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THE ROLE OF BRAND PERSONALITY APPEAL AND SELF-BRAND CONNECTION IN DETERMINING BRAND RESONANCE

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Abstract:

This study intends to explore factors influencing brand resonance of cosmetic product in Indonesia. This research used an on-line cross-sectional survey to obtain data concerning the purchase of respondents' cosmetic favourite brands. The target population for this paper encompassed women in Bandung city, Indonesia who have favourite cosmetic brands and always use the same brand for more that 6 months (possible existing self-brand connection and brand resonance). The sample was taken in Bandung city collaborating 400 respondents. The data analysis method used is SEM-PLS approach based on the SmartPLS version of 3.2.7. The research scope is seen from the perspective of geography and context. For that matter limited to women in the city of Bandung, Indonesia. Contextually, the research is limited to the cosmetic context and narrowed down to reflect only the views of women in Bandung. The results of the study is brand personality appeal has a positive effect towards brand resonance and self-brand connection mediates the relationship between brand personality appeal and brand resonance.

Keywords:

Brand Personality Appeal, Self-Brand Connection, Brand Resonance

Introduction

In today's crowded market of cosmetic products, companies try to find better and innovative ways to create and sustain their competitive advantage, which helps them to better manage the commercial key success factors of their market (Sakara & Alhassan, 2014). Brand power is very important to firms. Through strong brands companies can manage their assets well and increase competitive advantage. Marketer's understanding of how to measure and manage

brand power has occurred primarily through the investigation of brand resonance (Ambedkar et al., 2017). Due to intense competition and the similarity of product functions and sizes in cosmetics market, consumers face problems in choosing the products they want. This has been encouraging manufacturers to adopt appropriate branding measures to differentiate and identify them products from competitors. In the context of cosmetic, consumers have an innate drive to define and express themselves through the purchases they make.

Based on literatures brands have personalities or human characteristics is now well established, as is the idea that brand personality is a vehicle of consumer self-expression and can be instrumental in helping a consumer express different aspect of his or herself (Swaminathan, et al., 2009). Brand personality plays and important role in differentiating one brand from others in the eyes of consumers; in building a strong consumer brand relationship, tied with brand commitment and loyalty (Rubiyanti & Mohaidin, 2018).

While the flurry of research activity surrounding brand personality represents substantial progress in evaluating the importance of establishing a brand personality, it also high- lights an important issue that warrants further exploration (Freling et al., 2011). This research is interested in consumers' perceptions regarding the appeal of a brand's personality. Freling et al., (2011) defined brand personality appeal as a brand's ability to appeal to consumers through the combination of human characteristics associated with it. By understanding the degree of appeal of a brand's personality, managers can better understand the relevance, potency, and endurance of a particular brand personality and how this personality influences consumer behaviour.

Self-brand connections mean that consumers use certain brands to build, strengthen and express themselves. Previous researches have shown that the self-brand connection positively affects brand loyalty (Rubiyanti & Hariandja, 2020; Ye, Liu, & Shi, 2015). This loyalty activity such as repeat purchase rates and the extent to which customers seek out brand information, events, and other loyal customers, is a character of brand resonance, in terms of the intensity or depth of the psychological bond the customer has with the brand (Keller, 2011), this study intends to explore factors influencing brand resonance of cosmetic product in Indonesia. The conceptual model is developed to address the core issue of the present research – how do brand personality influence brand resonance with the role of self-brand connection. The questions that linger for our research are:

RQ1. What impact does brand personality appeal and self-brand connection have on the brand resonance of cosmetic?
RQ2. Is there a direct and indirect effect of brand personality appeal on self-brand connection towards cosmetic in the perception of consumers?
RQ3. Does the self-brand connection mediate the relationship between brand personality appeal and brand resonance?

In the end, we expect this paper to fill research gaps by contributing self-brand connection as a mediating variable. After delivering the introduction, we are going to continue discussing relevant literature and developing the research framework. Afterwards, there will be a specific part that discusses the research methodology and the data collection procedure. It will also explain adopted measures, followed by the discussion on results. Eventually, we will review the research implications and offer suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Brand Personality Appeal

Brand personality appeal defines as brand's ability to appeal to consumers through the combination of human characteristics associated with it (Freling et al., 2011). Consumers use the brand when its personality assists them in personal identification and positioning; based on the information about the brand they integrate over the time (Tho, et al., 2016). Brand personality appeal is conceptualized as consisting of three dimensions: favorability, originality, and clarity. Favorability indicates how consumers view a brand, whereas originality shows how distinct the personality of a brand is from that of competitors. Clarity expresses how clearly brand personality is perceived by consumers (Borzooei & Asgari, 2013). Brand personality could affect important marketing variables such as brand loyalty (Kim, Han, & Park, 2001) which one of the dimension of brand resonance (Ambedkar et al., 2017). Therefore, we formulate H1:

H1: Brand personality appeal has a positive effect on brand resonance

Self-brand Connection

Customer self-brand connection is the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Moliner, et al., 2018). Self-brand connection analyzes the degree of connection between the consumer's identity and the brand and with the symbolic consumption of the brand, and it plays an important role the consumer's actual or ideal self-expression (Moliner et al., 2018). Self-brand connection implies a strong brand association, which may satisfy an individual's psychosocial needs, strengthen their identity and improve their connections with others (Kemp, et al., 2012). Self-brand connection as the formation of stable and meaningful ties between a particular brand and a consumer's self-identity (Dwivedi, et al., 2015; Rubiyanti & Hariandja, 2020). As the relationship to the brand personality appeal, then we proposed H2:

H2: Brand personality appeal has a positive effect on self-brand connection

Brand Resonance

Brand resonance describes the nature of this relationship and the extent to which customers feel that they are "in sync" with the brand (Keller et al., 2011). It refers to the relationship between a brand and its users, including the consumer's willingness to purchase and to recommend to others (Ambedkar et al., 2017). Resonance is characterized in terms of intensity, or the depth of the psychological bond that customers have with the brand, as well as the level of activity engendered by this loyalty (repeat purchase rates and the extent to which customers seek out brand information, events, and other loyal customers). One of the dimensions of brand resonance is brand attachment which self-brand connection is its dimension (Keller et al., 2011). Thus, we suggest H3 &H4:

H3: self-brand connection has a positive effect on brand resonance
H4: self-brand connection mediates the relationship between brand personality appeal and brand resonance

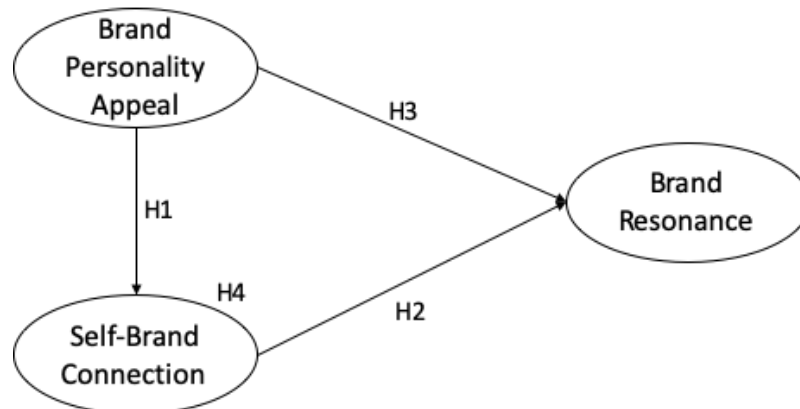The research model is visually presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Model

Research Methodology

This section focusses on the development of hypotheses, variables and statistical measures. This study uses structural equation models to investigate the relationships as depicted in the research model.

Measurement Variables

The measures contain three constructs, namely, Brand Personality (9 items), Self-brand connection (4 items), and Brand Resonance (8 items). Table 1 shows the research measurement. The questionnaire contains 21 questions which were distributed online to cosmetics consumers who study in several universities in Bandung. All statements were measured via a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

The set of questions (in the questionnaire) was represented by a five-point Likert scale to illustrate the respondent's degree of agreement. The number "5" indicates "strongly agree" and "1" indicates "strongly disagree".

A snowball sampling was used to obtain information from a particular group of student respondents. We spread a total of 600 questionnaires, and we received 400 responses back. We disregarded the invalid responses and processed the 400 valid ones. The participants were 400 female students who studies in Telkom University, Bandung Technology of Institute, Maranatha University, Parahyangan University, and Padjajaran University.

Malhotra (2007) explained that the minimum sample size for research using a structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis with up to five latent constructs is 200. Hence, our research study consists of five latent constructs with a sample size of 400. The gathered data was then processed by hierarchical regression and path analysis using SmartPLS software version 3 (Henseler et al., 2016). Table 2 shows the respondents' profiles.

Table 1: Research Measurement

	Variable	No. of items	Indicators	Source
1	Brand personality appeal	9 items	1 – 9	(Freling et al., 2011)
2	Self-brand connection	4 items	10 – 13	(Dwivedi, et al., 2016) and (Rubiyanti & Hariandja, 2020)
3	Brand Resonance	8 items	14 - 21	(Keller et al., 2011)

Result and Discussion

The first stage of analysis using the SEM method is to make a path diagram analysis to interpret the relationship between latent variables and indicators on the PLS software. Then the measurement model analysis is carried to see the value of outer loading, this is to evaluate the relationship as a constructed variable with a clear indicator. According to Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2011) the SRMR value needs to be evaluated to see whether the model shows a good fit. The SRMR value of our model is 0.073, which is still below the recommended threshold (0.08).

Construct & Convergent Validity

The validity of the scales was accomplished in a confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model. In the confirmatory factor analysis, the measurement model was assessed for construct and discriminant validity as well as reliability (Hair et al., 2010). All items of the variables must have loading s and cross-loadings significant at 0.708 or higher (Hair et al., 2010) or it still can be accepted in higher than 0.5 (Ramayah et al., 2018). However, several items had been deleted due to load weakly. Hence 1 item from self-brand connection was eliminated for further analysis. Table 3 shows all the items have significant construct validity. Convergent validity measures whether variables positively correlated with other measures of the same construct (Hair et al., 2014). This study measured the composite reliability and average variance extracted method (Hair et al., 2010), which require significant values higher than 0.7 and 0.5 respectively.

Table 2: Construct & Convergent Validity

Items	Loading	CR	AVE
I think this brand's personality is satisfactory	0,678		
I think this brand's personality is attractive	0,721		
I think this brand's personality personality is desirable	0,742		
I think this brand's personality is distinctive	0,788		
I think this brand's personality is novel	0,818	0,925	0,581
I think this brand's personality is surprising	0,843		
I think this brand's personality is apparent	0,824		
I think this brand's personality is obvious	0,730		
I think this brand's personality is well-defined	0,693		
I consider myself loyal to this brand	0,804		
I buy this brand whenever I can	0,876		
I really love this brand	0,737		
This brand is special to me	0,806		
I really identify with people who use this brand	0,842	0,935	0,642
This is a brand used by people like me	0,803		

I really like to talk about this brand to others.	0,778		
I am proud to have others know I use this brand.	0,753		
I feel this brand is personally connected to me	0,739		
I feel this brand is emotionally bonded to me	0,722	0,797	0,567
I think this brand could say something to other people about who	0,795		

Table 2 shows the composite reliability values for each construct, ranging from 0.797 to 0.935 which exceed suggested minimum value (Hair et al., 2010). The average variance extracted values are 0.567 to 0.642 which also exceed the recommended value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010).

Discriminant Validity

It is essential to measure and test whether the correlations between the measures possibly overlap by discriminant validity, it is the opposite of convergent validity (Neuman, 2014). Table 3 shows that the average variance extracted values shared between each construct were higher than the difference divided between other constructs, means people answers all the question in deferent ways (Neuman, 2014). In this study has been confirmed that all the construct have adequate discriminant validity using Fornell Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3: Fornell Larcker Criterion

	BP	BR	SC
BP	**0,762**		
BR	0,651	**0,801**	
SC	0,666	0,780	**0,793**

Note: bold values represent the average variance extracted (AVE) while the other entries represent the squared correlations

Hypothesis Testing Using Bootstrapping

The structural model and hypotheses were evaluated after attaining a validated measurement model. In this study, 400 cases were used for each of the 5,000 bootstrap samples. Table 4 and Figure 1 present the path coefficients resulting from bootstrapping process. The findings show that all constructs supported in the relationship with brand resonance.

Table 4: Results of The Structural Model Path Coefficient

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	pvalues	Decision
H1	Brand Personality Appeal -> Brand Resonance	0.246	0.004	Supported
H2	Brand Personality Appeal -> Self-Brand Connection	0.664	0.000	Supported
H3	Self-Brand Connection -> Brand Resonance	0.616	0.000	Supported
H4	Brand Personality Appeal -> Self-brand Connection -> Brand Resonance	0.409	0.000	Supported

The measurements of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were evaluated before we proceed to further analysis. Bootstrapping was used to review the significance levels of the predicted relationships (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Each indicator's p-values were examined and to find out the significance of the coefficient (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). The commonly used critical value for the two-tailed t-test is 1.96 for a

significance level of 10% (Hair et al., 2017). Table 5 summarizes the path coefficients and their p-values.

According to Table 4, there is a significant positive effect of brand personality appeal on brand resonance (β1/0.246, p-value < 0.004). Therefore, H1 is supported. Similarly, there is a significant positive and direct effect of brand personality appeal on self-brand connection (β2/0.664, p-value < 0.000). This result supports H2. Another positive and significant results appears on the relationship between self-brand connection on brand resonance (β3/0.616, pvalue < 0.000) which is supported H3. To examine the mediation of self-brand connection on brand personality appeal on brand resonance, p-values for indirect effects were obtained through bootstrapping (Ringle et al., 2015). The results indicate that there is an indirect effect of brand personality appeal on brand resonance trough the mediation of self-brand connection (the value of mediation effect = 0.409 and the p-value is 0.000). This shows that H4 is supported.
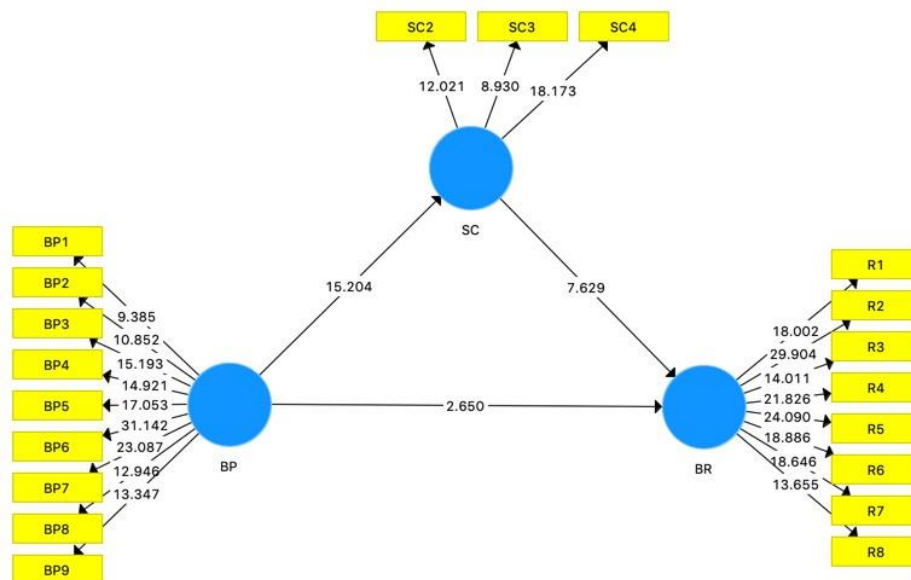

Figure 2: Bootstrapping Analysis

Conclusion

This study concluded that brand personality appeal could build self-brand connection and influence brand resonance. Brand personality appeal positively and significantly influence consumer's self-brand connection towards cosmetics. Thus, cosmetic firms should design a marketing strategy that develops a brand personality appeal that has similar value with the consumer character to encourage self-brand connection. When consumers' self-concepts are correlated to a brand, the company or entity behind the brand may be able to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Moreover, when individuals develop a self-brand connection, the brand becomes less of switching behavior (Kemp et al., 2012; Rubiyanti & Hariandja, 2020), which is the brand resonance will be form. Although the findings provide significant implications, this study has some limitations and offers several directions for future research. We believe future research should also differentiate between halal cosmetic products or green product and any specific categorize of cosmetics that are local-made or imported from different countries. This can give more useful insights into the cosmetic industry players.

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