The Role of Self Congruity on The Effect to Brand Equity on Brand Preference (Study of IT Telkom Purwokerto)

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ABSTRACT

Finding an ideal university considered as a difficult process because it will involve students' identity and conformity. This research was conducted to examine the role of self congruity on the brand preference that moderated by brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality. The research was conducted in IT Telkom Purwokerto to measure how students prefer this brand. The result showed that self congruity had a significant influence on brand preference moderated by brand equity. All variables were statistically tested and had a significant path. Brand equity would be influenced by students' self concept and conformity where this state would lead them to create their consideration on the brand equity. By this brand equity, students would explore what university's brand is relevant and ideal to their self concept and identity. This research found and underlined that self congruity had a significant influence on brand preference moderated by brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality.

Keywords: Self Congruity; Brand Awareness; Brand Association; Perceived Quality; Brand Preference.

1. Introduction

Higher education has become an indicator of a person's status in society. The higher a person's education, the better and positive the public's perception of that person in the community. Study in university becomes quite attractive for students who have graduated from Senior High School. Day by day, the interest of students to continue their studies is getting higher.

Data from the Indonesia Central Statistics Agency shows that the amount of student who continued their studies in 2018 was 1,732,308 (921,359 of them chose private universities). In 2019, there were 2,130,481 Senior High School students continued to study with 1,084,634 of them choose private universities. Then in 2020 there were 2,163,682 students who continued their studies, of which 1,068,912 studentss chose private universities. There has been a significant increase in the number of students continuing to higher education in the last 3 years.

Student preferences in choosing a university could be influenced by many factors, such as one's congruity on product or event. The differences of consumers' self-concepts will lead to different purchase behaviors. Many studies have found that consumers would be disposed to choose products with a brand image that is suitable with their self-concepts to enhance their own self-

concept (Sirgy, 1982; Grohmann, 2009). It occurs because consumers use products to not only develop their own self-concept, but also modify it through purchasing and using products. According to self-congruity theory, individuals prefer brands that match their personal value priorities (Sirgy, 1982; Torelli et al., 2012).

Brand preference is also influenced by brand equity. Brand equity has important role on influencing consumer in choosing a certain brand or making purchase decision. Based on the definition stated by Keller (1993) on Jia-yi, F., et.al., (2022) brand equity is defined as the response of consumers to the brand marketing activities under the influence of their brand knowledge. According to literature, brand equity has five components shaper that is brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived brand quality and brand association or brand image, and the fifth is brand's authenticity that often considered as an antecedent factor (Aaker, 1992; Baek, Ham, & Yang, 2006; Phung, Ly, & Nguyen, 2019). Aaker (1991) in Fan Jia-Yi, et.al. (2022) categorized brand equity into brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other brand proprietary assets (such as patents, trademark and channel relationships), with the first four dimensions represent consumers' perception of the brand while the last one was based on the company's perspective.

In many studies, it can be found that brand equity has positive influence on brand preference. Yıldız, E., & Akyol, A. (2016) in their study found the correlation of positive influence between brand equity and brand preference. Then, Moradi and Zerai (2011) on their study of about 700 students from 3 different state universities in Iran who have laptops and cell phones found the effects of the brand equity on the brand preference, purchase intent, and about the moderating role of the country of origin in this relationship.

Bashir, M. A., et.al. (2019) had found that consumer brand preference and consumer's brand purchase intention were also studied along with the effects of brand equity. Here, brand equity has an important role in influencing customer preference. Keller (1993) in Fan Jia-Yi, et.al (2022) define brand equity as the response of consumers to the brand marketing activities under the influence of their brand knowledge. It can be defined also that brand equity is a collective organizational resource that is closely related with performance-based outcomes like escalated revenue from increasing consumer preferences (Aaker, 1992 on Basu, et.al, 2022).

For several reason, brand equity has impact on brand preference. The study had found that consumers' preferences on a certain brand, would be based on the various consumers'specification: the brand imagination, the consumer perception, the efficiency of the marketing activities, and to some social, physiological, personal, and environmental reasons (Keskin and Yıldız, 2010, p. 240). The divergence in consumers' self-concepts carry out different purchase behavior. Many researchs have shown that consumers are willing to choose products with a brand characteristic that is consistent with their self-concepts to enhance their own self-congruity (Sirgy, 1982; Grohmann, 2009). So, brand preference would be influenced significantly by consumers'self congruity.

From the deep explanation above, this research discusses and analyzes the influence of self congruity on brand preference, moderated by brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality. It will measure how consumers make Telkom Institute of Technology Purwokerto as their brand preference based on their self concept and congruence related to factors appear on their mind about the brand.

2. Literature Review

2.1.Brand Preference

Product or service information will influence consumer's perception of quality and preference (Dransfield et al.,1998; Dimra and Skuras, 2003). Brand preference point to the consumer's tendency to choose a specific product brand over a similar product brand. In other term, brand preference is the relative preference for choosing and using a certain brand over other similar brands (Chomvilailuk and Butcher, 2010). Thus, product quality perception is one of a very importance consideration in most purchasing decision, and the effects of perceived quality on brand judgement have been well documented by consumer (Metcalf et al., 2012).

Brand preference is considerably used to measure the effect of brand equity (c.f.Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Yoo et al., 2000) and indicates consumer's intention to choose and purchase a certain brand (Yoo et al.,2000). Perceived positive corporate reputation has a significant positive impact on brand preference (Alamro and Rowley, 2011). Yoo et al.'s (2000) give definition that brand preference is the relative preference of consumer on choosing and using the brand.

2.2.Self-Congruity

Cunsumer tends to present themselves by purchasing or consuming a particular brand, for instance, the degree of customers' self-concept closely matches the store image. This psychological circumstance is referred to as self-congruity (Sirgy, Johar, Samli, & Claiborne, 1991). Self-congruity is arranged by self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image.

In gaining a perception, the consumer will observe within oneself or self-observance about the congruity between one's self-image and product-user image. Liu, C., et.al. (2020) proposed that self congruity will influence consumer's brand awareness as they make a recognition to a product characteristic.

High self-congruity would mean that a consumer perceives the user of a particular brand closely matches his or her image (Liu et al., 2012). It related to the study held by Lu, J., & Xu, Y. (2015), they found that self congruity had a positive influence on consumer's brand association. Then, self congruity also affects on perceived quality. It can be learned from the study of Kwak, D. H., & Kang, J. H. (2009) that stated briefly self congruity would positively affect on consumer's perceived value. Therefore, this study will hypothesize:

H1   : Self-Congruity has a positive effect on Brand Awareness
H2   : Self-Congruity has a positive effect on Brand Association
H3   : Self-Congruity has a positive effect on Perceived Quality

2.3.Brand Awareness

If an organization has a good campaign on brand awareness it means that the organization has a good reputation and acceptable in market (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007). Process in giving awareness of the university brand will determine a significant role while enrolling as a new student may relate on perceived risk of students as a university costomers and their level of assurance about the enrolling decision due to awareness in university brand and its uniqueness.

Brand awareness indicates the consumers' recognition and recall of the brand, which can reflect consumer's attitude toward brand (Aaker, 1996 on Tan, Y., et.al., 2021). Brand Awareness would be closely related with the strength of the brand identity or trace in memory, which constantly customer use their ability to identify the brand under different condition. (Grohmann in Keller, 2013). Correlately, Fioretha, F. V. (2015) stated that brand awareness positively influences brand preference. Another study had shown also that brand awareness would influence consumer brand preference Sukant, M. (2021). Therefore, this study will hypothesize:

H4   : Brand Awareness has a positive effect on Brand Preference

2.4. Brand Association

Brand associations could be defined as consumers' perceptions of a brand embedded on consumer memory, which accomodate the important meaning of the brand for consumers, and these associations come in all conditions and may reflect characteristics of the product or special aspects of the product (Keller, 2013).

A brand name leads many associations in consumer's mind that finally will draw up the brand image. Organization must struggle to build a strong, favorable, and unique organizations's brand image in order organization to develop desired good brand associations in consumer's mind. So, the impact of a consumer's brand associations on their evaluations of brands would be determined by the favourability, strength, and uniqueness of the brand associations created by product (Keller, 1993 on O'Cass, A., & Lim, K., 2002).

How consumers find a product and how they choose the product will be influenced by their brand association. O'Cass, A., & Lim, K. (2002) on their study found that brand association in whole characteristics had positive influence on brand preference. Therefore, this study will hypothesize:

H5   : Brand Association has a positive effect on Brand Preference

2.5. Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is interpreted as consumer's judgment about the superiority or excellence of a product or service (Zeithaml, 1988 on Lu, J., & Xu, Y., 2015). Consumers frequently evaluate the quality of a certain product or service based on variety of informational sign that is associated with the product. These signs come from intrinsic of the products (the product's physical characteristics such as color, appearance, size, aroma, or flavor), whereas others are extrinsic. Therefore, consumers can adopt these physical characteristics to make a judgement about quality of the brand.

In consumers' mind, perceived quality emphasizes on perception, product quality and superiority. Perceived quality cannot necessarily be particularly determined because perceived quality is simply a summary construct (Aaker, 1991, p. 85-86). Perceived quality is based on consumer's judgments, personal factor. As consumers differ in their personal preferences, perceptual abilities, and experience level, perceived quality will accordingly vary. It could be said that when consumer find a product or service, they will find their perceived quality. Therefore, in this study it will hypothesize:

H6   : Perceived Quality has a positive effect on Brand Preference

3. Research Methodology

In this research, the author uses descriptive quantitative research where the research is based on the results of a deep analysis of the data from the survey process conducted on students from IT Telkom Purwokerto from several batches. This research is associative-causal because the researcher measures the influence of Self Congruity on Brand Preference moderated by Brand Awareness, Brand Association and Perceived Quality.
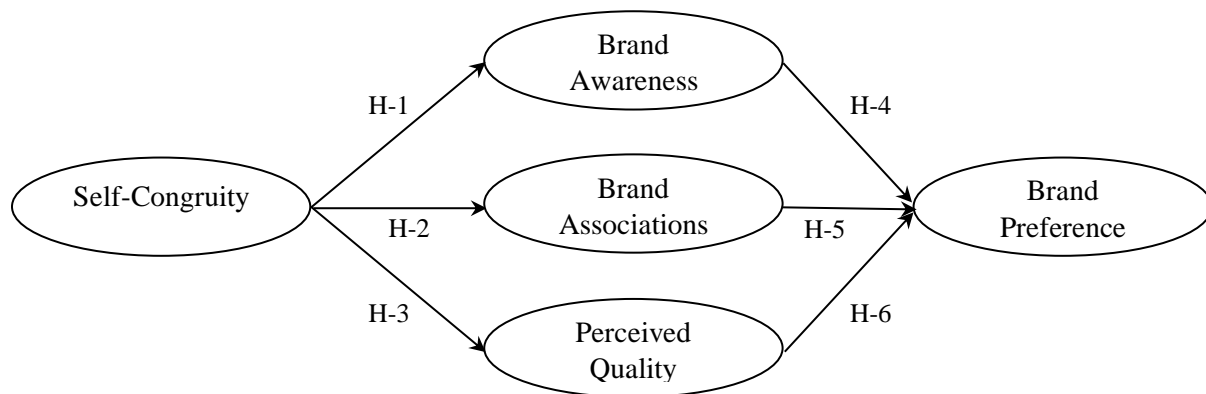

Figure 1. Research Model

3.1. Research Design

The research subjects are students from IT Telkom Purwokerto who are declared to have obtained a Student Identification Number and are declared to be still active in college. Data of this research was taken quantitatively from internal campus, that was from the Admissions unit which specifically handles the registration and new students enrolling process. Then, secondary data came from questionnaires.

3.2. Population and Sample

The population in this research were all students in IT Telkom Purwokerto. While the sampling in this research used a purposive sampling method, namely sampling based on certain criteria for respondents who were used as objects of information (Sugiyono, 2005: 78). The criteria used was active students from many major and department randomly selected on 183 students from questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study has a Likert scale of 5 type, where a scale of 1 means strongly disagree and a scale of 5 means strongly agree.

The responses of questionnaire measured in this study were the effect of self congruity on student's brand preference with brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality as a moderating variable. Data of this research is analyzed and processed by the statistical tool IBM Statistical Program for Social Science (IBM SPSS) 21.

4. Results

4.1. Validity and Realibility Test

Based on the critical review and describing the literature, a conceptual model utilizing self-congruity as a predictor variable that influence consumer's brand preference moderated by brand

equity. It is hypothesized that educational brands which are congruent with prospective students' self-image will be more likely to yield positive brand preference.

Refer to Dwi Priyatno (2018), the data valid if the value sig. (2 tailed) < 0.05 or by comparing the value of r table with r count. If r count > r table so the item is valid. From r table N=183, r table value is 0.1216. From the result of validity test data used Pearson Product Moment Correlation can concluded that all of 27 statements are valid.

Based on Coefficient Cronbach's Alpha theory, a statistical flexible technique can be used for various types of data. If Coefficient Cronbach's Alpha <0,6 it is not good, if the coefficient Cronbach's Alpha > 0,7 – 0,8 it is good, and it will be very good if > 0,8. From the test, all variables are greater than 0.7 (value=0.950), so it can be said that all of research instruments are reliable and can be used for further tests.

4.2. Homogeneity Test

Table 1. Result of Homogenity Test

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
DataBaru			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.966	4	910	.098

Based on the table above, it is known that the significance value is 0.098, means that 0.417 > 0.05. It can be concluded that the instrumens are homogeneous.

4.3. Correlations Test

Table 2. Result of Correlations Test

		Self Congruity	Brand Awareness	Brand Association	Perceived Quality	Brand Preference
Self Congruity	Pearson Correlation	1	.723**	.635**	.723**	.749**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	183	183	183	183	183
Brand Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1	.773**	.750**	.732**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	183	183	183	183	183
Brand Association	Pearson Correlation	.635**	.773**	1	.806**	.670**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	183	183	183	183	183
Perceived Quality	Pearson Correlation	.723**	.750**	.806**	1	.780**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	183	183	183	183	183
Brand Preference	Pearson Correlation	.749**	.732**	.670**	.780**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	183	183	183	183	183
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

By using Pearson Coorelation, the data above resulted a conclusion:

H1   : *Self-Congruity has a positive effect on Brand Awareness*
         This hypothesis is accepted because Significant value is 0,00 < 0,05

H2   : *Self-Congruity has a positive effect on Brand Association*
         This hypothesis is accepted because Significant value is 0,00 < 0,05.

H3   : *Self-Congruity has a positive effect on Perceived Quality*
         This hypothesis is accepted because Significant value is 0,00 < 0,05.

H4   : *Brand Awareness has a positive effect on Brand Preference*
         This hypothesis is accepted because Significant value is 0,00 < 0,05.

H5   : *Brand Association has a positive effect on Brand Preference*
         This hypothesis is accepted because Significant value is 0,00 < 0,05.

H6   : *Perceived Quality has a positive effect on Brand Preference*
         This hypothesis is accepted because Significant value is 0,00 < 0,05.

4.4.Regression Test

Table 3. Result of Regression Test

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Self Congruity to Brand Awareness	Regression	1677.575	1	1677.575	198.573	.000[b]
	Residual	1529.114	181	8.448		
	Total	3206.689	182			
Self Congruity to Brand Association	Regression	721.586	1	721.586	122.594	.000[b]
	Residual	1065.365	181	5.886		
	Total	1786.951	182			
Self Congruity to Perceived Quality	Regression	1326.797	1	1326.797	198.306	.000[b]
	Residual	1211.006	181	6.691		
	Total	2537.803	182			
Brand Awareness, Brand Association & Perceived Quality to Brand Preference	Regression	1807.177	3	602.392	115.108	.000[b]
	Residual	936.757	179	5.233		
	Total	2743.934	182			

From the data output it is known that Self Congruity (x) has significant influence on brand awareness (y) because the calculated F value is 198,573 with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. Then, it is known also that the calculated F value is 122,594 with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05, then the regression model can be used to predict the participation variable or in other words there is an influence of the Self Congruity variable (x) on Brand Association (y).

Self congruity (x) is proved having significant influence on Perceived Value (y) because the calculated F value is 198,306 with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05. It is clear also that the data also shows that the calculated F value is 115,108 with a significance level of 0.000 < 0.05, then the regression model can be used to predict the participation variable or in other words there is an influence of the Brand Awareness, Brand Association and Perceives Quality (x) on Brand Preference (y).

5. Discussion

It is important to note that self congruity has different influential paths to brand equity. Self-congruity first leads to customers' brand awareness of a university while self-congruity helps build brand image in the next step, which finally makes brand preference. Then, the strong brand awareness result in brand preference, which leads to enrollment to university. Self-congruity is potential drivers to brand preference of students, and would be meadiated be brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality.

Positive identity and congruity will increase feelings and emotional experiences obtained from the Perceived Value of a product (Shamah et al., 2018). If the needs are met, then there will be continuous motivation and the provision of Perceived Value that is in accordance with the identity and conformity of consumers. Self-congruity theory defines consumer behavior as partly determined by the congruence resulting from a psychological comparison involving the product user image or brand image and the consumer self-concept (Hamilton and Sun, 2009). So, their congruence will lead to brand association.

This research will underline that self congruity have a relevant influence on brand equity (brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality), and therefore by this brand equity customers will lead to make brand preference based on their identity and conformity. Student will make their decision on choosing the brand based on their understanding and perception about the brand.

This research will also make some of contributions to the literature of brand preference. First, there is a growing interest in understanding consumers' brand preference from a self-congruity perspective (Sirgy, 1986; Kressmann et al., 2006; Liu et al.,2012). This research contributes to this field of study by empirically confirming the influence of consumers' self congruity on brand preference moderated by brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality.

Second, this research confirms the important role of brand equity in creating brand preference of students in finding their ideal university. While self-congruity can exert a significant direct effect on brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality moderated its effect on students' brand preference. Third, this research confirms that brand preference will be influenced by students' self congruity. While brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality had direct influence on brand preference, the influence of self congruity on brand preference is not direct, but it is moderated through brand equity (brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality).

For the next research, it will be interesting if the study is added one variable as a mediator: brand authenticity. By adding this variabel on the next research, brand equity as a mediator variable would complete and give a more comprehensive measure on how consumer (student) finds and choose their university brand, and how big the influence of the factor.

6. Conclusion

Higher education will be still importantly considered by Senior High School graduate. Better university will become a better reference. Student will prefer and chose a university having a good brand and reputation. What they know about university will influence their choice.

From this research, it can be summarized that Self Congruity will influence students on recognition on a university brand. This recognition or recall is considered as a brand awareness. Students' brand awareness would become one of the consideration factors in making a university preference. The research shows that Self Congruity has a significant influence on Brand Awareness, and Brand Awareness has e significant influence on Brand Preference.

A capability of university in creating events, achievements, uniquenes and reputations is a good way to make a university brand perception. In fact, student's concept in any product will bring their assumption to their self congruity that further it will shape their brand awareness. The quality of university will also be influenced by students' self concept. This research shows that self congruity of students will influence brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality oe a university.

Then, as a process of choosing their best university to be the plave of their study, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality will strongly influence students' brand preference. Student will prefer a university that have a good reputation, a strong brand, trusted university, and a widely known brand.

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