

Experience in Intention to Buy: Engagement as a Mediation in Retail Skincare Product

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received January 24, 2023

Received in revised form

April 6, 2023

Accepted April 6, 2023

Available online June 30, 2023

Kata Kunci:

Keterlibatan merek, pengalaman merek, niat untuk membeli, PLS-SEM, hubungan konsumen-merek, produk perawatan kulit.

Keywords:

Brand engagement, brand experience, consumer-brand relationship, intention to buy, retail branding, PLS-SEM, skincare products.

ABSTRAK

Munculnya sejumlah retail skincare kosmetik di Salatiga, Jawa Tengah merupakan salah satu faktor dimana persentase perempuan yang sadar akan pentingnya kesehatan kulit semakin meningkat, ditambah lagi penyebab masalah pada kulit saat ini beragam. Hal ini membuat salah satu retail di Salatiga yaitu toko G&G kosmetik perawatan kulit perlu memperkuat hubungan dengan customer agar dapat bertahan dan mencapai keunggulan bisnis di tengah kompetitifnya pasar perawatan kulit. Penelitian ini diangkat dari keingintahuan peneliti mengenai adanya pengaruh signifikan dari pengalaman merek terhadap niat untuk membeli produk melalui toko G&G dengan menggunakan keterlibatan merek sebagai mediasi. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan cara menyebarkan kuisioner kepada 100 responden yang telah melakukan pembelian di retail kosmetik G&G minimal sekali transaksi. Sample yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah *judgmental sampling*. Metode *Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)* dengan *Partial Least Square (PLS)*, dan software Smart-PLS 3.0 diaplikasikan pada studi ini. Kemudian, hasil dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman merek berpengaruh signifikan terhadap niat untuk membeli produk dengan ketiga indikator dari keterlibatan merek sebagai mediasi. Selain itu, hasil juga menunjukkan bahwa merek perawatan kulit ritel G&G perlu meningkatkan aktivasi mereka dalam keterlibatan merek untuk menarik dan mempertahankan hubungan dengan konsumen mereka dalam jangka panjang.

ABSTRACT

The emergence of the number of skincare cosmetic retailers in Salatiga, Central Java, is one of the factors in which the percentage of women who are aware of the importance of skin health is increasing, especially since the causes of skin problems are currently various. It makes one of the retailers in Salatiga, namely G&G skin care cosmetics store, need to strengthen relationships with their customers to survive and achieve business excellence amid a competitive skincare market. This research was lifted from the curiosity of researchers regarding the significant influence of brand experience on the intention to buy products through G&G stores by using brand involvement as mediation. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents who had made purchases at G&G cosmetics retail at least once. The sample used in this research is *judgmental sampling*. The structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with Partial Least Square (PLS) was applied in this study. Then, the result of this study shows that brand experience has a significant effect on the intention to buy a product, with the three indicators of brand involvement as mediation. Moreover, the results also show that G&G retail skincare brands need to increase their activation in brand engagement to attract and maintain relationships with their consumers in the long term.

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1. Introduction

Beauty is something that every woman wants. A survey conducted by ZAP Beauty Clinic & Markplus Inc (2021), shows on the percentage of Indonesian women who considered themselves beautiful when they had a clean face free of acne, spots, and smoothness increased to 67.1% compared to the previous year. Moreover, according to the researchers, as many as 53.8% of Indonesian women are looking for the benefits of anti-acne skincare. As a result, brands, such as skin care products, the most popular cosmetics that have become mainstream in the global cosmetic industry, can take advantage of this opportunity to attract customers (Lee et al., 2019). On the other hand, companies also seek techniques to strengthen emotional relationships with consumers as brands that can endure in the market and achieve business excellence (Bairrada et al., 2019). It is also supported by a statement from Singh (2020), which says that on the customer side, they are looking for functional benefits and the experience associated with a brand, which is a crucial component of branding strategy. Moreover, some academics and practitioners are paying attention to the brand-consumer relationship (Fetscherin et al., 2019). According to Greenwood-Gaynor Lea (2013), purchasing decisions are made in stores because customers are influenced by the atmosphere, layout, music that represents the store, try-on, and attractiveness, referred to as store environment. Hence, it shows that consumers want to buy because they have felt the experience of being in the store they visited. Besides, the researchers also revealed that the intention to carry out product transactions was caused by the customer getting a pleasant experience along with the information contained in the product (Li et al., 2019; Shukla et al., 2022). Especially for the G&G skincare and makeup store, where the buyer can try cosmetics samples product provided by the store before making a purchase.

In addition, the repercussions of providing memorable experiences to reinforce consumer-brand relationships and improve performance results have been highlighted in the research on consumer-brand experience (Huang, 2017; Hwang et al., 2021). On the other hand, retail brands have become a focus of branding and retail theory due to the success of new retail concepts that change consumer behavior. However, consumer pattern is notoriously difficult to trace in terms of influences, motivation, and lifestyle (Greenwood-Gaynor Lea, 2013; Rodrigues & Brandão, 2021). This statement was also made in Naszariah's (2021) research, which revealed that consumer objectives might shift because of unexpected events. Several retailers, particularly in this current era, are experiencing a shift to online shopping, which has an impact on reshaping consumer behavior and business models worldwide (Baek et al., 2020). Safeer (2021) stated that due to the high level of connectivity with the digital environment, consumer behavior and market dynamics had been completely altered. In contrast, when it comes to planned purchases, consumers will first select a product category and basis before deciding on a brand and type in the store. Fully planned purchases, on the other hand, imply that consumers decide which products and brands to buy before entering the store. It should be noted that the level of awareness and the strength of the brand image can influence these three types of purchasing behavior (Lee et al., 2019). According to Naszariah et al. (2021), the desire to purchase a specific product or service within a specific time frame is referred to as the intention to buy.

According to Fetscherin (2021)'s research, the structure of the brand relationship wheel model, there is a theoretical concept in which brand relationships are the basis and categorized as affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses. The researchers also reveal that the responses given by consumers are the expression of positive or negative opinions expressed about brands; in other words, it happens when consumers communicate and make decisions to do a transaction. According to Tsai (2015)'s research on tablet PC users, brand experience is one of the marketing strategies companies can use to determine consumer brand strategies. Schmitt (2008) argues that a strong brand is a brand that gains important space in consumers' minds. However, building a strong brand and position among consumers is still insufficient. Therefore, the retail needs to add value to the brand and product design, such as quality, functionality, and design to customers to differentiate the overall brand experience from competitors. This statement has also been said by Sanny (2020), that market competition has become much more intense in recent years; to differentiate similar products, branding is an important competitiveness factor for a business to shape consumers' perspectives and make the products more appealing. Firms that can successfully identify their business' characteristics and set consumers' minds have an exclusive position in consumers' minds. In addition, brand interaction and involvement with consumers are needed to maintain a retail position amidst the many competitors and considerations for purchasing. According to Ainsworth & Foster (2017), customers feel more at ease in a store where employees are positive and welcoming. Managers have alluded to these states of mind, claiming that one of their objectives is to make customers feel at home in their establishment. It shows that in addition to the experience that consumers get when shopping, they also need interaction (Khan et al., 2021; Ueasangkomsate & Santiteerakul, 2016; Zha et al., 2022). However, in

research on Starbucks Cafe conducted by Han (2019), instead of having a positive impact, the researcher found that brand experience did not have a significant influence on the intention to repurchase the product.

Therefore, researchers use the theory of planned behavior to fill the research gap between brand experience and buying intention. In this theory, Ajzen (1991) states that intention is the initial formation of a person's behavior, and the theory can describe any behavior that requires planning. In addition, attitudes toward behavior are cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies to respond to things that are liked or disliked in an object, institution, person or event (Ajzen, 1991). Based on this theory, an individual's attitude towards a behavior is obtained from beliefs about the consequences caused by that behavior, which are called behavioral beliefs. Views on behavior are believed to directly impact the will to behave. Attitude toward a behavior is considered the first variable that influences behavioral intention. Furthermore, "behavioral intention" refers to an individual's conscious plans or the likelihood of engaging in a particular behavior (Zhao et al., 2018). On the other hand, it is stated that humans have a positive or negative response when responding to something that indicates an interaction. It is even more for retailers because the influence of emotional attachment to post-consumption behavior is very important (Bigne et al., 2020). Therefore, brand engagement is needed to mediate between brand experience and buying intention. The indicators used for brand engagement are taken from Hollebeek's (2014) research by modifying cognitive, affection, and activation.

Furthermore, based on the research gap from previous studies and modification research, this study aims to fill it with the impact of the brand experience by mediating the role of brand engagement on intention to buy by asking several research questions, namely: 1) Is there a positive influence between brand experience and intention to buy? 2) Does brand experience have a positive influence on brand engagement? 3) Does brand engagement positively influence the intention to buy? 4) Does brand experience positively influence intention to buy by using brand engagement as a mediator? As a result, this paper expands on the impact of brand experience on purchase intent using brand engagement as a mediator. This research aims to provide new insights and innovations to develop business strategies, especially in the marketing aspect where retail brands in Indonesia are developing. In addition, this research is expected to help and provide new insights regarding the relationship between the three constructs.

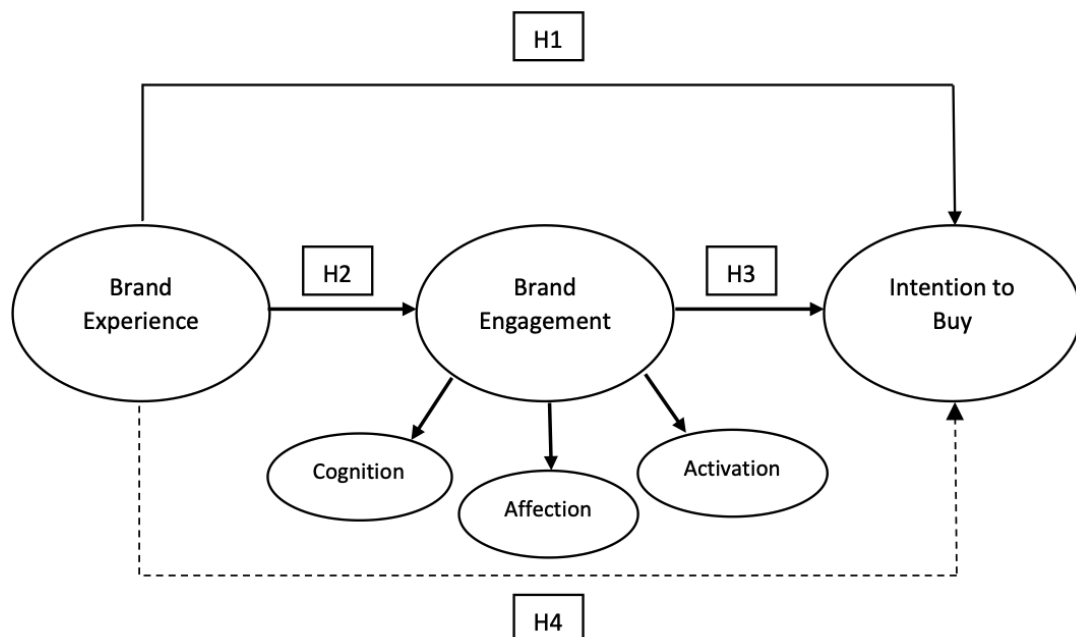


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

2. Method

Data and sample collection

This study uses a questionnaire via Google form to collect data from students in Salatiga, Central Java. The target respondents were students who had made a one-time purchase at the G&G makeup skincare store or had experience shopping for products. In addition, from research conducted by Brakus (2009), researchers used the question at the beginning, namely "Have you shopped at G&G makeup skincare store at least once?" to find out that the respondent already has a shopping experience there. In

addition, researchers use quantitative methods to determine the existence of a significant relationship between variables.

Furthermore, a survey in the form of a Google form was distributed to 150 female students. A total of 100 people completed the questionnaire, with 59 (59%) being between 18 and 21. It was also discovered that respondents spend most of their annual budget, IDR 181,000 to IDR 220,000 (35%), on products sold by G&G makeup skincare stores. In contrast, most respondents (33%) buy products 3 to 4 times per year. According to Sugiyono (2013), 100 respondents were considered representative because they had passed the minimum number of samples to be processed, which is 30. The profiles of the sample respondents are listed in Table 1 below.

Items for measurement

This study uses three types of variables: the dependent variable in this study is the intention to buy (IB), the independent variable is the brand experience (BE), and brand engagement is the intervening variable. Then, brand engagement (BEGA) itself is divided into three indicators there is activation (BEGA), cognition (BEGC), and the last is affection (BEGAF). This data employs a Likert scale, which assesses a person's or group's attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of social phenomena by measuring their agreement with questions posed in a questionnaire. The response of a person or group of people about social phenomena by measuring their agreement with the questions that will be asked through a questionnaire. Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5) are the responses.

Meanwhile, the research instrument used to measure respondents' answers is the G-Form questionnaire. In addition, the researcher uses geographic groupings such as gender, age grouping (18-21, 22-24, and more than 25), occupational category, annual expenditure range for skincare products, and the annual purchase frequency of skincare products (Lee et al., 2019). The method used is judgmental sampling, where the correspondents who fill out the questionnaire are certain people (Uma & Bougie, 2016). In order to determine the direct and indirect relationship between brand experience and intention to buy through mediation, specifically brand engagement at the G&G makeup skincare store in Salatiga. SmartPLS software was used to test the relationship and evaluate the entire calculation model using the PLS-SEM method(Hair et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2018).

Table 1. Profiles of Respondents

Characteristics		Number	%
Age grouping	18-21 years old	59	59
	22-25 years old	30	30
	More than 25 years old	12	12
Annual purchase skincare product in a year	1-2 times per year	21	21
	3-4 times per year	33	33
	5-6 times per year	27	27
	More than 6 times a year	19	19
Annual expenditure range to buy skincare	IDR 140.000- IDR 180.000	29	29
	IDR 181.000- IDR 220.000	35	35
	IDR 221.000- IDR 280.000	22	22
	Above IDR 280.000	14	14

3. Result and Discussion

Measurement Model

The test results of the examiner's hypothesis show that convergent and discriminant validity have significant results, namely more than 0.7 for validity and more than 0.8 for reliability. AVE is the average extent variance, which shows more than 0.5 for all variables. The loading factors for all constructs, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), configuration completion, and rho A are shown in table 2 below.

Hypothesis examining

The testers' hypothesis testing results show that brand experience has a positive influence on brand engagement, where the results show that brand experience has a significant effect of ($\beta = 0.227$; p-value 0.05) on brand engagement. In brand engagement, there are also three second-order variables where each has a significant impact where the activation has a higher influence, namely ($\beta = 0.575$; p-value < 0.05) compared to other second orders such as cognition and affection. Furthermore, brand engagement positively influences purchase intent, so H3 is supported. In addition, as a mediating variable, brand engagement can be a positive link between brand experience and intention to buy, with a significant value ($\beta = 0.555$; p-value < 0.05), where H4 is supported. Testing the hypothesis is presented in section Table 4 and Figure 2 below.

Table 2. Convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Loading of Factors	AVE	Reliability of Composites	Rho_A
Brand Experience (Brakus et al., 2009); (Dwivedi et al., 2018) with adjustments	BE 1: This retail brand has made an indelible impression on my visual sense	0,693	0,824	0,877	0,827
	BE 2: This retail brand attractiveness appeals to my senses	0,743			
	BE 3: This retail brand appeals to me on a sensory level.	0,836			
	BE 4: When I come across this retail brand, I do a lot of thinking.	0,767			
	BE 5: The retail beauty brand produces bodily sensations.	0,788			
Brand Engagement Activation (BEGA) (Hollebeek et al., 2014) with modification and adjustment	BEGA 1: When compared to any other retail beauty brand, I spend the most time interacting with this one.	0,734	0,791	0,877	0,820
	BEGA 2: Whenever I go online on social media, I usually search for this retail brand	0,827			
	BEGA 3: I usually interact with this retail brand, when I log in to social media	0,724			
Brand Engagement Cognition (BEGC)	BEGC 1: When I see beauty brand activities, it makes me think about this retail brand	0,860			
	BEGC 2: When I am engaging with the beauty brand on retail shop, I think a lot about this brand	0,828			
	BEGC 3: When I am interacting with this retail brand, I want to learn more about this retail	0,823			
Brand Engagement Affection (BEGAF)	BEGAF 1: When I interact with this retail brand, I feel very positive	0,810			
	BEGAF 2: When I interact with this retail brand, I feel good	0,867			
	BEGAF 3: Associate with this retail brand makes me proud.	0,840			
Intention to Buy (IB)	IB 1: I'm consider to purchasing the product in GnG's retail shop	0,707	0,806	0,873	0,830

Schiffman, L., & Kanuk, L. (2014).	IB 2: I'm eager to be kept up to date on the latest product in GnG's retail shop	0,783
and (Camilleri & Falzon, 2021)	IB 3: I'm interested in the products being offered by GnG's retail shop	0,881
with modification	IB 4: I'm looking for information so that I can stay current in GnG's retail shop	0,802

* Due to the low factor loadings, the final design was scrapped (below 0.70)

The results of the current study determined that brand experience has a significant influence on purchase intention. Especially when brand engagement is used as a mediator between the two constructs. The research results stated that brand engagement activation is very important for the G&G skincare makeup store. The relationship between consumers and brands is very important to compete with competitors. The activation indicators state that when consumers go online to find the product they want, they usually look for retail accounts on social media. Osei-Frimpong (2019) and Ariadi *et al.* (2021), that consumer involvement with brands is one of the things that influence consumers in making decisions.

Table 3. Validity in discrimination

	BE	BEGA	IB
BE			
BEGA	0,228		
IB	0,616	0,413	

Table 4. Testing hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standard Coefficients	Test Result
H1	Brand Engagement → Intention to Buy	0,288 **	Significant
H2	Brand Experience → Brand Engagement	0,228 ***	Significant
H3	Brand Experience → Intention to Buy	0,550 *	Significant
H4	Brand Experience → Brand Engagement → Intention to Buy	0,066 ***	Significant

Note: Significant at *1%, **5% and ***10% levels

Besides, through this test that the researchers have already done, it is shown that the consumer's experience can influence the customer's interaction or response. Different from the research conducted by the study conducted by Farhat (2021) and Ariadi (2022), instead of having a positive impact, the researchers found that brand experience does not have a significant effect on brand engagement.

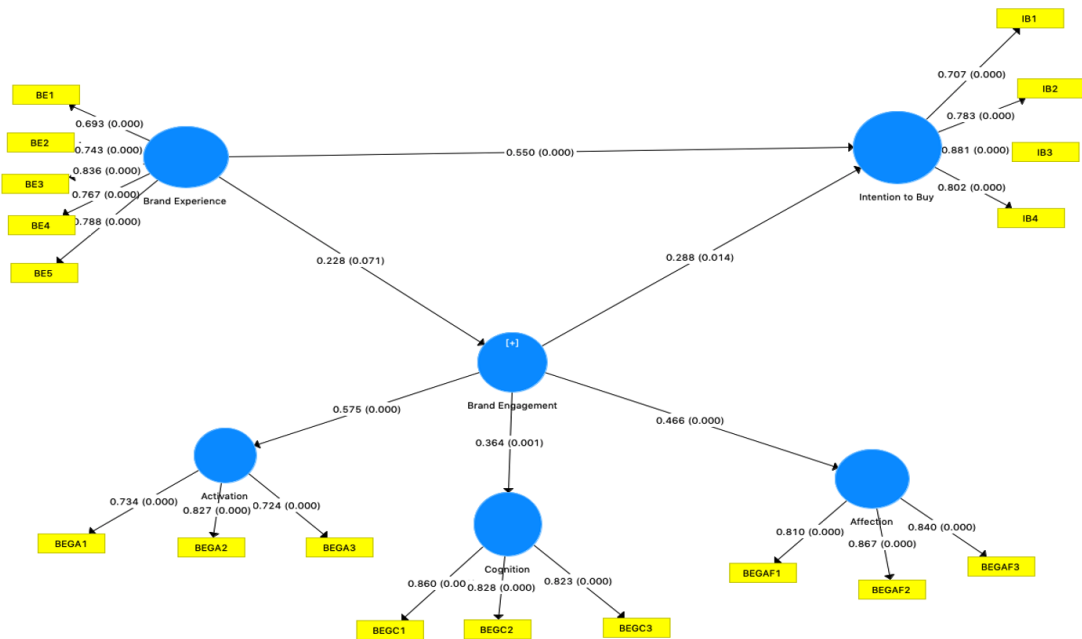


Figure 2. Result Path Analysis

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

The study found an important role of brand engagement in the brand experience variable and buying. The results that the researcher has carried out show that activation in brand engagement has an important role for G&G makeup skincare stores that can make them focus more on increasing interaction with customers both directly or through social media. In addition, through this research, the researcher hoped that the G&G makeup skincare store would be able to find tactics to have an advantage in order to maintain and increase engagement over its competitors. Furthermore, the research results on shopping experience also influence consumers to buy skincare products from G&G makeup skincare stores.

However, the researcher also found limitations in the study where this could be used as research material for future researchers. In this study, only female gender was examined, and it was only limited to residents in Salatiga ; this could also be an opportunity for future researchers to add characteristics such as academic levels and monthly income earned by consumers, add male gender, or ethnicity. Then, future researchers can also add variables such as trust, social media marketing or other variables to identify retail brands needed in this globalization era and other skincare objects in Salatiga or a city in Central Java

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