aceh	39.974	160
Lhokseumawe	19.987	80
Meulaboh	15.989	60
Meulaboh	14.990	64
Takengon	4.996	20
Kutacane	3.997	16
Total	99.933	400

Source: Province of Aceh

3.2 Data Collection Techniques

As described in the previous chapter, the sampling technique used is nonprobability sampling. Nonprobability sampling is a way of selecting elements from the population to become members of the sample, where each element does not get the same opportunity to choose. The more specific method that can be employed is purposive sampling, whereas the sample that meets is taken based upon certain intention or purpose. This method is considered due to the sample meets with the appropriate characteristics and it can assist to conduct this research properly.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

This test refers to regression value analysis (Regression Weights Analysis Structural Equation Modeling). Hypothesis testing is based on Critical Ratio (CR) value and Probability (P) value of the data if required, i.e. $CR > 1.96$ and $P < 0.05$. If the result shows a value that meets the requirements, then the hypothesis is acceptable. As a novel strategy, this study also has a mediation variable, brand love, so that there is a need to test the mediation effect as suggested by McAlister (1995). This process is also carried out through a structural equation model in which the models are viewed as superior models in mediation testing as described by Anderson & Gerbing (1988) and McAlister (1995).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the analysis show that the value of Chi-square = 387.203 ($p < .000$) with Chi-Square /df = 8.770. GFI value of 0.907 and TLI of 0.856 < 0.90 shows the result of marginal fit and only CFI of 0.882 indicating good fit indices. However, RMSEA values are higher than 0.08. Based on data that has been validated according to the model of measurement equation through the first step approach, further analysis can be conducted with the second-step approach or structural equation model. In the previous section, the results of the measurement model have achieved acceptable fit index respectively, with statistically significant and significant parameters. The structural approach emphasizes the testing of theoretical models or frameworks of this study that can be seen in the following diagram.

Table 2: Fit Indices for Confirmation Analysis Factors of Brand Loyalty

Chi-Square	Chi-Square/df	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
387.203***	8.770	0.907	0.856	0.882	0.008

*** Sig. at level 0.01 (1%)

In addition, the result of analysis for testing the relationship among variables involved (refer Figure 2). Following the result in Figure 2 below, this study found that Brand Favorability, Brand Strengthens and Brand Uniqueness have a significant positive effect on Brand Love and Brand Loyalty. Besides that, this study also found that Brand love is being the role as mediating variable in the relationship between Brand Favorability, Brand Strengthens, Brand Uniqueness and Brand Loyalty.

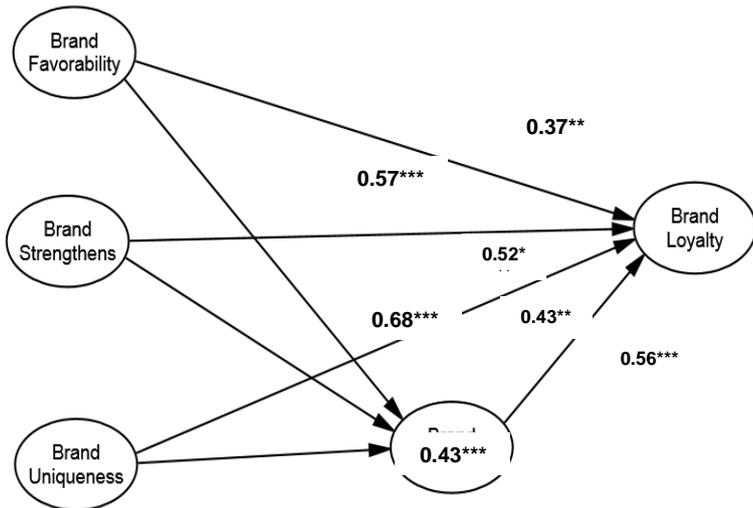


Figure 2: The Result of the Structural Model

As the main objective of this research is to confirm for the future application of the formation of the brand image and brand loyalty. Thus, it is necessary to incorporate brand love as a mediator so that it results in stronger brand loyalty. The result implies that the strength and excellence that exist in the brand (brand image) will lead consumers to a sense of happiness (love) towards the brand; and subsequently, it generates brand loyalty. This is in line with Ahuvia (2005) where brand love has been conceptualized as a combination and a mixture of emotion and passion (spirit) towards brands that can shape loyalty over time. The statement was reinforced by previous research that brand love is a highly emotional, imaginative and irrational variable (Sarkar, 2014). Using the power of love for a brand, it can create happiness and passion for its engagement with the

brand, especially in hedonic products (Sarkar, 2014). Thus, there is suitability and relationship between brand image and brand love. This is consistent with the Chen (2015) which states that passion will primarily depend on the image that is reflected in the mind of the consumer as the brand's power arises when recalling the brand. According to Chen (2015), the relationship to a brand will be stronger if it based on product superiority, whereas in competition, the advantages possessed and the characteristic causes a product has its own appeal for consumers.

5. CONCLUSION

Brand image built in this research model affects brand loyalty. This condition implies that the better brand image will affect the increasing brand loyalty to car customers in Aceh and brand love serves as a mediation variable partially between the relationship of brand image and brand loyalty. Further, there are several limitations of this study; In general, certain theories do not apply universally in any region and this also applies to the brand love model. This model can only be applied to the behaviour of car buyers where customers really need many factors in choosing the product. Thus, this model is somewhat less suitable for products that have low emotional levels. Although this research has confirmed that love can make a person loyal to a particular brand, it cannot be generalized to other types and models of research. Also, for future research, we suggest to build the model from this study has confirmed the testing of brand love and its impact on brand loyalty to car customers in Aceh. Therefore, in the future, researchers who are interested in testing this model are advised to investigate the influence of brand love on

different consumers or other product categories and other areas of research. Furthermore, this study also does not identify whether respondents purchased the product through direct or indirect purchasers. Currently, many customers in choosing a particular product also prefer to buy products via the internet (e-marketing). In the future, it also allows researchers to test this model for customers who are interested in purchasing brands/products via the internet.

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