



Social identity perspective on brand loyalty [☆]

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a social identity perspective of customer–brand relationship and integrates brand identity and identification with value, trust and satisfaction in predicting brand loyalty. Two studies' empirical results support this path to brand loyalty framework. The results offer several theoretical implications. First, this research confirms the presence of significant direct and indirect effects of brand identity and brand identification on traditional antecedents of brand loyalty (i.e. perceived value, satisfaction, and trust). Second, the research suggests that social identification perspective of brand loyalty can integrate with other perspectives to model the consumer's psychological path to brand loyalty. Third, the research confirms the pivotal role of brand identification in brand loyalty development and stresses the mediation effect of brand identification on the effects of brand identity on the path to brand loyalty.

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1. Introduction

Identifying the psychological process/path to consumer brand loyalty is a focal issue in marketing research (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Harris and Goode, 2004; Oliver, 1999; Woodside and Walser, 2007). Extant literature presents several perspectives on this issue (Harris and Goode, 2004). These studies frequently propose differing central or pivot constructs, including trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), customer satisfaction (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Oliver, 1999), and perceived value (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) to brand loyalty. An integrated approach is emerging that incorporates these constructs into holistic conceptualizations (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Harris and Goode, 2004). To date the literature pays insufficient attention to social identification antecedents (e.g., brand identity and brand identification) to brand loyalty and has not yet incorporated them into traditional frameworks.

Recent studies suggest that a social identity perspective could be insightful in describing the relationship between a company and stakeholders (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Mukherjee and He, 2008). A social identity perspective advocates the study of consumers' identity motives, specifically self-expression, self-enhancement, and self-esteem in developing meaningful relationships with companies and brands (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003;

Escalas, 2004). Recent studies accumulate evidence on the effects of brand identity and identification on loyalty (He and Li, 2010; Marin et al., 2009). However, scant research is available on integrating social identity variables with social exchange variables in explaining brand loyalty. Since both social identification processes (Rindfleisch et al., 2009) and interpretations of service dynamics (e.g., value, satisfaction, and trust) (Harris and Goode, 2004) contribute to consumers' psychological processes, incorporating both processes into a broader conceptualization of brand loyalty formation seems intuitively logical.

This research offers an integrated framework to bridge this gap. Specially, this research contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, this research confirms the pivotal role of brand identification in the process of brand loyalty development and stresses the mediation effect of brand identification on the effects of brand identity on the path to brand loyalty. Second, this research suggests that social identification perspective of brand loyalty can integrate with other perspectives (e.g., perceived value, trust, and satisfaction) in explaining brand loyalty. Furthermore, this research provides initial evidence on the slightly differential paths to brand loyalty due to the product natures of the focal brands.

2. Model development and testing

The transition to a relationship marketing paradigm places brand loyalty as a central indicator of customer relational strength (Oliver, 1999). As a result, the issue of antecedents of brand loyalty becomes increasingly topical (Jang et al., 2008; Kressmann et al., 2006). Previous research on loyalty focuses on constructs, such as perceived value, brand trust, and customer satisfaction. Fig. 1 synthesizes such

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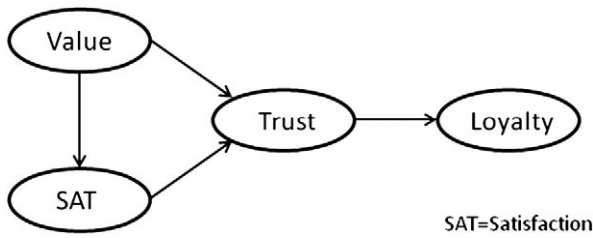


Fig. 1. Established framework of perceived value, customer satisfaction, brand trust, and brand loyalty.

research. Table 1 presents the definitions of the key constructs appearing in this research.

Brand loyalty research is increasingly adopting integrative approaches to model the antecedents to brand loyalty. However, mainstream research into brand loyalty neglects the role of brand itself (i.e. brand identity) and consumers' identification with the brand (i.e. brand identification). The social identity perspective of customer–brand relationships suggests that consumers engage in pro-brand behavior because they identify with the focal brand or company, and such brand identification arises largely due to the identity of the brand (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Social identity perspective places brand identity as a key antecedent to brand identification. Brand research also suggests that brand identity has a direct effect on brand relationship (e.g., Madhavaram, et al., 2005; Schmitt and Pan, 1994). For example, de Chernatony (1999) stresses the important role of brand identity management for building brand reputation.

Madhavaram et al. (2005) advocate that brand identity management should be the starting point of integrated marketing communications for the purpose of building brand loyalty. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) and He and Mukherjee (2009) suggest that brand identity (as manifested in properties such as prestige and distinctiveness) leads to stronger customer relationship. Ahearne et al. (2005) offer some initial important evidence on the effect of corporate brand identity (via identification) on important customer relationship indicators (i.e., extra-role behaviors and product utilization).

2.1. Study 1: Integrating brand identity

A first step in exploring and describing these relationships requires the incorporation of brand identity into the established framework of the drivers of loyalty (see Fig. 1). Fig. 2 identifies the key constructs in the first study.

Customers can develop strong relationships with a brand for its identity (Fournier, 1998). Brand (including corporate) identity refers to the distinctive and relatively enduring characteristics of a focal brand (or company) (Balmer, 2001; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). A brand tends to have a strong and attractive identity when the identity is more distinctive and more prestigious (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Dutton et al., 1994). Distinctive brand identity can help consumers

fulfill their self-definitional needs for uniqueness (Berger and Heath, 2007; Ruvio, 2008; Tian et al., 2001). Different individuals have different levels of motivation and need for distinctiveness in their identities (Tian et al., 2001). Hence, a brand with more distinctive identity is advantageous in obtaining consumers' attitudinal and action supports.

Enhancing and protecting self-esteem are other identity-related motives for brand choice and consumption (Kressmann et al., 2006). Self-enhancement establishes when consumers believe that the focal brand is a prestigious and highly reputed one. A prestige brand is a brand that is for not just the quality but more importantly status, especially for conspicuous consumption (Kirmani et al., 1999). Research shows that corporate reputation positively influences customer–brand relationship (Cornwell and Coote, 2003; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001), and construed that external prestige positively influences organizational identification (Fuller et al., 2006; Smidts et al., 2001).

The model proposed in Fig. 2 suggests that value, trust, and satisfaction mediate brand identity's effect on brand loyalty. First, brand identity enhances brand value. A brand with strong brand identity tends to satisfy customers' symbolic needs more than their functional needs. According to the basic utility principle of perceived value (Parasuraman et al., 1988), a brand with stronger identity tends to enhance value perception. Prior studies find some empirical support for such an effect. For example, Steenkamp et al. (2003) find that brand features (e.g., brand globalness) enhance brand value. Hansen et al. (2008) find that corporate reputation positively relates to perceived economic value. In addition, brand identity positively relates to customer satisfaction, since, as noted earlier, the identity of a brand represents certain prestige and distinctiveness, which in turn can accommodate customers' needs for uniqueness and self-enhancement. For example, Chun and Davies (2006) find that brand character/personality is positively related to customer satisfaction.

- H1. Strong brand identity relates to brand value positively.
- H2. Strong brand identity relates to customer satisfaction positively.

Brand identity also associates with brand trust positively. Two cognitive processes of the development of trust are particularly relevant to the effect of brand identity on brand trust (Doney and Cannon, 1997). The first process is calculative by means of calculating the costs/rewards of the target brand acting in an untrustworthy manner. Consumers could see a brand with a strong identity (i.e. high prestige and high distinctiveness) as incurring too much cost by acting untrustworthily due to the potential loss of brand reputation, which consequently enhances brand trust.

The second process of trust building relates to a brand's capability to fulfill its promises. Consumers tend to perceive brands with strong identity as highly capable and enjoying stronger consumer trust. Extant literature echoes the notion that reputed brands/companies are more likely to enjoy higher consumer trust (e.g., Sichtmann, 2007; Walsh et al., 2009). Baek et al. (2010) find that brand prestige positively relates to perceived quality, and negatively relates to

Table 1
Definitions of key constructs.

Constructs	Definitions
Trust	'Confidence in the exchange partners' reliability and integrity' (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p. 23).
Satisfaction	Accumulated general emotional evaluation of a brand's products/service over time (Anderson et al., 2004).
Value	The overall assessment of the utility of a product based on the perceptions of what is received and what is given (Parasuraman and Grewal, 2000; Zeithaml, 1988).
Brand loyalty	"Biased behavior response expressed overtime by some decision-making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands" (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978, p. 80).
Brand identity	The distinctive and relatively enduring characteristics of a focal brand (or company) (Balmer, 2001; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). A brand tends to have a strong and attractive identity when the identity is more distinctive and more prestigious (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Dutton et al., 1994).
Brand identification	'...an active, selective, and volitional act motivated by the satisfaction of one or more self-definitional (i.e., "Who am I?") needs...' (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003, p. 77).

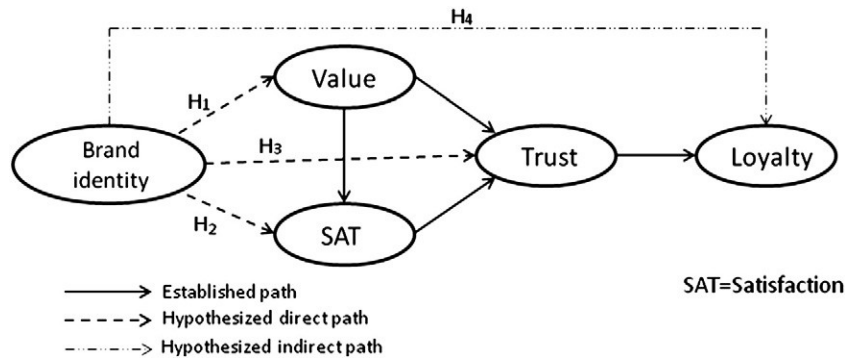


Fig. 2. Integrating brand identity.

perceived risk. Research on brand extension finds that prestige brands, due to their status- and quality-signaling advantage, tend to receive more favorable brand extension evaluation (e.g., Kirmani et al., 1999; Monga and John, 2010). Research on corporate identity also strongly advocates that strong identity engenders trust (Berens et al., 2005; Simoes et al., 2005). Hence, this research expects that value, satisfaction and trust will mediate brand identity's effect on brand loyalty (Harris and Goode, 2004).

H3. Strong brand identity relates to brand trust positively.

H4. Strong brand identity has an indirect effect on brand loyalty via brand value, customer satisfaction, and brand trust.

2.2. Study 1: Method

The study collected the survey data via mall intercept interviews. The mall intercept method has the advantages of getting access to relevant participants over a short period of time and having the opportunity to have personal contact with potential participants. The study recruited female skincare customers ($n=201$) outside the cosmetic sessions of five different department stores in Taipei, Taiwan. Participants filled in the paper questionnaires onsite. The response rate is about 23%. The age of respondents ranges from 16 to 62 with a mean of 32 and standard deviation of 9. Monthly income distribution is (in Taiwanese currency TWD): below 20,000 (18.9%); 20,000–29,999 (13.4%); 30,000–39,999 (28.9%); 40,000–49,999 (19.4%); 50,000–59,999 (10.0%); 60,000 and above (9.5%). Education distribution is: without degree (20.9%); with first degree (61.7%); and with higher degree (17.4%). According to British Council, over 80% high school graduate chose to continue higher education in Taiwan in 2004. Therefore having 62% respondents with first degree is normal.

The survey asked the respondents to refer to the primary brand that they currently use. The survey covered most leading skincare brands. The study measured brand identity with four items (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003): identity prestige and distinctiveness. The study selected these items because a brand tends to have a strong and attractive identity when the identity is more distinctive and more prestigious (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Dutton et al., 1994).

Principal component analysis of the four items suggested that they converge into one factor only, which explains 69.72% of the total variance. The Cronbach alpha is high (0.85). The study measured perceived value and brand loyalty using items from Harris and Goode (2004). The study measured trust with four items (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

The study measured customer satisfaction with three items widely used in the literature to measure overall satisfaction (Tam, 2004; Wang et al., 2004). The study used five-point Likert scales to measure all variables. Appendix A presents the measurement items, factor loadings, and reliability results.

2.3. Study 1: Scale assessments

The study followed the two step approach of structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the data (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The study adopted the second-order factor model for the brand loyalty scale (Harris and Goode, 2004). The proposed CFA achieved good fit. Appendix A also reports the results of CFAs. The study further tested the convergent and discriminant validity of all measures with the CFA results. Convergent validity occurs when the factor loadings and average variance explained (AVE) in items by their respective constructs are greater than 0.50 and factor composite reliability is equal to or greater than 0.60 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Factor loadings of all items to their latent variables are over 0.50 threshold; while the internal consistence reliability estimates (Cronbach alphas) are over the threshold of 0.70. Appendix B presents the descriptive statistics of Study 1. All AVEs are higher than the squared correlations between the focal construct and other constructs, which provides evidence of discriminant validity of the measures (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

2.4. Study 1: Hypotheses testing

Table 2 presents the results of the structural models. The authors first ran Model 1a which corresponds to the proposal framework. Model 1a achieves good fit. Model 1a results support H_1 (brand identity \rightarrow value; $\beta=0.82^{***}$), H_2 (brand identity \rightarrow satisfaction; $\beta=0.56^{***}$) and H_3 (brand identity \rightarrow trust; $\beta=0.24^*$). The model also supports paths of value \rightarrow satisfaction ($\beta=0.53^{***}$) and trust \rightarrow brand loyalty ($\beta=0.78^{***}$), except for the path of value \rightarrow trust ($\beta=0.09$). The authors modified Model 1a and ran Model 1b which excludes the insignificant path of value \rightarrow trust, based on the principle of model parsimony. Model 1b achieves adequate fit which is not significantly worse than Model 1a ($\chi^2_{\text{difference}}/df=1.32/1$, $p=0.25$). Model 1a achieves rather consistent results with those of Model 1a (incl. path coefficient and R^2) and equally supports H_1 , H_2 and H_3 ($\beta=0.82^{***}$, $\beta=0.56^{***}$, and $\beta=0.26^{**}$ respectively).

H_4 predicts that brand identity has an indirect effect on brand loyalty. Table 3 reports the direct and indirect effects of all independent variables as estimated by Model 1b (the more parsimonious model). To assess the paths and respective significance of the indirect effects, the authors calculated the effect sizes of all possible indirect paths and used Aroian version of the Sobel test (Baron and Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 2007). Table 3 presents the indirect effects with detailed indirect paths and significance levels. For the indirect effect of brand identity on brand loyalty, the test results show that brand identity affects brand loyalty via its effect on trust ($\beta=0.20^{***}$); via its effect on satisfaction and trust ($\beta=0.17^{***}$); and via its effect on value, satisfaction and then trust ($\beta=0.14^{**}$). Thus the findings support H_4 .

Table 3 also presents the detailed indirect effects involving other variables. The results show that although perceived value has no

Table 2
Results of model testing for Study 1.

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	Model comparison	CFI	S.RMR	RMSEA	AIC
Model 1a	593.72	288	2.06	Base	0.93	0.079	0.073	719.723
Model 1b	595.04	289	2.06	1.32/1 $p=0.25$	0.93	0.082	0.073	719.043
				Model 1a			Model 1b	
				Coefficient	C.R.		Coefficient	C.R.
Brand identity → value				0.82***	8.53		0.82***	8.55
Brand identity → satisfaction				0.56***	5.50		0.56***	5.46
Value → satisfaction				0.53***	6.14		0.54***	6.19
Brand identity → trust				0.24**	2.52		0.26**	2.71
Value → trust				0.09	1.17			
Satisfaction → trust				0.34***	3.72		0.40***	5.15
Trust → brand loyalty				0.78***	7.96		0.78***	7.95
R ²								
Value					0.53			0.53
Satisfaction					0.76			0.76
Trust					0.66			0.66
Brand loyalty					0.82			0.82

Two-tailed test. C.R. = Critical Ratio.

*** $p < 0.001$.

** $p < 0.01$.

significant direct effect on brand trust, it has a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.22^{***}$) via its effect on satisfaction, which supports the mediation effect of satisfaction between the path of perceived value → trust.

The above analyses also suggest that the Model 1b is a more parsimonious model as compared to Model 1a. Besides testing and comparing nested models, the authors also compared Model 1b with a major theoretically different model. The literature offers an alternative theoretical prediction of the effect of trust on value and satisfaction (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). The rival model reversed most of the paths among brand identity, trust, value and satisfaction to obtain the following paths: trust → brand identity, trust → satisfaction, satisfaction → brand identity, and value → brand identity, but keep the path from value → satisfaction unchanged, as a reversed relationship has little theoretical or empirical support. This reversed competing model is a poorer model compared to Model 1b: AIC difference = $804.176 - 719.043 = 85.133$ (Burnham and Anderson, 2002), other scores are also worse than those of Model 1b: such as CFI = 0.90 (as compared to 0.93), $\chi^2/df = 2.15$ (in comparison to 2.06).

Table 3
Direct and indirect effects of Model 1b.

		Brand identity	Value	SAT	Trust
Value	DE	0.82***			
	IE				
SAT	DE	0.56***	0.54***		
	IE	0.44***			
		via Value			
Trust	DE	0.26*		0.40***	
	IE	0.22***	0.22***		
		via SAT	via SAT		
		0.18***			
		via Value/SAT			
Brand loyalty	DE				0.78***
	IE	0.20***	0.17***	0.31***	
		via Trust	via SAT/Trust		
		0.17***			
		via SAT/Trust			
		0.14**			
		via Value/SAT/Trust			

Two-tailed test. SAT = satisfaction; DE = direct effect; IE = indirect effect.

*** $p < 0.001$.

** $p < 0.01$.

* $p < 0.05$.

2.5. Study 2: Integrating brand identification

Study 2 serves two main purposes: (1) to replicate the brand identity model with a different sample to enhance the external validity of the model; and (2) to extend the brand identity model to a more integrative model that integrates brand identity and social identification processes. Fig. 3 identifies the key constructs included in the second study.

Based on social identity (e.g., Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1985), corporate/organizational identity (e.g., He and Balmer, 2007; He and Baruch, 2010) and organizational identification theories (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth and Mael, 1989), this study proposes that brand identification is a distinctive construct that mediates the effects of brand identity on value, brand trust, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty. Social identity theory maintains that people go beyond their personal identities to develop or claim social identities in articulating and constructing their sense of selves (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987). People establish their self-concepts and social identities by categorizing themselves as members of certain social categories.

The introduction of social identity theory to management discipline generates the notion of organizational membership as one social identity of individuals; and organizational identification as a necessary condition for a salient organizational identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Organizational identification, which refers to the perceived oneness with and sense of belonging to employing organizations, receives extensive attention as a major predictor of various employee–organization relationships (Ashforth et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005).

For consumers, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) propose consumer–company identification as a key construct in customer–company relationship to represent ‘deep, committed, and meaningful’ relationship. This study examines customer brand identification, instead of customer identification with companies, because the concept of a brand can be more inclusive than a company (Aaker, 2004; He and Li, 2010). Different brands within the same company can have different identities (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Although brands are not formal organizations, they can act as salient social categories for consumers to claim membership with and affiliation to, thus develop relationships with them (Fournier, 1998; He and Li, 2010). For example, research on brand community finds that consumers’ participation of brand community can enhance brand-centered social identity and customer–brand relationships (e.g., Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; McAlexander et al., 2002).

Consumers have a greater tendency to identify with a brand, if the focal brand has a strong identity in terms of being distinctive and prestigious than those of compared brands (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Dutton et al., 1994). Such proposal accords with notions that consumer company identification derives mainly from corporate identity (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003) and with the suggestion that employee organizational identification derives from organizational identity (Dutton et al., 1994).

H5. Strong brand identity relates to brand identification positively.

Brand identification has a positive influence on perceived value, brand trust, and customer satisfaction. First, perceived value is a subjective evaluation of gain and loss of exchange relationship (Zeithaml, 1988). Affective attachment with the focal object can influence cognitive evaluation (Murphy and Zajonc, 1993; Zajonc, 1984). Since brand identification involves affective attachment with the brand, customers with stronger brand identification are more likely to evaluate the value of exchange relationship with the focal brand more favorably. Although not dealing with brand identification per se, prior research has shown that (1) relationship quality positively relates to perceived value (Moliner et al., 2007), (2) image congruity (actual and social) enhances brand value perception (He and Mukherjee, 2007); and (3) intangible assets (e.g., reputation) enhance customer perceived value (Hansen et al., 2008). Since brand identification represents a deep

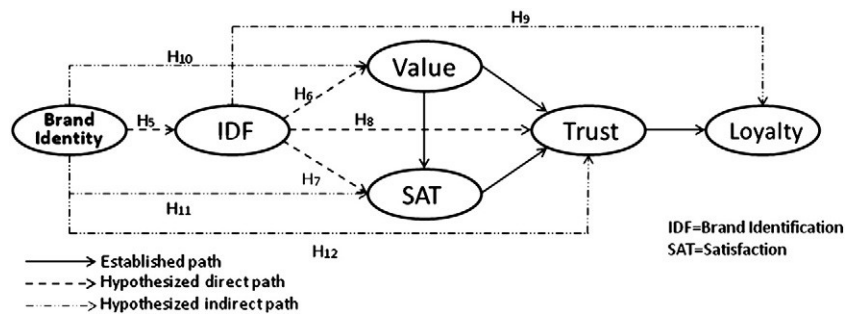


Fig. 3. Integrating brand identification.

and meaning relationship (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; He and Mukherjee, 2009) and that corporate reputation is highly associated with brand identification (Berens et al., 2005), brand identification relates positively to enhance perceived value.

H6. Brand identification relates to perceived value positively.

According to expectation-disconfirmation theory of customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1980; Oliver, 1993), customer satisfaction happens when the actual brand performance exceeds/confirm the prior-purchase/consumption expectation of performance (Yi and La, 2004). Brand identification could enhance customer satisfaction in two ways: by enhancing the perceived performance (as indicated by its effect on perceived value) and by more favorable overall appraisal due to affective attachment with the brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; He and Li, 2010). The antecedent role of brand identification can also be due to the fact that brand identification can happen for non-customer consumers (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003), however brand satisfaction's occurrence requires the act of purchase (in other words, it happens only for actual customers).

H7. Brand identification relates to customer satisfaction positively.

Brand identification can directly and indirectly influence brand trust. As noted earlier, brand identity engenders brand trust. Based on social identification theory, the effect of a social category's identity on responses towards the focal social category normally happens through an individual's identification with the social category (Ashforth et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005).

Accordingly, brand identification will mediate the effect of brand identity on brand trust. In addition, brand identification represents affective attachment to the brand, which provides a favorable platform for brand trust development (Dunn and Schweitzer, 2005; Jones and George, 1998; Lewicki et al., 1998; Williams, 2001). Given the positive effects on brand identity and brand identification on the same outcome variables, and that brand identity precedes brand identification, naturally a mediating effect exists of brand identification on the effects of brand identity on the outcome variables.

H8. Brand identification relates to brand trust positively.

Brand identification can also affect brand loyalty, according to identification theory (e.g., Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). A number of prior studies empirically support such effect among samples of bank customers (Marin et al., 2009), and physicians (Ahearne et al., 2005). In addition, Cornwell and Coote (2003) find that consumers have stronger intention to purchase from the sponsor of a non-profit organization (NPO) if they have stronger identification with the NPO. Lichtenstein et al. (2004) find that customer identification mediates the effect of corporate social responsibility on customer donation to the corporate-supported NPO.

Similarly, perceived value, customer satisfaction and brand trust will mediate the effect of brand identification on brand loyalty. Prior research has found that perceived value, customer satisfaction and

brand trust are all important antecedents to brand loyalty (see e.g., Harris and Goode, 2004). The literature documents widespread evidence of the links between perceived value on brand loyalty (Grewal et al., 2003; He and Li, 2011; He and Mukherjee, 2007; Parasuraman and Grewal, 2000; Spiteri and Dion, 2004). In addition, customer satisfaction and/or trust tend to mediate the effect of perceived value on brand loyalty (Lin and Wang, 2006). For example, Harris and Goode (2004) find that perceived value has both direct and indirect (via trust and satisfaction) on brand loyalty.

H9. Brand identification affects brand loyalty via brand value, customer satisfaction, and brand trust.

Study 1 has established the positive effects of brand identity on brand value, customer satisfaction, and brand trust. Early discussion has also established the positive effect of brand identity on brand identification, and the positive effects of brand identification on brand value, customer satisfaction, and brand trust. Hence, the study expects that brand identification would mediate the effects of brand identity on brand value, customer satisfaction, and brand trust. Prior literature offers some indirect evidence on the mediation effect of brand identification. For example, consumer identification mediates (a) the effect of identity (prestige) on sponsorship-linked purchase intent (Cornwell and Coote, 2003), (b) the effect of corporate social responsibility on customer donation to the corporate-supported NPO (Lichtenstein et al., 2004) and service brand loyalty (He and Li, 2010); and (c) the effects of company image and characteristics on their utilization of products from the pharmaceutical firms and extra-role pro-company behavior (Ahearne et al., 2005).

Strong evidence exists in the organizational identification literature on the mediating effect of employee organizational identification on the effect of organizational identity perception on employee commitment and loyalty (Ashforth et al., 2008). Given that brand identification also has indirect effect on brand loyalty via brand value, customer satisfaction and brand trust (H₉), brand identity will have indirect effects on brand loyalty via not only brand identification, but also the mediators of brand identification.

H10. Brand identity affects brand value via brand identification.

H11. Brand identity affects customer satisfaction via brand identification.

H12. Brand identity affects brand trust via brand identification.

2.6. Study 2: Method

To test the generalizability of the brand identity model as tested in Study 1 to another context, Study 2 chose a different sector (mobile phone) for the following reasons. First, as compared to skincare brands in Study 1, mobile phone consumption is more publicly visible. Second, mobile phone brands may act as a means to express consumers' personal and desired identities, which makes it relevant to the research on social identification process. Third, although mobile

phones involve less functional risk (such as product quality), their consumption can have potential high social risk.

Mall-intercept method of survey returned one hundred and ninety nine questionnaires (with about 25% respond rate). The sample consists of 40% male and 60% female, 11.9% at the age of below 20, 47% within the range 21–25; 28.2% within the range of 26–30, and 12.9% above 30. Education distribution is: without degree (23.1%), with first degree (65.8%), and with higher degree (11.1%). The questionnaire asked the participants to refer to the main brands of their current mobile phones when answering the questions onsite. The study measured brand identification by a well-established five items scale (Mael and Ashforth, 1992) to fit the consumer–brand context. To enhance the generalizability of the effect of brand identity on other measures of brand loyalty, Study 2 used a different scale to measure brand loyalty, which emphasizes the behavioral preference nature of brand loyalty (Washburn et al., 2004). Other measures were consistent with the scales being used in Study 1. Study 2 used 7-point Likert scales to measure all constructs. Appendix C lists the measurement items.

2.7. Study 2: Scale assessments

The CFA of Study 2 achieves good fit. Appendix C presents the full CFA results. All factor loadings are over 0.50 ($p < 0.001$). The AVEs of all variables are over the 0.50 threshold and higher than the squared correlations of all pairs involving the focal variables (as reported in Appendix D). Thus, our measurement model demonstrates evidence of convergent and discriminant validities.

2.8. Study 2: Hypotheses testing

Table 4 reports the results of all structural models. First, the authors tested whether Study 2's data can confirm the conceptual framework of Fig. 2 (Study 1). The authors ran Model 2a which corresponds to Fig. 2. Model 2a achieves good fit. Table 4 presents the results of structural models for study 2. The results support H₁ (brand identity → value; $\beta = 0.88^{***}$), H₂ (brand identity → satisfaction; $\beta = 0.58^{***}$) and H₃ (brand identity → trust; $\beta = 0.22^*$). H₄ predicts that BI has indirect effect on brand loyalty. The findings support H₄; see Table 5. This finding confirms the generalizability of the brand identity model to the mobile phone sector.

To test the hypotheses H₅–H₁₁, the authors ran Model 2b (with good model fit) which includes brand identification and corresponds to Fig. 3. H₅ predicts that brand identity positively relates to brand identification. H₅ is supported ($\beta = 0.81^{***}$). H₆, H₇ and, H₈ predict that brand identification positively affects perceived value, satisfaction and trust respectively. H₆, H₇ and, H₈ are supported ($\beta = 0.50^{***}$, $\beta = 0.28^{***}$ and $\beta = 0.37^{***}$ respectively). H₉, H₁₀, H₁₁, and H₁₂ are mediation effects predicting that brand identification mediates the effect of brand identity on perceived value, satisfaction, trust and brand loyalty respectively. Table 5 presents the direct and indirect effects of Model 2b.

The analysis includes applying the Sobel mediation test in the same way as in Study 1. H₉ predicts that brand identification has indirect effect on brand loyalty via perceived value, satisfaction and brand trust. H₉ is supported, as Table 5 shows that brand identification has significant indirect effects on brand loyalty via brand trust ($\beta = 0.25^{***}$); via perceived value and trust ($\beta = 0.11^{**}$); via satisfaction and trust ($\beta = 0.05^*$); and via perceived value, satisfaction and trust ($\beta = 0.03^\dagger$). Table 5 clearly shows that brand identity does not only have a significant direct effect on perceived value ($\beta = 0.47^{***}$), but also a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.40^{***}$) via its effect on brand identification. Thus the findings support H₁₀.

Brand identity does not only have a significant direct effect on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.43^{***}$), but also a significant indirect effect via brand identification ($\beta = 0.23^{**}$), via perceived value ($\beta = 0.15^{**}$) and via identification and perceived value ($\beta = 0.13^{**}$). Thus the findings support H₁₁.

Table 4
Model estimation of Study 2.

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	S. RMR	RMSEA	AIC
Model 2a	306.779	128	2.397	0.95	0.042	0.084	392.779
Model 2b	444.097	219	2.028	0.95	0.041	0.072	558.097
			Model 2a		Model 2b		
			Coefficient	C.R.	Coefficient	C.R.	
Brand identity → identification					0.81 ^{***}	8.65	
Brand identity → value			0.88 ^{***}	10.99	0.47 ^{***}	4.22	
Identification → value					0.50 ^{***}	4.19	
Brand identity → satisfaction			0.58 ^{***}	7.37	0.43 ^{***}	5.17	
Identification → satisfaction					0.28 ^{***}	3.26	
Value → satisfaction			0.41 ^{***}	6.31	0.32 ^{***}	4.77	
Brand identity → trust			0.22 [*]	2.32	0.12 [‡]	1.46	
Identification → trust					0.37 ^{***}	4.25	
Value → trust			0.37 ^{***}	4.56	0.32 ^{***}	4.67	
Satisfaction → trust			0.40 ^{***}	3.61	0.27 ^{**}	2.76	
Trust → brand loyalty			0.65 ^{***}	8.36	0.68 ^{***}	8.69	
R ²							
Brand identification							0.68
Value				0.62			0.68
Satisfaction				0.84			0.86
Trust				0.90			0.97
Brand loyalty				0.56			0.60

Two-tailed test. C.R. = Critical Ratio. Identification = brand identification.

*** $p < 0.001$.

** $p < 0.01$.

* $p < 0.05$.

‡ $p < 0.15$.

H₁₂ predicts that brand identification mediates the effect of brand identity on brand trust. H₁₂ is supported, as Table 5 shows that brand identity has a significant indirect effect on brand trust via brand identification ($\beta = 0.30^{***}$); via brand identification and perceived value ($\beta = 0.13^{**}$); via brand identification and satisfaction ($\beta = 0.06^*$); via brand identification, perceived value and satisfaction ($\beta = 0.04^*$). Finally, satisfaction has a significant effect (indirectly, $\beta = 0.18^{**}$ via trust) on brand loyalty.

3. Discussion

This research conducts two empirical studies to test the social identity model and an integrated model of the path to brand loyalty. Study 1 uses a sample of skincare consumers to test the effect of brand identity on brand loyalty. Study 1 finds that brand identity does not only have direct and indirect effects on perceived value, customer satisfaction and brand trust, but also have significant indirect effects on brand loyalty via its effect on perceived value, customer satisfaction and brand trust. Study 2 confirms the effects of brand identity.

Study 2 expands the brand identity model by incorporating the pivotal construct of brand identification along the path from brand identity to brand loyalty. Study 2 supports the pivotal role of brand identification by finding (1) brand identification does not only have direct and indirect effects on perceived value, customer satisfaction and brand trust, but also has significant indirect effects on brand loyalty; (2) brand identification mediates the effect of brand identity on perceived value, customer satisfaction, brand trust and brand loyalty.

3.1. Theoretical implications

This research makes a number of contributions to the literature of brand loyalty. First, the research is the first one that confirms the presence of significant direct and indirect effects of both brand identity and brand identification on traditional antecedents of brand loyalty (i.e., perceived value, satisfaction and trust). Recently social identity approach is receiving increasing attention for consumer loyalty (Ahearn et al., 2005; Mukherjee and He, 2008).

Table 5
Direct and indirect effects of Model 2b.

		Brand identity	IDF	Value	SAT	Trust
IDF	DE	0.81***				
	IE					
Value	DE	0.47***	0.50***			
	IE	0.40*** via IDF				
SAT	DE	0.43***	0.28***	0.32***		
	IE	0.23** via IDF 0.15** via Value 0.13** via IDF/Value	0.16** via Value			
Trust	DE	0.12†	0.37***	0.32***	0.27**	
	IE	0.30*** via IDF 0.15** via Value 0.12* via SAT 0.13** via IDF/Value 0.06* via IDF/SAT 0.04* via Value/SAT 0.04* via IDF/Value/SAT	0.16** via Value 0.08* via SAT 0.04* via Value/SAT	0.09* via SAT		
Brand loyalty	DE					0.68***
	IE	0.08† via Trust 0.20*** via IDF/Trust 0.10** via Value/Trust 0.08* via SAT/Trust 0.09** via IDF/Value/Trust 0.04† via IDF/SAT/Trust 0.03* via value/SAT/Trust 0.03* via IDF/Value/SAT/trust	0.25*** via Trust 0.11** via Value/Trust 0.05* via SAT/Trust 0.03† via Value/SAT/Trust	0.22*** via Trust 0.06* via SAT/Trust	0.18** via Trust	

Two-tailed test. SAT = satisfaction; DE = direct effect; IE = indirect effect; IDF = brand identification.

*** $p < 0.001$.

** $p < 0.01$.

* $p < 0.05$.

† $p < 0.01$.

‡ $p < 0.15$.

Customers, as non-formal members of a company, can also develop strong attachment and identification with the company and its brands (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; He and Li, 2010). Indeed, prior studies suggest that consumer–company/brand (C–C/B) identification is a relationship marketing model of emerging importance (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). To date, empirical research on C–C/B identification is insufficient. The present research addresses this gap by examining the effects of brand identity and identification on brand loyalty.

Second, the research suggests that social identification perspective of brand loyalty can integrate with other perspectives to model the consumer psychological path to brand loyalty. This paper demonstrates this by developing and testing a more general model that integrates social identity and social exchange perspectives of brand loyalty. One important stream of research on customer–brand relationship is delineating the path to brand loyalty (Breivik and Thorbjørnsen, 2008; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Fournier, 1998; Rindfleisch et al., 2009).

Consumers commit relational market behavior for various personal, social and institutional reasons (Dick and Basu, 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). Extant literature focuses on the economic and social exchange relationship between customers and brands (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). In this line of research, constructs, such as perceived value (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Zeithaml, 1988), and trust & commitment (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Gruen et al., 2000; Morgan and Hunt, 1994) receive much attention as central indicators and predictors of strong customer relationship. More recently, the literature accords attention to integrating the roles of different constructs: such as trust, satisfaction, and perceived value (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2000; Harris and Goode, 2004; Suh and Yi, 2006) to brand loyalty. And the second emerging research focuses the social identification process (Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; He and Li, 2010). This research incorporates different perspectives of brand loyalty into a more general framework that stresses the antecedent role of

brand identity and identification. By doing so, this research expands prior research on social identity perspective of brand loyalty through incorporating the mediation effects of social exchange variables (e.g., perceived value and trust).

Third, this research confirms the pivotal role of brand identification in the process of brand loyalty development and stresses the mediation effect of brand identification on the effects of brand identity on the path to brand loyalty. Although brand identity itself can exert a significant effect on the path to brand loyalty, brand identification partially mediates its effect. Study 2 supported this effect.

The present research suggests a number of additional interesting theoretical insights. First, the study finds that both brand identity and brand identification can be significant antecedent to (not just brand loyalty) perceived value, satisfaction and trust. The extant literature focuses on the direct effects of brand identity and identification on brand loyalty, but largely ignores the immediate effects of brand identity/identification on value/satisfaction/trust. These immediate effects can stem from the subjective and biased evaluation and judgment of in-group objects due to social identification process.

Similarly out-group discrimination could also be applicable here, since customers with stronger brand identification are also likely to develop negative biased attitude towards the focal brand's competing brands. Second, this research also contributes to the debate on the relationship between trust and customer satisfaction. The extant literature does not offer a definite answer to the issue. This research suggests that the exact relationship between trust and customer satisfaction could depend on the customer tenure (the brand experience). This research suggests that customer satisfaction tends to precede trust for existing customers.

3.2. Managerial implications

The significant positive effects of both brand identity and identification suggest that companies should invest on brand identity

and consumer identification. Instead of merely communicating brands for the purpose of brand awareness, brand investment should focus on according strong ‘identity’ meaning to consumers, so that it facilitates consumer search for consumer–brand bond.

This research notices that the effects of brand identity and identification go through some consumer psychological states, such as perceived value, brand satisfaction, and brand trust. Such results reinforce the importance of building strong brand identity and consumer identification, since a brand with a strong identity does not only affect brand loyalty through social identification process but also enhances consumer perception of social exchange relationships. Thus brand managers should not only integrate their rational social exchange investment, but also investment on customer social interaction. Brand community can be a viable tool for building strong brand identity and consumer identification.

3.3. Limitations and future research

This research has several limitations that suggest promising avenues for future research. First, although the research makes some effort to enhance the generalizability of the models by applying it to two different sectors (mobile phone and skincare); the findings should still be interpreted within these two contexts. To enhance further the generalizability of these models, future study should apply them to other products, for example luxury brands and service brands. Second, the research examines only brand identity and identification as the antecedent variables, future research should examine the antecedents of brand identity and identification. Third, the literature proposes other outcomes of brand identity and identification, such as brand championship, word of mouth, resistance to negative information and support of marketing activities. Future research should aim to find empirical evidence for these effects, and other effects, such as the effect of brand identification on brand extension.

Appendix A. Measures and results of the CFA of Study 1

Construct items	Loading	α	CR	AVE
<i>Brand identity</i>				
X has a distinctive identity.	0.80	0.85	0.86	0.60
X stands out from its competitors.	0.82			
X is a first-class, high-quality brand.	0.73			
X has a high reputation.	0.74			
<i>Perceived value</i>				
X is excellent value for money	0.87	0.90	0.91	0.77
I am happy with the value for money I get from X	0.96			
X's services are excellent value	0.80			
<i>Customer satisfaction</i>				
I am completely satisfied with X	0.89	0.92	0.92	0.80
I am very pleased with X	0.88			
I am absolutely delighted by X	0.91			
<i>Brand loyalty (second order)</i>				
Cognitive loyalty	0.83	0.93	0.92	0.74
Affective loyalty	0.77			
Conative loyalty	0.93			
Action loyalty	0.90			
<i>Trust</i>				
I trust X	0.82	0.89	0.89	0.67
I rely on X	0.81			
X is an honest brand	0.81			
X is safe	0.84			

Appendix A (continued)

Construct items	Loading	α	CR	AVE
<i>Cognitive loyalty</i>				
I believe that using X is preferable to other brands	0.87	0.82	0.84	0.63
I believe that the features of X are well suited to what I like	0.85			
I prefer the service of X to the service of other brands	0.64			
<i>Affective loyalty</i>				
I have a negative attitude to X (R)	0.90	0.90	0.91	0.77
I dislike X (R)	0.93			
I like the features and performance of X	0.80			
<i>Conative loyalty</i>				
I have repeatedly found X is better than others	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.65
I have repeatedly found the features of X inferior (R)	0.75			
Repeatedly, the performance of X is superior to other brands	0.82			
<i>Action loyalty</i>				
I would always continue to choose X before others	0.84	0.81	0.83	0.62
I would always continue to favor the offerings of X before others	0.86			
I will always be willing to try new products offered by X	0.65			

Note: Model fit: Standardized RMR=0.056, $\chi^2=536.544$ (285), $\chi^2/df=1.883$, RMSEA=0.066; CFI=0.94, PCFI=0.82; AIC=668.544.

Appendix B. Descriptive statistics for Study 1

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Brand loyalty	3.69	0.57	1				
2. Brand identity	3.53	0.70	0.72**	1			
3. Perceived value	3.47	0.74	0.73**	0.66**	1		
4. Customer satisfaction	3.62	0.73	0.78**	0.72**	0.77**	1	
5. Trust	3.85	0.57	0.76**	0.59**	0.61**	0.65**	1

** $p < 0.01$ level. Two-tailed test.

Appendix C. Results of the CFA of Study 2

Construct items	Loading	α	CR	AVE
<i>Brand identity</i>				
X has a distinctive identity.	0.76	0.93	0.92	0.77
X stands out from its competitors.	0.91			
X is a first-class, high-quality brand.	0.91			
X has a high reputation.	0.93			
<i>Brand identification</i>				
When someone criticizes X, it feels like a personal insult.	0.68	0.90	0.90	0.65
I am very interested in what others think about X	0.88			
X's successes are my successes	0.86			
When someone praises X, it feels like a personal compliment	0.76			
If a story in the media criticized X, I would feel embarrassed	0.85			
<i>Perceived value</i>				
X is excellent value for money	0.88	0.91	0.91	0.76
I am happy with the value for money I get from X	0.91			
X's services are excellent value	0.83			
<i>Customer satisfaction</i>				
I am completely satisfied with X	0.90	0.95	0.95	0.86
I am very pleased with X	0.95			
I am absolutely delighted by X	0.94			

(continued on next page)

Appendix C (continued)

Construct items	Loading	α	CR	AVE
<i>Brand loyalty</i>		0.89	0.90	0.68
It makes sense to buy X instead of any other brand, even if they are the same	0.70			
Even if another brand has same features as X, I would prefer to buy X	0.92			
I would prefer to buy X' If there is another brand as good as X, I prefer to buy X	0.84			
If I cannot distinguish of another brand and X, I still think that buy X is advisable	0.83			
<i>Trust</i>		0.89	0.89	0.66
I trust X	0.83			
I rely on X	0.79			
X is an honest brand	0.86			
X is safe	0.77			

Note: Model fit: Standardized RMR = 0.036, $\chi^2 = 427.273$ (215), $\chi^2/df = 1.987$, RMSEA = 0.071; CFI = 0.95, PCFI = 0.81; AIC = 549.273.

Appendix D. Descriptive statistics for Study 2

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Brand loyalty	4.45	1.38						
2. Brand identity	4.77	1.40	0.65**	1				
3. Brand identification	4.38	1.32	0.73**	0.76**	1			
4. Perceived value	4.32	1.21	0.61**	0.73**	0.72**	1		
5. Customer satisfaction	4.76	1.37	0.69**	0.84**	0.79**	0.79**	1	
6. Trust	4.19	1.24	0.60**	0.73**	0.73**	0.81**	0.78**	1

** $p < 0.01$ level. Two-tailed test.

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