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## Effects of Brand Love, Personality and Image on Word of Mouth; the Case of Local Fashion Brands among Young Consumers.

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### Abstract

As the competition of local fashion industry gets fiercer, better strategies for local fashion companies are needed to achieve higher performance in the market. Due to the competitiveness of Indonesian fashion industry, local brands have to be able to be more competitive by establishing strong brand love of the customers as well as brand personality and brand image. The study aims to replicate the study conducted by Ismail and Spinelli (2012) in Indonesian context. Quantitative research was utilised in the study. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents with knowledge of two local brands; Cotton Ink and Nikiccio.

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### 1. Introduction

Brand are acknowledged to provide emotional benefits to customers (Pawle and Cooper, 2006 in Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013). In particular, brands of fashion products are known to possess symbolic meanings compared to other product categories (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) due to their ability to convey the identity of the wearers (Campbell, 1986; Hebdige, 1987). Consumption behaviors represent the desire to possess certain brands as a means to achieve status and self-fulfilment (O'Cass and Siahtiri, 2013). In particular, fashion brands are known to be influenced customers' lifestyle (McColl & Moore, 2011). Besides that, consumers have become more fashion-conscious and are eager to keep themselves updated with the recent trends (D'Aveni, 2010 in Casidy, 2012).

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## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Brand Love

Brand love is defined as an attitude that consumers held toward a particular brand which include their ability to think, feel, and behave with regards to the particular brand (Rubin, 1973). Brand love was found to influence other brand-related concepts such as brand loyalty and word-of-mouth. The ability of an individual to recognize and yearn of some brand is one of the variables of decision, so that consumer has a sense of willingness to purchase the same product or brand continuously over time. It has also been acknowledged that the relationship that leads to brand love is deep and enduring, thus rendering the brand love to be irreplaceable (Albert and Merunka, 2013).

Fournier (1998 in Albert, Merunka, and Valette-Florence, 2008) suggests how the customers form and maintain strong relationships with brands. He notes that in total there are six major categories of relationships that customers can have with a brand, including brand love. Brand love is said to be more meaningful and long-lasting than a mere preference that the customers have toward the brand. Brand love can act as a motivator in forming and maintaining close relationships with the companies (Reimann, Castaño, Zaichkowsky and Bechara, 2012). Love is linked to positive emotions (Fehr and Russel, 1991 in Albert et al, 2008; including pleasure which could influence the duration of relationship that a customer can have with a brand (Albert et al, 2008).

Brand love can build consumer willingness to involve integration of a brand become consumer's identity (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Consumers who love a brand will become invested in the brand, similar to how they would be with the loved ones (McEwen, 2004). When a consumer loves a brand, the brand will shape a consumer's identity to be similar to what the brand is perceived as. Brands that are lovable are likely to have stronger brand loyalty and competitive advantage (Yang, 2010). Brand love was also proven to increase re-patronage intentions (Vlachos and Vrechopoulos, 2012).

### 2.2. Brand Personality

Brand performance is closely linked to brand personality, a concept which allows a brand to form a relationship with the consumer (Hankinson, 2004). Brand personality has been intensively studied in marketing domain, especially in the recent years (Lin, 2010) Brand personality is a result of human characteristics endowment to a brand (Aaker, 1997). This brand personality can lead the customers to have relationship with a brand similar to a person (Aaker, Fornier and Brakel, 2004). Sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness are the five generic dimensions of brand personality scale (Aaker, 1997).

The perception that a consumer has towards the personality of the brand can be shaped through both direct and indirect experience dealing with the brand. (Aaker, 2010 in Seimiene and Kamarauskaite, 2014) This perception can influence how consumers evaluate and consume the brand (Swaminathan, Page and Gurhan-Canli, 2007). Brand personalities can create memorable and favourable associations which lead to higher brand equity (Keller, 1993). These suggest the importance of brand personality in relation to how the customers choose a brand and make purchasing decision (Biel, 1993).

Besides that, brand personality is crucial in forming the relationship between company and the customers (Fennis and Pruyn, 2007). Brand personality can be built through various marketing communication strategies (Ang and Lim, 2006; Batm and Homer, 2004; Orth and Malkewitz, 2008 in Park and John, 2012). It can help the customers to express self-concept and their symbolic benefits (Ouwersloot and Tudorica, 2001 in Bouhlel, Mzoughi, Hadiji and Slimane, 2011).

It is believed that in many instances, consumers who possess particular personality traits will exhibit consistent behaviors associated with those traits in almost every circumstances (Randhawa, Calantone and Voorhees, 2015). Consumer personality and brand personality should be tightly intertwined as the latter will act as a means for the customers to express themselves via purchase and consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982 in Orth, Limon and Rose, 2010).

Many scholars suggested that excitement and sincerity are considered as two major dimensions that capture the variance in personality rating for brands (Aaker, et al, 2004). For that matter, only excitement dimension is utilized in this study.

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