INFLUENCE OF BRAND EXPERIENCE AND PERSONALITY ON LOYALTY DIMENSIONS: EVIDENCE FROM SUCCESSFUL MALAYSIAN SME BRANDS

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ABSTRACT

Brand loyalty is vital for any business, be it large enterprises or Small and medium enterprises (SME), to sustain in the competitive foodservice industry. Branding researchers had claimed that both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty has their own unique influences on business performance. There has been little studies examining brand experience and brand personality on loyalty dimensions from SME brand perspective. Studies had claimed that factors tested on big brand may yield different result for SME brand. Therefore, this study will investigate the direct influence of brand experience and brand personality on both attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty which yet to be investigated in any empirical research from the perspective of SME brands. Data was obtained through intercept survey of 200 diners prior analyze using SmartPLS 2.0 software. Results showed brand experience significantly influence attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. However, this study found that only behavioral loyalty is influenced by brand personality.

Keywords: *Attitudinal loyalty, Behavioral loyalty, Brand experience, Brand personality, SME brands.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The foodservice industry has always been resilient in contributing toward global growth even during economy recession. Moreover, the Southeast Asia market with countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam had contributed nearly US$110 billion of foodservice value in 2011 (Euromonitor, 2012). Despite that, the competition in the Malaysian foodservice industry is getting more competitive due to several reasons. Firstly, there are an increasing number of established global brands dominating the marketplace. In 2012, global brands such as Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's both accounted more than 70% of the total market share in Malaysia (Euromonitor, 2013). Secondly, as numbers of food operators increases there will be more competing brands providing the best value to attract consumers. Such stiff competition is not surprising when the foodservice industry has shown rapidly growth in the Southeast Asia (Euromonitor, 2012).Therefore, it is vital to differentiate a brand by offering emotional benefits to stand out among varieties of brands. In addition, emotional benefits (i.e. brand experience, brand personality) of a brand are more attractive for consumers in the competitive foodservice industry (Han & Jeong, 2013; Kim, Magnini, & Singal, 2011). Meanwhile, food operators had claimed that gaining customer loyalty is a vital factor contributing toward business sustainability (FCSI, 2012).

For the past decades, loyalty research in foodservice industry had gained increasing attention among scholars and practitioners around the world. In addition, each of these studies emphasize on different topics. To mention a few; understanding factors affecting customer loyalty toward the restaurant brand focusing on factors such as brand personality (Murase & Bojanic, 2004), understanding customer based brand equity (Kim & Kim, 2004), examining the influence of servicescape factors on behavior intentions (Othman & Goodarzirad, 2013), examine perception of consumer on revisit intentions through brand reputation, brand image, and emotion engagement (Chang, 2013; Han, Back, & Barrett, 2009; Mattila, 2001; Ryu, Han, & Kim, 2008), differences between teenagers and adult in their attitude formation toward restaurant loyalty (Frank, 2012). The current study acknowledged the contribution toward the branding literature by past studies. However, there is still avenue for more investigation to be carried out with other branding facet in the foodservice industry.

The impact of brand experience and brand personality on both attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty has not been investigated in any empirical research from the perspective of SME brands in foodservice industry. In addition, there has been conflicting findings on their influence on customer loyalty Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Kim, Magnini, & Singal, 2011; Lin, 2010; Mohamed and Musa, Sahin, Zehir, & Kitapci, 2011; Ueacharoenkit and Coehn, 2013). Moreover, it is important to examine these relationships on SME brands because it may contribute different result as compared to global/ big brands (Berthon et al., 2008; Caloghirou et al., 2014; Parijat, Saeed, & Pranab, 2011). Therefore, this study will fill this gap by developing a conceptual framework to investigate the relationships between brand experience and brand personality on attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty from the perspective of SME brands. The model builds upon the study of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Kuikka and Laukanen (2012), as well as Lin (2010) which studied loyalty as a separate variables namely attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Hence, the empirical result of this study will provide a better understanding for managers of SME in creating and retaining loyal customers for their business, particularly in the foodservice sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty helps to improve a business performance in the long run with higher profits. Review of literature had shown that brand loyalty consisted of two unique dimensions namely attitudinal and behavioral loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Assael, 1998; Day, 1969; Jacoby & Kyner, 1973; Oliver, 1999; Tucker, 1964). Attitudinal loyalty is defined as the act of a loyal customer in providing recommendations to friends and family, preference for a particular foodservice, and readiness to pay more to dine in a particular foodservice (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Ismail & Spinelli, 2000; Lau & Lee, 1999; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Meanwhile, behavioral loyalty is defined as the bias action of a loyal customer to revisit only the particular foodservice brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Lau & Lee, 1999; Zhang & Bloemer, 2008). Moreover, both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty also has its own unique influences on brand performance. Attitudinal loyalty is closely linked to customer willingness to pay premium price while behavioral loyalty is associated with higher market share of a business (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Rauyruen, Miller, & Groth, 2009; Sethuraman & Gielens, 2014). Besides, scholars (e.g. Berthon, Ewing, & Napoli, 2008; Krake, 2005) have called out more investigation to be carried out on SME brand loyalty because factors contributing toward customer loyalty of big firm may be different in the case of SMEs (Rauyruen, Miller, & Groth, 2009). Empirical evidence had supported that not every factors contributed toward the success of big firm have the same effect on SMEs (Caloghirou, Protogerou, Spanos, & Papagiannakis, 2014; Parijat, Saeed, & Pranab, 2011; Shashank, Siddharta, & Subhas, 2013). Besides, SME brands usually suffer higher risk of being eliminated out of the market when customers did not return to make repeated purchase. Besides, understanding customer loyalty toward a brand, from the aspect of both attitudinal and behavioral, is one of the important strategies for SME brand to sustain in the marketplace (Bettman, 1973; Gordon, Calantone, & di Benedetto, 1993).

Provided with the literature above, this study is interested to investigate the link between brand experience and brand personality on attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. The following section discusses on the relationships between the constructs of the proposed model (Figure 1) and derivation of research hypotheses.

2.1 Brand Experience

Today, many businesses failed to capture the heart of their customer to come back for repeated purchase due to lack of understanding of the shift in business competitiveness. According to Mascarenhas, Kesavan, and Bernacchi (2006), businesses that focus on traditional differentiation strategy such as pricing, quality, and customer service may no longer be sufficient for current business landscape. In fact, businesses should acknowledge that customers today are looking for benefits from both utility and emotional perspective (Walter, Cleff, & Chu, 2013). Therefore, brand experience is an important success factor in order to create differentiation for a particular brand in competitive industry (e.g. foodservice industry) to retain loyal diners (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Iglesias, Singh, & Batista-Foguet, 2011). Besides, due to the competitiveness of the foodservice sector, SME brands face even tougher challenges to make sure diners return to dine in their particular outlets. Unless these SME brands manage to keep ongoing revenue, they face risk of wiping out of the market given its limited financial resources to overcome accumulated losses (Reijonen, 2010; Saleh & Ndubisi, 2006). Therefore, a unique and lasting brand experience is crucial to sustain loyal customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1988), particularly in the foodservice industry. Brand Experience is defined as subjective, inner responses of a consumer that can

be categorized into sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral response evoked by restaurant brand related stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009).

Despite the importance of brand experience has been acknowledged in the marketing literature, the current study hope to cover the following gaps. Firstly, the impact of brand on both attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty has not been investigated in any empirical research from the perspective of SME brands. Past loyalty studies (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009; Lin, 2010; Lin & Huang, 2012; Mengxia, 2007; Nam, Ekinci, & Whyatt, 2011; Yoo & Donthu, 2000) had only cover our understanding from the perspective of global/ big brands. No doubt that learning from the success of global brand is important. However, Krake (2005) argued that these global brands were once SME brands too. He then warranted more investigation should be conducted in order to understand factors of customer loyalty toward SME brands. Secondly, there is a conflicting finding from past researches. Despite a few studies (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009; Mohamed and Musa, Sahin, Zehir, & Kitapci, 2011; Ueacharoenkit and Coehn, 2013) have found positive effect of brand experience on brand loyalty, there are studies (e.g. Iglesias et al., 2011) that fail to support the positive effect of brand experience on brand loyalty. This sparks our interest to investigate whether brand experience influences both dimensions of loyalty positively. Following the argument above, the current study proposes that brand experience will have positive influence on SME brands loyalty.

H1: Brand experience directly and positively influence attitudinal loyalty.

H2: Brand experience directly and positively influence behavioral loyalty.

2.2 Brand Personality

Brand personality attract attentions in the marketing literature when Aaker (1997) introduced five different personalities for a brand namely sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Following Aaker (1997), brand personality is defined as the association of human personality toward a particular brand. Studies had found that brand personality will encourage a positive evaluation, perceptions, and enhance the overall preferences of customers (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Govers & Schoormans, 2005; Vila-Lopez & Rodriguez-Molina, 2013). Furthermore, the brand personality of the food outlet will also influence consumer's decision making in their selection of outlet to dine in. Customers will choose a particular brand either to express their personality or appropriate to the situation (Aaker, 1999). Following this, one will bring their family to a food outlet with family-oriented brand personality rather than to a food outlet with exciting-oriented brand personality for social activity or party such as bars.

Besides, brand personality has been an important factor to be examined in the foodservice industry by researchers around the world (e.g. Balakrishnan, Lee, Shuaib, & Marmaya, 2009; Kim, Magnini, & Singal, 2011; Lee, Back, & Kim, 2009; Lin & Huang, 2012; Magnini & Thelen, 2008; Murase & Bojanic, 2004; Musante, Bojanic, & Zhang, 2008; Othman & Rahman, 2014; Siguaw, Mattila, & Austin, 1999; Sophonsiri & Polyorat, 2009; Sung & Tinkham, 2005). However, there are still avenue should be explored with this construct (Polyrat, 2011). Firstly, less is known of the impact of brand personality on both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty from the perspective of SME brands in the foodservice industry. It is crucial to investigate the influence of brand personality on customer loyalty toward SME brands because it may produce different result as compared to big/ global brand (Berthon et al., 2008; Caloghirou et al., 2014; Parijat, Saeed, & Pranab, 2011). Despite a few, there are studies (e.g.

Murad, Omar, & Fadzil, 2011; Opoku, Abratt, Bendixen, & Pitt, 2007) acknowledging the importance of brand personality for SME brands to sustain in the marketplace. Following the argument above, the current study contends that brand personality will have positive influence on SME brands loyalty.

H3: Brand personality directly and positively influence attitudinal loyalty.

H4: Brand personality directly and positively influence behavioral loyalty.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Settings and Subjects

Survey was carried out solely by the researcher himself with 200 diners who had dined in the particular chained local restaurants. The brand chosen for this study are two successful local SME brands of casual dining restaurant that has operated for more than 10 years in Malaysia and has expanded its branches into international market. Both these SME brands are selected from the list of companies given at SME Corp. Malaysia (SME Corp., 2014). Both these brands had received SMEs Bestbrand Awards in recognition for their successful branding (The BrandLaureate, 2014). Prior to data collection, the outlet manager allowed the researcher to do survey with condition not to expose the brand name in any publication. The brand chosen is justified following other loyalty researches (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2009; Lin, 2010; Lin & Huang, 2012; Mengxia, 2007; Nam et al., 2011; Yoo & Donthu, 2000) which had similarly chosen a brand which is consider recognized by the population in accordance to the year of business establishments more than 10 years. The data collection was carried out in several locations during a 5 weeks period from early November to early December in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

The sampling procedure used in this study is multistage area probability sampling as suggested by Sudman (1980). In the first step, every state in Peninsular Malaysia is cluster into four zones namely Central, East Coast, Northern, and Southern region (Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2014). The common goal of a research is to manually collect data that are representative of a population to be studied (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001; Cavana et al., 2001; Hau & Marsh, 2004; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Therefore, central region is chosen due to highest number of population which is 7,209,175 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011). In the second step, the central region is clustered into ten districts according to its local authorities namely Kuala Lumpur City Hall, Putrajaya Corporation, Selayang Municipal Council, Ampang Jaya Municipal Council, Kajang Municipal Council, Klang Municipal Council, Petaling Jaya City Council, Subang Jaya City Council, Shah Alam City Council, and Sepang Municipal Council. These ten districts consisting majority of the population within central region and is also known as Greater Kuala Lumpur or Klang Valley. Klang Valley is the largest metropolitan in Malaysia with approximately 6 million populations and contributed RM263 billion to Gross National Incomes (GNI) in year 2010 (Economic Transformation Programme, 2012; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011). Next each SME brands were allocated equally and randomly among the ten district areas. One restaurant branch were selected randomly on each districts based on business volume as suggested by outlet manager. This research used systematic sampling to select the respondents in which every first of fifth diners were approached upon exiting the restaurant after paying their bill. The questionnaires were distributed on random weekdays and weekends during lunch (12pm-3pm) and dinner time (6pm-9pm).

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) data analysis technique commonly attains high levels of statistical power with smaller sample sizes compared to covariance-based structural

equation modeling (Henseler, 2010; Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009). In addition, Cohen (1988) suggests that the sample size for PLS-SEM is dependent on the statistical power to be achieved. According to Gefen, Rigdon, and Straub (2011), the minimum acceptable power in social sciences researches are 80 percent. Following this, the minimum sample size is determined based on power analysis using the G*Power program as recommended by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2012). The analysis of G*Power program suggested that a minimum sample of 68 observations are required to achieved significance level of 0.05 and statistical power of 80 percent for hypothesis testing. Nevertheless, a large sample size is necessitate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) due to the estimation procedure and the estimation for model fit are based on the assumption of a large sample size (Hair et al., 2006). Kelloway (1998) suggests that the minimum sample size to conduct SEM would be at least 200 observations. In addition, the minimum samples of at least 200 observations are subjected to model complexity (Kline, 2011, p. 12). In contrary, PLS-SEM work well with smaller sample size even for a complex model as compared to CB-SEM which required at least 200 observation to avoid non-convergence and improper solutions (Boomsma & Hoogland, 2001, p. 8; Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwiesier, 2014, p. 108). Given that the model in this study is not complex the researcher will increase the final sample size to 200 observations. In addition, the derivation of 200 observations as the final sample size is also due to the higher non-response rate associated with intercept survey method used in this study (Gates & Solomon, 1982; p 46; Hornik & Ellis, 1988, p. 539; Zikmund et al., 2009, p.213).

3.2 Measurement

This study adapted existing scales for all constructs. Brand experience scales were measured using the 12 items developed by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009). Brakus et al. (2009) identified brand experience in terms of four dimensions: sensory (3 items), affective (3 items), intellectual (3 items), and behavioral (3 items). Brand personality scales were measured using the 15 items developed by Aaker (1997). Aaker (1997) identified brand personality in terms of five dimensions: sincerity (4 items), excitement (4 items), competence (3 items), sophistication (2 items), and ruggedness (2 items). Brand loyalty in this study refers to the degree of both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty of diners toward restaurant brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Attitudinal loyalty scales were adapted from items developed by Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), Ismail & Spinelli (2000), Lau & Lee (1999), Zhang & Bloemer (2008). Behavioral loyalty scales were adapted from items developed by Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), Lau & Lee (1999), Zhang & Bloemer (2008). All the statements were measured with six-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree and 6=strongly agree). According to Garland (1991), the presence of a five-point Likert scale with a middle point of '3' "neither agree nor disagree" will interfere with the findings of the study due to social desirability bias. He further argued that respondents will answer based on the content of the questions when given an even number of response scale. Additionally, respondent from Asian countries tend to choose the middle category response than the respondents from Western countries (Mitchell, 1999; Si & Cullen, 1998). It was also found that both validity and reliability tend to be higher for an even number response scale when compared to odd number response scale (Birkett, 1986; Coelho & Esteves, 2007). Following this, the use of six-point Likert scale in this study is justified. The questionnaires were translated following method suggested by Brislin (1970) to minimize the translation problems. The final questionnaires were in bilingual languages namely English and Malay. In addition, Malhotra et al. (2002) suggest that a sample size between 15 to 30 respondents is required for pilot test. Therefore, 30 questionnaires were distributed to diners of both SME brand in Penang where 15 questionnaires were allocated to each brand. The breakdown of 15 respondents for each outlet was as

follow: 10 respondents using convenience sample while 5 respondents using systematic sampling. Based on the pilot study feedback from respondent, certain words were reconstructed to provide better understanding. The result suggested that all the Cronbach's alpha value were greater than .90 which indicates that the measurement were reliable (Nunnally, 1978).

3.3 Data analysis technique

This study used the Partial Least Squares (PLS) version 2.0 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005) as a technique to analyze the data for hypothesis testing. In addition, we used the bootsrapping method of 200 resamples to determine the significance level for loadings and path coefficients (Chin, 1998).

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 Profile of Respondents

A total of 200 questionnaires were received at the end of data collection process. There was no missing value in all the usable questionnaires. This may be due to the effort of the researcher informing the respondent upon returning the questionnaire that a free gift will be given as a courtesy participating in this study. Meanwhile, the researcher will check whether all the questions are answered correctly before a free pen is given to the respondent. If there is any unanswered question identified, the researcher kindly asked the respondent to answer it immediately. Therefore, the number of questionnaire is sufficient to proceed for data analysis given it has achieved the minimum sample observations required for this study to achieved significance level of 0.05 and statistical power of 80 percent for hypothesis testing. The profiles of respondents are analyzed according to gender, age, education, and occupation as summarized in Table 1. All the respondents were Malaysian. From the total of 200 respondents, a total of 143 (71 percent) were female while 57 (29 percent) were male. This result is also consistent with other restaurant survey studies (Chang, 2013; Kim et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009). One plausible reason for female dominant responses is due to the higher likelihood of female to answer survey as compared to men (Gannon et al., 1971; Green, 1996).   The age group of 21-30 (35 percent) and 31-40 (36 percent) accounted for the biggest portion for the sample meanwhile age group less than 21 years (6 percent) are the smallest portion of the sample. Only 3 percent studied until primary education. Most of the respondents are working employees (72 percent).

4.2 Non Response Bias

This study also tests non-response bias using extrapolation method as suggested by Armstrong and Overton (1977). This method assumes that respondents who answered in an unprepared condition are similar to non-respondents. The unprepared condition refers to respondent answering later or answering after receiving more reminders (Armstrong & Overton, 1977, p. 397). Moreover, they suggested the independent t-test with assumption of equal and unequal of group variances in order to test the mean score differences between early and late respondents. The data collection was conducted over a period of five weeks from early November to early December 2014. Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001) suggest that statistical power will be reduced if unequal sizes of early and late respondent are used in comparison. They further recommend a minimum of 30 late respondents required for the comparison. Therefore, the early batch of 50 responses were compared with the last batch of 50 responses to test whether their mean score differ. The result reported indicates that there is no difference between both groups because the

mean for every variable in the study exceed the 0.05 significance level between both groups (Pallant, 2010). Therefore, the issue of non-response bias did not occur in this study.

4.3 Measurement Model

This study used the two-step approach as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Firstly, convergent validity and reliability were evaluated as shown in Table 2. In order to achieve convergent validity, loadings must be greater than 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), composite reliability must be greater than 0.7 (Gefen et al., 2000), and the average variance extracted (AVE) must be greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Lacker, 1981). As shown in Table 2, the measures achieve sufficient convergent validity and reliability because it achieves the criterion stated above.

Next, discriminant validity is evaluated as shown in Table 3. In order to achieve discriminant validity, the average variance shared between each construct and its measures should be greater than the variance shared between the construct and other constructs (Fornell & Cha, 1994; Fornell & Lacker, 1981). As shown in Table 3, the measures achieve sufficient discriminant validity because the correlation values for each constructs (included row and column) is lower than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) by the indicators measuring that construct which is displayed on the diagonal. Hair et al. (2014) suggest that the loadings of measurement items should be higher than the cross loadings by at least 0.10 to achieve sufficient discriminant validity. As shown in Table 4, the loadings of all constructs satisfy this criterion. Thus, we can conclude that discriminant validity is achieved.

4.4 Structural Model

Next, the structural model was tested. Table 5 and Figure 2 portrayed the results of structural model for this study. Table 5 displayed all the hypotheses tested for this study. Firstly, brand experience ($\beta = 0.613$, $p < 0.01$) is positively related to attitudinal loyalty. Therefore, H1 is supported. Secondly, brand experience ($\beta = 0.619$, $p < 0.01$) is positively related to behavioral loyalty. Therefore, H2 is supported. Next, brand personality ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.01$) is a significant predictor of behavioral loyalty. Hence, H4 is accepted. Brand personality ($\beta = 0.101$, $p > 0.05$) is not a significant predictor of attitudinal loyalty. Thus, H3 is rejected.

Figure 2 exhibited both Q^2 values and R^2 values for the respective endogenous variables. The R^2 values are 0.471 and 0.579 respectively which suggest that the modeled variables can explain 47.1 percent on attitudinal loyalty and 57.9 percent on behavioral loyalty. In addition, the Q^2 values are 0.293 for attitudinal loyalty and 0.373 for behavioral loyalty respectively which suggest that the model has large predictive relevance on the endogenous construct (Fornell & Cha, 1994; Hair et al., 2014).

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to test whether brand experience and brand personality exerts a direct and positive influence on both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Result of this study found that brand experience have direct positive relationship on both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. This empirical evidence supports the findings in the literature from different research context that brand experience has positive effect on attitudinal and behavioral loyalty (Han & Li, 2012). A unique brand experience will make it hard for competitor to replicate. Hence, this will serve as an advantage for the SME brand because customers are likely to recommend to others and return for future visit at the particular brand outlet. Such result is also explained by the importance of brand experience as unique

differentiation strategy in the foodservice industry which is vital in influencing customer's future visit to the particular brand outlet (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Iglesias, Singh, & Batista-Foguet, 2011).

Meanwhile, this study found that only behavioral loyalty is influence by brand personality. This finding is consistent with researches in other context that found similar influence of brand personality on behavioral loyalty (Eisend and Stockburger-Sauer, 2013; Lin and Huang, 2012). Customers will return to dine at a particular brand outlet with personality congruent to them either to express their personality or appropriate to the situation (Aaker, 1999). For instance, health conscious customers will prefer Subway for a healthy breakfast when they could easily identify the personality of the brand. Therefore, a brand with strong consistent personality will enhance the decision making of a customer through better evaluation, perceptions, and preferences (Freling & Forbes, 2005; Govers & Schoormans, 2005; Vila-Lopez & Rodriguez-Molina, 2013).

However, the hypothesized positive influence of brand personality on attitudinal loyalty is not supported by the result of this study. Despite that, there are several reasons this finding is inconsistent with previous researches (e.g. Kim et al., 2011; Mengxia, 2007) that support the positive effect of brand personality on attitudinal loyalty. Firstly, past studies that found support for the positive influence on the relationship between brand personality and attitudinal loyalty mainly examine using global brand (e.g. NIKE, Olive Garden, SONY) which might create a much favorable responses from the respondents. This study however, examines such relationships from the perspective of SME brands. Besides, global brand and SME brand are definitely not the same in which they are different mainly from the aspect of resources itself such as financial and manpower (Muhammad, Char, Yasao, and Hassan, 2010). Another possible reason to such findings might be due to the lack of strong brand personality among the SME brands. SME brands should learn to stick to one or two personality which drive their overall business decision making that has been done by their larger compatriot (e.g. McDonald's). Moreover, the SME brands might have confused customers of its personality when they provide varieties of offerings, business culture, advertising style or even the outlet servicescape which is inconsistent with their core brand personality. As Keller (2013, pp. 115) explained that customer perceptions toward a particular brand personality can be influenced directly or indirectly from the encounter of customer with any aspect of the brand. Lastly, this result is also supported by the finding of Lin (2010) which also failed to provide sufficient support for the positive influence between brand personality and attitudinal loyalty in the toys and games industry in Taiwan. Hence, both brand experience and brand personality are important factors for SME brand to enhance their profits through repurchase loyalty of customers.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study contribute toward SME owner-manager regarding the influence of brand experience and brand personality has on both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Firstly, brand experience does exert positive influence on both attitude and behavior loyalty. Owner-manager of SMEs should start to see brand experience as a powerful tool to create a differentiation among competitors in the industry. Experience can be created directly and indirectly among brand stimulus (Brakus et al., 2009). Apart of dining in experience, owner-managers of SME might consider a take-away experience. This might be something special among the customers who would like to buy home their meal. One may implement a policy of take-away meal such as customers are not allowed to order for take-away food

except the leftover food ordered. Such experience will influence the business negatively and positively. On the positive side, customers will feel the unique experience from the business that tried to provide them quality meal of dining in upon served. On the other hand, some customers may be annoyed by such rigid policy. Besides, Walter, Cleff and Chu (2013) claimed that customers today are looking for benefits from both utility and emotional perspective.

Secondly, brand personality does exert positive influence on behavior loyalty. SME owner-manager should create the personality intended for the business to encourage people to dine in. Aaker (1999) claimed customer spend on product with personality congruent with themselves or appropriate to situation. It is important for the SME business to set the personality of the brand to cater self expression of customers or for event celebration. Eventually, the marketing such as advertisement and packaging will be shape the personality intended for the business. A brand personality is a success when it helps providing statement on behalf the business toward customer what type of person dine and when to dine in this brand outlet (Aaker, 1996). In sum, manager of SME brand should emphasize on brand experience and brand personality if their goal is to increase the firm's profitability. Meanwhile, brand experience should be the focus of SME brand managers if they wished to charge premium price for their product or services. In addition, experience of a brand also helps SME brands to gain larger customer based because attitudinal loyal customer usually share positive recommendations among their friends and family. However, in order to achieve sustainability in the marketplace for SME brands, managers/ owner must take note that both brand experience and brand personality must be unique and lasting in the mind of customers or else customer will recommend to others as well as return for future dining. Moreover, the uniqueness of emphasizing on both brand experience and brand personality as a competitive advantage tools will provide challenges competitors to imitate easily.

The findings of this study also provide some valuable insight of the influence of brand experience and brand personality on attitudinal and behavioral loyalty from the perspective of successful SME brands. The current literature had mainly examined the influence of brand experience and brand personality on composite brand loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Iglesias, Singh, & Batista-Foguet, 2011; Walter, Cleff, & Chu, 2013). It is important to examine these relationships on SME brands because studies had found different significant result for variables tested between SMEs and global/ big brands (Berthon et al., 2008; Caloghirou et al., 2014; Parijat, Saeed, & Pranab, 2011). The result will contribute to the literature of SME branding which has received less attention as compared to global/ big brands (Agostini et al., 2014; Asamoah, 2014; Reijonen, Laukkanen, Komppula, & Tuominen, 2012; Spence & Essousi, 2010).

7. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the current study provides interesting findings on the influence of brand experience and brand personality on both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, it has several limitations. Firstly, this study only collected data from two successful Malaysian SME brand in the casual dining chain. Therefore, such findings are limited to only SME brands in the casual dining chain foodservice industry. The result may be different if data were collected from other successful SME brand in other industry such Flipper and Coveithci in the footwear industry (The BrandLaureate, 2014). We strongly urge more researches to be done on other SME brands to further validate our findings. Moreover, literatures had indicated there is dearth of branding studies in the context of SME brand in comparison to global/ big brand (Agostini et

al., 2014; Asamoah, 2014; Reijonen, Laukkanen, Komppula, & Tuominen, 2012; Spence & Essousi, 2010). Secondly, the systematic sampling method had resulted in a skewed dominant female response over male respondents. Perhaps a quota sampling of equal number of male and female respondents might provide different outcome for the model tested in this study. Thirdly, this study chose intercepts every first of fifth respondents upon exiting the restaurant because outlet manager prohibited survey in their outlets. This method resulted in a higher non-response rate. Future studies may try to conduct the drop and collect method to gain more response in order to further validate the findings. In addition, it would be interesting to enhanced the current model with inclusion of other antecedents such brand reputation, brand image, and brand affect to study their relationships on both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

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APPENDICES
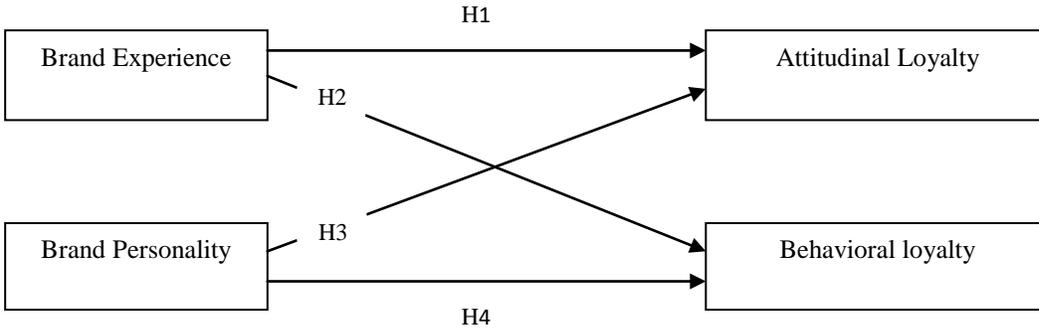
Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1:

Proposed model

Figure 2:

Results of the structural model analysis
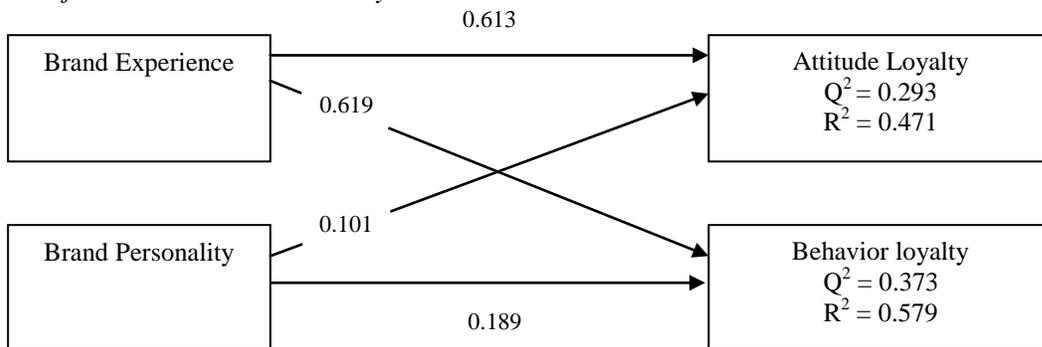
Appendix 2: Tables

Table1:

Respondent profile

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	57	29
Female	143	71
Age		
< 21	8	4
21-30	69	35
31-40	72	36
41-50	30	15
>50	21	10
Education		
Primary school	6	3
Secondary school	35	17
College (Certificate/ Diploma/ Advanced Diploma)	66	33
Bachelor degree	79	40
Postgraduate degree	14	7
Occupation		
Student	16	8
Employee	144	72
Self-employed	18	9
Unemployed/ Housewife	22	11

Table 2:

Result of measurement model

Model construct	Measurement item	Loading	CR[a]	AVE[b]
Attitudinal loyalty	Attitudinal loyalty 1	0.838	0.919	0.657
	Attitudinal loyalty 2	0.880		
	Attitudinal loyalty 3	0.879		
	Attitudinal loyalty 4	0.832		
	Attitudinal loyalty 5	0.768		
	Attitudinal loyalty 6	0.639		
Behavioral loyalty	Behavioral loyalty 1	0.843	0.916	0.648
	Behavioral loyalty 2	0.835		
	Behavioral loyalty 3	0.816		
	Behavioral loyalty 4	0.649		
	Behavioral loyalty 5	0.808		
	Behavioral loyalty 6	0.860		
Brand experience	Brand experience 1	0.782	0.945	0.610
	Brand experience 2	0.788		
	Brand experience 3	0.826		
	Brand experience 4	0.803		
	Brand experience 5	0.780		
	Brand experience 6	0.806		
	Brand experience 7	0.786		
	Brand experience 8	0.717		
	Brand experience 9	0.764		
	Brand experience 10	0.780		
	Brand experience 12	0.755		
Brand personality	Brand personality 2	0.704	0.909	0.500
	Brand personality 3	0.701		
	Brand personality 4	0.748		
	Brand personality 5	0.735		
	Brand personality 7	0.717		
	Brand personality 9	0.688		
	Brand personality 10	0.759		
	Brand personality 11	0.750		
	Brand personality 12	0.612		
	Brand personality 13	0.645		

Note: items brand personality 14 and brand experience 11 was deleted due to loadings not greater than 0.50; items brand personality 1, brand personality 6, brand personality 8, and brand personality 15 were deleted to achieve average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5.; [a]Composite Reliability (CR) =

(square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}; [b]Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}

Table 3:

Discriminant validity of constructs

Constructs	Attitudinal loyalty	Behavioral loyalty	Brand experience	Brand personality
Attitudinal loyalty	0.810			
Behavioral loyalty	0.804	0.805		
Brand experience	0.682	0.748	0.781	
Brand personality	0.518	0.610	0.680	0.707

Note: Value on the diagonals represents square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) while the other entries represent the correlations value.

Table 4:

Cross loadings of constructs

	Attitudinal loyalty	Behavioral loyalty	Brand experience	Brand personality
Attitudinal loyalty 1	**0.838**	0.714	0.691	0.490
Attitudinal loyalty 2	**0.880**	0.654	0.531	0.432
Attitudinal loyalty 3	**0.879**	0.657	0.529	0.429
Attitudinal loyalty 4	**0.832**	0.623	0.510	0.353
Attitudinal loyalty 5	**0.768**	0.642	0.501	0.317
Attitudinal loyalty 6	**0.639**	0.591	0.501	0.466
Behavioral loyalty 1	0.756	**0.843**	0.677	0.490
Behavioral loyalty 2	0.753	**0.835**	0.673	0.447
Behavioral loyalty 3	0.594	**0.816**	0.591	0.551
Behavioral loyalty 4	0.483	**0.649**	0.415	0.408
Behavioral loyalty 5	0.604	**0.808**	0.561	0.548
Behavioral loyalty 6	0.657	**0.860**	0.652	0.506
Brand experience 1	0.555	0.608	**0.782**	0.533
Brand experience 2	0.517	0.583	**0.788**	0.522
Brand experience 3	0.502	0.590	**0.826**	0.544
Brand experience 4	0.545	0.624	**0.803**	0.496
Brand experience 5	0.506	0.567	**0.781**	0.529
Brand experience 6	0.484	0.555	**0.806**	0.458
Brand experience 7	0.599	0.629	**0.786**	0.591
Brand experience 8	0.473	0.476	**0.717**	0.532

Brand experience 9	0.539	0.517	**0.764**	0.527
Brand experience 10	0.581	0.675	**0.780**	0.522
Brand experience 12	0.536	0.564	**0.755**	0.587
Brand personality 2	0.429	0.512	0.525	**0.704**
Brand personality 3	0.349	0.389	0.467	**0.701**
Brand personality 4	0.366	0.489	0.504	**0.748**
Brand personality 5	0.356	0.478	0.499	**0.735**
Brand personality 7	0.329	0.407	0.400	**0.717**
Brand personality 9	0.469	0.468	0.561	**0.688**
Brand personality 10	0.352	0.406	0.477	**0.759**
Brand personality 11	0.356	0.411	0.489	**0.750**
Brand personality 12	0.362	0.356	0.458	**0.612**
Brand personality 13	0.236	0.341	0.376	**0.645**

Table 5:

Path coefficients and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	Supported
H1	Brand experience → attitudinal loyalty	0.613	0.053	11.585**	Yes
H2	Brand experience → behavioral loyalty	0.619	0.064	9.655**	Yes
H3	Brand personality → attitudinal loyalty	0.101	0.071	1.435	No
H4	Brand personality → behavioral loyalty	0.189	0.067	2.819**	Yes

Note: *p < 0.05 (1.645); **p < 0.01 (2.33) one tail

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