

Analysis of the Effect of Brand Experience and Brand Love Toward Resistance to Negative Information of the McDonald's Brand

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Abstract – People spend their money impulsively on things they love in this modern age. They claim it is brand love and often do not realize how much they have spent on it. Using McDonald's as the brand, the main focus of this study was to analyze the effect of brand experience and brand love on resistance to negative information about a brand. This research is classified as a descriptive analysis method to take samples and a questionnaire as the primary tool. Ninety-nine out of 142 McDonald's customer from around Indonesia was used as a sample for this research. Respondents were selected using a non-probability sampling technique. The research results demonstrate that just because someone has used or tried a brand's product doesn't mean they will automatically become resistant to information about the brand. They must first cultivate a brand-love attitude toward the brand.

Keywords: *Brand Love, Brand Experience, Brand Personality; Brand Value; Brand Emotion*

Introduction

Negative information is believed to negatively affect consumer behavior toward the brand (Le & Ha, 2021). Negative information does have an adverse effect on variables related to or indicating a consumer-brand relationship, like brand loyalty, brand perception, price levels consumers were prepared to pay, and propensity to buy (Jahn & Brühl, 2019). However, McDonald's went into a situation where the brand fell victim to a scandal, or, in other words, had damaging information about its brand, yet still managed to maintain its sales and popularity. It all started when a photo of the pink slime with captions such as "Pink slime McDonald's" and "McDonald's uses pink slime to produce their nuggets" went viral. The pink slime, or pink goop, is slang for "ammonia-treated lean beef trimmings." It is an industrial food process that mechanically harvests edible pieces of meat stuck to the bone but cannot be removed with a knife to add spices to burgers or convert chicken products into a lower-cost, bulkier substance. It was found that chicken nuggets sold in fast-food restaurants contain much more than meat (NBC News, 2014). Despite all the rumors, McDonald's is arguably the number one fast food restaurant based on their sales and popularity (Andrews, 2019).

From that phenomenon, it can be assumed that a certain kind or a degree of consumer-brand relationship variable can make the consumer resistant to negative information. However, from all the popular terminologies and variables related to consumer-brand relationships, like brand experience, brand loyalty, brand image, and customer satisfaction, this terminology prepossesses brand love. Instead, brand love is defined as the level of intense emotional attachment a satisfied consumer develops for a specific brand name (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Moreover, brand love can also be described as the representation of the emotions of a group of satisfied consumers, and their positive feelings toward the brands influence the brands' ratings and emotional responses (Rodrigues et al., 2023). In addition, positive feelings embrace passion, emotional connection with the brand, and long-term attachment to the brand (Batra et al., 2012). Consequently, it can be assumed that brand love is a kind of consumer-brand relationship that accumulates almost all other well-known or most frequent consumer-brand relationship variables studied (Martiyanti et al., 2021). In other words, brand love may represent almost all kinds of consumer-brand relationships like brand loyalty, customer satisfaction,

brand experience, brand image, positive word of mouth, where it can either be the antecedents or consequences of brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Thus, brand love might possibly be that certain kind or a degree of consumer-brand relationship variable that can make the consumer resistant to negative information.

The purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between brand experience, brand love, and resistance to negative information. This study is expected to enrich a broader knowledge about brand love in the context of well-known fast-food restaurant consumers. The following research questions guide our study: (1) Is brand experience or satisfaction enough to make customers resistant to negative information? (2) Does a customer need to have brand love first to be resistant to negative information?

Literature Review

A brand love conceptual paper by Roy et al. (2013) suggested that brand experience is an antecedent of brand love and brand loyalty is the consequence of brand love. Another study done by Huang (2017) also stated that brand love acts as a mediator between sincerity and excitement and positive word of mouth (Gumparthy & Patra, 2019). All those statements have led and supported this research to use brand love as its mediator. Moreover, unlike other studies like Huang (2017) and a suggestion from a brand love conceptual paper by Roy et al. (2013) that studied a relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty as an outcome through brand love as their mediator, this research will use resistance to negative information instead of brand loyalty. This decision is supported by some studies that suggested resistance to negative information as the consequence of brand love (Batra et al., 2012) and suggested future research from Gumparthy and Patra (2019) that said future research can explore how consumers' love for brands can change and how it impacts the managerial implication such as resistance to negative information. In addition, consumers engage in many different actions, such as product research, shopping, receiving services, and consuming items, all of which involve experience (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). Thus, it can be assumed that without brand experience, brand love cannot exist and is resistant to negative information. Therefore, to prove that assumption and to open the possibility that customer brand experience might already be enough to make them resistant to negative information about the brand, this research will use the brand experience as its independent variable.

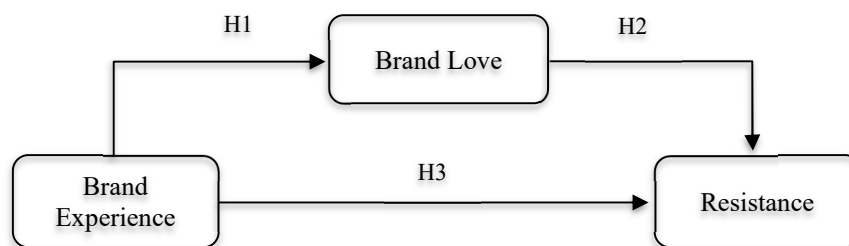


Figure 1. Framework Model

Hypothesis Development

Brand experience and brand love are variables that are strongly connected where brand experience is believed to be one of the antecedents of brand love (Gumparthy & Patra, 2019). This belief has been proven by a study conducted by Madeline and Sihombing that showed consumers who have a positive brand experience will come to love the brand and to increase consumers' love for the product, businesses should keep track of their consumers' responses toward the brand (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). In addition, a study by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) showed that a satisfying degree of consumption experience precedes an aroused level.

According to prior studies, merely being satisfied might result in brand loyalty (Gumparthy & Patra, 2019). Hence, we hypothesize:

H1: Brand experience has a significant relationship with brand love.

Several studies have shown that brand love will eventually make the customer resistant to negative information regarding the brand. In a study by Turgut and Gultekin (2015), valuable consumer-brand relationships like brand love eventually facilitate consumer resistance against negative information and intention to repurchase. Moreover, a study showed that brand love is related to higher degrees of brand loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), and another study by Batra et al. (2012) showed that consumers will question any negative information that they receive regarding the brand that they love, if they possess the strength of loyalty towards the brand that they love (Gumparthy & Patra, 2019). In their study on an Indonesian ride-sharing company, Pangaribuan and Wijaya (2020) found that, despite the respondents' negative reactions to unfavorable news, e.g., sexual harassment case, the brand of the business is still regarded as popular by the respondents due to media, positioning, or consumer psychology. Hence, we hypothesize:

H2: Brand love has a significant relationship with resistance to negative information.

There are still few studies that analyze the relationship between brand experience and resistance to negative information. However, there is this one study that indirectly shows the relationships between brand experience and resistance to negative information. According to Elsharnouby et al. (2021), brand involvement helps explain why consumers are resilient to negative information about specific brands. It is also said that brand involvement fully mediates the relationships between both information quality and virtual interactivity and resilience to negative information. For this case, brand involvement can basically be considered a form of brand experience to where it is brand. Hence, we hypothesize:

H3: Brand experience has a significant relationship with resistance to negative information.

Research Methods

This study addresses an area of research that has been little developed and conducted to better understand the compatibility of the independent variable, brand experience, to the dependent variables; resistance towards negative information of a brand and brand love, which also as a mediator.

With a consumer-brand relationship as our research topic, we tried to look for a brand that was already popular to generate many respondents. Besides, we also considered the geography of our targeted sample based on the reasons we used the brand experience as one of our independent variables. With brand experience as our independent variable, we needed respondents who often interact with the brand. To generate those respondents, we need to use a brand within the reach or surround of our respondents. Moreover, we also look for an affordable brand for all social classes to generate a more diverse social background. With all these considerations, we chose McDonald's as the brand we would use for the research.

Every Indonesian comprises the target population of this study. Therefore, the sample would be people in Indonesia or those fluent in Bahasa and who have purchased and consumed products from McDonald's at least three times. The survey questionnaire was shared publicly through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram.

Data collection began with deciding what appropriate questions correlate with each variable, resulting in 4 items for the independent experience, six for the first dependent variable, the mediator, and 4 for the second dependent variable. In addition, there were other items such

as the respondents' profile (age and gender) and the filtering questions to—obviously—filter the whole population into a sample.

The language we used in the survey questionnaire was Bahasa Indonesia to prevent those who might be the candidates to be our survey participants from not being able to complete the survey due to the language barrier. In addition, a non-probability sampling method, purposive sampling, was used to select the samples out of the populations by using the filtering questions as previously mentioned for analysis since extracting the people in Indonesia is tremendously difficult.

This survey's items were constructed using scales from earlier studies and then changed to fit the objectives of the current study. Based on the eight survey items (Nawaz et al., 2020), the variable brand love is measured as the degrees of an individual good or happy feeling that indicates love. Based on the 12 survey items (Schmitt et al., 2009), the variable brand experience was measured as the change and development in the individual sensory, behavioral, and intellectual. Finally, based on the four survey items (Bagozzi et al., 2016), the variable resistance to negative information was measured as the degrees of individual loyalty towards the brand. It also measured the purchasing tendency and the perspective toward the brand.

Findings

Demographics

From the data, we found 91.7% of our respondents are female, where 8.3% of them are underage under 18 years old, 15.9% are above 25 years old, and those who are at the age of 18 - 25 are the most respondents for 75.9%. Thanks to this research, we found an amazing fact that there are people who actually have *never* purchased McDonald's products. Among the 97.9% of our respondents who have purchased McDonald's products, most of them are neutral, which means that they neither too often buy the product nor too seldom. Those who buy too frequently are the lowest for only 8.3% (or 12 respondents), while those who barely buy them are in second place for 10.3% (or 15 respondents).

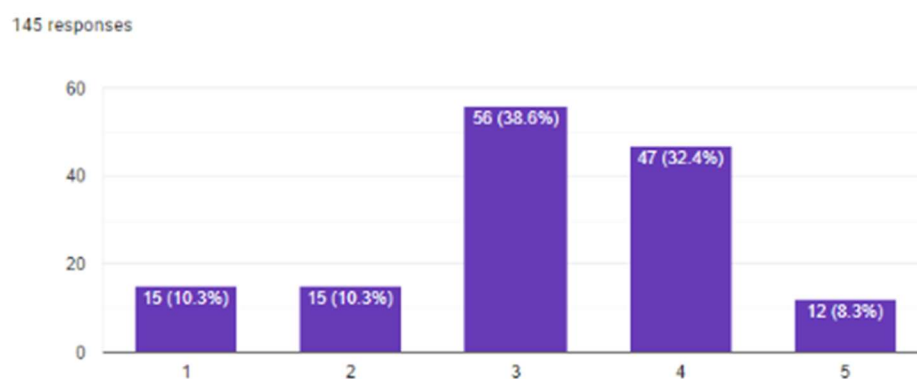


Figure 2. Demographics of the Respondents

The actual total number of respondents we got for this study is 145, however, due to a problem that happened while inputting the data, we decreased it to 99 for the measurement reliability and validity analysis.

Indicator Loadings & Reliability and Validity Tests

Outer loadings are the relationship estimated by the framework model. With the minimum 0.7 alpha, they determine the item's absolute contribution to the associated

framework. As seen in Table 1, four indicators are not significant; BRE1, BRE4, LOVE10, and RES13. It turns out that those four indicators' results are below the alpha (< 0.7). It means that BRE1, BRE4, LOVE10, and RES13 do not have enough absolute contributions to the associated framework.

To analyze the data in this study, we use the Smart PLS software 3 to perform the measurement validation and reliability, test the hypotheses, and figure out the relations of the independent variables with the dependent variable. Based on Table 1, the result of reliability and validity measurement using Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are all the latent constructs are reliable and valid as all of its values are above 0.7. Similarly, all AVE is considered acceptable since they are all above 0.5. Therefore, the item of each variable is said to be consistent.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity of Variables

Constructs	Items	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_A	Composite reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Experience	BRE1	0.667	0.718	0.777	0.826	0.550
	BRE2	0.838				
	BRE3	0.865				
	BRE4	0.551				
Brand Love	LOVE5	0.843	0.863	0.875	0.899	0.600
	LOVE6	0.748				
	LOVE7	0.740				
	LOVE8	0.836				
	LOVE9	0.847				
	LOVE10	0.603				
Resistance	RES11	0.890	0.703	0.821	0.811	0.534
	RES12	0.818				
	RES13	0.403				
	RES14	0.714				

Multicollinearity Tests

Multicollinearity is the event of large cross-correlation between factors in a multiple regression model that occurs when there is more than one significantly correlated variable. Another way to determine the occurrence of multicollinearity is by using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) role. If the VIF is higher than 5, then multicollinearity does occur. However, as shown in Table 2, none of the VIFs is higher than 5, which means multicollinearity does not happen in this study.

Table 2. Variance Inflation Factor

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)						
BRE1	BRE2	BRE3	BRE4	LOVE10	LOVE5	LOVE6
1.287	1.755	1.815	1.161	1.340	2.382	1.754
LOVE7	LOVE8	LOVE9	RES11	RES12	RES13	RES14
1.708	2.187	2.547	2.100	1.870	1.228	1.518

Model Summary (R²)

Not only the test for multicollinearity, in this study, the R² is also calculated. Based on Table 3, the R² value for Brand Love in this study is 0.600, which means that the percentage of this dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable (Brand Experience) is around 60%. The same meaning goes to the R² value of Resistance, where 0.428, or 42.8% of this dependent variable, which the independent variable can explain.

Table 3. Model Summary (R-Square)

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Love	0.600	0.596
Resistance	0.428	0.416

Hypothesis Testing

As a part of the hypothesis testing, path analysis is also tested in this study. From Table 4, not all the hypotheses that are tested through the model are significant. The original sample or the Beta (β) for hypothesis H1 is 0.774, T statistics is 21.992, and the P value is 0.000, which, as a result, hypothesis H1 is accepted. The original sample or the Beta (β) for hypothesis H2 is 0.581, T statistics is 4.639, and the P value is 0.000, which, as a result, hypothesis H2 is accepted. The original sample or the Beta (β) for hypothesis H3 is 0.091, T statistics is 0.716, and the P value is 0.474, which, as a result, hypothesis H3 is rejected. Therefore, hypotheses H1 and H2 are accepted, while hypothesis H3 is rejected.

Table 4. Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
BRDEXP → BRDLOVE	0.774	21.992	0.000
BRDEXP → RESISTANCE	0.091	0.716	0.474
BRDLOVE → RESISTANCE	0.581	4.639	0.000
BRDEXP → BRDLOVE → RESISTANCE	0.450	4.390	0.000

In addition to the hypothesis testing, there is also path coefficient and specific indirect effect where if the lower the P value indicates the more positive significance between the path coefficients. As can be seen from either Table 4, Figure 3, or Figure 4, in this study, BRDEXP (brand experience) to BRDLOVE (brand love) and BRDLOVE to resistance has the lowest P value. Meanwhile, BRDEXP to resistance has the highest P value. It signifies that BRDEXP has the weakest influence on resistance which is also the one that makes 3rd hypothesis rejected. It can be transcribed that for someone to have resistance to negative information towards a brand, they need to reach the level of loving the brand (brand love) first.

Discussion*Brand experience has a significant relationship with brand love (H1)*

Research on brand experience (Gumparthy & Patra, 2019) is a relevant basis for explaining the effect of experience on brand love in this study. Brand experience can be defined as an individual's internal and subjective reactions to a product or service. It consists of sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual dimensions that are triggered by brand-related stimuli, and it can result in consumers and brands developing close emotional bonds (Schmitt et al., 2009). Almedia and Nique (2005) demonstrated that a simple degree of satisfaction can lead to excitement in the consumption experience. According to prior studies, merely being satisfied

can result in brand loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Therefore, creating emotionally filled customer brand relationships requires having a good brand experience.

Brand love has a significant relationship with resistance to negative information (H2)

Research on brand experience (Batra et al., 2019) is a relevant basis for explaining the effect of brand love on resistance in this study. When consumers fall in love with a brand, they tend to be loyal to it and have been seen to talk highly of it; however, the intensity of their loyalty causes them to question if they hear something negative about the brands they love. McDonalds customers tend to be loyal to the brand and have been heard to speak favorably of it, but because of the intensity of their loyalty, they become doubtful when they hear something bad about the brands they adore.

Brand experience has a significant relationship with resistance to negative information (H3)

Most people rarely give any thought to how they might react in the future if they learned negative information about a company. Instead of thinking about what they would do if the brand were to become tarnished in the future, they are more apt to reflect on past interactions with it and do so naturally (Merlo et al., 2023). Resilience to negative information is likely to protect the brand from any negative outcomes, such as the observation of a significant loss in market share, bad reputational effect, or a sharp decline in sales (Cleeren et al., 2013). Even if McDonalds does not deliver the anticipated brand experience, consumers seem to be more apt to tolerate it.

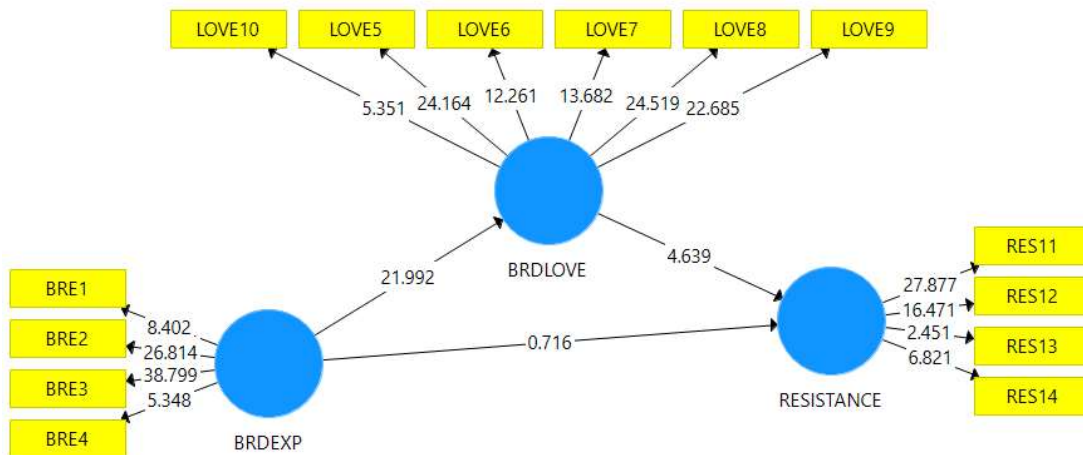


Figure 3. Results of SEM Model

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusion recommended that there was a positive relationship between brand experience and brand love as well as between brand experience and resistance to negative information. Moreover, brand love has a significant mediating effect between brand experience and resistance to negative information, meaning that the relationship has more effect when the relationship goes indirectly through brand love instead of directly from brand experience toward resistance. Considering the negative information on the McDonald’s brand, we can understand the importance of brand experience and suggestions of brand love affect the customers being resistant to unfavorable news.

From the theoretical perspective, the most important contribution of this study is finding the correlation between brand experience with brand love in consumer-brand relationships and

resistance to the negativity of a brand. All variables are significant, however, not all variables influence one another. In conclusion, it shows that even though people have had experience in using or trying a brand's product, it will not make them immediately become resistant to negative information about the brand. They need to develop the brand love feeling towards the brand first.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, this research offers brand managers managerial advice. Particularly, its results demonstrate a favorable relationship between brand love and resistance. In other words, if brand managers are successful in earning a consumer's confidence in a product or service, this will encourage the consumer to fall in love with that brand. Therefore, managers should invest in learning about consumers' wants and needs to satisfy them through brand activities related to advertising and promotions. This will help them create brands that people love.

Limitations and Future Research

Similarly, like how nothing in this world is perfect, this study is also not perfect as it has several limitations that hold the researchers from exploring more deeply into the topic, such as (1) most of the respondents in the survey are female for more than 90% which might lead into gender bias. The result of the study with the limited number of male respondents may lead to the notion that females tend to be more indulgent than males, (2) minimal time to proceed with the whole research, (3) the samples used in the study may not represent the population fully with most of the respondents are teens to early adult age (18-25). These two points, second and third, may lead to several misunderstandings and not relating to the study result due to not being able to fill up the questionnaire as it did not reach them, and (4) the software SmartPLS 3 that we used to analyze all the data collected cannot accept the whole samples collected (145 samples), only limited to 100 samples. Therefore, future research can attain equal respondents' gender by limiting each gender when collecting respondents.

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