

How affection leads to overall brand equity and brand awareness? The mediating role of activation

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Abstract

The food and beverage industry is a sector that deals with highly demanded products. The aim of this study is to examine how the presence of affection influences activation and further, both the overall brand equity and brand awareness. In addition, this study examines activation acting as a mediation factor in the relationship between affection and overall brand equity as well as between affection and brand awareness. There were 202 respondents who had purchased Excelso products participating in this study. The data was analyzed with a structural equation modeling. The findings of this research show affection influences activation and, further, both overall brand equity and brand awareness. In addition, activation mediates the relationship between affection and overall brand equity and between affection and brand awareness.

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Abstrak

Industri makanan dan minuman adalah sektor yang berhubungan dengan produk yang sangat diminati. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menguji bagaimana kehadiran afeksi berdampak pada aktivasi dan lebih jauh lagi, baik pada ekuitas merek secara keseluruhan maupun pada kesadaran merek. Selain itu, penelitian ini menguji aktivasi yang bertindak sebagai faktor mediasi dalam hubungan antara afeksi dan ekuitas merek secara keseluruhan serta antara afeksi dan kesadaran merek. Terdapat 202 responden yang pernah membeli produk Excelso yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Data dianalisis dengan model persamaan struktural. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan *affection* memengaruhi *activation* dan selanjutnya, memengaruhi baik *overall brand equity* maupun *brand awareness*. Hasil lainnya adalah *affection* memengaruhi *overall brand equity* dan *brand awareness* melalui *activation*.

Kata kunci: Afeksi, aktivasi, ekuitas merek secara keseluruhan, dan kesadaran merek

Introduction

The rise of fast food and beverages has created a promising business trend in the food and beverage industry. The revenue in the food market is expected to reach US\$5,892.00 million in 2023 (Statista Ecommerce Food Indonesia, 2023). The expansion of franchises has contributed to the growth of possibilities within the food and beverage industry, facilitating the introduction of innovative products and methods for creating superior food in Indonesia (Fcfibreglass, 2023). The emergence of trends, especially among young people who prefer fast and trendy food, renders the food and beverage industry a vast target market. The food and beverage industry's growth is highlighted by unique cafes with distinctive, cozy, and visually appealing concepts, making them stand out (Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Food and beverage play a crucial role in capturing consumers' attention. Positive affection encourages the creation of more intense relationships with consumers, making a brand more recognizable (Palazon et al., 2015). The strong relationship established with consumers provides an ever-increasing emotional connection due to interactions among consumers. Affection portrays consumers who like a brand, reflected through their attention and preference for a brand (Cheung et al., 2021). The positive emotional connection consumers have with a brand can yield long-term benefits for business development (Choi et al., 2014).

A greater understanding of activation is vital for marketers. Activation refers to consumer behavior involvement derived from a relationship (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2022). Activation fosters customer loyalty by creating emotional ties with a brand. It can establish a positive relationship between consumers and the brand to enhance profits (Harrigan et al., 2017). Therefore, investigating activation in the context of food and beverage is highly important.

Understanding overall brand equity is crucial for marketers. Overall brand equity drives consumer knowledge about a brand (He & Li, 2011). The perceived value by consumers can enhance and promote brand awareness (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). Overall brand equity has been studied in the context of global brands versus local brands (Roy & Chau, 2011). Previous research on overall brand equity has not focused on the food and beverage context (Ali & Alqudah, 2022; Verma, 2021). However, brand awareness needs further discussion. Brand awareness is consumers' understanding of a brand stored in memory and involves brand-related judgments (Du et al., 2022). The initial step in brand awareness is demonstrating consumers' commitment to a brand (Kim et al., 2018). One way to measure brand awareness is by branding through specific products or services. Thus, brand awareness remains alive in customers' minds and can attract purchases for the brand (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021).

The aim of this study is to examine how the presence of affection impacts activation and further, both the overall brand equity and brand awareness. In addition, this study examines activation acting as a mediation factor in the relationship between affection and overall brand equity as well as between affection and brand awareness. This study holds theoretical and

practical significance. Theoretically, research on affection, activation, overall brand equity, and brand awareness are limited in the food and beverage industry (Kent et al., 2019). Practically, this research can assist marketers in understanding consumer preferences and building emotional connections with consumers, enabling the creation of effective marketing strategies (Ali & Alqudah, 2022).

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Theoretical background

Affection

Affection is concerned with the positive feelings experienced by consumers. Affection is defined as the extent to which consumers feel positive emotions towards a specific brand (Ooi et al., 2022). Affection pertains to consumers' cognitive recognition of the brand, reflected in their attention and preference (Cheung et al., 2021). Affection serves as the key driver of consumer interaction with a particular brand (Cheung et al., 2021). The affection process motivates individuals to form social connections by expressing and receiving various emotions (Hesse & Mikkelsen, 2021). Understanding the relationship between affection and a brand presents a new opportunity for marketers. Every form of affection plays a crucial role in someone's experience; therefore, researchers can delve further into this topic.

The topic of affection has been relatively underexplored in previous research in the context of food and beverage. Prior studies have examined affection in the context of loyalty towards telecommunications service providers (Ooi et al., 2022). Affection has also been studied in the context of smartphone technology (Cheung et al., 2021). The current research will focus on the interconnection between affection and marketing. Affection can be conveyed by enhancing a relationship that can attract brand customers, often achieved by marketers providing comfort and friendly service to their customers. This renders affection positively impactful for building strong consumer relationships. Research on affection is highly intriguing and warrants further exploration (Hesse & Mikkelsen, 2021).

Activation

Activation is the willingness to spend time and efforts for making interaction or to a brand (Leckie et al., 2016). Activation identifies consumer interactions that stem from a relationship (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2022). It encompasses the level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement of customers related to interactions with a specific brand (Cheung et al., 2021). Activation forms a strong bond with a brand and establishes a long-lasting psychological relationship (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2022). Activation can reflect consumers' level of engagement with the brand (Ooi et al., 2022).

Activation has been studied before. Previous research has explored activation related to brand equity (Verma, 2021). An earlier study has also examined activation in exploring consumer involvement with brands (Cheung et al., 2021). Activation has a positive impact on customer loyalty and consumer emotional interaction attachment to the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Research on activation is highly intriguing and worth investigating further (Verma, 2021).

Overall brand equity

Overall brand equity is an assessment or consumer perception of the brand. Overall brand equity refers to the different impacts of brand knowledge on brand marketing behavior exhibited by consumers (He & Li, 2011). Overall brand equity is a combination of positive values and perceptions associated with a brand (Verma, 2021). Overall brand equity occurs when a brand is well-known and has several positive and unique associations stored in the minds of consumers (Roy & Chau, 2011). A consumer's perceptual knowledge of the brand influences the consumer's response to brand marketing strategies (Verma, 2021).

Overall brand equity has been researched before. Previous research examined overall brand equity on key service drivers for high-tech services (He & Li., 2011). Previous research also

examined overall brand equity on global brands versus local brands (Roy & Chau, 2011) and the effect of brand involvement and love on brand equity and purchase intention model with mediation (Verma, 2021). Overall brand equity has an impact on the success and sustainability of a brand in the market. Research on overall brand equity is very interesting to explore (Kuvykaite & Pilgrimienė, 2014).

Brand awareness

Brand awareness is essential to advance our understanding of consumers have about a brand. Brand awareness is defined as a consumer's understanding of a brand stored in memory, including all descriptive information and valuations related to the brand (Du et al., 2022). It enables gauging a prospective buyer's ability to recognize a brand within a specific product category (Kim et al., 2018). Brand awareness is widely used to project individual actions in various situations (Du et al., 2022) and serves as the initial step in demonstrating a consumer's commitment to a brand (Kim et al., 2018).

Brand awareness has been studied previously. Earlier research examined brand awareness in the context of repurchase intentions in online knowledge (Du et al., 2022). Previous studies also explored brand awareness regarding the influence of celebrities in literary festivals (Kim et al., 2018). Research on brand awareness indicates that it is a primary business instrument impacting consumers' attitudes and preferences towards a brand (Du et al., 2022). Studies on brand awareness are highly intriguing and worthy of further exploration (Ali & Alqudah, 2022).

Hypothesis development

Affection and activation

Marketers need to recognize the significant influence of affection on activation. Affection is linked to the brand and consumers' personal motivation to interact with a product (Cheung et al., 2021). This intensification occurs as consumers engagement more deeply in brand interactions when the brand is already familiar to them (Palazon et al., 2015). Affection and activation are included in the consumer brand involvement dimension (Verma, 2021). Affection can be reinforced by consumers' emotional attachment to the brand relationship, fostering advantageous interactions (Choi & Choi, 2014). Activation is crucial because it involves psychological processes that can establish a positive relationship between consumers and the brand, enhancing profits (Harrigan et al., 2017). This research is essential as previous studies have been confined to the context of smartphone technology (Cheung et al., 2021) and antecedents of brand equity (Verma, 2021). Affection is believed to exert influence on activation.

This study posits that affection impacts activation, a claim supported by prior research. Cheung et al. (2021) indicate that affection positively affects activation. Emotional sentiments can continually escalate due to consumer involvement with the brand (Choi et al., 2014). Marketing can increase consumer activity through various channels, including social media, clients, user-generated content, celebrity endorsers, and others (Kent et al., 2019). Marketers' proficiency in targeting children and teenagers can present new challenges in developing the food and beverage business. The study by Cheung et al. (2021) asserts that affection is interconnected with activation and wields a significant influence. This study formulates the following hypothesis:

H1: Affection significantly influences activation

Activation and overall brand equity

Understanding the impact of activation on overall brand equity is essential for marketers. Overall brand equity is linked to consumers' perceptions of products, viewed as crucial assets (Verma, 2021). Activation influences overall brand equity based on based on consumer interaction (Ali & Alqudah, 2022). Interactions and responses among customers play a vital role in enhancing overall brand equity (Verma, 2021). This research is significant as previous studies were limited to brand equity antecedents (Verma, 2021).

This study argues that overall brand equity affects activation. This is supported by previous research Verma (2021) stating that activation can influence consumer perceptions. Engagement with a brand can impact brand evaluations, purchase intentions, and create brand equity (Machado et al., 2019). Verma (2021) suggests that overall brand equity significantly influences activation due to the engagement with a brand. This relationship can shape perceptions about the quality of food and beverage products or services. Based on the above discussion, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H2: Activation significantly influences overall brand equity

Activation and brand awareness

Understanding the impact of activation on brand awareness is crucial for marketers. Activation pertains to the relationship between consumers and the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Brand awareness can influence interactions among consumers, shaping their perception of a brand (Hepola et al., 2017). Customer trust in a brand can enhance brand awareness and drive purchases (Abou-Shouk & Soliman., 2021). This research is essential, as previous studies were limited to smartphone technology (Cheung et al., 2021) and tourism contexts (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021).

This study contends that brand awareness affects activation. This is supported by previous research Abou-Shouk & Soliman (2021) indicating that activation significantly impacts brand awareness. A positive correlation can be observed between consumer engagement with a brand and brand awareness, which has the potential to boost and foster greater brand recognition (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). If brand awareness is weak, the brand's connection with customers also weakens (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). Activation has the potential to maintain brand awareness for food and beverage brands in customers' minds. This the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Activation significantly influences brand awareness

Affection, activation, and overall brand equity

Marketers need to recognize the importance of the influence of affection on overall brand equity mediated by activation. France et al. (2016) states that activation has a multidimensional influence, including affection. Affection is the positive emotional behavior of consumers towards a brand, tied to consumer interactions (Leckie et al., 2016). Interactions among consumers lead to overall brand equity, which can have a positive impact on the brand (Ali & Alqudah, 2022). This can serve as the foundation for research to examine the influence of affection on overall brand equity mediated by activation.

This study argues that affection influences overall brand equity mediated by activation. Verma (2021) states that positive feelings towards the brand and consumer involvement play a role in building, strengthening, and enhancing overall brand equity. Activation is a marketing key that creates relationships bound by consumer participation related to brand equity (Schivinski et al., 2020). Creating a supportive environment for the brand to interact with customers can benefit marketers (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Activation has the potential to mediate the relationship between affection and overall brand equity. Referring to the arguments above, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H4: Affection significantly influences overall brand equity mediated by activation

Affection, activation, and brand awareness

Understanding the impact of affection on brand awareness mediated by activation is crucial for marketers. Positive feelings among consumers can quickly lead to brand recognition, reflected in their attention and preferences (Spratt et al., 2009). Consumers with positive brand experiences tend to develop affection (Cheung et al., 2021). The influence of affection on brand awareness mediated by activation will enhance consumers' positive experiences and improve brand recall

(Choi & Choi, 2014). This can form the basis of research to examine the impact of affection on brand awareness through the mediation of activation.

This study argues that affection influences brand awareness mediated by activation. Affection makes consumers aware of the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Positive interactions between consumers and the brand have an impact on higher brand awareness (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021). Affectionate feelings motivate consumers to think proactively, engaging actively with the brand (Adhikari & Panda, 2019). Activation potentially mediates the relationship between affection and brand awareness. Based on these points, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H5: Affection significantly influences brand awareness mediated by activation

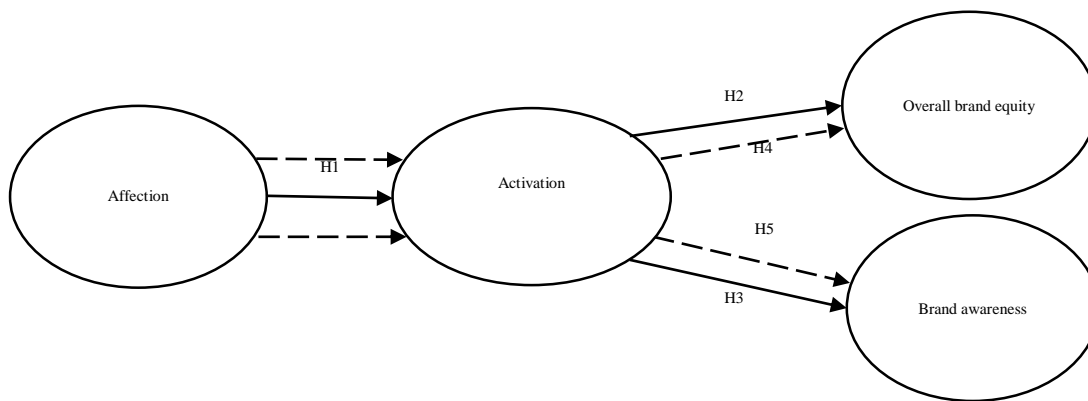


Figure 1.
Research Framework

Methods

Excelso is an Indonesian food and beverage brand with a presence in over 100 outlets across 30 cities in Indonesia (Reynaldo et al., 2015). Excelso builds trust with its customers by offering top-notch products and services (Reynaldo et al., 2015). Excelso products are tailored to meet the needs of high-end segments, including business executives, public figures, and business meetings (Reynaldo et al., 2015). The goal is to transform the negative perceptions surrounding food and beverage, positioning it as a high-quality product (Reynaldo et al., 2015). Excelso has long-term business plans, involving collaborations with hotels, restaurants, cafes, and offices (Reynaldo et al., 2015).

This research employs non-probability sampling with the purposive sampling technique, aligning with specific criteria (Acharya et al., 2013). The criteria for respondents in this study include consumers who have purchased Excelso products. The questionnaires for this research were distributed directly in Excelso outlets and online through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp.

This research method utilizes a Likert scale assessment. This assessment is employed to gauge individuals' opinions on a scale ranging from one to seven (Preston & Colman, 2000). The scale spans from one, indicating "Strongly Disagree," to seven, indicating "Strongly Agree," to generate valid scores (Preston & Colman, 2000). Affection was measured using four items from Cheung et al. (2021). Activation was measured using two items from Verma (2021). Overall brand equity was measured using three items from Verma (2021). Brand awareness was measured using three items from Abou-Shouk & Soliman (2021). The statement indicators measuring the variables in this study are presented in Table 1.

Results and discussion

The respondents of this study have certain characteristics. Most respondents were aged between 21 - 25 years (45%), followed by 26 - 30 years (25.7%), 16 - 20 years (15.3%), 31 - 35 years (10%), and above 35 years (4%). In this study there were more male respondents (53%) than women (47%). Most respondents were in bachelor program (67.3%), master program (14.4%), associate program (10.4%), senior high school (5.9%), and doctoral program (2%).

Table 1.
Research instrument

Variable	Code	Description
Affection	AFF01	I feel very positive when consuming the Excelso brand.
	AFF02	Consuming Excelso brand make me happy.
	AFF03	I feel comfortable when consuming the Excelso brand.
	AFF04	I am proud to consume Excelso
Brand awareness	BAW01	I want to learn more about the Excelso brand.
	BAW02	Anything related to the Excelso brand will catch my attention.
	BAW03	Sharing their experiences and recalling their memories will help increase brand awareness.
Activation	ACT01	Whenever I consume drinks, I usually use the Excelso brand.
	ACT02	Excelso is one of the brands that I usually use when consuming drinks.
Overall brand equity	OBE01	Although other products have the same teste as the Excelso brand, I prefer to buy the Excelso brand.
	OBE02	If there are other brands that are as good as the Excelso brand, I prefer to buy the Excelso brand.
	OBE03	If other brands are not different from the Excelso brand in any way, it seems that I would rather buy the Excelso brand.

Table 2.
Profile of Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age</i>		
<15 years old	-	-
16 - 20 years old	31	15.3%
21 - 25 years old	91	45%
26 - 30 years old	52	25.7%
31 - 35 years old	20	10%
>35 years old	8	4%
Total	202	100%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	107	53%
Female	95	47%
Total	202	100%
<i>Education</i>		
Senior High school	12	5.9%
Associate Program	21	10.4%
Bachelor Program	136	67.3%
Master Program	29	14.4%
Doctoral Program	4	2%
Total	202	100%

Source: Autors' Data (2023)

In this study, the measurement model was evaluated in four steps. First, factor loadings should be greater than or equal to 0.708 to indicate item reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Table 3 shows that all factor loadings have item reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Second, to demonstrate convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) value should be greater than or equal to 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4 shows that all AVE values have convergent validity for all constructs. Third, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability should be 0.7 or higher to demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2019). Table 5 shows that Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are adequate.

Table 3.
Factor Loading

Variable	Code	Loading
Affection	AFF01	0.845
	AFF02	0.823
	AFF03	0.807
	AFF04	0.835
Activation	ACT01	0.890
	ACT02	0.899
Overall brand equity	OBE01	0.852
	OBE02	0.894
	OBE03	0.852
Brand awareness	BAW01	0.842
	BAW02	0.857
	BAW03	0.857

Source: Authors' Data (2023)

Table 4.
Convergent Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Affection	0.750	0.749	0.899
Activation	0.848	0.847	0.897
Overall brand equity	0.815	0.811	0.888
Brand awareness	0.837	0.833	0.900

Source: Authors' Data (2023)

Fourth, discriminant validity was assessed. Assessing discriminant validity measures the degree to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in a structural model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This evaluation must demonstrate that the square root of each AVE value is greater than the correlation between the variable and other variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 5 shows the values that meet the criteria and therefore have discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 5.
Discriminant Validity (square root of AVE in bold on diagonal)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Affection	0.849			
2. Activation	0.780	0.828		
3. Brand awareness	0.811	0.795	0.852	
4. Overall brand equity	0.806	0.807	0.849	0.866

Source: Authors' Data (2023)

The subsequent step involves evaluating the structural model to test the hypotheses. The results of the evaluation of the structural model, depicted in Figure 2 and presented in Table 6. The results show that all hypotheses are supported. Affection significantly influences activation (0.780, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H1. Activation significantly influences overall brand equity (0.806, $p < 0.001$) and brand awareness (0.811, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2 and H3. Affection significantly affects brand awareness through activation (0.629, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4. Affection significantly affects brand awareness through activation (0.633, $p < 0.001$), supporting H5.

Table 6.
Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Coeff.	t-value	p-value	Conclusion
H1 Affection -> Activation	0.78	28.57	0.00	Supported
H2 Activation -> Overall brand equity	0.81	29.75	0.00	Supported
H3 Activation -> Brand awareness	0.81	34.70	0.00	Supported
H4 Affection -> Activation à Overall brand equity	0.63	14.74	0.00	Supported
H5 Affection-> Activation à Brand awareness	0.63	14.99	0.00	Supported

Source: Authors' Data (2023)

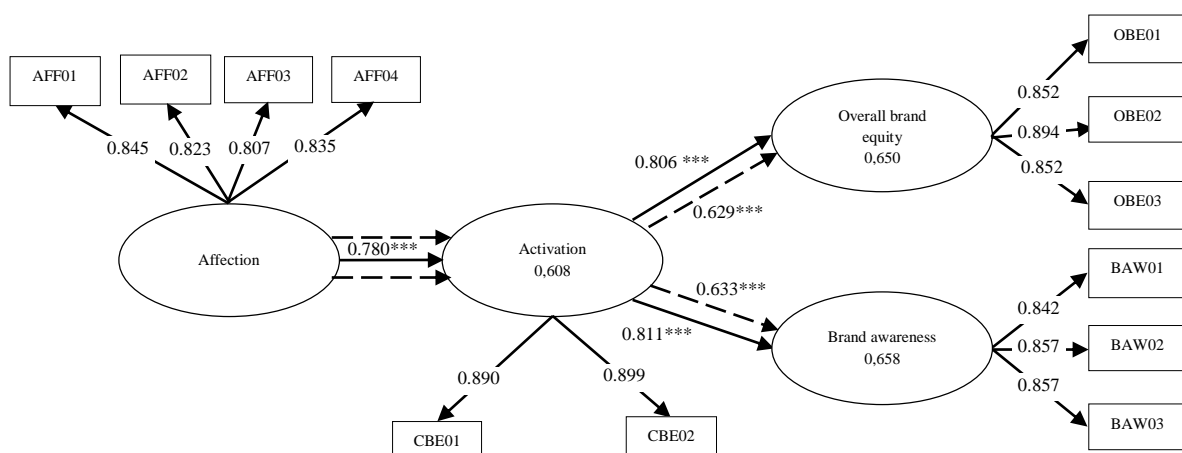


Figure 2.
Structural Model Evaluation Results

Discussion

This research has five important findings. First, affection significantly influences activation. This aligns with the study by Verma (2021) on the potential relationship between affection and activation. The current study focuses on food and beverage, specifically Excelso. This finding is crucial as it positively impacts consumer interest and enhances food and beverage product engagement. Excelso can utilize various marketing resources to build interactions with children and teenagers on social media to gain advantages. This aligns with Choi (2014) who state that a positive emotional connection with a brand can create beneficial interactions in this study.

Second, activation significantly influences overall brand equity. This study demonstrates that when consumers engage with brands they trust, it creates interactions that result in positive brand perceptions. (Kuvykaite & Piligrimiene, 2014). The current study focuses on Excelso's food and beverage sector. This finding positively correlates with consumer attachment to a brand, leading to consumer interactions and perceptions of a brand (Qing & Haiying, 2021). Positive perceptions of the quality of Excelso's food and beverage products and services will instill long-term customer confidence. This impact influences consumer perceptions, affecting their responses to the brand's products.

Third, activation significantly influences brand awareness. The research shows that consumer activation positively contributes to increasing brand awareness (Hollebeek et al., 2014). This study differs from previous research that focused on brand equity antecedents (Verma, 2021) and tourism contexts (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021), while the current study focuses on Excelso's food and beverage. Increasing and promoting brand awareness can help Excelso's food and beverage sector to thrive (Leckie et al., 2016). Higher consumer engagement and awareness can lead to an increased consumer base (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). These findings are positively related to their interest in a brand, influencing consumers' understanding and awareness of a brand.

Fourth, affection significantly influences overall brand equity through the mediation of activation. This research aligns with studies by Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Leckie et al. (2016), indicating that positive consumer influence can lead to consumer interactions with a brand. Positive relationships among consumers affect consumer attachment and perceptions of a food and beverage brand. Creating a supportive environment for the brand by interacting with customers through services, social media, and print media will enhance Excelso's recognition among the public. This discovery demonstrates the influence of affection on overall brand equity through the mediation of activation.

Fifth, affection significantly influences brand awareness through the mediation of activation. This finding aligns with Cheung et al. (2021) stating that affection significantly influences activation. Spratt et al. (2009) assert that affection influences brand awareness through the mediation of activation. Customer fondness for Excelso's food and beverage products will motivate them to think proactively to encourage consumer interaction with sustainable purchases at Excelso. This discovery demonstrates the influence of affection on brand awareness through the mediation of activation.

Limitations

This research has limitations that open opportunities for future research. Firstly, this study focuses on the relationship between affection, activation, overall brand equity, and brand awareness. This study did not explore the consumers specific experiences with the variables. For example, this study did not explore consumers' specific affection when they consume products in the coffee shops and when they take them away from the shop. Future studies may focus on exploring the variables and qualitatively analyze the content of the experiences.

Secondly, this study employed a non-probability sampling that limits the generalization of the findings. Future studies may opt to employ probability sampling such as systematic sampling to increase the generalizability of the findings. Thirdly, this study focuses on local brand of coffee shop, Excelso, rather than global name such Starbucks. Future studies may focus on such global brand or local brands using Bahasa Indonesia such as Kopi Kenangan, Jokopi, and Janji Jiwa.

Conclusion

Researchers and marketers need to understand the consumer-brand relationship. Affection has an important role in driving activation and, subsequently, overall brand equity as well as brand awareness. In addition to these direct effects, activation mediates the influence of affection on overall brand equity as well as the influence of affection on brand awareness. These relationships advance our understanding of affection in building consumer experiences in helping companies' branding strategy.

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