



Global Conference on Business and Economics Research (GCBER) 2017  
14-15 August 2017, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

# Identifying Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Loyalty: a Case of Apparel Brands in Social Media

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## Abstract

New developments in e-commerce technologies along with the wide adoption of mobile devices and social media have enabled companies to enhance customers' shopping experiences and their interaction with brands anytime, anywhere. Social media is becoming a place to display and promote products. Therefore, marketers need to design a website which not only has good content but is also attractive. A previous survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) published in November 2016 indicates that consumers find smart devices increasingly relevant to their lives, and they are inspired by the possibilities of the connected world. Since online consumers can easily switch to other e-commerce sites, their online loyalty is generally not high. The purpose of this paper is to provide an improved understanding of the factors that influence brand loyalty. Empirical evidence from both in-depth interviews and data garnered from 200 surveys was integrated into a conceptual model. The causal model was tested using structural equation modelling. It was validated using Smart PLS 2.0. The results indicate that brand loyalty is an important antecedent of word-of-mouth and it mediates the influence of brand experience, brand trust, brand personality and brand love. This study is expected to provide insights into strategies to encourage and enable entrepreneurs to continue to develop better focus on their efforts to maintain customers.

**Keywords:** Brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, brand personality, brand trust, word-of-mouth

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social network sites (SNSs) have transformed the way users interact with each other, obtain product and service information, and make purchasing decisions (Chu and Choi, 2011). For decades, retailers and researchers have been aware that shopping is not just a matter of obtaining tangible products, but it is also about the shopping experience. In Jakarta, smartphones are increasingly being used 24/7 to access social media, such as Facebook, Instagram and BBM Group. People are also using this technology to browse on the internet for various needs, such as Muslim clothing, and complete their purchase transactions easily. As for retailers, they only need to display a few samples of their clothes, rather than set up a complete clothing store, in the online forums or communities of which they are members (Briliana, 2016).

Hijup.com is a multi-brand e-commerce retailer, which uses the internet as its main and only platform for a marketplace and its marketing communication efforts. It was formed on August 11, 2011 selling only fashion products for Muslim women's fashion products. It targeted Muslim women aged 21 - 35, and attracted an average of 293,000 website guests a week in 2012. The majority of the population of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia with an area of 664.01 km<sup>2</sup>, as many as 10,177,924 people (86%) are followers of Islam and are, therefore, a potential market for Muslim fashion (Briliana, 2016). The rise of Muslim fashion media, blogs and

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customer-to-customer online know-how exchanges focused on fashion could be impacting design and retail trends (Briliana et al., 2015). This study contributes to this body of knowledge by proposing the factors that influence brand loyalty and hijab fashion consumption through e-tailing.

Brands are important in the consumer's daily life. Recent research has emphasised different types of relationships between consumers and branded products. Studies have discussed values in the cosmetics product context (Jouzaryan et al., 2015). While these studies have enriched understanding of this area, their limitations must be noted. First, no study has surveyed the outcome of brand loyalty. Most studies have examined only a small set of the value components and neglected other imperative ones. Second, due to the incomplete selection of the values constructs, the existing literature has missed opportunities to understand the relative strengths of the varying perceived values in cultivating consumer behaviour. Third, a majority of the prior studies have been limited to descriptive or conceptual discussion and modelling. The purpose of this research is to provide an improved understanding of the nature of the relationships among brand personality, brand love, brand experience, brand trust and brand loyalty with the focus on fashion, as well as word-of-mouth information exchange, particularly amongst Muslim women.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Brand Personality**

Brand personality (BP) reflects an emotional identity for a brand, which produces sentiments and feelings towards the brand among consumers (Schifman, 2015). Solomon (2013) states that BP is the set of traits people attribute to a product as if it were a person. BP is mostly impacted by the design of a bottle or label, the colours and advertisements (Basfirince, 2013). Consumer perceptions of brands are created, whereby the brand attaches itself in the minds of consumers and customers also know its characteristics. BP generally comes from three sources: firstly, is the association consumers have with a brand; secondly, the image a company tries hard to create, for example using an advertising spokesperson to create a corporate image; and lastly, the product attributes, for example product categories and distribution channels. Endorsers of a brand, the company's employees and CEO, and users of a brand affect the perception of BP directly. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1 (H1) is proposed.

H1. Brand Personality has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

### **2.2 Brand Love**

Consumers' love for objects and products has been widely noted, but their love for brands was first identified by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). Brand love (BL) is still a relatively new concept in the research stream of consumer-brand relationships, with a broad range of positive emotions and attitudes being directed towards brands (Batra et al., 2012). This helps explain and predict variations in desirable post-consumption behaviours among satisfied consumers (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). BL is the part of the relationship structure between consumers and brands, which is more intense than just liking (Heinrich et al., 2012; Fetcherin and Heinrich, 2014). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) define the degrees of consumer expression towards brands in five levels. They are passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand, and declarations of love for the brand. Loyal customers develop relationships with brands and they maintain these relationships long-term. The abstract idea of BL is vibrant and needs to be explored on a large scale, but still it is less researched. Hence, Hypothesis 2 (H2) is proposed:

H2. Brand Love has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

### **2.3 Brand Trust**

Brand trust (BT) is an important mediating factor on customer behaviours before and after the purchase of a product; it causes long-term loyalty and strengthens the relationships between the two parties (Liu et al., 2012). Trust has been recognised as an important influence on customer commitment and hence on loyalty (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Gremler and Brown, 1999). Zhao et al. (2016) state that trust is a key variable in the progress of m-commerce. It is important to acknowledge the existence of different approaches to the interactions among satisfaction, trust and loyalty (Izogo, 2016). Consumers trust brands they feel are secure and reliable, and they believe that these brands act in the consumers' best interests (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is proposed:

H3. Brand Trust has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

## **2.4 Brand Experience**

Brand experience (BE) is conceptualised feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environment (Brakus et al., 2009). Shim et al., (2015) point out that online flow positively influences sensory and affective brand experiences, which in turn lead to BL. Brand experiences, satisfaction and trust positively affect BL (Sahin et al., 2011). In the e-shopping context, experience and enjoyment derive from e-consumers' interactions with an e-retail site. Past experiences that reassure the consumer will positively influence BL to an e-retailer. Hence, Hypothesis 4 (H4) is proposed:

H4. Brand Experience has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

## **2.5 Brand Loyalty**

Brand Loyalty (BLO) consciousness is the ultimate objective of building powerful brands. BLO means consumers purchase only one brand (Clow and Baack, 2014). Loyalty is a concept that goes beyond repeated purchasing; it consists of a behavioural dimension and an attitudinal dimension, where commitment is an essential feature (Beerli et al., 2004). Tuu et al. (2011) state that customer loyalty is a cumulative construct that includes both the act of consuming (action loyalty) and expected consumption (future repurchasing). Yoo and Donthu (2001) show in their research that BLO indicates the motivation to be loyal to a brand, and it is demonstrated when consumers select a brand as their first choice. One of the roles of advertising is to encourage consumers to be loyal to the brands with which they are familiar. Aaker (2014) divides evidence of loyalty towards a brand into five levels: The first level is non-loyal buyers, who are sensitive to the price and switch easily to use other brands. The second level is satisfied customers, who habitually purchase the brand. The third level is satisfied customers with switching costs, i.e. the loss of time, money, acquired loyalty advantage, and the performance risks associated with switching to another brand. The fourth level is customers who truly like the brand, based upon associations, such as a symbol, positive user experiences, or a perception of high quality. The fifth level is committed customers, who are bound to use the brand that expresses their personalities, and they recommend the brand to other customers. For this reason, the researcher is interested in investigating the relationships among brand loyalty and word of mouth. These will bring the benefits to the companies by enable them to maintain existing customers and capture new customers and help reduce the cost of the advertising and promotions (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Berger, 2014). Hence, Hypothesis 5 (H5) is proposed:

H5. Brand Loyalty has a positive impact on Word-of-Mouth.

## **2.6 Word-of-Mouth**

Hawkins et al. (2004) point out that Word-of-Mouth (WOM) refers to the sharing of opinions from one consumer to another. It is the conclusive stage in the consumer decision-making process that convinces people to use particular products or services. It enters deeply into the target audience's thoughts, delivering reliable messages that are proven to change behaviours and attitudes, in offices, homes, schools, on blogs and SNSs, wherever consumers naturally talk to each other. WOM is informal communication among consumers regarding the supplier and/or its product or service characteristics. WOM produces extremely rich and reliable conversations. These conversations matter to others, because they help people make decisions about what is really worth buying. It is the authenticity that makes it so powerful. In their research, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) show that about 15 percent of our daily conversations have some product or service-related content. Studies have investigated the willingness to recommend and the value of positive WOM communication (Lloyd et al., 2011; Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). However, prior research is still lacking in the e-commerce literature, especially in the context of the fashion industry. The characteristics of shopping online for a product necessitate relying on others' opinions to evaluate a product or service before purchase.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted based on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which tests whether a specified set of constructs influences the responses in a predictable way. The study used PLS-SEM version 2.0. The PLS-SEM algorithm was used to estimate the path coefficients and other model parameters in a way that maximises the explained variance or minimises the amount of unexplained variance (Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2017). In order to test the coefficient for the significance of the path modelling, the bootstrapping method was applied. The output from bootstrapping also shows the paths corresponding to each hypothesis. The convergent validity is demonstrated by loadings greater than 0.70, and the average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity refers to the degree of specific construct, which is different from other constructs, and is demonstrated by the square root of the AVE being greater than any of the inter-construct

correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2017). Meanwhile, composite reliability is generally interpreted in the same way as Cronbach's alpha and varies between 0 and 1, whereby higher values indicate higher levels of reliability (Hair et al., 2017).

The population, which became the object of this research, is the consumers who buy clothing products online through Hijup.com. The sample unit is an individual member of Facebook, Instagram, or the website Hijup.com. Moreover, the samples were determined by purposive sampling. Conducting a consumer perception survey among Muslims was quite easy as Muslims are in the majority in Jakarta (Briliana, 2016). Respondents for the study qualified according to preset criteria, i.e. they are Muslims, who do the purchasing and make decisions to shop using social media, such as Facebook, Instagram or the website of Hijup, a company that sells online. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the respondents.

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Cross-sectional data were collected by means of a structured survey in Jakarta over multiple days in February 2017. From a distribution of 225 questionnaires 200 were returned, of which 200 (or 88.9%) were usable for further analysis. According to the respondents' profiles, the study found the majority (44.5%) were in the 21-to-23-year age group, holders of diploma or bachelor degrees (60.5%), entrepreneurs (68%) and earning a monthly income of IDR 5,000,001 to 6,000,000 (44.5%). The demographic information of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics sample

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	%
Age	18 – 20 years old	43	21.5
	21 – 23 years old	89	44.5
	24 – 26 years old	66	33
	27 – 29 years old	2	1
Education level	Senior high school, Diploma, Bachelor,	73	36.5
	Master	121	60.5
		6	3
Occupation	Student	5	2.5
	Student, also employee	67	33.5
	Employee	54	27
	Entrepreneur	68	34
	Housewife	6	3
Monthly income	≤ IDR 4,000,000	3	1.5
	IDR 4,000,001 – IDR 5,000,000	68	26
	IDR 5,000,001 – IDR 6,000,000	89	44.5
	≥ IDR 6,000,001	56	28

Table 2 shows the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), which exceeded the 0.70 recommended values of Hair et al. (2017). The assessment of the structural model involves an estimation of the path loadings and the  $R^2$  values (Table 2). Path loadings indicate the strengths of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, while  $R^2$  values measure the predictive power of the structural models. Interpreted as multiple regression results, the  $R^2$  indicates the amount of variance explained by the exogenous variables. Here, the correlation between constructs that exceed the square roots of their AVE indicates that they may not be sufficiently discriminable. Using a bootstrapping technique, path loadings and t-statistics for hypothesised relationships were calculated. The PLS analysis results are shown in Table 4. In marketing, researchers usually assume a significance level of 5%. Hypotheses with a t-value above 1.96 will be accepted and a hypothesis will be rejected when its t-value is found to be less than 1.96 for significance level = 5% and for significance level = 1%. Hypotheses with a t-value above 2.326 will be accepted and a hypothesis will be rejected when its t-value is found to be less than 2.326 (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2. Summary result of the measurement model and convergent validity

Variable	Adapted from	Item	Loading	AVE	R Square	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Personality (BP)	Jouzaryan et al., 2015	BP1	0.971	0.809	--	0.944	0.921
		BP2	0.961				
		BP3	0.955				
		BP4	0.912				
Brand Love (BL)	Carroll and Ahuvia 2006	BL1	0.957	0.813	--	0.945	0.923
		BL2	0.969				
		BL3	0.961				
		BL4	0.945				
		BL5	0.759				
		BL6	0.668				
		BL7	0.871				
		BL8	0.645				
		BL9	0.757				
		BL10	0.869				
Brand Experience (BE)	Jouzaryan et al., 2015	BE1	0.971	0.787	--	0.936	0.908
		BE2	0.922				
		BE3	0.952				
		BE4	0.973				
Brand Trust (BT)	Jouzaryan et al., 2015	BT1	0.985	0.936		0.983	0.977
		BT2	0.963				
		BT3	0.996				
		BT4	0.996				
Brand Loyalty (BLO)	Jouzaryan et al., 2015	BLO1	0.937	0.752	0.912	0.924	0.890
		BLO2	0.949				
		BLO3	0.956				
		BLO4	0.943				
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	Carroll and Ahuvia 2006.	WOM1	0.971	0.805	0.954	0.925	0.878
		WOM2	0.943				
		WOM3	0.956				

Table 2 summarises the results of the measurement model. Item reliability, construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2017) support the convergent validity of the CFA results. The CR, which shows the degree to which construct indicators demonstrate the latent construct, ranged from 0.924 to 0.945, which was above the cutoff value of 0.7. The AVE ranged from 0.752 to 0.936, which was greater than 0.50, justifying the use of the construct. The AVE values of 0.5 and above indicate that convergent validity was achieved by all constructs (Khong et al., 2013). Overall, these results indicate that the measurement model has good convergent validity. The variances explained,  $R^2$ , are 0.912 (BLO) and 0.954 (WOM) respectively. All the Cronbach's alpha values were greater than 0.70 indicating the good reliability of all the measures. The construct with the highest Cronbach's alpha was BT (0.977), which indicates good internal consistency of the items in this construct, while the lowest Cronbach's alpha was WOM (0.878), which indicates low inter-item correlations (Table 2). Overall, these results indicate that the measurement model has good convergent validity. To examine the discriminant validity, the study followed the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The square root of the AVE for each construct was compared; if they are greater than the correlation coefficients of the corresponding inter constructs, discriminant validity is achieved (Table. 3).

Table 3. Discriminant validity

	BE	BL	BLO	BP	BT	WOM
BE	<b>0.887</b>					
BL	0.672	<b>0.901</b>				
BLO	0.765	0.774	<b>0.867</b>			
BP	0.751	0.820	0.756	<b>0.899</b>		
BT	0.882	0.865	0.880	0.885	<b>0.967</b>	
WOM	0.765	0.807	0.838	0.774	0.703	<b>0.852</b>

Note: Diagonal entries (in bold) represent the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) while the other entries represent the squared

The PLS analysis based on a bootstrapping procedure for 500 subsamples was carried out. The summary of hypotheses presented in Table 4 and Figure 1 shows support for the five hypotheses tested in this study.

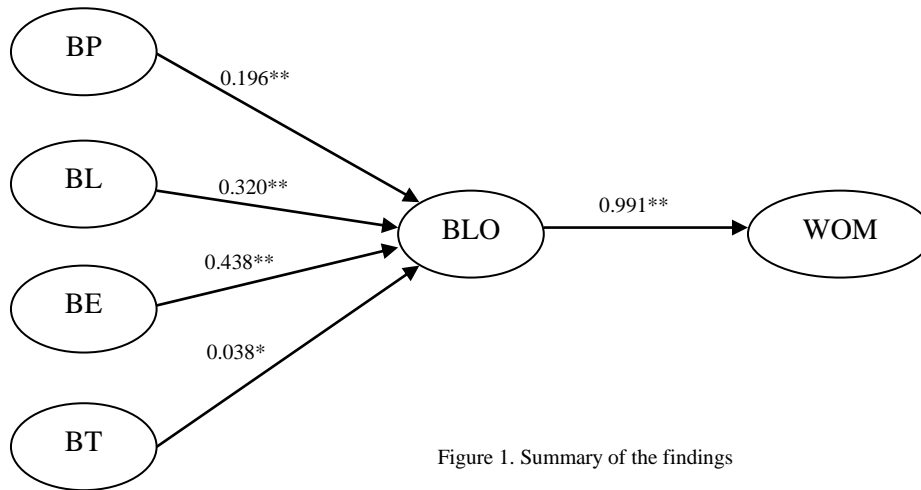


Figure 1. Summary of the findings

Table 4: Summary of findings

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (β)	Standard Error (STERR)	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis
H1	BP → BLO	0.186	0.086	2.148	< 0.01	Significant
H2	BL → BLO	0.307	0.094	3.268	< 0.01	Significant
H3	BE → BLO	0.411	0.101	4.065	< 0.01	Significant
H4	BT → BLO	0.070	0.098	1.967	< 0.05	Significant
H5	BLO → WOM	0.976	0.004	236.012	< 0.01	Significant

The results show that Hypothesis 1 is supported, as BP was found to positively impact on BLO ( $\beta=0.186$ ; t-value 2.148;  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings are consistent with previous studies about the relationship between BP and BLO (Jouzaryan et al., 2015). BP may influence consumers' brand loyalty to consumable goods (Kumar et al., 2006). The finding of a study by Mengxia (2007) reveals that brand personality has a positive influence on brand preference, affection, loyalty and purchase intention. Moreover, this finding is similar to the results of the studies of Lin et al. (2010), who found a significantly positive relationship between BP and BL. In the study of Su and Tong (2015), their research shows a positive and significant relationship between the BP of sportswear and BE that includes BL. Fashion brands convey their personalities directly through the clothing items themselves, or indirectly through advertising, store design, shopping malls, etc. For instance, Hijup.com elicits a feeling of being fashionable, comfortable and youthful. A brand personality is something to which the consumer can relate; an effective brand increases its brand equity by having a consistent set of traits that a specific consumer segment enjoys (Aaker, 1997).

A positive and significant link between BL and BLO was found ( $\beta = 0.307$ ; t-value 3.268;  $p < 0.01$ ), which is consistent with H2. These findings are consistent with previous studies about the relationship between BL and BLO. Previous research from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) shows the positive direct effects of BL on BLO. Consumers love their fashion brand because of the passion it inspires in them. They want to be well dressed and well groomed, and they also want to be informed about the latest styles. Batra et al. (2012) found that BL can act as a motivator in forming and maintaining close relationships with the companies. Brands that are lovable are likely to have stronger BLO and competitive advantage. This result is further supported by Mira et al. (2013), who revealed that increasing BL will result in increasing loyalty.

Relationships were found among constructs, revealing that BE has a positive relationship with BLO ( $\beta = 0.411$ ; t-value 4.065;  $p < 0.01$ ), which is consistent with H3. Previous research about BE found that BE about cosmetics has influence in relation to BLO (Jouzaryan et al., 2015). In their research Shim et al. (2015) examined the relationships among consumers' skills, perceived challenges, online flow, BE and BLO, in the context of online shopping on an apparel brand's website. Brakus (2009) points out that BE affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty directly and indirectly through BP associations. Sahin et al. (2011) show in their research, that brand experiences, satisfaction and trust positively affect BL. This result is further supported by

Khalili et al. (2013), whose research indicates that BE has a positive and meaningful relationship with brand satisfaction, trust, perception of image and loyalty.

BT was also found to be a predictor of BLO ( $\beta = 0.070$ ; t-value 1.967;  $p < 0.05$ ) which is consistent with H4. These findings are consistent with previous studies about the relationships between BT and BLO (Jouzaryan et al., 2015). With BT, a company can keep its customers for a long time and increase their satisfaction. Relationships characterised by trust will often result in the desire for long-term commitment between two parties (Hrebiniak, 1974; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Gournaris, (2005) revealed that enduring relationships are often based on emotional attachment, and trust is often viewed as an essential ingredient in successful relationships.

In support of H5, a positive and significant link between BLO and WOM was found ( $\beta = 0.976$ ; t-value 236.012;  $p < 0.01$ ). These results are consistent with the findings of Jouzaryan et al., 2015. Casidy (2014) noticed it is reasonable to predict that loyalty has a positive influence on WOM. The structural equation model and correlation analysis also reveal a strong relationship between online shopper loyalty and WOM. The link between customer loyalty and WOM has been well documented in the literature (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Gruen et al., 2006; Wangenheim and Bayon, 2004). Loyal customers will appear positive word-of-mouth (Zeitmal et al., 1996). Carlos et al., (2008) revealed that loyal customers will provide open recommendation and word-of-mouth to others customers.

Therefore, market researchers in general, and international brands in particular, should design their marketing campaigns by focusing on creating a product that triggers customer excitement. They can do this by creating a unique fashion and attractive item as shown by its design and other tangible aspects. Companies need to create products and services that represent an image of the brand in order to motivate consumers to promote it by word-of-mouth. Successfully persuading customers to love the brand, guarantees this will happen.

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