

Customer Brand Engagement in Relationship Quality and Brand Loyalty During Pandemis in the Field of Communication Technology and Communication

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ABSTRACT : *This study aims to explore the relationship between the variables of customer engagement, self brand image congruity, brand familiarity, customer brand engagement, relationship quality, and brand loyalty. This study focuses on customer brand engagement, such as customer engagement, brand self-image congruence, and brand recognition. This study wants to see customer behavior generated by customer brand involvement through relationship quality and brand loyalty. This research was conducted on users of mobile phone brands that have a good reputation in Indonesia, such as the iPhone and Samsung, using a purposive sampling method. using SPSS as a method to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. In testing the hypothesis using the Lisrel SEM analysis method, the results obtained indicate that customer involvement, self-brand image alignment, and brand familiarity are proven to play a role in increasing customer brand engagement. Customer brand involvement can mediate the relationship between customer engagement, self-brand image alignment, and brand familiarity with relationship quality and brand loyalty. Relationship quality affects brand loyalty among mobile phone users in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research can be used as a consideration by brands and market strategists to design strategies to develop long-term relationships and build customer loyalty.*

KEYWORDS -Customer involvement, self brand image congruity, brand familiarity, customer brand engagement, relationship quality, brand loyalty.

I. INTRODUCTION

Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) is important in the world of marketing because when customers feel a connection to a product or brand, they are more likely to be loyal and continue to use that brand on a regular basis (Martnek, 2021). Similar to this statement, Such, Tehseen, Parrey, & Hussain (2018) also explain that customer involvement in the community is one of the main factors that influence the world of marketing. Carvalho & Fernandes (2018) argue that only a small number of brands are able to intensely improve relationships with their customers. Furthermore, Syah (2014) suggests developing customer brand engagement (CBE) in order to maintain the relationship in the long term. In addition, customer brand engagement (CBE) is also useful in developing a brand experience through unique and creative interactions created by customer involvement with the brand (Iglesias, Markovic, Rialp, & Josep, 2019; Sadek, Mehelmi, & Heba, 2020).

Previous studies have discussed several factors that play a role in influencing customer brand engagement (CBE), such as brand interactivity, consumer involvement, and self-brand image congruity (e.g., Adhikari & Panda, 2019), brand familiarity (e.g., Acharya, 2021), and customer involvement, customer interactivity, customer participation, and customer flow experience (e.g., Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018). Research by Leckie et al. (2016) shows that customer involvement, customer participation, and self-expressive brand are factors that influence customer brand engagement (CBE). However, these studies were only conducted in the fields of technology, automotive, and electronic commerce (e.g., Leckie et al., 2016; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Adhikari & Panda, 2019; Acharya, 2021). In addition, some empirical evidence shows that customer brand engagement (CBE) has the potential to increase relationship quality and brand loyalty (e.g., Leckie et al., 2016; Harrigan et al., 2017; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Adhikari & Panda, 2019). Meanwhile, it is still rare to find studies that empirically support the direct contribution of customer involvement, self-brand image congruity, and brand familiarity to relationship quality and brand loyalty. Therefore, a mediating role of customer brand engagement (CBE) is needed in the relationship between these variables. especially in the field of communication technology during the pandemic.

In this study, we make a new attempt to confirm the effect of customer brand engagement (CBE) on relationship quality and brand loyalty for well-known mobile phone brands (iPhone and Samsung) in Indonesia. In addition, this study also examines whether customer involvement, self-brand image congruity, and brand familiarity can play an active role in positively influencing customer brand engagement as well as the mediating role of CBE on these variables for iPhone and Samsung mobile phone users in Indonesia. Based on this explanation, the goal we want to achieve is to prove that there is a relationship between all the variables that are assumed to be applicable to communication technology, especially mobile phone brand users in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. LITERATUR RIVIEW

2.1 Customer Involvement (CIT)

Customer involvement is one of the main characteristics of any service and has been recognized as a new frontier of competitive advantage (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Consumer behavior is based on customer desires that can motivate them to make purchases and interact with a brand (Kapferer & Laurent, 1993). Furthermore, Zaichkowsky (1994) defines customer involvement as the level of individual interest and personal relevance related to the object or decisions in terms of their basic values, goals, and self-concept. Not much different from the previous statement, customer involvement can also be interpreted as a customer's perception of the importance of an object that is tailored to their interests, needs, and innate values (Carsky et al., 1995). While Parihar et al. (2019) explain that customer involvement is the customer's assessment of the brand after interacting with it. Adhikari & Panda (2019) conclude customer involvement as a customer's assessment of more interest in a brand that makes him want to have involvement in that brand. They used three statements to measure customer involvement, such as: (1) I am attracted to the brand; (2) I am fascinated by the brand; and (3) I personally feel involved with the brand.

2.2 Self- Brand Image Congruity (SBIC)

Self-brand image congruity is self-alignment, self-reference, and entertainment from alignment with a brand that can strengthen self-identity so as to achieve self-consistency (Phua & Kim, 2018). Furthermore, Sirgy (1982) describes self-brand image congruity as the suitability of the customer's perception of himself with a certain brand image, which will ultimately create a relationship between him and the brand. According to Malär et al. (2011), self-brand image congruity can increase the effectiveness, attitudes, behavior, and customer responses to a brand. In accordance with this statement, Hu et al. (2012) explain that self-brand image congruity is customer satisfaction with the brand image of a product. Another opinion defines self-brand image congruity as a match between the customer's point of view of assessing himself related to a certain brand image (Adhikari & Panda, 2019). They also revealed that self-brand image congruity can be measured by three statements: (1) the brand can reflect who I am; (2) the brand is similar to me in the real sense; and (3) the brand is very similar to me.

2.3 Brand Familiarity (BF)

Brand familiarity is defined as the repetition and familiarity of a brand in the eyes of consumers (Catalán et al., 2019). Alba & Hutchinson (1987); Kent & Allen (1994) explain that brand familiarity (BF) is related to how much experience customers have with a brand, either directly or indirectly. Meanwhile, Acharya (2021), describes brand familiarity (BF) as the customer's knowledge of a brand that is stored in his memory. Customers' knowledge of a brand that is stored in their memory can be caused by the fact that they often see promos or advertisements for the brand on the grounds that they are already familiar with it (Stewart, 1992; Ha & Perks, 2005). In line with that, Acharya (2021) states that familiar and unfamiliar products in the eyes of customers depend on their knowledge of the product stored in their memory. To measure brand familiarity (BF) in his research, he used three statements, including: (1) I am familiar with this brand, (2) I have experience with this brand, and (3) I have knowledge of this brand.

2.4 Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE)

Consumer brand engagement is a consumer activity related to the brand, starting from the process of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities (Obilo et al., 2021). They concluded that consumer brand engagement (CBE) consists of effects that customers perceive, such as cognitive processing, affection, and activation. Adhikari & Panda (2019) explain that customers will show their involvement with a brand through participation in discussion forums provided by the brand for various reasons, one of which is to get information about the product. Based on relationship marketing theory, consumer brand engagement (CBE) is built by customer involvement, customer experience with the brand, and preference for promotions from the brand (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Touni, Kim, Choi, & Ali, 2020). In addition, consumer brand engagement (CBE) can also occur due to ongoing interactions between customers and brands (Adhikari & Panda, 2019). Another opinion explains the benefits received by brands from consumer brand engagement (CBE), namely increased sales, reduced operational costs, and positive word of mouth promotions that customers voluntarily carry out (Singh & Srivastava, 2019). The statements that can be used to measure CBE

are (1) the brand makes me feel positive and happy, (2) the brand makes me think about it, (3) the brand makes me feel proud, and (4) the brand makes me have fun when dealing with it (Adhikari & Pandas, 2019).

2.5 Relationship Quality (RQ)

Relationship quality is the quality of the relationship that is obtained through the experience experienced by consumers with a brand (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019). According to Crosby et al. (1990), relationship quality is the quality of relationships that are assessed by customers based on their satisfaction with and trust in a brand. Similarly, Palmatier et al. (2006) also explain that relationship quality is a multi-dimensional construct that includes an overall assessment of a relationship (Palmatier et al., 2006). Smit, Bronner, & Tolboom (2007) argue that relationship quality is an indicator to measure the extent of the relationship between customers and certain brands. Previously, Fournier (1998) had classified relationship quality into three different categories: affective and socio-emotive attachment (love, passion, and self-connection), cognitive beliefs (intimacy and quality of brand partners), and behavioral bonds (interdependence, trustworthiness, and commitment). Meanwhile, Adhikari & Panda (2019) prove in their research that there are seven statements that can measure relationship quality, one of which is that the brand treats me in a special way compared to other customers..

2.6 Brand Loyalty (BL)

According to Belaid & Behi (2012), brand loyalty can be viewed as systematic repeated purchases by customers of the same brand. Brand loyalty can form an emotional attachment and build customer commitment to a particular brand (Liu et al., 2012). According to Liu & Syah (2017), brand loyalty is defined as a user's behavior in buying or using products or services repeatedly and showing attitudes towards products or services that they receive from a brand. In brand loyalty, customers are considered relatively less interested in moving to competitors despite price increases (Shinta Syah & Negoro, 2020). Based on several previous statements, Adhikari & Panda (2019) concluded that brand loyalty is a consequence related to the purchase of the relationship between the customer and the brand. In addition, brand loyalty is included in consumer behavior that includes positive aspects of customer loyalty to using certain brands (Le, 2021). Adhikari & Panda (2019) suggest four statements that can be used to measure brand loyalty, such as: (1) I will definitely recommend the brand to family and friends; (2) I am willing to continue using the brand in the future; (3) I will keep using the brand even if I get a better offer from another brand; and (4) I will spread good things about the brand while talking to my friends.

Hypotheses Development

Based on previous exposure the author developed several hypotheses in this study as follows:

H1: Customer involvement (CIT) has a positive effect on customer brand engagement (CBE).

H2: Self-brand image congruity (SBIC) has a positive effect on customer brand engagement (CBE).

H3: Brand familiarity (BF) has a positive effect on customer brand engagement (CBE).

H4: Customer brand engagement (CBE) has a positive effect on relationship quality (RQ).

H5: Customer brand engagement (CBE) has a positive effect on brand loyalty (BL).

H6: Relationship quality (RQ) has a positive effect on brand loyalty (BL).

H7a: Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between customer involvement (CIT) and relationship quality (RQ).

H7b: Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship of self brand image congruity (SBIC) to relationship quality (RQ).

H7c: Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between brand familiarity (BF) and relationship quality (RQ).

H8a: Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between customer involvement (CIT) and brand loyalty (BL).

H8b: Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship of self brand image congruity (SBIC), and brand familiarity (BF) to brand loyalty (BL).

H8c: Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between brand familiarity (BF) and brand loyalty (BL).

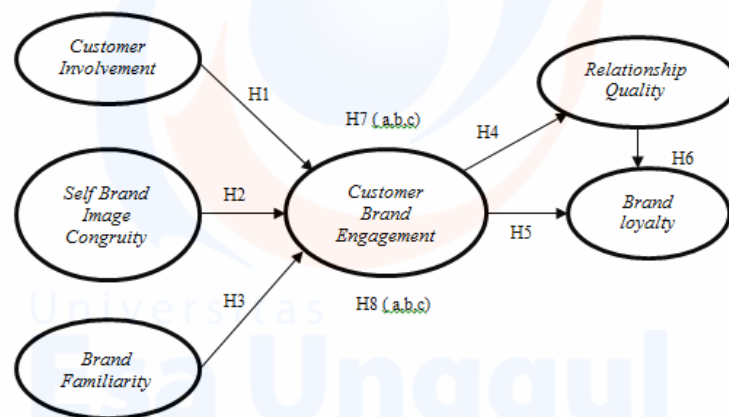


Figure 1

Research Conceptual Framework

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The population in this study are people who use Apple iPhone mobile phones and Samsung mobile phone users spread across several regions in Indonesia. This research was conducted in October 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. We used a purposive sampling method, while one of the respondents' specific criteria was that they had used the mobile phone at least once. To see more, it's in appendix 3.

This research uses Google Forms as a means to distribute previously prepared questionnaires. We used Lisrel's Structural Equation Model (SEM) to process and analyze the data in this study. Meanwhile, in testing the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, we used SPSS factor analysis by looking at the values listed in Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA), and Cronbach's Alpha value with a minimum limit of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2018).

The results of data processing from all variables in SPSS were mostly declared valid, other than the BL4 statement in the brand loyalty variable. Thus, as many as 23 questions that have been declared valid will be used as questionnaires in this study. Based on the SEM analysis method, the determination of the number of research samples is five times the number of statements (Hair et al., 2014), so this study uses a minimum sample of (24x5) 120 respondents.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Instrument Testing

4.1.1 Validity test

An indicator can be said to be valid if the Pearson Correlation value for each variable is above 0.5 with a significance level below 0.05. A validity test was conducted using 30 respondents. Table 1 can be seen that All indicators on each variable are declared valid. The results shown in the validity test table above are satisfying. If the value in the table is above the r table, which is 0.50, then all these indicators are legitimate. The reliability value that has been calculated using Cronbach's Alpha is 0.60 with a 95% confidence level. self-assurance level A measure of the variables' reliability is displayed in Table 2: in the process of researching

Table 1- Variable Validation Test

Variable	Loading factor	Explanation
Customer involvement	2,05	Valid
Self-brand image congruity	2,18	Valid
Brand familiarity	2,23	Valid
Consumer brand engagement	2,73	Valid
Relationship quality	5,27	Valid
Brand loyalty	2,24	Valid

4.1.2 Reliability Test

The reliability value that has been calculated using Cronbach's Alpha is 0.60 with a 95% confidence level. self-assurance level A measure of the variables' reliability is displayed in Table 2: in the process of researching.

Table 2- Variable Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Explanation
Customer involvement	0,686	Reliable
Self-brand image congruity	0,765	Reliable
Brand familiarity	0,696	Reliable
Consumer brand engagement	0,922	Reliable
Relationship quality	0,918	Reliable
Brand loyalty	0,888	Reliable

The results shown in the reliability test table above are quite satisfactory. The value in the table has All of these were above the predetermined standard Cronbach's Alpha value, which is above 0.60, so that all of these variables are reliable.

4.2 Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics of research respondents are described by presenting their characteristics based on gender, age, education, and occupation. In detail, the characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Respondent Characteristics

No.	Variable	Classification	Total (People)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	56	45%
		female	69	55%
	TOTAL		125	100%
2.	Age	Less than 25 Years	72	58%
		25 - 40 Years	46	37%
		41-55 Years	7	5%
	TOTAL		125	100%
3.	Education	High school	45	35%
		Bachelor	74	59%
		Postgraduate	3	3%
		Other	3	3%
	TOTAL		125	100%
4.	Profession	Health		
		industry	39	31%
		education	20	16%
		Other	22	18%
	TOTAL		125	100%

Source: Processed Data, 2021

Based on the distribution of questionnaires conducted online through Google Forms, 125 respondents were collected according to the established criteria. From the data obtained, the number of female respondents was 55% and male respondents was 45%. Furthermore, based on the mobile phones used, 29% of respondents who use iPhones and 71% of Samsung phones use.

4.3 SEM LISREL Analysis Results

In the model suitability test, the results of the analysis show that there are still several items with good fit on Chi Square, ECVI, AIC, and CAIC, Fit Index, but not on RMSEA and Goodness of Fit. And there is a marginal fit item, namely Critical N. The following are the results of the study, which are depicted in the T-Value diagram. Figure 2 illustrates the structural equation model's estimation outputs in this research.

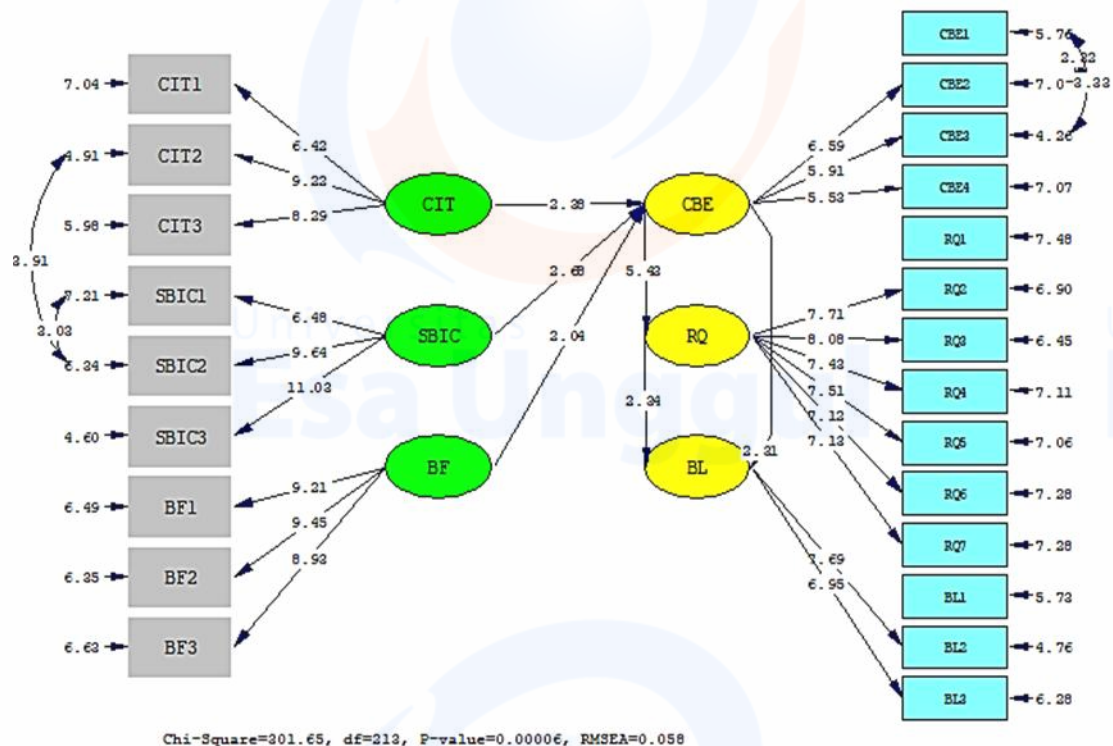


Figure 2 Path Diagram T-Value

43.1 Analysis of the Role of Mediation Variables

The results of this study prove that customer brand engagement (CBE) can completely mediate the relationship between customer involvement (CIT), self-brand image congruity (SBIC), and brand familiarity (BF) on relationship quality (RQ) with a t-value of 5.43. Furthermore, customer brand engagement (CBE) can completely mediate the relationship between customer involvement (CIT), self brand image congruity (SBIC), and brand familiarity (BF) to brand loyalty (BL) with a t-value of 2.31.

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	T-Value	Description
H1	Customer involvement (CIT) has a positive effect on customer brand engagement (CBE).	2,38	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H2	Self-brand image congruity (SBIC) has a positive effect on customer brand engagement (CBE).	2,68	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H3	Brand familiarity (BF) has a positive effect on customer brand engagement (CBE).	2,04	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H4	Customer brand engagement (CBE) has a positive effect on relationship quality (RQ).	5,43	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H5	Customer brand engagement (CBE) has a positive effect on brand loyalty (BL).	2,31	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H6	Relationship quality (RQ) has a positive effect on brand loyalty (BL).	2,34	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H7a	Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between customer involvement (CIT) and relationship quality (RQ).	2,38	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H7b	Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship of self brand image congruity (SBIC) to relationship quality (RQ).	2,68	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H7c	Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between brand familiarity (BF) and relationship quality (RQ).	2,04	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H8a	Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the	2,38	The data supports up the

	relationship between customer involvement (CIT) and brand loyalty (BL).		hypothesis.
H8b	Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship of self brand image congruity (SBIC), and brand familiarity (BF) to brand loyalty (BL).	2,68	The data supports up the hypothesis.
H8c	Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) mediates the relationship between brand familiarity (BF) and brand loyalty (BL).	2,04	The data supports up the hypothesis.

Source: Processed Data, 2021

V. CONCLUSION

This research was successful in confirming that customer brand engagement (CBE) managed to become a mediation variable that connects customer involvement (CIT), self brand image congruity (SBIC), and brand familiarity (BF) to relationship quality (RQ) and brand loyalty (BL). In addition, this study shows that customer involvement (CIT), self brand image congruity (SBIC), and brand familiarity (BF) can increase customer brand engagement (CBE) in mobile phone users (iPhone and SAMSUNG) in Indonesia. Users of mobile phone brands that are reputable or high, usually have a high level of engagement because they trust the brand to improve their quality of life and even their reputation in the public eye. This research shows the results of customer brand engagement (CBE) in mobile phone users (iPhone and SAMSUNG) which is the establishment of good relationships between brands and users that will later lead to loyalty to the mobile phone brand.

This study has several limitations in it, including first, data collection is done online, so it is possible that if there is a meaning from the statement in this study, respondents cannot ask and answer according to their perceptions. In future research, it is recommended to distribute the questionnaire directly, so that it is easier to know the difference in perception. Second, this research was conducted during a pandemic, so it was difficult to find respondents who filled out the right statements because, at the time, it was generally difficult for people to communicate with each other regarding research-related matters. Subsequent research is recommended to be carried out in times other than the pandemic. Third, this study only focuses on users of 2 mobile phone brands, so it cannot describe the entire brand of mobile phone users in Indonesia, because Indonesia has many types of branded cellphones that are also well-reputed and popular with people today. For further research, it is recommended to add other brands or replace products with some of the biggest brands that are most in demand by the public so that the results obtained can represent the relationship between the variables proposed. In future research, it is recommended to add the purchase intention variable because it has a continuous relationship with customer brand involvement, then the emergence of brand familiarity, and the creation of relationship quality and brand loyalty, where the ultimate goal is purchase intention, which will be beneficial for a brand.

This research has several managerial implications that can be applied to the marketing field. The results of this study may provide new insights and contribute to the limited knowledge regarding consumer brand engagement. The tight competition in the mobile phone business today makes it very necessary for players in this sector to maintain their market share by creating a sense of satisfaction for their customers so that they do not switch to other brands. In other words, the main focus for mobile phone brands is to create loyalty by increasing relationship quality with consumers. In addition, the findings can help mobile phone brand managers and market strategists design strategies for developing long-term consumer relationships. To build customer loyalty, manufacturers are advised to be able to make products with a good reputation, attractive, easy to recognize and have more value compared to similar products. For marketers, the findings of this study have implications regarding brand building strategies, forming satisfaction, trust, and commitment to brand loyalty in the short and long term through the dissemination of information on social media.

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