ANTHROPOMORPHISM BRAND UNIQUENESS: PRODUCTS MARKETED OFFLINE VERSUS ONLINE

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Abstract: Consuming brand identification is essential for companies to cope with competition. The aspect of brand identification is based on consumer interaction with products. It is motivated by several factors including brand anthropomorphism, engagement, skepticism, and prestige, distinctiveness, and self-similarity. Brand anthropomorphism as a variation of cognitive processes that represent consumers' preferences towards brands, so brands are considered in accordance with human traits, both based on overall actions and regard them as objects with the motivation and intentions of consumers. The purpose of this study therefore is to test and analyze factors influencing consumer brand identification. The conceptual model of testing involves products marketed offline and online. The results show there is a very significant difference between these two marketing aspects. Anthropomorphism affects consumer-brand identification, though only for products sold online. So the company can respond to intense competition, by choosing the right business strategy to gain market share.

Index Terms - brand anthropomorphism, consumer – brand engagement, consumer's skepticism, brand prestige, brand self-similarity, brand distinctiveness, consumer-brand identification, brand loyalty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Brand loyalty reflects customer devotion to certain products. In case consumers have a positive attitude towards a brand, there is likely to be excellent results for the company. This is especially true in case the loyalty is long-term and cumulative. The longer the loyalty of a customer, the greater the benefits to the company [1].In consumer behavior, the brand is the most critical part in developing self-confidence and build individual and social identity [2]. The company strives to maintain a good relationship with consumers through its marketing campaigns. This is based on the assumption that consumers identify the company's brand. Based on consumer culture theory, the market might be a source of symbols and social cues which help consumers to identify its brands [3]. *Consumer-brand identification* has three drivers derived from the nature of customers' interaction with brands. It consists of brand anthropomorphism, more referring to the perception of the brand. It also involves consumer-brand engagement to indicate the level of their capital, and skepticism towards marketing communication and reflects the need to interact with a brand [4]. Additionally, three other drivers come from self-definition needs, which expresses its better and prestigious sense, brand-self similarity involving personality, and brand distinctiveness, which relates to unique characteristics of the brand [5]. These three elements help to improve the quality of the relationship between consumers and brands. In most cases, brand loyalty is also perceived as a consequence of consumer-brand identification to control the validity of variables. The brand anthropomorphism variable uses an indicator [6]. The results of previous studies stated that a

product is not significant to consumer-brand identification based on skepticism [4]. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the effect of consumer-brand skepticism on consumer-brand identification. This study is significant to Market Managers and helps them determine strategies of increasing brand loyalty. It is often conducted by increasing the driving factors of consumer-brand identification. Moreover, it also analyzes the impact on products purchased both online and offline*.*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Brand anthropomorphism

Brand anthropomorphism is defined as the tendency of customers to see and describe a non-human object through the characteristics contained in a brand to have the ability to motivate, aim, and have feelings like humans in general [7]. Anthropomorphism has the potential to identify an individual with a branded product [8]. The concept of brand anthropomorphism is less researched in empirical studies, which directly examines the relationship between brand anthropomorphism and consumer-brand identification. However, previous research provides some insight, showing brand anthropomorphism influences consumer-brand identification [4] [9], [10]. Research in cognitive psychology established the anthropomorphic objects driver cognitive and behavioral responses similar to humans [11]. Consumers tend to identify objects with stronger emotional ties. The anthropomorphism brand is perceived as one of the primary drivers for consumer-brand identification. This leads to a temporary presumption:

H1. There is a positive influence between *brand anthropomorphism and consumer-brand identification*

2.2. Consumer Brand Engagement

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Consumer-brand engagement is a good relationship between the company and its customers. It provides opportunities for firms to determine strategies for building intense interactions with customers [12]. This study distinguishes consumer-brand engagement from specific understandings of involvement, including self-concept [13]. From the previous research, consumer-brand engagement tends to strengthen self-connection with brands [14].

H2. ***Consumer-brand engagement has a positive influence on consumer-brand identification***

2.3. Consumer Skepticism

Consumer skepticism is customer doubt about a company's brands and drivers them to determine more about a business's products and services [15]. The bonds formed between consumers and brands contribute to self-feelings [16]. One study established that there is a negative relationship between consumer skepticism and consumer-brand identification [17]. As a result, the hypothesis in this study is :

H3. *Consumer skepticism* has a negative influence on *consumer-brand identification*

2.4. Brand Prestige

Prestige leads to a high value for customers suppose they use the product or services of a company brand [18].

The positive influence of brand prestige on consumer-brand identification is evident in case there are previous ties between consumers and products [17]. This study investigates consumer-brand identification with products well known to them. It does not require membership or brand ownership, leading to the hypotheses H4.

H4. ***Brand prestige* has a positive influence on *consumer-brand identification***

2.5. Brand brand-self similarity

Self-verification is the primary motive for maintaining the interests of consumers and the benefits obtained [19]. There is a culture in the assessment of conformity or similarity between self-awareness and sense of commercial entities, such as companies or brands [20]. In identifying brands, there is a vital role of perceived conformity between products and personalities [21].Efforts to define brand equality with oneself as consumers' perceptions of the performance of their personalities with brands are a driver for consumer brand identification [5]. This leads to a fifth hypothesis H5*.*

H5. ***Brand-self similarity has a positive influence on consumer-brand identification***

2.6. Brand Distinctiveness

Consumers often distinguish themselves from others in social contexts. Indisputably, the characteristics of a product is the key to identifying a brand [22]. In general, consumers try to assert their identity through the brands they prefer and use [23]. This study defines distinctiveness as the perceived uniqueness of brand identity, an aspect that drivers consumer brand identification. According to the uniqueness, needs are the main components of consumers' augmented self-esteem [24]. There are two unique needs, including the uniqueness reflected in consumers and brand distinctiveness [25].

H6. *Brand distinctiveness has a positive influence on consumer brand identification*

2.7. Brand Loyalty

Consumer-brand identification is defined as a goal of thoroughly assessing and identifying a brand [26]. Consumer identification with companies and brands positively influence various attitudes and supportive behaviors. It affects trust [27], positive WOM [17], consumer recruitment [28], customer satisfaction [29], consumer commitment [4], resistance to brand transfer [30], increased purchase [31]), and repurchase intentions [3].

*Brand loyalty i*s defined as a sense emerging from the quality of a good connection between consumers and brands, as well as the experience of customers toward products or services [32]. According to the study, loyalty to a company is a significant consequence of consumer-brand identification [21]. It forms a significant consumer identification in brand control [5].

H7. ***Consumer-brand identification has a positive influence on brand loyalty.***

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, several variables were used, including brand anthropomorphism, using 3 statement indicators [33], consumer-brand engagement using 10 statement indicators [4], Consumer's skepticism, using 12 (twelve) statement indicators [4]. Prestige brand using five indicators from [4]. Brand self-similarity with 15 indicators [5]. Brand distinctiveness using three indicators [5]. Consumer-brand identification with 6 statement indicators adapted [4]. Brand loyalty using 5 indicators [4]. The study also used a statement item with an interval scale as well as a Likert scale.Purposive sampling was used with respondents' criteria for objects online shopping such as smartphone acquisitions, travel services, made purchases twice or more in the last two years, and at least six months active on social media. The total respondents were 225. Further criteria for products purchased offline include canned drinks and fast-food consumed at least three times in the last three months. The total respondents in this regard were 335 people.

TABLE 1.
RESULT OF *GOODNESS OF FIT* TEST

Measurement Type	Measurement	Recommended acceptance limit	Score	Conclusion
Absolute fit measures	Probability	≥ *0,050*	0,000	Poor of fit
	Chi-square	Preferably small (close to 1)	4214,928	Poor of fit
	RMSEA	≤ 0,10	0,085	Goodness of fit
Incremental fit measures	GFI	≥ 0,90 or close to 1	0,605	Poor of fit
	NFI	≥ 0,90 or close to 1	0,695	Poor of fit
	TLI	≥ 0,90 or close to 1	0,756	Poor of fit
	CFI	≥ 0,90 or close to 1	0,769	Poor of fit
	AGFI	≥ 0,90 or close to 1	0,605	Poor of fit
Parsimonious fit measure	CMIN/DF	Lower limit: 1,0 Upper limit : 2,0 ; 3,0 or 5,0	3,111	Goodness of fit

Note

GFI: Goodness Of Fit Indeks; NFI: Normed Fit Index; TLI: Tucker Lewis Index; AGFI: Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; CFI: Comparative Fit Index; CMIN/DF: the minimum sample discrepancy function/degree of freedom

Based on the results of Table 1, it can be concluded that with a CMIN/DF approach of 3.111, there is a model of the goodness of fit, and therefore, the theoretical hypothesis has to be continued.

TABLE 2.
ANALYSIS RESULTS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis		Offline Product			Online Product		
		Estimate	P-Value	Decision	Estimate	P-Value	decision
H₁	*Brand anthropomor-phism has a positive influence on consumer-brand identification*	-0,009	0,4415	Not Supported	0,542	0,000	Supported
H₂	*Consumer-brand engagement has a positive influence on consumer-brand identification*	0,103	0,004	Supported	0,288	0,009	Supported
H₃	*Consumer skepticism has a negative influence on consumer-brand identification*	-0,285	0,0025	Supported	0,347	0,000	Not Supported
H₄	*Brand prestige has a positive influence on consumer-brand identification*	-0,052	0,2002	Not Supported	0,248	0,003	Supported
H₅	*Brand-self similarity has a positive influence on consumer-brand identification*	0,885	0,000	Supported	0,768	0,000	Supported
H₆	*Brand distinctiveness has a positive influence on consumer brand identification*	-0,620	0,188	Not Supported	0,211	0,000	Supported
H₇	*Consumer-brand identification has a positive influence on brand loyalty*	0,627	0,000	Supported	0,206	0,000	Supported

Table 2. Showed that the hypothesis is not supported for products traded offline. Moreover, there is no positive effect of anthropomorphism on consumer-brand identification, meaning H1 is not accepted. This does not increase consumer understanding and feeling with a brand as a social unit [3], [6]. Nevertheless, the results of this test do not support previous research [4]. H4 is not significant since there is no positive influence of brand prestige on consumer brand identification. The effect of brand prestige on identification might be significant through product involvement [5]. Brand distinctiveness do not have any positive influence on consumer-brand identification, and therefore H6 is not accepted. This means consumers wish to distinguish themselves from others since they feel their have better self-esteem. Also, the need for expression in their uniqueness is also reflected. The results of this study do not support the previous works [5].For products marketed online, consumer's skepticism has no negative effect on consumer-brand identification, and therefore H3 is not accepted and this in line with previous studies [4]. The view of skeptical advertising is expected to influence the negative

attitudes of consumers regarding a brand, and stimulate them to purchase of a brand [34]. Previously, consumers with a skeptic attitude stated that they had a higher tendency not to be easily influenced by an informative advertisement compared to those with deep skepticism in an advertisement [35]. Consumer skepticism itself arise from the attitude of consumers in case they see a misleading advertisement [36]. Therefore, the lack of consumer motivation in interacting with a brand has a negative influence on consumer-brand identification. However, consumers who have less confidence in a company's business activities tend to respond to a brand as something less memorable and interesting, lacking any association with it [4].

CONCLUSION

Product sold online have significant differences from the ones traded offline. The hypothesis is not supported for products traded offline. Moreover, there is no positive effect of anthropomorphism on consumer-brand identification, meaning H1 is not accepted. Nevertheless, the results of this test do not support previous research [4]. This study shows the ability of consumers to perceive the characteristics and forms of product design resembling humans. It indicates both the similarity in the external appearance of the product and the physical attributes of humans as well as through the perceived conformity between consumers of the commodity with several aspects of self-concept. This does not increase consumer understanding and feeling with a brand as a social unit [3], [6]. H4 is not significant since there is no positive influence of brand prestige on consumer brand identification. The effect of brand prestige on identification might be significant through product involvement [5]. Brand distinctiveness do not have any positive influence on consumer-brand identification, and therefore H6 is not accepted. This means consumers wish to distinguish themselves from others since they feel their have better self-esteem. Also, the need for expression in their uniqueness is also reflected. The results of this study do not support the previous works [5].For products marketed online, consumer's skepticism has no negative effect on consumer-brand identification, and therefore H3 is not accepted and this in line with previous studies [4]. The view of skeptical advertising is expected to influence the negative attitudes of consumers regarding a brand, and stimulate them to purchase of a brand [34]. Previously, consumers with a skeptic attitude stated that they had a higher tendency not to be easily influenced by an informative advertisement compared to those with deep skepticism in an advertisement [35]. Consumer skepticism itself arise from the attitude of consumers in case they see a misleading advertisement [36]. Therefore, the lack of consumer motivation in interacting with a brand has a negative influence on consumer-brand identification. However, consumers who have less confidence in a company's business activities tend to respond to a brand as something less memorable and interesting, lacking any association with it [4].Future studies need to consider the effect of value congruity on brand identification [37]. Additionally, other variables that influence brand prestige and distinctiveness, for instance product involvement, has to be considered.

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