TRUST, COMMITMENT AND SATISFACTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND LOYALTY AND SATISFACTION IN THE MOBILE PHONE INDUSTRY

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DEDICATION

By the grace of almighty Allah (swt)

To my beloved mother and father

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ABSTRACT

Brands are accepted as one of the most valuable assets that a firm needs to build. To maintain a competitive advantage, the strategy of the creation and maintenance of brand loyalty plays a vital role. The main aim of this study is to examine the theoretical and empirical evidence on the causal relationships among different factors i.e., brand personality, image, experience, satisfaction, trust and commitment that have direct and indirect effects in the creation of brand loyalty. This study also aims to investigate the relationship between brand personality and brand image constructs that influence brand loyalty independently. Based on the objectives of the study, sixteen hypotheses were developed to test the relationships among brand loyalty determinants. The study was conducted using survey questionnaire and the data were collected from 490 mobile phone users in Malaysia. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was applied to test the relationships in this study. The findings indicate that brand personality, brand image and brand experience are key sources of brand satisfaction. In addition, all the factors i.e., image, experience, satisfaction, trust and commitment have a direct and indirect impact on brand loyalty. However, the role of brand personality on brand loyalty is recognized through brand satisfaction. The contribution of this study has been to confirm the distinction between brand personality and brand image. Overall, these results indicate that the personality of brand is an essential driver for brand satisfaction. However, contrary to the hypothesis, brand personality does not have any significant effect on brand loyalty directly. These findings enhance our understanding that brand image and brand personality must not be used interchangeably, specifically when technological brands are involved. Furthermore, the results also support the mediating effects of the relational constructs i.e., commitment and trust in association between satisfaction and loyalty. This study provides significant theoretical and managerial implications. Limitations and suggestions for future investigation are also discussed.

ABSTRAK

Jenama diterima sebagai salah satu aset yang paling berharga bagi sesebuah firma perlu bangunkan. Untuk mengekalkan kelebihan daya saing, strategi penciptaan dan pengekalan kesetiaan jenama memainkan peranan penting. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji bukti secara teoritikal dan empirikal tentang perhubungan bersebab antara faktor-faktor yang berbeza iaitu personaliti jenama, imej, pengalaman, kepuasan, kepercayaan dan komitmen yang mempunyai kesan langsung dan tidak langsung dalam penciptaan kesetiaan jenama. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara konstruk personaliti jenama dan imej jenama yang mempengaruhi kesetiaan jenama secara bebas. Berdasarkan objektif kajian ini, enam belas hipotesis telah dibangunkan untuk menguji hubungan antara penentu kesetiaan jenama. Kajian ini dijalankan melalui tinjauan soal selidik dan data telah diperoleh daripada 490 pengguna telefon mudah alih di Malaysia. Kaedah Permodelan Persamaan Berstruktur (SEM) dengan menggunakan Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa (PLS) telah digunakan untuk menguji hubungan dalam kajian ini. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa personaliti jenama, imej jenama dan pengalaman jenama merupakan penyumbang utama kepada kepuasan jenama. Di samping itu, semua faktor iaitu imej, pengalaman, kepuasan, kepercayaan dan komitmen mempunyai kesan langsung dan tidak langsung terhadap kesetiaan jenama. Walau bagaimanapun, peranan personaliti jenama terhadap kesetiaan jenama diiktiraf melalui kepuasan jenama. Sumbangan kajian ini adalah dalam mengesahkan perbezaan antara personaliti jenama dan imej jenama. Secara keseluruhan, keputusan ini menunjukkan bahawa personaliti jenama merupakan pendorong utama bagi kepuasan jenama. Walau bagaimanapun, bertentangan dengan hipotesis, kesetiaan jenama didapati tidak mempunyai sebarang kesan signifikan terhadap kesetiaan jenama secara langsung. Penemuan ini meningkatkan pemahaman kita bahawa imej jenama dan personaliti jenama tidak boleh ditukarganti penggunaannya, khususnya apabila melibatkan jenama teknologi. Tambahan pula, keputusan ini juga menyokong kesan pengantara konstruk hubungan iaitu komitmen dan kepercayaan dalam perkaitan antara kepuasan dan kesetiaan. Kajian ini memberi implikasi yang ketara terhadap teori dan pengurusan. Limitasi dan cadangan untuk penyelidikan di masa hadapan juga turut dibincangkan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
ATL	-	Attitudinal Loyalty
BHL	-	Behavior Loyalty
BP	-	Brand Personality
BI	-	Brand Image
BE	-	Brand Experience
BC	-	Brand Satisfaction
BL	-	Brand Loyalty
BT	-	Brand Trust
BC	-	Brand Commitment
CMB	-	Common Method Bias
CR	-	Composite Reliability
CBSEM	-	Covariancebased Structural Equation Modeling
DOSM	-	Department of Statistics, Malaysia
EPSI	-	European Satisfaction Index
GPS	-	Global Position Systems
LV	-	Latent Variables
MCMC	-	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
MATRADE	-	Malaysian External Development Corporation
OLS	-	Ordinary Least Squares
PLS	-	Partial least squares
RM	-	Ringgit Malaysia
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modeling
TRA	-	Theory of Reasoned Action
VIF	-	Variance Inflation Factor
WOM	-	Word of mouth

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Brand loyalty is one of the most-cited concepts in marketing literature, and both academic and practitioners have accepted the range of benefits derived from it (Doorn *et al.*, 2014). At present, brand loyalty plays a vital role in strategic management. In fact, organizations have been emphasizing great significance to build and to manage loyalty for their brands. The perception that loyalty leads to improved profitability has been proven by numerous research papers and articles (Azila and Noor, 2011; Dawes *et al.*, 2015). Presently, through development of loyalty, an organization can safeguard its existence for a long duration and gain from its cost-effectiveness (Baloglu, 2002; Dehdashti *et al.*, 2012). However, most researchers do not only face problems in trying to describe loyalty, but they also seem to be keen in understanding the method of development of loyalty (Chinomona, 2013; Curasi and Kennedy, 2002; Kaur and Soch, 2013). Moreover, researches carried out so far in the field of loyalty have failed in providing a clear vision for the concept of loyalty phenomena (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2012).

Nevertheless, loyalty does not always necessarily exist with the satisfaction of customers (Reichheld, 1994). In evidence, Reichheld *et al.* (2000) noted that such consumers were found to be satisfied or very satisfied during the conduct of the assessment and the amount that were defeated from most of the businesses had been approximately 60% to 80%. Therefore, in order to achieve aims and purposes of marketing, it is essential for each business to generate, retain, and expand the sense

of loyalty among customers towards their products (Dick and Basu, 1994). Besides, the studies carried out by (Aaker David, 1991; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Reynolds and Arnold, 2000) have suggested that companies that focus on identifying customer brand loyalty possess the probability of generating profit increase, as well as the maintenance of durable relationship with consumers, reduction in cost of marketing, and increment in competitive advantage. Hence, it has been widely accepted that it is indeed essential for organizations to undertake the process of progress and improvement for loyalty of customers towards brand in the present situation of more competition. Nevertheless, despite of the abundance of studies carried out on brand loyalty during the span of the last thirty years, the research paradigm is unique in its inability to produce generalizable results.

Besides, following to the latest development in loyalty literature, it has been observed that it is a matter of concern to the companies that consumers are currently less inclined towards loyalty as compared to the recent past (Bennett and Rundel-Thiele, 2005; Dekimpe *et al.*, 1997; Kapferer, 2005). According to the statement by Schriver (1997), in the U.S., *"loyalty cannot be presumed as it was 50 years ago"*. According to Rachael (2013), between 2006 and 2010, loyalty toward brands has been declining, as customers no longer feel that owning a "best" brand is important. Furthermore, a decline in the perception of brand loyalty has been found with reference to some famous national brands (Dekimpe *et al.*, 1997; Howell, 2004; Mark, 2011). Besides, the yearly brand loyalty study conducted by Mark (2011) discovered some unpredicted changes in customer loyalties, specially in mobile phone industry. The highest losses in brand loyalty between the top -100 losers were mobile phone brands: Nokia (a decline of 63%) and Blackberry (51%). Moreover, tough competition and fast introduction of a variety of new goods and facilities in the industry have attracted consumers to gain familiarity with the details of the product with improved wide-ranging choice and customer's friendly substitutes and prospects. Hence, it is vital for providers and industrialists to ensure that their products differ in terms of quality and other features as compared to their opponents, so as to deliver attraction and liking for their services and goods (Bennett and Rundel-Thiele, 2005). Therefore, a number of researches have been showed in struggle to understand the essential factors that determine loyalty toward brand.

On top of that, the mobile phone industry has been considered as one of the fastest-growing technology and innovative industries worldwide due to the combination of numerous elements, such as technological change, market demand, and evolution of competition, whereby the markets are flourishing rapidly (Azila and Noor, 2011; Petruzzellis, 2010). Moreover, based on a study carried out recently, the mobile phone industry in Russia, China, and Brazil are likely to record the highest development in the near future due to the increasing development of economy and expansion (Global Cell Phone Industry , 2012).

Nonetheless, a decline of 2% had been noticed in the mobile phone industry in Malaysia for the volume growth from 15% in 2010 to 13% in 2011, which reached almost 4.5 million units. There was a short decline in the volume growth due to quick decline in the demand of feature phones, which reduced up to 7% in 2011. This was due to the fact that most of the users changed their preferences to smart phones, which caused the unit price of the latter to reduce by 6% from RM1, 026 in 2010 to RM967 in 2011 (Mobile Phones in Malaysia,2012). On the other hand, The Malaysia Telecommunications Report for Q1 2010 stated that the mobile phone market penetration exceeded 100%, which means people possess multiple mobile phones. Therefore, with the increase in the usage of mobile phones throughout the world, it is becoming important to globalize the mobile device user interface design for the success of business and in producing a base of loyal customers (van Biljon and Renaud, 2008). In this study, efforts were taken to reveal information pertaining to satisfaction and levels of loyalty towards the mobile phone brand among users, as well as their related factors in the very competitive mobile phone industry in Malaysia.

1.2   Background of the Study

Loyalty lies at the core of marketing knowledge. Brand loyalty is still a very ongoing research subject. The conception of loyalty stems from the literature of customer behavior (Chegini, 2010). For the last couple of decades, brand loyalty has been recognized as an important factor in marketing literatures for the experts

(Nawaz and Usman, 2011). The studies carried out in this regard have revealed that an increment of 5% in consumer holding may result in generation of profit from 25% to 95% in 14 industries, for example in software, credit card industries, auto service chains, and bank deposits (Reichheld and Detrick, 2003). Besides, Rosenberg and Czepiel (1984), and Fornell and Wernerfelt (1987) demonstrated that the budget required for luring new customers costs more than retaining existing customers. In addition, loyal customers of the brand tend to act as the supporters and provide recommendation to potential consumers in their circle (Schultz, 2005). Besides, it has been observed that the process of decision making of the customers is dependent on brand loyalty (Bennett *et al.*, 2005).

Attempting to build and maintain brand loyalty is very significant in marketing as it leads to competitive advantages over the rivals (Gommans *et al.*, 2001). As such, increasing brand loyalty can be considered as the responsibility of all companies. Besides, the similarity between products is high to some extent, which will result in misleading customers to select the products. This made the companies to put more efforts on boosting brand loyalty through brand name. On the other hand, the study carried out by Catalina Marketing's Pointer Media Network indicated that among 32 million customers in 2007 and 2008 across 685 top brands, just 52 percent of "high-loyal buyers" (i.e. those who bought 70 percent or more of goods from the similar brand) started buying more from the competitor or might leave the brand completely in the next year (Krasny, 2011).

Apart from that, Heskett (2002), and McMullan and Gilmore (2008) stated in their studies that it is essential for the company to move along with the today's world of competition to create and to maintain brand loyalty with existing customers. Besides, programs based on brand loyalty, which focus on basic emotional behavior, play an important role to enhance profitability of business (Keiningham *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, an increment of 5% in customer retention has been observed, which resulted in 25% to 125% of increase in profits. This is due to the decreased cost of sales and marketing, referrals, increased price premiums, and revenue growth (Heskett, 2002; McMullan and Gilmore, 2008; Reichheld, 2003; Rowley, 2005). Furthermore, Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) asserted that devoted consumers

do not resort to involve themselves in search of knowledge about other substitutes, thus, the likelihood to switch over to an alternative brand is considerably reduced.

Since the last five years, the competitive scenario between mobile phone manufacturing has changed significantly. At present, the emerging areas are thought to be registered as more developed, as the rapid growth of population and the growing urbanization in developing regions contribute as the main factors for the development of the industry (Global Cell Phone Industry, 2012). Mobile phones allow people to be more connected than ever. In addition, Kushchu (2007) argued that mobile phones are not only the devices for communication, but their role has also gone far beyond the customary method of communication between two people. Today, more than half of the world's population, consisting of over three billion people, uses mobile phones. This figure is far more than the number of people who use computers or have access to the Internet. In several developed countries, about 90% of the population use mobile phones, whereas in developing countries, the use of mobile phones is increasing rather quickly (Mobile Commerce, 2008).

In addition, since the usage of mobile phones has spread throughout the world, it is becoming more essential for the mobile device user interface to become globalized for the success of business, and hence, a base of customer is formed on loyalty. Video call, Global position Systems (GPS) and Mobile Email Solution that can be found worldwide provide the users who do not necessarily live in the same continent or speak the same language with the ability to use the same phone with the same attributes and each element is rated on the basis of each individual's needs and abilities (Azila and Noor, 2011; van Biljon and Kotzé, 2008).

In Malaysia, mobile phones are treated as a vital tool for the purpose of effective communication, and they have become a part of everyone's life in the Malaysian society. According to Euromonitor (2015), mobile phones have become a very important gadget in consumers' daily lives and habits, including, but not limited to online networking or communications, games, business or work related matters, and multi-tasking. The indispensable device for many adults and the wider usage among teenagers and younger children have preserved sales of mobile phones at a

vibrant level, with 12% and 14% growth registered for volume and current value terms respectively in 2012. On top of that, Malaysia is the first country in the Southeast Asia to develop its own cellular network. The mobile phone was considered as a luxurious item in Malaysia when it was first introduced in 1998; therefore, the professionals primarily utilized it. However, mobile phones have become an essential part of every Malaysian life at such an extreme level that it is impossible to overlook its influence socially on the lives of people. Initially, the mobile phones were utilized for the purpose of making calls only, but at present, mobile phones have other features that can be further used to communicate and entertain. Therefore, additional features introduced from time to time do attract users, particularly the younger generation, and thus, result in considerable growth in the quantity of Malaysians who own mobile phones.

Moreover, based on an investigation conducted by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in 2008, Malaysia stood in the second place with 26 thousand of mobile phone users in ASEAN, whereby most of the users were males (54%), while the remaining were females (43.6%). The survey further revealed that young adults (between 20 and 49 years old) had been substantial mobile phone users in Malaysia. Meanwhile, children in their early teens and students below 19 years old contributed up to 20.9% and the elder ones comprised of 12.3% (Abdullah, 2004). The reason for this is that mobile phones are utilized by the younger generation not only for the sake of communication, but also as a tool for expressing their personalities (Ito and Okabe, 2003). In fact, Bianchi and Phillips (2005) claimed that the older generation was born before the introduction of this technology as such, they utilized the cell phones generally to fulfill their societies or as corporate requirement.

In Malaysia, sales of Mobile phones grow by 12% in retail volume terms to reap 8,584 billion units' sales in 2013. Dependency on mobile phones encourages more sales in smartphones (Euromonitor, 2015, see Table 1.1 and 1.2).

Table 1.1: Sales of Mobile Phones in Malaysia: Volume 2008-2013

'000 units	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Feature Phones	2,610.4	2,675.7	2,729.2	2,756.5	2,770.3	1,939.2
Smartphones	794.0	1,183.5	1,775.2	2,449.8	3,797.2	6,645.1
Mobile Phones	3,404.4	3,859.2	4,504.4	5,206.3	6,567.5	8,584.3

Source: Euromonitor International (2015, p.4).

Smartphone and feature phones are two categories of cellphones that are available on the market. Smartphones are any mobile phones that are similar to a mini computer. Smartphones offer a variety of features that allows advanced computing capability and connectivity. Feature phone is a category of mobile phones that have minimal features and are moderately priced. These phones are aimed at customers that want a medium range phone that is not overly priced and also offers some of the features of a smartphone (Lee, 2010).

Table 1.2: Sales of Mobile Phones in Malaysia: Value 2008-2013

MYR million	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Feature Phones	1,366.0	1,092.8	1,027.2	975.9	858.8	429.4
Smartphones	1,189.0	1,412.0	1,821.5	2,368.5	3,647.5	6,346.7
Mobile Phones	2,555.0	2,504.8	2,848.7	3,344.4	4,506.3	6,776.0

Source: Euromonitor International (2015, p.4).

On top of that, according to International (2015), the unit price of mobile phones rose in 2013 as consumers increasingly switched from feature phones to smartphones, which were more expensive; yet contained various functions and features. Consumers' increased sophistication and improved disposable incomes at the end of the review period also raised their willingness to invest in more expensive phones that can aid them in their daily lifestyles. They also showed that smartphones had been registered as the strongest volume growth of 10% in 2014 due to rapid development in technology and regular introduction of new models that attracted

interests among consumers in Malaysia. Besides, smartphones have been projected to lead volume growth over the forecast period, as consumers will continue to switch from using feature phones. Hence, relentless efforts by manufacturers to innovate smartphones will also continue to drive consumers' interest in them during the forecast period (Euromonitor, 2015, see Table1.3).

Table 1.3: Sales of Mobile Phones in Malaysia: % Volume Growth 2008-2013

%Volume growth	2012-13	2008-13CAGR	2008-13
Feature Phones	-30.0	-5.8	-25.7
Smartphones	75.0	52.9	736.9
Mobile Phones	30.7	20.3	152.1

Source: Euromonitor International (2015, p.4).

Furthermore, the statistics portrayed in Table 1.3 proves that the usage of mobile phones has been very popular in Malaysia. However, limited studies have probed into the acceptance of mobile phones and its use amongst Malaysians. For example, Zulkefly and Baharudin (2009) focused on psychological well-being and effects of the use of mobile phones by taking into account a group of students at a local university. Meanwhile, Karim *et al.* (2006) explored utilization of mobile phones in the educational environment, specifically in library and information services. In another study, Balakrishnan and Raj (2012) examined mobile phone usage, extending work beyond teenage years to examine the role of mobile phones among urbanized Malaysian youth, specifically university students. Other studies include the study by Julsrud *et al.* (2009), who looked into the use of mobile phones among small retailers in the country, whereas Shaffril *et al.* (2009) evaluated the possible use of mobile phones in the agricultural environment. Nevertheless, due to insufficient studies concerning the acceptance of mobile phones and its use by Malaysians, particularly amongst the younger age group, this study investigated the factors that were taken into account when purchasing a mobile phone.

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in examining the adoption of mobile phone and its significance in the daily life among Malaysian customers. In addition, according to Nielsen (2013), nearly one-quarter (24%) of global customers have claimed complete loyalty to mobile phone brands. Furthermore, Mark (2011) discovered unexpected changes in customer loyalties, specially in mobile phone industry. He found that the highest losses in brand loyalty between the top -100 losers brand were mobile phone brands: Nokia (a decline of 63%) and Blackberry (51%). However, little attention has been paid towards commitment and loyalty of Malaysian customers towards specific mobile phone brands. The presented evidence supports the idea of how to build, enhance, and maintain brand loyalty among mobile phone users in Malaysia, which is one of the highest infiltrations of mobile phones in Southeast Asia.

Besides, customers' expectation of brands is very significant as it shapes their preference towards the brand and determines their choices. As such, building brand on the basis of the expectation of the customers regarding the brand is very important for the companies. Furthermore, the process through which customers make their decisions and select their favorable brand is very complicated. Consumers select their favorable brand from different available brands on the basis of their personality, experience and brand image. As mentioned above, in 2013, sales of mobile phone in Malaysia experienced growth up to 12% in retail volume that reaped 8,584 million units of sales, which was estimated as being worth about RM6,776 million (Euromonitor, 2015). Despite the increasing demand for mobile phone products among Malaysians, there is no much information if this phenomenon is the result of high loyalty, high level of satisfaction, or images of mobile phone brands. Therefore, this study filled this research gap by providing a comprehensive investigation of the factors influencing customer loyalty towards the brand of mobile phone, which include brand personality, image, experience, trust, commitment, and satisfaction among Malaysian users, as well as their related factors. This type of product category is considered as a high involvement product market (Petruzzellis, 2010; Şahin *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, the consumer electronic industry has been exposed to the great shift of the market power, where the consumers are able to collect lots of information about different brands, their new features, as well as their development, and the

consumer can, therefore, easily compare prices and products (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010a).

1.3   Problem Statement of the Study

Undoubtedly, one of the most challenging issues in the marketing is brand loyalty (Brexendorf *et al.*, 2010). The challenge, nevertheless, lies in determining the real brand loyalty worth of a product or service and how a company can accomplish loyal customers to their brand (Moolla, 2011). Companies understand that customers do not always show loyalty towards a specific brand (Bennett and Rundle-Thiele, 2004; Kapferer, 2005). Hence, researchers and academics have started to focus on the significance of this issue as the formation of loyalty towards the brand is becoming problematic and more complex.

Moreover, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) argued that brand loyalty can be examined under different approaches like attitudinal approach, behavioral approach, or compound approach. Despite the well-recognized significance of measuring loyalty as a composite construct involving attitudinal and behavioral dimensions, a few studies have addressed the two-dimensional types of loyalty (Hossain, 2012; Kaur and Soch, 2013). In addition, Caceres and Paparoidamis (2007) concluded that even if many authors have spoken about attitudinal and behavioral measurements of loyalty, the majority of measurements are attitudinal. Accordingly, Kaur and Soch (2013) suggested that in the future, researchers should consider more than one dimension of loyalty when examining the loyalty relationship. Analyzing the components of brand loyalty is crucial to understand customer reactions to marketing efforts, which differ, based on customers' purchase behavior.

Nonetheless, researches related to brand loyalty suffer from lack of agreement over the operationalization of construct for brand loyalty (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007). The empirical frameworks, which provide a base for the buildup of research studies, have remained instable (Lanza, 2008). Although brand loyalty plays an important role in managerial decisions, researches based on loyalty of

customers towards brand have not come up with "generalizable results" (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007). In general, "there is no unified field of theory for loyalty, nor can be assumed that the means of assessing loyalty in one set of circumstances is the same as in another set" (Thiele and Bennett, 2001, p. 15).

Despite the fact that brand loyalty clearly has important managerial implications, significant conceptual and empirical gaps, ambiguities, and variances are visible in the findings of this area (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2012; Fournier and Yao, 1997; Lau and Lee, 1999; Oliver, 1999). Furthermore, although vast literature is available for the topic of brand loyalty, experiential literature is rather scarce (Baloglu, 2002; Dawes *et al.*, 2015; Lanza, 2008). Thus, loyalty towards brand has been considered as a focal issue in the present world of business, and numerous studies have offered clues concerning such relationship.

In addition, Nadeem (2007) raised a question in his study: "If the decision of rebuying is affected by the level of satisfaction, why does an unsatisfied customer continuously repurchase a particular brand?" This is because; satisfaction will not lead to loyalty by itself (Naderian and Baharun, 2013; Oliver, 1999). On top of that, Gierl (1993), cited by Rita (2008), reported that the majority of customers who have asserted to be principally brand loyal did switch the brand even if they were satisfied with their regular brand. There are certain criteria or intention of customers as a reason to be loyal to their selected brand. It is a commonly accepted belief that in spite of the existence of numerous brand loyalty frameworks, the best understanding of brand loyalty comes from brand personality and brand image (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Keller *et al.*, 2011; Plummer, 2000). Generating and managing proper brand image and brand personality have become vital for effective product positioning (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). Hence, clear differentiation between brand personality and brand image, as well as recognition of elements that contribute to loyalty of brand is important to be understood, not only on the theoretical basis, but also practically (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Klabi and Debabi, 2011). Therefore, this study focused on brand personality and brand image in order to evaluate something as complicated as brand loyalty.

Meanwhile, as for the success of a brand, distinctive brand personality is of great importance. It creates a strong association between the customer and the brand, which leads to the perception of customers about brand personality. Besides, some studies have looked into the roles of brand personality in marketing literature, especially creating and maintaining brand loyalty. In this respect, there is a dearth of studies concerning brand personality and its outcomes (Ekhlassi *et al.*, 2012; Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Ha and Janda, 2013; Hayes *et al.*, 2006; Wilson, 2011). Nevertheless, most studies to date have focused on the structure and the measurement scales of brand personality with limited attention being paid to their predictive roles (Rojas-Méndez *et al.*, 2015; Roustasekehravani *et al.*, 2015; Sung and Kim, 2010). More specifically, Louis and Lombart (2010b) and Lombart and Louis (2012) have clearly stated that future studies should focus on the influences of brand personality on satisfaction and loyalty. Meanwhile, Ha and Janda (2013) claimed that the effects of brand personality on consumer brand loyalty have not been well addressed. Hence, given its great potential usability for marketers, the predictive roles of brand personality on consumer brand satisfaction and loyalty need to be empirically investigated in order to obtain better insights for the construct of brand personality and its importance in marketing and consumer research.

In reviewing the brand personality literature, researches carried out after 1997 almost exclusively used factor research methods based on Aakar's model of brand personality. The concept of brand personality has been defined as "the set of human characteristics that are related to the brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). This explanation by Aaker's brand personality recently has faced many criticisms in spite of having a benefit of being defined clearly for the first time (Arora and Stoner, 2009; Austin *et al.*, 2003; Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Bosnjak *et al.*, 2007; Caprara *et al.*, 2001; Park and Lee, 2005; Sung and Yang, 2008; Sweeney and Brandon, 2006). Apparently, her model must be used with caution.

As a response to the critics from Aakar's model, Geuens *et al.* (2009) designed a new model to measure brand personality, in which they resolved the problems that lied in Aaker's model and came up with reliable and validated dimension for brand personality. Besides, factor research methods are of

fundamental importance in brand personality theory and research. However, only a few studies have used new brand personality based on the new scale and the measurement. In fact, several studies have suggested that in order to overcome problems in the previous brand personality models in marketing literature, scholars should use them with respect to Aakar's model (Avis, 2012; Chapleo *et al.*, 2011; Ekhlassi *et al.*, 2012). Hence, bridging the gap of the literature had been one of the most important motivations for this study.

In addition, one of the important antecedents to assess brand loyalty is brand image (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000; Koo, 2003; Lin and Hsu, 2013; Thakur and Singh, 2012; Wu, 2011). From the perspectives of theoretical and managerial branding, brand image is perhaps one of the most interesting components (Aaker, 1996a; Bondesson, 2012; Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Kapferer, 1997). The influence of brand image on satisfaction and loyalty, nevertheless, needs further comprehensive verification because some inconsistent results do exist in brand image literature (Hung, 2008; Jani and Han, 2014; Lai *et al.*, 2009; Palacio *et al.*, 2002; Park, 2009; Thakur and Singh, 2012). Thus, concerning the relationship between image and loyalty, there is little agreement among researchers (Martenson, 2007; Sajtos *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, some researches have integrated the role of brand image with brand loyalty (Chitty *et al.*, 2007; Lai *et al.*, 2009; Suhartanto, 2011a). Thus, extending the model of brand loyalty to include the context of brand image is a necessity (Suhartanto, 2011a). The inclusion of brand image in brand loyalty framework does not only enhance the predictive power of the model (Small *et al.*, 1998), but it also can provide better understanding on the factors that motivate consumers to be loyal (Suhartanto, 2011a).

Furthermore, although previous researches have looked into the influence of satisfaction on loyalty, the inclusion of other factors, such as image in the relationship, have yet to be affirmed (Jani and Han, 2014; Zhang, 2015). Additionally, studies that have attempted to determine the mediating role of satisfaction on the relationship between image and loyalty have been inconclusive (Sondoh and Stephen, 2009). Although the findings show that the relationships between image, satisfaction, and loyalty are inconclusive, it is important to note that

the multidimensional construct of store image, bank image, automobile images, and mobile phone image differ from each other as they each possess unique characteristics of image attributes that cannot be generalized to other products. Therefore, the effect of brand image on brand satisfaction and loyalty still needs to be further validated in other product categories. Hence, attempt to bridge this gap in marketing literature had been another motivation for this study.

Moreover, image of brand and brand personality can be considered as the main factors for renowned brands (Aaker, 1996b). Likewise, Plummer (1985) and Keller (1998a) explicitly mentioned that brand personality and brand image are the main components of brand loyalty and brand positioning. Researchers have also argued that brand personification allows better understanding and interpretation of brand image concept (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990) although the distinction between brand personality and brand image is still unclear (Ambroise *et al.*, 2005). However, ambiguity does exist between the relationship of these two factors and how these factors affect brand loyalty (Faircloth *et al.*, 2001; Hosany *et al.*, 2006; Palmer, 2010; Prayag, 2007). Meanwhile, Patterson (1999) and Cian (2011) concluded that most researchers have failed to discriminate between the conceptions of brand image and brand personality due to a few theoretical clarifications of these two constructs and the scarcity of empirical studies. Apart from that, previous studies have tried to provide some descriptions of brand image and brand personality, but most of such negotiations have stayed only theoretically (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Karande *et al.*, 1997; Plummer, 2000). Indeed, to the best of the researcher's understanding, to date, there is a dearth of empirical research carried out to identify how brand image and brand personality are related to brand loyalty simultaneously.

Furthermore, in some studies, the terms brand personality and brand image have been used interchangeably to measure consumer perceptions of brands e.g., (Graeff, 1997; Hendon and Williams, 1985; Smothers, 1993; Upshaw, 1995). Besides, some scholars believe that brand image is a broad umbrella concept that also involves brand personality (Palmer, 2010; Plummer, 1985). Meanwhile, for other brand personality and brand identity, there are two antecedents for brand image (Heylen *et al.*, 1995). On the other hand, Keller (1998b) suggested that just as self-

image and personality are discrete, brand image and brand personality are also distinct constructs, even if they are both components of customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1998). Therefore, constant progress will have to be made to clarify the restrictions and the limitations that exist in the literature regarding the relationship between brand image and brand personality with respect to brand relationship (i.e. satisfaction, trust, and commitment), which plays a pivotal role to increase brand loyalty. Therefore, the attempt to bridge this gap in marketing literature had been another motivation for this study.

Does brand experience influence customer behavior and loyalty? It has been recognized by many marketing academics and practitioners that in the current situation, the experience felt by the customers is the main issue to be taken into consideration (Berry *et al.*, 2002; Brakus *et al.*, 2009b; Nysveen *et al.*, 2012; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999; Ward *et al.*, 1999; Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010). Besides, Iglesias *et al.* (2011, p. 579) believe that "managing brand experience is undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges that marketing managers currently face. However, a few conceptual and empirical researches have looked into this topic, which is of extreme importance for practitioners."

In addition, according to Sands *et al.* (2008), and Schmitt *et al.* (2015) most pervious categories of brand experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999) were especially suitable to create brand experiences. Additionally, Brakus *et al.* (2009b) noted that serviceable product features and category experiences have been focused by many researches in the field of experiences till present, but not on the experiences provided by brands. Along this line, Möller and Herm (2013), and Shamim and Butt (2013) indicated that the relationship between customer experiences and branding is a fruitful avenue for research. More research is required in this field to determine the valence of positive and negative feelings developed as antecedents that could affect consumers' brand loyalty, as there is indeed a need to bridge this gap in the literature. On top of that, Iglesias *et al.* (2011) asserted that some previous studies have indicated that brand experience has important effects on brand loyalty by combining other factors of brand loyalty, which can be further enhanced, such as brand trust and brand satisfaction, for future work. Accordingly,

the importance of brand experience from the view of Malaysians is vital as they depend on extrinsic cues and experiences in purchasing (Nadzri and Musa, 2014). Therefore, bridging this gap is another important motivation in this study.

Apart from that, brand commitment is also another important antecedent to customer brand loyalty (Deniz and Yozgat, 2013; Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006; Gustafsson *et al.*, 2005; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). In a number of studies, trust and commitment, as relational constructs, have been utilized for generating and enhancing brand loyalty (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Gustafsson *et al.*, 2005). In fact, some researches have been carried out with commitment, but limited research looked into its mediating role between trust and loyalty (Fullerton, 2005, 2011). Despite the attention given to the relationship between trust and commitment by Morgan and Hunt (1994), there is lack of study pertaining to the links between trust ,commitment, and brand loyalty (Ha and Janda, 2013). Most researches and understanding of relationship or relational marketing to date have been conducted from the view of western countries, while fewer researches on Malaysian and Asian contexts (Leen *et al.*, 2010; Naderian and Baharun, 2013). Hence, this study contributes to the marketing literature by investigating the effect of relationship in marketing, which consisted of trust and commitment towards brand loyalty, as there is limited available research in the field that addressed this gap.

Recently, the explosive growth of penetration and usage of mobile devices has attracted academics (Barnes and Scornavacca, 2004; Massoud and Gupta, 2003; Park and Yang, 2006). In fact, the marketing of high-technology products is challenging and the use of brands has been minimal until recently (Zajas and Crowley, 1995). Understanding what differentiates customers in choosing a technology product is crucial in today's high-tech era (Moore, 2002). According to (Park and Yang, 2006; Schoenfelder and Harris, 2004; Zambuni, 1997), there is limited empirical research concerning high-tech brands, especially mobile phones, even though there is general agreement that branding is more important as high-tech products have become accessible to mass consumers (Reddy, 1997; Ward *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, most of the studies on mobile phones have been conducted in the USA, the UK, or Scandinavia, thus a different geographic area helps in

understanding the influence of cultural conditioning on consumer attitudes and brand personality perceptions (Lim and Ang, 2008; Petruzzellis, 2010). Moreover, this study looked into mobile phone brand because according to Salciuviene *et al.* (2009), mobile phones are noticeable and visible consumer products and carry an element of fashion. These are combined with technical product attributes that may have an influence on brand choice.

Mobile phone market in Malaysia has become very competitive with very rapid technology that facilitates the production of new brands of mobile phones (Said, 2014). However, According to Dallas (2013) Malaysian consumers are increasingly open to new experiences as they become more affluent and that makes brand loyalty harder to achieve. He explained that in Malaysia consumer profiles were changing, as people became wealthier and grew up with more choices. They are demanding, digitally savvy and have been exposed to different things. In other words, consumers in Malaysia are willing to try new things and it is difficult to hold them in a brand. Nevertheless, Dallas (2013) argued that even as consumers switched brands, marketers could develop strategies that persuaded consumers to choose another brand in the same company's portfolio.

To date, not many studies have given much attention on factors that affect brand loyalty in Malaysia, especially in the mobile phone industry. Therefore, this study examined the influence of the factors that affected brand loyalty among customers of mobile phone devices in the Malaysian competitive environment at present. The main importance of this study had been to identify the factors that affected the demand of mobile phones among Malaysians. By conducting this study, adequate knowledge can be generated to fill the existing research gap. In addition, this study provides all producers, designers and programmers of mobile phone with information on how mobile phones are perceived by consumers in order to take the necessary actions. Last but not least, this study contributes to the Malaysian Plan 2011-2015; the big 10 ideas. There is also lack of study, which specifically focused on brand personality, brand image, and brand experience simultaneously, on brand loyalty or in establishing a relationship between the three thus far. Therefore, this research examined the association between brand personality, image, and experience

from the interpersonal point of view with stress given in determining the link of relationship marketing (commitment and trust) and brand loyalty.

To sum up, previous studies have empirically tested either the relationships between brand personality, brand image, brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty, or the relationships between brand trust, brand commitment, and brand loyalty respectively. However, these researches have failed to provide an integrated approach to understand the relationship between these constructs, especially in the mobile phone market. Thus, this study extends the theoretical and the empirical tests for brand loyalty model and its relevant components from the perspectives of mobile phone, so as to aid marketers in developing a more competitive brand. Table 1.4 shows the summary of research gaps.

Table 1.4: Summary of finding research gap

Constructs /Relationship	What was done?	What needs to be done?
Brand loyalty	Prior researches have tended to focus on attitudinal or behavioral dimensions of brand loyalty.	Need to consider more than one dimension of loyalty when examining the loyalty relationship.
Brand personality	Prior studies have carried out after 1997 almost exclusively uses Aakar's model to measurement brand personality.	Need to examine new measurement of brand personality.
	Prior studies have been done in the roles of brand personality in marketing literature specially crating and maintaining brand loyalty.	There is still lack of empirical evidence establishing a link between brand personality and its outcomes. The effects of brand personality on consumer brand loyalty have not been addressed well.

Constructs /Relationship	What was done?	What needs to be done?
Brand image	The inclusion of brand image in brand loyalty framework enhances the predictive power of the model; provide a better understanding of the factors that motivate consumer to be loyal.	The influence of brand image on satisfaction and loyalty needs a further comprehensive verification,
Brand personality and brand image	Prior studies show the best understanding of brand loyalty comes from brand personality and brand image. Generating and managing proper brand image and brand personality has become vital for effective product positioning and brand loyalty.	Need to consider more to show clear differentiation between brand personality and brand image and the recognition of elements that contribute to brand loyalty not on the theoretical basis, but also practically.
Brand experience	Serviceable product features and category experiences have been focused by many of the researches carried out in the field of experiences till present. Not on the experiences provided by brands.	More research is required in this field to show that how the valence of positive and negative feelings develops as antecedents that could affect consumers' brand loyalty.
Trust and commitment	Trust and commitment, as relational constructs have been utilized for generating and enhancing brand loyalty.	Need to investigate the link between trust, commitment and loyalty.
Relational marketing	Prior studies and understanding of relational marketing to date conducted from the view of western countries regarding that.	There are few researches of Malaysia and Asia context.
Mobile phone market	Most of the studies on mobile phone have been conducted in USA, UK or Scandinavia.	Need to examine different geographic area to understanding the influence of cultural conditioning on consumer attitudes and brand personality perceptions toward mobile phone in Asia countries.

1.4   Research Objective

The current research study is designed in an attempt to examine the antecedents and factors of brand loyalty based in mobile phone industry, in reaction to the wider literature review and gap in literature. Though, the meaning and benefits of brand loyalty in other industries have been identified and well explained by many studies, there is still a need for more studies recognize how consumers assessment brands in the competitive mobile phone industry. The importance of loyalty is very often underestimated by those managers who look for immediate profit instead of building a lasting relationship with the customers. The very purpose of this research is to add towards the loyalty literature and thereby creating a proper understanding of the brand loyalty uniqueness. Therefore, This study aims to understand consumer brand loyalty developed from personality, experience and image of the brand, and, in turn, its impact on future purchasing decisions. This is further divided into objectives, which are:

1. To predict the direct relationship among brand personality, brand image, brand experience and brand satisfaction.

2. To investigate the direct effect of brand satisfaction on brand trust and commitment.

3. To predict the direct relationship among brand satisfaction, brand trust, brand commitment and brand loyalty.

4. To predict the direct relationship among brand personality, brand image and brand experience on brand loyalty.

5. To examine the mediating affect of brand satisfaction in the relationship between brand personality, image, experience and brand loyalty.

6. To predict the mediating effect of brand trust and brand commitment in the relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty.

1.5   Research Question

The research questions this study addresses in line with above research objectives are as follows:

1- Does brand personality positively affect brand satisfaction?
2- Does brand image positively affect brand satisfaction?
3- Does brand experience positively affect brand satisfaction?
4- To what extent brand satisfaction positively affects brand trust?
5- To what extent brand satisfaction positively affects brand loyalty?
6- To what extent brand satisfaction positively affects brand commitment?
7- To what extent brand trust positively affects brand loyalty?
8- To what extent brand commitment positively affects brand loyalty?
9- Does brand personality positively affect brand loyalty?
10- Does brand image positively affect brand loyalty?
11- Does brand experience positively affect brand loyalty?
12- Does brand satisfaction mediate the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty?
13- Does brand satisfaction mediate the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty?
14- Does brand satisfaction mediate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty?
15- Does brand trust mediate the relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty?
16- Does brand commitment mediate the relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty?

1.6   Scope of the Study

This study aims to understand consumer brand satisfaction developed from personality, image and experience of the brand, and, in turn, its impact on future purchasing decisions. To achieve this aim, the scope of the study is to identify the

different brand factors constituting brand loyalty; that is, it focus on the brand trust and commitment at the consumer level. In addition, it focuses on consumer descriptions of brand personality, image and experiences, presenting their response to various brand elements. Furthermore, the study focuses on high-tech product, mobile phones, in Malaysia as a promising market for high-tech brands.

Malaysia is a middle-income country, and has transmuted itself since the 1970s into an emerging multi-sector economy, stimulated with high technology, knowledge-based, and capital-intensive industries. In view of its strategic location in the heart of Southeast Asia, Malaysia provides a cost-effective facility with pro-business government policies for investors who intend to set up offshore industries to carry out manufacturing of advanced technology products for both regional and international markets (Market Watch, 2012).

The popularity of mobile phones in Malaysia can be judged from the high growth observed in 2010 as consumers bought 24% more mobile phones compared to 2009 and spent RM4.5 billion. Besides, the current rate of increase, which has been over 120%, indicates one of the highest infiltrations of cellular phones in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, in 2010, out of the total sales of mobile phones, about 62% were Smartphones, according to a study carried out by a research firm; GfK (Market Watch, 2012). Hence, building strong brands has become a marketing priority for Malaysian brands Besides, in the past few decades, the market in Malaysia was overwhelmed with value for money Malaysian products (Lee and Leh, 2011). However, not all Malaysian customers are capable of recalling a Malaysian brand when they are asked. National recognition has not been achieved by most of Malaysian brands. Malaysian consumers often select an international brand over the Malaysian one when they are given a choice of different brands. As such, the priority of most of Malaysian brands is to build strong brand (Lee and Leh, 2011).

On top of that, in 2013, sales of mobile phones in Malaysia experienced a growth up to 12% in retail volume to reap 8,584 units of sales, which was estimated about RM 6,776 million (Euromonitor, 2015). More importantly, in Malaysia the elimination of the 10 percent sales tax on all kind of mobile phones device in 2010,

the growth of mobile phones has been on a positive and increasing route signal. Identifying the huge growth potential in the country, an increasing amount of phone companies started entering Malaysia, leading to a high attention to mobile phone (Euromonitor, 2015).

Despite such high rate of mobile phone usage among Malaysians, there is no categorical information available if it was the result of high customer brand loyalty, high level of satisfaction, or the images of the mobile phone brands. Therefore, the focus of this study had been on the personality of brands and customer experience with mobile brands. There are a number of factors attributable to the selection of mobile phone products: a) first, brand involvement is very high in mobile phone product class; b) second, high spending by marketers on advertisement and publicity expenditures for mobile phone brands, and c) third, brand satisfaction, which is very important for mobile phone consumers (Petruzzellis, 2010; Şahin *et al.*, 2013).

Besides, the Malaysian market had been chosen since it showed very strong specificities, which could help mobile phone firms to develop successful marketing strategies. This market had been found to outperform in terms of both numbers and socio-economic implications (Market Watch, 2012). In fact, the penetration rate of mobile phones was over 120% with an increase of 24% compared to the previous year, which indicated that Malaysia has one of the highest infiltrations of cellular phones in Southeast Asia.

In Malaysia, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur are known as level 1 centers of conurbation while Pahang, Johor and Penang are considered as level 2 conurbation centers. These mentioned states have high potential to attract both foreign and domestic investments that is necessary for generating more job opportunities (Khalid, 2005). National capital of Malaysia is Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and shapes the basis of most crowded areas of country. It is the remarkably global-orientation of city as well as its implications for an expanded urban area which is the main emphasize of this study. It contributes significantly to economic development of Malaysia in comparison to rest of the cities. Regarding economy vision of the country, Kuala Lumpur is considered to get a vision in

becoming a world-class city in 2020. Since Kuala Lumpur is capital of Malaysia so it made this city's development activities and economic moves aligned with economy mission and vision of Malaysia (Bunnell et al., 2002). This city is a Federal Territory with area equal to 243 km2 or (94 sq mi) that includes city center as well as surrounding urban regions which are all being managed by Kuala Lumpur City Hall. Also it is merged with some adjacent satellite cities for instance Subang Jaya, Petaling Jaya, Klang, Shah Alam, Port Klang, Rawang/Selayang, Puchong, Kaajang and also Sepang, that all are located in Selangor state that enclaves Kuala Lumpur and all through their specific authorities locally, developing a huge metropolis named as Greater Kuala Lumpur or Klang Valley in general.

Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur is placed in Southeast Asia and similar to rest of the city-regions in this region, is facing with fast expansions. It seems that Kuala Lumpur has been followed similar strategic method to other cities in emerging countries. This city might be considered as a leader in these terms due to early adoption back to early 1980s; of such strategy and can be assumed to have first or maybe second mover advantage. KL has connections with universal network of cities and is becoming close to remarkably preferred world-class city positioning (Morshidi, 2006). The reason is that there is real economic growth to some of the world-class aspects. The observable development in KL within past twenty years however nicely is fitted to explanation models utilized by influential scholars in studies on economic geography and globalization. Many of invented concepts for instance "World Class Development" can be found clearly while investigating Kuala Lumpur development process. During recent years trading is becoming more critical compared to mining acts.

City of Johor Bahru has been named as a dynamic city that has a bright future and is going to become the second most critical conurbation in Malaysia. It means that currently it is assumed as second after KL itself regarding growth potential and rapid development. There are 13 states in Malaysia and Johor is among them that is placed in south. Capital of Johor is Johor Bahru that is among the old cities in South of Malaysia. Also Johor Bahru was a small village of fishing and small port back in 19th and had been colonized by U.K. This old city became larger with grow of more

villages around city center. Johor Bahru is seprated from Singapore by Straits of Johor. After achieving independence in 1957 from British, Malaysia, further developed in most of the areas of country such as Johor Bahru. Such development inside city was diversified in 1970s with establishing first industrial estate and building even more housing plans. One of these developments was Taman Pelangi (Ahmad, 2007). In 1980s there were more shop houses in city as well as shopping centers, hotels and port. Nowadays, Johor Bahru is a busy city and it is considered to become a cultural and planned city in 2020. It has an area equal to 2064.2 sqaure kilometers and its population is equal to 1.278.000 (Jabatan Perancang Bandar MPJB, 2003). Development in Johor Bahru improved through understanding national vision about Malaysia into becoming Garden Nation back in 2005. Malaysian Garden Nation Vision was a policy of government in order to reach a balance among economic, social and physical developments (Ngah, 2002).

1.7   Significant of the Study

In current research, there are many offerings theoretically which have been realized and not yet confirmed in literature. Moreover, this study has many advantages for theory and practices both for Malaysian and also Western scholars who try to have better comprehension of mobile phone market in Malaysia.

It is evident that in consumers' choice decision-making in marketing research there is a lack of consistent theory that can reflect the unique characteristics of customer for the brand loyalty judgment process. The theoretical significance of the present study is that it has been drawn from the widely used theories of relationship marketing, Theory of Reason Action, and trust - commitment developing a parsimonious model to investigate the antecedents of brand satisfaction and loyalty.

Results achieved from previous investigations and also field study have provided the notion that brand loyalty is combination of those constructs which have many dimensions and no single unit is existed to be formed. There is still no specific literature, which explains relationships between personality, images, experience and

satisfaction to generate and improve brand loyalty as consistently suggested in current research. This study considered brand loyalty as the complex and also comprehensive model by assessing concurrently relationships between a series of different constructs. The results demonstrated that all of the relationships are connected significantly to loyalty excluding relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty. This study will evoke different aspects of brand satisfaction in forming brand loyalty. Formulating the framework is another contribution of this research, which can be used to calculate impacts of many different influences on loyalty. Thus, the expectation is high about the fact that at level of theory, this study will provide a comprehensive knowledge of those constructs which seem to be affective antecedents in establishing brand satisfaction and brand loyalty related to experience, image and personality of a particular brand, mainly when technological brands are contained in a highly consistent direction.

Besides, the basic premise of the study is the support of marketing experts, and brand managers in the mobile phone industry that is essential for the development successful and long-term sustainability of a brand loyalty not only in developing countries like malaysia and the South Asian region but in the wider world. Currently, mobile phone manufacturers are encountering the harshest competition and the challenges are growing as the years pass. The mobile phone market has extended at an unbelievable rate over the last five years with several countries showing progression rates of 20 to 30% (Euromonitor, 2014). Accordingly, it is significant not only to attract new consumers, but also to preserve them over time and to stimulate the repeat buying of mobile devices. As a result, it is very much vital to have an improved comprehension of why and when consumers become loyal to a brand and what aspects motivate the loyalty. The main outcomes of this study have substantial managerial insinuations for marketing operators and brand managers for the making of a promotion and marketing strategy for increasing loyalty and satisfaction for their brands.

To position the brand based on symbolic associations, practitioners need to differentiate between the construct of self-congruity and brand personality. The findings did not support the direct impact of brand personality on brand loyalty.

However, a mediation relationship of brand personality and brand loyalty is supported by brand satisfaction. Brand personality cannot directly affect brand loyalty without emphasizing self-congruity evaluations the brand. This suggests that practitioners need to define the appeal of brand personality, which is distinct from the general recognition of brand personality. In defining brand personality appeal, the favorability of personality type and novelty attributes that differentiate the brand from others should be apparent and focus on the salient trait.

The role of self-concept is emphasised by the findings. This suggests an important implication for practitioners in targeting consumers in collectivistic cultures. The study highlights the importance of consumers' self-expression impact on brand loyalty. It provides the importance of the effect of schema congruity on product evaluations and purchasing decisions in the context of technological products. This implies that marketers need to define the preferred personality of consumers in the target market and transfer explicitly this desired personality to the brand. Accordingly, market research is required to uncover the target consumer self-concept and matched brand image. The desired personality appeal of the brand can then be built and reinforced in consumer minds using marketing communications. Stereotypical brand users and spokespersons with the desired personality dimensions will be targeted.

Also findings of current research explain that with experience all of the managers will be able to generate consistent customer predispositions into brand as the result of trade-off between different options. This will result in relationship between brand loyalty and brand experience. Moreover, brand managers need to be careful about and utilize their experiences about a brand as a strategic tool in long-term for building continues preference which transform behavioral tendencies into some actual repeated actions. In case of mobile industry, brand experience can increase customer preference on a specific brand while compared with other options in market. It is hoped that results of this careful investigation will be useful for marketing schemes globally, in particular placement and promotional assumptions within all of the geographical boundaries and other relevant contexts in developing and employing plans for mobile phone market. In addition, a practical model will

make marketing managers able to define significant aspects of brand loyalty in mobile industry and as a result form their objectives to get more brand loyalty as well as brand satisfaction of customers in Malaysia. Moreover, this research emphasized on mobile phones and high-tech goods within developing countries as an appropriate market for such brands.

1.8   Definitions of Key Terms

Definitions and explanation of terminologies used in the research are explained below.

Brand loyalty can be defined as the emotional response and the function of psychological procedures. It also refers to the non-random (biased) behavioral response (purchase) expressed over time using some decision making units regarding one or more alternative brands out of group of brands (Jacoby, 1971).

Behavioral loyalty is considered as the inclination of the consumer towards the repurchase of brand exposed through behavior, which can be measured, and which influences the sales of the brands (East and Hammond, 1996).

Attitudinal loyalty is defined as the inclination of the consumers towards a brand as a result of psychological processes. This includes a commitment and attitudinal preference towards the brand (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978).

The composite brand loyalty model combined attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty as suggested by Day (1969) and supported by Jacoby and Chestnut (Jacoby, 1971). In this thesis, both attitudinal and behavioral factors were considered for the construction of the conceptual composite brand loyalty framework.

Brand personality is considered as "the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands" (Geuens *et al.*, 2009, p. 99).

Brand image is defined as a set of Perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand association held in consumer memory (Keller, 1993).

Brand experience refers to Subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments (Brakus *et al.,* 2009)

Brand satisfaction is defined as the overall pleasure or contentment the customer associates with the brand, fulfilling needs, wishes, and expectations (Nadeem, 2007).

Brand trust relates to the willingness of a customer to have confidence in the reliability and honesty of a specific brand (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Brand commitment is defined as an enduring desire to continue a valued relationship with the preferred brand (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

1.9   Research Thesis Structure

This study is systematized in a five-section format. The **First** section of this thesis comprises an overview of the importance and the phenomenon of loyalty and satisfaction, as well as the importance of the research in the claimed areas. This chapter also explains the background of the study, the statements of problem, the objectives of study, the research questions, the contributions, and the scope of the study, as well as the related definitions and terms. Meanwhile, **Section two** presents a detailed literature review of theoretical and empirical studies pertaining to the definitions of the dependent variable (brand loyalty) and the independent variables

(brand personality, brand image, brand experience, brand satisfaction, trust, and commitment). Based on a critical review of literature, a research model and the associated hypotheses that define the relationship between the variables were developed. Apart from that, **Section three** presents the design and the methodology of this research. The instrument used to measure the seven variables in this research model is reviewed. Then, the sampling plan and the data collection method are discussed. Finally, the statistical tools employed to perform analysis on the data collected are reviewed. Next, **Section four** demonstrates the results and the data analysis of this study. First, the profiles of the sample are looked into. Next, the results of the validity and the reliability tests of the measurement model are presented. Finally, the results of hypotheses testing using PLS structural equation model (PLS-SEM) are reviewed. Finally, **Section five** ends with conclusion and suggestions for future research, as well as theoretical and practical limitations.

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