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Relationship between Brand Perceptions and Satisfaction: Empirical Study on Skin Products in Malaysia

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Abstract: In the highly competitive marketplace, marketers for the skin care product are facing challenges with identifying the consumer's brand perception and brand satisfaction. Brand satisfaction is perceived as an important issue on skin care industry. Obviously, customers are the important stakeholders in organizations and their satisfaction is a priority to the company. This study aims to investigate the relationship between brand perceptions and brand satisfaction on skin care products with four independent variables (quality, promotion, image and preference). This study employed the statistic software of SPSS version 19.0 to evaluate 200 sets of questionnaires which collected from students, undergraduates, working adults and other respondents. The findings in this study shows that the brand perceptions on quality, image and preference have positive and significant relationship with brand satisfaction on skin care products. However, the relationship between brand perception on promotion and brand satisfaction is being rejected. Thus, the marketers can focus on perception on quality, image and preference to increase customers' brand satisfaction to capture and retain them.

Keywords: *Brand satisfaction, brand perceptions, skin care, image, preference*

1. Introduction

Branding is an important aspect in marketing. Consumer is one of the factors that influence the brand perceptions toward brand satisfaction particularly in skin care industry. However, this industry is too wide. Thus, this research focuses on a specific area of the industry, namely "skin care products". Besides products, skin care industry also includes treatment services performed to uplift or keep optimal hygienic conditions, excluding medical treatment. Interestingly, beauty and skin care nowadays not only associated with young ladies but both female and male of all ages. Euromonitor International (2011) claimed that Malaysian leading brand is L'Oreal, with market share of 12%. This is followed closely by Procter and Gamble with share of 11% and others like Estee Lauder, Shiseido, Amway and Unilever. On one hand, there are a lot of brands in the market for consumers to choose. On the other hand, trying new brand of skin care products may be high risk hat include allergy, rashes to skin as well as other health and cosmetic issues. Lacking of consideration of advantages of skin care products may also cause consumers being trapped by advertisements that may inspire them spend too much money and may not meet their requirements. These have caused brands perceptions on skin care products become more important than reality because it is associated with brand recognition, where consumers able to recall and differentiate the brand in variety conditions (Wonglorsaichon and Sathainrapabayut, 2008). Customer mind is more significant than ever in determining brand perceptions. Dodds, Monroe & Grewal (1991) stated that when brand perception is more favourable, consumers attribute higher quality to the product, and their perception of the product's value and the overall willingness to purchase is greater. A loyal consumer will most probably be having experience with the brand while experienced buyers are more possible to test new concept from the brand (Swaminathan, 2003). In order to have a brand preference, the consumer must learn about the brand from their past experience with the brand they consume (Sheth & Partvatiyar, 2002). After experience consumers can determine their preferences (Hoch and Deighton, 1989). Yet, it is unknown of which aspects of brand perception are important to customers' satisfaction. Therefore, this research aims to identify the brand perceptions and brand satisfaction on skin care products in Malaysia. It seeks to examine and understand the relationship between four independent variables, namely brand perceptions on (i) quality, (ii) promotion, (iii) image and (iv) preference to brand satisfaction on skin care products.

2. Literature Review

The first step of corporate learning to compete in the world market is to understand the consumer perceptions (Craig & Douglas, 1996). We found that most of the people like to observe stimulus that relate to their existing needs while they are conscious and purposeful allocation of attention. So, there are four dimensions which may include in brand perceptions on skin care products that comprise (i) quality, (ii) promotion, (iii) image and (iv) preference which have the relationship with the brand satisfaction.

Quality: Quality is a continuous process to make and retain satisfaction of needs, both affirmed and required. Applying to the scope of this study, knowing the skin care product is from a good quality brand can affect the experience of using it. Therefore, better perception on quality leads to higher success possibility of brand (Allenby & Rossi, 1991; Chang & Wildt, 1994; Dawar& Parker, 1994). Keller (1993) explained that attributes are expressive features which distinguished a product or service that shape the potential buyer's idea of what a product or service is or has. Thus, attributes of a product is related to its physical properties or service's requirements. For the value, it grouped into certain definitions which are value is low price, whatever I need in a product, the price that I pay from the quality, and what I get for what I give (Zeithaml, 1998). Besides, quality assurance plays an important role in the skin care products. It is a guaranteed offer by the product or service provider to meets certain quality level. Meanwhile, ISO 9000:2006 stated that quality assurance is an assurance of the product-specific requirements, test specifications, general requirements and legal compliance. This required identifying the meaning of "quality"; specifying the system to ensure its existence; and specifying the measurement of its conformance (Eurostat 2012). Furthermore, SERVQUAL is commonly used as service quality framework to measure the level of quality on service sector. Its components are reliability, capability, responsiveness, access, politeness, believability, communication, safety, knowing or understanding the customer and tangibles. In this study, this framework has been modified into RATER model, which measurement consist of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness.

Promotion: Brand promotion is concerned with the active and positive communication of the brand and its value. Brand promotions observe that some consumers actively seek out promotion for preferred brands (Shankar and Krisnamurthi,1996). Brand implies a mark (symbol or sign) or design or their combination used to distinguish the product from its competitors. There are four major types of promotion on skin care products. First, advertising is the process of using a wide range of promotional tools working together to create a brand satisfaction. It can change the purchase attitudes of a person toward the targeted product (Evans & Lindsay, 2010). Second, free samples or gifts are one of significant promotional tools in marketing. It influences the consumers and motivated the likelihood of purchase after trying (Heilman, Lakishyk, and Radas, 2006). Therefore, samples are one of the brand promotion methods that will have relationship with the brand satisfaction on skin care products. Third, according to Arens (1985), offer in-store display or testimonials materials able to build additional store traffic, exhibit and advertise the product, and promote impulse buying with use of designed advertising like device. Fourth, price discounts showed the immediate reduction of the regular price on a product's label on package (Kotler, 2003; and Pride and Ferrell, 1997). Brand perception on promotion like price discounts are used to favourably sway consumer's opinion of the promotional product's fair price, improve perceived value, and boost brand satisfaction for a purchase or intentions to purchase (Darke and Dahl, 2003).

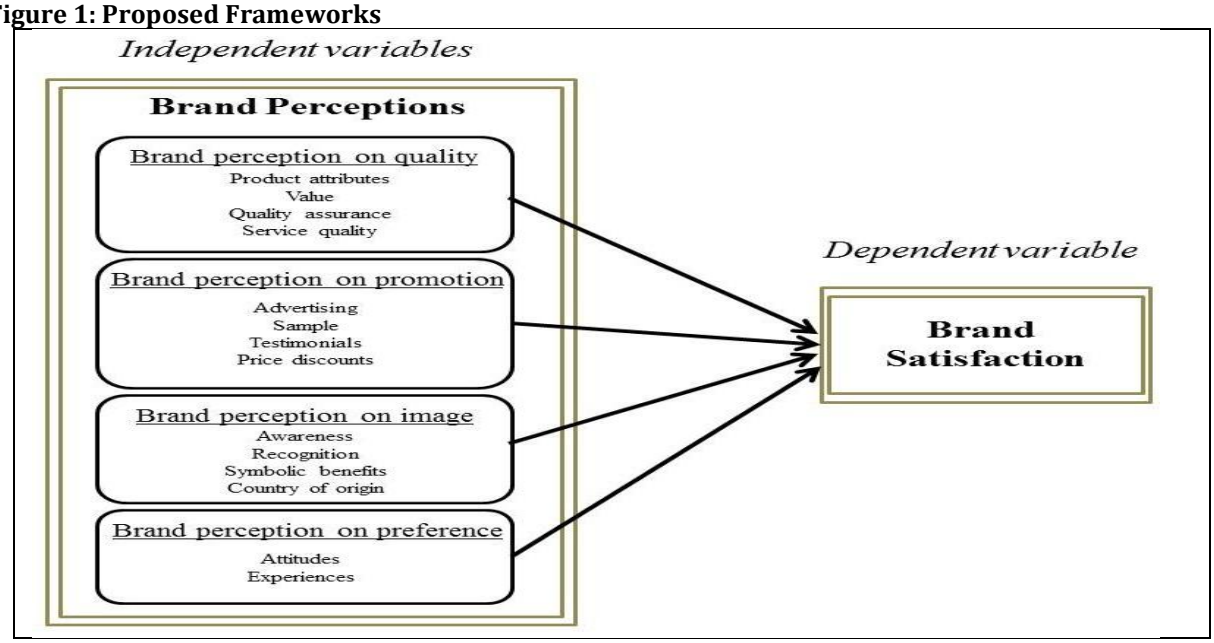
Image: Brand image is vital as consumers are believed to conclude the product quality through brand image that subsequently stimulates purchasing behaviour. Based on Herzog (1963) and Newman (1957) and others, brand image adopted is perception on the brand as reveals by its associations in customers' thought. So, in our study, the brand image perception includes four dimensions which are awareness, recognition, symbolic benefits and country of origin with brand satisfaction. Brand awareness influence consideration about brands. For instance, customers have been revealed to accept a judgment instruction to purchase merely recognizable, well-established brands (Jacoby, Syzabillo and Busato-Schach, 1977; Roselius, 1971). Brand awareness also affects people decision consideration by affecting the structure and strength of band association within brand image, which include recognition. It refers to the act of identifying someone or something about the skin care products because of previous knowledge or to formally acknowledge so that it will lead to higher brand satisfaction. Keller (1993) claimed brand image could be categorized into functional,

experiential and symbolic benefits. These symbolic benefits were allied with fundamental needs for individual expression, societal endorsement and external-directed self-esteem, which is mainly correspond to non-product linked attributes. According to Stephen, Maznah Wan Omar, Nabsiah Abdul Wahid Ishak Ismail and Amran Harun (2007), symbolic benefits are positively related to brand satisfaction. Paswan and Sharma (2004) recommended that favourable perceptions about a country lead to favourable perception to brands originated in that country. Therefore, the impacts from reputation country image should be considered in marketing actions for bi-national products. Researcher should also take note that Na, Marshall, and Keller (1990) noted that "image also comprise the dimensions of buyers' insights of assessment and benefits gain from utilize the brand".

Preferences: Brand preference is how far consumer favours particular brand or company relative to others within the set of choices (Hellier, 2003: 1765). Our research includes attitude and experience in the brand perception on preference. According to Kotler & Keller (2009), attitude is a lasting and pleasing emotion, the appraisal tendency toward a plan or thing. These implied that attitude is highly resistant to change because of the present of sensitive nature. It is manifested in consumer's preferences. Brand preference also influenced greatly by earlier consumer's experiences (Keiningham, Perkins-Munn, Aksoy & Estrin, 2005). Thus, a good consumer experience leads buyer to custom a preference for a brand, buyer's overall assessment of all brands' stimuli and it resulted from the buyer's perceptions and satisfaction with their experience to the dimensions of service brand (Grace and O'Cass, 2005; Hellier, 2003). Therefore, this research comes out with the dependent variable of brand satisfaction on skin care products. Brand satisfaction is means that keeping existing customers who already have satisfied and loyal to the brand is just as important to volume of sales. Also, satisfaction is the fulfil response of customer about the service and product (Oliver, 1997).

Brand satisfaction: Brand satisfaction is the fulfill response of customer about the service and product (Oliver, 1997). Brand attitudes and satisfaction are viewed as different concepts in the customer satisfaction literature (Oliver, 1980; Yi, 1990). Based on Oliver (1980), consumer's satisfaction is rather transient and consumption specific, but attitude is rather enduring. Westbrook and Oliver (1980) claimed that satisfaction is a valuation, while brand attitude is a fondness for the product. Furthermore, determining consumer satisfaction allows the firm to obtain many benefits (Evans & Lindsay, 2010). Likewise, Andreassen and Lindestad (1998) argued that consumer satisfaction is the collected experience of a customer's purchase and consumption experiences. It is usually understood that a satisfied consumer has higher probability for repeat buy and keen to spread positive words of mouth (Taylor, 1998: Bennett & Rundle- Thiele, 2004; Shultz, 2005). Deriving the gaps from the literatures, Figure 1 summaries the proposed framework.

Figure 1: Proposed Frameworks



The theoretical framework or conceptual framework that proposed as above is modified based on Kerry M. Lanza (2008) and Ahmad Jamal & Goode (2001). We focus on the skin care product of brand perception on product quality, promotion, image and preferences as independent variables and brand satisfaction as dependent variable.

3. Methodology

Quantitative is design in our study because it is to quatify the data by applying statistical analysis. Primary data are collected through questionnaire survey to the respondents. According to Malhotra and Peterson (2001), sampling design is the outline of the study target population, sample size, sampling technique, and methods of selecting respondents. Selecting the target population is also according to the convenience of the researcher in order to distribute and collect the questionnaire from the target population. Sampling location of this study has chosen Klnag Valley area to conduct the sampling process. This is because the area in Klang Valley gathers the most differences people around the country and it is Malaysia's most attractive economic hotspot. In a nutshell, sampling element defined as the item from which information is favored (Malhotra et al., 2002). Respondents consist students, undergraduates, working adults and others users of skin care products. Total of 50 copies of pre-test sample (pilot-test) have been distributed and carried out before conducting formal survey which is 200 in sample size. This is to make sure the correctness and quality of the questionnaire survey. Roscoe (1975) found that rule of thumbs is that sample size of more than 30 but less than 500 are more suitable for the study. The questionnaire is designed in English language and was divided into two parts which are Demographic Information and General Information (Part A) like age, gender, race, marital status, level of education, occupation as well as income level and Construct Measurement (Part B) such questions are all about the relationship between brand perceptions and brand satisfaction on skin care products. Empirical analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 19 programs. Cronbach's Alpha (reliability test) has been exercised to determine the internal reliability of pilot test and actual samples to determine the consistency of measuring of a certain concept (Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran 2001). According to Malhotra et al. (2002), reliability was considered weak when alpha coefficient was lower than 0.6 but considered as strong if range between 0.8 and 1.0.

The construct measurement adapted from Sekaran (2003). In Section A, we was designed using nominal and interval scale. In Section B, the four variables are being measured on the five-point Likert scale range which are "Strongly Disagree" "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree". These is to analyses the level of agreement or disagreement on the dependent variable (brand satisfaction), and independent variables (brand perception on quality, brand perception on promotion, brand perception on image and brand perception on preference). Missing value is being treated as incomplete responses and will be rejected. The descriptive statistics (frequencies analysis) is performed on independent variables which consist of brand perception on quality, brand perception on promotion, brand perception on image, and brand perception on preference. Result will be show in mean and ranked in position of 1 to 5. The highest result in Mean would determine that respondents are more likely to agree into particular variable on skin care products toward brand satisfaction. Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis is applied to describe the link between two continuous variables. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1.00 to 1.00, with zero value implying completely no systematic association between two variables (Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2003). Pearson's correlation analysis method is chosen because correlation can be compared without regarding to amount of variation exhibited by each variable separately at 1% significance level. Multiple linear regressions (MLR) is used to analyze the linear relationship between dependent variable and independent variables, which are the four hypothesis in this study. The general equation for multiple linear regressions in this study is as followed:

$BS = \alpha + \beta_1 Q + \beta_2 P_O + \beta_3 I + \beta_4 Pe + e$

Where, BS=Brand satisfaction (dependent variable); Q=Brand perception on quality; Po=Brand perception on promotion; I = Brand perception on image; Pe= Brand perception on preference; e = error term.

4. Results and Discussion

Demographic profile is asked in Section A of the survey questionnaire. There are total of nine questions on the respondent's demographic profiles (see Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency Table on Demographic Profiles

Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Do you use skin care product?		
Yes	200	100.0
No	0	0.0
Gender		
Male	104	52.0
Female	96	48.0
Race		
Malay	0	0.0
Chinese	195	97.5
India	3	1.5
Others	2	1.0
Age		
18-22 years old	94	47.0
23-27 years old	90	45.0
28-32 years old	11	5.5
33-37 years old	1	0.5
38-42 years old	0	0.0
43-47 years old	1	0.5
48 years old and above	3	1.5
Marital status		
Single	191	95.5
Married	9	4.5
Divorced	0	0.0
Widowed	0	0.0
Level of education		
SPM	13	6.5
STPM or PRE-U or Diploma	41	20.5
Bachelor's Degree	141	70.5
Master's Degree	3	1.5
Doctoral Degree	2	1.0
Other	0	0.0
Occupation		
Employed	43	21.5
Unemployed	20	10.0
Homemaker	1	0.5
Student	132	66.0
Free-lance	4	2.0
Retired	0	0.0
Monthly income or allowance per month		
Less than RM1,000	149	74.5
RM1,000-RM2,000	18	9.0
RM2,001-RM3,000	24	12.0
RM3,001-RM4,000	4	2.0
Above RM4,000	5	2.5
Brand of skin care product		
The Body Shop	27	13.5
Garnier	21	10.5
Nivea	20	10.0
Clean & clear	18	9.0
Artistry	16	8.0
Clinique	13	6.5
L'oreal	10	5.0
Neutrogena	7	3.5
Biotherm	5	2.5
L'ancome	3	1.5
Avon	2	1.0
Other	58	29.0

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Variables

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Quality	200	3.60	0.47
Preference	200	3.55	0.57
Image	200	3.55	0.46
Promotion	200	3.21	0.66

Three independent variables used to measure brand satisfaction, namely quality, preference, image and promotion. The measurement scale ranged from "strongly disagreed" (rating of 1) to "strongly agree" (rating of "5"). Table 2 shows that quality has highest mean of 3.60 whereas promotion has lowest mean of 3.21. Therefore, on average, respondents give highest satisfaction rate to quality perception with brand satisfaction on skin care product while lowest satisfaction rate to promotion perception with brand satisfaction.

Table 3: Summary of the Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Item
Quality	0.848	15
Promotion	0.906	13
Image	0.830	12
Preference	0.902	11
Brand Satisfaction	0.838	5

This test is applied to examine reliability of all 56 items used to measure the five constructs. Referring to the reliability test as in Table 3, promotion had the highest level of Cronbach's Alpha which is 0.906 (number of items measure are 13). Second highest is preference which is 0.902 (number of items measure are 11), followed by quality which is 0.848 (number of items measure are 15). The lowest of Cronbach's Alpha value is image which is 0.830 (number of items measure are 12). Brand satisfaction which is the dependent variable had the Cronbach's Alpha of 0.838 (number of items measure are 5). In summary, the reliability analysis for the five constructs indicates high level of internal consistency for the scale due, where the reliability statistics is more than 0.80. Therefore, all the items in measuring the five variables are reliable.

The respective correlation pairs of quality, promotion, image and preference with brand satisfaction are all significant with positive correlation (see Table 4). Each of the quality, image and preference has correlation of more than 0.70, implying a strong correlation with brand satisfaction. Only promotion has a weak correlation with brand satisfaction, which is 0.251. Therefore, promotion is not significant on 1% level. Preference has a significant, strong and positive correlation with the brand satisfaction on skin care products which is 0.740, followed by image (0.727) and quality (0.715). Thus, brand perceptions on preference, image and quality have strong and positive correlation with brand satisfaction on skin products at 1% significant level.

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation Analysis

		Q	Po	I	Pe	BS
Q	Pearson Correlation	1	.251**	.764**	.731**	.715**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
Po	Pearson Correlation	.251**	1	296**	.227**	.251**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000		.000	.001	.000
I	Pearson Correlation	.764**	.296**	1	.742**	.727**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
Pe	Pearson Correlation	.731**	.227**	.742**	1	.740**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.001	.000		.000
BS	Pearson Correlation	.715**	.251**	.727**	740**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

(Note: Sample size (N) is 200 for all variables)

As showed by the Table 5a, correlation coefficient, R = 0.800. High R value implies that brand satisfaction on skin care product (predicted variable) has strong relationship with observed or independent variables (quality, promotion, image and preference). Besides that, the adjusted R square is equal to 0.639. This indicates 63.9% of the variance in brand satisfaction on skin care products has been explained by brand perceptions on quality, promotion, image, and preference. This implies that the model has work well in explaining the variation in brand satisfaction toward skin care products.

Table 5a: Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.800[a]	.639	.632	.3136

Table 5b: ANOVA of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	34.005	4	8.501	86.441	.000[a]
Residual	19.178	195	.098		
Total	53.183	199			

Table 5c: Coeficient of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.461	.194		2.376	.018
	Quality	.267	.080	.242	3.359	.001
	Promotion	.024	.036	.030	0.669	.504
	Image	.304	.084	.267	3.605	.000
	Preference	.322	.063	.357	5.149	.000

Table 5b ANOVA shows the significant of overall model. The ANOVA test result shows the F-test statistic value of 86.441, thus the model is proven to be statistically significant at 1% level. This implies that at least one of the independent variable does explain the dependent variable. For t-test, three significant values (α) are used, which are 1%, 5% and 10%. Table 5c indicates that quality is significant at 1% level (with t-value = 3.359, p = 0.001 < 0.01), image is also significant at 1% level (t-value = 3.605, p = 0.000 < 0.01). Preference is significant at 1 % level (t-value = 5.149, p = 0.000 < 0.01). Highly significant coefficients (at α =1%) for quality, image and preference statistically supported their relationship with brand satisfaction on skin care product. However, promotion is not significant even at α=10% level (t-value = 0.669, p = 0.504 > 0.10). Therefore, there is no significant relationship between brand perception on promotion and brand satisfaction on skin care product.

5. Conlusion

Results are summaried according to their respective hypothesis in Table 6 and revealed that there is significant relationship between brand perception on quality and brand satisfaction on skin care products (H1). Fornell et al. (1996) recommended brand perception on quality have a relationship with the satisfaction of the customer receives that subsequently affects future buying patterns. Despite agreeing that value is positively related to customer's satisfaction, Bryant's (1996) research results showed that the impact of quality on overall satisfaction is greater than value.

Table 6: The summary of research question hypothesis and result

Hypotheses		Result	Supported
H1:	There is a significant relationship between brand perception on quality and brand satisfaction on skin care products.	β = 0.267 Sig = 0.001 (< 0.01)	YES
H2:	There is a significant relationship between brand perception on promotion and brand satisfaction on skin care products.	β = 0.024 Sig = 0.504 (> 0.01)	NO
H3:	There is a significant relationship between brand perception on image and brand satisfaction on skin care products.	β = 0.304 Sig = 0.000 (< 0.01)	YES
H4:	There is significant relationship between brand perception on preference and brand satisfaction on skin care products.	β = 0.322 Sig = 0.000 (< 0.01)	YES

The second hypothesis (H2) about relationship between brand perception on promotion and brand satisfaction is not supported. Based on literatures, brand promotion serve as persuasive communication tools as well as economic incentive to entice consumer to purchase (Honea and Dahl, 2005). Therefore, promotion merely has a more sub-role as compare to quality, image and preference. Furthermore, some of the promotional aspect like free sample is to stimulate trial product or speed up the adoption of new products (Block, 1996). Besides that, Ruckman (2005) stated that the promotion of a product can help the company to reposition their brand in the season. Next, he also found out that a brand promotion can help increasing the brand awareness before the consumer have knowledge on the particular product with their benefit and feature (Ruckman, 2005) and not directly aiming to increase brand satisfaction.

The third hypothesis (H3) about relationship between brand perception on image and brand satisfaction is supported. This is consistent with Hsieh, Pan, and Setiono (2004) who stated that good brand image helps customers to recognize the needs for brand to fulfill and distinguish the brand from its substitute, as well as enhancing the probability that customers will buy the brand. According to Reichheld (2001), desirable brand image may influence people to consider a view of a firm's public relationship exercise that consistent with the firm's reputation. The forth hypothesis (H4) about relationship between brand perception on preference and brand satisfaction is also found significant. Russell and Lane (1993) found attitude to be an important predisposition and a strong relationship of brand preference and loyalty. The consumer's preference for one certain brand in term of attitude (Wang, 2003). Bolton and Drew (1991) has also studied the attitudes of people on the brand has the relationship in making brand preferences as well as comparative consumer share of visit or purchase. The people attitudes originated through accessing brands after using it. Therefore, this research study can help those marketers and company to improve their customer satisfaction by enhancing customers' brand perception on quality, image and preference. With a good brand satisfaction, consumer will have a repeat purchasing and word of mouth to increase the brand revenue. Nonetheless, we suggest the future researcher to expand this framework by adding more independent variable which can help the researcher has a better way to discuss the brand perceptions toward the brand satisfaction for the skin care product.

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