

The Importance of Brand Stories towards Brand Perception and Purchase Intention in Gen Z Indonesians

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Abstract - The research explored the importance of brand story towards Indonesia's Gen Z and how it affected buying decisions and perception towards the brand. It explored if creating a brand story is a central element in creating and differentiating Indonesian fashion brands that becomes a beneficial tool for both business owner and its customer. The research was conducted through an exploratory descriptive approach by using survey on Indonesian collectivist society—those who behave communally based on in-group norms including the 84 Gen Z—as well as archival research on two similar fashion brands, and interviews on one customer and one brand owner. The research findings point out that brand stories take a positive effect on a customer's perception towards a brand and their purchase decision. While brand stories do have an influence in shaping the image of a brand as well as becoming a factor in a customer's purchase decision process, other brand attributes such as packaging, social media content, and logos also plays an important role in a shaping brand image, as well as the customer's final purchase decision. Furthermore, the opinions of a key opinion leader about a brand or product greatly matters in this society and that people are more willing to purchase a product if it has already been positively reviewed by a key opinion leader.

Keywords: brand story, Gen Z, brand perception, purchase intention, brand image construction

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, Generation Z – or those who was born from 1995 onwards – are coming of age and as they mature they will make and spend money, as a result they become the perfect target for businesses. In 2020,

Indonesia was populated by 74,93 million Gen Z making up to 27,94% of the country's total population (Rakhmah, 2020) and are dubbed as the internet savvy for their active use of internet and technology. This generation loves immediacy without having to wait for long period that shows in their ability to multi-task (Sriprom et al., 2019; Asyifa, 2021). Although it seems that they do not like to work in a team but with their dependency on internet especially social media, they tend to follow the influences around them, such as on their consumption, purchase intention or preferred brands (Fitriana et al., 2020).

Throughout history, stories have aided humans in understanding and perceiving the world (Escalas, 2004). Fog et al. (2010) propose that storytelling can be used as a tool for brand creation and its concept, and today, storytelling is becoming a popular element to adapt in marketing. Leading fashion companies and other disciplines have already started implementing storytelling in their marketing schemes. Well-told stories about brands have the potential to influence a customer's feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses, which are evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of the brand's environment, identity, messages, and environment (Lundqvist et al., 2012), which all ultimately affect the customer's overall brand experience and later would link to positive brand image and customer attachment (Kim & Chao, 2019).

The past decade has brought ready-to-wear fashion brands to the forefront of the Indonesian fashion scene. Local designers have shifted their focus to creating products that are able to be mass-produced (e.g. basics), which has led to an increased number of local brands throughout the country that creates a tough competitiveness and differentiation dilemma in fashion industry in general. Therefore, the question of how to differentiate brands from one another has

become even more challenging for marketers, which has resulted in them using the power of stories to communicate and form an emotional connection with consumers and their markets (Huang, 2010; Hong & Cho, 2016; Lindsay-Warren & Ringler, 2021). Conveying ideas and concepts through stories could be an effective way for consumers to make sense of a certain brand (Escalas, 2004) that leads to customers' intention in spreading their experiences with the brand and its information (Kang et al., 2020). A brand story might also enhance the relationship between a customer and the brand (Tsai, 2020) since it possesses a utilitarian function and a symbolic meaning that may connect and resonate with the customer's feelings and emotions (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Pereira, 2019). A brand story that is built around a distinctive personality can evoke an emotive response from the customers (target market), which can form the core foundation of any strong successful brand across different categories—this happens because when a customer is buying a product/service from a brand, they are not only buying the tangibles and its functional benefits, instead they also look for an emotional benefit (Veloutsou & Delgado-Ballester, 2018).

Speaking about culture and behavior in Indonesia, previous studies have revealed that a collectivist society is at the core of the Indonesian social structure (Maulana et al., 2019). Indonesian culture revolves around loyalty, conservatism, affiliation, and togetherness; as expressed in the term "Gotong Royong" -communal work- and "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" -unity in diversity- (Slikkerveer, 2019; Nugroho, 2018). Throughout history, Indonesians have been known to be communal people (Suwignyo, 2019), beginning in villagers creating close-knit communities, to now communities (work-place friend groups, extended families, etc.) maintaining and valuing harmony above all else.

Collectivist cultures consist of individuals that are interdependent with their in-groups, build their behaviour on the basis of in-group norms and behave communally (Orji, 2016). Furthermore, as they feel involved with the in-groups, they tend to give priorities more to the goals of their in-groups – family, friends, co-workers – and feel normative pressures to conform those goals (Burholt et al., 2018), which may result in them straying away from trying new styles of clothing, makeup, hairstyles, and more. This event shows that they are avid followers of trends and prefer to use things that has been pre-approved by their in-group or the key opinion leader of that group.

When it comes to retail, collectivist societies are more likely to prioritize the needs and wants of a certain group (usually their in-group) over their individual desires, that the beliefs and opinions of a leader greatly influences and reflect people in collectivist societies. This manifest can be seen in the form of social media influencers using their influence to promote products and services from a company, which usually results in a portion of their followers purchasing the promoted item and at the same time creating a more favorable

brand image (Nurhandayani et al., 2019). Through the influencer's storytelling as the brand's people or endorser, customers can construct a more detailed image or understanding towards the promoted brands – its products and service – in a relatable manner (Glucksman, 2017), which would then improve or worsen the brand personality and image (depending on how the influencer delivers the review of a certain product or service) (Tong et al., 2018).

In the concept of storytelling, stories are used as means of transferring emotions, experience, points of view or information, and atmospheres (Tsai, 2020) in such a way that the listener learns, understands, or experience something through listening. In general, stories are more interesting and able to capture the audience's attention which results in them being more attentive and involved in comparison to someone stating facts (Chen & Seng, 2016). In addition to telling stories (Roxo, 2020), humans also process information in the form of stories since it helps individuals to make sense a situation, organise an event, evaluate and cope with emotions. Stories are believed to help people form identities and help them connect to the outside world in a comprehensive manner (Huang, 2010) and storytelling is further proven to help aiding people in making sense of the world and strengthening emotional connections (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

Since people are accustomed to understanding the world, their surroundings, and who they are as individuals functioning as a member of a society through stories, it eventually became a marketing method that is widely used today (Huang, 2010). It becomes a vital element in advertising, communication, branding, and its strategy management for various disciplines (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote, 2016; Dimitrova, 2021). A brand story is a narrative construction that communicates the visions, benefits, values, development and innovation, and the birth of a brand (Solja, Liljander, & Söderlund, 2018). It gives consumers a chance to associate brand stories with their personal stories or experiences and to connect with the brand favourably (Carnevale et al., 2018) resulting in self-brand connections on a more personal level (Huang, 2010). Stories are widely used to explain goals, evaluate the actions to achieve the goal and to interpret the outcomes of it (Lee, 2020). A brand can use the same method to explain the establishment of motivations and objectives (He et al., 2016) whilst evaluating actions, and planning future actions to achieve the goals in the form of a brand story. Moreover, stories help in aiding the self-introduction of a brand (Pan & Chen, 2019) and describing the products' function (He et al., 2016).

Customers are constantly seeking for experiences that are attractive to their emotions, which stories help creating such experiences (Fog et al., 2010). Stories make brands look more interesting that results in customers becoming brand ambassadors who actively share their experiences with their close relatives. When a brand is communicated in a narrative format, customers would react to the brand

less critically and minimize negative thoughts about the brand in comparison to the time when they find the brand in common advertisements (Escalas, 2004). Arguably these days, a brand's physical product or service no longer serves as a differentiator in the midst of sameness competition. Instead, the difference lies in the story and the content of the story which includes the vision, mission, culture, history, which in turn would churn out the purpose and relevance of the brand to its audience. Sustaining competitive advantage has become increasingly important in this era, and corporate brands can no longer "just stand there" they must be out in the world standing for something and somehow stories are able to aid a competitive differentiation (Hofman-Kohlmeyer, 2017; Dimitrova, 2021).

Naturally, humans crave for authenticity (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020) and are likely to doubt whether the information that they received is authentic or not. Stories are considered as "true" if it includes meaningful values and purposes that aligns with people's real-life experiences. In contrast, a story would be inauthentic if it does not align with their life experiences or when it seems like the truth is distorted or hidden (Huang, 2010). The authenticity of a brand story matters greatly as it may aid a customer in further understanding the brand. However, it is important to note that brands should not stray too far from authenticity (i.e., operating the business that is nowhere near their claims) since there is a chance that a brand might be called out for their inauthenticity and dishonesty, which could lead to boycott or mistrust, especially in the era of social media, where information are easily exchanged between people.

Stories that are told through a first-person narrator who tells their own stories and reveal personal experiences are more believable than a story told by a third-person narrator. This is due to phrases containing the word "I" or "we" would resemble our daily communication, therefore they are more likely to be perceived as authentic inducing favourability and trust that will result in a stronger brand image (Huang, 2010; Ryu et al., 2019). The narrator in a story has to be able to get a customer involved in a story in order to precipitate emotional or behavioral response—this is often demonstrated when an influencer or a public figure is promoting a certain product or service through their social media platforms.

The plot of the overall brand story is an essential part of storytelling since it is the tool that organizes a story from beginning to end (Pan & Chen, 2019). Having a plot will help customers navigate through the story, which would result in them grasping a better understanding of the brand and its attributes. In branding, the structure of a plot usually begins with a clear background information about the brand, followed by the introduction of the conflict, then onto reaching the climax of the story discussing problem and ends with a resolution or solution to the conflict (Fog et al., 2010). They become a guide for brand to create a compelling story in return for a positive brand

image; that it must be understandable, spreadable, and influential. All in all, a successful and clear brand story reflects the brand's ability to capture the hearts and minds of its customers and its willingness to give its customers a say or a sense of belongingness within the brand (Chen & Seng, 2016).

Mabkhot, Shaari, and Salleh (2017) suggest that brands are perceived by the customer in the form of brand image. Brand image can be defined as perceptions of a brand that is reflective of the brand's associations in the minds of a customer. Additionally, the concept of a brand image encapsulates the idea that customers look from brands not only for their physical functions and attributes, but also the meanings and emotions associated with the brand (Išoraitė, 2018). Essentially, a brand image is a set of beliefs held by a customer about a specific brand—it also tells the customer where the brand is positioned within the market, and helps them differentiate brands from one another. Thus, the construction of a brand image lies solely from the customer's perspective.

A customer can construct a perceived image of a certain brand only when the brand in question has a specific brand identity that is easily reached by the customer, thus, a brand will have to first figure out its identity, deliver that through a story, and let the customer construct an image of a brand. The identity of a brand usually consists of things that are visually noticeable, such as logo, symbol, or even colour (Ross, 2020; Tarver, 2020), as they enable customers to identify one brand from another. Having a brand identity will help the brand differentiate itself from others, whilst also creating strong brand awareness that leads to credibility and trust among customers.

Kapferer (1996) develops a diagram that would help brands and customer identify its identity to construct an image. The brand identity prism is a diagram that illustrates the information between the correlation of the brand's identity (how the brand wants to be perceived) and the brand's image (how the brand is perceived by the customer).

The diagram consists of a hexagon, in which each side represents an essential element of brand identity as identified by Kapferer (1996). As seen on Figure 1, the top two elements represent the picture of the sender, which would be the brand, whereas the two bottom represents the picture of the recipient, which would be the customer that observes or interacts with the brand. The left side contains external elements, whereas the right holds internal elements (Kapferer, 1996).

Figure 1 shows an example on how the brand identity prism with its six elements is used, and in this case, Patagonia will be the example. Patagonia is an outdoor clothing brand that specialises in creating durable fabrics and garments in an environmentally friendly way. The physique represents the physical characteristics of the brand and is argued by Kapferer (1996) as being the basis of a brand. Second, the personality is the character of a certain brand, this segment is where the brand is personified by a

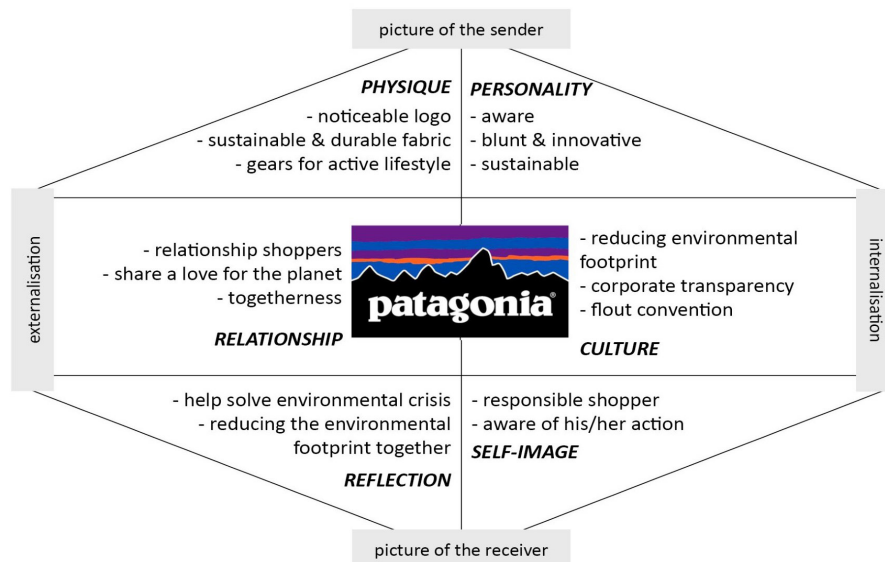


Figure 1 Patagonia's Brand Identity Prism
(source: Authors, 2020)

customer, the process is similar to calling a person blunt or sustainable. Third, the culture represents the principles and values that the brand stands for, which in this case would be reducing environmental footprint in the supply chain process. Fourth, the relationship represents the relationship that the brand creates with its customers. In other words, this segment is based on how brands influence their own customers. Fifth, the reflection represents how a customer reflects with the brand, which is different than how customers perceive the brand, this stage talks more about the customers who use the brand, instead of the brand. Finally, the self-image segment represents how a customer perceives themselves while or by using the brand (Kapferer, 1996).

The content that a brand puts out for the public to see will be the things that help them construct a brand image. Moreover, it becomes more critical during consumer purchase decision, in terms of brand awareness and its recognizability where consumers have to choose a brand over other competing brands (Chen, 2017; Novansa & Ali, 2017; Ansary & Hashim, 2018). The fact that brand images are created by the customer, the company must create a portrayal of the desired brand image through creating a comprehensive brand identity to evoke the customer into constructing a brand image.

Customers seem to easily permeate with brands with personality traits (Aaker et al., 2004). It is defined as the set of human personality traits or characteristics associated with a given brand (Aaker, 1997). These characteristics includes gender, age, socioeconomic class, as well as classic human personality traits, which are warmth, concern, and sentimentality (Aaker, 1996). Earlier studies have suggested that an individual has greater preference for the brand when there is a greater congruity between the human characteristics that describe an individual's ideal self

and those that describe the brand.

Mark and Pearson (2001) propose that the 12 archetypes are divided into four categories based off of: 1) stability and control, 2) belonging and enjoyment, 3) independence and fulfilment, and 4) risk and mystery. Through a marketing standpoint, archetypes are used to interact with a customer's deepest motivations and give meanings to the products and brands associated with their unconscious desires. It is argued that designing a brand story based on archetypes enables a customer to form connecting to the brand in a conscious and subconscious level; in fact, up to 95% of consumer buying decisions are subconscious (Gross, 2017). Archetypal brand is able to connote trust between the customer and the brand through providing shared meanings and values across different cultures—they also act as a tool to generate emotional connection with the customers in a psychologically compelling way that results in user-brand relationship (Sebastian et al., 2017). Emotional branding, attachment and commitment, would eventually create strong brand relationships that reflect on the customers' loyalty.

The attributes, features, and traits of a brand are then delivered to the customers through the brand story. Stories act as a carrier of meanings of a brand to a customer, and the meanings inside the stories can resonate within the customer's experiences, and memories (Huang, 2010). Finding the right story to portray to customers can also be found through identifying an archetype, since archetypes are able to resonate and connote trust with customers. Through storytelling, the narrator (brand) can deliver information about the brand's identity, which would aid the customer to personify the brand and construct an image for the brand. It should be noted that an interesting and successful brand story is arguably built around a distinctive character or personality. It results in evoking an emotive response from the

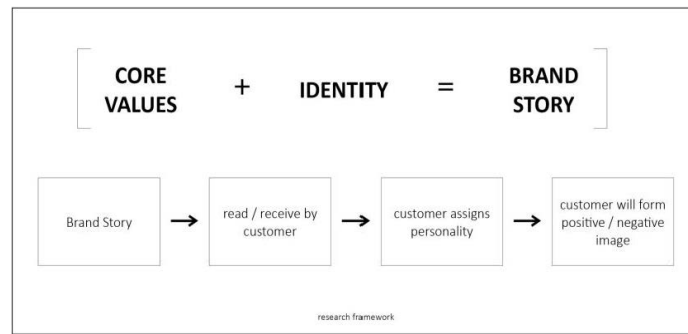


Figure 2 Research Framework

customers, which would form the core foundations of a successful brand across different product categories and industries.

Brand stories in fact enable the brand and customer to add symbolic meaning behind the product and the brand (Lundqvist et al., 2012). In addition to that, stories embrace the values of a brand in ways that traditional marketing cannot – having a brand story enables the brand to communicate values, spiritual, and emotional connection of the brand or organisation to target groups (Keskin et al., 2016), leading to an increase in customer loyalty and a positive brand image (Lundqvist et al., 2012; Hwang, 2017).

Behind every purchase, a customer goes through a process in which they determine whether the product is worth buying. In relation to that, values are believed to influence the behaviours of individuals and provide a powerful explanation on customer behaviour (Eibel-Spanyi & Hofmeister-Toth, 2013). Bullen (2019) clarify that the brand that one puts out would reflect much more than the product they are selling; a brand's core value shows a customer what the company believes in which might enhance the authenticity of the brand. In addition to that, Gen Z customers are more likely to ask or search about a brand's values which greatly affect their purchasing decisions. Indonesian Gen Z are brand-conscious, and they seek for brands with uniqueness and personality that could set them apart (Kim et al., 2020). In fact, 63% of consumers in 35 countries said that they are more likely to buy products from companies that reflect their own values and will avoid companies that do not (Barton et al., 2018).

In correlation with brand image, the value of a brand also has the potential to build a positive brand image, since stories can relate to a customer's personal experiences, the brand's core values have the ability to enhance the overall customer experience. Inherently, the core values of a brand acts as a guide to figuring out the brand's story contents and narrative, its actions, visions, as well as its identities. The core value of a brand is a direct reflection of who the brand really is, thus, before constructing a particular story, it is best to figure out the core values of a brand to know and successfully deliver the brand's essence, identity, and visions to the customers. It is further formulated in Figure 2.

In a culture that values collectivism where people are more likely to be influenced than to influence, the research aims to explore if creating a brand story is a central element in creating and differentiating Indonesian fashion brands. It looks into the extent to which brand stories influence purchase decisions and their impact on brand image, identity, and value from the perspective of Gen Z customers in Indonesia. Inherently, the overall research objective of the research is to look into the importance of brand story towards the nation's young adults and how it affects their buying decisions and their perception towards the brand, since a brand story could become a beneficial tool for business owner to help them stand out in the current sameness competition.

II. METHODS

The data are gathered through an exploratory descriptive approach by using multi method with the application of online survey and archival research towards members of a collectivist society as well as Gen Z Indonesians. Samples are chosen purposively based on the non-probability sampling techniques.

A total of 84 respondents aged 15-25 are gathered for the descriptive analysis through online questionnaire that was spread across the nation to give an accurate representation of the brand stories' effects towards ordinary young adults in Indonesia. The data collection method revolves around two similar local brands; Public Culture (Brand 1) and Thanksinsomnia (Brand 2) — with the aim to dig deeper insights on how the presence or absence of a brand story would affect customers' perception of the brand.

Archival research is focused on two similar brands: Calla (Brand A) and Sejauh Mata Memandang (Brand B) — comparing how the availability of brand story on both brands affecting the brand performance. This looks into several criteria: 1) follower count, 2) promotion method, 3) customer interactions, 4) accessibility, and 5) story. The two brands are chosen since both brands are offering a quite similar style and similar numbers of followers on their social media yet one presents a story with clear vision and missions and the other one relies on visuals without a brand story.

Along with the data collected from the survey,

all data are further validated by the online interviews. The interview is implemented to look into a deeper comprehension from the perspectives of both a customer and a brand owner on the effects of brand stories. Both are recruited as samples because they both have experienced with 'brand'. The brand owner and the customer who is also a marketer in a company give a first-hand experience and the real data towards the importance of a brand story. The interviews are done separately and virtually to avoid bias and keep the privacy of the two interviewees. Similar types of questions are asked with some following questions to dig their point of view on the matter.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey finds that 93% of the respondents are attracted to the brand with an extensive brand story attached to it (Brand 2), which is when they are shown the two brands side by side. The outliers point out that Brand 1 stands out more and they are more focused on its aesthetics of the brand instead of who or what the brand is. The 39% out of the 84 respondents said they want to buy from Brand 1 (brand with minimal background description). The result is a total contrast when they are asked about Brand 2. 85% of respondents answer the Brand 2's story tells something interesting about the brand that is relatable and makes them attracted to buy from the brand.

<i>BRAND 1</i> — "Pared-down, industrial-chic trendy urban streetwear."	
<i>BRAND 2</i> — "Each of our clothing is made from upcycled cotton from different factories. Since we don't use new fabrics, we reduce carbon footprint through water intensive processes of yarn and fabric production, as well as the dyeing process. We also package our products in bio-degradable boxes that will disintegrate back into nature once disposed of, leaving less burden on nature."	
84 Respondents — GenZ, 60% women 40% men	
Brand 1	39% want to buy
Brand 2	92% want to buy
	86% would relate to the brand
	85% said story tells them something interesting about the brand

Figure 3 Survey

Figure 4 shows that customers are more likely to choose the brand with story containing value than brand with an ambiguous background. Customers are more able to construct the desired portrayal of a brand when the brand establishes an identity delivered through a story, which tells them something interesting about the brand. The agreement of values between the customer and the brand in fact leads to customers favouring the brand more.



Figure 4 Survey: Which Brand Stands Out The Most?

BRAND A	BRAND B
158,000 Instagram followers	132,000 Instagram followers
No background story, only visuals	Mentions their background, purpose, values in its story
E-commerce & online platform user friendly	Online platform a bit rough; sells mainly through stockists
Manages to rake in sales and awareness through social media influencers / endorsements (KOL)	Promotes through celebrities, magazines
Collectivism culture in Indonesia is potent	Able to captive customers through missions, vision, and aesthetic

**Brand A = brand without a brand story ; Brand B = brand with brand story*

Figure 5 Archival Research

Archival research is done on two brands; one with and one without a brand story. Both brands are successful (in terms of sales, marketing, and fame) and customers are still actively purchasing their products. Despite having unclear brand story, Brand A manages to collect sales and awareness through influencer endorsements and further line back to the collectivism culture in Indonesia that is potent. On the other hand, Brand B promotes through celebrities and makes their products look and feel more high-end rather than relatable. Yet, they are still able to captivate customers through their missions, visions, and aesthetic. It is believed that even though brand story is important to have, other factors like identity and aesthetic would also be important factors to include in the creation of a successful brand.

Through the interview, it is found that both brand owner and customer agree that Indonesian brands tend to be similar to one another and tend to prioritise style or aesthetics over value, beliefs or background. Besides, Indonesia's collectivism culture still plays a major role in Indonesian fashion industry and overall influencing the purchase behaviour.

Having clear intangible attributes like story as part of brand identity indeed will benefit both brand owner and customer in navigating the brand. It serves as brand's navigator in which it makes it easier for customers to understand the identity of company and decide whether it is the right one for them. In this sense, it could become a competitive advantage in the

same environment of fashion brands. The brand owner believes that the story will tell more about the brand as compared to factors like aesthetics or packaging. It helps steering the brand into the wanted direction upon brand launching and makes it easier for customers to personify the brand. People want to showcase who they are and are more likely to gravitate towards a brand with a clear brand story — in this way, brands are there to support the visions of their ideal self.

“People are more likely to purchase from brands that represent themselves. You want to feel good about buying stuff.”
– Customer

“Having a brand story and a clear identity automatically personifies your brand, it gives your brand a little bit of flavor, relatability, and authenticity.”
– Brand Owner

Today, there are still numerous brands in Indonesia with little to no brand story and rely solely on visuals and influencers, yet they are still successful and manage to have high demand in the market. This brought an attention to the fact that Indonesia’s collectivism culture does play a role. Furthermore, tangible attributes of a brand play just as much an important role in branding like identity and value. Customers could in fact personify, relate, and structure an image of a brand through visuals and other tangible aspects as well. However, Gen Z and late millennials are believed to have started paying attention to the brand and the brands’ beliefs, so eventually there is a change in the purchase decision factors and how customers shop in general.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Stories are one of the tools that allow customers to receive an experience that is appealing to their emotions and dreams. A brand’s core value acts as building blocks for the construction of the brand identity, which are then delivered to customers through brand stories in the hope that customers will assign the brand a personality that will lead them to construct either a positive or negative brand image. All factors intertwine with each other and eventually leads to customers’ final purchase decision. Starting how key opinion leaders use their storytelling as a method to how stories are developed from core values that results in the construction of identity, followed by the story carrying the brand’s core values and identity to its customers for them to assign personalities and form an image of the brand.

The research shows that customers would differentiate brands from one another through visual aspects and content. For some brands, visual aspects might be their points of differentiators but for some others, content (story or value) is used as a method for differentiating in this sameness yet competitive

market. Brand stories do take effect on the customers’ perception of a brand and their purchase intention. While brand stories may be a significant factor in those two aspects, other factors such as visual imagery and aesthetics also takes role in shaping an image as well as purchase intention. It is noted that while some people may be affected to the presence or absence of brand stories, some people simply do not care about those factors, and prioritize tangible attributes (visual aspects, packaging) over intangible ones (values, background beliefs). Furthermore, it adds information that visual attributes, hype, and key opinion leader (KOL) promotion all chime in to affect the brand’s overall recognition, perception, and eventually the customer’s final purchase decision.

Creating unique brand stories in a collectivist society is to an extent important, but we also have to remember that brand stories cannot carry the brand alone. We would still need appealing visual attribute and correct market positioning and planning for a brand to be able to stand out from competitors and sustain themselves long-term. With that knowledge, brand owners or managers should not rely greatly on brand stories alone to generate revenue and become successful. There are still a limited amount of studies that prove the efficacy of brand stories within a brand in collectivist societies, let alone Indonesia. Even if brand stories influence revenue, visual attributes and a positive endorsement from a key opinion leader would greatly matter in this country. For a brand to be successful, they must find a balance between the three factors.

As of current, the sample sizes for the three methodologies are still relatively small and limited. Having a bigger scope of study may give future research a more objective and accurate answers. The research might be beneficial to apply to different age group, brands, and different industry to further test the importance of brand story. Additionally, it might also benefit to look into the link between brand story and other visual attributes as how the two would help in brand image and identity creation in the midst of sameness competition.

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APPENDIX

Interview:

Customer - Gen Z, 1996:

"Brand identity is a subconscious thing; it's not the first thing customers see."

"Personally, I tend to gravitate towards more practical, like brands that promote practicality. When you want something and it's marketed towards other spectrum of yourself that you don't necessarily identify with; sometimes it makes me feel like 'okay, so is that not for me?', you know when they kind of put labels on it. Generally, when my value aligns with the brand's, that's when the chemistry happens."

"People more likely to purchase from brands that represent themselves. You can't deny, you want to be good, like there are brands promoting sustainability, donating to charity, it's not hurting the environment, etc. You want to feel good about buying stuff."

Streetwear Brand Owner:

"Creating an identity before launching a brand greatly helps me to steer the brand into the direction I want. Having a brand story and a clear identity automatically personifies your brand, it gives your brand a little bit of flavour, relatability, and authenticity. "

"Brand stories do affect me when shopping. I find brands without backgrounds a bit boring and generic"

"Brand stories do help customers in assigning the brand personalities. People born around 2000 (Gen Z) tend to pay more attention to who the brand is and what the brand's beliefs are"

"But right now, I feel like this country still prioritizes aesthetics over meaning and purpose in fashion. There are so many successful brands without brand story, and rely solely on aesthetics and influencers, and they are still very successful."

"More and more people in this country are starting to gravitate towards brands with promising purposes like sustainability, or minority support."