

## BRAND LOYALTY DETERMINANTS OF IMPORTED COSMETIC BRAND AMONG FEMALES IN MALAYSIA

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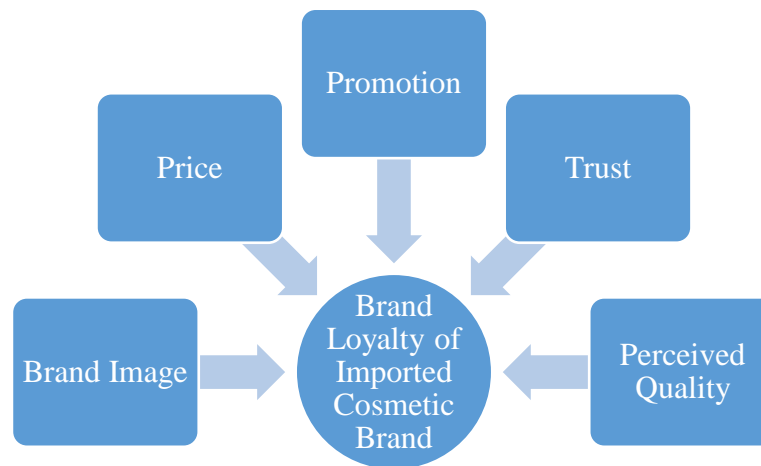
**Abstract:** *Cosmetics product's market has become intensive popular among consumers all around the world as well as Malaysia. This growing demand offers a good opportunity for cosmetic companies to promote their brands and increase their sales. Eventhough the usage of cosmetic product is increasing among both genders, but the dominant user is still female. Many researchers in Malaysia have been focused on the brand loyalty towards cosmetic brands in general but little to none focus specifically on imported cosmetic brands. After the foreign cosmetic firms enter the Malaysian market, they may face difficulties to adapt to the unfamiliar environment. Hence, the foreign cosmetics firms could face the problems to hold the loyalty of consumers that have differences in culture. The primary objective of this paper is to identify the determinants such as (brand image, price, promotion, trust and perceived quality) that affect the brand loyalty towards imported cosmetic brands among females in Malaysia. Convenience sampling was used and total 220 female respondents were interviewed who had used imported cosmetic products. Descriptive analysis and reliability measurement using Cronbach's alpha. The associations between independent variables and dependent variable are analyzed using Chi-square test and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The results identify that brand image, promotion, trust and perceived quality are significant to brand loyalty unfortunately price is not. Based on the result, it is suggested that the companies should concern on trust determinant to increase their brand value, increasing and maintaining the quality of the products, formulating strategy to increase or maintain positive reputation in consumers' mind. In addition, enhancing more promotion such as advertising and sales promotion yet still assure the quality of promotion to keep the perception of consumers' towards the brand in good condition. Lastly, the price should align with the cost and quality.*

**Keywords:** *Brand Loyalty, Females, Determinants, Import, Cosmetic*

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## Introduction

Over past two decades, cosmetics product's market has become intensive popular among consumers all around the world. They show increasing attention to their body's appearances in the modern society as the body is the first and most visible place to be attended by others. This growing demand offers a good opportunity for cosmetic companies to promote their brands and increase their sales. Cosmetic market grows rapidly in Malaysia. In 2015, Malaysia's total personal care and cosmetic trade amount was around US\$2.24 billion while over 50% of this amount which is US\$1.13 billion was met in imports, in which the major exporters are South Korea, Japan, Spain, Italy, Australia, United States, France, New Zealand and Switzerland (Gerstle, 2016). Skin-care products have the largest market share with US\$292 million total import value, followed by cosmetics and toiletries with US\$109 million and skin-wash products valued at US\$104 million (Gerstle, 2016). Malaysia's population is around 32.6 million while the population of female is 15.8 million which contributed to around half of the population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). Eventhough the usage of cosmetic product is increasing among both genders, but the dominant user is still female (Krishnan, Amira, Atilla, Syafawani, & Hafiz, 2017). Consumers may consider buying back the same brand due to the relationship between them and the firms. The consumers' commitment to repurchase and the extent of fidelity of consumers to a brand is normally named as "brand loyalty" (Parmar, 2014). Obasan, Ariyo, & Hassan (2015) stressed that the companies profitability is positively affected by consumers' loyalty to the brands. As a result, brand loyalty is very importance to maintain or increase a firm's profit as loyal consumers will repurchase the products from same brand and even recommend the brand to their friends or family. The annual growth rate of the global cosmetics market in 2019 is 5.25% (Shahbandeh, 2020) and the global cosmetics market is expected to garner \$429.8 billion by 2022 (Rajput, 2016). Cosmetics manage to have steady value growth due to the active launch of new brands (Euromonitor, 2020). Cosmetic industry is very competitive as there are exceed 60,000 types of cosmetics products in Malaysia (Hassali, *et al.*, 2015). The brand competition among cosmetic firms is fierce. Hence, the cosmetic firms could face difficulties to approach new customers or even to retain existing customers which later resulting in lower customers' loyalty towards their brands. In every business, revenue is the main key for a company to continue operating their business. For cosmetic industry, sales are generated from the consumers that buy their products while most of the sales come from loyal consumers. However, the company loses 13% of their consumer base annually shows competitive environment in the modern world (Chan & Mansori, 2016). It is very challenging for the foreign cosmetic firms to achieve merely 1% annual growth from both new and regular consumers. Many researchers in Malaysia have been focused on the brand loyalty towards cosmetic brands in general but little to none focus specifically on imported cosmetic brands. After the foreign cosmetic firms enter the Malaysian market, they may face difficulties to adapt to the unfamiliar environment. Hence, the foreign cosmetics firms could face the problems to hold the loyalty of consumers that have differences in culture. The primary objective of this paper is to identify the determinants such as (brand image, price, promotion, trust and perceived quality) that affect the brand loyalty towards imported cosmetic brands among females in Malaysia as depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Relationship between Brand Loyalty and the Determinants.**

Source: Own

### Literature Review

Brand loyalty is the one of the fundamental concept for company to operate strategic marketing. Companies can achieve the profitability and compete with other brands with high brand loyalty (Reichheld, Markey, & Hopton, 2000). Most of the companies prefer selling with the greatest net profit. Therefore, it is very important to ascertain the determinants of brand loyalty. Malik et. al., (2013) stressed that loyal consumers purchase a brand confidently based on their previous experiences without brand evaluation. Brand image is first impression that goes to consumers' mind when a brand is mentioned, therefore it often refers to brand associations (Chan & Mansori, 2016). Brand image is also the consumers' picture in their minds of the brand and it comprises representative values that consumers can link with the symbolic characteristics of the brand (Bibby, 2011). As a result, a proper brand image is essential to clearly tell a company's goal and to differentiate its brand (Chan & Mansori, 2016). Moreover, price is factor for the consumers to purchase either local or imported products in Malaysia (Ong, Kitchen, & Chew, 2010). Price conscious consumers has lower brand loyalty as they will change their buying decision whenever there is a lower price brand, in which they are not willing to build relationship with only a brand. Promotion is defined as a marketing activity to inform or persuade consumers about the value of given brand for the purpose of attracting consumers to purchasing the products or service under the brand (Bamigboye, 2001). In Malaysia, the promotion in local magazines and the advertising in the international magazines increase the popularity of American and European cosmetic brands among Malaysian (Hassali, *et al.*, 2015). The role of trust is to minimize the uncertainties, fear of opportunism and information asymmetry as well as to make consumers feel good and cosy with the brand (Pavlou, Liang, & Xue, 2007). Furthermore, in point of view of consumers, the perceived quality is the assessment of the current performance of the firms and such action tends to affect consumers' behavioral intentions and attitudes positively in relation to the suppliers (Anderson, Fornel, & Lehmann, 1994). Perceived quality adds value to consumers and leads them to buy the brand in which it is a crucial point of differentiation (Balaji, 2011).

## Methodology

Causal research is applied since it involves investigation on whether the independent variables will have impact on brand loyalty. Non-probability technique is chosen in this research where the samples are selected based on their own convenience and the probability of the unit selected is unknown. Among all non-probability techniques, convenience sampling has been used. Convenience sampling is a sampling where the units of target population who are easy to accessible.

## Data and Variable Descriptions

In this research, the independent variables such as brand image, price, promotion, trust and perceived quality are determined whether they would be influential determinants that affect the dependent variable which is brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.

In addition, target population will be the imported cosmetics consumers aged above 18, while gender is a controllable variable which means only female adults are targeted. Only female gender is targeted because based on the study of Krishnan, *et al.* (2017), females are found to be more interested in cosmetics as compared to males. Thus, they are considered to have better understanding and own opinion on the imported cosmetic brands. Total 250 questionnaires were distributed to females who had used imported cosmetic products. The total population in of females in Malaysia is around 15.75 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). Therefore, there are huge number of female respondents available to provide reliable information on imported cosmetic brands leads the researcher to choose Malaysia as the location to collect sample. The questionnaire consists of 3 parts. Part A focuses on the demographic information, which consists of 5 questions regarding the demographic information of the respondents' age, race, relationship status, income/allowance per month and occupation status. Part B is general information of the respondents which consists of 5 questions which are the general information about the consumers' usage and knowledge of imported cosmetic brands. Part C is the construct measurement which relates to the brand image, price, promotion, trust and perceived quality and brand loyalty. 27 questions relate to both variables in this study are constructed. Respondents are required to provide their opinions based on the questions. Five-point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) is used in this part to evaluate the degree of agreement of the respondents on the variables.

## Hypothesis

Our main hypotheses presented below,

- $H_1$ : There is significant relationship between brand image and brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.
- $H_2$ : There is significant relationship between price and brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.
- $H_3$ : There is significant relationship between promotion and brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.
- $H_4$ : There is significant relationship between trust and brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.
- $H_5$ : There is significant relationship between perceived quality and brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.

### **Descriptive analysis**

This analysis is used to describe the raw data collected from the survey questionnaires to interpret the input data in a meaningful way. It also presents the data using frequency distribution; measures of dispersion, central tendency and shape. It will be used to present the demographic information (age, race, relationship status, income/allowance per month and occupation status) and the general information (preferred brand, source of knowing preferred brand, the frequency, monthly spending and place to purchase the preferred brand) of the respondents.

### **The Cronbach's Alpha**

The purpose of the employment of this analysis is to see if multiple question Likert scale surveys are reliable. In general, the cut point of Cronbach's Alpha in this research is 0.80 which means that the result is reliable and consistent with an alpha of 0.80 and above.

### **The Chi Square Test, $\chi^2$**

The  $\chi^2$  test is non-parametric statistic for testing hypotheses of non-metric data and consists of two variables. Since the construct measurements are ordinal scale,  $\chi^2$  will be used to identify the significant predictor of dependent variable. Each variable will be tested individually towards dependent variable. The null hypothesis for this test is that there are no significant relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. If the p-value is less than significance level, the null hypothesis will be rejected.

### **The Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, $\rho$**

It is a non-parametric that measures the relationship between variables, using ranked data to calculate the correlation. Since ordinal data is ranked data, Spearman's Rank is used to identify the positive or negative relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. Spearman coefficient ranges from -1 to +1, where -1 shows perfect negative relationship, +1 shows perfect positive relationship and 0 shows perfect monotonic relationship.

## **Result and Discussion**

Total of 250 surveys are collected in total in Malaysia. All questionnaires collected are filled completely and only 220 sets of surveys are valid. We start with presenting the demographic information of the respondents.

### **Demographic Profile of the Respondent**

All 220 female respondents were interviewed in this research. It shows that 67.7% of the respondents is from 18 to 25 years and the least 2.3% is from the range of 50 to 56 years old as shown in Table 1. While in Table 2 shows that 40.5% of the respondents are Chinese and the lowest is 0.9% from other races. Moreover, most of the respondents is single (41.4%), followed by respondents that in a relationship (30.0%). The remaining (28.6%) is from the respondents who are married as shown in Table 3. In addition, as shown in Table 4 majority of the respondents' monthly income are below RM1000 which consists of 39.1% and the lowest is only 2.7% of respondents have RM7500 and above of monthly income.

**Table 1: Distribution of Age Group**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	149	67.7	67.7	67.7
	26-33	30	13.6	13.6	81.4
	34-41	23	10.5	10.5	91.8
	42-49	13	5.9	5.9	97.7
	50-56	5	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

**Table 2: Distribution of Races**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Malay	88	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Chinese	89	40.5	40.5	80.5
	Indian	41	18.6	18.6	99.1
	Others	2	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

**Table 3: Distribution of Marital Status**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	91	41.4	41.4	41.4
	In a relationship	66	30.0	30.0	71.4
	Married	63	28.6	28.6	100.0
	Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

**Table 4: Distribution of Monthly Income**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Below RM1000	86	39.1	39.1	39.1
RM1000-RM2499	41	18.6	18.6	57.7
RM2500-RM4999	65	29.5	29.5	87.3
RM5000-RM7499	22	10.0	10.0	97.3
RM7500 and above	6	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

**Table 5: Distribution of Preferred Brand**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid L'Oreal	23	10.5	10.5	10.5
Maybelline	30	13.6	13.6	24.1
NYX	23	10.5	10.5	34.5
Urban Decay	15	6.8	6.8	41.4
Innisfree	57	25.9	25.9	67.3
Peripera	12	5.5	5.5	72.7
Etude House	24	10.9	10.9	83.6
Shiseido	9	4.1	4.1	87.7
Canmake	9	4.1	4.1	91.8
Others	18	8.2	8.2	100.0
Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

According to Table 5, the most preferred imported cosmetic brand is Innisfree with 25.9% of the respondents consume it. While the lowest number of users are Shiseido and Canmake with 4.1% individually. Furthermore, from Table 6 it shows that most of the respondents know their most preferred brand from their friends which consists of 37.3% and the least percentage is from printed media which is 5% of the total respondents. From Table 7, 60.5% of the respondents buy once per three months for their preferred cosmetic brand and with only 4.1% of respondents buy more than three times per three months. It shows that their preferred brand can use for longer period of times. Last but not least Table 8 shows the monthly spending on preferred brands of respondents. The highest percentage is 41.8% of respondents spends RM101-RM200 on cosmetic brands monthly and followed by the lowest percentage is 8.6% of respondents spend more than RM300 on cosmetic brands.

**Table 6: Distribution of Information Channel**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Friends	82	37.3	37.3	37.3
Family	40	18.2	18.2	55.5
Social Media	75	34.1	34.1	89.5
Printed Media	11	5.0	5.0	94.5
Broadcast Media	12	5.5	5.5	100.0
Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

**Table 7: Distribution of Buying Frequency**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Once per three months	133	60.5	60.5	60.5
Twice per three months	68	30.9	30.9	91.4
Three times per three months	10	4.5	4.5	95.9
More than three times per three months	9	4.1	4.1	100.0
Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

**Table 8: Distribution of Monthly Spending**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Below RM100	77	35.0	35.0	35.0
RM101-RM200	92	41.8	41.8	76.8
RM201-RM300	32	14.5	14.5	91.4
More than RM300	19	8.6	8.6	100.0
Total	220	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own

**Table 9: Cronbach's Alpha Result**

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Results of Reliability
Brand Image	4	0.836	Very Good
Price	4	0.831	Very Good
Promotion	4	0.819	Very Good
Trust	5	0.811	Very Good
Perceived Quality	4	0.819	Very Good
Brand Loyalty	6	0.816	Very Good

Source: Own

Based on Table 9 it shows that all variables show alpha of above 0.8, which indicate they are very good reliability and internally consistent in determining brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.

### Inferential Statistics

In view of results (Table 10), the asymptotic significant for brand image, promotion, trust and perceived quality fall in rejection region at 5% significant level and it leads to significant to brand loyalty. However, price has p-value of 0.377 fall in acceptance region. It concluded that this variable influence insignificantly to brand loyalty of imported cosmetic brands.

**Table 10: Chi Square Test Result**

	Pearson Chi-Square Value	df	Asymptotic Significant (2-sided)	N of Valid Cases
Brand Image	107.228	48	0.000	220
Price	50.440	48	0.377	220
Promotion	89.457	48	0.000	220
Trust	86.488	18	0.000	220
Perceived Quality	157.052	48	0.000	220

Source: Own

Based on the hypothesis that has been tested, it shows that  $H_1$ ,  $H_3$ ,  $H_4$  and  $H_5$  are proved to be a statistically significant towards brand loyalty.

**Table 11: Chi Square Test Result**

		Brand Image	Price	Promotion	Trust	Perceived Quality	Brand Loyalty
Brand Image	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.133*	.357**	.563**	.463**	.447**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.048	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N		220	220	220	220	220
Price	Correlation Coefficient		1.000	-.112	.039	-.061	.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.098	.566	.369	.224
	N			220	220	220	220
Promotion	Correlation Coefficient			1.000	.392**	.402**	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.000	.000
	N				220	220	220
Trust	Correlation Coefficient				1.000	.555**	.521**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000	.000
	N					220	220
Perceived Quality	Correlation Coefficient					1.000	.498**
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.000
	N						220
Brand Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient						1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N						

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own

Based on Table 11, the p-values of brand image, promotion, trust and perceived quality are 0.000 which indicate that they are significant towards brand loyalty at 5% significant level (2-tailed) yet price shows insignificant relationship (0.224) with brand loyalty. The strongest correlation coefficient is 0.521 for trust, followed by 0.498 for perceived quality, 0.447 for brand image and 0.350 for promotion. The values show that there are moderate positive relationships between them and brand loyalty. Price shows positive relationship as well but only a little value with 0.082. This indicates price has weak positive relationship with brand loyalty.

## Conclusion

This paper has presented an analysis to identify the determinants that affect the brand loyalty towards imported cosmetic brands among females in Malaysia. Based on the result, it is

suggested that the companies should concern on trust determinant to increase their brand value so that the consumers would trust their brand more. The managers should plan to add value to the brand such as being accessible by consumers, having reliable products and being honest to consumers. It is also recommended by increasing and maintaining the quality of the products. These will lead to retention of consumers as the consumers like to consume high and consistent quality products. The managers can carefully supervise the procedure of manufacturing the products to assure the quality and to eliminate the defeated products. Consequently, the consumers would think that the companies are considerate towards them and stay loyal with the companies. In addition, by formulating strategy to increase or maintain positive reputation in consumers' mind such as doing corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR can beautify the brand image so that the consumers would stay loyal to the brand. Furthermore, by enhancing more promotion such as advertising and sales promotion yet still assure the quality of promotion to keep the perception of consumers' towards the brand in good condition. For example, the advertising of the brand should be meaningful and attractive so that the consumers would their loyalty towards the brand is worth and valuable. As for the price is insignificant to brand loyalty towards imported cosmetic brands therefore the companies should aware of this price should align with the cost and quality of the products instead of keep lowering the price to attract and retain consumers. The managers should plan to implement differentiation or strategy instead of cost leadership as the loyalty consumers concern more about the quality but not the price. Not only that, future researchers are encouraged to narrow down the range of industry of research such as to specifically study halal cosmetic industry. The demand for halal cosmetics are rising recently (Badarudin, 2018).

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