

The Effect of Involvement and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on Brand Image and Its Impact on Consumers Brand Switching of Mamypoko

ANNETTA GUNAWAN^{a*}, BERTHA DIANA^b,
BRIAN GARDA MUCHARDIE^a AND
MARTINUS FIESER SITINJAK^a

^a*Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia*

^b*PT Unicharm Indonesia Jakarta, Indonesia*

ABSTRACT

The main idea of this research is based on the phenomenon that a noticeable amount of MamyPoko consumers decided to switch brand after reading reviews, comments and information provided by other consumers on the Internet. The aim of this study is to determine the effect of involvement and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on the brand image, and the impact toward Brand Switching on MamyPoko consumers through respondent's evaluation of each dimension. The study involved 100 active members on MamyPoko's official Facebook account. Data is collected by filling a questionnaire and is analyzed using the quantitative method, Path analysis. Based on the result of this research, it is known that involvement and eWOM partially and simultaneously affecting brand switching behavior through brand image. Therefore, Involvement, eWOM, and also Brand Image should be important variables to be concerned about in order to keep consumers from switching to other brands

Keywords: Brand Image, Brand Switching, Consumer Behavior, eWOM, Involvement

*Corresponding author: Email : angunawan@binus.edu

INTRODUCTION

Data from the National Population and Family Planning (BKKBN) mention that the birth rate in Indonesia reached four million people per year (Okezone News, 2012). This makes Indonesia as a very potential market for baby care products industry, one of which is a disposable diaper industry. This potential is also supported by the tendency of consumption and practical all owned by the people of Indonesia. Evident from the Nielsen Consumer & Media View 2014 which mentioned the increase in the average expenditure of Indonesian society by 4% compared to 2013. The data of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2012 also mentioned that Indonesia is ranked fourth for the most consumptive nation in Asia-Pacific (Republika, 2014). Also, Indonesia became one of six countries that have seventeen million infants under the age of four years. By looking at the high target market and accompanied by the increasing disposable income of the people, it is forecasted to be further growth of the disposable diaper industry. Data from Nielsen in 2014 showed that there is a rise in the use of baby diapers. Approximately 71% of the population of mothers with children aged 0-3 years regard baby diaper as a primary need in the care of the child.

In choosing baby care products, moms surely want to give the best for their children. In addition to the increasing usage of baby diapers, Nielsen also recorded an increase in baby diaper usage frequency in 2014. The average of baby diaper usage became 39 pieces per month. In big cities, such as Jakarta and Surabaya, average number of diapers used can reach 56 pieces per month.

Baby care products, which directly relate to the health of the baby, are getting more attention from the mother. This makes the baby diaper products can be categorized as a product with a high level of involvement. According to Choubtarash (2013), the consumer involvement is a crucial variable in the study of consumer behavior. Two aspects that are often observed in this variable are interest factor and personal attachment. From those involvement supporting points, we can conclude that the diapers are included in the high-involvement products. Therefore, mothers tend to become active consumers in the search for information about infant care, including baby diapers.

The information search process itself can be done through various means and media. In addition to the product information search, the mothers also generally listen to the recommendations of others before making the purchase. One medium that is often used to search information today is the Internet. Today, 1 of 3 people in Indonesia has been using the Internet throughout 2014 (Nielsen Consumer and Media View, 2014). Through the Internet, the mother can obtain information and discuss with the availability of many social media sites and discussion forums.

Along with technology and information development nowadays, more word of mouth recommendation done through the Internet. Information not only can be accessed between 2 persons, but it can be mass accessed. The speed of messages spreading in Internet makes it possible for users to share actual and real time information. The availability of various media to access Internet, especially smart-phone, also encourages users to spread information quickly. These promote new way of communication, i.e. electronic word of mouth.

Communication among consumers regarding the product over the Internet is then known as Electronic Word of mouth, or from now on referred to as eWOM. Schiffman (2010) stated that technology development also gives opportunities for people to collect and share their experiences about a product or service, both visually and verbally. eWOM can be happened in social networks, brand communities, blogs, and discussion portals or forums. eWOM communication through electronic media enables consumers to obtain information about products or services not only from people they know, but also from a group of people comes from various geographic areas who have experiences of the products or services (Christy, 2010). eWOM became a “venue” or a place that is valuable for consumers to give their opinion. eWOM is considered to be more competent than WOM because of the level of accessibility and a wider scope than the traditional WOM, which is mediated offline (Jalilvand, 2012).

Assuming that WOM communication is done with the interactive media and “live” as in Internet media, WOM can give an unyielding influence on the perception and brand image and consumer consideration of a product, and all of these factors will ultimately lead to consumer purchasing decisions. Lin, *et al* (2013) also stated that eWOM directly and positively influences brand image. Brand Image is consumer’ perception when they see the brand and reflect brand association in their thoughts. Their association to brand image tends to be multidimensional and contains emotional or attitude aspects about brand and also perceived quality. From overall picture of experiences that consumers have, brand image is important because through this technique, brand image will result in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral response (Lin, *et al*, 2013). As stated by Schiffman *et al* (2015), as more and more brands within a given product category fulfill consumers’ needs effectively, consumers often rely primarily on the brand’s image and claimed benefits in their purchase decision.

This is in line with the phenomenon that occurs in the company of PT. Unicharm Indonesia, which is one of the main perpetrators of the disposable diaper industry from Japan, MamyPoko. Currently, MamyPoko occupies the number one market share in Indonesia. For several months in a row, the marketing team of MamyPoko see the phenomenon where people tend to be active and to entrust the selection of products through a variety of other outstanding consumer reviews on the Internet. In general, consumers will share his experience using the product by describing the perception of the brand, the performance of the products, as well as other information, such as promotions. EWOM process is also actively followed by the mothers in various sites such as social media, discussion forums, and more. This became a concern to the marketing team in PT Unicharm Indonesia. Some consumers are interested in doing brand switching after reading the reviews, recommendations and product comparisons on the Internet.

Kumar and Charlas (2011) defined brand switching as a process in which consumers make the shift of usage from a single product with a particular brand to other brands in the same product category. Switching own brand according to Shukla (2009) can be affected by various factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Guoqing *et.al* (2012) explained that WOM communication has an influence on consumer intentions on Brand Switching. Moreover, Srivastava *et.al* (2013) explained that there are a relationships and influences between Brand Image and the behavior of Brand Switching.

Brand switching phenomenon has become a particular concern, which discussed in monthly marketing reports in Unicharm Indonesia. Unicharm has been actively interacting with consumers through the official website and social media accounts of MamyPoko. Unfortunately, Unicharm has not yet fully focused on marketing strategy through the Internet or E-marketing when compared with its competitors, who had previously focused on implementing a broad variety of marketing programs on the Internet. This needs to be wary, regarding the results of recent research from Nielsen in 2014 that states 60% of MamyPoko users access the Internet every day. Nielsen also noted an increase in the number of mothers who use the Internet to search information.

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in conducting research on “Analysis of the Effects of Involvement and eWOM on Brand Image and Its Impact on Consumers Brand Switching on MamyPoko”.

This study has two main objectives; First is to know the effects of Involvement and eWOM on Brand Image, either individually or simultaneously on MamyPoko consumers. Second is to know the impact of Involvement and eWOM on MamyPoko consumers Brand Switching through Brand Image, either individually or concurrently.

This paper is organized as follows : Section 2 reviews the literature; Section 3 lays out the methodology; Section 4 contains a discussion of the empirical findings; and Section 5 provides conclusions and suggestion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Involvement

Product involvement reflects the degree of personal relevance that the product holds for the consumer (Schiffman, 2015). Hawkins / Mothersbaugh (2010) stated that involvement is crucial for marketers for it influences various types of consumer behavior. For example, consumer involvement can increase attention, analysis process, information searching, and word of mouth. Involvement is also important because it has significant impact on marketing strategy.

According to Solomon (1999), there are 3 factors that influence consumer involvement:

- Person factors, are those which based on individual intrinsic elements. Person factors that laid in an individual consist of different level. Indicators of person factors such as needs, importance, interests, and values.
- Object or stimulus, this factor is stimulated by the differences between various types of products or objects. Some indicators of object or stimulus are differentiation of alternatives, source of communication, and content of communication.
- Situational factors, are factors that measure consumer involvement level which sourced from situation at the moment. Some indicators of situational factors are purchase or use, occasion, and social influences.

Electronic Word of mouth (eWOM)

Word of mouth marketing emphasizes consumers passing along information about a product. A recommendation by a friend, family member, or even an acquaintance carries higher levels of credibility than does an advertisement (Clow, *et al*, 2012). As what Sernovitz (2006) mentioned, that word of mouth is conversation that naturally happen among people, word of mouth is original consumer talks. While Solomon (1999) stated that word of mouth is product information transmitted from one individual to others. The growth of Internet usage causes the creation of new paradigm in word of mouth communication context, and this is the beginning of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) emergence. EWOM is assumed to be an evolution from interpersonal traditional communication towards new generation of cyberspace. With the advancement of technology, more consumers search information about products or services they are going to buy via Internet before the purchase is made. Hennig-Thurau *et al*. (2004) defined eWOM as negative or positive statements that made by existing, potential, or ex customers about particular products or companies, and this information are available in Internet for other people or institutions.

Goyette, *et al* (2010) classified eWOM into four dimensions:

- Intensity, is about how much opinions written by consumers in a social network site.
- Positive valence, is defined as good or positive comments spread by consumers.
- Negative valence, is defined as bad or negative comments spread by consumers.
- EWOM content, is comments written by consumers about product contents, such as quality, usage, etc.

Brand Image

Peter *et al* (2009) stated that brand image consists of knowledge and belief (cognitive) towards brand attribute, brand usage consequence, and consuming situation, such as evaluation of feeling and emotion (affective response) associated with brand. Kotler, *et al* (2012) defined brand image as a set of belief, idea, and impression of a person towards a particular brand. Therefore, consumer attitude and behavior towards a brand are determined very much by the brand image. Kotler also added that brand image is a requirement for a strong brand.

Brand image consists of some components below:

- Physical attribute, is descriptive definition about various features included in a product or service, such as product appearance and product specifications.
- Benefit or product performance, is consumer' personal values that related to product or service attributes. It consists of functional benefits (related to basic needs fulfillment) and experiential benefits (related to the feelings of using a product or service)

Brand Switching

Brand switching is measured by the frequency with which the same customer purchases brands sequentially (Weitz, *et al*, 2002). According to Hoyer *et al* (1984), consumer decision about

brand switching is not only influenced by variety seeking, but also some other factors such as decision strategy, situational and normative factors, dissatisfaction to previous brand, and problem solving strategy.

Indicators of brand switching are:

- Internal environment

Consumer internal environment factors arise within the consumer self that influence buying decision, brand selection, and brand switching behavior. Internal environment factors consist of variety seeking and dissatisfaction to the previous brand. Variety seeking has been identified as an influencing factor of brand switching. Van Trijp, *et al*, (1996) stated that when consumers are considering about brand selection, they think about brands stored in their memory and brands that emerge in the time of searching process. Brand preferences stored in consumers' memory will emerge after being stimulated. Besides that, the experience about dissatisfaction to the previous brand will take consumer to a pressure that will later be evaluated through rational or cognitive assessment (Van Trijp *et al*, 1996).

- External environment

Van Trijp, *et al* (1996) defined external environment as environment factors outside the consumer self that can influence brand switching. External environment consists of in-store promotion and unavailability of the product. In-store promotion is used to stimulate consumers in making a purchase. It has a significant role to keep and develop relationship with consumers. So, in-store promotion will give a strong reason for consumers to do brand switching. Besides that, unavailability of the product in store also causes brand switching. There is a possibility for consumers who cannot find their favorite brands to evaluate another brand and then buy it.

- Emotional response

Basically, emotional response is a response based on affective component that see an attitudinal change process of an individual when observing something according to signals caught by an object. This feeling is suddenly emerged from one self as a result of hurriedly evaluation that relied on personal beliefs of a person (Van Trijp, *et al*, 1996). Emotional response can be measured with curiosity owned by consumers. Curiosity is the feeling consumers have about something interested for them and make them want to try it. Another element of emotional response is impulsive buying that caused by surprise feeling consumers have that the products they do not expect are available in store they patronize.

- Rational response

Rational response is consumer response to a stimulant as a result of one's intellectual awareness after obtaining information that catch his attention and become the basis of evaluation (Baker, 1999). This is supported by consumer response to advertising so that consumer will do a trial to a product, then it can be assumed that consumer's willing to try is a dimension of brand switching (Grover, *et al*, 1992). Another dimension of rational response is product evaluation, which is a consumer attitude when consumer learns about a product and compares the product he consumes before to alternative products. This situation happens because of existing memory of consumers and their interactions with their environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is an associative research. The research population is the members of Facebook fan page of MamyPoko Indonesia. By using simple random sampling, the researcher use questionnaires that distributed to 100 samples. Likert scale is used to measure the three variables.

The analysis technique used to process data in this research is Path Analysis in order to test the Involvement and eWOM direct and indirect effects on consumers Brand Switching through Brand Image as mediating variable.

Variables in this research can be operationalized in the Table 1 below.

Table 1 Operationalization of Research Variables

VARIABLE	DIMENSION	INDICATOR	AVERAGE SCORE
Involvement (X1)	<i>Person Factors</i>	Needs	3,28
		Importance	3,33
		Interest	3,22
	<i>Object factors</i>	Differentiation of alternatives	3,21
		Source of communication	3,01
		Content of communication	2,77
	<i>Situational Factors</i>	Purchase/use	3,10
		Occasion	2,90
		Social influence	2,91
eWOM (X2)	<i>eWOM intensity</i>	Frequency of message spread	2,58
		Frequency of message received	2,86
	<i>Positive valence WOM</i>	Willing to recommend	2,90
		Pride	2,80
		Promote directly	2,65
		Trust positive opinion from other users	2,80
	<i>Negative valence WOM</i>	Spread dissatisfaction	2,76
		Trust on dissatisfaction	2,75
	<i>EEWOM content</i>	Discuss product quality	2,71
		Discuss product usage	2,83
Brand Image (Y)	<i>Physical Attribute</i>	Product appearance	2,53
		Product features and specification	2,83
	<i>Performance</i>	Product functionality	2,74
		Product experience	3,16
	<i>Emotional Benefit</i>	Secure	2,49
		Trust	2,83

Table 1 (Cont.)

Brand Switching (Z)	<i>Internal</i>	Variety seeking	3,12
		Dissatisfaction	3,21
	<i>External</i>	In store promotion	3,31
		Unavailability	2,77
	<i>Emotional Response</i>	Curiosity	3,33
		Impulsive buying	3,19
	<i>Rational Response</i>	Product evaluation	3,07
		Willing to try	3,22

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After All statements of the questionnaire have been tested, and the final results show that all of the items included in the calculation are valid and reliable and all three variables are normally distributed, Path Analysis are used to answer the research questions. Based on the results of the Path Analysis, the following results are obtained:

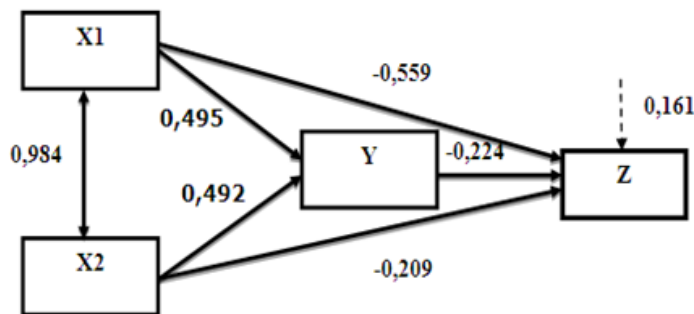


Figure 1 Causal Relationship of Variable X1, X2, And Y Toward Z

This table shows the summary of causal relationship of variable X1, X2, and Y Toward Z.

Table 2 Summary of Causal Relationship of Variable X1, X2, And Y Toward Z

Variable	Path Coefficient	Causal Influence		
		Direct	Indirect Through Y	Total
X1 to Y	0,495	0,495	-	0,495
X2 to Y	0,492	0,492	-	0,492
X1 to Z	-0,559	-	-0,110	-0,669
X2 to Z	-0,209	-	-0,110	-0,319
Y to Z	-0,224	-	-	-0,224
ϵ_1	0,179	0,179	-	0,179
ϵ_2	0,161	0,161	-	0,161

Involvement (X1) contributes positively and significantly to Brand Image (Y)

From the research, it was found that the variable involvement or consumer engagement in MamyPoko has a direct, significant, and positive contribution to Brand Image. The influence between the two variables is also very strong. From Table 1, it can be seen that the indicator needs, importance, and interest get quite high results. This shows that consumers feel that the MamyPoko diaper is one of the vital products for the care of their children. The consumers feel the need to seek out pieces of information that relate to the baby diaper products. However, the indicator of the content of communication gets the lowest average score. Indicates that although MamyPoko consumer involvement in search of information is very high, but the overall information content available on social media account and discussion forums of MamyPoko were deemed to be less informative. This needs to be wary of considering the involvement of consumers has an influence in the creation of the Brand Image itself. Involvement also reflects the level of consumer attachment to a product category or brand. Therefore, the company can explore various ways to optimize consumer engagement, both directly and indirectly. Social media and other digital media can be used as a means of communication and delivery of information. Those means can indeed improve the involvement of consumers, as well as the impact on improving the brand image of MamyPoko.

As we know, baby diaper is a product category with high consumer involvement level, company should provide clear, credible, and useful information for consumers. Beside offline channel, company can optimize its official website and its official social media as information provider media that enables two-way communication between company and consumers. Company can present various types of information, such as new products, promotional program, and other information about MamyPoko, in the forms of videos and pictures using different kinds of interactive media that are available in digital world to make it more interested to watch.

eWOM (X2) contributes positively and significantly to Brand Image (Y)

The findings of this study indicate that variable eWOM or Electronic Word of mouth has a direct, significant, and positive contribution to Brand Image, with the characteristic of the influence 'very strong'. This is in line with research conducted by Jalilvand (2012) which states that eWOM is one of the most effective factors affecting Brand Image. This means that an increase in positive eEWOM content can provide a positive impact on the brand image of MamyPoko. In his research, Jalilvand (2012) also revealed a strong brand image can increase consumer confidence in a product and enable consumers to describe and feel tangible and intangible factors better. Hence, companies need to focus on improving both the quantity and quality of MamyPoko consumers' positive eWOM. Another reason supporting the need for the company to pursue and pay attention to the content and the high spread of eWOM of brand MamyPoko is in his research. Jalilvand (2012) revealed that, in fact, the search for information about the product through other consumers' opinion on the Internet has been continuously increasing and has become an everyday habit. This fact shows that in its development, eWOM has become a source of credible and reliable information that consumers depend on before making a purchase. eWOM also has become a strong influence not only to the Brand Image but also on

other consumer behavior and buying decision. Therefore, in addition to the positive effect of existing eWOM which has good effect on Brand Image of MamyPoko, the company can make such efforts such as creating marketing programs that engage consumers actively, in order to increase the eWOM activity. In addition, the influence of negative eWOM or content such as negative opinions and testimonials that exist regarding MamyPoko brand should be wary, because it can cause a decrease in Brand Image of MamyPoko. The development of Internet and information technology can facilitate the company to be able to monitor the passing of information between consumers in social media. It can also be used as a material consideration and evaluation of products or for promotional programs.

Company needs to utilize information and technology convenience to monitor and analyze eWOM quality and quantity that circulate in the Internet, both about MamyPoko and competitors. This should be done in order to know consumer's opinion and preference after using the product, also to know how consumers evaluate the product and promotional programs held by the company.

Involvement (X1) contributes negatively and significantly to Brand Switching (Z)

From the research, it was found that the variable Involvement has a direct contribution to MamyPoko consumer Brand Switching. The relationship is very strong, but it is in opposite direction. It can be interpreted that if the consumer involvement is high, then the likelihood of consumers to switch brands will be lower, and vice versa. This fact is in line with research conducted by Paurav (2009), where the results showed that the Involvement is one-factor underlying consumer Brand Switching. From Table 1, it can be seen that the indicator variety seeking in the variable Brand Switching has a high average score. It means consumers agree that the reason for switching brands can be caused by a desire to find other alternatives so that the consumer is involved in the search. Besides, the indicator product evaluation also showed that after making a purchase and use of the product, the consumer will be involved in the process of evaluating the use of products of baby diapers. After changing their brand, they will tend to do a comparison of advantages and disadvantages of the products that have been tried. Due to the high level of involvement, MamyPoko need to make the provision of clear and reliable information for consumers. In addition, MamyPoko also can prevent the occurrence of Brand Switching by keep making innovation and development of the product quality.

Company need to increase consumer Involvement in order to increase Brand Image, this can be done by communicating product benefits through television advertisement (above the line) and especially below the line activities such as in store promotional programs or carry out interactive marketing campaigns that involve consumers to participate in Brand Image development. In the end, this effort finally resulting in the decrease of Brand Switching intention.

eWOM (X2) contributes negatively and significantly to Brand Switching (Z)

This study shows that the variable eWOM has a direct contribution to consumer Brand Switching on MamyPoko. The relationship is very strong, but it is in opposite direction. It can be interpreted that the higher the eWOM quality that spread across the Internet regarding MamyPoko, then the lower it will be to the likelihood of Brand Switching. This is evident from the results that MamyPoko consumers make Internet and eWOM as media sources as a credible consideration in the use and selection of products. Negative eWOM about MamyPoko can cause them brand switching intention, as well as positive eWOM about other brands may trigger brand switching. Hence, the company needs to make managerial efforts and marketing activities that could create positive eWOM among consumers regarding MamyPoko. Not only being able to improve the brand image, but it can also be done to attract other consumers to try the products of MamyPoko.

From the preliminary observation, it is assumed that so far company has not focused much on online marketing strategy, whereas Internet usage trend keeps on growing, especially the fact that 60% of MamyPoko consumers use Internet daily. Therefore, company needs to give special attention to its online marketing strategy. Marketing managers can initiate point-of-sale activities in the form of product trials in order to motivate eWOM communication among consumers and give a chance to consumers to share their own impression regarding to the brand. Company can also do effort to increase positive eWOM quantity and quality with online product sampling and online quiz.

Brand Image (Y) contributes negatively and significantly to Brand Switching (Z)

This study found that Brand Image has a direct contribution to the behavior of Brand Switching on MamyPoko consumers. The relationship is very strong, but the relationship is in opposite direction. It means the higher the Brand Image of a brand, the less likely the occurrence of Brand Switching, and vice versa. This is in line with research conducted by Srivastava and Sharma (2013). The research suggests that a positive brand image not only helps companies to attract customers but also contribute to give positive influence and provide a sense of trust. Results of research conducted, also suggest that consumers may associate the brand image as a perception of quality, which can later affect customer satisfaction. The result of the positive brand image can make consumers not interested in making the Brand Switching. Srivastava and Sharma (2013) also revealed the results of research in which major factor in Brand Switching is dissatisfaction, which caused a decline in Brand Image on the minds of consumers.

Even though Brand Image of MamyPoko is assessed as quite good, but there is still intention from consumers to conduct brand switching, for they are interested to try alternative products because of good testimonials about competitor products in Internet. Therefore, the company needs to pay attention and focus on creating a good Brand Image. It can also consist of satisfaction and good product quality, and conduct marketing activities to improve the Brand Image in the mind of the consumer to prevent Brand Switching.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

From the detail discussion above, we can conclude the result of this research. First, there are significant effects of Involvement and eWOM on Brand Image of Mamypoko, individually and simultaneously. Second, individually and simultaneously, there are significant effects of Involvement and eWOM on consumers Brand Switching of Mamypoko, both directly and indirectly through Brand Image. Therefore, Involvement, eWOM, and also Brand Image should be important variables to be concerned about in order to keep consumers from switching to other brands.

While, it is suggested that further research can be done by using the same variables on other product types or service industry. Further research is also needed to explore more antecedents of consumer brand switching, because of the more dynamic environment that causes fast-shifting consumer behavior.

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