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## **An Integrated Model of Influence of Perceived Quality, Perceived Value, Brand Association, Brand Awareness and Brand Uniqueness on Brand Loyalty Towards a Luxury Brand in Bangkok, Thailand.**

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### **Abstract**

Under today's increasingly competitive business environment, maintaining customers' brand loyalty remains a significant factor. To be successful in any business sector, companies should understand the customers' needs and create strong brands to achieve long-term business success. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the factors affecting brand loyalty towards the top luxury brand in Bangkok, Thailand. The researchers collected the data from 400 consumers including both Thai males and females at four shopping malls, in Bangkok by using five-point Likert scale survey questionnaires. All respondents whom the researchers conducted had experienced purchasing luxury products. The non-probability sampling procedures including judgment, quota, and convenience sampling techniques were applied to collect the data from the sampling units. The descriptive analysis and inferential analysis including linear regression analysis were used to test all the hypotheses. Based on the result of this study, the researchers found that brand awareness has a significant influence on perceived quality and brand association. Additionally, brand loyalty is significantly influenced by perceived value, brand uniqueness, perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand association, respectively.

**Keywords:** *Perceived Quality, Perceived Value, Brand Association, Brand Awareness, Brand Uniqueness, Brand Loyalty, Luxury brand*



## Introduction

The global luxury goods market is estimated to increase from \$285.1 billion U.S. dollars in 2020 to 388 billion U.S. dollars in 2025 (Statista report, 2020). According to a Deloitte report (2019), the luxury sales growth is 10.8% a year, with the personal luxury goods market growing by 4% percent in 2019 (Bain & Company Luxury Study). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, revenues in 2020 were rapidly dipping compared to 2019, and many business sectors have been negatively

affected throughout, including the luxury product market. Furthermore, as a highly competitive environment nowadays and increases the trend from commoditization continues, maintaining brand loyalty is a critical challenge that many consumer

goods manufacturers face, especially in the luxury product sector (Martinroll, 2018). Developing brand loyalty was reasonably easy for brand luxury in the past, as the competition was moderate and customers were relatively easy to target due to the strict social class and the tendency of consumers to stay loyal and uncritical towards one brand (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). However, It has changed as competition has increased, and the consumer market has rapidly grown. Today's consumers have various options for luxury products, and luxury customers' behaviors are rapidly changed. Customers expected superior quality, superior design, and exclusive products. Hence, luxury brands nowadays have to continually catch up with social trends and need a new creative that fuels growth virtually insatiable and can stand in the market. Luxury brand marketers must consistently figure out some new strategies to keep customers loyal and make a brand remain in the luxury market's primary place. Therefore, the researchers concentrated on customers' brand loyalty towards the luxury brand in Bangkok to investigate, which factors influence Luxury goods' loyalty among consumers in Bangkok, Thailand.

In academics, brand loyalty was embraced and received a great deal of attention from researchers when explaining a brand (Malai and Speece, 2005). Oliver (1997) claimed that brand loyalty directly affects a lovely brand for consumers regularly re-patronizing in the future, even though some marketing strategies and situational effects are likely to cause brand switching actions. Aaker (1991) explained that brand awareness is the first step to creating loyal customers. Yoo et al. (2000) studied marketing mix elements based on brand equity, involving sports shoes, camera film, and color televisions. The study found that there is a positive relationship between brand awareness on perceived quality and brand loyalty. Also, Gil et al. (2007) endorsed the positive effect of brand awareness and brand association toward the family's role on consumers. It is also directly related to customer brand loyalty. Accordingly, Keller & Lehmann (2003) investigated the relationship between the elements of customer-based brand equity. As a result, the researchers found a significant relationship between perceived quality and brand loyalty. Further, Su et al. (2018) carried out a study of customers' perceptions and brand loyalty toward fast fashion clothing and found that perceived value, brand awareness, and brand uniqueness are the significant components that affect consumer loyalty.

Consequently, luxury marketers must consistently figure out some new strategies to keep customers loyal and to make their brand remain in the primary place in the luxury market. Hence, the researchers focus on Customers' brand loyalty towards Gucci brand to investigate which factors influence the brand loyalty. In this study, the researchers collected the primary data at four shopping malls which are the IconSiam, Siam Paragon, Central Embassy, and the Emporium in Bangkok, Thailand. The respondents include both male and female customers who have an experience in purchasing Gucci products.

## Research Objective

- 1 To analyze an influence of brand awareness on perceived quality.
- 2 To investigate an influence of brand awareness on brand association.
- 3 To study an influence of brand awareness, brand



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association, perceived quality, perceived value, and brand uniqueness on brand loyalty.

### **Literature Review**

The following theories and related literature support the main conceptual framework of this present study.

#### **Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness is conceptualized by Aaker (1991) as a potential buyer's ability to recognize or recall a brand as a specific product category. Similarly, Rossiter & Percy (1997) pointed out that brand awareness is the recognition of the brand or the brand recall of purchase. According to Ehrenberg et al. (1997), brand awareness meant entering the customer's mind as a preferred brand when specific needs have occurred. Furthermore, Aaker (1991) represented that brand awareness is advantageous when purchasing a product or service, which helps customers be more familiar with the product. In addition, Keller (1993) pointed out that brand awareness consists of both brand recognition and brand recall. Aaker (1996) indicated that brand awareness is measured by brand recognition, and customer exposure to the brand is the consequence of brand awareness.

#### **Perceived Quality**

Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived quality as a customer's attitude about a product's excellence or superiority. Keller (2003) indicated perceived quality as a customer's acknowledgment of a product's quality. Aaker (1991) conveyed favorable judgment of a product's quality and contributed to the company's achievements. However, a negative perception of the product's quality also destroys brand reputation in the consumer's mind. While Kotler (1991) also explained that a favorable perception of the company's goods or services' quality or services leads to customer satisfaction, and an improvement in the amount of profit a company makes. It can be assessed by direct experience of a brand, and evaluations from direct experience are more substantive and more comfortable accessioning memories (Netemeyer et al., 2004).

#### **Brand Association**

Aaker (1991) stated that brand association is

an expression of a brand, which is directly linked to customers' memory and creates value for the company and customers by distinguishing brands, creating positive attitudes/feelings, and helping to obtain information. Keller (1993) classified brand associations into three categories: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. As defined by Jeon & Baeck (2016), the brand association provides a psychological representation of a brand and is considered a unique brand connection that distinguishes the brand from other brands in the same category (MacInnis and Nakamoto, 1991). Dean (2004) also mentioned that companies will have a better market positioning by establishing a strong brand association to distinguish goods or services. Tsang & Qu (2000) explained that all criteria that influence purchase decisions will be directly affected by brand association.

#### **Perceived Value**

Oliver (1999) defined perceived value as the customer's overall evaluation of a product's usefulness, based on expectations of what is obtained and what is given. Netemeyer et al. (2004) described that the general assessment of a customer on the efficiency of a product based on the views of what is received (satisfaction) and what is given (price) as compared to other brands is referred to as perceived value. Heskett (2009), described perceived value as the ratio of the quality process and the outcomes provided to consumers when compared to the price and other costs to obtain goods and services. Kirmani & Zeithaml (1993) and Netemeyer et al. (2004)

stated that perceived value is the trade-off of what a customer gets (emotional and functional benefits) for what a customer gives (effort, money, and time). Lim et al. (2014) proposed that perceived value refers to the preference or evaluation of whether a product's attributes can meet its needs and satisfaction in a specific situation.

#### **Brand Uniqueness**

The uniqueness of the brand is defined by Netemeyer et al. (2004) as the degree to which the customer feels the brand is different from other brands, and there is a difference when compared with competitors. Franke & Schreier (2008) and Tian et al.

(2001) described the uniqueness of the brand as consumers' feelings that the brand is completely different from other brands, and there is a difference when compared with competitors. It is a desirable brand characteristic that many brands try to obtain (Keller, 1993; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) because it offers a competitive advantage over competitors (Hakala, 2011; Keller and Lehmann, 2006; Ooi and Stober, 2008). If the brand is not accepted by competitors as a unique brand, it will be difficult to gain the interest of customers and build customer expectations and interactions (Netemeyer et al., 2004).

### **Brand Loyalty**

Aaker (1991) conceptualized brand loyalty as the consumer's attachment towards a brand, even after changing the price or product features (Reisenwitz and Gupta, 2011). There are two categories of loyalty: behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Keller, 1998). Behavioral loyalty can be measured by a number of repeated purchases, while attitudinal loyalty refers to the customer's intention to buy the brand as a primary choice (Keller, 1998; Yoo &

Donthu, 2001). In other words, Oliver (1997) defined brand loyalty as a strong commitment to regularly repurchase desired products or services for the future or a commitment to rebuy products or services of a brand as a first choice. Bowen & Shoemaker (1998), loyal customers tend to purchase more frequently than non-loyal customers. They will not switch to competitors' products or services due to the price because they believe that the brand is more satisfying than the other alternatives (Holland and Baker, 2001).

### **Related Literature Review**

#### **Brand Awareness and Perceived Quality:**

Zeithaml (1988) implied that perceived quality is one of the most critical parts of brand awareness. In other words, growing awareness of a brand would increase the opportunity of a remarkable quality being offered. Aaker (1991) mentioned that consumers are more likely to value a brand if they are aware of the brand's quality compared to its competitors. Therefore, awareness of the brand will also improve the deep understanding of the brand's quality to encourage customers to purchase or

repurchase the product or service. Cobb-Walgren et al. (1995) suggested that intensive brand awareness may create a feeling of quality for a brand. Further, Swait et al. (1993) and Yoo et al. (2000) concluded that brand awareness has a positive impact on perceived quality. Many researchers also supported that the higher the brand awareness, the higher the perceived quality (Monroe, 1990; Dodds and Grewal, 1991; Lo, 2002; Lin, 2006).

#### **Brand Awareness and Brand Association:**

Brand awareness involves the connection between the brand and various associations in memory (Keller, 2003). Hence, consumers must also be conscious of a brand first to later have a brand association (Aaker, 1991). Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) study found that it has a high positive effect of brand awareness on the brand association. Brand awareness encouraged marketers and business managers to develop the right brand name (Aaker, 1991). Besides, according to Gordon et al. (1993), the brand association can be strengthened by raising awareness of products. Several researchers, including Keller (1993), Pitta & Katsanis (1995), Gladden & Funk (2002), Ross et al. (2006), Gil et al. (2007), Pike et al. (2010), and Buil et al. (2013) have thoroughly studied and endorsed the positive effect of brand awareness on the brand association, also the positive relationship between these two variables.

#### **Brand Awareness and Brand Loyalty:**

Aaker (1991) defined that brand awareness is the first step toward building loyal customers. Aaker and Keller (1990) also described that consumers' brand loyalty could be encouraged by good awareness and strong image, and the greater the brand awareness is, the greater brand loyalty and repurchase intentions are to consumers. Further, Peng (2006) mentioned that brand awareness has the most effects on brand loyalty. According to the studies by Grover and Srinivasan (1992), Kavasslis et al. (2003), and Dickinger et al. (2004) found that there is a positive correlation between brand awareness and brand loyalty. Yoo et al. (2000) also found a positive impact on brand awareness on brand loyalty. When businesses develop new products or services, they should promote their brand awareness in order to receive the best outcomes (Kuang Chi et al,





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2009) because brand awareness is significantly related to

brand loyalty (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Wu, 2002; Chou, 2005; Peng, 2006).

#### **Perceived Quality and Brand Loyalty:**

Wu (2007) mentioned that the perception of consumers could increase or reduce brand loyalty. Aaker (1991) identified that brand loyalty is a deep commitment to a brand, and it will be increased when consumers perceive more quality of the brand. Lavidge and Steiner (1961) further indicated that consumers would repurchase a product or service when they perceive higher quality because the perceived quality and brand loyalty have a strong connection (Judith and Richard, 2002). Additionally, Chaudhuri (1999) stated perceived quality as an essential part of brand loyalty. Customers will decide to repurchase a brand and stay loyal to it if they gain the brand's excellent quality or services (Yoo et al., 2000). Fournier (1998) also reported that there is a positive effect of perceived quality on brand loyalty. Several previous studies indicated that high levels of perceived quality and positive associations could improve the loyalty of a brand, and the relationship between these two variables has been extensively investigated by many researchers, such as Chaudhuri (1999), Keller and Lehmann (2003), Pike et al. (2010) and Buil et al. (2013).

**Brand Association and Brand Loyalty:** Brand associations were defined by Aaker (1991) as anything linked to the memory of a brand. It can be from a wide variety of sources and differing in their preferences, strength, and uniqueness (Keller, 1993). Lavidge & Steiner (1961) discovered the relationship between brand association and brand loyalty. Gordon et al. (1993) also endorsed the positive effect of the brand association on brand loyalty. A study by

Chaudhuri (1999) found that a brand with a higher brand association has greater customer brand loyalty; that means customer's brand loyalty will increase if the brand association is improved (Gladden & Funk, 2002). Additionally, Ross et al. (2006) found out that there is a significant relationship between the brand

association and brand loyalty. Many researchers such as Konecnik and Gartner (2007), Gil et al. (2007), and Buil et al. (2013) have researched and authorized that there is a positive effect of brand association on brand loyalty.

#### **Perceived Value and Brand Loyalty:**

Customers' perceived value is one of the main contributors to consumer brand loyalty (Lai et al., 2009). He et al. (2012) and Li et al. (2012) found a positive association between perceived value and brand loyalty. It means that perceived value is contributed to generating consumer's loyalty or has a positive direct effect on brand loyalty (Su, 2016; Su and Chang, 2018).

Likewise, Atulkar (2020) showed a positive relationship between perceived value and brand loyalty. Consequently, perceived value is the value earned by customers for their investment, often referred to as utilitarian value (Kesari and Atulkar, 2016). Many researchers concluded that perceived value directly influences brand loyalty (Lin et al., 2006; Gronroos, 2000; Eggert and Ulaga, 2002; Petrick, 2002).

#### **Brand Uniqueness and Brand Loyalty:**

Keller (2010) claims that customer expectations of products are guided by their awareness and the desire for brand uniqueness derived from personal experience. The study by Shen et al. (2014) described that, unique products' apparel satisfies the need for uniqueness of consumers, which is explained as the characteristic of seeking differences relative to others so that one's self-image and social image can be established and improved. This study found that the higher the brand uniqueness a brand has, the more it will increase consumer loyalty. According to Ye et al. (2012), brand uniqueness is the uniqueness of a brand that encourages consumers to buy the brand to increase the number of loyal consumers to a brand. This study found the same results as Su et al. (2018) who stated that brand uniqueness has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

#### **Research Framework**

The researchers applied the previous studies and relevant theories to develop the new conceptual framework with six variables and seven hypotheses. In the conceptual framework, the independent variables are brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, perceived value, and brand uniqueness

towards luxury brands in Bangkok, Thailand. The framework is illustrated in Figure 1. There are three hypotheses which are designed based on the framework and they are shown as follows:

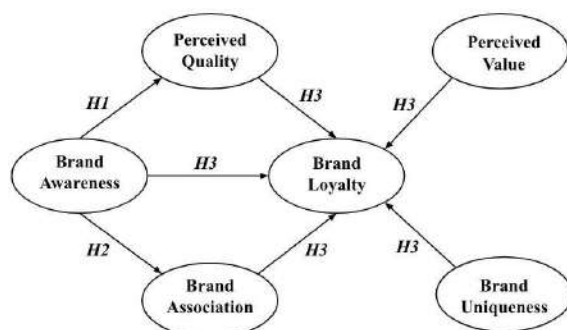


Figure1: The Conceptual framework

### Research Hypothesis

H1o: There is no significant statistical influence of brand awareness on perceived quality.

H1a: There is a significant statistical influence of brand awareness on perceived quality.

H2o: There is no significant statistical influence of brand awareness on brand association.

H2a: There is a significant statistical influence of brand awareness on brand association.

H3o: There is no significant statistical influence of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, perceived value, brand uniqueness on brand loyalty.

H3a: There is a significant statistical influence of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, perceived value, brand uniqueness on brand loyalty.

### Methodology

#### Research Method Used

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, perceived value, and brand uniqueness, on brand loyalty towards Gucci customers in Bangkok, Thailand.

According to Zikmund (2003), the researcher applied the descriptive research method to find out the research questions because it is used in analyzing which factor may or may not affect the other variables. The descriptive method typically used to measure a group of people's performance in different situations

(Churchill, 1999).

In this study, the researchers used the survey research technique and self-administered questionnaires to gather the primary data. The paper describes five independent variables which are brand awareness, brand association perceived quality, perceived value, and brand uniqueness and their effects toward the dependent variable, brand loyalty. Thus, the researchers applied simple and multiple regression analysis to analyze hypothesis testing.

Firstly, Malhotra and Birks (2006) defined the population as the group of elements that contain the required information and which the research justifies the result and is conducted. In this study, the researchers aimed to study about brand loyalty towards the Gucci brand. Therefore, this study's target population includes both Thai male and female customers who are existing customers and currently using a Gucci brand product. The population of Gucci's existing customers in Bangkok is unknown. Malhotra (1999) suggested that the researcher can use sample size based on a previous study to define the sample size.

Hence, the researchers applied the previous studies to reference the sample size to get a reliable sample size. Buil et al. (2013) studied the impact of various factors on brand equity to perceive brand equity, using 302 respondents for the sample size. Similarly, Atulkar (2020), who studied the factors that influence brand trust and brand loyalty towards mall shoppers in India and indicated 332 participants for the sample size. Cooper & Schindler (2006) also defined that the larger sample increased the estimation precision and narrowed the error range. Therefore, based on previous studies, the researchers determined 400 respondents as the sample size of present study.

This research applied three non probability sampling methods: (i) Judgment sampling; the researchers collected the data from males and females at four shopping malls in the Bangkok area where Gucci stores are located (Icon Siam, Siam Paragon,

Central Embassy, and the Emporium). These four shopping malls sell a wide variety of world-class luxury brands that might not be found in any other malls; (ii) Quota Sampling; the researchers used to compute the



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entire sample members and separate them into subgroups. The 400 questionnaires were distributed into four equal portions;

(iii) Convenience Sampling, which is used for a large number of respondents to reach the willing and convenient target to answer and complete the questionnaire.

The conceptual framework was supported by the contents of the questionnaires and was consistent with previous studies. The questionnaires included both English and Thai. The researcher divided the questionnaire into four parts. Part 1 consists of a screening question to identify participants who have purchase experience with Gucci. Part 2 and Part 3 are the attitudinal rating scale. The researchers measure the respondent's attitudes with ratings ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) based on the five-point Likert scale. Lastly, Part 4 includes demographic information, consisting of five items (gender, age, education, occupation, and income). After collecting data, the researchers analyzed all data by utilizing the statistical software to generate readable and easily interpreted information.

### **Data Collection**

The primary data is collected from the respondents at four large shopping malls in Bangkok, Thailand where most of the luxury stores are located. The target population is both Thai males and females who are existing customers and using Gucci products. The researchers applied a

non-probability sampling technique, which consists of judgment sampling, quota sampling, and convenience sampling to collect the data from a total of 400 respondents during Sept 10 to Oct 4, 2020.

### **Reliability analysis**

Based on the reliability pre-test, the researchers applied 50 respondents by using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed that all the question sets of each variable are higher than 0.6. The reliability of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, perceived value, brand uniqueness, and brand loyalty at .826, .747, .851, .862, .837, and .928, respectively.

### **Findings**

Based on the descriptive analysis, among 400 respondents found that the majority of respondents is female, with 273 respondents (68.3%). The participants are aged between 21 to 30 years old (46.0%), which accounts for 184 people. The highest educational level is a bachelor's degree, with 204 respondents (51.0%). Most of the respondents are self-employed, with 156 people (39%). The majority of respondents have a monthly income above 50,000 Thai baht with 149 people (37.3%).

### **Hypothesis Testing**

According to findings of hypothesis testing, the researcher applied Simple Linear Regression for hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, and Multiple Linear Regression to analyze hypothesis 3. A 95% confidence level was set to determine the hypotheses. After analyzing, all the null hypotheses are rejected as all three have a significance level less than 0.05. The results are summarized as follows:

**Table 1: The summary of the results from hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Level of significance	Standardized Beta Coefficient Value	Result
H1o: There is no significant statistical influence of brand awareness on perceived quality. - Brand awareness	.000	.839	Rejected H1o
H2o: There is no significant statistical influence of brand awareness on brand association. - Brand awareness	.000	.819	Rejected H2o
H3o: There is no significant statistical influence of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, perceived value, and brand uniqueness on brand loyalty. - Brand awareness - Perceived quality - Brand association - Perceived value - Brand uniqueness	.032 .002 .040 .000 .000	.130 .209 .106 .252 .221	Rejected H3o Rejected H3o Rejected H3o Rejected H3o Rejected H3o

### Conclusion

Maintaining customers' brand loyalty remains a major factor under today's competitive business environment. The researchers concentrated on brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, perceived value, and brand uniqueness towards luxury products to determine the brand loyalty based on the data analysis. The researchers collected the data from 400 consumers in front of the main gate of four shopping malls (Icon Siam, Siam Paragon, Central Embassy, and the Emporium) in Bangkok including both Thai males and females, who have had an experience in purchasing luxury products by using five point Likert scale survey questionnaires. The non-probability sampling methods including judgment,

quota, and convenience sampling techniques were applied to collect the data from the sampling units. The researchers used a descriptive and inferential analysis to evaluate all hypotheses based on simple and multiple linear regression analysis data. Regarding the research findings, brand awareness has a significant influence on perceived quality and brand association. Further, brand loyalty is significantly influenced by perceived value, brand uniqueness, perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand association, respectively.

### Recommendations

According to the data analysis of this research, the result can help marketers better understand Thailand's luxury goods market.





and the Thai consumer's purchasing behavior. The outcomes from three hypotheses illustrate the important factors that influence the brand loyalty of Thai customers to luxury brands. As to the research findings, the answers from the questionnaires of this research paper and based on the researchers' investigation, the researchers has made suggestions as follows:

Based on Hypothesis 1, the beta value of brand awareness is .839 and significantly affects perceived quality. Therefore, luxury retailers in Thailand should focus on the customers' perception and improve the product's quality for creating a positive attitude for the brand. Furthermore, the 2nd hypothesis has shown that brand awareness also significantly impacts the brand associations with a beta value of .819. Thus, luxury marketers should build more brand awareness by educating the brand's history and the importance of the brand so that customers can quickly recall and recognize the brand's outstanding characteristics. The study also found that if consumers can identify a brand name when they want to buy a luxury product, it means that the luxury brand holds greater brand awareness.

According to the result of Hypothesis 3, the finding showed that luxury goods manufacturers should pay much attention to the impact of perceived value, perceived quality, and brand uniqueness on brand loyalty in order to encourage customers to repurchase in the future. The result indicated that most customers pay more attention to the value of "What is invested" and "What is received." Hence, luxury goods manufacturers should deliver value to customers by emphasizing qualities such as production quality, aesthetic design, and unique products.

Consumers will build brand loyalty by virtue of their good product quality and different characteristics from its competitors. As a result, if the brand maintains the value and quality consistently, luxury consumers will increase loyalty and repurchase behavior.

#### **Further Study**

This research paper concentrates on investigating the factors influencing the

customers' brand loyalty towards the Gucci brand in Bangkok, Thailand. The researchers would like to suggest additional aspects for further research.

Firstly, to practice this research framework, further studies can be comprehensive to apply in other provinces of Thailand, and it can also be conducted for other luxury brands. Also, further studies can modify this research to measure customers' behavior between different countries or different generations.

Secondly, the researchers selected five independent variables in this study; brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, perceived value, and brand uniqueness to evaluate consumers' brand loyalty. For further studies, they can consider other variables that may affect brand loyalty, such as customer satisfaction or a variable that can be studied consumer behavior by extending the present study.

Furthermore, this research focused on one specific brand of the luxury goods market due to limitations. Other researchers could measure other brands, products, or services in other countries which helps to get more information and the luxury industry's latest situation.

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