

# How to improve brand image: The role of customer attitude, brand familiarity, brand awareness, and brand extension

Yazid\*, Helmidhia Kawiryan

Department of Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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#### \*Corresponding author:

yazidy59@gmail.com/ 873110105@uii.ac.id

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#### **Abstract**

This article is a publication of a research finding aimed to determine the influence of customer attitude, brand familiarity, brand awareness, and brand extension toward brand image (study case using toothpaste brand XYZ). Brand image is one of the key factors of brand management to stay survive in the future, to win the competition, to increase sales, and therefore increasing revenue. When consumers buy a products or services, they not just buy the products or services, they also buy what the brand stand for. It means that a brand should convey exactly what producers want it to say. Results of data analysis show that all of the independent variables contribute positive significant, both simultaneously and individually, influence on brand image, which, among the four independent variables, brand familiarity contributes the biggest positive significant influence on brand image. The implications of the findings will be discussed.

#### Introduction

It has long been known that a brand is a product, service or concept that is used to distinguished from other products, services or concepts such that so it can be easily communicated and usually marketed. The elements of brand include logo, symbol, number, voice, tagline, or tone or the combination of several of them. For a company brand is a tangible or intangible asset, helps in driving new business, and compliments the marketing strategies, connects the company with its customers emotionally (Patterson, 1999). A brand also defines a company itself in public, and focuses long-term goals of a company. Last but not least, brand also sets a benchmark to measure progress against: For target customers brand make them easier to identify (show the reputation of) product they want/need. Thus, a brand has a very important and strategic role for a business. For this a company must have good strategic brand image vision. Without having a brand image strategies, a company doesn't have any way to evaluate whether its brand image is moving in the right direction or not (Theurer et al., 2018).

Having a strategic vision allows companies to develop long-term stages of achievement that are full of challenges for both small and large environmental changes, especially changes in the level of increasing competition (Ferrel et al., 2019). This strategic vision allows the company to stay focused on the brand/company image vision that it wants to realize in the future (Peng et al., 2021).

The absence of ownership of a brand's image strategic vision can put a company in danger, one of which is the company's unpreparedness to face the changes that are coming and happening so that the company cannot make necessary adjustments (Chowdhury & Naziz, 2021). The absence of readiness can be fatal, namely the brand or product/service loses demand, no matter how big/strong the brand image is. Remember the case of Nokia which has a strong/great brand image but was not ready to face changes in the cell phone concept and technology. It's a shame that the big name of the Nokia brand image seems to make the company that owns the brand complacent so that they have no well preparation to face the change. Unfortunately, the changes that occur have such a fundamental effect that they completely destroy the brand image that has been built

for a long time with great difficulty, brand image that other companies have really high difficulty to compete with (Hsieh et al., 2004). In its golden era competitor must acknowledge the designation "handphone/cellphone is Nokia".

After the disruption, Nokia has been very difficult to rise to recapture the success and the market it once had. Now Nokia is no longer visible in the market. Now Nokia only lives in memories. The authors may say that the destruction of Nokia is a tragedy. Therefore, the authors belief that no single company wants to face a fate like Nokia.

To always be ready to face change a company needs to do a number of studies to identify changes trend that are taking place. Then findings of these studies can be used as the basis for developing appropriate responses to any unfavorable impacts of the change on brand image (Hsieh & Lindridge, 2005; Fan, 2019). This means that research is an essential part of good brand image management to keep brand image strong and competitive in the constantly changing market environment (Aghamirian et al., 2015).

Even though it has a vital role for a company, however, brand image issues still don't seem to get the appropriate attention it deserves. Evidence of the issue is that the publication of research related to brand image is just a few. Writings about brands (brand image, brand equity, etc.), are generally done by practitioners, that often be found on blogs (Shannak et al., 2012; Loken et al., 2023; del Barrio-Garcia & Prados-Peña, 2019). This condition is one of the main reasons for the authors to conduct research on brand image and the results are shared in this publication. Hopefully this article contributes more to practical management of brand image rather than theoretical one.

# Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

# **Brand Image**

Brand image is basically the (reasoned and emotional) impression about brand a company creates in the minds (perceptional) of the existing and potential customers (Kotler et al., 2020). It is influenced by product/service quality, personality, values, usability, durability, and association (Besharat, 2010). All of these affect customer satisfaction, retention, and advocacy (Khademi & Farazandeh, 2019). A positive brand image means that the brand meets or exceeds the expectations of customers (Kouba, 2008). Brand image is formed by a number factors such as consumption experience, brand familiarity with, brand attitude, and trust (Mihardjo et al., 2019). toward the product/service, and brand extension. Whether the brand image is good or not is also influenced by how the company presents its product/service, how the company executes its product/service, and how effective the customers find the product/service, all impact the company brand (Blumenthal, 2005). Brand image is a part of branding strategy (Hamzaoui-Essoussi et al., 2011).

#### Customer Attitude

Consumer attitudes is a person's feelings of like or dislike toward an object (in this case toward a brand). Consumer attitudes are the result of consumer's overall opinion of a branded product/service. Consumer attitudes is a mixture or relation of three factors; beliefs (cognitive), feelings (affective), and behavioral (conative) interests of a person towards a product or service of a company (Asshidin et al., 2016; Kim & Chao, 2019). Consumers involve all of those factors in making their purchase decisions. Aaker's experimental research (2009), shows that a number of words that have no meaning to a number of consumers. These consumers have a tendency to choose names they like, most of them even choose words that don't make sense. This means that consumers are not always rational, many times they also use their attitudes or feelings, or emotions (like or dislike) as the basis for their choices.

Therefore, understanding brand attitude is a big part in the effort of improving consumer buying decisions. Past experience also plays a big role in developing and strengthening certain attitudes (Subrahmanyan & Tomas Gomez-Arias, 2008). Meanwhile, Coelho et al. (2028) argues that to strengthen attitude can be done by adding or emphasizing a new attribute that consumers like and can use the attribute (e.g. quality or service, etc.) in evaluating a brand or company (Zhang, 2015). Improving attitude is also an important part of improving brand image through quality,

value, usefulness, association, and durability. Brand managers often do this, e.g. by improving their products/service use focusing on additional benefits associated with the brand. For example, 'HIT' (mosquito repellent) expands its usefulness. Previously 'Hit' was only known as a mosquito killer/repellent, but now it can also be used to eradicate/repel cockroaches.

H<sub>1</sub>: Consumer attitude toward brands has a positive significant effect on brand image.

## **Brand Familiarity**

Keller (1993); Alba and Hutchinson (1987); and Khan and Fatma (2019) argue that brand familiarity is the total experience a consumer has with a product gleaned from use experience, product advertising, etc. Brand familiarity captures consumers' brand knowledge structures and brand associations that exist within a consumer's memory (Campbell & Keller, 2003). All exposure to the brand will increase brand familiarity, and the level of personal relationship with the identity of a brand (such as brand visual elements, values, and culture that are relevant in society). A strong brand identity is the same as a positive brand image (Lee et al., 2014). A positive brand experience might encourage a positive reaction to pricing associated with the purchase and impact indirectly or directly on brand trust. Strong brand familiarity increases the perceptual identification of a brand, produces a positive influence on the brand image, and motivates buying behavior (Baker et al., 1986).

Brand familiarity is also influenced (positively or negatively) by the interaction frequency (with product/service, advertising) of each customer with a brand (Schmidt & Eisend, 2015). Molinillo et al. (2017) argue that things that can affect brand familiarity are consumer perspectives on brand values and identity. So, a positive consumers perspective or good familiarity with a brand is very likely to increase consumer understanding of quality, utility value, durability, and association or image of a product/service brand.

So it is understandable if brand image is influenced by the extent to which consumers are familiar with a brand. This is where the brand image appears which in turn has the possibility to generate brand equity.

H<sub>2</sub>: Brand familiarity has a positive significant effect on brand image.

### **Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness describes the degree of familiarity of consumers with the distinctive qualities or image (perceptions of the qualities) of a particular brand of products or services (Widjaja, 2028). So, essentially, brand awareness is similar to the positioning of a product in the mind of consumers. A brand awareness campaign seeks to familiarize the public with a new or revised product and differentiate it from the competition. High levels of brand awareness are likely to generate more revenue because consumers are more likely to buy familiar brand names compared to unknown ones. The higher the level of brand awareness towards a product, the stronger consumers' motivation to buy the product. It means that brand awareness increases sales or market share and finally revenue.

Branding is the first step to gaining brand awareness. Producers need to make the right efforts to impress their brands or create positive awareness in the minds of consumers (Cakmak, 2016). Foroudi (2019); Dobni and Zinkhan (1990); and Rhee and Jung (2019) argue that brand awareness and brand choice are highly correlated. This correlation reflects the fact that the choice of the brand indicates brand awareness.

It is therefore brand awareness is one of the important dimensions of brand equity when consumers choose a brand for the first time. Miniard et al. (2020) argue that brand awareness will give potential consumers have the ability to recall that a product is part of a certain category. According to Tam (2008), the ability of consumers to recognize (be aware of) certain brands gives the brand has great opportunity to be chosen over a brand that is not recognized. In other words, it can be recognized that brand awareness is the result of consumer exposure to a brand (Wänke & Bless, 2013).

H<sub>3</sub>: Brand awareness has a positive significant effect on brand image

#### **Brand Extension**

Brand extension is basically the introduction of a new product that relies on the name and reputation of an established product brand. Brand extension is very likely to be successful when the original (established product whose image base has been well developed) and the new products share a common name, quality, or characteristics of the existing product that the consumer can easily identify. Brand extension can be done on the same product that already exists or even by creating a new product that is different from existing products. Be careful, brand extension has the possibility of dilution risk. However, this strategy also offers opportunities to increase the success of new products (Salinas & Perez, 2009). Well-known brand names increase consumer interest and willingness to try new products based on well-known brands (Lozanova, 2016). If new product success opportunities can be realized (the new product is accepted and able to satisfy consumers), then the brand extension can be the basis of a sales growth strategy, even on an international scale, for the sake of company growth (Keller, 1998).

This means that brand extensions allow a company to reach a wider customer base by offering new products under an existing name (or parent brand). This is the main advantage of the brand extension strategy, which includes increasing the overall brand image with lower communication costs because the parent brand is already known (Erdem & Sun, 2002). They transfer their perceptions and attitudes from the parent brand to the new product (Tauber, 1981; Aaker & Keller, 1990). In return, the brand extension can also produce positive effects for the parent brand, namely strengthening the meaning of the parent brand and helping to build brand equity (Keller & Sood, 2003), as well as encouraging consumers to buy other products from a company. It can be repeated here that the launch of new products and services under the parent brand, if done properly, will significantly reduce unwanted risks and at the same time increase the acceptance of products/services, all of which will lead to cost savings.

H<sub>4</sub>: Brand Extension has a positive significant effect on brand image.

#### Theoretical Framework

An overview of each variable involved in this study has been briefly described above. So the following is an overview of the related variables in a theoretical framework or the model of this study.

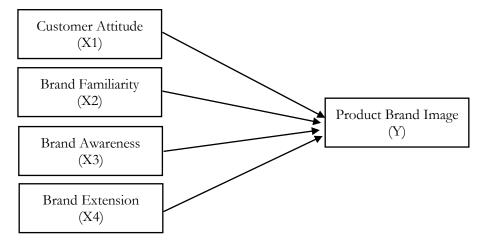


Figure 1. Research Model

## Research Methods

This is quantitative research using primary data. The population of this research was the users of the XYZ brand of toothpaste. The sample of this study was 200 respondents, selected through the purposive convenience sampling method (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Data was collected by distributing questionnaires (Likert scale) to the selected respondents who are users of XYZ brand toothpaste, aged 17 years and above, and reside in Yogyakarta. Then the collected data was analyzed using multiple linear regression from SPSS version 21.0 (Stockemer, 2018).

### Results and Discussion

Table 1. Summary of Regression Analysis Result

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient	Sig-t (p-values)	Partial Correlation (r)	Partial Correlation Coefficient (r <sup>2</sup> )
Y (Constant)	0.303	-	-	-
Consumer Attitude (X1)	0.105	0.028	0.156	0.024
Brand Familiarity (X2)	0.315	0.000	0.488	0.238
Brand Awareness (X3)	0.285	0.000	0.372	0.138
Brand Extension (X4)	0.270	0.000	0.405	0.164
F-compute	216.540			
F-significant	0.000			
Adjusted R Square	0.812			

Source: Primary data processed, 2023

The regression analysis table above shows that all the four independent variables namely brand attitude, brand familiarity, brand awareness, and brand extension simultaneously influence positively significantly brand image (sig. F = 0.000). If the authors look at the contribution coefficient of each independent variable on brand image, the order coefficient of the contribution (from largest to smallest) is brand familiarity (0.315), brand awareness (0.285), brand extension (0.270), and consumer attitudes (0.105). Meanwhile, the contribution of the influence of the four independent variables toward brand image simultaneously is very significant (F = 0.000). It means that the combination of all four variables can be used by XYZ to increase its brand image in the eyes of its consumers. All of the individual variables contribution toward brand image is also very significant.

Based on the findings, XYZ toothpaste should involve or consider all of the four independent variables, either simultaneously or individually, in its marketing strategy aimed to strengthen its brand image. However, because of the contribution of consumers attitudes in influencing brand image (judging from the individual coefficient of the influence on brand image is the weakest) then it is appropriate that XYZ's marketing strategy involves more serious attention to consumer attitudes so that the influence contribution of consumer attitudes toward brand image can be further enhanced. Efforts to improve consumer attitudes can be made by using the following four strategies, as suggested by Chou et al. (2020): a) increasing or changing the strength or belief rating of a brand on an important attribute; b) changing consumers' perceptions of the importance or value of an attribute; c) adding a new attribute to the attitude formation; and d) changing perceptions of belief ratings for a competing brand.

Let us discuss how the four variables should be treated so each of them gives the maximum contribution to the brand image. Increasing consumers brand attitude means improving the favorable feeling of consumers toward XYZ brand/product. This can be done through communication, through both conventional and through social media platforms that are designed in such a way that they can be accepted with pleasure by the target audience and drive potential consumers to try and existing consumers to buy. This tactic very likely will increase the sales/revenue of the company. Improving attitude can also be done through product improvements such as improving quality, usability/benefits, and product value (Lee et al., 2018). Giving scholarships or prizes for certain achievements, or sponsorship, or further improving the quality of services that make consumers happy, and other things are good ideas to improve consumer attitudes (Burmann et al., 2008).

The benefits of brand familiarity go beyond name recognition. Along with recognition and trustworthiness, customers are more likely to buy from brands that they already know and recommend these brands to their friends. Just like engaged employees, loyal customers will become brand ambassadors, using word-of-mouth recommendations as one of their many advertising tactics. Brand familiarity also increases the likelihood that consumers and other stakeholders will see the brand as the reflection of a strong company (Levine, 2006). Perception of a strong company of course can impact employee motivation, outside investor interest, and perceived business value.

So brand familiarity, has a very strategic role, it brings inside and outside impact for a company (Ha & Perks, 2005).

Brand familiarity can be improved through telling a brand story, creating value beyond company's product, creating shareable content, contributing to the community, running social media contests, etc (Morgan et al., 2021; Myers, 2011; M'zungu et al., 2010).

Brand extensions allow companies to diversify their offerings and increase market share. Brand extension can give the company a competitive advantage over its rivals that don't offer similar products (Panda et al., 2019). The existing brand serves as an effective and inexpensive marketing tool for the new product (because the public already knows the existing product, so the cost of marketing of new product is of course lower than that of the existing product). Several are to be considered when a company wants to create a successful brand extensions, namely evaluate the existing brand equity, and set goals (Donthu et al., 2021). Review the company's resources, look into wider consumer or market trends, research the competitors, engage with your existing customers, narrow down options, understand the new target market.

In conveying similar messages consistently (integrated marketing communications). The brief explanation above leads to the understanding that brand image is really very important. Because the main advantage of having a good brand image covers: encouraging consumers to make repeat purchases, which means increasing company revenue, and encouraging customers to maintain their behavior (loyalty) as long as they have a positive brand image of the product or brand they purchased (Mathras et al., 2016). In other words, the authors can say that what consumers actually buy is not only the physical form of the product or service, but also the value of the brand (product/service) they have in mind (Kam Fung So & King, 2010).

As explained above, brand awareness is essentially the positioning of a product in the mind of consumers, which influences consumers preferences to buy a product that they know and trust (Satvati et al., 2016). Therefore manufacturers need to make efforts to improve brand awareness by doing something that influences (reduces) consumers' perceived risk assessment and their confidence in the purchase decision (Shapiro, 1982). Two important things may be good to be considered: brand recall and brand recognition (Solomon, 2008). Brand recall deals with memory retrieval and brand recognition related to object recognition (Ansary & Nik Hashim, 2018).

As the authors already know that brand extension is essentially the introduction of a new product that relies on the name and reputation of an established product brand. Brand extension allows a company to enter a new market that may give new challenges or risks (Dwivedi et al., 2016; Plumeyer et al., 2019). Therefore in order for the brand extension tactic to be successful, before doing brand extension, the company needs to evaluate such as its brand equity, understand the level of competition for the product to be extended, know the source it has, etc (Hemsley-Brown, 2023; Pedeliento et al., 2016).

# Implication and Conclusion

A good brand image can help a company establish credibility within its industry. It, however, needs to get the respect of consumers and competitors through quality, consistency in delivering promise, and honesty. There are many ways that brands establish credibility, such as: honesty with consumers, consistence quality of product or service, etc. All of these are part of the four influence variables used to predict brand image.

All of the discussions above describe efforts of how to improve brand image, either through consumer attitudes, brand familiarity, brand awareness, or brand extensions, that it turns out that the efforts to improve brand image involve many aspects of marketing, and all of which alone seem to make an important contribution to brand image (Kuenzel & Vaux Halliday, 2008). However, because the level of contribution of each variable influencing the improvement of brand image varies, it might be wise if in making efforts to improve brand image it is carried out by taking into account the priority scale, prioritizing the variable that gives the smallest contribution (consumer attitudes) first without neglecting the variables that give the greater influence contribution to brand image (Wijaya, 2013).

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