ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND ATTITUDE AND BRAND ENGAGEMENT ON POSITIVE BRAND REFERRAL IN KOPIKO BRAND

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Article Information

Abstract

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The market for food and beverage products in Indonesia has experienced positive development, especially with the success of Kopiko candy, which reinforces its positive image among consumers. This research explores the impact of brand attitude on positive brand references among Kopiko candy consumers through brand attitude and brand engagement. Non-probability sampling employed to this study through survey resulted 311 consumers and analysed using PLS. This study findings that brand attitude indirectly influences positive brand references. Conversely, there is a positive relationship between brand attitude and brand involvement, which significantly contributes to positive brand references. Brand involvement also acts as an effective mediator in connecting brand attitude and positive brand references, with the presence of a moderating effect. This study provides a unique contribution by exploring the dual role of brand involvement as a mediating and moderating variable in the relationship between brand attitude and positive brand references, focusing on Kopiko coffee candy.

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INTRODUCTION

With a substantial population and positive economic growth, Indonesia presents promising opportunities for various food and beverage products (Jailani & Adinugraha, 2022). Changes in consumption patterns among the Indonesian population, gravitating towards practical, healthy, and lifestyle-supporting products, render the food and beverage market increasingly attractive (Wijaya, S., 2019). One product that enjoys popularity across all segments is candy. The diverse array of candy brands produced annually offers consumers a more varied selection (Konar et al., 20232). Simultaneously, business competition within this industry intensifies (Śmiglak-Krajewska et al., 2020). Competitive advantage becomes a fundamental requirement for every company (Lestari et al., 2020). Manufacturers strive to provide more diverse flavors, innovative raw materials, and attractive packaging to expand their market share (Khan & Tariq, 2023).

The positive values of a product can be reflected through the brand used, emphasizing its fundamental role in creating awareness among consumers regarding the product's existence in the market (Ilyas et al., 2020). Consumer awareness of a product not only triggers a desire to try it but also opens the door to positive experiences (Pinkse & Bohnsack, 2021). A product's good reputation can establish a strong attachment between the brand and consumers through perceived satisfaction (Pinkse & Bohnsack, 2021). This can drive the inclination to provide positive references regarding the consumed product within their social environment. In other words, the better the consumer's attitude toward a brand, the higher the potential for them to give positive recommendations to others (Kurdi et al., 2022). This relationship aligns with the findings of Zhou et al.'s (2020) research. However, contrasting results were discovered in the study conducted by Davtyan & Tashchian (2022). In their research, Davtyan & Tashchian (2022) explained that even if someone has a positive view of a brand, if they do not interact or share their experiences with others, the potential to provide positive

recommendations becomes limited. The inconsistency in research findings further underscores the gap in this study, necessitating a variable that can mediate and moderate the relationship between them.

In the long term, this relationship not only fosters consumer loyalty but also creates opportunities for consumers to easily recommend the products and positive experiences they have with a brand to others. This recommendation process occurs naturally as a result of positive interactions and satisfying experiences. The interactions take place not only as a response to consumer needs but also as a sustainable strategy to build deep and lasting relationships with consumers. In other words, the role of brand engagement in mediating and moderating the relationship between brand attitude and positive brand referral becomes increasingly significant. These findings align with the research conducted by Verma, P. (2021), indicating that positive interactions are a key factor in shaping consumer perceptions and enhancing the potential for positive recommendations to be disseminated.

This research breaks new ground by investigating the previously unexplored mediating and moderating roles of brand interaction in the relationship between brand attitude and positive brand referral. Unlike prior studies, our focus is on unraveling the complexities of brand interaction dynamics. The dual exploration of mediating and moderating aspects enhances the research's novelty. Set against the backdrop of the coffee candy brand Kopiko, this study not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also offers specific, practical insights for the industry. In essence, our research represents a pioneering effort to advance understanding in branding and consumer behavior. A unique phenomenon is observed at PT. Mayora Tbk., where the revenue in 2020 amounted to only 24.48 trillion and significantly increased by 14%, reaching 27.90 trillion in 2021 (Databoks, November 2023). This increase indicates a high level of consumer interest in the products sold by PT. Mayora, including Kopiko candy. Being an Indonesian coffee candy that gained global media attention for its appearances in various Korean drama series with high ratings (CNBC, November 2023), Kopiko presents a distinctive case. The hope is that through this research object, the researcher can gain a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior regarding Kopiko candy.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Brand attitude, encompassing emotional evaluations towards a brand, is closely associated with positive brand referral (Nayeem et al., 2019). When individuals harbor a positive attitude towards a brand, the likelihood of providing positive recommendations to others increases (Nayeem et al., 2019; Arghashi & Yuksel, 2022). In this context, trust and credibility also play pivotal roles, as brands perceived as trustworthy are more likely to receive positive recommendations from consumers (Arghashi & Yuksel, 2022). Research conducted by Natarajan & Veera Raghavan (2023) asserts that positive interactions, such as excellent customer service or satisfying purchase experiences, can deepen the emotional connection between consumers and the brand, laying a robust foundation for positive recommendations.

H1: Brand attitude has a significantly positive influence on positive brand recommendations.

Brand attitude, encompassing positive or negative feelings, beliefs, and knowledge, serves as the primary foundation for the level of consumer involvement (Cheung et al., 2021). When individuals form a positive attitude towards a brand, consumers are more likely to engage more deeply with that brand (Rabbanee et al., 2020). Zeng et al. (2022) elaborate in their research that positive attitudes in consumers can create emotional appeal and make consumers more open to interacting with the brand through various channels, including social media, marketing events, or other brand communications.

H2: Brand attitude has a significantly positive influence on brand engagement.

Brand engagement has a close correlation with the formation of positive brand referral. When consumers are frequently engaged with a brand, they are more inclined to pay extra attention to information about that brand (Rasool et al., 2020). High levels of involvement are often associated with positive personal experiences, shaping favorable associations with a brand (Rasool et al., 2020). Previous research by Pina & Dias (2021) states that high consumer interaction with a brand, coupled with positive feelings, can strengthen consumers' inclination to provide brand-related references. Consequently, trust, loyalty, and a positive brand image can also develop as a result of strong brand engagement (Pina & Dias, 2021).

H3: Brand engagement has a significantly positive influence on positive brand referral.

Positive brand referral, such as customer testimonials or recommendations, serve as reflections of positive experiences enjoyed by consumers (El-Said, O. A., 2020). The influence of brand attitude on positive references plays a crucial role in building trust and confidence among other consumers (Kim et al., 2019). Farhat et al. (2021) explain in their research that high

brand engagement acts as a catalyst that can evoke positive brand referral among consumers by providing a more profound experience. Consumer interactions with high involvement, such as participation in events or contributing to online communities, can provide opportunities for consumers to offer more comprehensive product references (Farhat et al., 2021).

H4: Brand engagement mediates the relationship between brand attitude and positive brand referral.

Consumers deeply engaged with a brand tend to associate positive personal experiences with that brand (Kang et al., 2020). Moreover, high brand engagement can strengthen the relationship between brand attitude and the formation of positive associations (Hwang et al., 2021). Research conducted by Helme-Guizon & Magnoni (2019) explains that actively engaged consumers are more likely to form strong positive associations with the brand. Additionally, the level of brand engagement also exerts a moderating influence on the relationship between brand attitude and positive brand referral. In this context, emotionally or cognitively engaged consumers tend to be more loyal and possess stronger positive brand referral. Overall, brand engagement plays a key role in shaping and reinforcing the relationship between brand attitude and positive brand referral, thereby creating more memorable consumer experiences with the brand.

H5: Brand engagement moderates the relationship between brand attitude and positive brand referral

METHOD

The quantitative approach employed in this research utilizes primary data. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires using Google Form, focusing on consumers of Kopiko Kapal Api candy. All respondents in this study meet the criteria of being above 17 years old and having consumed products from the Kopiko Kapal Api candy brand. The selection of candy from the Kopiko Kapal Api

brand was made considering its popularity in the market, as evidenced by a 14% increase in net sales for PT Mayora Indah Tbk in 2020, attributed to significant sales of Kopiko Kapal Api candy (Databoks, November 2023).Furthermore, the success of Kopiko Kapal Api candy in entering the international market with the image of being an authentic Indonesian coffee candy has a significant impact on brand attitude and brand engagement among consumers (Novalia & Basori, 2023). Therefore, to gain deeper insights into consumer perceptions of the brand, the questionnaire in this research was widely distributed throughout Indonesia via various social media platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. The questionnaire was distributed to 547 respondents, who voluntarily provided responses related to this research questionnaire. There were 236 respondent responses that exhibited response bias, showing a tendency to select consecutive identical numbers for each question. Therefore, after conducting a screening test, the collected data was reduced to 311 responses that can be considered to significantly represent the population. The item assessment in this research was conducted using a Likert scale with a range of 7 points, starting from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This study utilized a set of statement items drawn from previous empirical research that has demonstrated good reliability and validity for all tested variables. Four items for the Brand Attitude (BA) variable were adapted from Hwang et al. (2021), seven items for the Brand engagement (BI) variable were adapted from Xi and Hamari (2020), and three items for the Positive brand referral (PBR) variable were adapted from Hsu, L. C (2019).

In the execution of this research, data analysis is performed using the SmartPLS 4 software. The analytical approach utilized is the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. The application of PLS aims to analyze causal-predictive relationships in models with high complexity (Ghozali & Latan, 2014). Thus, the use of PLS allows for the identification of more optimal predictive linear relationships in the data, which can then be used to confirm theories and relationships among latent variables in this research.
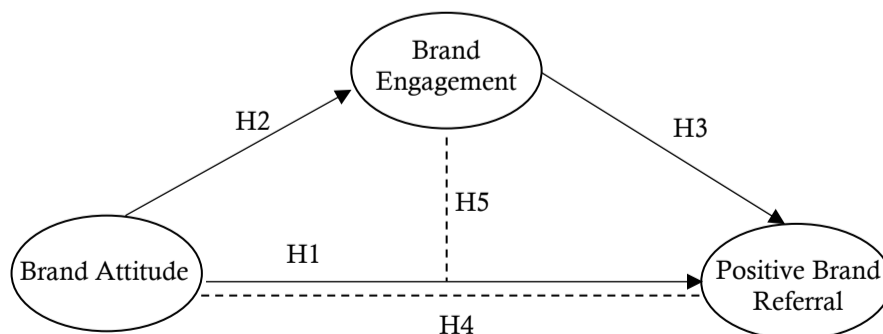

Figure 1. Research Conceptual

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Referring to respondent characteristics, the majority of the total 311 respondents were female (55%), aged 17-22 years (53%), with education up to high school level (64%), students (50%), with income below Rp. 1,000,000 (56%), and residing in Sumatra (57%). Hence, women are the dominant group as consumers of Kopiko Kapal Api candy in Indonesia. More detailed information about respondent characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' Characteristics

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	170	55%
Male	141	45%
Age		
17-22 years old	165	53%
23-30 years old	146	47%
Education		
SMA/SMK/MA kebawah (High School or Equivalent)	198	64%
D3 dan S1 (Diploma and Undergraduate)	101	32%
S2 dan S3 (Postgraduate)	12	4%
Occupation		
Student	154	50%
Private Sector Employee	88	28%
Civil Servant	69	22%
Domicile		
Sumatera	176	57%
Jawa	100	32%
Kalimantan	12	4%
Sulawesi	8	3%
Papua	3	1%
Bali dan Nuasa Tenggara	2	1%
Salary/Month		
<Rp1.000.000	175	56%
Rp1.000.000 - Rp5.000.000	112	36%
Rp5.000.000 – Rp10.000.000	24	8%

The factor weights and Average of Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct serve as significant parameters in the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The analysis of the measurement model is conducted by examining the factor weight values on the items in the measurement model, with factor weight values > 0.7 and Average of Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). In Table 2, all items for each variable have factor weight values > 0.7, and the AVE values exceed 0.5. This indicates that all constructs meet the criteria and have satisfactory convergent validity. Hair et al. (2019) explain that the range of composite reliability values and Cronbach's α > 0.7 can be considered satisfactory and reliable. Discriminant validity parameters can be observed through the cross-loading values of indicators in each construct, which should be higher than the values in other construct blocks. Table 3 shows that the cross-loading values of indicators meet the criteria.

Table 2. Measurement Model Analysis

Construct	Loading Factor	Average of variance extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's α
Brand Attitude (SM)		0.645	0.845	0.725
SM1	0.779			
SM2	0.808			
SM3	0.822			
Brand Engagement (KM)		0.581	0.917	0.897
KM1	0.793			
KM2	0.750			
KM4	0.776			
KM5	0.753			
KM6	0.772			
KM7	0.733			
KM9	0.758			
KM10	0.760			
Positive Brand Referral (RMP)		0.632	0.837	0.710
RMP1	0.742			
RMP2	0.813			
RMP3	0.827			

Table 3. Cross Loading

	Brand Attitude (SM)	Brand Engagement (KM)	Positive Brand Referral (RMP)
SM1	**0.779**	0.522	0.453
SM2	**0.808**	0.580	0.502
SM3	**0.822**	0.573	0.434
KM1	0.574	**0.793**	0.629
KM2	0.591	**0.750**	0,601
KM4	0.531	**0.776**	0.550
KM5	0.493	**0.753**	0.546
KM6	0.487	**0.772**	0.608
KM7	0.514	**0.733**	0.556
KM9	0.521	**0.758**	0.567
KM10	0.524	**0.760**	0.560
RMP1	0.371	0.512	**0.742**
RMP2	0.476	0.635	**0.813**
RMP3	0.517	0.651	**0.827**

Table 4 presents the results regarding the relationships between constructs. The analysis results indicate that H1 has a positive effect, with the relationship between BA and PBR being not significant (b11= 0.097, ρ 0.135<0.05), thus H1 is not supported. H2 has a positive effect, with BA to BI having a significant relationship (b21= 0.696, ρ 0.000<0.05), hence H2 is supported. Furthermore, the relationship between BI and PBR has a positive and significant effect (b31= 0.677 , ρ 0.000>0.05), thus H3 is supported. Additionally, the mediating effect on the relationship between BA and PBR mediated by BI has a negative and significant effect (b41= -0.471 , ρ 0.000<0.05), thus H4 is supported. Regarding the moderating effect of BI on the relationship between BA and PBR, it has a positive but not significant influence (b51= 0.090 , ρ 0.090<0.05), so H5 is not supported. Overall, the structural model explains a good level of fit and prediction.

Table 4. Structural Analysis Result

Path	Path Coeficient	P Values	Hypothesis	Result
SM→RMP	0.097	0.135	H1	Not Supported
SM→KM	0.696	0.000	H2	Supported
KM→RMP	0.677	0.000	H3	Supported
SM→KM→RMP(Mediation)	-0.471	0.000	H4	Supported
Moderation Effect 1→RMP	0.037	0.090	H5	Not Supported

This study analyzes the relationships among brand attitude, brand engagement, and positive brand referral. Thus, the findings of this research can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, brand attitude does not significantly influence positive brand referral (H1). While brand attitude can influence how consumers evaluate a product, it cannot be assured that consumers' brand attitudes consistently lead them to recommend products from that brand to others in their environment. The findings of this research align with Davtyan & Tashchian (2022), indicating that brand attitude does not significantly contribute to the emergence of positive references for a brand. This is attributed to the mismatch between the expectations of consumers and the quality of products or services provided by the brand. When consumer expectations do not align with the quality of products or services provided by a brand, it impacts consumer attitudes toward the brand, reducing the likelihood of consumers providing positive references for that brand (Davtyan & Tashchian, 2022; Nayeem et al., 2019; Arghashi & Yuksel, 2022). Therefore, this study suggests that Kopiko Kapal Api continuously test and adjust strategic recommendations in building and maintaining positive consumer attitudes toward the brand, in line with market dynamics and product characteristics.

Secondly, brand attitude has a positive influence on the level of consumer involvement with the brand (H2). This means that a positive attitude creates an emotional and affective connection between consumers and the brand, which can enhance consumer involvement with that brand (Rasool et al., 2020). Consumers with a positive attitude toward a brand tend to provide positive support (Pina & Dias, 2021). For consumers of Kopiko Kapal Api candy, this positive attitude will be reflected in positive responses to marketing content produced by Kopiko Kapal Api, such as advertisements, brand interactions with consumers on social media through presented content, and more. The findings of this research are consistent with studies by Giakoumaki & Krepapa (2020) and Wang et al. (2019), affirming that positive consumer attitudes toward a brand drive active involvement, creating dynamics between brand preferences and consumer interactions. In this context, brand engagement includes participation in every event organized by the brand, repeat purchases, and interaction in the brand's fan community. Thus, to enhance consumer involvement with the brand, this study suggests that Kopiko Kapal Api can take strategic steps such as innovating candy products, expanding the reach of the Kopiko Kapal Api candy fan community through social media, actively interacting with consumers on social media platforms, and providing prompt responses to consumer feedback.

Thirdly, brand engagement can significantly influence the formation of positive brand referral (H3). In this context, when consumers of Kopiko Kapal Api candy feel emotionally involved, they tend to have a better perception of Kopiko Kapal Api candy. This involvement can stem from direct experiences with Kopiko Kapal Api candy, interactions with the brand on social media, or through attention-grabbing marketing campaigns. This is confirmed by the research conducted by Obilo et al. (2021), stating that the level of consumer involvement with a brand positively correlates with an increase in positive brand referral. In this case, consumer involvement with the brand creates a strong bond between consumers and the brand, thus increasing the likelihood that consumers will provide positive references for the brand to others (Kim et al., 2019). Consumer brand engagement can also strengthen consumer loyalty (Farhat et al,m 2021). Therefore, this study suggests that Kopiko Kapal Api candy make efforts to enhance consumer involvement through effective strategies by building a positive brand image in the market, fostering consumer engagement, which can then become a primary driver of positive brand referral, and creating engaging consumer experiences.

Fourthly, consumer involvement with the brand plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between consumer attitudes toward the brand and positive brand referral (H4). When consumers feel involved with a brand, it can influence how they form attitudes toward that brand (Kang et al., 2020). Consumer involvement with the brand can create a stronger emotional bond, serving as the foundation for the formation of positive consumer attitudes (Hwang et al., 2021). This result is supported by research from Cheung et al. (2021), stating that when consumers feel involved with a brand, they tend to have a

more positive perception of the brand's values, product or service quality, and overall brand experience. Consumer brand engagement can also enhance consumer awareness of the brand, making consumers more susceptible to persuasive messages conveyed in marketing content (Cheung et al., 2021). Thus, in this context, consumer brand engagement can act as a mediator in the relationship between consumer attitudes toward the brand and positive brand referral. Consequently, this study suggests that Kopiko Kapal Api design more effective marketing and communication strategies by focusing their efforts on increasing consumer involvement as a way to strengthen positive attitudes and build positive brand referral.

Lastly, the role of consumer brand engagement in influencing the relationship between consumer attitudes toward the brand and positive brand referral (H5). The results of this study indicate that brand engagement can positively influence the relationship between brand attitudes and positive brand referral. However, as the level of consumer brand engagement increases, the relationship between brand attitudes and positive brand referral seems to decrease or weaken. In this context, the level of consumer brand engagement can serve as a moderating factor. This means that the level of consumer involvement reflects the extent to which consumers are emotionally engaged with a particular brand (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019). If consumers have a high level of involvement, they will be more critical and selective in forming positive references related to that brand (Kang et al., 2020). Thus, consumers will consider giving references related to that brand to others (Kang et al., 2020). Therefore, this study suggests that marketing and communication strategies for Kopiko Kapal Api candies should be tailored to the level of consumer involvement. In efforts to increase consumer brand engagement through deeper interactions and captivating experiences, this can be a key strategy to optimize the positive influence of consumer attitudes toward the brand in forming positive brand referral.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The research results indicate that although brand attitudes do not significantly influence positive brand referral, this can be attributed to the mismatch between consumer expectations and the quality of products or services provided by the brand. The implication is that Kopiko Kapal Api candies are advised to continuously test and adjust strategies in building and maintaining positive consumer attitudes toward the brand, in line with the changing dynamics of the market and product characteristics.

This study also asserts that brand attitudes have a positive impact on the level of consumer engagement with the brand. Positive attitudes create emotional and affective relationships that enhance consumer engagement, especially through positive responses to marketing content, such as advertisements and brand interactions on social media. Therefore, the marketing strategy for Kopiko Kapal Api candies can focus more on leveraging positive consumer attitudes to strengthen consumer engagement with the brand. In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights for Kopiko Kapal Api candies to refine marketing strategies and brand interactions with consumers to maximize positive impacts on consumer engagement levels and, consequently, strengthen consumer-brand relationships that can shape positive brand referral.

Additionally, this research can broaden understanding regarding the relationship between brand attitudes and brand engagement that can influence positive brand referral. Furthermore, the study reveals that consumer engagement with the brand is a moderating factor that can enhance the significance of the relationship between consumer attitudes toward the brand and positive brand referral. Additionally, the research provides in-depth explanations on how consumer engagement with Kopiko Kapal Api can strengthen the relationship between consumer attitudes and positive brand referral.

In addition to theoretical implications, this research provides practical implications for Kopiko Kapal Api regarding marketing efforts that can optimize their endeavors to build a positive brand image. Understanding that consumer engagement is not only a result of consumer attitudes toward the brand but can also reinforce its influence, Kopiko Kapal Api can design more precise strategies to enhance consumer engagement levels. This may involve the development of more interactive social media marketing campaigns and increased interaction with consumers through social media platforms.

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the generalization of results is constrained by respondent characteristics, sample size, and industry focus on confectionery. The research findings may not be entirely applicable to different contexts or industries. Future studies could broaden their focus to other industries or economic sectors to gain more diverse insights. Second, this study only considers the relationships between brand attitude and brand engagement with positive brand referral, without incorporating other external variables that may influence positive brand referral. Future research could explore additional variables to present a more holistic understanding. Lastly, the research participants were predominantly from Sumatra (57%), indicating uneven geographical coverage in Indonesia.

Subsequent studies may further diversify by implementing data collection strategies that cover underrepresented regions, such as providing specific incentives to respondents from those areas. Thus, the collected data can be more geographically representative.

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