The Role of Value congruity and Consumer Brand Identification toward Development of Brand Commitment and Positive Word of Mouth

Yohana Larasati and Arga Hananto
Department of Management, Universitas Indonesia

Introduction

Intense business competition require companies must work harder to get and retain customers. Amidst this intensifying competition, brand can serve as potent weapon for marketers. Brand drives almost two-thirds of most customer purchases and it is regarded as true business asset, not simply a marketing communications icon (Davis & Halligan 2002).

Scholars have proposed that there are relationship qualities between consumers and brand (Breivik & Thorbjornsen 2008). At the heart of customer-brand relationship is customer commitment. Research into customer commitment suggest that consumer-brand identification might be one factor that influence it (Tuskej et al 2011).

Commitment toward a brand, is suggested to bring many benefits such as positive WOM which has been recognized as alternative means to promote brands. (Harrison-Walker 2001). Furthermore, research indicates that WOM may play important role in shaping consumer attitude and behaviors (Harrison-Walker 2001). Scholars have also considered WOM as a dominant force in the marketplace, for instance for being primary driver in diffusion of new innovation (Brown et al 2005).

This paper intends to replicate study by Tuskej et al (2011) that investigated the relationship between value congruity, consumer’s identification, brand commitment and positive word of mouth communication. This study attempted to apply model proposed by Tuskej et al (2011) while addressing some future research directions suggested in their paper. For instance,
Tuskej et al (2011) suggest researchers to focus on a specific brand instead of focusing on respondent’s favorite brand (Tuskej et al 2011, p. 6). In addition, they suggest that past purchase behavior is an important factor to consider when studying strength of consumer identification with a brand. Therefore, this study would replicate Tuskej et al’s (2011) research model as well as some of their future research suggestions. Their model would be used to examine Indonesian consumer’s perception toward Apple product.

Apple was selected as focal brand because it is a popular brand that has enjoyed significant sales and positive brand image. According to Laurent & Kapferer (1985), involvement with a product has five facets: its perceived importance, perceived risk, symbolic/sign value, and lastly, its hedonic value. For some people, Apple products might represent some, if not all of these facets. Apple has become a phenomenon, whereby communities of Apple products (e.g. iPad, iPod, or Mac Computers) can be found easily, both online or offline. In fact, Apple is amongst other brands that experts refer to as “cult brand” (Atkin, in “Interview Douglas Atkin” 2004; Koay & Eriksson, 2006). This might suggest that Apple products might invoke high involvement.

Apple has been cited as one of few brands that has succeeded in building and maintaining emotional ties with its customer.

This paper is consist of four sections. The first section begins by a literature review of variables in a model proposed by Tuskej et al (2011) followed by research hypothesis. The second section will explain about research method (data collection, sampling). The third section will describe the study result and discussion. Finally the fourth section will conclude the paper with summary and research limitations.
Literature Review and Hypotheses

a. Consumer’s identification with a brand

Various scholarly works on brand identification are based on social identification theory, which is commonly used in organizational studies (Tuskej, et al. 2011; Kuenzel & Halliday 2008). Social identification and categorization theory suggest that an individual would identify with a social category when the social category and its associated social identity enhances individual self esteem, and in order to preserve the attractiveness of the social identity, the individual would engage in various behaviors that relates positively to that category (He and Li 2010).

In organizational context, Dutton et al (1994) defines social identification as the degree to which a member defines himself or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization. Using the concept in marketing context, this process occurs when customers identify and associate themselves with brands that reflect and reinforce their self identities (Kuenzel & Halliday 2008).

Tuskej, et.al (2011) defines consumers’ identification with a brand as “Perception of sameness between the brand and the consumer”. Meanwhile, Lam et al (2010) define consumer-brand identification as a customer’s psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness (i.e. psychological oneness that stems from actual or symbolic membership) with a brand. Kim, et al. (2001) suggest that consumer brand identification reflects the degree to which brand expresses and enhances consumers’ identity.

There are two types of identification, namely personal identification and social identification (Del Rio et al 2001). Social identification involves a brand’s function as communication instrument that allows a consumer to blend in or separate himself/herself from groups of
individuals that make up his/her closest social environment (Del Rio et al. 2001). On the other hand, personal identification function involves degree to which a consumer identifies with a brand and develop feelings of affinity toward it. Carlson et al. (2008) further suggest that personal identification depends on degree of overlap between individual self schema and schema he/she perceives about the brand. Self schema or self concept is also made of values held by an individual, this implies that brand identification is influenced by degree of overlap between an individual’s set of values and the brand’s set of values (value congruity).

Work by Kuenzel & Halliday (2008) in the context of car ownership suggest that prestige, satisfaction and communication also influence brand identification. A brand perceived as more prestigious, and provide satisfaction, if backed up by strong external communication can yield higher brand identification.

Therefore it appears that strength of brand identification is affected by consumers’ internal values as well as the brand’s image and performance itself. In this study, however the authors follow Tuskej et al.’s (2011) approach that only looks at value congruity as antecedent of brand identification.

**H1: Value congruity positively influences consumers’ identification with a brand**

* b. Value congruity

Del Rio, et al (2001) suggest that personal identification function is one of several functions performed by brand, and these functions would contribute toward the brand’s marketing performance.
According to Del Rio et al (2001), personal identification function is related to degree to which consumer identify themselves with a brand and develop feelings of empathy and similarity with the brand. Based on cognitive identification process described in Bergami and Bagozzi (2000), Carlson, et al (2008) suggest that identification process involve self categorization process whereby consumers categorize themselves and others into groups based on their own self schema. In this process, degree of overlap between individual’s self schema and the schema he/she holds for another target object (in this context is the focal brand) would determine whether identification occurs.

This process is in line with self congruity theory (Johar & Sirgy 1991) which defines value congruity as consumers’ mental comparison in respect to the similarity or dissimilarity of an entity’s values and consumers’ own set of values. Meanwhile, by drawing from past literatures, Aguirre-Rodriguez, et al (2011) suggest that self congruity concept stems from match between consumer self concept and a brand personality facet (either brand personification or stereotypical brand users).

In consumer behavior research, impact of self congruity on decision making has been studied in more than 100 scholarly articles (Aguirre-Rodriguez, et al 2011). According to Aguirre-Rodriguez, et al (2011) self-congruity effect has been proposed to largely determine the success of value expressive brands, since congruity between their brand personalities and targeted consumers’ self-concepts produces favorable consumer responses such as brand attitudes and purchase intentions. This is in line with Del Rio, et al’s (2001) suggestion that the greater the consistency (or congruity) between the brand’s image and the consumer’s self image, the higher the consumer’s evaluation of the brand and eventually, the higher his/her willingness to buy the brand.
To measure self congruity, some researchers suggest that perceived brand values and consumer values can be used to measure self congruity (Tuskej et al 2011). Since there are two types of values, namely terminal and instrumental values, which type of values to use in measuring value congruity needs to be considered. Value instrumentality is one approach of value measurement that emphasize on pattern of means-end chain between values and behavior (Munson & McQuarrie 1988). In this sense, value is regarded as desired end goals or end of consumption process, while products and/or product attributes are regarded as ways to reach the goals or values. Rokeach (1973 in Allen, Ng & Wilson 2002) defined instrumental values as beliefs about desired modes of action. In other words, instrumental values is regarded as beliefs related to ways to achieve an end goal. In addition, associating instrumental values to a product would be easier since instrumental values is more specific and concrete compared to terminal values which is very general, abstract and having broad meaning.

c. Customers’ Commitment to a Brand

Customer commitment is a crucial construct in development and maintenance of marketing relationships because it is a key psychological force that links the consumer to the selling organization (Fullerton 2005). Customer commitment refers to the degree to which a brand is firmly entrenched as the only acceptable choice in a product class (Warrington & Shim 2000). Customer commitment is proposed to be of different concept from brand loyalty. According to Assael (1998, in Warrington & Shim 2000) brand loyalty is viewed from behavioral perspective, while brand commitment is viewed from attitudinal perspective. According to Warrington and Shim (2000), brand commitment is considered as better indicator of customer satisfaction with brand.
Customer commitment concept was developed from Allen and Meyer’s organizational commitment concept, which consists of affective, continuance and normative commitment dimension (Ellis 2000). Affective dimension refers to a binding link between products and customers bound by emotional attachment, which may be caused by positive emotional experience (Ellis 2000). On the other hand, Continuance dimension is a form of attachment resulted from scarcity of alternatives, side bets and switching costs (Fullerton 2005). Lastly, Normative dimension refers to attachment between customer and a brand motivated by significant social forces in the customers’ life such as friends, family members, work associates, etc that may influence the customer’s choice process. This normative component is also called social compliance commitment. Ellis (2000) suggest that affective and normative component are results of attitudinal influences on consumer behavior and imply high involvement process, while continuance commitment does not, because continuance commitment involves commitment due to inconvenience or high switching costs.

Normative commitment may be related to social identification function proposed by Del Rio, et al (2001). Social identification function deals with the brand’s ability to act as a communication instrument that allows the consumer to demonstrate his/her desire to be associated or dissociated from the groups that make up his/her closest social environment (Del Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias 2001). Thus, a consumer would tend to be committed to purchase a brand that is highly regarded by a group he/she is currently in or wants to be in.

In this study brand commitment would be derived using Tuskej, et al’s (2011) approach, which consist of two dimensions: affective brand commitment and normative commitment/social compliance brand commitment.
Past research by Kuenzel & Halliday (2008) found that brand identification results in positive word of mouth and intention to repurchase a brand. He & Li (2010) reported that brand identification serves as mediating role in predicting customer satisfaction and customer brand loyalty. According to Bhattacharya & Sen (2003), research on organizational identification suggest that identification makes people feel attached to an organization, thus motivate people to commit to achievement of its goals, expend more voluntary effort on its behalf and interact positively and cooperatively with organizational members.

\textit{H2a: Customers’ identification with brand has a positive influence on affective brand commitment and is a mediating variable between value congruity and affective brand commitment}

\textit{H2b: Customers’ identification with brand has a positive influence on social compliance brand commitment and is a mediating variable between value congruity and affective brand commitment}

Value congruity influence brand identification as well as directly influence customer commitment. The effect of self-image congruity on attitudes, preferences, and purchase intentions also has been confirmed empirically in various studies involving products/branded goods and services (Yim, et al 2007). Drawing from research on the field of organization studies, Yim, et al (2007) suggest that a person’s self image congruity with his or her image of organization affects his or her preference for and satisfaction and commitment toward that organization. Yim, Chan & Hung (2007) also found that self image congruity has the most significant impact on both customer satisfaction and commitment judgments. Sirgy, et.al (2008) found that self congruity with a sponsorship event has positive influence on brand loyalty.
$H3a$: Value congruity positively influence consumers’ affective brand commitment

$H3b$: Value congruity positively influence consumers’ social compliance brand commitment

d. Positive Word of Mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) represents opportunity to achieve competitive advantage because it has been proposed to provide highly credible means of persuasion, for instance in converting unfavorable or neutral predispositions into positive attitudes (Mazzarol et al 2007). Past research has found that WOM is influenced by identification and commitment.

According to Kuenzel & Halliday (2008), past studies indicate that identification may have favourable impact on brand loyalty and word of mouth. Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) assert that consumers become champions of the companies with whom they identify. The greater the degree of overlap between a person and an organization, the more likely that individuals would say positive things about the organization (Brown, et.al 2005). Brown, et.al (2005) also found that identification, satisfaction and commitment are among antecedents of WOM. Algesheimer et al (2005) reported that customers who identifies with a brand and the brand’s community tend to be supportive and make recommendations about the brand.

**H4: Consumers’ identification positively influence positive WOM**

Commitment also influence word of mouth communication. A study by Harrison-Walker (2001) in service industry found that affective commitment would positively relate to WOM activity and WOM praise. Harrison Walker (2001) contends that those who stays with a service provider because he/she likes the provider would tend to spread positive words about it, while those who only stays with a provider just to avoid costs or difficulty to make the changes tend to be less engaged in WOM activity.
Brown, et al (2005) suggest that consumer identification influence positive word of mouth intentions through consumers’ commitment. Brown et al’s (2005) argument incorporates findings from previous studies that suggest identification with an organization is very likely to enhance support and commitment to that organization. Brown et al (2005) also cited Morgan and Hunt (1994) who reported that retailer perceptions of shared values with their supplier positively influence relationship commitment toward the supplier.

Social compliance brand commitment may motivate consumers to participate in WOM for social enhancement reasons (Ellis 2000). Assael (1992, quoted by Ellis 2000) argues that consumers would engage in WOM to gain social reward (e.g. friendship, social acceptance). They do so by talking up a brand in order to remind their social groups that they are similar to their group because they buy what the group buy. In other words consumers with high social compliance brand commitment tend to provide positive WOM to express their identity to the group (i.e. give positive WOM about Apple product to show that they are part of Apple owners).

**H5a:** Consumers' affective brand commitment has a positive influence on positive WOM and is a mediating variable between consumers' identification and positive WOM

**H5b:** Consumers' social compliance brand commitment has a positive influence on positive WOM and is a mediating variable between consumers' identification and positive WOM

**Research Method and Measurement**

a. Data collection and sample

Data were gathered using self administered questionnaire distributed by the first author through both off-line (delivered face to face by the first author) and on-line distribution (google spreadsheet link sent through email, facebook, twitter, messenger and mailing list) between November-December 2012.
Sampling procedure used was convenience sampling technique. Given lack of sampling frame and resource, this non probability sampling technique allows researcher to select respondents based on fulfilment of selection criteria as well as ease of contact/willingness to participate in study (Malhotra 2010). Criteria used to recruit respondent is Indonesian Apple consumer who have purchased and used at least one of a set of Apple electronic product (iMac, Macbook, iPad, and iPhone). The product variants selected were limited to high-priced Apple products lines so that only those who might exhibit high involvement with the products. High involvement with product line is proposed to result in more extensive decision making whereby behavior would be determined by attitudes (Ellis 2000). Tuskej, et.al (2011) suggest that consumer-brand identification process might not occur if consumers do not exhibit involvement or product knowledge of certain brand.

Selection of Apple as focal brand in this study is based on assumption that Apple is a product whose consumers exhibit involvement with it. According to O’Cass (2000), involvement is defined as degree to which consumer regards a product to be central part of their life, i.e, a meaningful, important and engaging object for the consumer. Laurent & Kapferer (1985) reviewed involvement literatures and report that involvement have five facets, namely perceived importance, perceived risk, symbolic or sign value and hedonic value. The authors argue that aforementioned Apple product variants seems to reflect some of these facets. To check whether respondents perceive high involvement, the authors also include involvement measurement using some of O’Cass’ (2000) measurement items in research questionnaire.

Data collection activity resulted in a sample of 150 usable responses to be used in data analysis using Structural Equations Modelling . Having a sample of 150 more than fulfills minimum sample requirement for Structural Equations Modelling (SEM) proposed by Anderson & Gerbing (1988 cited in Holbert 2002). In addition, having sample of 150 respondents exceeds minimum sample size for SEM, which is five times number of indicators
ting, there are 15 indicators used, thus minimum required sample size is 75 respondents.

b. Measures

Measures in this study was based on measurement items from Tuskej et al (2011) which was adapted to Bahasa Indonesia. The following Table describe sources of measurement used by Tuskej, et al (2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand identification</td>
<td>Adapted from organization identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Podnar 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Brand Commitment</td>
<td>Ellis (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Compliance Brand Commitment</td>
<td>Ellis (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Congruity</td>
<td>Rokeach Value Survey Items (Rokeach 1973)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tuskej, et.al, 2011

Besides language adaptation, some differences between measures used in Tuskej, et.al (2011) lies in the scale used. This study measures all indicators using 6-point Likert scale.

To measure value congruity, at first respondents were asked to choose three out of eighteen values they consider important, then they were asked to respond to questions regarding their perception whether these three values they perceive as important were also evident in Apple brand.

Results

Tuskej, et al (2011) implied that consumer brand identification more likely to occur under condition of high involvement with the product, thus after pretest the authors started data analysis by examining respondents’ response to scale used to measure involvement. Involvement was measured using some items from O’Cass (2000) which measures involvement through four dimensions (product involvement, purchase decision involvement,
consumption involvement and advertising involvement) using 6-point Likert scale. Data analysis resulted in mean product involvement of 4.34, purchase decision of involvement of 4.25, consumption involvement of 4.14, and advertising involvement of 4.3. These figures indicates that respondents exhibit relatively high involvement toward Apple product.

Following approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988, in Wijanto 2008), a two step structural equations modelling was performed. Analysis began by specifying measurement model and perform Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Upon satisfactory fulfillment of validity, reliability and model goodness of fit, structural model analysis was conducted to assess overall goodness of fit and to test hypotheses.

a. Measurement model

Confirmatory Factor Analysis conducted using Lisrel 8.54 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 2003) resulted in all indicators load significantly onto each respective constructs ($p<0.001$). Only one indicator (SBC3) have standardized loading factor (SLF) of 0.4. The authors decided to keep it, since Chin (1998 in Wijanto 2008) proposed that minimum SLF of 0.4 can still be maintained.

Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all constructs are summarized in Table 2. CR and VE calculated from CFA results indicated all constructs satisfied requirement proposed in Hair et.al. (2006) that CR must be at least 0.7 and AVE must be at least 0.5. According to Hair et.al. (2006), fulfillment of Factor Loadings, CR and AVE requirements indicates evidence of convergent validity.

Examination of measurement model goodness of fit indicates fairly good fit between measurement model and data ($\chi^2 = 131.95$ ; $df=80$ ; RMSEA = 0.066; CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.89).
### Table 2. Reliabilities and Average Variance Extracted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>SLF*</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Brand Identification</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI 1</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI 2</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI 3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Brand Commitment</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC1</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC2</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC3</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Compliance Brand Commitment</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBC1</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBC2</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBC3</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM1</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM2</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Congruity</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVS1</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVS2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVS3</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: data analysis result

*Standardized Loading Factor, all significant at p<0.001*

**b. Structural Model**

Structural model depicts relationship between constructs hypothesized in the model. Analysis of goodness of fit measures indicate fairly good fit between structural model and data ($\chi^2 = 142.47$; df=82; RMSEA = 0.070; CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.89). Figure 1 below depicts structural model along with results from hypothesis testing.
Figure 1. Structural Model

Source: Model from Tuskej et al. (2011), values in figures from data analysis results.

** Value indicates Standardized Factor Loading, significant at p<0.001 level
* Value indicates Standardized Factor Loading, significant at p<0.005 level

Hypothesis testing result found support for hypothesis 1: “value congruity positively influences consumers' identification with a brand” (t=5.56; p<0.001). Value congruity is also found to positively influence affective brand commitment (hypothesis 3a, t=3.25, p<0.001). Nevertheless, value congruity not found to be directly influencing social compliance brand commitment (hypothesis 3b; t=0.80; p>0.10).

Hypothesis 2a is partially supported. This study found that consumers’ identification positively affects affective brand commitment (t =2.78; p<0.001), but only partially mediates the relationship between value congruity and affective brand commitment. This can be seen by evaluating standardized parameter estimates on Table 3 that indicates decreasing (but still significant) path coefficient between Value congruity (VC) and Affective Brand Commitment (ABC) in mediated model as compared to non mediated model. According to Hair et al. (2006), had there been full mediation, path between VC and ABC would have been non significant after Consumers’ identification (CI) is added into the model.
Same analysis can be applied to examine hypothesis 2b. The authors found that consumers’ identification positively affects social compliance brand commitment/SCBC ($t=4.14; p<0.001$) and fully mediates the relationship between value congruity and social compliance brand commitment. Full mediation is indicated by non-significant path coefficient from value congruity to SCBC in the mediated model, while in non mediated model, the same path is found to be significant (see Table 3). Thus hypothesis 2b is fully supported.

In regard to variables that influence positive WOM (PWOM), data analysis results suggest that there is no evidence that positive WOM is positively influenced by consumers’ identification directly (hypothesis 4; $t=-1.55, p>0.05$). Nevertheless, this research suggest that consumers’ identification influence PWOM through affective brand commitment and social compliance brand commitment (see Figure 1 and Table 3). Thus, hypotheses 5a and 5b is fully supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Comparison between Mediated Model and Non Mediated Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model Fit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chi square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Degrees of Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Probability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- RMSEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- CFI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardized Parameter Estimates</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- VC$\rightarrow$ ABC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- VC$\rightarrow$ CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- VC$\rightarrow$ SCBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- CI$\rightarrow$ ABC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- CI$\rightarrow$ SCBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- CI$\rightarrow$ PWOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ABC$\rightarrow$ PWOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- SCBC$\rightarrow$ PWOM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*t is significant at 0.01 level
Discussion

This study supports conclusion from original study by Tuskej et al (2011) that consumers’ identification is important as basic psychological force that enables the formation of committed and meaningful relationships with brands” (Tuskej, et al 2011, p. 4).

In this study, value congruity was found to positively affect consumers’ identification and affective brand commitment. Value congruity also found to influence social compliance brand commitment and positive WOM indirectly. This means that the higher the value congruence between a product and its consumers, the higher the chance for the product to receive favorable outcomes in terms of commitment and positive word of mouth. This supports proposition made by Aguirre-Rodriguez, et al (2011) that congruity between brand personalities and targeted consumers’ self concepts would produce favorable consumer responses.

Work by Kuenzel & Halliday (2008) suggest that the extent to which a brand can yield high consumer identification might be related to the product type represented by the brand. They suggest that a product regarded as more prestigious and provide satisfaction would yield higher brand identification. This study suggest that in addition to prestigious image, value congruity also play a role in affecting identification. In future study, perhaps researchers can apply Tuskej, et.al’s model using brand with different prestige image (prestigious and less prestigious) to see whether the model holds trus for brands with no prestigious image or less prestigious image.

Strength of impact of consumer identification to two different types of commitment is also found to be different. Path from consumer identification to social compliance brand commitment exhibit higher factor loading (0.63) than the path to affective brand commitment (0.39). This indicates that in this study, consumer identification has more impact on social
compliance brand commitment than on affective brand commitment. Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) contend that identification makes people feel attached, thus motivates them to commit. In this study (which studied Apple brand), consumer identification seems to influence normative (or social compliance) brand commitment more than it influence affective brand commitment. This probably mean that attachment and commitment induced by identification may be more prevalent in consumption of brands motivated by normative influences than on consumption of brands motivated by affection. In other words, brands built around “cult” or community with distinct identity may be more successful than brands that only aim to build consumer’s personal affection with the brand.

Contrary to findings in Tuskej, Golob & Podnar’s study (2011), this study found support for Brown et.al’s (2005) finding that consumer commitment mediates impact of consumer identification on positive WOM. This study’s findings also substantiate Harrison -Walker’s (2001) proposition that consumers with high affective commitment would tend to engage in positive WOM. Furthermore, this study also support Ellis’ (2000) argument that social compliance brand commitment may motivate consumers to participate in WOM for social enhancement reasons.

**Managerial Implications**

Based on the results discussed above, there are several managerial implications. The first one involves increasing brand identification, the second involves creating and maintaining consumer commitment.

Given the significance of consumer brand identification found in this study as well as substantiated in previous studies, marketers need to focus on how to increase identification. Value congruity has been found to affect identification. Thus one way a marketer can do to increase identification is by carefully selecting unique and positive values to be built into a
brand and communicated to its target market. Nevertheless, before a brand can do such thing, it needs to fulfill some basic requirements. According to Laverie et.al (2011) competence, reputation and quality as three variables that are needed to develop brand identification. Thus it might be interesting to study how brand identification would vary among brands with differing levels of perceived reputation, competence and quality.

Using social media to communicate with consumers and build brand community is also another way to increase brand identification. A study by Cone Communications in US (2008) suggest that 56% Americans who use social media feel stronger connection with companies and their brands when they can interact with them through social media. A study by Perkins & Forehand (2012) found that an individual would be likely to identify with brands displayed alongside their personal information on a Facebook page, and that this relationship would be stronger for individuals with strong self esteem.

Given the promising impact of social media revealed in academic research, marketers should be more confident to increase their social media presence. In Indonesia, social media is increasingly popular. Nielsen reports that on average Indonesians over 15 year-old spent 14 hours on the Internet, and 90 percent of its respondent had active Facebook profile (Nielsen Digital Media Habit Report, 2011) . Furthermore Nielsen reports that only 20 percent digital consumers who have connected with /interacted with brands or companies through social network, but a higher number of digital consumers (30%) is reported to visit online forums regularly. This data suggest that online forums and social media may be potential medium to influence consumer attitudes. The same report also suggest that Indonesians (and the rest of South East Asian digital consumers) are actively posting their own opinions about products and brands as well as reading other people’s comment as part of decision making process.
Since commitment is important to affect positive WOM, then it is important that marketers increase consumer commitment. This study revealed two ways that marketers can use to increase consumer’s commitment, i.e. through increasing consumer’s affection toward brand and increasing consumers’ need for approval or motivation to comply with normative beliefs in product consumption.

Increasing affective brand commitment may be achieved by increasing product self-relevance. This study has found evidence that value congruity has significant impact on affective brand commitment. This is also supported by Malar, et.al (2011) who found that self-congruence generated higher level of emotional brand attachment, especially when a consumer is involved with the product and the brand. This suggest that for high involvement products, marketers can communicate their brands by projecting brand images consistent with their target market’s self image (either actual or ideal self image). Products should make their consumers feel good or better about themselves (Malar, et.al. 2011). This can be achieved through creating unique, valuable product features and design, quality and good brand image.

Increasing social compliance brand commitment can be achieved by emphasizing on brand’s symbolic meanings. According to Tuskej, et.al (2011), if consumers see brand as social currency, then marketers should make effort to emphasize the meaning of a brand as social capital. Brand as social currency seems to relate with Thorstein Veblen’s conception of conspicuous consumption: “Acquisition of publicly visible goods and services costing considerably more than functionally equivalent product in order to achieve social status” (Veblen, 1899 in Gierl & Huettl, 2010). According to Gierl and Huettl (2010), people consume such brands for three possible reasons: as status symbol, to express uniqueness, and/or to express conformity with exclusive social groups. They found that ads that emphasize a product’s ability to indicate high social status and to demonstrate uniqueness or
conformity in an advertisement increases the perceived ability of a socially visible product to signal these characteristics, but marketers should adjust which of the three aforementioned product benefits that are highly valued by their target market.

Premium priced electronics gadget such as Apple products are somewhat conspicuous in nature and may create bandwagon effect similar to that of “luxury for the masses products”. According to Silverstein and Fiske (2003 in Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012) this kind of products are goods and services that possess higher level of quality, taste and aspiration compared with the rest of their category and command premium priced over their competitors. To market this kind of product Kastanakis & Balabanis (2012) suggest that marketers can focus on: (1) enhancing their products’ status by deriving it from popularity and linking it to popularity (e.g. suggesting that this is what most high status people buy), (2) enhancing normative, fit in function (e.g. suggesting that “everyone must have this kind of product”), and (3) enhancing creative choice counter conformity (e.g. suggesting that this product makes you different in a way that everyone will like).

Limitations and directions for future research

This study has found some results that support model proposed by Tuskej, Golob & Podnar (2011). Nevertheless, this study still have limitations in terms of sample. This study gathered 150 usable responses from Apple users who fulfilled criteria set by the authors. Nevertheless, the sample was gathered using non probability sampling (by convenience sample), thus sample would be very limited to people who are easier to reach and willing to participate. Consequently, the results of this study is not generalizable. However, use of non-probability sampling is still regarded as acceptable, for example in research model testing (Tuskej et al 2011)
Another limitation is that this study only focused on one brand with high involvement (Apple). In their original study, Tuskej, Golob & Podnar (2011) suggest that future research should focus on brands without predetermined consumer’s involvement in order to see whether proposed model holds.

Kuenzel & Halliday (2008) suggest that prestige image affect brand identification, thus future research could consider brands with different prestige image (prestigious vs less prestigious) to see whether brands with high value congruity would yield high consumer identification regardless its prestige image.

This study addressed some of Tuskej, Golob & Podnar’s future research directions that suggest researchers to focus on a specific brand instead of focusing on respondent’s favorite brand (Tuskej, et.al, 2011, p. 6). In addition, by focusing on one brand that respondents have purchased and used, this study also partially confirms proposition made by Tuskej et al (2011) that suggest past purchase behavior as an important factor to consider when studying strength of consumer identification with a brand. Unfortunately, this study did not measure another brand for comparison (e.g. brand that consumers have not purchased and used), consequently we have no information about the strength of consumer identification with a brand that they have not purchased.

Conclusion

This study, which was conducted on Apple users in Indonesia found that: (1) value congruity positively influence consumers’ affective brand commitment, both directly as well as through consumers’brand identification (2) Value congruity is not found to be directly influence social compliance brand commitment, but only through consumers’ brand identification (3) Consumers’ brand identification is found to be positively influencing both affective commitment and social compliance brand commitment but does not significantly influence
positive word of mouth (Positive WOM), (4). Affective brand commitment and social compliance brand commitment positively influence positive word of mouth and mediates the relationship between consumers’ identification and positive word of mouth.

Result from this study indicates that brand building activities should be aimed at developing brand that possess clear and distinct set of values that match with its target market’s values in order to build affective commitment and positive word of mouth, which could potentially increase demand for the brand. In addition, brands can also emphasize symbolic meaning in its marketing communications to take advantage of commitment based on social compliance.

In terms of academic contribution, this paper contributes toward repository of Indonesian consumer behavior research, particularly related to customers’ brand identification, brand commitment and positive word of mouth.
References


[Accessed 22 07 2012].


