

## THE ROLE OF BRAND LOVE AS MEDIATION FACTOR TOWARD CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to explain the effect either directly or indirectly directly from the brand love mediation variables on the relationship of brand trust variables consisting of Brand Excellence, Brand Strength and Brand Uniqueness on Brand Loyalty to Car customers in Aceh. Method data collection used is to spread the questionnaire to as many as 400 respondents, with sampling technique that is Purposive Random Sampling Based on result of data analysis, hence can be concluded that variable of brand image proved to have partially and simultaneous, positive and significant influence to brand love. This condition means that the better image of merek will affect the increasing of brand love to car customers in Aceh.

**Keywords:** Brand Image, Brand Love, Brand loyalty

### Introduction

Research on consumer behavior that focuses on brand loyalty has been widely practiced. Some previous research such as brand image is thought to have an impact on brand loyalty (Le blanc, 2001, Durrani, 2003, Nandan, 2005). But in reality there are still many consumers who have not been able to survive on one particular brand type (Matzler, 2006) so that expectations about the formation of brand loyalty is still not in accordance with reality. One of the causes of weak formation of brand loyalty is there is a gap that must be filled as a factor that can strengthen brand loyalty. The study further states that factors that are able to strengthen brand loyalty are brand love (Carrol and Ahuvia, 2006). Brand love, however, which is seen as a factor that reinforces brand loyalty remains little attention by researchers in exploring its effect on brand loyalty (Carrol and ahuvia, 2006). In this new era of marketing, creating a strong relationship between brands and customers has become an integral part of the company's mission to face intense competition aimed at maintaining the existence of the brand (Carrol and Ahuvia, 2006). The issue mentioned above has become a consideration for academics and practitioners so that the concept of building brand love needs to be explored further (Batra, 2012)

In this case, the concept of brand love will be attributed to the brand of car brands, where enhancing brand strength will certainly continue to be an important task for the purpose of getting a predicate as a car brand that is in great demand in the Acehnesse society. To clarify this, the number of new cars sold in Aceh

**Tabel 1.** The Best Selling Car In Aceh By 2016

Brands	Units	Percentage
Toyota	3.550	46,12
Mitsubishi	1.474	19,5
Suzuki	1.041	13,52
Daihatsu	472	6,13
Honda	352	4,57
Kia	291	3,78
Isuzu	199	2,97

Sumber: Samsat, Provinsi Aceh

Looking at the phenomenon, there is a possibility in the future, the car brand in the down position can catch up to the top if the car manufacturer is not able to retain customers. This is based on previous research that has been done in the context of the car industry that links to brand loyalty. Based on the above research background, three things underlie the author to identify the problem as follows:

1. Limited understanding of what components become antecedents of brand love that can increase brand loyalty
2. Limited understanding of whether there is an indirect influence between strength, excellence and brand uniqueness.

### **Restricting The Problem**

The problems in this study are limited to variable brand image, brand love and brand loyalty. The analytical unit in this study is the cars that are widely circulated in Aceh such as Toyota, Mitsubishi, Honda, Suzuki, Isuzu, Daihatsu, Nissan, Kia, Mazda in Aceh spread over 5 cities in Aceh and observation units are customers who use these types of cars.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty is the most expected outcome of a study on consumer behavior (Arslan, 2010). There are many definitions of brand loyalty in terms of different perspectives. However, in general, loyalty is divided into two things. Namely, attitude loyalty and behavioral loyalty. In reality, however, the commonly used definition is the explanation that brand loyalty is a consistent consumer preference for purchasing on the same brand on a specific product or service category. Concerning the statement, the most common definition of loyalty is something that consumers can be a reflection of a product, service, store, product category (eg cigarette), and activity (eg swimming). Here will be used brand loyalty terminology. This is to know that customer loyalty is part of someone, not something that attaches to the brand. Unfortunately, there is no universally agreed definition (Oliver, 1999).

Based on the above description, the authors conclude that brand loyalty consists of attitude and behavior. That is, attitude loyalty 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, while behavioral loyalty is brand loyalty based on the actions and buying behavior, that is, customers make repeated purchases regularly and buy between product and service lines, referring to others and showing immunity to competitors' attractions.

#### **Brand Love**

In the new era of marketing (new era marketing) as it is today, attention to the love of brands such as a building that can be seen with the growing relationship between consumers with brands (Batra et al., 2012). It can be concluded that brand love has become the most important part that industry and companies need to recognize because love for brands can build consumer attachment to brands and can sometimes provide forgiveness for mistakes and some brand failures (Munnuka, 2010).

#### **Brand Image**

In the competitive market dynamics, brand image has a very important role because it differentiates a company or product with others. This is reinforced by the statement Nandan (2005) that An image formed can not be separated from how the company communicates the product so that the perceived by consumers. Based on this, this study builds the dimensions proposed by Keller (2003) which mentions the dimensions of the image formers are as follows:

### **1. Brand advantages**

One of the factors that make up Brand Image is the superiority of the product, where the product is superior in competition. Brand advantage where 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.

### **2. Brand Strength**

The power of the brand depends on how information enters the consumer'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 in 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.

### **3. Brand Uniqueness**

Uniqueness is the association of a brand inevitably must be divided with other brands. Therefore, must be created 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. From the existing differences, both from products, services, personnel, and channels expected to make a difference and competitors. Which can provide benefits to producers and consumers or in other words is the uniqueness-uniqueness owned by the product / brand.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Sampling technique is done by Nonprobability Sampling. According to (Hair, 2010) 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 technique taken by researchers in nonprobability sampling is purposive sampling technique, that is the sample is taken with a specific purpose or purpose, which is considered the sample meets the appropriate characteristics and can assist the researcher in conducting the research. Purposive sampling is sampling in this case limited to certain types of people who can provide the desired information either because they are the only ones who have it, or meet some of the criteria specified (Sekaran, 2010). After the respondents obtained, the data collection technique used is by distributing questionnaires directly to respondents that meet the criteria. Questionnaire is designed and contains questions concerning the variables being studied. The people of Aceh Province who have and have experience using a particular car brand as a prospective respondent are met at the site and offered their willingness to be respondents.

Considering the data analysis in this research data using structural equation modeling (SEM), the sample size for this purpose is determined in the form of statistical test which is used as the model of structural equation or structural equation modeling (SEM) with 400 respondents. The criteria used are used car brands that are self-owned sampling selected for this study should have sufficient experience with the purchase of the car brand, therefore, respondents selected based on the following criteria:

1. Respondents are only people domiciled in Aceh Province.
2. At least 17 years of age, this requirement is taken because the age is a requirement to get a driver's license and other identity in Indonesia required to buy and use car
3. Customers using the car are the family car category consisting of Sedans, Jeeps and Minibuses selected for this survey.
4. Has made at least two services in the official dealer. This requirement is used so that the customer already has enough experience about the ins and outs of the machine, service and completeness of the official dealer Car for this research.

### **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) And Structural Equation Modelling**

The next step is the use of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to strengthen the measurement model. The purpose of the CFA is to confirm or test the model, ie the measurement model whose formulation comes from the theory. Thus, the CFA can be said to have two focus studies: (1) whether the indicators are conceptually unidimensional, precise and consistent; (2) what dominant indicators form the constructs studied in the context of brand love anteseden and brand loyalty. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to test theoretical models based on measures of conformity goodness rather than statistical calculations (Hair et al. 2010).

### **Hypothesis Testing with Direct Effect**

After the various stages above are met, then the next stage is testing the research hypothesis as described in Chapter II. 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, ie  $CR > 1.96$  and  $P < 0,05$ . If the result shows a value that meets the requirements, then the hypothesis is acceptable.

### **Hypothesis Testing with Indirect Effect**

C, and can be tested and perform partial Mediated models, which also include pathways from A to C as Kelloway (1995). $\diamond$  B  $\diamond$  According to Kelloway (1995) it is important to realize that some cases are important to be thoroughly tested, for example the existence of mediation in relationships as described by Baron and Kenny (1986). A mediator is seen as a third variable that affects and is also influenced by independent variables. Baron and Kenny (1986) also explain that the mediator helps researchers to explain how and why effects or relationships occur. According to Baron and Kenny (1986)

### **Research Results and Discussions**

This study aims to insert the role of brand love in a brand image relationship consisting of three dimensions of excellence, strength and uniqueness of the brand to brand loyalty. As a result, this research has confirmed that in the future, it is necessary to insert brand love so that brand loyalty will become stronger. This is in line with the opinion of Skoog (2015) that to generate brand loyalty, it takes brand appeal embedded in the minds of consumers through brand love that is marked by brand attachment and a sense of joy to the brand. In terms of loading factor, the indicator for the brand image variable that has the largest loading value is for ugm\_5 (This car brand tends to be economical in its class) with a value of 0.881. In other words, to provide a strong brand image, the key factor is that the car brand is the one that provides a competitive or economical price in its class.

### **Conclusion**

Based on result of data analysis, hence can be concluded that variable of brand image proved to have partially and simultaneous, positive and significant influence to brand love. This condition means that the better image of merek will affect the increasing of brand love to car customers in Aceh. Furthermore, when associated with brand loyalty, the analysis results also indicate that there is partial and simultaneous, positive and significant influence between brand image and brand loyalty (H5). This means that improving brand image will have a positive and significant impact on increasing brand loyalty among car customers in Aceh. Based on the statement, it can be interpreted that there is a role of the brand image variable in this research model on car customers in Aceh in increasing brand love and brand loyalty.

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