

Dissertation – Proposal
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BA (Hons) Business Management
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**The Impact of Brand Image and Customer
Satisfaction on the Brand Loyalty of
Marriott Hotels in London**

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1.0 Introduction

Branding has increasingly been building a stronger relationship with customers and is gaining more power, enough to direct the customer's choice and loyalty (Nazir et al., 2016). This is a descriptive study of the London-based Marriott hotels' customer satisfaction and brand image and how they affect customer brand loyalty.

Customer satisfaction remains at the centre of marketing theories because it has been acknowledged as the purpose of marketing strategy for many years (Cuong, 2020). Hence, customer satisfaction has become the central focus of marketing practices. This is because marketing practices have changed the prior behaviours of buying into post-buying behaviours like brand loyalty and repurchase. According to Martin (2015), satisfaction involves a pleasing realization of a standard pleasure. For a customer to be loyal, multiple satisfactions have to be achieved in order to aggregate personal satisfaction stages. If the results were displeasing and did not meet the expectations, then the client would not be satisfied. Prior research linking customer satisfaction and brand loyalty reveals that customer satisfaction remains a precursor of brand loyalty and has notable positive impacts on branding (Cuong, 2020).

Brand image plays a big role in building long-term brand equity. A brand image is the perception of a given brand. It is the response towards a brand name, impression or sign and shows a sign of quality. Brand image plays a key role in the customer's choice and decision to purchase. Normally, a greater brand image indicates that the product is of high quality and customers have confidence in it (Nazir et al., 2016). Businesses that have continuously maintained a positive image in society can positively achieve better business

performance. Further, a positive image makes customers more satisfied and loyal towards a given brand (Nazir et al., 2016).

1.1 Research Context

The hotel industry is highly competitive and sensitive in today's world. Consequently, branding remains an essential factor for success. Such is because it differentiates services and products of one hotel from the rest of the hotels. Besides, the greater the strength of the connection between the customer and the brand the more the customer brand preference and loyalty (Cuong, 2020). Brand loyalty is a situation where the customer trusts the brand and worries in case they buy and use the same products from another client who they do not trust. It exists when the buyer feels that the brand has the right goods with the right features and quality at a favourable price. Even when the other brands are better and at a lower price the loyal customer will remain attached to his or her brand. According to study, customer satisfaction is a sign of brand loyalty and brand image remains the originator of customer satisfaction (Rodriguez, 2022).

1.2 Importance of the Research

Customer retention remains a key element in today's service industry. Marketers are increasingly developing new strategies to ensure that they do not just attract new customers, but keep them for themselves. According to the study, customer retention costs less than customer acquisition. Consequently, if a business ensures repeat customers are satisfied, it has a higher chance of succeeding than a business that relies on a one-time customer (Nasir, 2017). To achieve retention, the organization has to make sure that the customers are satisfied with what they receive and remain happy. In addition, organizations

have to keep their brand alive in the market. For it has a great impact on the customer's choice of purchase. A strong image in the eyes of the customer means high quality and that the brand can be trusted. By measuring the customer satisfaction and brand image impact on brand loyalty, we will be able to identify the factors that affect the customers' buying behaviour and their impact on brand loyalty (Nasir, 2017). Although much research has been done in the past concerning brand loyalty, it has not been done in relation to Marriott hotels in London. Consequently, this research will help in the identification of the factors that have an effect on Marriott hotel brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, and brand image.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative and descriptive research is to determine the impacts of both customer satisfaction and brand image on customer loyalty at Marriott hotels in London. The researcher's skill, knowledge, and resources remain enough to conduct conclusive research. Marriott's hotel brand remains one of the largest and most well-known globally. A study will be conducted on the hotels in London and the data will be obtained through questionnaires' personalized emails and selected social media platforms. The data will be viewed and managed through MS Excel.

1.4. Research Aim and Objective

The aim of the research is to identify the effects of customer satisfaction and brand image on brand loyalty for the Marriott hotels in London. The following are the objectives of the study:

1. The impact of brand image on brand loyalty

2. The impact of customer satisfaction on brand loyalty
3. Which of the two above has the greatest effect on brand loyalty?

1.5 Research Issue

Based on the research objectives and the research hypothesis, the questions of the research would be as below:

1. What are the effects of customer satisfaction on brand loyalty?
2. What are the effects of brand image on brand loyalty?
3. Which one of the two has more impact on the brand's loyalty: customer satisfaction or brand image?

1.6 Hypothesis of Research

The research hypothesis is simple in this case. Basing on the research aim and questions above, the hypothesis is that,

1. Brand loyalty is positively affected by customer satisfaction.
2. A positive brand image in the eyes of society or customers leads to increased customer choice and brand loyalty.
3. In comparison, brand image is broader and has more impact on brand loyalty than customer satisfaction.

The hypothesis above will be tested through research and data analysis from primary and secondary sources.

1.7 Outline for a Dissertation

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter is the introduction, and it includes the research topic and the company. It also explains the background of the study, the research hypothesis, the research objectives and questions, and the purpose of the research. In addition, the introduction part explains the significance of the study to the company and society.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter will explain the terms brand image, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Further, it will incorporate the theories and relevant literature from other studies. Using a conceptual framework, the study will be linked to theoretical models to make it more appreciated.

Chapter Three: Methodology of Research

This chapter will elaborate on the research design and the type of investigation applied by the researcher. Also, it will explain the data collection process, sampling method, and data analysis.

Fourth Chapter: Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This chapter will present the data in form of table, and charts with the help of MS excel. The information collected from the respondents will clearly be presented and interpreted.

Chapter Five: Summary, Findings, Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations

This chapter will summarize the main points and results of the study. Further it will give recommendations were possible and state the limitations of the study.

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Brand Image

Brand image is the observation surrounding a brand as reflected by the brand association held in a consumer's memory (Anwar et al., 2011). Additionally, the term can be defined as consumer sentiments (Kwek & Erfan, 2013). The brand picture represents a summary of the brand relationship within the consumer's mind, combining the brand recognition, brand state and relationship, brand characteristics, and brand advantages. The abovementioned situations indicate a few aspects of the brand in the customer's memory (Hsiang-Ming et al., 2011). Also, "brand image" is defined as "a set of consumer beliefs towards a brand." Therefore, brand image is termed as a highly critical concept in relation to consumer behaviour. Mostly, the brand and the customer's choice rely on the customer's perspectives, attitudes, and feelings towards the brand image (Cho 2011).

According to Stephen et al. (2007), a customer builds a brand image through the selection of just a few impressions from the whole number of imprints he or she has on a product. After that, the selected impressions then expand, get blown up, and are arranged by the customer to form the image. Therefore, brand image can be said to be a representation of one's imagery through which customers collaborate with a brand, incorporating the whole portion of any brand-related details (Hem & Inversen, 2008). If a company maintains a positive public perception of its brand, it gains market share and gains a competitive advantage (Meenaghan, 1995).

Intimacy, sensuality, and mystery are three dimensions of brand image. The entire dimension represents the aspects of the sensual, rational, and poignant dimensions of the

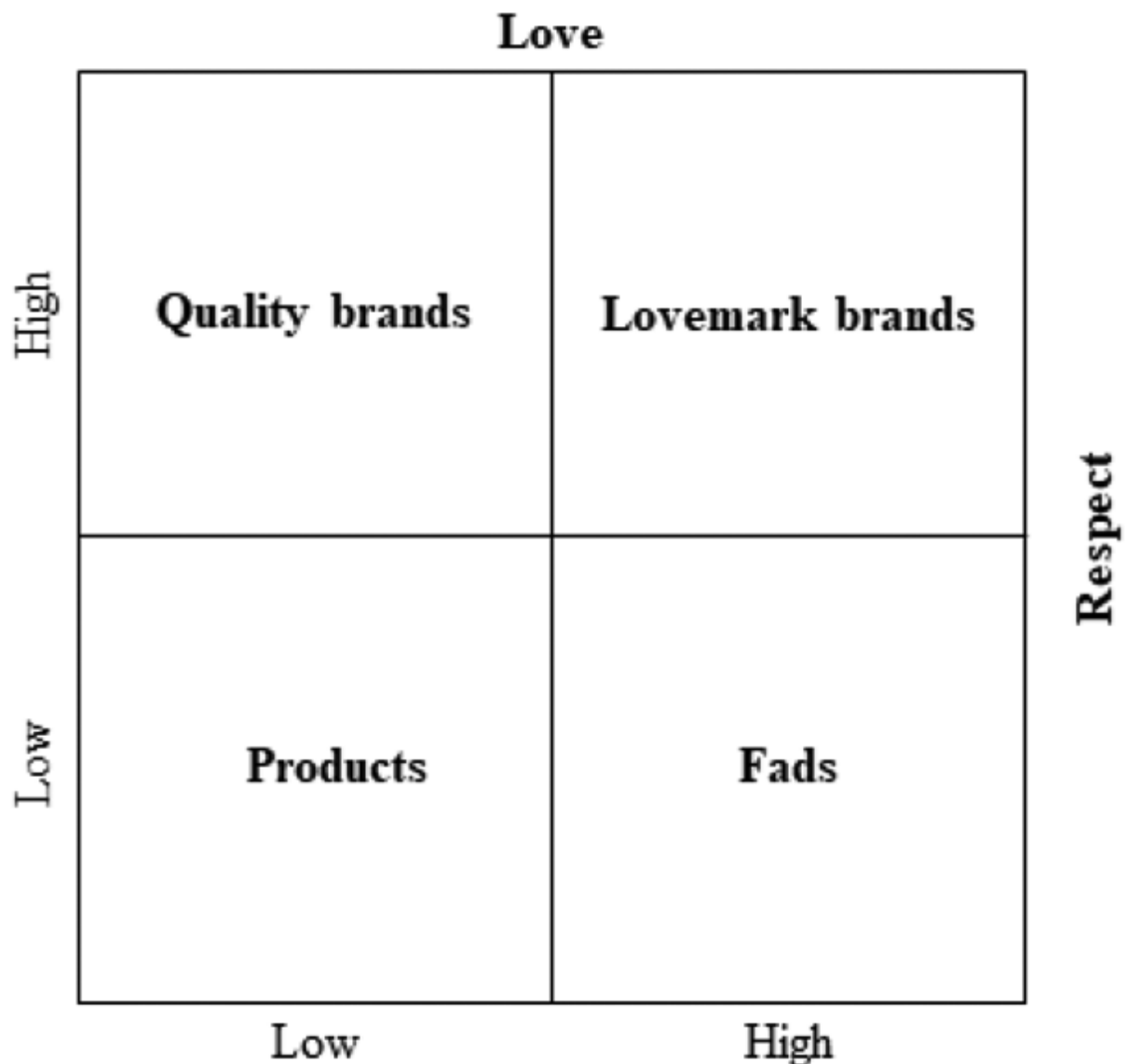
brand. However, it's the duty of the brand to provide the three dimensions named above in order to develop a "love mark" (Cho, 2011). Brand love and respect towards the brand image affects consumer perceptions of the brand image either positively or negatively.

With reference to the above details, it's clear that brand image affects or influences brand equity. As a result, a company that lacks or has a weak brand image relies on a company with a strong brand image to increase its market share through acquisition. Basically, the stronger the firm's brand, the stronger the brand image and the greater the market share. Also, if weak brand equity joins a strong image business, it strengthens the brand equity (Hsiang-Ming et al., 2011).

2.2 The Feeling Mark Theory

According to Roberts, love-mark brands tend to score high on two dimensions, including respect and love. The two dimensions strengthen the consumer-brand relationship and lead to positive effects and brand loyalty (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018). Respect is the functional aspect of the brand and reflects the brand's reputation, performance, and trust. Love represents the emotional attribute of the brand. Based on their theory, there are four types of brands, including love marks, quality brands, brands that are fads and those that are just products. Normally, love-marked brands remain highly desired because they enjoy the customers' love and respect. Those brands with low love and high respect are quality brands, but not as desired as the love marks. On the other hand, those with high love and low respect are fads that will eventually disappear, and finally, brands with low love and low respect are just available products. Please refer to the figure below.

Figure 1: Love Mark Grid (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018).



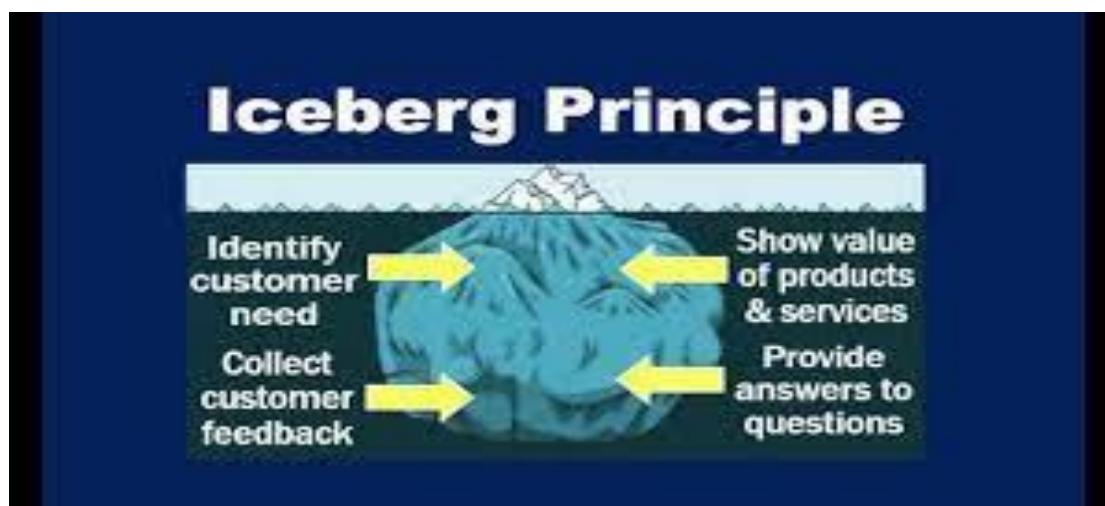
This theory emphasizes the development of the customer-brand relationship. Through a good relationship, brands develop into love brands through the development and strengthening of emotional bonds between the consumer and brands. For a product to fit as a love brand, it has to have three key ingredients, including mystery, close relationship, and complete experience. According to Roberts, mystery is given through ancient times, impressive stories, dreams, inspirations, and myths. On the other hand, complete experience is given through the union of sensuality and a close relationship is achieved

through empathy and commitment. Consequently, the love marks theory explains why clients remain attached and loyal to a brand. This is due to the fact that well-liked brands consistently outperform expectations. They reach into the heart and mind of the consumer, leaving an intimate and emotional connection. According to Roberts, people mourn the brand's absence because it is a relationship and not just a mere transaction. Consequently, "consumers do not just buy love marks, but embrace them with passion." (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018).

2.3 The Theory of the Iceberg and Brand Image

The iceberg principle has key functions, including identification of the customer's needs, collection of customer feedback, showing the value of the business services and products, and providing relevant answers to the customer's questions.

Figure 2 (below): shows the iceberg principle functions (MBN, 2022).



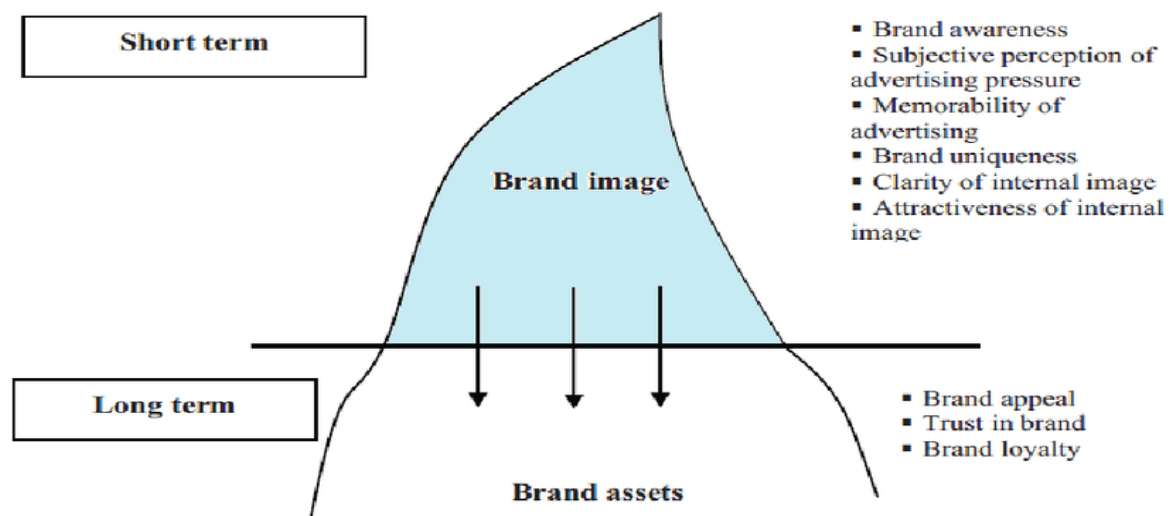
The iceberg principle, or theory, suggests that people cannot see or detect most situations of information. Therefore, only the tip remains visible while the heavy part remains below

the water surface or invisible. According to the principle, aggregated data can guide information, which is critical for proper evaluation of a product or service (MBN, 2022).

The brand iceberg evolved from the iceberg principle, and it holds that brands represent very little on the service but a lot more beneath the service. One can only see the tagline and brand logos, which represent the crux of what they can sketchily see. Brands are built on values that the founders wish to express (MBN, 2022). The process of visualization and quantification entails the so-called brand iceberg. This is an excellent tool to explain the details of a brand or what is really wrapped within a brand. It thus displays the elements that consumers interact with directly. When the brand comes to the customer's mind, these elements have the first chance of being remembered. The importance of the elements is that they provoke emotional suggestions inside the consumers, hence the reason the customers stay loyal to a given brand despite the different options in the market (Opatha, 2015).

Above the service, the customers can see the business logo, colours, image styles, graphics, and visual elements. These elements are critical because they express the brand image and further the organization's fundamental values, mission, and goals. Beneath the service, the customers find the brand's core values. Such is what the company believes in. These elements form the body of the brand and drive everything that customers experience at the point of contact (Opatha, 2015).

Figure 3 (below): "The Brand Iceberg" Source: (Opatha, 2015).



From the iceberg chart above, what the customers see and experience on the service is short-term, but what lies beneath the service is long-term and leads to the consumers' love for the brand and brand loyalty. Just like in any other business, customers of the Marriott hotel cannot learn much about the hotel's services and products from outside. They have to buy and try the products and experience the hotel's quality and loyalty before creating the brand image.

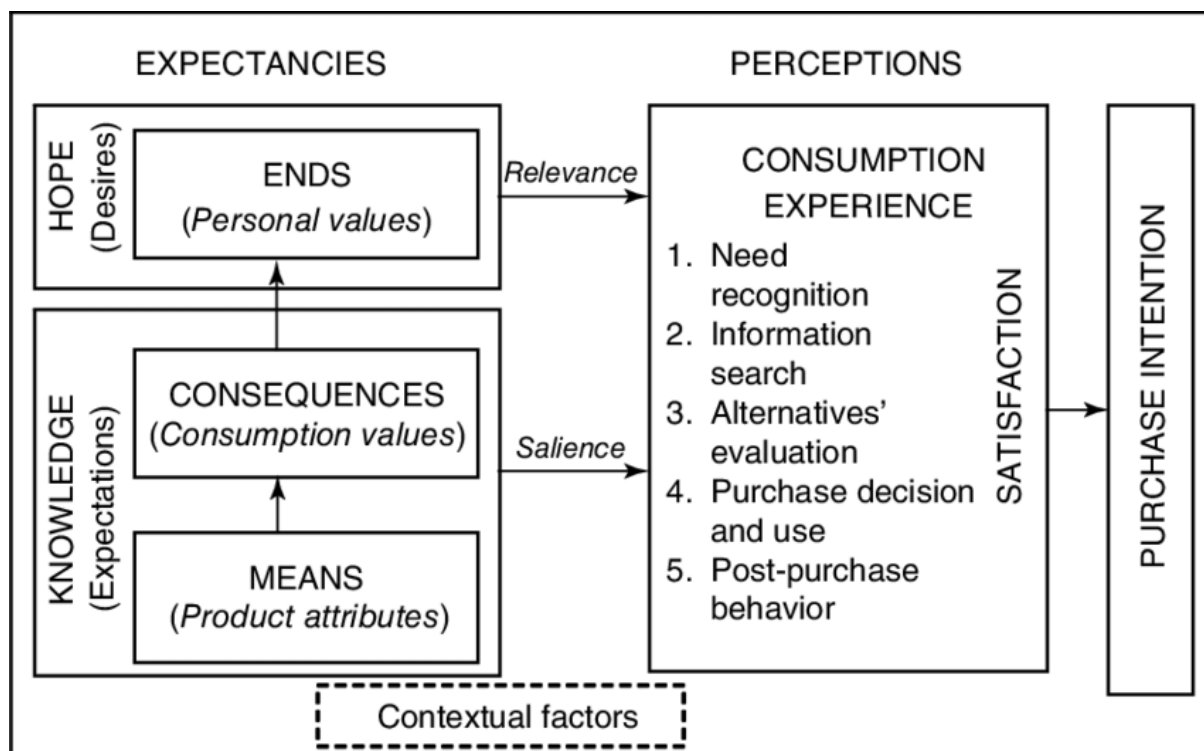
2.4 Effects of Brand Image

Brand image affects the customer's behaviour, intentions, and attitude towards a brand. Customer satisfaction is the general evaluation of the whole shopping experience. When the customers' expectations are exceeded, the customer is satisfied, but when the customer expectations exceed the product performance, the customer's satisfaction rate decreases. Performance remains a key element in customer satisfaction and brand image. As a result, businesses strive to maintain high performance in their services and products (Zhang, 2015).

2.5 Level of Customer Satisfaction

Guido (2015) states that customer satisfaction is the judgement consumers make in connection to their sense of fulfilment about the purchase of specific services and products. Normally, the concept of satisfaction has three recurrent elements, including being either emotional or cognitive, responding to an evaluation process like that constituted by personal expectations, experience, or comparison. The final element is the fact that it depends on the given timing under which the response occurs. According to the knowledge hope model of consumer satisfaction, there are elements involved in determining satisfaction judgement. Such elements fall under different groups, including customer desires and expectations, and consumption experiences. (See the figure below).

Figure 4 (below): KHM



Source: (Guido, 2015)

The above model has desires and expectations on one hand and consumption on the other hand. The model states that whatever really affects customer satisfaction judgement is not the expectations but knowledge held by the customer from time to time for a given product in relation to evaluation. Although knowledge structures appear for the entire consumption process, they change from time to time and are available depending on the present evaluation situation. Expectations stand as a by-product of knowledge that changes with the degree of familiarity and expertise of the customer at the purchase time. Consequently, the model presents knowledge as a key determinant of satisfaction. The KHM desire includes what the customer wishes for and also the normative standards pertinent to the ideal performance and to the performance that is termed ideal and fair (Guido, 2015).

Expectations form the basis for comparison with the entire consumption experience. The end chain connects the consumer's knowledge to the attributes of the evaluated product. The model suggests that one part of satisfaction is rational or utility, while the other part is hedonic, or pleasure. However, both sides contribute to a higher stock of wellbeing through emotional flow or satisfaction. Further, the satisfaction judgement changes according to contextual factors that are both environmental and personal (Guido, 2015). Consequently, the models hypothesize that the consumption experience is composed of the product performance and everything that happens before and after the predicted use (Guido, 2015).

2.6 Brand Loyalty

According to Kopp & Mansa (2021), brand loyalty remains the positive association the consumers attach to a given brand. Consumers who show brand loyalty remain devoted to the product or services shown through repeat purchases in spite of competitor's effort to

attract them. Businesses invest significant amounts on customer service and marketing to develop and keep brand loyalty. Companies build brand loyalty through stellar customer service to meet customer satisfaction and make the customers love the brand (Kopp & Mansa, 2021).

Brand loyalty shows that the customer is willing to pay extra money for the products and also recommend the product to others. It is also the possibility of repeat purchase leading to formation of brand loyalty. Several elements are said to determine brand loyalty including brand quality, brand image and Customer perceived value and satisfaction (Saif et al, 2018). Based on the research conclusions and theories discussed above, brand loyalty is highly determined by the brand image, and customer satisfaction.

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