

The antecedents and consequence of brand coolness: A case of millennial consumers toward fashion clothing brands

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ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received November 18, 2022

Received in revised format

December 20, 2022

Accepted February 18 2023

Available online

February 18 2023

Keywords:

Brand Coolness

Brand Experience

Brand Identification

Brand Equity

Millennial Consumers

This research aimed to study the antecedents and consequences of brand coolness for fashion clothing brands in the millennial consumer context. The data was collected through an online questionnaire on 380 consumers who used to buy brand-name fashion clothing. The data were analyzed using the structural equation model. The results showed that the antecedents of brand coolness consisted of brand experience and brand identification, both of which positively influence brand coolness. Brand coolness (i.e., reference, singular, personal, esthetic, functional, energetic, and high status) was the key driver that creates brand equity. The research results were able to explain 94% of the variance in brand coolness and 81% of the variance in brand equity. This research is empirical support that helps expand the perspective on brand coolness and presents a dimension to measure brand coolness in a more transparent and complete method. The research result also complements the marketing knowledge that can guide academics and practitioners in creating substantial brand equity in the customers' hearts.

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1. Introduction

Business organizations are now facing the challenge of addressing their target group's needs due to the increasing number of brand options. These increasing substitute products that led to fierce competition are the most important strategic decisions to make and affect consumer decision-making (Alves, Fernandes & Raposo, 2016; Aaker, 1991). The understanding of the changing consumption patterns can be studied through the behaviors of the different age groups since members from each age group will have a similar way of life, values, preferences, and behaviors (Ordun, 2015; Parment, 2013). Therefore, market segmentation according to age groups is a useful tool (Parment, 2013). Millennial consumers, which exceeds 1.8 billion people out of a total population of over 7 billion people worldwide (Brandbuffet, 2018), is a consumer group representing the world's largest population that contributes to the economy with high purchasing power, driving businesses forward (Rahman et al., 2020; Mulia, 2019; Bilgihan, 2016; Ordun, 2015). The size of the millennial consumer market in Thailand is 15,298,818 people (National Statistical Office, 2020), representing 40 percent, accounting for 1 in 3 of the population, and is a group of people who are starting to enter the workforce and are the main labor force in the market (Brandbuffet, 2018). From the above, millennial consumers have become an attractive target group for the fashion industry (Gerardo, 2018; Moore & Carpenter, 2008). The fashion business market has continued to grow since 2021 (Kanthoop, 2022) since people use fashion as a medium of expression, a source of self-expression (McCarthy, 2013), and a representation of symbolic value that is becoming more and more modern (Shi, Xu & Sun, 2021; Piamphongsant & Mandhachitar, 2008; Michaelidou & Dib, 2006; Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2021).

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Consumer perception of brand coolness is one of the issues that has recently been studied since coolness is one way to differentiate brands within this fierce competition (Warren et al., 2019). Brand coolness is a key social driver contributing to best-selling products (Kerner & Pressman, 2007), enabling marketers to carry out brand management to beat competitors, generate the most profitable revenue (Runyan et al., 2013), and promote brand success (Warren et al., 2019). Brands with coolness will be unique compared to other brands (Sarioğlu, 2020; Warren et al., 2019). Cool brands can become a symbol of memories that connect consumer relations in society, including a strong symbolic relationship between customers and brands (Loureiro et al., 2020; Warren et al., 2019). Therefore, coolness became the thing that stimulates consumers, controls their behaviors, and determines their buying trends, providing value for both consumers and marketers (Warren et al., 2019; Anik, 2020). Currently, factors related to the brand coolness concept are increasingly being studied (Kerner & Pressman, 2007; Southgate, 2003; Pountains & Robins, 2000) as consumers are willing to pay more for cool brands. They will develop a strong connection with the brand and help increase market share and profitability for the brand and business (Gurrieri, 2009; Southgate, 2003), especially in the fashion segment, which directly aligns with the expression of identity through the use of the products by consumers.

However, although the study of variables leading to coolness has received constant attention, there are still limited studies. The millennial consumer group is a group with the behavior of using fashion as a tool for self-expression, as well as paying great importance to the experience of using goods or services. They often seek unique experiences, including giving importance to the concept of self-concept or self-identity (Chen & Chou, 2019). More importantly, this group is willing to pay more for brands they trust, emphasizing cool products (Runyan, Noh & Mosier, 2013) and expressing their individuality. In other words, the brand coolness will reflect the millennial's identity's uniqueness and distinctive characteristics. In conclusion, creating a good experience and the self-expression of the brand is a crucial factor in this research of studying the antecedents of brand coolness.

For marketing, the brand equity concept was accepted and now plays an important academic and practical role, as well as being regarded as the core and the result of brand management (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre, 2009; Punj & Hillyer, 2004). However, previous research on the antecedent of brand equity identified various ways of increasing brand equity. But there are still limited studies on the creation of brand coolness that leads to building brand equity, especially in the context of millennial consumers, as well as the lack of knowledge of explaining the perceptions of brand coolness (Warren et al., 2019) and the relationship between brand coolness and other variable structures. It is still limited (Sarioğlu, 2020; Warren et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be said that there is an important opportunity for this research to be a pioneer work that contributes to fulfilling the knowledge area, increasing the value of academic studies, elevating the perspective for the business sector to build a strong brand and create brand differentiation, and developing brand equity that is formed in the minds of customers that lead to a strong relationship between brands and consumers. The study is empirical research that will provide evidence, extend the view on the antecedents and consequences of brand coolness among millennial consumers from an academic perspective, and point out clarity for more practical use.

2. Literature Review and Research Conceptual Framework

2.1 Brand Coolness

The concept of coolness has been developed over time, and its implications have been accepted, especially in the culture of young people (Matos, 2017; Pountain & Robins, 2000). From the consumer's point of view, the cool brand consumption is considered an expression of status (Belk, Tian & Paavola, 2010), lifestyle (Nancarrow, Nancarrow & Page, 2002), and differences and distinctiveness (Warren et al., 2019; Bruun et al., 2016; Warren & Campbell, 2014; Rahman, 2013; Runyan et al., 2013; Loureiro & Lopes, 2011). Therefore, coolness is an expression of a variety of qualities that makes brands try to build themselves to be awesome to present to consumers (Belk et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2019; Anik, Miles & Hauser, 2017). However, cool brands can drive themselves, establishing themselves as attractive, gaining acceptance from specific groups of consumers, and gaining more and more popularity among the masses. The characteristics consumers perceive or see as cool constantly change over time (Serras, 2020; Warren et al., 2019). Therefore, studying concepts that lead to brand coolness is a concept for creating positive brand success. The researcher aimed to study the antecedents that lead to creating success with coolness, which the variables will be discussed later in this paper.

2.2 Brand Experience

Brand experience is a specific response to brand-related stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009), which include communication, packaging design, advertising, and sales (Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014; Bapat, 2020). The concept of consumer experience and market research suggests that experiences occur when consumers search for a product, purchase the product and receive the service, and consume that product and service. The concept includes explaining the occurrence of different experiences in various ways, such as product experiences and shopping and service experiences (Brakus et al., 2009). From the literature review and relevant research, no empirical studies directly examined the relationship between brand experience and brand coolness (Belk et al., 2010; Leland, 2004). However, several studies have identified a positive relationship between coolness and digital products in terms of user experience (Raptis et al., 2017). Schembri (2009) describes the brand experience of Harley-Davidson

as a unique consumer subculture. It is a symbol of freedom full of extensions of meanings and the image of consumers daring to be different. The aforementioned characteristics are characteristics of coolness. Moreover, several studies in the tourism context have studied the antecedents of tourists' perception of coolness by examining travel opinions through tourist experiences (Ridhani & Roostika, 2020; Chen & Chou, 2019; Vengesai, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2009). Therefore, this study implies that brand experience and brand coolness are related, leading to hypothesis 1 as follows:

Hypothesis 1: *Brand experience has a positive influence on brand coolness.*

2.3 Brand Identification

Customer brand identification describes an individual's positive perception of their self-value, which is enhanced through personal or social identity concepts (Edwards, 2005). This concept connects individuals with a group or social organization (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The unity or membership of an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) is the perception of similarity by connecting the brand with the individuals' concepts (Coelho, Rita & Santos, 2018). Brands, as a source of symbolic meaning, can help consumers establish and maintain their identity (Holt, 2005) through the study of knowledge and understanding. Personal identity behavior is one of the fundamental concepts that help explain why people think and act in certain situations or environments. Ridhani & Roostika (2020) studied the antecedents of perceived coolness in the tourism context, consisting of three variables: uniqueness, self-expression, and attractiveness. The study above is consistent with the research by Chen & Chou (2019) on creative tourism of Generation Y tourists visiting creative tourist destinations in Taiwan. The research found that self-expression was positively correlated with perceived coolness. Therefore, the researcher linked brand identification and brand coolness to hypothesis 2 as follows:

Hypothesis 2: *Brand identification has a positive influence on brand coolness.*

2.4 Brand Equity

The outcome factor of this study is Brand Equity, which is the power of a brand in the minds of consumers and what consumers experience and learn about the brand over a certain period of time (Keller & Brexendorf, 2019). Brand equity is a strategic planning tool for brand management (Yoo & Donthu, 2002), reflecting the quality relationship between brands in consumers (Zarantonello & Pauwels - Delassus, 2016). Brands represent an enormous value of legal assets, which can influence consumer behavior regarding purchases and owner sustainability (Keller, 2016; Kapferer, 2012). The empirical studies and relevant research found that only a few studies examined the relationship between brand coolness and brand equity. A study by Khamwon & Kularbkaew (2021) examined the influence of brand coolness on brand engagement and brand equity in the context of brand-named bags and found that brand coolness had a highly positive influence on brand equity. Moreover, previous research has investigated and identified the correlation between some dimensions of brand coolness that influence brand equity (Lu et al., 2015). Furthermore, several previous studies identified different dimensions of brand equity from different element dimensions of brand coolness, such as assessing credibility, brand authenticity (Kucharska et al., 2020; Mody, Hanks & Dogru, 2019; Burkhalter et al., 2017; Choi et al., 2014), and innovation (Choi et al., 2014). Consumption indicates the status (Erdoğan & Büdeyri - Turan, 2012; Baek et al., 2010), influencing brand loyalty, and the relationship between brand association with status and outstanding consumption (O' Cass & Frost, 2002) led to hypothesis 3 as follows:

Hypothesis 3: *Brand coolness has a positive influence on brand equity.*

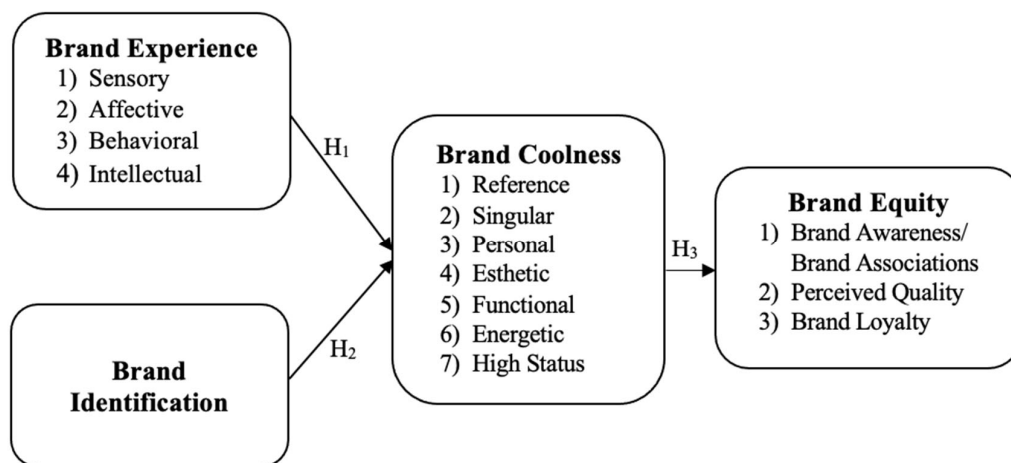


Fig. 1. Research Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research tools

The tools used in this research were online questionnaires. The researcher submitted the questionnaire to three experts to check and examine the content validity of the questions by finding the Index of Congruence (IOC) between the questions and the objectives. The questions with the Index of Congruence (IOC) between the questions and objectives from 0.60 were then selected (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). The questionnaire consisted of six following parts: Part 1. Screening questions, which were used for screening and selecting suitable samples. Part 2. Brand coolness. The researcher made some improvements to the measuring instrument from Dar-Nimrod et al. (2012), Rahman (2013), Runyan et al. (2013), Bruun et al. (2016), Pol et al. (2020), Jansson and Johansson (2021) and Warren et al. (2019) The tools consisted of seven following dimensions: Reference, Singular, Personal, Esthetic, Functional, Energetic, and High status. Part 3. Brand experience. The researcher improved the instrument from Brakus et al. (2009) and de Kerviler & Rodriguez (2019), in which the variable consists of 4 components: Sensory, Affective, Behavioral, and Intellectual. Part 4. Brand identification. The researcher adopted the measuring tools from Stokburger-Sauere et al. (2012). Part 5. Brand Equity. The researcher has improved the measurement tools from Yoo & Donthu (2002), Khan et al. (2015), Su (2016), and Pina & Dias (2021), in which the variables of brand equity consisted of three components: Brand awareness/Brand associations, Perceived quality, and Brand loyalty. To measure this theoretical variable, the researcher used a 7-point Likert scale, starting from level 1 (strongly disagree) to level 7 (strongly agree) (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Part 6. General information of respondents, consisting of five questions: gender, status, occupation, education level, and average income per month.

3.2 The sample group used in the research and data collection

The sample group used in this research is 380 people from the millennial consumer group in Thailand who have bought brand-name fashion clothing over the past one year. The researcher relied on non-probability sampling by using convenience sampling (Hair et al., 2014), which is a data collection method mainly based on the researcher's convenience. Even though the population is large and cannot be identified, those who have never bought a fashion brand clothing would not be able to answer. The data was collected from millennial consumers who follow online communities related to fashion brands on Facebook pages, mainly because it is a platform with many users in Thailand (KEPIOS, 2022; YouGov, 2022). The respondents filled out the information themselves (Self-Administered Questionnaire).

3.3 Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data to find a relationship using two statistical methods: 1) descriptive statistics and 2) inferential statistics. The structural equation model (SEM) was also used to analyze the data, consisting of two following characteristic steps (Kline, 2016; Hair et al., 2014): (1) Measurement Model and (2) Structural Model.

4. Research Results

4.1 General data analysis

The researcher has preliminarily defined the following properties of the sample group: must be born between 1980 - 1995 and have bought brand-name fashion clothing. All 380 respondents were fully qualified according to the specification. Most channels for buying brand-name fashion clothing are directly from that brand's store (56.65%). The favorite online channel for buying brand-name fashion clothing is the brand's direct website (48.84 percent). The brand-name fashion brands that most respondents used to buy were H&M (7.02 percent). The purchase frequency was mostly 1-2 times/month (46.84 percent). Most purchase values were between 1,000-5,000 baht (50.79 percent). The number of items purchased per time is mostly 1-2 pieces (50.26 percent). Most purchases of brand-name fashion clothing were bought at a promotional price (40.58 percent). The general data analysis of the sample group showed that most of the consumers were female (63.42 percent), single (67.37 percent), employees in private companies (24.74 percent), had bachelor's degree (77.37 percent), and have an average monthly income of 10,001–20,000 baht (22.11 percent).

4.2 Data validation before statistical analysis

The analysis results of normality of the data from the skewness analysis and the kurtosis of the data found that the lowest skewness was -1.612 and the highest was -.807, while the kurtosis has the lowest value of 1.046 and the highest value of 1.989. The result indicated that the data were normally distributed. From the analysis of the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the tolerance values, results found that the VIF value is between 2.029 to 2.838, which was below 10, and the tolerance values were between .352 and .493, which was below 5, indicates that the data does not have multicollinearity issue.

4.3 Measurement model analysis and validity and reliability analysis

The results of the measurement model analysis by confirmatory factor analysis revealed that Chi Square = 1045.781, df = 1157, Chi Square/df = .904(Schumacker and Lomax, 2010), Goodness of Fit Index: GFI = .906(Byrne, 2010), Comparative Fit Index: CFI = .982(Kline, 2010), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA = .015(Kline, 2010), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual: SRMR = .0393(Byrne, 2010). The result showed that the measurement model for brand experience, brand identification, brand coolness, and brand equity are appropriate. As for the convergence validity and reliability analysis, it was found that the factor loading has a minimum value of .614 and a maximum value of .922 (> .50) (Hair et al., 2010), indicating that the data had high validity. The Cronbach alpha coefficient had a minimum value of .701 and a maximum value of .916 (> .70) (Zilmund et al., 2010), indicating that the data were highly reliable. For the results of composite reliability analysis (CR) of the latent variables and the average variance extracted(AVE), it was found that the total reliability of latent variables (CR) had a minimum value equal to .702 and a maximum value equal to .916 (> .60). The average variance extract (AVE) had a minimum value of .502 and a maximum value of .786 (> .50) (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000), which showed that each latent variable could unity explain the variance of the observed variable. In addition, all variables are accurate and reliable, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Factor Loading, CR, AVE and Cronbach 's Alpha analysis results

| Observable elements/variables | | Loading | CR | AVE | α |
|------------------------------------|---|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| (Brand Coolness; BCL) | | | 0.858 | 0.503 | 0.831 |
| (Reference; REF) | | | | | |
| BCL1 | My favorite brand-name fashion clothing brands have lots of advertisements and publicity. | 0.675 | | | |
| BCL3 | This brand is popular. | 0.647 | | | |
| BCL4 | This brand is is mainstream. | 0.666 | | | |
| BCL6 | Most people think this brand is cool. | 0.785 | | | |
| BCL7 | I feel that this brand is associated with a cool brand. | 0.762 | | | |
| BCL8 | I feel that this brand enhances my social status. | 0.709 | | | |
| (Singular; SIN) | | | 0.855 | 0.544 | 0.795 |
| BCL9 | This brand is one of a kind. | 0.824 | | | |
| BCL12 | This brand represents originality. | 0.623 | | | |
| BCL13 | This brand is innovative. | 0.686 | | | |
| BCL14 | This brand is different. | 0.745 | | | |
| BCL15 | This brand conveys novelty. | 0.793 | | | |
| (Personal; PER) | | | 0.820 | 0.534 | 0.790 |
| BCL17 | This brand boosts my confidence. | 0.732 | | | |
| BCL19 | This brand fits my style. | 0.637 | | | |
| BCL20 | This brand enhances my unique personality. | 0.780 | | | |
| BCL21 | This brand gives me a good personality and a graceful look. | 0.765 | | | |
| (Esthetic; EST) | | | 0.755 | 0.508 | 0.703 |
| BCL24 | This brand is known for its aesthetically appealing. | 0.758 | | | |
| BCL25 | This brand is known for nice appearance. | 0.713 | | | |
| BCL26 | This brand is known for its good looks. | 0.663 | | | |
| (Functional; FUN) | | | 0.750 | 0.600 | 0.739 |
| BCL31 | This brand has benefits beyond expectations. | 0.776 | | | |
| BCL32 | This brand has extraordinary features. | 0.773 | | | |
| (Energetic; ENE) | | | 0.853 | 0.533 | 0.701 |
| BCL33 | This brand is energetic. | 0.769 | | | |
| BCL34 | This brand has an outgoing vibe. | 0.719 | | | |
| BCL35 | This brand is lively. | 0.743 | | | |
| (High Status; HIG) | | | 0.799 | 0.570 | 0.751 |
| BCL36 | This brand is hip and chic. | 0.794 | | | |
| BCL37 | This brand indicates glamorous charm. | 0.737 | | | |
| BCL38 | This brand indicates a sophisticated taste. | 0.733 | | | |
| (Brand Identification; BID) | | | 0.754 | 0.608 | 0.779 |
| BID1 | I feel a strong sense of belonging to this brand. | 0.867 | | | |
| BID4 | This brand is like a part of me. | 0.682 | | | |
| (Brand Experience; BEX) | | | 0.756 | 0.510 | 0.711 |
| (Sensory; SEN) | | | | | |
| BEX2 | I think this brand is extremely interesting through visual or direct contact. | 0.628 | | | |
| BEX3 | This brand attracts and awakens my senses. | 0.760 | | | |
| BEX4 | This brand has a sensory appeal. | 0.746 | | | |
| (Affective; AFF) | | | 0.835 | 0.541 | 0.723 |
| BEX5 | This brand makes me feel enjoyable and puts me in a good mood. | 0.733 | | | |
| BEX7 | This brand responded to both my emotions and feelings. | 0.764 | | | |
| BEX8 | I have a good feeling about this brand. | 0.708 | | | |
| (Behavioral; BEH) | | | 0.702 | 0.516 | 0.705 |
| BEX9 | I feel that this brand has come to play a role and has been involved in my daily life. | 0.782 | | | |
| BEX10 | This brand has given me a good experience wearing it. | 0.648 | | | |

Table 1
Factor Loading, CR, AVE and Cronbach 's Alpha analysis results (Continued)

| Observable elements/variables | Loading | CR | AVE | α |
|---|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| (Intellectual; INT) | | | | |
| BEX13 This brand gets me to think more. | 0.922 | 0.880 | 0.786 | 0.890 |
| BEX14 This brand encourages my curiosity and gives me ideas for solving problems. | 0.850 | | | |
| (Brand Equity; BEQ) | | | | |
| (Brand awareness/ Brand associations; BAS) | | | | |
| BEQ1 I know my favorite brand-name fashion clothing brand very well. | 0.717 | 0.845 | 0.522 | 0.916 |
| BEQ2 I can distinguish this brand from other brands. | 0.684 | | | |
| BEQ3 Some of the features of this brand can quickly remind me of it. | 0.761 | | | |
| BEQ5 This brand has a unique image in my mind compared to other competing brands. | 0.774 | | | |
| BEQ7 I saw and perceived an advertisement for this brand even in different media. | 0.672 | | | |
| (Perceived Quality; PCQ) | | | | |
| BEQ9 This brand represents high-quality products. | 0.680 | 0.865 | 0.502 | 0.771 |
| BEQ10 This brand represents a great functional product. | 0.763 | | | |
| BEQ11 This brand represents a very reliable product. | 0.731 | | | |
| BEQ13 This brand represents durable products. | 0.671 | | | |
| BEQ14 The overall quality of that brand was awesome. | 0.692 | | | |
| (Brand Loyalty; BLY) | | | | |
| BEQ15 I am loyal to this brand. | 0.844 | 0.916 | 0.601 | 0.810 |
| BEQ16 This brand will always be my first choice. | 0.820 | | | |
| BEQ17 I only choose the products from this brand, although there are other brands to choose from. | 0.786 | | | |
| BEQ18 I intend to continue buying this brand. | 0.692 | | | |
| BEQ19 I can always trust this brand. | 0.725 | | | |

In addition, the researcher has examined the discriminant validity by comparing the square root of AVE with the relationship between components and found that the square root of AVE in each diagonal row was higher than the correlation between every element, both vertically and horizontally. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model has discriminant validity, meaning that the model for the antecedents and the consequence of brand coolness in the case study of millennial consumers have been significantly recognized as accurate and reliable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2
Discriminant Validity Assessment

| | REF | SIN | PER | EST | FUN | ENE | HIG | SEN | AFF | BEH | INT | BAS | PCQ | BLY | BID |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| REF | .709 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SIN | .571 | .738 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PER | .406 | .435 | .731 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| EST | .517 | .584 | .618 | .712 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FUN | .347 | .382 | .556 | .528 | .775 | | | | | | | | | | |
| ENE | .531 | .534 | .385 | .485 | .524 | .744 | | | | | | | | | |
| HIG | .600 | .603 | .480 | .590 | .446 | .601 | .755 | | | | | | | | |
| SEN | .428 | .532 | .557 | .593 | .532 | .475 | .536 | .714 | | | | | | | |
| AFF | .451 | .512 | .508 | .541 | .517 | .589 | .551 | .603 | .735 | | | | | | |
| BEH | .514 | .438 | .397 | .472 | .479 | .522 | .502 | .456 | .570 | .718 | | | | | |
| INT | .520 | .446 | .218 | .278 | .319 | .600 | .453 | .273 | .504 | .540 | .887 | | | | |
| BAS | .507 | .560 | .506 | .573 | .477 | .529 | .575 | .574 | .559 | .526 | .408 | .723 | | | |
| PCQ | .406 | .491 | .475 | .549 | .570 | .534 | .535 | .583 | .549 | .520 | .355 | .655 | .708 | | |
| BLY | .501 | .577 | .431 | .496 | .378 | .510 | .537 | .478 | .481 | .535 | .497 | .618 | .611 | .776 | |
| BID | .569 | .564 | .418 | .496 | .423 | .624 | .538 | .464 | .612 | .588 | .673 | .576 | .530 | .615 | .780 |

Note: The bold diagonal elements are the square root of the average variance extracted. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.4 Structural Equation Model Analysis

The structural equation model analysis found that the model was consistent with the empirical data, with all five indexes of harmony passing the acceptance criteria, which were Chi Square = 1154.291, df = 1160, Chi Square/df = .995, GFI = .900, CFI = .998, RMSEA = .018, SRMR = .0721. Fig. 2 and Table 3 indicate the acceptance of all three hypotheses.

Table 3
The results of hypotheses testing

| Relationships | Hypotheses | β | t-value | Results |
|------------------|------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| BEX → BCL | H1 | .979 | 6.590*** | Supported |
| BID → BCL | H2 | .211 | 4.742*** | Supported |
| BCL → BEQ | H3 | .904 | 8.995*** | Supported |

Note: $R^2_{BCL} = .944$, $R^2_{BEQ} = .811$
*P < .05, **P < .01, ***P < .001

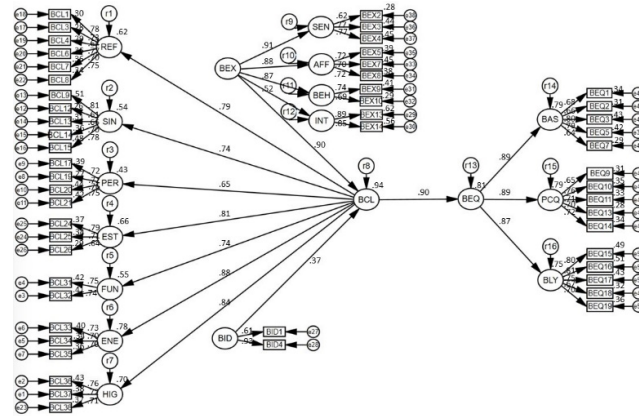


Fig. 2. The SEM Result of the Antecedents and Consequence of Brand Coolness: A Case of Millennial Consumers toward Fashion Clothing Brands

5. Discussion

The result from the study showed that brand coolness in brand-name fashion clothing brands among millennials consumers consists of two antecedents: Antecedent 1 is brand experience, which is consistent with Ridhani & Roostika (2020) and Chen & Chou (2019) who stated that experiences elevate brand perception of coolness and promote awareness of brand coolness among consumers. This result is in line with the research by Choi, Ok & Hyun (2011), who stated that the four aspects of brand experience influence brand class. In the context of brand-name fashion clothing brands among millennial consumers, a crucial component of creating a brand experience is the sensory experience component. Millennial consumers have direct contact with the product or brand, especially quality brand-name fashion clothing. When consumers wear the products, they experience the design, beauty, quality, and material of fashion clothing. Moreover, the next important component is the emotional experience and consumer behavior. When millennial consumers consume fashion clothing, the clothing affects the satisfaction mood and provides a good wearing experience in everyday life. As a result, consumers perceive the brand coolness. They will feel the charm and the brand's luxurious and classy nature. Having an experience with the brand also makes consumers aware of its vitality and feel more familiar with the brand they use. Therefore, brand experience results in the perception of brand coolness. Another important factor in creating brand coolness is brand identification, which is consistent with Chen & Chou (2019) and Ridhani & Roostika (2020). In the context of fashion clothing brands, millennial consumers consider their favorite brand-name fashion clothing brands as part of their identity, including having trust in that brand. Therefore, creating a brand identification results in the perception of brand coolness.

The consequence of brand coolness is brand equity, which is consistent with Budzanowski (2017), Ridhani and Roostika (2020), and Chen & Chou (2019), who stated that a high level of brand coolness was associated with high brand equity and resulting in the brand's economic prosperity. It can be seen that brand experience has more influence in creating brand coolness than brand identification. The reason may be that consumers experience, wear, and engage with the brand in their daily lives, leading to more perceived brand coolness and brand equity. However, if brand identification is created together with brand coolness, this will also better promote brand equity. The context of fashion clothing is an industry that is changing rapidly. In addition, there are many competitors and substitute products in the market. The more brands create coolness by encouraging consumers to express themselves through brand coolness, the more chance there is for consumers to create a stronger bond between their identity and the brand they use. This bond can develop into the link between the brand and themselves, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, which is the value that is generated in the brand. Therefore, it can be said that both factors provide high opportunities to create brand coolness and build brand equity in fashion clothing brands. Moreover, the research also presents significant findings on brand coolness. This study identified seven key elements of brand coolness: high status, energetic, esthetic cool, personal cool, singular cool, reference cool, and functional cool. While previous research on coolness in the context of clothing purchases presented six dimensions of coolness, the researcher adjusted and added more measurement dimensions. Measurement questions were also added to be more appropriate and comprehensive. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that the index values passed the specified criteria, which indicates that the measuring elements are appropriate. Therefore, it can be said that this research is another empirical research that expands the perspective and understanding of brand coolness and presents a concept to measure the brand coolness dimension for fashion clothing in a more comprehensive way. In addition, this research can be considered to have fulfilled the academic knowledge about brand management and provides an excellent guideline to promote the relationship between brands and consumers.

6. Conclusions

The new findings of this study provide empirical support for two key factors in creating brand coolness: brand experience and brand identification. The research results found that brand experience is a stronger influencing factor in brand coolness than

brand identification. There is only a little previous research on creating brand coolness from brand experience and brand identification. Moreover, this research provides the following important new findings that empirically support factors influencing brand equity: reference, singular, personal, esthetic, functional, energetic, and high status. Business organizations should consider strengthening their communication to get consumers to feel the benefits of using fashion clothing brands to express themselves. The organization may consider marketing through communications, advertising, and public relations to let consumers know that the fashion clothing brand is a brand with special features, full of benefits beyond their expectations, friendly, beautiful, hip, chic, good-looking brand, outstanding, unique, different, exotic, as well as indicating the taste, charm, classiness of the wearer, and making consumers feel lively, proud, feel like they are in the fashion trend, and is accepted by society when wearing such brands. The experience can be strengthened by organizing activities for consumers to experience and join in the fun to win prizes from the brand, both online and offline, which will lead to the creation of strong brand equity.

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