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### Understanding the Role of Admiration in Marketing

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#### Abstract:

An admired brand will have a higher brand equity, greater consumer's loyalty, and stronger brand advocacy, increase in revenue and company assets. This research will draw a comprehensive synthesis of prior studies on the admiration and provide insights of its application in marketing. This study aims to understand (1) the theoretical positioning of admiration in branding, (2) benefit and importance of brand admiration (3) negative effect of admiration (4) antecedents and measurement of brand admiration and (5) theoretical gaps and opportunities for future research. This study drew research synthesis and interpretation of qualitative evidence gained from literature review of previous articles, journals, and research. It can be concluded that there is clear evidence that Brand Admiration can be an alternative construct in the marketing field, and there is ample room for future research to enrich the literature of brand admiration. For marketers, this research is expected to provide insight into the importance of making their brand admired. While for the academics, this study contributes a new perspective in the area of branding. It is very difficult to find specific investigations on brand admiration, a relatively new construct in branding, especially in Indonesia, as a representative of developing countries.

**Keywords:** brand admiration, loyalty, marketing, consumer behavior.

### 了解钦佩在营销中的作用

#### 摘要:

受人推崇的品牌将拥有更高的品牌资产、更高的消费者忠诚度、更强的品牌宣传、收入和公司资产的增加。本研究将全面综合先前关于钦佩的研究，并提供其在营销中的应用见解。本研究旨在了解（1）品牌钦佩的理论定位，（2）品牌钦佩的好处和重要性，（3）钦佩的负面影响，（4）品牌钦佩的前因和衡量，以及（5）品牌钦佩的理论差距和机会 未来的研究。本研究对从以前的文章、期刊和研究的文献综述中获得的定性证据进行了研究综合和解释。可以得出结论，有明确的证据表明品牌崇拜可以成为营销领域的替代结构

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，未来的研究有足够的空间来丰富品牌崇拜的文献。对于营销人员而言，这项研究有望深入了解让他们的品牌受到赞赏的重要性。而对于学术界来说，这项研究为品牌领域提供了一个新的视角。很难找到对品牌崇拜的具体调查，这是一个相对较新的品牌构建，特别是在印度尼西亚作为发展中国家的代表。

**关键词：**品牌崇拜、忠诚度、营销、消费者行为。

## 1. Introduction

People are often moved by individuals who do extraordinary things. For example, in sport, people admire sportsmen such as Michael Jordan, Lionel Messi, or Usain Bolt. The feeling of admiration includes emotional responses and distinctive feelings, which trigger physical and behavioral responses that arise when people see extraordinary talents and accomplishments. These athletes displayed extraordinary talent and achievement in their respective fields, which gained admiration from their enthusiasts.

Not only in sport, there is a lot of polling conducted by organizations such as Fortune, Forbes, and Gallup that asks what companies and leaders are the most admired. Just as it dominates the world economy, big tech companies such as Apple consistently rank in the top 3 for the last three years (Fortune, 2022). Every year in the United States, Gallup does surveys on Americans who are most worthy of their admiration. For the last six years, the most admired man has been President Barack Obama; for the last twelve years, the most admired woman has been former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Michelle Obama (Gallup, 2020). Although the companies on the list are very popular, one is left to wonder what these rankings actually mean for its consumers. Take Fortune's World's Most Admired Companies for example, this list is based on a poll of +3.700 business executives and analysts. What are the benefits and qualities of those who are admired and the characteristics of those who admire? What do they tell us about the qualities of those who are admired or about the characteristics of those who admired? In short, the ranking does not necessarily serve as a barometer for where current and future consumers are heading and predict future collective behavior.

There are many concepts in brand marketing, which emphasize the connection between brand and customer. Over the years, it became evident that the relationship between brand and customer is much broader than marketing and involves other disciplines such as consumer psychology, philosophy, and communication. A company needs to leverage its brand so that customers connect with it in a more deep and frequent manner. There are concepts such as brand love, brand attachment, brand trust, brand love, and brand loyalty.

This research attempts to provide a new insight in the field of customer and brand relationship. Brand admiration research is still in its early stage and was first discussed by Park et al. in 2016. In branding, admiration is developed not only through an array of marketing levers such as logos, brand names, and

products but also something more emotional. According to Park et al. (2016), brand admiration is a brand that is loved, trusted, and respected. By having an admired brand, businesses will get higher growth and revenue, stronger market position, better cost efficiencies and better employer branding. Despite an increasing number of contemporary articles dedicated to the topic, there is only a few deep-dive theoretical research of brand admiration. The pioneer research by Kim et al (2016) was also lacking in connecting the emotion aspect to the Brand Admiration model.

In this paper, we present past research results on the admiration, while highlighting existing gaps in the available literature and suggesting directions for future research. We explore the current state of knowledge on the admiration in four sections: (1) Theoretical positioning of admiration in branding, (2) Measurement and antecedents of brand admiration (3) Benefit and importance of brand admiration (4) Gaps and opportunities for future research. The methodology used for this research is a literature review from previous articles, journals, and research from the field of marketing, and psychology.

This research develops alternative concepts of branding drawn from a psychological proxy for emotions. Brand admiration can be end-goal for marketers and provides supplementary role for brand equity. In his study, Park et al. (2016) argue that brand equity is an outcome measure of all previously executed branding decisions. To gain insights into why brand equity might be higher or lower, marketers should assess the drivers of brand equity, specifically, the nonfinancial factors.

## 2. Theoretical Positioning of Admiration in Branding

The emotional aspect of branding began by exploring the emotional connection in consumer and brand relationships in the 1990s (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). This is started because several companies wanted to know how consumers relate to a brand and why one brand is preferred over another. Many previous publications have found the positive impact of a strong consumer and brand relationship such as better brand image, better brand durability, higher consumer's willingness to pay premium prices, increase in brand loyalty, and better profitability (Aaker et.al., 2012; Park et.al., 2016).

To understand the consumer and brand relationships, perspective from two areas of knowledge can be used: brand management by using the personification of

human relations and consumer psychology. The psychological relationship between consumers and brands includes reciprocal interactions through multiple repetitive actions (Sharma et al., 2020). Brands can provide meaning in a psycho-social- cultural context for customers.

Brand admiration is a relatively new construct in branding pioneered by the study of Park et al. (2016). However, very few empirical studies on branding have examined consumer admiration for a brand. Theoretical and empirical research on admiration and its psychological effects are scarce, although emotions have an important role in shaping various aspects of consumer behavior (Pham & Chen, 2019). For example, a wide choice of product assortments will drive consumers' preferences not only because it gives an opportunity to choose a better product but because of the emotional satisfaction of reviewing it (Aydinli et al., 2017). If consumers are happy due to a brand advertisement, the consumer's brand attitude will increase.

As a first step to apply admiration in marketing discipline is to understand what admiration is and specify why it is different from related emotions. Admiration is an emotion that focuses on others elicited by competence above standards (Smith, 2000). It is a surprise associated with a sense of wonder at another person's excellence (Darwin, 1872, cited in Algie & Haidt, 2009). Individuals will experience an admiration for someone who is great at something that he/she finds important. Admiration is the most representative example of the 'emotion of appreciation', which includes appreciation and respect. Previous research has indicated that individuals or groups who are admired will be desired and inspire those who admire them (Onu & Kessler, 2016). As when someone admires beautiful landscapes, works of art, animals, and other objects, we can also admire individuals, for example, when Usain Bolt breaks the world record: an entity like a soccer team, a culture, a country, and a brand. This competence will depend on the levels of interest on a particular topic. For example, if you're not into soccer, you may not admire a soccer team. To evoke admiration, someone must like the object. The background and personal settings also have an important role in someone's admiration for something.

On this basis, this study draws the admiration construct into the realm of marketing. Within the general admiration literature admiration, admiration is categorized into several categories: as an appreciation emotion together with awe, respect, appreciation, and esteem (Ortony & Turner, 1990), as upward assimilative emotions, with inspiration and optimism (Smith, 2000), as other-praising emotions, with gratitude and elevation (Algie & Haidt, 2009). Admiration is an emotion uniquely owned by humans (Haidt & Seder, 2009). Admiration has been linked to how people relate to their role models (Smith, 2000) and, on a wider scale,

how it facilitates social learning within and between social groups (Fessler & Haley, 2003). In short, admiration has essential functions in social interaction: it inspires individuals to learn from excellent role-models, to become better people, and to create social bonds.

Looking at the impact that admiration has on a wide-social scale, admiration is surprisingly little studied empirically in the marketing field. a company can have a strong bond on a wider scale with its target group of consumers if they have an admired brand. The brand admiration construct was first pioneered by Park et al. (2016) and defined as a strong consumer-brand relationship encompassing three primary dimensions that consist of brand trust, brand respect, and brand love. To stipulate trust, respect, and love, a brand must provide three kinds of benefits for customers, i.e., enabling benefits that solving customer problems resulting in brand trust; enticing benefits provide a sense of excitement or warmth, resulting in brand love; and enriching benefits by resonating with customer's beliefs and their sense of self, resulting in brand respect. The more a brand able to provide benefits that enables, entices, and enriches its customers will be more admired by customers.

As the opposite, some views that customers might have at non-admired brands are decent, confusing, noble, faddish, and boring (Park et.al., 2016). Although such brands also can be profitable, particularly when customers do not have another option but to purchase it. When a brand is admired, there are several benefits that can be obtained for the company. A detailed review of brand admiration benefits will be presented in the next section.

### 3. Result

#### 3.1. Benefit and Importance of Brand Admiration

Brand admiration is an important marketing construct because it has many positive effects on both companies and customers. Brand admiration can be a competitive advantage for a company and sets it apart from its competitors and moving away from product and price-led competition to a more emotional-based advantage. An admired brand will have a strong consumer and brand relationship, which will have a lot of positive impact on the company. The summary of the advantages of Brand Admiration is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Benefits of brand admiration (Developed by the authors)

Viewpoint	Effect	Reference
Branding	Better brand durability	Aaker et al. (2012)
	Better brand image	Ahluwalia et al.
	Higher brand advocacy	(2000), Hwang
	Higher brand loyalty	and Kandampully (2012)
Finance	Higher company value	Park et al. (2016)
	Higher company revenue	
	Better profitability	

Continuation of Table 1		
Human capital	Retail top talent	Park et al. (2016)
	Recruit top talent	
	Willingness to pay premium	Thomson et al (2005)
Consumer behavior	Willingness to follow	Park et al. (2016)
	Willingness to learn new ideas and skills	Onu & Kessler (2016)
Product management	Facilitate product extension	Park et al. (2016)
Business collaboration	Attract top companies to collaborate	Park et al. (2016)

From the brand management standpoint, brand admiration is positively correlated with brand durability, brand image, brand advocacy, and brand loyalty (Aaker et al., 2012).

From a finance standpoint, brand admiration will increase a company's revenue, profitability, and company's value. It is easier for an admired brand to attract new buyers and reduce cost due to its high demand and word-of-mouth from their followers.

From a human capital standpoint, it will be easier for a company that has an admired brand to retain their talent and recruit the best talent from the market. Employees will be more motivated to strengthen the brand, which is ultimately crucial to a company's success. Talent is the most difficult core competency for competitors to copy (Park et al., 2016).

From a business collaboration standpoint, an admired brand will attract powerful external partners who want to be associated with the brand. Collaboration allows companies to obtain partners with great expertise and track records.

From a product management standpoint, an admired brand will have the advantage regarding expanding to a new product category. An admired brand such as Nike, Disney, and Apple have achieved tremendous success across categories, across markets.

From a consumer standpoint, individuals will also be inspired to emulate their admired subject. They are willing to learn new ideas and skills to be like their admired brand. Customers will spend their resources (time, money, and energy) on following their admired brand and purchasing their products. They are also willing to pay a premium price to obtain products from their admired brand (Park et al., 2016). Since there are many positive impacts of brand admiration in all aspects of business, it is important to study the brand admiration in a more in-depth manner.

### 3.2. Negative Effect of Admiration

While most research on Admiration provides positive effects, there are research that reported negative effects of admiration. Aruguete et al. (2019) said that admiration in the context of celebrity is associated with materialism, with many people desiring to own expensive items that many celebrities own. Admiration could lead to a fantasy of described items and experiences. Admiration might lead to unrealistic

expectations and create a sense of pessimism if these expectations are not fulfilled. This social comparison could lead to self-devaluation. Admiration is related to envy, which can occur in upward social comparison situations (Van de Ven et al., 2011). Individuals may think of themselves as lacking skills, qualities, and feel inferior to others, which eventually might impact the well-being of the customers. Most of the studies on the negative effect of admiration is in the context of human relationships. There is no prior study that highlighted the negative effect of brand admiration. This provides opportunities for future research. As a starting point, nowadays shopping-malls, e-commerce are very accessible for customers. Customers are now exposed by marketing stimuli everywhere and at any time. It is easy for customers to follow their admired brands, consciously and unconsciously. Future research can look into the negative effect of admiration on a brand and the impact it might impose because of upward social comparison. In short, some viewpoints that can be starting points are consumerism, hedonism, and luxury consumption.

### 3.3. Antecedents and Measurement of Brand Admiration

Park et al. (2016) says that a brand is admired when they can offer 3 types of benefits for consumers: (1) the brand provides solutions to consumer problems and saves consumer resources. This benefit is called enabling benefit. A brand that can enable their customers will gain brand trust from them (2) the brand indulges the consumer's senses, mind, and heart (enticing benefits), which will stipulate brand love, and (3) the brand provides self-actualization for the customer (enriching benefits), which will form brand respect. Figure 1 shows the Brand Admiration framework proposed by Park et al. (2016):

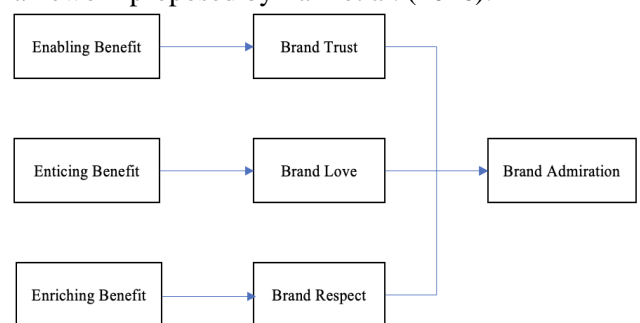


Figure 1. Brand admiration framework (Park et al., 2016)

A trusted brand will solve customer problems when it arises. In today's world, it is common for a brand to over promise to their customers but in the end unable to fulfill those promises (Ramaditya et al., 2020). Trust is a belief in a brand's competency and integrity. Customers will form trust by reviewing the performance and tangible and intangible characteristics of a brand and decide if the brand is trustworthy or not (Holt, 2002 in Atulkar, 2020). The variability of brand

trust depends on whether a brand can satisfy customer needs and fulfill its promises. Trust is defined as a willingness to rely on an exchange partner (Moorman, 1992). In the context of business, trust can be interpreted as the need for a customer to rely on its business partners (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Trust is a sense of security, which will provide peace of mind for customers (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Brand trust is important in developing customer and brand relationships, and with the intensity of competition in the marketplace, customer trust is becoming more important (Ramaditya et al., 2022).

Respect is one of the fundamental traits in human relationships. The nature of respect varies depending on the type and setting of these relationships. It is related to accepting and understanding what other people are, accepting and understanding their way of thinking, even if it is not similar to ours (Sánchez, 2009 in Albu, 2017). Every person demands respect from others despite their cultural background (Middleton 2004). The use of respect in marketing is very rare. Brand respect arises when a brand is placed in a high hierarchy by the brand (Park et al., 2016). Respect grows after a customer evaluates a brand's performance, trustworthiness, and reputation (Roberts, 2005). Brand respect will reduce the risk for customers and is positively correlated with purchase intention (Frei & Shaver 2002).

Love is one of the most frequently discussed emotions. It involves interaction with other mental functions such as attention, perception, memory, and reasoning (Alea & Vick, 2010; Chan et al., 2013; Langeslaq et al., 2014; Ramaditya et al., 2022). Love is a psychological phenomenon that involves commitment for further connection with certain people. In the marketing context, brand love is defined as the degree to which customers have a strong level of affection for a brand. Customers can have a feeling of love for a brand and develop a strong relationship with the brand they love (Fournier, 1998). Customers will adore the brand because it pleases their minds and heart. Customers will praise and have an aspirational perspective to the brand. The love mark theory (Roberts, 2005) states that love can develop beyond reasons because it touches the deepest hearts of customers. Brand love creates long-term results (e.g., increased brand loyalty) and short-term outcomes (e.g., temporary increases in consumption).

The methods used to measure admiration in most literature are self-report methods such as scales and single-item measures, while only one research used brain state measures and the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) by measuring heart rate and respiration rate. Research has generally asked individuals to think about something or someone they admired (Algoe & Haidt, 2009) and asked them to remember a moment that they felt admiration (Van de Ven, 2010). ANS methods are helpful in determining the level of arousal

associated with admiration. Behavioral measures have not been used so far to measure the admiration, such as vocal characteristics and facial expressions (Mauus and Robinson, 2009).

From a branding standpoint, the only measure of brand admiration identified from past studies is a framework by Park et al. (2016). They were using Structural Equation Modeling by using enabling, enticing, and enriching benefits as an antecedent of brand trust, brand love and respect, which eventually will form brand admiration. Looking at the relatively unexplored topic of admiration in branding, many other methods could potentially be used to gain additional insights into the nature of admiration and its use case in branding.

### **3.4. Theoretical Gaps and Opportunities**

The previous marketing literature on brand admiration is still limited and in its early stages. Previous marketing literature only studied brand admiration as a mediating variable in corporate social responsibility communication in the context of the banking industry (Ahmad et al., 2021), as an independent variable on corporate social responsibility and brand reputation (Munteanu et al., 2014), and investigating admiration in the context of country of origin (Maherm, 2010). There is no known literature that comprehensively summarizes and discusses the concept and model of brand admiration itself.

Admiration is found to be an important social emotion that influences customers to seek for products from admired countries. The admiration was thought to increase the purchase intention, customer loyalty, and is related to prestigious brands. The current available thesis on how to build an admired brand is framed by factors such as brand trust, brand love, and brand respect, which are stipulated by antecedents such as enabling benefit, enticing benefit, and enriching benefit. Each of these three antecedents has its strength and weaknesses. There is ample room to challenge each variable from the view of what it does, what it makes, and how it performs in regards to creating brand admiration. For example, Lovemarks Theory (Roberts, 2005) and Emotion Theory (Goleman, 1995) argued that trust and respect are part of love as an emotion. In-depth research to examine the impact of brand trust and brand respect on brand love should be done in the next brand admiration research.

Looking at the negative effect of admiration, there is no prior study linking admiration to brand, consumer behavior, luxury items, and consumerism. This research is important since branding has shifted from the product-driven to consumer-driven. Are there any negative side effects to consumers? At one time, there were constraints on media availability, distribution channels, and capital, while now the scarcity is customer time, attention and trust. When a consumer admires a brand, they are willing to invest their

resources for the brand they admire. While sometimes, the brand itself is unreachable to them.

From a consumer standpoint, the next research on admiration should analyze consumer characteristics. By understanding who admires what and at what stage of the consumer journey, a brand can use it as a fundamental roadmap in building brand admiration. While feelings and emotions are important in consumer behavior, these topics are unsystematically integrated into school lessons or business practice.

From a geographical standpoint, there is also an opportunity to see what is the effect of brand origin on brand admiration, particularly in Asia emerging markets. Take Indonesia as an example where the perception of imported products is in better quality compared to local products. By understanding the impact, the study can be guidance for local brands to compete with its competitors coming from abroad.

The next research should also challenge the antecedents of brand admiration that are currently offered by Park et al. (2016). There are some positive emotions that can be tested to form admiration, e.g., happiness, satisfaction, and so on.

#### 4. Conclusions

The research synthesis in this study concludes that there is clear evidence that admiration is applicable in the marketing field by providing a new valuable branding paradigm to build a strong consumer-brand relationship. Brand admiration provides differentiated insights and guides for a brand to go beyond functional to emotional. An admired brand connects with customers strongly, meeting objectives contributing to their emotion. They are loved, trusted, and respected by customers. Marketers can make their brand admired if they provide benefits that enable, entice and enrich their customers. Brand admiration should be the end-goal of a branding effort, and its framework can help the marketers to (1) evaluate the brand current performance, (2) understand what's driving its performance, and (3) understand the actions should be taken next.

#### 5. Limitations and Further Study

This study also mentions opportunities for future research to enrich brand admiration constructs, which are relatively unexplored. To strengthen the brand admiration framework, future research should: (1) challenge and seek alternative antecedents of brand admiration and its impact on consumer behavior and company overall; (2) analyze consumer characteristics who admires certain brands; (3) explore the effect of brand origin on brand admiration; (4) explore more the negative effect of admiration in branding on consumer behavior.

#### Authors' Contributions

Erwin Manalu conceived of the presented idea and worked on the manuscript. Hartoyo supervised the project. Ujang Sumarwan aided the theoretical framework, and Popong Nurhayati contributed to the design and analysis of the results.

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