



The Factors Influencing Consumer Attitudes Towards Brand Extension: A Case Study of Engine Oil Lubricants

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Abstract

In today's world, brand extension is more important than ever as companies are constantly seeking to expand their customer base, increase revenue, and remain competitive in an ever-changing business landscape especially during this post COVID-19 pandemic. The study of consumer attitudes toward brand extension has been greatly discussed by researchers previously. However, in this particular research, researchers attempted to narrow down and scrutinize the scope of consumer attitudes study towards the brand extensions of engine oil and determine the antecedents which formed the consumer attitudes. The attitude-toward-object model established by Martin Fishbein in 1967 was adopted in this study. Variables examined in this research are brand loyalty, and consumer involvement. Survey methods were employed by distributing 165 sets of self-administered questionnaires to prospective respondents and convenience sampling was operated. The findings of the study provide evidence on the elements significantly shaped the consumer attitudes towards brand extensions with regards in selecting engine oil for cars. The findings of this study can be exploited to further enhance the brand extension approaches conducted by the related industries to ensure the effectiveness of the strategy. It is recommended that in future study, to take into consideration the other variables that not tested in this study.

Keywords: - Brand extension, consumer attitude, engine lubricant

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1. Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic started in 2019 has caused major downturn in many businesses regardless the industry. Lubricants companies were also impacted by the global outbreak as many market surveys reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on the sales and production of engine oil manufacturers (Reuters, 2020; Li et al., 2021). According to a report by ResearchAndMarkets.com (2021), the global engine oil market size is expected to decline by \$5.22 billion during 2020-2024 due to the impact of COVID-19. The report states that the pandemic has caused a decline in automotive production and sales, leading to a decrease in demand for engine oil.

Nevertheless, Mordor Intelligence (2021) has projected that the ASEAN lubricant market will witness a

Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) exceeding 3%, despite the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing the need to bounce back in the post-pandemic era, lubricant companies are reformulating strategies to maintain their market relevance and sustainability. One of the marketing strategies to remain competitive in the market is through the introduction of product extension or brand extension as a competitive advantage. Firms use brand extensions to influence consumers' brand choices. Brand extension is a part of the marketing strategy to break the entry barriers between product categories through the carryover of a brand's reputation (Kushwaha, 2012). Before implementing a brand extension strategy, it is crucial for companies to identify the key factors that must be emphasized to ensure the strategy's success. Studies have shown that brand extension has a significant impact on customers' purchase intentions. In simpler terms, when a well-established

brand introduces a new product that is related to its existing products or services, customers are more likely to consider purchasing it (Abdel-Aziz, AL-Haddad, Judeh, & Al-Badawi, 2022). However, the success of brand extension also depends on how well the new product or service fits with the existing brand image and whether it meets customers' needs and expectations. Vahdat et al., (2020) focused their research on how emotional brand attachment contributes to attitude toward brand extension which the impact of customer satisfaction on attitude toward the brand extension is noticeable. However, Ahmad et al., in 2011 exploited a single factor which was the brand loyalty impacts on brand extension. The effects of perceived quality, brand extension incongruity, involvement and perceived risk were examined tremendously to determine their influences towards consumer attitudes of brand extension (Srivastava & Sharma, 2013). Srivastava & Sharma (2013) applied the antecedents in testing their stated hypothesis in the comparison of fast-moving consumer goods, durable goods, and services. Hence, this current study is particularly aimed at investigating the effects of brand loyalty and consumer involvement which formed consumer attitudes towards engine oil brand extension. The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of consumer attitudes towards brand extension of engine oil and to explore the relationship between brand loyalty, consumer involvement, and consumer attitudes towards brand extensions. As a result, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between brand loyalty and consumer attitudes towards brand extensions.

H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between consumer involvement and consumer attitudes towards brand extensions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Attitudes Towards Brand Extension

Brand extension is a marketing strategy that involves using an existing brand name to launch a new product or product line in a different market or category. The purpose of brand extension is to leverage the existing brand equity and increase the chances of success for the new product by capitalizing on the positive associations and loyalty that consumers have towards the parent brand. According to Shabbir (2020), brand extension can have a significant impact on customer's purchase intention. This means that if a consumer has a positive attitude towards a particular brand, they are more likely to purchase a new product that is introduced under that brand. On the other hand, if a consumer has a negative perception of the brand, they may be less likely to purchase the new product.

Asshidin et al., (2016) explained consumer attitudes as a person propensity towards an idea or an object, and his or her value assessment and feelings about something. According to Hultman et al., (2021) brand extension is viewed as having more value when consumers are loyal to

the parent brand, which can enhance market share. Retailer performance may be improved by branding and clear positioning using customer and competitive oriented strategies. (Ramakrishnan, 2010; Reinartz et al., 2011). In this current study, the researcher proposes to employ the attitude-toward-object model established by Martin Fishbein in 1967 (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010) to study and investigate the consumer attitudes towards brand extensions. As suggested by this model, the consumer's attitude toward a product or specific brands of a product is a function of the presence (or absence) and evaluation of certain product-specific beliefs and/or attributes. It is simply understood that consumers generally have favorable attitudes toward those brands that they believe have an adequate level of attributes that they evaluate as positive, and vice versa.

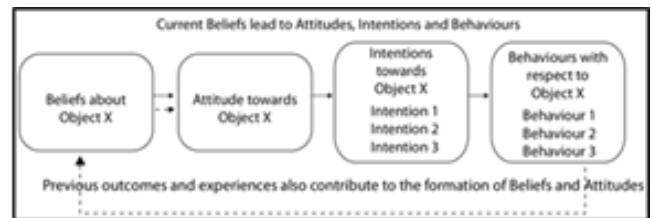


Fig. 1. Fishbein's attitude-toward-object model

Basically, brand extension is a strategy which is conducted by many organizations with the main objectives of benefiting from the brand knowledge achieved in the current market of existing brands. It is generally defined as "the use of an established brand name to enter new product categories or classes" (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Aaker & Keller (1990) claimed the success of a brand extension usually rely on several theories such as: consumer hold positive beliefs and favorable attitudes toward the original brand in memory, these positive associations facilitate the formation of positive beliefs and favorable attitudes toward the brand extension, and negative associations are neither transferred to nor created by the brand extension. This research proposition is consistent with Fishbein's theory of consumer attitude-toward-object model.

2.2 Brand Loyalty

According to Ozretic-Dosen et al., (2018) brand loyalty is a consequence of customers' favorable perceptions and emotions towards the brand. When considering brand extension, loyal customers are particularly important because they have made a substantial investment in the brand and consider it to be a reliable partner (Spiggle, Nguyen, & Caravella, 2012). Anwar et al., (2011) suggest that customer loyalty has a positive impact on their attitude towards brand extension. Therefore, the key to a successful brand extension is to cultivate a positive attitude towards the extension among customers, which is largely influenced by their loyalty to the brand (Shujie, 2017). Marketing concept of brand loyalty build-up of a consumer's commitment to repurchase or continuously using the brand and this behavior are indicated by repeated buying of a product or service or other positive behaviors such as word of mouth promotion (Dick & Basu, 1994; Ghorbani & Madani, 2012). However, Choi et al., (2010) and Hansen et al., (2004) used

affective commitment to describe brand loyalty. They stated that most research has found the affective kind of commitment to be a major determinant of customer loyalty. The goal of the business must be to keep all sorts of clients loyal to the brand because acquiring new ones really costs five to ten times more than keeping existing ones. (Oh & Park, 2020; Penefit 2015).

The notion of commitment has been an important aspect of studies on customer relationships over the last decades. Numerous studies have identified affective commitment as a key determinant of customer loyalty, while the effects of other types of commitment remain ambiguous (Kumar, Hibbard & Stern, 1994). If a customer's affective commitment to a brand is strong, it is expected to lead to a desire and motivation to maintain the relationship. This is consistent with Vahdat et al., (2020) recent study, which found that high brand commitment among customers results in a desire and motivation to maintain the relationship, making them less susceptible to newly introduced brand products and more resistant to brand extension. This study suggests that consumers with high affective commitment to a supplier are less likely to be receptive to newly introduced products in that category. In terms of brand extension, this implies that the intention to purchase a new product will decrease as the level of commitment to an incumbent brand increase.

Hem & Iversen (2003) used this notion to investigate the relationship between brand loyalty and brand extensions in 2003. The outcome of their study resulted that highly affective relation towards the parent brand might result in favorable consumer attitudes towards brand extensions, and loyal behavioral intention towards the parent brand is a crucial antecedent for achieving positive evaluation of the extension. In 2012, a study conducted by Zohreh et al., hypothesized the relationship between brand loyalty and consumer attitudes towards brand extensions. Adopting Reast (2005) and Volckner & Sattler (2006), the attitude toward an extension is better when the consumer trusts the brand, buy the brand's products regularly and shows a commitment to repurchase them. In the latest broad and extensive study by Kothari & Maindargi (2019) and Catic & Poturak (2022) brand loyalty has positive and significant impact on consumer behavior.

2.3 Consumer Involvement

Consumer involvement is considered as an individual difference variable, and it is a causal or motivating variable with several consequences on consumer's purchase and communication behavior. Consumers have established and maintain relationship with the product to some extent, where its play an important role in explaining how to establish and realize this relationship (Shen et al., 2019). It is defined in terms of relevance, pleasure, sign-value, risk importance and risk probability. The degree to which an individual is involved in a particular issue can have an impact on their decision-making process, and in general, a positive correlation exists between involvement and attitude. Consumer's level of involvement will influence the purchase decision (Bravo et al., 2013). As a result, individuals who perceive an issue as important and relevant

to them personally tend to have more favorable opinions about objects related to that issue (Eren-Erdogmus et al., 2018). If consumers are engaged with the introduced product category, this favorable attitude may extend to new brand extensions in the form of positive evaluations and attitude. Zaichkowsky in 1985 describes involvement as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests" (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985).

The relationship between involvements with brand extension evaluation is because the difference in response between highly involved and less involved consumers reflects, to some extent, differences in risk-taking tendency. Highly involved consumers tend to have less risk avoidance than other consumers (Hansen, Hem, & Administration, 2004). The statement was observed from Steenkamp and Baumgartner's work where individuals with high in perceived involvement are more venturesome and likely willing to try new brands. The positive attitudes towards brand extensions were enhanced by higher involvement with them. It can be suggested that high involvement increases the tendency to think about benefits and detriments of new products and consumer's willingness to process more information, which result in favorable evaluation (Srivastava & Sharma, (2013). A recent study by Levesque & Pons (2021) suggested that involvement facilitates the intention-behaviour relationship which leads to encouraging consumer attitudes. This was also supported by the prior study of consumer involvement and consumer behavior (Jeseviciute-Ufartiene, 2019).

3. Methodology

The respondents of this study are the consumers who have the experience of buying or using engine lubricating oil. Data was collected from the consumers aged 18 and above who lived in Kuala Lumpur. The sampling size for this study was adopting Roscoe's rules of thumb as cited in Sekaran & Bougie (2013) which proposed the right sample size must be larger than 30 and less than 500 samples. The rule also stated that in this multivariate research, the sample size can be determined by times the number of variables by ten, or the number of items time by five. Therefore, as this research was investigating 4 variables with 23 items in total, 115 samples are considered appropriate. However, 160 samples from respondents were managed to be collected.

For measurement of scale, Likert scale is used which requires respondents to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements about the variables. Each scale item consists of five response categories ranging from "strong disagree" to "strongly agree". The sampling technique to be employed in this study is a convenience sampling, as it refers to the collection of information from members of the population who are conveniently available to provide it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). This study utilizes IBM SPSS as the statistical tools to analyse the data. The reliability tests conducted on the variables were found to be acceptable and reliable as the Cronbach's Alpha values for all the variables are more than 0.60. The following are the outcomes from the reliability tests: Consumer Attitudes towards Brand

Extensions (4 items; Cronbach's Alpha= 0.779); Brand Loyalty (10 items; Cronbach's Alpha= 0.948); and Consumer Involvement (4 items; Cronbach's Alpha= 0.806).

4. Finding and Analysis

4.1 Respondents' Demographic Profiles

Table 1. Respondents' demographic profiles

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	98	59.4
Female	67	40.6
Age		
16 – 20 years old	20	12.1
21 – 25 years old	54	32.7
26 – 30 years old	42	25.5
31 – 35 years old	19	11.5
36 – 40 years old	18	10.9
More than 40 years old	12	7.3
Occupations		
Student	63	38.2
Government	35	21.2
Own Business	21	12.7
Private	25	15.2
Others	21	12.7
Monthly Income		
RM 1,000 and below	61	37.0
RM 1,001 – RM 2,000	5	3.0
RM 2,001 – RM 3,000	34	20.6
RM 3,001 – RM 4,000	19	11.5
RM 4,001 – RM 5,000	38	23.0
RM 5,001 and above	8	4.8
Academic Qualification		
SPM / STPM	25	15.2
Diploma	74	44.8
Bachelor	55	33.3
Masters	7	4.2
PhD	2	1.2
Others	2	1.2

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of demographic profile for the total 165 respondents. 59.4% of the respondents who answered the survey were male, while the other 40.6% were women. Out of 6 predetermined group of age, most of the respondents were aged between 21 – 25 years old, which represents the largest age group among the total respondents. The survey also showed that most of the respondents are employed by total up the percentage for government, own business and privately employed which covers 49.1% out of total respondents. Monthly income levels for the respondents vary accordingly. The monthly income level of RM 1,000 and below represents the largest percentage which is 37.0%. For the academic qualification, most of the respondents are diploma level which involved 44.8% of the total 165 respondents.

The respondents were also asked several general questions which provide insight of the consumer attitudes and behaviors pertaining to the engine oil preferences, usage behavior and priority in choosing the right engine oil.

Table 2. General questions

General Questions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Q1: How many time(s) do you service your car?		
Once in a year	8	4.8
Twice in a year	22	13.3
3 times in a year	36	21.8
4 times in a year	18	10.9
5 times in a year	33	20.0
More than 5 times in a year	48	29.1
Q2: Do you care about the brand of engine oil used for your car?		
Yes	110	66.7
No	55	33.3
Q3: Do you loyal to a specific brand of engine oil?		
Yes	81	49.1
No	84	50.9
Q4: Which other brand of engine oil that you use for your car?		
Mobil1	14	8.5
Total	24	14.5
Shell	50	30.3
Eneos	8	4.8
Nasa	7	4.2
Castrol	14	8.5
Petronas	39	23.6
Hyrax	6	3.6
Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM)	39	23.6

Based on the above table, most respondents service their car more than 5 times in a year which represented 29.1%. The frequency or number of times car services in a year is also determined by many other factors, some of them are the type of base oil used, age of the car engines as well as the usage of the car and others. Most of the respondents, which is 66.7% claimed that they care about the engine oil used for their car. However, when it comes to the loyalty question, the percentages show a slight difference where only 49.1% considered themselves loyal to a specific engine oil brand meanwhile the remaining are not. Next, question 4 asked respondents to select the brand of engine oil they used for their car. Respondents may choose more than one brand in this question. To sum up the result, 30.3% respondents used Shell for their car, the next 23.6% respondents used Petronas, and same goes to Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM). Only a few numbers of respondents, which is 3.6% used Hyrax engine oil for their car.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) for dependent and independent variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Consumer Attitudes	3.8106	.62904
Brand Loyalty	3.4345	.85587
Consumer Involvement	3.5909	.66723

The descriptive table above shows the figure of mean and standard deviation for each variable. Mean for the dependent variables of the research which is the consumer attitudes is 3.8106 and 0.62904 for standard deviation. For brand loyalty, the mean is 3.4345 and the standard deviation is 0.85587. For the independent variable consumer

involvement, the mean is 3.5909 and 0.66723 for standard deviation. From the above result, it can be concluded that most of the respondents agreed with all the items in the brand loyalty and consumer involvement variables as they mostly choose between 3 to 5 in the Likert scales, which are from neutral to strongly agree.

Table 4. Relationship between independent variables with consumer attitudes towards brand extension

Variables	Significant value (p)	Pearson Correlation (r _s)
Brand Loyalty	0.000	0.702
Consumer Involvement	0.000	0.604

Note: Significant value with $p \leq 0.05$

By using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient test, this study found that all the identified factors have significant relationships with the Consumer Attitudes towards Brand Extension. In this case, Table 4 shows that the correlation coefficient obtained was 0.702 for brand loyalty and 0.604 for consumer involvement, and the p-value for all this correlation was smaller than 0.05. This shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between brand loyalty and consumer involvement with the consumer attitudes towards brand extension in engine oil products. This also means that the consumer attitudes towards brand extension in engine oil products can be increased when brand loyalty and consumer involvement increased. Beside the correlation value shows the independent variables and dependent variable is positively related, brand loyalty and customer involvement indicated a high correlation with r value of 0.702 and 0.604 respectively. Thus, the hypotheses proposed are all accepted.

Table 5. Coefficient table of the regression analysis

Model	Unstd Coefficients		Std Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (constant)	1.746	.260		6.717	.000
BLmean	.310	.069	.422	4.497	.000
CImean	.197	.083	.209	2.382	.018

Dependent Variable: CAmean

Output generated in the correlation analysis of brand loyalty and consumer attitudes towards brand extension shows there is a significant and positive relationship. To further prove this annotation, regression analysis explained that brand loyalty is the most significant and influential factor among others in determining consumer attitudes towards brand extensions as the Beta value for this coefficient was the highest (.422). All the items suggested to be used in measuring the variable were valid and totally significant since the factor analysis proved that.

5. Conclusion

Though consumers show the care for their car engine maintenance, the respondents of the study were split when it comes to the loyalty to specific brands. It might be driven by many other factors such as price, accessibility and others which were not examined in this study. The outcomes resulted from the investigation of relationship between brand loyalty and consumer attitudes towards brand extension was clearly supported by Volckner & Sattler (2006); Kothari & Maindargi (2019) and Catic & Poturak (2022) studies where it shows a positively and significantly relationship between both variables. The same output was produced for consumer involvement and the dependent variable. This was aligned with previous studies by Srivastava & Sharma (2013); Jeseviciute-Ufartiene, (2019); and Levesque & Pons (2021).

Despite the eagerness of companies in implementing multiple marketing strategies to dampen the effect of COVID-19 Pandemic, based on the result obtained, it is recommended for the company or other related firms to thoroughly looking into the importance of observed subset antecedents to activate the favorable attitudes of consumer towards the brand extension of any products. As stated factors significantly influenced consumer attitudes towards brand extensions, strategies which could emphasize and exploit those factors might need to be activated.

This study is useful and significant not to the lubricant manufacturing companies merely, but also can be used by other related industries such as automotive companies, workshops, and other parties. Appropriate sales and marketing activities might need to be conducted to capture larger market share as this study will provide clearer picture of consumer attitudes and behaviors towards their products. Companies can find the outcome of this research resourceful for the basis or foundation in revising and constructing relevant sales and marketing programs that would trigger the favorable attitudes of consumers towards their brand extensions literally. Thus, the traditional focus on aggressive selling merely should be reviewed by looking into the importance of consumer attitudes which encompasses multiple elements as discussed in this study.

Besides, for future research, it is suggested to broaden the scope of the study beyond a specific location since data collected as well as the result obtained from the analysis might only be significant in that specific area. Having broader scope may produce different results. It is also recommended to researchers in future to take into consideration the variables not studied in this study. Since consumer attitudes towards brand extensions not only comprise of brand loyalty and consumer involvement, other variables such as product feature similarity, consumer innovativeness, self-image, experience and so on might also be operated and further studies are encouraged.

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