



INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL VALUES OF LUXURY COSMETIC BRAND IDENTIFICATION ON CONSUMER BRAND LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

Brand loyalty is critical for a business to remain relevant in the market. Within the context of luxury sustainable practises, business has committed to sustainable business practises through its luxury brands, sending a strong message to the community about their commitment to the environment and community development. We are attempting to determine the factors that influence brand identification and loyalty in order to complete this research. The study's research objectives were accomplished through the use of an area sampling survey model in several major cities throughout Malaysia. The data were analysed using a structural equation model with partial least squares (PLS-SEM). Three dimensions of personal value, namely environmental consciousness, health consciousness, and appearance consciousness, as well as identification with a brand, were discovered to be significant predictors of consumer brand loyalty. The outcome provides practical advice that the Malaysian cosmetics industry can implement. The marketer's role will be to not only reinforce the brand's established positive perception, but also to forge a strong consumer-brand relationship. Additional research is required to address the study's limitations and to add to the body of knowledge on this subject.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The cosmetics industry is rapidly expanding globally and moving at a breakneck pace. The cosmetics market's growth indicates favourable business opportunities for the industry,

which offers a diverse range of products and categories to consumers (Hassali, Al-Tamimi, Dawood, Verma, & Saleem, 2015). The cosmetics industry's rapid growth is being fuelled by the advancement of digital communications, the establishment of market channels, the growing demand for natural and high-quality cosmetics, and the rise of the middle class in the new market (www.alliedmarketresearch.com, 2017). In Malaysia, the cosmetic industry is continuously a growing market in which this is a direct result of working ladies and men, expended urbanisation and expanding mindfulness because of education (Ridzuan et al., 2021). The widespread use of cosmetics has had a significant impact on the beauty industry, owing to consumers' increased purchasing power. Cosmetics, as defined by the German Food and Commodities Act of 08/15/1974, are "substances or preparations made of substances intended primarily for external use on the human body or oral cavity for cleaning and personal hygiene, to alter the appearance or odour of the body to convey scene" (Nohynek, Antignac, Re, & Toutain, 2010).

Purchasing luxury brands to demonstrate one's status has become a trend in recent years, and it is not just about satisfying one's desire. Luxury consumption has become a topic of discussion in relation to environmental sensitivity, intelligence, and healthy and lifestyle choices (Wiedmann et al., 2007; Cervellon & Shamma, 2013; Dall'Olmo Riley, Pina, & Bravo, 2015). However, over the last few decades, people's purchasing habits have shifted in comparison to previous consumer behaviour research. Taking consumer expectations into account, Atwal and Williams (2009) argue that luxury brands should also contribute to legitimate causes, giving back to nature and society through effective marketing initiatives. In other words, when people purchase luxury brands, they are not only concerned with the product's quality and price, but also with the environmental impact of their purchasing behaviour. Both the behaviour of avoiding harm and the intentions of doing good appear to influence how luxury consumers behave (Cervellon & Shamma, 2013). Customers expected that their purchases of luxury brands would aid in the preservation of the environment, as well as the protection of society and morality (Montague & Mukherjee, 2010). However, Anderlová and Pšurný (2020) argue that the emotional connection and social prestige is not as relevant to all consumers at the same level, instead the adjustment of the marketing communication to relate back to the brand can stimulate the customer's emotion.

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1.1 Research problem

The cosmetics and personal care industry's sustainability is critical in today's market. Sustaining a sustainable business model demonstrates a company's commitment to being ethical and competitive in today's market. Additionally, it serves as a business interest that all businesses, large or small, must pursue. As our world changes, with the global population now at 7 billion and projected to reach 9 billion by 2050, it is widely accepted that the planet's resources will not be sufficient to support such a population increase at current consumption rates. Human activities have significantly contributed to climate change, the extinction of animal and plant species, and the degradation of natural habitats. Additionally, research into human values has demonstrated that the consumption of ethical goods results in ethical consumer behaviour (Doran, 2009; Pudaruth et al., 2015; Miniero et al., 2014; Tsai et al., 2021). Even though ethical, productivity, food, and beverage issues have received considerable research attention, the cosmetic industry agenda has generally lagged behind other industries. widely, particularly when the subject of luxury has been a point of contention and receives varying degrees of attention in the luxury literature (Atwal & Williams, 2009).

Earlier research has concentrated on organic products (Hosta, 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2016), eco-friendly products (Paul et al., 2016), and the generalisation of luxury consumption (Paul et al., 2016; Lin & Huang, 2012; Rouhani & Hanzae, 2012; Wu & Liang, 2009). The majority of studies examined specific product categories rather than the entire product category holistically. It is critical that current research identifies the relevant factors that influence consumer loyalty to sustainable luxury brand products. In retrospect, new perspectives can be gained by identifying new factors that may affect consumers' loyalty to luxury products.

As a result, the following are the study's objectives:

RO1: To examine the relationship between personal values (health consciousness, environmental consciousness, and appearance consciousness) and consumer brand identification for Malaysia's luxury natural beauty brands.

RO2: To investigate the relationship between consumer brand identification and brand loyalty among Malaysian consumers of luxury natural beauty brands.

RO3: To examine the mediating effect of consumer-brand identification on brand loyalty for luxury natural beauty brands in Malaysia based on personal values (health consciousness, environmental consciousness, and appearance consciousness).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The beauty market has grown year after year at a rate of between 3 and 5.5 percent per year. This market, also known as Personal Care Products or Toiletries and Cosmetics, has demonstrated its capacity for continued growth and the potential for long-term financial stability (Ungarala, 2021). The global market is segmented into five distinct segments: personal care, cosmetics, fragrances, colour, toiletries, and skincare. This variety of cosmetic products is critical, as their purpose is to satisfy the customer. As a result of these trends, the manufacturing segments have shifted toward mass market and premium (Taher et al., 2010; Barbalova, 2011). Because production is determined by price, distribution channel, and brand prestige, beauty products can be classified into mass production and premium manufacturing

segments (Nagasawa & Kizu, 2012). Globally, premium vehicles account for 28% of the total vehicle market, while mass market segments account for 72% of the market (Barbalova, 2011).

Despite the recession, it is possible to revert to the pre-recession level of development in the future. Cheong et al. (2016) report that face-whitening cosmetics are popular in East Asian markets, where there is a strong desire for fairer skin. In India, the majority of women use skin lightening and brightening creams. The primary purchasers of whitening products have remained consistent - they are predominantly young ladies who live in modern areas and have a high level of disposable income and are willing to pay a premium for those beautifying agents (Pornpen Taweepong, 2021; Cheong et al., 2016; Walker, 2012).

2.1 Cosmetic industry in Malaysia

The high demand for high-end beauty products has enabled the cosmetics industry in Malaysia to contribute billions of Ringgit Malaysia in annual sales and is still growing rapidly at a rate of 15% per year (Azmi Hassali & AL-Tamimi, 2015). In addition, Malaysian consumers especially the younger generation and educated Muslim female in urban area have shown a proactive behavior on cosmetic products with health safety guarantee and willing to pay higher price for the desired brand (Ishak et al., 2020; Shaari, 2019). Employment demands have shifted as a result of urbanisation and the increasing participation of women in the workforce. Additionally, the Malaysian market has changed significantly, and the industry is now more tightly regulated. Historically, Malaysians purchased only basic personal care products. However, as disposable incomes increased and new products became available, people began purchasing a broader range of grooming products and services. Cosmetics are popular with both young people and adults due to their associations with youth, comfort, and versatility (Nur & Sapir, 2021; Azuizkulov, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2015).

2.2 Conceptualising the brand identification

Brand labels serve as a point of differentiation for individuals. As of 2015, consumers place a premium on branded products and are willing to pay more than the suggested retail price. Customers' purchase decisions are influenced by branding, and each brand has its own personality (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Ferraro, Kirmani, & Matherly, 2013). This is predicated on the notion that brands have evolved into a marketing tool for producers and a goldmine of data for consumers. For the producer, brands imply ease, as they elicit an emotional response from consumers (Jevons, 2005). According to Keller & Lehmann (2006), brands are trusted by consumers and enable consumers to connect with both the product and the manufacturer. The findings are based on Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) and suggest that a brand is a collection of the marketer's mental associations that aid the consumer in comprehending the firm. Typically, a brand is referred to as a character that demonstrates an ideal decision that the audience can easily comprehend and respond to.

Businesses promote brands by appealing to customers' lifestyles, prestige, cultural significance, and image. Wearing a particular brand is viewed positively as a form of advertisement. Brand recognition can help consumers mitigate the risk associated with purchasing an unfamiliar product (Bulmer & Buchanan-oliver, 2014). By focusing on the nature of human beings, branding ensures a stable benefit, a practice that helps design a maintainable benefit. Only humans are capable of imbuing non-living objects with emotions and meaning, and an arbitrary collection of symbols suggests that the appeal of branding is

not entirely balanced (Tan, Wee, Chua, & Ming, 2003). When a customer develops an attachment to a brand, they are unlikely to switch.

2.3 Personal values and consumer-brand identification

When consumers can identify with a brand, it indicates that the two parties have a genuine connection (Fournier, 1998). When it comes to product selection, consumer preferences are determined by financial risk. He asserts that meaningful relationships with any product are possible as long as customer satisfaction, brand personality, and perceptions of product quality are taken into account (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2017; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Smit, Bronner, and Tolboom (2007) argue that the consumer can create a brand's personality through their interaction with the brand. In the context of this investigation, how consumers perceive themselves has an effect on their level of brand attachment. The following section will elicit a more in-depth personal discussion with consumers about their values, profession, and the brand with which they identify.

2.4. Environment consciousness and consumer-brand identification

Numerous previous studies have demonstrated that, despite a brand's reputation for environmental stewardship, this does not benefit the consumer (Morea et al., 2021; Nielsen, 2001). Consumers will be unable to commit to a brand if they are lacking on the understanding of environmental impact to the users themselves (First & Khetriwal, 2010) and environmental impact towards the business (Bodur, Gao, & Grohmann, 2014). It is recommended that a strong bond and shared values exist between the consumer and the product in order for the consumer to act as a loyal supporter. Along with demonstrating consumers' preference for natural cosmetics, the research aims to demonstrate the meaning and value placed on nature by the luxury brand. According to Lu, Chang, Chang, and Chang Lee's (2013) research, Taiwanese customers who have a more positive perception of the company as a good corporate citizen have a greater faith in the product and direction. In light of this assumption, the following hypothesis is advanced.

H1: Environmental Consciousness has a significant relationship with consumer-brand identification.

2.5 Health consciousness and consumer-brand identification

Consumer concerns about the safety and efficacy of cosmetics, skin care, and personal care products have been addressed for some time (Voravuthikunchai & Howe, 2014). They are aware of their health status and therefore make an effort to maintain it through healthy behaviour (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008). Additionally, individuals may choose to purchase and utilise products and services that are widely recognised by others (Shepherd, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2015; Chen, 2011) However, there are distinctions in how patients view their health, product categories, and consumer attachment to the product. Consumers, for example, claim to purchase organic food despite their positive attitude toward it, indicating that it is healthier (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2009). The values of a brand, a customer, or a product can reflect a variety of societal stereotypes (as found by Shepherd et.al., 2015). As a result, it is critical for marketers to have a brand that reflects the customer's perspective while also expressing their own beliefs. Sociological research demonstrates that consumers developed a sense of self and selected brands to bolster their identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; da Silveira et al., 2013). According to the developed theory, when consumers believe a company

engages in moral behaviour, they are more favourable toward its products. In light of this assumption, the following hypothesis is advanced.

H2: Health Consciousness has a significant relationship with consumer-brand identification.

2.6 Appearance consciousness and consumer-brand identification

Beauty and intelligence only take root in a person when it appears on a face, however, does not originate in one's cosmetic application (Jones & Kramer, 2015). Furthermore, results from Shah and Amjad (2015) show that people are concerned about self-consciousness, rather than privateness in secrecy. This finding has put forward the notion that products favored by consumers are critical for a company's brand development. The brand is part of the upper-class consumers who are interested in being partaking in fitting into their social groups (Zhan & He, 2012; Nikhashemi & Delgado-Ballester, 2021). Based on these facts, the following hypothesis is proposed

H3: Appearance Consciousness has a significant relationship with consumer-brand identification.

2.7 Relationship between personal values, consumer-brand identification and brand loyalty

Various studies in the dimensional and empirical evidence on consumer action of luxury consumption habits have already been conducted (Bian, Q & Forsythe, 2012; Dubois et al., 2005; Wu & Liang, 2009; Wiedmann et al., 2009). The present study will examine only one facet of luxury brands that consider natural and sustainable as a part of the focus. When it comes to cosmetics and beauty products, a lot of women are interested, so the best option is the ones that have good quality. Previous research have paid attention to consumers' perceptions of luxury brands and is related to multiple aspects of those values (Cervellon & Shammass, 2013; Truong et al., 2012; Jung Choo et al., 2012; Hsiung & Lee, 2021). The study's objective is to explore how people identify with their preferred brand and to discover if the consumer's own values and ideas about sustainability are the same. In this research, the researcher must discover from the consumer's psychological meaning because luxury beauty products are created with attention to detail and are specific to a certain image. A study done by Ajitha and Sivakumar (2017) discovered that women's decision to choose a particular brand of cosmetic products is greatly impacted by their personal and social lives. However, this study was done on younger people of various generations, therefore the findings should be extended to people of different age and cultures in which provides an opportunity for people who are concerned about the environment to buy because of the wellness and safety to state their concerns about food consumption (Bartels & Onwezen, 2014; Marucheck et al., 2011).

Personal values, which is perceived by the consumers, has an emotional significance (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2007). Based on this understanding, the present investigation aims to understand consumer's values from three different viewpoints, i.e.e. the impact of their place on their health, personal values, and how much these impact their uniqueness and self-identity. According to the study conducted by Ahmad, Omar, and Rose (2016), which found that consumers have a strong connection to their personal values when purchasing a brand. This is why it is worthwhile to look into whether or not these customers

have a strong bond with the brand, also believe in shared beliefs and values (Hodge et al., 2015). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: CBI mediates the relationship between perceived Environmental Consciousness and brand loyalty

H6: CBI mediates the relationship between Health Consciousness and brand loyalty

H7: CBI mediates the relationship between Appearance Consciousness and brand loyalty

2.8 Relationship between consumer-brand identification and brand loyalty

Consumer brand identification was described earlier as brand-belong, in which consumers use a brand to indicate their association with the user (Tuškej, et al., 2013). Because of this illustrates how favourable brands can create long-term brand value (Kim et al., 2001; Sirgy et al., 2008; Casteran et al., 2019). The study done by Sutikno (2011) suggested that consumers' bond strengths and weaknesses were apparent in their choices of brands, thus meaning that the bond will remain. If consumers are able to easily associate a value and image with the product, the consumers will keep their loyalty. This illustrates how important the brand loyalty is to the consumer-brand relationship. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed;

H4: Consumer-Brand Identification (CBI) has a significant relationship with brand loyalty

3. METHODOLOGY

Self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the group of respondents whom the researcher has identified earlier. The respondents answered based on the survey questions at the selected mall which was confirmed to have that specific brand of luxury natural beauty product. However, in a situation that the researcher was facing such as dispersed location of potential respondents, the time needed for the respondents to fill-up the survey, hence the respondents were asked to give in their contact number, home/office address and personal e-mail address, in which the questionnaire was passed to the respondents via email just for the convenience of the respondents.

3.1 Data collection procedure

Luxury brands are sold in the malls with the most of the country's population in Malaysia's major cities. The consumers must have experienced using the luxury brand must first be at least 18 years of age and they must have purchased the sustainable product for at least three years to be included in the target audience. Participants were briefed on the project's objective and purpose in order to allow them to agree to participate in the study. following the respondents' agreement, the questionnaires will be given to them and they will have only about 15 to 20 minutes to finish them at the moment Respondents will also will be informed that their participation was entirely voluntary.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Profile of consumer demographic characteristics

These statistics gave insight into the demographic profiles of respondents who participated in the mall-intercept. The results show that respondents between 41 and 50 years old made up 32.2% of the total sample. More than half of the respondents are married with children (58.7 percent) and fewer than 30 percent are single (27.3 percent remain single). Among these 354 respondents, 31.4% were from the Malay community, 31.6% were from the Indian community, and 31.3% were from the Chinese community. Almost a quarter of the respondents (36.2%) have a bachelor's degree, forty per cent have a postgraduate qualification, and seventeen percent (17%) have a Diploma. Overall, only 3.4% of respondents came from outside of the area. Having discovered that 46.3% of respondents work in professional and administrative positions (18.4% are executives) (21.5 percent). Survey results show that 81.7% of respondents had earned over RM4,000 in a month.

4.2 Path coefficient and hypothesis test result

After running the PLS model, estimates are given for the path coefficients that indicate the hypothesised relationship between the constructs. The structural model's path coefficients were calculated, and the bootstrap analysis was performed to determine its statistical impact. The path coefficients have all been normalised to have values between -1 and 1. The estimated path coefficient 1 denotes a positive correlation, and a negative path coefficient a negative correlation (Hair et al., 2019). Bootstrap-based nonparametricity is random sampling to create a test sample and estimable error for the hypothesis (Hair et al., 2019). For the purpose of bootstrapping, Chin et al., (2003) found that 500 simulations were needed to estimate a parameter and in addition recommended that at least 1000 resampling, but cautions against going above 5000. Thus, the current study implements bootstrapping with 5000 re-sample tests.

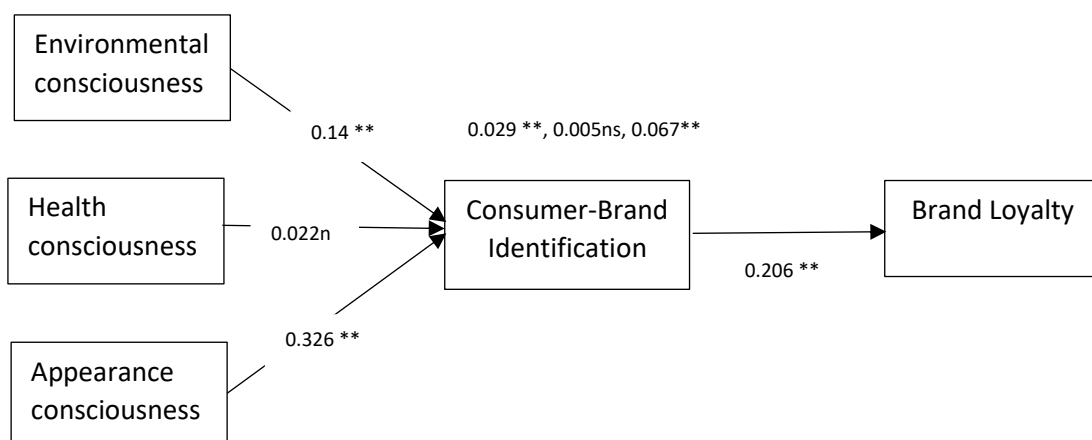


Figure 1: Research framework and result.

Table 4.1: Direct relationships of the variables in the study.

Num	Hypothesis	Beta	Standard Deviation	T Values	P Values	Decision
H1	PV_EC -> CBI	0.14	0.046	3.040**	0.002	Supported
H2	PV_HC -> CBI	0.022	0.039	0.567	0.571	Not Supported
H3	PV_AC -> CBI	0.326	0.046	7.041**	0.000	Supported
H4	CBI -> Loylty	0.206	0.051	4.042**	0.000	Supported

*significance at $p < 0.05$ (2.33), ** significance at $p < 0.01$ (1.645) ;(based on one-tailed test), bootstrapping (n=5000). CBI=Consumer-brand Identification, PV_Func= Functional value, PV_Exp= Experiential value, PV_Sy,= Symbolic value, PV_EC= Environment consciousness, PV_HC= Health consciousness, PV_AC= Appearance consciousness.

Table 4.1 indicated four direct relationship we tested where 3 of the hypotheses were supported (H1, H3 and H4) ($p < 0,05$ and $p < 0.01$) while H2 that tested o the relationship between heath consciousness and CBI was not supported ($p > 0.05$). Referring to Table 4.2, it was found that 2 indirect relationships were supported ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$) and one hypothesis (H6) was not supported. Moreover, according to Preacher and Hayes (2008) the upper limit and lower limit of each of the indirect relationship in Bootstrapped Confidence Interval (95%) were found not to have a 0 in between, proving that there is mediation. Figure 1 summarized the research framework and reults of the hypothesis.

Table 4.2: Indirect relationships of the variables in the study.

Num	Hypothesis	Path a*b	SE	t-value	Decision	Bootstrapped Confidence Interval	
						95% LL	95% UL
H5	PV_EC-CBI-Loyalty	0.029	0.012	2.481**	Supported	0.009	0.055
H6	PV_HC-CBI-Loyalty	0.005	0.008	0.551	Not Supported	-0.011	0.021
H7	PV_AC-CBI-Loyalty	0.067	0.018	3.78**	Supported	0.033	0.103

*significance at $p < 0.05$ (1.96), ** significance at $p < 0.01$ (2.58), bootstrapping (n=5000). CBI=Consumer-brand Identification, PV_Func= Functional value, PV_Exp= Experiential value, PV_Sy,= Symbolic value, PV_EC= Environment consciousness, PV_HC= Health consciousness, PV_AC= Appearance consciousness.

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The goal of the current investigation was to investigate the components that affect consumer brand identification and consumer loyalty towards the luxury brands of beauty products. The study adds to the depth of knowledge about customer preference for luxury beauty brand loyalty in the context of exquisite surroundings. This study incorporated three key influencing factors of customer loyalty including how valuable the customer perceived a product to be from their personal values. The findings of the study is supported by previous study (e.g Fatma et al., 2016; He & Li, 2011; Chen, 2009) that indicated consumer's personal values such as environmental consciousness and appearance consciousness have a direct relationship to consumer brand identification in the context of cosmetic products. Additional theoretical support was provided for three principal theories: brand values, Self-Identity Theory, and social identity. In sum, the study's findings represent a number of contributions, which are discussed in the following. The results of the current investigation have significant implications for business owners and operators involved in the promotion of natural beauty products. Brand equity and experiential value may both help brand managers, but focus should be put on providing relevant information to consumers. Consequently, brand managers must provide consumers with the capability to experience the brand. An example of experiential value creation is when you associate brands with people, places, things, and events. The ability to arouse feelings in others is something that may be useful in association with people (Feel brand experience). For people to identify with a brand, brands may utilise a sense of community and participation in cause-related activities (such as flagship stores, theme retail outlets) that create an experience for consumers (like charity outlets).

5.1 Suggestion for future research

Some of the suggestions made in the above mentioned above analysis are echoed in the research that needs to be done. Even though the current study was built on the conceptual model by integrating the factors under personal values into one model influencing consumer brand identification and brand loyalty, it was limited to examine the role of predictor on its identification and brand loyalty with the luxury natural cosmetic product. Therefore, the researcher recommends future studies to examine the impact of personal value on various type of consumer behaviour such as re purchase intention, positive word of mouth, and others. Secondly, it is suggested to consider other variables as the moderator, such as brand involvement or product characteristics, because the study focus on beauty products can be further sub-divided into several categories (whitening, serum, facial cleanser and others). Finally, the current study aimed to investigate a set of relationship among the Malaysian consumers, which can be used as a guideline for other businesses in the Southeast Asia. However, future studies are necessary to test the developed model in different countries in the Asian regions as well as other regions such as China, USA, or in the middle east, where there is market growth in luxury natural cosmetic products. Understanding how consumer behaviour patterns varies across regions and the different effect such as culture and government regulation is important. Consequently, retesting the conceptual model in other countries and comparing the significant of the results with the results from this study may address some of these issues. By doing so, the research model can become rigorous and can be generalized in a broader perspective.

5.2 Conclusion

The primary goals of the study were to understand the different dimensions of personal value and to learn more about their role in consumers' brand attachment for luxury products. Furthermore, the conceptual model in this study identified consumer-brand identification as a moderator and used it as a mediator for brand loyalty. It is expected that the research findings of the business owners and marketers will give them a better understanding of consumers' attitudes and how deeply committed consumers are to their own brand preferences. This study looks into both the perceptions and preferences that may have been overlooked as well as it dives deeper into their core state of mind. To own a good product with top-quality performance is expected, but to make a good product is an extra.

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