

## ANTECEDENTS OF BRAND EQUITY

Andina Seliani<sup>1</sup>, Luki Adiati Pratomo<sup>2</sup>

Faculty of Economics and Business

Universitas Trisakti

Email : andiniseliani@gmail.com

### Abstract

This study intends to examine the effects of brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and country-of-origin image on brand equity in Zara, Pull and Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo brands. To collect samples, a non-probability method was utilized with a purposive sampling technique, and obtained 135 respondents who were social media users and have bought Zara, Pull and Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo brands in the past one year. The analytical tool used was Multiple Regression. The results showed that there were positive influences among brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and country-of-origin image on brand equity.

**Keywords:** *brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, country-of-origin image, brand equity.*

### INTRODUCTION

The development of the fashion industry in Indonesia is crucially promising, this can be seen from the BPS report on the growth of creative industry exports which always increases from year to year (BPS Report, 2017). In addition to the growth in exports of fashion products, it is also evident that many global products have marketed their product in Indonesia and become a favorite of Indonesian consumers. That causes competition to be tighter so that the role of the brand becomes increasingly important (Keller, 2006). Companies have to strive to achieve brand equity for their products because this will encourage consumers to be loyal to their product brands (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-

Alemán, 2005). The importance of brand equity has been widely studied (H. J. Lee, Kumar, & Kim, 2010). For this reason, companies need to know what factors can strengthen brand equity to achieve the expected customer loyalty.

Aaker & David (1996) and Keller (2006) explain that the brand equity of a product or service is formed by several factors such as brand image, perceived quality, brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and also the country of origin. A research conducted by Emari (2012) and Listiana (2015) suggests the role of brand association on perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand equity. Likewise Martenson (2007), his research showed that the better

corporate image in a retail business, the higher the increase in customer satisfaction. Consumer awareness of brand power can strengthen the brand equity, since every time a consumer needs the product, what is remembered is the brand that he/she trusts or often uses (Chieng & Lee, 2011; Das, 2014; Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013). When consumers are loyal to a brand, the brand value is also increasingly strengthened in the eyes of consumers or it can be said as the stronger brand equity (D Aaker & David, 1996). This is evident from the research of Emari (2012) on chocolate consumers in Iran, which ensures that the more loyal consumers of certain chocolate brands, the stronger the brand equity is.

In addition to the above factors, it seems that the country of origin of a brand has a strong influence on brand equity, although not directly (Chieng & Lee, 2011). This shows that the product or service originating from a country that is believed to be a producer of quality products will cause consumers to highly value the product or have high brand equity (Chieng & Lee, 2011; Mohd, Nasser, & Mohamad, 2007).

In this connection, Indonesia is an attractive market for international fashion products. Many department stores and international brands market their products and services in Indonesia (Business Monitor International Ltd, 2015). Some well-known international brands such as ZARA, H&M, Pull & Bear and Uniqlo almost always have special outlets in leading malls in Indonesia (Business Monitor

International Ltd., 2015). Competition between these brands is very tight, so it needs to be investigated further by the strength of each brand. This study will measure the brand equity of some of the above-mentioned brands using variable brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand image, and country of origin image.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as a group of assets and liabilities that are directly related to the brand, name, and symbol that can add or subtract the value of the product or service, both from the company and its consumers. Further, Keller (2006) defines brand equity as consumer knowledge about a particular brand that is produced from the brand's marketing activities to produce a certain response to the company. Brand equity consists of five categories consisting of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and various other brand assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships (Aaker, 1991). Then Aaker & David (1996) perfected the dimensions of brand equity into brand loyalty, perceived quality/leadership, brand associations, brand awareness, and market behavior. Furthermore, Keller (2006) explains that brand equity has several dimensions, namely brand knowledge, brand awareness, and brand image.

Kumar, Dash, & Purwar (2013), in their research on hospital consumers in India, have found four dimensions of brand experience consisting of sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual

dimensions that influence the five dimensions of brand equity, namely brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand trust, and brand loyalty. Finally, the five dimensions of brand equity affect customer-based hospital brand equity. It can be concluded that when consumer awareness of the brand is strong, the consumer association of the brand is also strong, then the consumer's perception of brand quality, trust and loyalty is very strong. It then results in brand equity in the consumer's view that also becomes very significant and has a positive value (Kumar et al., 2013). Emari (2012) also ensures that vigorous brand loyalty and brand image will encourage robust brand equity as well.

One interesting study was conducted by Chahal & Bala (2011). They developed three hypotheses to see whether brand equity is the result of brand loyalty consisting of attitudinal and consumer loyalty behavior. Another possibility was if brand equity is a mediating variable between attitudinal and behavioral loyalty or brand equity is an antecedent of attitude and behavior loyalty. The results were quite surprising because all three hypotheses were supported, hence it shows the importance of a product's brand equity (Chahal & Bala, 2011). Even for the service industry, brand equity is also an important factor, as researched by Lee, Lee, & Wu (2011) that companies possessing poor brand image are certainly more difficult to get brand equity from consumers.

Brand association is an impression that arises in the minds of

consumers and is related to consumers' memories of certain brands (Aaker, 1991). Good brand associations will produce positive consumer behavior that will build added value from products or services and can ultimately lead to brand loyalty (Keller, 2013). Aaker (1991) describes several ways brand association creates value for companies and consumers of the company through efforts to help consumers processing information about the brand, making consumers able to distinguish brands or position the brand, giving rise to reasons for buying the brand, creating positive attitudes/feelings towards brand and acting as the basis for companies to do extensions.

This condition proves that the better the consumer associates the brand in his mind, the stronger the brand equity of certain branded products, as seen from the results of Emari's (2012) research on chocolate consumers in Iran. The research proves that brand association has a positive influence on brand equity. The positive brand association will also encourage consumers to have a loyal attitude towards certain returns, which has been proven in research on the attitudes of young Chinese consumers towards sportswear (Lu & Xu, 2015). Although the brand association is deemed significant in forming brand equity, there was also a study that found the opposite (Loureiro, 2013). A study (Loureiro, 2013) in the banking industry, particularly regarding internet banking found that brand association was less influential on brand equity at the bank. Recognizing that brand

association is very important in forming brand equity, hence French & Smith (2013) develop the concept of brand association strength consisting of positive and negative attitudes towards the well-known Mc Donald brand. While research on brand equity in a tourist destination in Pakistan, namely Lahore Fort, revealed that brand association has a strong direct influence on brand equity, and even also has an indirect effect on brand loyalty (Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015).

Keller (2006, 2013) outlines the definition of brand image as a consumer's view of a particular brand that results from their association of that brand in the consumers' memories. Brand image is a consumer's overall perception of a brand that is built from various experiences and information consumers have previously (Keller, 2013). A good brand image is driving consumers to believe in the equity of a brand. The better brand image in consumer perception, the stronger brand equity will be (Emari, 2012). This is also evident from the study conducted by Chen (2010) when investigating the role of brand image in environmentally friendly products. He found that brand image has a strong influence on brand equity. Alam, Saeed, & Malik (2016) also concluded that when examining the influence of brand image on various private and government tertiary institutions in Pakistan, it is very important to have a brand image that positively influences brand equity.

In the tourism industry in Pakistan, it turns out that the role of brand image in a tourist destination is

crucial in encouraging brand loyalty and equity (Kashif et al., 2015). Likewise, the research in the field of advertising, especially advertisements conducted by way of product placement, brand image plays an important role in encouraging consumers' desires to buy products (Guennemann & Cho, 2016). Brand image becomes interesting to understand further given the opinion of Gill & Dawra (2010) that brand image turns out to be a mediator between brand awareness and brand equity, which means that even though brand awareness in consumers is very high, it will be difficult to achieve brand equity without having a good brand image.

Consumer loyalty is defined by Oliver (1999) as a strong consumer commitment to repurchase or revisit a product or service that he/she likes consistently in the future. These repeat purchases will still be made by loyal consumers, even though there are marketing efforts from competitors that can cause a switching behavior (Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty is one dimension of brand equity, which means that the more loyal consumers to a brand, the stronger the brand equity will be (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2006). This causes more important for companies to generate and increase consumer loyalty, as explained by Emari (2012) that the more loyal consumers of chocolate brands that are commonly eaten, the stronger the brand equity of chocolate.

The significance of brand loyalty is also evidenced by Loureiro's study (2013) conducted on internet banking consumers in Portugal.

Loureiro (2013) stipulated that the higher the loyalty of consumers towards a bank, especially some internet banking users, the stronger the brand equity is. While the research of Chahal & Bala (2011) confirms that brand equity is the result of attitudinal loyalty which ultimately results in consumer behavior that is loyal to the brand.

Brand awareness describes how quickly a brand appears in the minds of consumers when going to buy a product (Keller, 2006). Whereas Aaker (1991) defines brand awareness as the ability of a potential buyer to remember a brand as part of a particular product category. Keller (2006) explains that brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition is the ability of consumers to be aware of certain brands when they see a sign of the brand (Keller, 2006). While the brand recall is the ability of consumers to remember certain brands when they are dealing with a product category (Keller, 2006).

According to Aaker & David (1996), there are six levels of brand awareness, namely (1) recognition (consumers are aware of the brand), (2) recall (consumers remember one particular brand from a product category), (3) top of mind (name the first brand that is immediately remembered), (4) brand dominance (the only brand that is immediately recalled), (5) brand knowledge (consumers understand very well about the brand), and brand opinion (consumers have an opinion about the brand). To understand these definitions, it can be understood that the better the

consumer's awareness of the company's brand, the stronger the brand equity is (Sasmita & Suki, 2015). The results of their research on young consumers that were Penang students suggest that the easier young consumers remember the brand of the product they are looking for, the greater their desire to buy the brand even though other brands have the same features (Sasmita & Suki, 2015).

Brand awareness also has a crucial influence on consumer emotions, namely cognition, affection, and conation (Sharifi, 2014). This becomes important as the three forms of emotion will encourage consumers' desire to buy products or services in the future, so that brand awareness can be said to be a variable that mediates these three forms of emotion towards consumers' desire to buy (Sharifi, 2014). Kashif et al., (2015) also emphasize that in the service business, brand awareness is the driving force for the emergence of brand equity in the tourist destination of Lahore Fort. In developing countries, the results of Dharamdasani & Sharma's research (2017) also emphasize the importance of brand awareness in consumers' minds about their buying intentions.

Country of origin (COO) is defined as the country of origin from which a product is produced (Dinnie, 2004). Thakor (2002) defines brand origin as a consumer's perception of the place or country where the brand is owned, not just where the product is produced. Based on further studies, such as those conducted by Han & Terpstra (1988), the image of COO can help consumers to evaluate a product or

service. Baker, Al-sulaiti, & Baker (2004) in library research studies on the impact of country of origin ensure that COOs give rise to consumers' perceptions of products or services produced by a country, especially when they do not have enough information about their products.

Further studies have found that the CCO image has many influences, including brand equity (H. J. Lee et al., 2010). The success of the Zara brand originating from Spain is also caused by the country of origin of the brand when they enter the global business (Lopez & Fan, 2009). Research on young Australian consumers confirms that COO is one of the determining factors when they decide to buy jeans.

One qualitative study that urged to see the management's perspective on COO found that COO is indeed an important business strategy and must be realized in several forms such as through brand positioning, long-term plans, expertise and brand value of the manufactured products (Rashid, Barnes, & Warnaby, 2016). It is interesting to see the results of the Listiana study (2015) regarding Palangkaraya consumers' perceptions of imported biscuits from Malaysia. The results stated that COO only has an influence on brand association but does not affect perceived quality. COO can also encourage brand equity, as described by Mohd et al. (2007) in his research in Selangor. They examined the buyers of electronic goods that were thought to feel a high risk when choosing the wrong brand, but it was proven that the image of the country of origin was crucial for the selected brand

equity. The brand association has a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and behavior of consumers (French & Smith, 2013). Consumers who have positive brand associations will allow these consumers to be more loyal (Das, 2014; Gladden & Funk, 2001). Besides, the better the consumer association of a brand, the more frequent and easier consumers will remember it, so that ultimately resulting in a more willingness to purchase the brand's product (Das, 2014). This shows that the better and more positive the consumers' memories of a brand, the better the brand equity is (Chieng & Lee, 2011; Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015). Based on the above thought, the first hypothesis was formed in this study: H1: *Brand association* has a positive effect on *brand equity*.

Consumers who have high loyalty will buy certain brands of the same product repeatedly (Oliver, 1999). The more loyal a consumer is, the stronger his influence so that consumers will decide to buy the same product in the future (Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat, & Aslam, 2011). Pleasant consumer experience with a particular brand will also encourage loyalty to the brand (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Loyalty is one of the main dimensions of brand equity (Chieng & Lee, 2011). When consumers immediately remember the brand when they need an item or service, it can be said that the consumers have high cognitive loyalty (Chieng & Lee, 2011). Several studies have confirmed that the higher the consumer's loyalty to a particular brand,

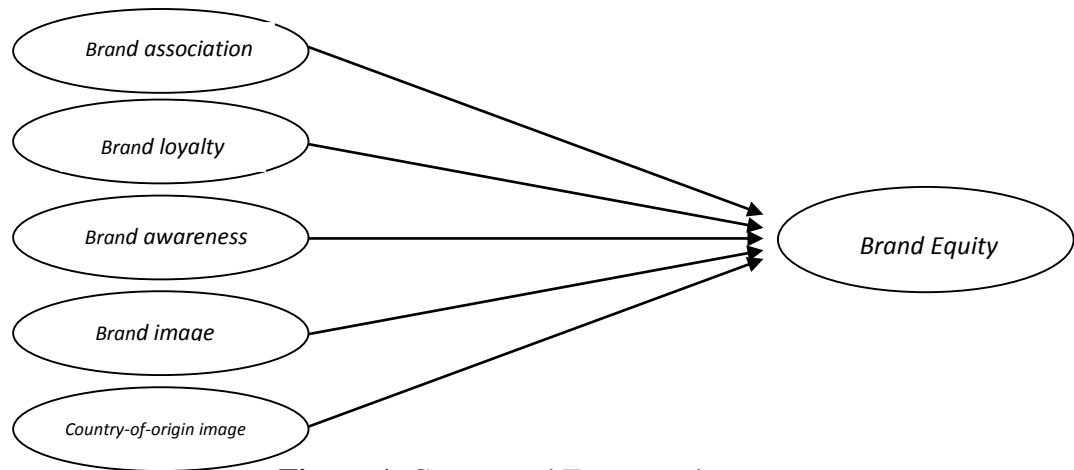
the stronger the brand equity is (Matthews, Son, & Watchravesringkan, 2014; Sasmita & Suki, 2015). The above thoughts and theories form the basis for the formation of this hypothesis: H2: *Brand loyalty* has a positive effect on *brand equity*.

It is significant for companies to make consumers able to identify a brand in various conditions since it shows high brand awareness (Aaker & David, 1996). High brand awareness is built by companies using good marketing communication through advertisements on television, newspapers, billboards and other forms of interactive communication with consumers (Hutter et al., 2013; Keller, 2013). Strong brand equity is formed by the brand image that will occur if the consumer association of the brand is also strong (Keller, 2006). Supporting this statement, the results of Susiati's (2012) research ensured that the stronger consumer awareness of a particular brand (brand awareness,) the higher the brand equity is. Thus, the third hypothesis is formed: H3: *Brand awareness* has a positive effect on *brand equity*.

The brand image relates to the image of consumers who use products from certain brands to reflect identity in their self-expression (Lau & Phau, 2007). Brand image is a perception of the brand that describes the brand association in the minds of consumers (Keller, 1993). Consumers regularly

associate brands with celebrities or historical figures. Also, mouth to mouth marketing communication strategy greatly affects brand image to increase brand equity (Lau & Phau, 2007). Faircloth et al. (2001) assert that brand image has a positive effect on brand equity, thus forming the fourth hypothesis: H4: *Brand image* has a positive effect on *brand equity*.

Brand equity can be constructed from the image of the country where the product is produced. As described by Krisjanti (2007), the place where a product is produced or made-in effect has a huge effect on consumers' intention to buy products with that country's brand. Often a country is considered to have a high manufacturing reputation so that it can create a superior quality brand (Krisjanti, 2007). As the result, recent customers who have a worldwide connection and traveling experiences have an opinion that each country has special attributes that are seen in the products or services offered. That particular country will ultimately assist consumers in making purchasing decisions (Listiana, 2015). According to Yasin et al. (2007), a COO image can add brand equity if it provides a positive image from the country of origin to other countries. Based on that thought, here is the formulation of the fifth hypothesis: H5: There is a positive influence of *country-of-origin image* towards *brand equity*.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

## METHOD

Based on several previous studies, indicators were developed to measure each variable in this study. The brand association, brand loyalty, and brand awareness variables were measured using five statements adapted from Sasmita and Suki's (2015) research. In addition, the brand image adapted three statement items from Sasmita and Suki (2015). The country-of-origin image implemented five statement items taken from the study of Yasin et al. (2007) and brand equity was measured by four statement items from Ballester and Aleman (2005). All items were then measured using a five-point Likert scale.

The method used to collect the data was a non-probability with a purposive sampling technique, so certain criteria were exercised to obtain suitable respondents. The criteria for this study were millennial consumers who were social media users and had purchased products from the Zara, Pull

& Bear and H&M brands in the past year. Two hundred questionnaires were sent online and offline, yet only one hundred thirty-five papers were returned to the researchers.

There were several tests to calculate and analyze data before testing the relationship, they were validity and reliability tests. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability and anti-image correlation was to test data validity by using SPSS on all constructs of the theory in this study. After knowing the results of the reliability and validity, the next step was to test the desired relationship using the Multiple Regression method.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The multiple regression method was used to test the hypotheses in this study. Based on the results of the hypotheses test, all hypotheses were stated significant because they had p-values of less than 0.05. ( $\leq 0.05$ )



Based on the results of the hypotheses tests, it is evident that there was a positive influence between brand association on brand equity so that it can be interpreted, the stronger the brand impression of Zara, Pull & Bear, H&M and Uniqlo in consumers' minds, the stronger the brand equity is. This means that when consumers believe that the Zara, Pull & Bear and Uniqlo brands have certain characteristics or personalities, consumers will feel that buying the brand is a smart move. Likewise, when they assume that these brands are different from the various brands in the market, they still feel that the products with the brands Zara, Pull & Bear, and Uniqlo are better than other products offered by other companies. The results of this study have supported the research of Kumar, Dash, & Purwar (2013) who found that brand association has a positive influence on brand equity. This result also confirms the strong influence of brand associations on brand equity, as examined by Sasmita and Suki (2015).

It can also be seen from the results of the hypotheses testing that brand loyalty has a positive influence on brand equity. This means that when customers are loyal to the Zara, Pull & Bear, H&M and Uniqlo brands, brand equity is stronger. When consumers are accustomed to using products from these brands, it shows that customers feel that products from these brands are better than the same products from other brands. These consumers are not easy to switch to other brands, because they feel that it makes the most sense to buy these brands. In fact they will be very eager to recommend it to friends

and relatives, it is because consumers feel that buying Zara, Pull & Bear or Uniqlo brand products is intelligent action. The results of this study reinforce the findings of Hossien Emari (2012) in the chocolate industry in Iran that brand loyalty has a positive influence on brand equity. Kumar et al., (2013) also prove that consumer loyalty to certain brands (brand loyalty) will encourage brand equity positively, in his research on hospital services in India.

Furthermore, based on the results of hypotheses testing, it was proven that brand awareness had a positive influence on brand equity. It can be interpreted that the higher consumer awareness (brand association) of Zara, Pull & Bear, H&M and Uniqlo brands, the stronger the brand equity is. When consumers can quickly identify Zara, Pull & Bear, H&M or Uniqlo brands, this shows that most consumers remain confident that buying these brands shows their intelligence in choosing a quality product. Likewise, when consumers easily recognize the symbols and characteristics of the four brands, consumers will still choose the brand products even though at the same time other brand products have the same quality. This study produces an opinion following Kumar et al., (2013) which ensures that in-hospital patients in India, the stronger brand awareness in patients, the stronger the brand equity of the hospital is. The results of this study also support Susiati's (2012) explanation which proves that brand equity is influenced by brand awareness.

The brand image also has a significant effect on brand equity. It can be interpreted that the better the brand image of Zara, Pull & Bear, H&M and Uniqlo in the eyes of consumers, the stronger the brand equity will be. When consumers feel that the four brands have different images from their competitors, then their belief that buying products with the Zara, Pull & Bear, H&M and Uniqlo brands is a very sensible decision. In fact, many consumers feel confident that the image of the four brands is clean and very well known, so they will continue to choose the brand, even though there are equally good products on the market. The results obtained from this study reinforce the findings of Hossien Emari (2012) which proves that when a product or service produced by a company has a good image, the brand equity of the product or service will be better in the minds of consumers. In addition, the results of this study are also by the description of Sasmita and Suki (2015) which confirms the strong role of brand image on brand equity.

Finally, based on the results of hypothesis testing, it is evident that the country of origin (COO) image has a positive influence on brand equity. It can be asserted that the better the consumer's perception of the country of origin of the Zara, Pull & Bear, H&M and Uniqlo brands, and the stronger the brand equity is. The results of this study illustrate that when consumers feel confident that the country of origin that produces these four brands is prestigious and has an image of a developed country, then it makes consumers feel more confident that

buying their products is a smart action. When consumers have a perception that the countries producing these brands have a creative and high-quality workforce, customers feel more comfortable buying products from all four brands, even though there are other products of the same quality. The results of this study support the stipulation by Yasin, et al., (2007) who found that the image of the COO can have a significant influence on brand equity. It is inline with Sasmita and Suki (2015) which prove that the image of the country of origin does have a strong influence on brand equity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion obtained from this study was that brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and country-of-origin image significantly give positive effects on brand equity. Following the results of the study, several things that can be done by Zara, Pull And Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo companies to strengthen brand equity, including:

These brands need to encourage consumers to be more familiar with the brands of Zara, Pull and Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo by providing promos, discounts, and event holding (such as fashion shows and buy one get one promotion). It is also hoped that they will encourage more consumers to be willing to recommend the Zara, Pull and Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo brands to their closest people. Some ways are by producing good quality products, holding events on social media, for example by distributing discounted vouchers to consumers who have

spread information about these brands on social media.

These brands can also make it easier for consumers to identify their products by developing innovative and unique product designs that are different from their competitors. The development of a good brand image of Zara, Pull And Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo by providing good service to consumers through certainty of product size and checking back by the servants of the company itself before the payment process takes place, and gives customers confidence with a sense of security when the shopping process is also considered necessary.

Finally, Zara, Pull and Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo need to ascertain the image of the countries of their origin which own that of creative and high-quality country workers and make a prestigious image by providing training and provision of knowledge about fashion so that workers have the necessary skills, be creative and knowledgeable about the world of fashion.

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