

## **CONSUMERS' BRAND LOYALTY OF ENERVON C IN PANDEMIC ERA**

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### **Abstract**

The growth of Vitamin C demand in pandemic makes brand loyalty became one of an important factor to win competitive advantage among competitors. This study aimed to examine and understand the relationship between brand awareness, word of mouth, perceived quality, and brand image towards brand loyalty of Enervon C consumer in pandemic era. Sample of this study were 270 respondents that consume Enervon C during pandemic. This study applies quantitative research method with data collection method through electronic questionnaires. Collected data will be analyzed through SmartPLS 3.3.3 with Structural Equation Modelling. The result indicated that brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty has a direct relationship with brand loyalty and brand image mediated the relationship of brand awareness and perceived quality with brand loyalty. Word of mouth has a direct relationship with brand image.

**Keywords:** brand loyalty; brand awareness; word of mouth; perceived quality; brand image

### **INTRODUCTION**

The emergence of COVID-19 puts the whole world in high alert and the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a major public health issue and declare the outbreak as a pandemic. This situation affected people and businesses around the world as governments of the world declare a new set of regulation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These regulations are including practice social distancing at any public places, obligation to wear a mask outside, frequently wash hands or use of hand sanitizer, limiting number of people at a room, frequently clean and disinfect, testing body temperature, mandatory quarantine or a stay-at-home regulations (GÜNER et al., 2020).

Public awareness is increasing along with the increasing level of concern about COVID-19. The increasing level of concern has pushed people to change their lifestyle such as exercising frequently, eating healthier food, and consuming vitamins to maintaining immunity. Vitamin C, a type of vitamin has many functions for human body that is known to promote immune function (Carr, 2020). Vitamin C became the most consumed vitamin among other types of vitamin during this era of pandemic. Moreover, a study found that Vitamin C has a role on reducing a critical case on COVID-19 patients (Hemilä & de Man, 2021).

The increasing number of Vitamin C leads to increased demand, which then leads pharmacy companies to a significant growth and an opportunity to enter the multivitamin industry (Anjani & Siregar, 2021). With the intense competition, brand plays an important role on winning competitive advantage among competitors (Cynthia Yulita Wardayanti, 2006). The number of brands available on the market creates an opportunity for customers to choose the favorable brand. Hence, it is important for brand to be superior to compete.

Enervon C, a well-known Vitamin C, is one of an old player on the multivitamin industry. It is produced PT Darya-Varia Laboratoria Tbk. Based on data of Top Brand Index, Enervon C became the second top brand on both 2019. Enervon C also index also increased by 13.5%. However, Enervon C still was not able to overcome the number on top brand, Vitacimin, even

though its index decreased. Retail data from IQVIA also shows that Enervon C has 34% growth in 2021. Even so, it is still on the fourth rank among five other brands.

The intense competition between multivitamin companies in this pandemic era encourages companies to meet the needs of their customers to maintain its position in the market. Customer loyalty towards brand is crucial when the market is highly competitive. Loyalty towards brand plays an important role for companies so consumers will always choose Enervon C even with several other options. Moreover, through loyalty, consumers may recommend Enervon C to their families and friends. Nonetheless, loyalty cannot be built overnight, it is a long process that requires a set of good overall experience for consumer. Loyalty can be built through many instruments. Some of them are Brand Awareness, Word of Mouth, Perceived Quality, and Brand Image, which will be discussed in this study.

Brand Awareness plays an important role on expanding brand's equity (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Through brand awareness, brand image can be increased where increasing brand image allows customer to build an association with a brand in their memory (Dülek & Saydan, 2019). A brand's image on customer's mind can be influenced by the level of awareness of customer towards a certain brand (Fajariah et al., 2016). Customer's awareness towards a certain brand continue to increase through a constant exposure in customer's mind. The more customer aware of a certain brand, the higher the brand image (Sari Dewi et al., 2020). It can be concluded that brand awareness helps build and strengthen a brand's image (Tariq et al., 2017).

H1: Brand Awareness has an influence on Brand Image.

Customer will be more likely to choose a brand they are aware of. Therefore, awareness is the first step of customer's preference towards a certain brand. Through a high level of brand awareness, companies can attract customer's trust to make a constant purchase. When customer is faced with various options, they will be most likely to choose a brand that they are aware of. Hence, when faced with products with various options, they will choose a brand with the highest level of brand awareness. Brand Awareness can be considered as an asset that influence customer's perception and preference that can lead to loyalty (Bernarto et al., 2020). Customer's loyalty towards brand is stronger when customer is aware of the brand (Alkhaldeh et al., 2017). Therefore, brand awareness affects brand loyalty (BİLGİN, 2018).

H2: Brand Awareness has an influence on Brand Loyalty.

Brand Image is formed in customer's mind through a perception, which reflected in customer's buying behaviour as a quality that is perceived by customers who have experienced the product or service before (Yaman, 2018). Through word of mouth, customers will form an image or expectation about a certain brand in their mind, consciously or not. When customers heard a positive information through word of mouth, a positive brand image is formed. Otherwise, the brand tends to be less attractive when there is a negative word of mouth (Temaja & Yasa, 2019). As mentioned before, word of mouth can be considered as a marketing tool. Therefore, word of mouth plays an important role on forming a brand's image. It can be concluded that word of mouth has affects brand image (Wicaksono & Seminari, 2016).

H3: Word of Mouth has an influence on Brand Image.

Customer who has a good perception and judgement towards a certain product tends to appreciate brand's credibility which is a component of brand image (Kurniawan, 2017). Companies can help contribute on forming a brand image through perceived quality (Yaman, 2018). Customers will evaluate perceived qualities of a certain brand to create a brand image in their mind. The more positive the perceived quality, the more positive the brand image. When customers assume that a certain product has a good quality, a positive brand image will be formed. Otherwise, when customers assume that a certain product does not meet their

qualifications, a negative brand image will be formed (Cahyani et al., 2017). Therefore, perceived quality affects brand image.

H4: Perceived Quality has an influence on Brand Image.

Quality is an important factor on building brand loyalty (Sia et al., 2018). Customer will be more like to keep choosing a certain brand and gives recommendation to others when they feel superiority of a brand. The higher level of perceived quality, the easier it is for customer to be loyal to a certain brand (Kurniawan, 2017). Perceived Quality is considered to be an element that strengthen superiority perception of a certain brand that makes a brand superior to competitors. Customer's perception might be a motive for customer to make a purchase and deciding the chosen brand when faced with options (Nofriyanti, 2017). Perceived Quality differentiate its brand from competitors which then affect loyalty (Gunadi et al., 2017). It can be concluded that perceived quality influences brand loyalty, where the higher the perceived quality, the higher the level of loyalty (Vazifehdoost & Negahdari, 2018).

H5: Perceived Quality has an influence on Brand Loyalty.

By creating a positive brand image in the minds of customers, customers might gain trust in the brand that will lead to loyalty. Brand Image is considered to be one of a key to gain customer's loyalty (Mabkhot et al., 2017). Customer's perception and opinion towards a certain brand leads them to loyalty (Bernarto et al., 2020). The better the brand image, the higher the level of loyalty. When a brand has a positive image, customer will tend to have a good relationship with the brand (Puška et al., 2018). Customers have tendency to choose a brand with a positive image. When an image of a brand is positive on customer's mind, they will keep choosing that brand. Therefore, brand image affects brand loyalty (Tammubua, 2021).

H6: Brand Image has an influence on Brand Loyalty.

Brand Awareness is considered to have an influence on brand loyalty, though a positive brand image will support it (Saleem et al., 2015). Brand Awareness helps customers to build and form an image of a certain brand, which then lead them to loyalty. When a customer is aware of certain brand, they will form an image in their mind. The customer's image towards a brand then drives them to be loyal to that brand. Through brand image, brand awareness affects brand loyalty. Therefore, it can be concluded that brand image mediates the effect of brand awareness towards brand loyalty (Fajariah et al., 2016).

H7: Brand Image mediates the influence of Brand Awareness towards Brand Loyalty.

Customer's perception is the primary step of forming a loyalty which then supported by brand image (Alhaddad & Alhaddad, 2015). When a perception towards the product quality is low, customer tends to choose other brands (Fajariah et al., 2016). Perceived Quality plays an important role on forming a brand's image, which then leads customer to loyalty. When a perceived quality is high, then a positive brand image will be formed which leads to loyalty. It can be concluded that brand image mediates the effect of perceived quality towards brand loyalty.

H8: Brand Image mediates the influence of Perceived Quality towards Brand Loyalty.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The approach used in this research is quantitative. The purpose of this research is to identify and analyse the relationship between variables, therefore this is a descriptive research type. The population of this study was all Enervon C users in Indonesia. This research used a non-probability sampling method, with a convenience sampling technique. Requirements for respondents to be sampled are people who consumed Enervon C during pandemic. The unit

analysis of this research is individuals, where the data are collected from Enervon C users counted as an individual. The data used are the results of questionnaires that have been distributed via electronic questionnaires or online questionnaires through Google Form. This study uses a sample of 270 units. The data obtained in this study were then performed statistical analysis with Structural Equation Method (SEM) using Partial Least Square (PLS) with SmartPLS 3.3.3 software.

## **RESPONDENT PROFILE**

The results of this study indicate that this research is dominated by male respondents, with total of 146 respondents (54.1%), Most of them are at the age of over 39 years old (61.5%) with an occupation of employees of private/state/state-owned companies (73.3%) and an income over Rp 15.000.000 per month (48.2%). This research is dominated with respondents who are Enervon C users with total of purchase 1 to 2 times per month (80%).

**Tabel 1. Respondent Profile**

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Qty</b>
Age	<18 y.o.	1
	18 – 24 y.o.	26
	25 – 29 y.o.	38
	30 – 34 y.o.	20
	35 – 39 y.o.	19
	>39 y.o.	166
Profession	Unemployment	1
	Profesional	4
	Freelancer	8
	Entrepreneur	13
	Student	22
	Housewife	24
	Private employees	198
Monthly Income	<Rp 5.000.000	38
	Rp 5.000.001 – Rp 7.500.000	20
	Rp 7.500.001 – Rp 10.000.000	33
	Rp 10.000.001 – Rp 12.500.000	26
	Rp 12.500.001 – Rp 15.000.000	23
	>Rp 15.00.000	130
Repeat Buying	1 – 2 times	216
	3 – 4 times	42
	5 – 6 times	6
	>6 times	6

**Table 2. Validity, Reliability, R<sup>2</sup>, GoF**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
Brand Awareness	0,649	0,811	0,878	
Word of Mouth	0,852	0,942	0,959	

Product Quality	0,822	0,891	0,933	
Brand Image	0,749	0,915	0,937	0,804
Brand Loyalty	0,788	0,933	0,949	0,726
SRMR	0,068			
NFI	0,856			
rms theta	0,158			

Table 2 shows that both dependent variables are considered substantial, where 80.4% of the variance of Brand Image can be explained by its independent variables and 72.6% of the variance of Brand Loyalty can be explained by its independent variables. This model of this research is fit and accurate with the regression line of the actual data, which shown in Table 4, where the SRMR value is below 0.10, the NFI value is closer to 1, and the RMS Theta value is closer to 0.

**Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results**

Hypothesis	T-statistics	P-Value	Result
H1: Brand Awareness → Brand Image	4.933	0.000	Significant
H2: Brand Awareness → Brand Loyalty	3.793	0.000	Significant
H3: Word of Mouth → Brand Image	3.758	0.000	Significant
H4: Perceived Quality → Brand Image	8.505	0.000	Significant
H5: Perceived Quality → Brand Loyalty	2.509	0.012	Significant
H6: Brand Image → Brand Loyalty	5.544	0.000	Significant
H7: Brand Image mediates the influence of Brand Awareness towards Brand Loyalty.	3.825	0.000	Significant
H8: Brand Image mediates the influence Perceived Quality towards Brand Loyalty.	4.539	0.000	Significant

## DISCUSSION

Based on the profile of respondents, it can be concluded that this research is dominated by adults over 39 years old with a stable job and a relatively high income. This shows that Enervon C is a trusted product by an “upper middle class” adult, where they choose Enervon C despite their high income. Moreover, it is shown that Enervon C user with the age below 18 years old are relatively low. This might be due to the differences in lifestyle among “younger people”, where they tend to pay less attention on their health and the importance of Vitamin C. However, consumers mostly buy products 1 to 2 times a month, this could be due to the size

of Enervon C bottle containing 30 tablets. Hence, consumers only need to make a purchase once a month.

The results of this study found that the higher the awareness of Enervon C, the higher the brand image (H1). The findings of this study support the previous research results of Fajariah et al (2016). Therefore, to build a positive brand image, Enervon C must raise its awareness. According to the same previous study, brand awareness such as logo, name, and appearance can affect brand loyalty. This study also found that the higher the awareness of Enervon C, the more loyal Enervon C customers will be (H2). Hence, Enervon C must raise its awareness to attract customer loyalty. To develop its brand awareness, Enervon C can create a branding program that might increase its awareness. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of previous studies by Indra (2018). The more positive or negative the word of mouth, the easier the image is formed (H3). Word of Mouth, such as recommendation, invitation, and information can affect the image of Enervon C in customer's mind. While word of mouth is a cheap and efficient way to promote brand, it is having to be built through experience. When customer's experience with Enervon C is overall satisfying, they tend to share it with their relatives or friends. Therefore, Enervon C must offer a satisfying experience to create a positive word of mouth which then affect its image. The study found that the perceived quality of Enervon C is strong enough to generate the image of customer loyalty to Enervon C (H4). It is also shown that perceived quality affects brand loyalty the strongest, meaning that to form a positive image, Enervon C needs to put perceived quality as a top priority in forming a brand image. The findings of this study support the research result of the previous study by (Fajariah et al., 2016).

This study also found that the higher the perceived quality, the more loyal customer will be (H5). This finding supports the results of the same previous research. To increase loyalty, Enervon C can increase its product perceived quality. Perception can be formed through product's appearance. Therefore, Enervon C creating a new format of Vitamin C. The more positive the brand image, the more brand loyalty towards Enervon C would increase (H6). Brand image affects brand loyalty the most, therefore, in order to increase loyalty, Enervon C should give brand image a bigger marketing portion and more attention. This finding supports the same previous study of Fajariah et al (2016). From the results of this study, Enervon C needs to create a positive brand image to generate loyalty by creating a bundling promotion or upgrading its current packaging. In H7 and H8, the mediating role of brand image is described. This study found that brand image can mediate the influence of between brand awareness towards brand loyalty (H7) stronger than the direct influence of brand awareness towards brand loyalty. Therefore, it is preferable for Enervon C to increase customer's loyalty towards Enervon C by increasing its awareness through brand image. Even though the compatibility of Enervon C with its brand awareness is sufficient to generate loyalty without having to form positive image towards Enervon C, positive brand image can strengthen the influence of brand awareness towards brand loyalty. This study also finds that brand image can also mediate the influence of perceived quality towards brand loyalty (H8). Though perceived quality can directly affect brand loyalty, it is preferable for Enervon C to gain loyalty by increasing perceived quality through brand image since it has a stronger influence.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

To improve its position in the top brand and increase its sales growth, Enervon C must increase their customer's loyalty. This study found that the influence of brand awareness, word of mouth, perceived quality, and brand image towards brand loyalty are strong enough during pandemic. Therefore, Enervon C can increase customer's loyalty through brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand image since all of them influence brand loyalty. Though, brand

image has the strongest influence towards loyalty. Hence, Enervon C must give the biggest marketing portion to increase brand image while also paying attention to increasing its awareness and perceived quality and offering a high-quality experience to increase a positive word of mouth.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Loyalty can be built through various aspects, such as satisfaction, trust, experience, customer's knowledge, and purchase intention, but in this study, the researcher only uses four aspects. Therefore, the further research can examine more aspects so that it can be seen which aspects have the most influence on brand loyalty. The further research can choose a larger number of samples by distributing questionnaires to more respondents with a wider range location to get more accurate results and the conclusions drawn are more accurate because they are represented by more people. The same variables can be inspected on different objects such as beauty products, gadgets, or food and beverage products.

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