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The relationship between marketing mix and Retailer-Perceived Brand Equity

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The Relationship between Marketing Mix and Retailer-Perceived Brand Equity

Abstract

Purpose: A huge investment launching the marketing program is made by the manufacturers to establish brand loyalty with retailers and other supply chain partners; however, what is the impact of these efforts on retailer-perceived brand equity is scarcely investigated in a B2B context. This research investigates the impact of Nu Green Tea's marketing mix on retailer-perceived brand equity.

Methods: Based on the positivist paradigm, we followed a survey based approach to collect data from 125 retailers of Nu Green Tea brand from Indonesia. The collected data was rigorously analyzed by means of structural equation modeling.

Findings: The results reveal that elements of marketing efforts such as supplier image, distribution strategy, and push and pull promotions have a significant impact on the retailer-perceived brand equity of Nu Green Tea.

Originality: This research extends our understanding of retail marketing in a Business-to-Business context by investigating the impact of marketing efforts on retailer-perceived brand equity.

Keywords: Marketing Mix, Retailer-Perceived Brand Equity, Brand Performance.

Introduction

Brand is one of the most important company assets which plays an important role to improve the lives of consumers and also contributes to the financial equity of the firm (Kotler & Keller, 2006). A stronger brand is the primary source of competitive advantage which ultimately generates revenue to enhance the liquidity of the firm (Baldauf et al., 2003). Therefore, companies must continue to build and enhance brand equity for their products to ensure longevity of success for the firm in the long term.

In marketing the products, producers commonly sell their goods through full channel – via retailers and wholesalers. In this regard, the retailer's decision to sell a particular brand determines the success of the manufacturer especially in the consumer goods category (Bloom & Perry, 2001). Retailers generally sell goods that have value or profit for them in return and are demanded by the customers. For these reasons, brand equity is important not only as measured from the consumer's perspective, but also from the retailers' perspective; an important field which has been largely ignored and scarcely investigated so far (Samu et al., 2012). While the industry is notably paying a closer attention to the applicability and significance of branding in a business-to-business (B2B) context, the academic interest on this subject is unfortunately still lacking (Lynch & de Chernatony, 2004; Herbst, et al., 2012; Koporcic & Törnroos, 2015). This is where we intend to make a meaningful contribution to the retail marketing knowledge – to analyse retailer-perceived brand equity with its dimensions in a developing country context of Indonesia.

To this extent, there have been excellent studies published where marketing efforts are considered to have a positive impact on brand equity (Yoo et al., 2000; Kotler & Keller, 2006; Baldauf et al., 2009). In this research, marketing efforts are carried out in its traditional form, which is the marketing mix (i.e., product, place, price, and promotion), as a representative set of marketing activity which are related to brand equity (Yoo et al., 2000). Almost every marketing activity has a potential impact on brand equity because it represents the effect of marketing investment that has been accumulated into a brand. Furthermore, marketing decisions and marketing conditions also affect brand equity, such as advertising expenditures, sales force and marketing expenditure, the age of the brand, advertising shares, and portfolio of products as a source of brand equity (Simon & Sullivan, 1993). Other marketing activities such as the use of public relations, slogan or jingle, symbols, and packages (Aaker & Equity, 1991), company image, country of origin, and promotional events (Keller, 1993) also positively contribute to brand equity.

Retailer-perceived brand equity can be profitable for producers and retailers. The functional and emotional nature of a brand could bridge the relationship between producers and retailers, which in turn affect the latter's decision-making process (Lynch & de Chernatony, 2004). The benefits for producers can be described with the condition if retailers believe that certain brands enhance the performance of transactions and turnover of the products in their stores so they would prefer to sell these brands and provide a shelf for these products and vice versa (Sloot & Verhoef, 2008). The retailer's decision in selecting the right brand is also important to their success because most of the profits they earn from sales of the products with that brand (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). Thus, retailer-perceived brand equity is closely linked to brand profitability performance (Baldauf et al., 2009).

Furthermore, by nature, since the retailer is much closer to the customer, they can collect meaningful data from the latter which in turn can be effectively utilized by the company to develop effective marketing programs. However, this is only possible in the case where retailer-manufacturer relationships are strong and retailers perceive that the brand has high equity (Pelău, 2008). On the other hand, a lot of marketing investment (the investment in product, pricing perceptions, promotions, and retail strategies) is wasted—does not result in profitable customer relationships (Luo and Kumar, 2013). In this context, if the producer-retailer relationship is strong can easily lead to strong brand equity. This is another reason we focused on to strengthen the producer-supplier relationship by investigating the perceived effectiveness of marketing mix elements on retailer-perceived brand equity.

There are meaningful contributions which justify the need to conduct this study. First, brands are facing tough competition from retail brands – the private labels where bargaining power has been slowly shifting to retailers (Hyman et al., 2010). This calls for a need to develop and groom the manufacturer-retailer relationship in order to strengthen ties to ensure the exchange process would take place smoothly (Jo, 2006). So far, the debate in the marketing and branding literature has been dominated by customer perceived brand equity – the retailer brand equity is scarcely investigated and presented to strengthen the tie between a manufacturer and its retailers. Academic research to understand retailer-perceived brand equity is needed to assist B2B (business-to-business) marketers in developing an applicable brand strategy (Leek & Christodoulides, 2010). On the other side, the Asian context is missing as the retailer brand equity is largely dominated by the European context which is markedly different from the more collectivist, relationship-oriented Asian cultures (Samu et al., 2012).

For the purpose of this study, we collected data from one brand – Nu Green Tea, which is based in Indonesia. There are a few considerations which justify the selection of this brand should include competition from local and global players, rising consumer concerns about quality of product (Razdan et al., 2013), and the struggles this brand is making to establish its foothold in Indonesian market. There has been compelling evidence that one or two brands are studied to investigate the perceived equity as a case study (Pappu & Quester, 2006). This is to better understand the supplier-brand relationship and to offer few pragmatic implications for managers to improve the marketing outcomes of sales and profitability. In a competitive market such as Indonesia where a lot of substitutes to tea are available and the retailer bargaining power is high, this study has pragmatic value. Keeping this pragmatism in mind, we did not opt for an investigation based on suppliers' corporate brands.

In the subsequent section, we will present the conceptual framework of this study. We will then review the literatures relevant to the relationships among the constructs. Next, we describe the research methodology and report the findings. Furthermore, we will also discuss the implications of the findings as well as directions for future research.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model of this study comprise of antecedences and performance consequences of Retailer Perceived Brand Equity (RPBE). Initially, the dimensions of retailer-perceived brand equity constructs were focused and based on previous studies in the context of B2B branding (Baldauf et al., 2009; Yoo et al., 2000; Glynn, 2012; Luo & Kumar, 2013), potential antecedents of RPBE were identified. Finally, the impact of RPBE on brand profitability performance was envisioned (presented as Figure 1 below).

-----------------------Insert Figure 1 here ----------------------------

Retailer-Perceived Brand Equity

Brand equity can be assessed from the perspective of retailers as it has three conceptual perspectives (Baldauf et al., 2009): (1) the equity associated with the retailer's brand (e.g. Wal-mart, Carrefour, Tesco, and Aldy stores), (2) the equity associated with retailer's store brand (also known as private label products), or (3) retailers' perception of the brands they sell. In this research, we focused on the third issue, i.e., how do retailers perceive the equity of the brand they sell?

This research considers the retailer-perceived brand equity from the retailers' perception because perception can be viewed as a pioneer of behavioral manifestations of brand equity. Although retailers are the ultimate participant of the value chain, but retailers are also the consumers of the producers so they should be treated like any other consumers. Retailers who are particularly independent, single-store establishments have the ability to decide what products they will sell and be able to influence the customers who will purchase particular products.

Referring to the concept of brand equity developed by Aaker (Aaker & Equity, 1991) and Baldauf et al. (Baldauf et al., 2009) and the extant literature on B2B branding (Luo & Kumar, 2013; Glynn, 2012), we classified the dimensions of RPBE into three main constructs which are the retailer-perceived quality of a brand, the retailer loyalty to a brand, and the retailer's awareness of and association with a brand. Although the original conceptualisation developed by Aaker (1991) distinguished between brand awareness and brand association, the empirical evidence shows that they can be combined into a single dimension (Yoo et al., 2000).

Retailer-Perceived Quality of a Brand

Zeithaml (Zeithaml, 1988) defined perceived quality as the consumer rating (subjective) about the overall performance of the product (the service). From the point of view of retailers, retailer-perceived quality of a brand is the retailers' perception of overall quality or superior products or services linked to the objectives or benefits compared to alternative products (Aaker & Equity, 1991). In this context, the retailers are seen as professional marketers – to have the ability and knowledge of the brands in the market (Chiou, 2003). Therefore, they should be able to provide accurate reports about the actual quality of a particular brand as compared with alternative brands available in the market (Baldauf et al., 2009).

Retailer Loyalty to a Brand

Javalgi and Moberg (Raj G. Javalgi & Moberg, 1997) defined brand loyalty based on consumer behavior, attitudes, and choices. Behavior perspective is based on the total purchases for a particular brand, while attitude perspective incorporating consumers' preference and disposition towards brands. From the choice perspective, it focused on the reason for the purchase or factors that can influence the choice. That definition of brand loyalty has been examined empirically in three main categories: multi-domain approach, behavior approach, and attitude approach (Rundle-Thiele & Bennett, 2001).

Retailer loyalty to a brand is a commitment that was held by retailers to repeat the purchase of selective products or service consistently in the future despite the influence of situation and marketing efforts which may have a potential cause in switching behavior (Oliver, 1999). Because retailers carry a wide range of brands, loyal retailers tend to select the same brand even if competitors' brand offers discount or other promotions (Baldauf et al., 2009).

Retailer's Awareness of and Associations with a Brand

Aaker (1991) defines brand associations as "anything linked in memory to a brand". The associations are stronger when they are based on many experiences or exposures to communication, rather than a few (Aaker, 1991). Brand associations, which resulted in high brand awareness, is positively associated with brand equity as they can be a signal of quality and commitment and they help buyers consider when to purchase a brand, which direct to the behavior that benefits to the brand. In this research, brand awareness and brand associations combined into one-dimensional form after an empirical test and proved significant to use (Yoo et al., 2000).

Retailer's awareness of and association with a brand is the ability to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Aaker, 1991) and associations they link to a manufacturer's brand (Aaker 1991; Aaker and Keller 1990; Keller 1993). Baldauf et al. (Baldauf et al., 2009) stated that dimension is important to construct RPBE because such as consumers, the trade has less uncertainty dealing with a proven brand name that has already achieved recognition and association (Aaker, 1991). As retailers are considered an expert, the crucial issue is not simply whether retailers are aware of a particular brand or if they have an association with a brand (La Rocca & Snehota, 2016), but rather whether awareness and associations are strong and provide a clear reason to buy.

Marketing Mix

Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (Yoo et al., 2000) stated that brand equity can be created, maintained, and enhanced by strengthening the dimensions of brand equity. Superior brand is usually based on substantial long-term investment (historical) in building a brand (Aaker, 1991). Historical investment, which captures all aspects of the marketing mix (4Ps), protects from imitation and makes a brand difficult to substitute, so that ultimately creates barriers to entry or competitive advantage.

In this study, we also use the 4Ps of the marketing mix as a conceptual logic to identify the antecedents of retailer-perceived brand equity. The concept of marketing mix focused on supplier image, distribution, price level, push strategy promotion and pull strategy promotion. Concept product is not included because it was covered in RPBE itself (Baldauf et al. 2009).

Supplier Image

According to Baldauf et al. (Baldauf et al., 2009), the supplier image is an important influence on RPBE. Supplier here could be manufacturers, distributors, or wholesalers. In this study, we use the image of the manufacturer because the direct influence on brand equity is a company that produces the product. This is supported by the findings of study conducted by Ross-Wooldridge, Brown, and Minsky (Ross-Wooldridge et al., 2004) which stated that company image role as brand equity.

The company's reputation is a concept related to (but not the same as) the image of the company and involves subjective judgments of outsiders on the quality of the company in terms of its (perceived) past performance (Bennett & Gabriel, 2001). The benefits of a company with a favorable reputation include higher level of customer purchase intention, strong organizational identification among employees customer loyalty, and greater competitive advantage (Bennett & Gabriel, 2001).

Distribution

In industrial markets, branding is dependent on the surrounding distribution network (Kuhn et al., 2008), making the role of distributors particularly important in building brand equity. According to Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (Yoo et al., 2000), the consumers will be more satisfied when the products are available in a greater number of stores because they will be offered the product where and when they need it. Intensive distribution can reduce the time needed by customers searching the stores and traveling to and from the stores, provide convenience in purchasing, and make it easier to get services related to the product.

The distribution can reduce various problems such as saving their time and costs to be incurred while buying from a wholesaler. With an increase in the reliability of distribution, more retailers save time and money and received more value from the product with a particular brand. The increasing value will impact on RPBE. In accordance with specified by Baldauf et al. (2009), distribution has a potential effect on RPBE.

Price Level

The price level is generally assumed to provide important extrinsic cues for buyers to assess products (Kotler and Keller, 2006). For consumers, higher prices could be an indicator of a higher quality product and can be expected to have a positive relationship with brand equity (Yoo et al., 2000). On the other hand, retailers are considered experts and expected to have a profound knowledge of all brands in the market (Baldauf et al. 2009). They are likely to know the (true) quality of the products they carry in their assortment and do not have to rely on extrinsic cues such as price level as much as consumers (Maheswaran, 1994). In a competitive market, price is an extremely valuable tool to influence customers (Danziger et al., 2014; Yoon et al., 2014) – the positive perceptions determine consumer choice.

Push Strategy Promotion

One of the producer's strategies to push their retailers to sell their products continuously is through push strategy promotion. Along with many product categories that have been matured, managers find themselves increasingly concerned with improving the "push" programs, i.e. into a sale and personal sales efforts directed to the retailers or wholesalers (Balmer et al., 2006). According to Kotler and Keller (2006), push strategy happens when firms use trade promotion and sales force to persuade intermediaries to carry, promote, and sell products to end consumers. This strategy is appropriate when brand loyalty is low in category product, a brand choice made at the store, products are impulse items, and product benefits are well understood. Sales promotion activities in the form of selling contest or prize offered to the retailers will increase retailers' perception of quality, loyalty, awareness and association to the brand and ultimately affect the profitability of the brand (Baldauf et al., 2009). Therefore, push strategy promotion creates value for retailers and should be considered by companies as an essential element of the brand building.

Pull Strategy Promotion

Pull strategy promotion is executed when companies use advertising and promotion to lure consumers looking for products in intermediaries so that intermediaries will order the products to the producers (Kotler and Keller, 2006). This strategy is appropriate when a high brand loyalty and high involvement in the product category, when people can feel the difference between one brand to another, and when people choose a brand before they go to the store. According to Baldauf et al. (Baldauf et al., 2009), promotional activities directed to consumers is creating demand for products without adding efforts from retailers to sell products. Pull strategy promotion can be either giving free samples or tester, coupons, raffle prize, exhibition, sponsorship, or publicity that can simultaneously affect retailers' perceived quality, loyalty, brand awareness, and association about their knowledge of the product without any additional costs.

Brand Profitability Performance

From retailers' perspective, strong brand provides attractive financial benefits because of the brand to produce a higher profit (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). The higher quality of product or brand that sold by retailers, the greater the effect would be on profits. Retailers would not be loyal to a brand if it is financially unattractive to them. The same thing applies at the level of awareness and association, as retailers would not include a specific brand if they feel the brand does not lead to more sales. In accordance with Aaker (1996), Keller and Lehmann (Keller & Lehmann, 2006) concluded that brand profitability performance, defined as financial contribution of a brand to the profit of retailers, is a result of retailer-perceived quality of a brand, retailer loyalty to a brand, and retailer's awareness of and association with a brand.

Research Hypotheses

The core objective of this study is to investigate the impact of marketing efforts on retailer-perceived brand equity. On the basis of literature, we hypothesise directional relationships among marketing efforts, the dimensions of retailer-perceived brand equity, and brand profitability performance. The relational paths among the constructs are summarized in Figure 1.

Baldauf et al. (2009) found that supplier image has a positive effect on retailer-perceived brand equity. A supplier with a good reputation will be more trusted by retailers for the products and brands they carry. Supplier image is a signal that the brand has a decent quality. Consumers and retailers will also be more familiar with and associate the brand with reputable company. Higher consumers purchase intention, consumer loyalty, and better competitive advantage will also affect retailer loyalty toward the brand. Therefore, supplier image has indicated a positive effect on retailer-perceived quality of a brand, retailer loyalty to a brand, and retailer's awareness of and association with a brand.

H1a. Supplier image positively impacts on retailer-perceived quality of a brand.

H1b. Supplier image positively impacts on retailer loyalty to a brand.
H1c. Supplier image positively impacts on retailer awareness of and association with a brand.

The retailers do not want to lose their customers due to lack of supply of goods or delay in distribution. The availability of an adequate supply of goods and on-time delivery will affect retailers' perception of the brand or company that carries that product. Good distribution will affect retailers' satisfaction, perceived quality, and loyalty. Thus, the distribution is indicated to have a positive impact on retailer-perceived quality of a brand and loyalty to a brand.

H2a. Distribution positively impacts on retailer-perceived quality of a brand.
H2b. Distribution positively impacts on retailer loyalty to a brand.

In contrast to consumers who consider price as an indicator of the quality of the product, retailers generally have more expert and are more knowledgeable about the products they sell. For retailers, providing low price to customers can actually increase customers' loyalty. Therefore, retailers also expect low price from suppliers or producers. The high price would be less effective for building customers' loyalty because customers usually expect a special price from retailers (Baldauf et al. 2009). Based on this, the price level is indicated to have a negative relationship to the retailers' loyalty.

H3. *Price level negatively impacts on retailer loyalty to a brand.*

Along with many product categories that have been matured, managers find themselves increasingly concerned with improving the productivity of "push" programs, i.e. into sales and personal sales efforts directed to the retailers or wholesalers. Push strategy promotion can motivate retailers to carry, promote, and sell the brand more to customers (Keller, 1993). Sales promotion activities in the form of selling contest or prize offered to retailers increase retailers' perception of quality, loyalty, awareness, and association to the brand (Baldauf et al., 2009). Therefore, push strategy promotion is indicated has a positive impact on retailer-perceived quality of a brand, retailer loyalty to a brand and retailer awareness of and association with a brand. However, sometimes, in a B2B context, the retailers do not consider push strategy to be an approach which is regarded a defensive strategy – to increase sales in a short-term period (Glynn, 2012). However, in our case, we have proposed the popular literature on branding.

H4a. Push strategy promotion positively impacts on retailer-perceived quality of a brand.
H4b. Push strategy promotion positively impacts on retailer loyalty to a brand.
H4c. Push strategy promotion positively impacts on retailer's awareness of and association with a brand.

Pull strategy promotion is a promotion which is addressed directly to consumers of a particular brand (Jo, 2006). This can give benefits to retailers because of increasing demand from consumers without the need to step up efforts to sell the products to the consumers (Baldauf et al. 2009). Pull strategy promotion could be in the form of advertisement, free sample or tester, coupons, raffle prize, fairs, exhibition, sponsorship, or publicity. The greater spending on promotional activities indicates that the company invested in a brand that has implication for the superior quality. Repetitive promotional activities also increase the loyalty, awareness, and association to a brand. Therefore, pull strategy promotion is indicated to have a positive effect on retailer-perceived quality of a brand, retailer loyalty to a brand, and retailer's awareness of and association with a brand.

H5a. Pull strategy promotion positively impact on retailer-perceived quality of a brand.
H5b. Pull strategy promotion positively impact on retailer loyalty to a brand.
H5c. Pull strategy promotion positively impact on retailer's awareness of and association with a brand.

The brand with higher quality that is sold by retailers will have a greater impact on profitability (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). Furthermore, it is unlikely that retailers will be loyal to the brand if the brand is not financially attractive to them. The same is also true for a higher level of awareness and association, as retailers will not include the brands in their product portfolio if they do not think that the brands will ultimately lead to a large purchase. Hence, based on the literature, it is found imperative including brand profitability performance as a result of retailer-perceived quality of a brand, retailer loyalty to a brand and retailer's awareness of and association with a brand.

H6a. Retailer-perceived quality of a brand positively impacts on brand profitability performance.
H6b. Retailer loyalty to a brand positively impacts on brand profitability performance.
H6c. Retailer's awareness of and association with a brand positively impact on brand profitability performance.

Research Methods

Scale Development

On the basis of items used in literature and the definitions established in our research, we generated a pool of sample measures. All of the items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with anchors of 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*, in order to understand the respondents' level of agreement vis-à-vis the predetermined statements (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Marketing mix elements: We examined both perceived and actual marketing mix elements. Retailers usually know market information, so they can assess the measures accurately, and for some cases, perceivably. Supplier image was measured as it is subjectively perceived in the retailers' mind. Based on the studies of Baldauf et al. (2009) and Bennett and Gabriel (Bennett & Gabriel, 2001) we developed five items. The distribution was measured as the retailers' actual assessment to the distributor. The price level was measured both actual and perceived assessment. We develop four items for price level construct based on previously conducted studies (Baldauf et al., 2009).

Push strategy promotion was measured by actual and perceived assessment. Using literacy of Kotler and Keller (2006) and Glynn, Motion, and Brodie (Glynn et al., 2003), we developed five items. Pull strategy promotion is also measured by actual and perceived assessment. Adopting from Baldauf et al. (Baldauf et al., 2009) research and Kotler & Keller (2006) literature, we develop five items. The items of measures are an exhibit in Table 1.

Dimensions of retailer-perceived brand equity: As we discussed previously, we recognize three dimensions of retailer-perceived brand equity: retailer-perceived quality of a brand, retailer loyalty to a brand, and retailer's awareness of and association with a brand. Retailer-perceived quality of a brand measures retailers' subjective judgment about a brand's overall excellence or superiority. We developed five items based on Baldauf et al. (2009); Zeithaml (1988), and Aaker (1991). We designed five items for retailer loyalty to a brand based on Baldauf et al. (2009). We designed five items for retailer's awareness of and association with a brand based on Baldauf et al. (2009) and Aaker (1991). The items of measures are an exhibit in Table 1.

Brand profitability performance: Brand profitability performance was measured by actual assessment. We designed five items based on Baldauf et al. (2009) and Keller and Lehmann (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). The items measured are an exhibit in Table 1.

It is notable that existing scales have been used to investigate the brand equity. This is common practice in brand-related surveys that pre-established surveys are used to collect data after making sure that scales are widely used and have high reliability (Kashif et al., 2015). We also checked for the reliability of scales reported in the respective studies and chosen the best available survey scales to collect data – as recommended by branding experts while conducting quantitative research (Punjaisri et al., 2009).

-----------------------Insert Table 1 about here -----------------------------

Measurement reliability and validity

We performed the test of validity by using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to detect the Unidimensionality of each construct. The Unidimensionality is evidence that a single trait or construct underlies a set of measures (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). A completely standardized solution produced by LISREL 8 showed that 39 items were loaded highly on their corresponding factors, which supported the independence of the constructs and provided strong empirical evidence of their validity. The *t* values for the loadings ranged from 5.03 to 14.01, demonstrating adequate convergent validity. Overall fit statistics of the measurement model ($\chi^2_{(125)} = 778.82$) were as follow: Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) were 0.76 and 0.71 respectively; comparative goodness-of-fit indexes were 0.91, 0.97, 0.98, and 0.98, in Normed Fit Index (NFI), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Incremental Fit Index (IFI), respectively; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RSMEA) was 0.038. These indicated a reasonable level of fit of the model.

The test of reliability in this research is using *Cronbach alpha* as the reliability coefficient for each construct. The higher value of coefficient alpha (0 < coefficient *alpha* < 1) is the more consistent or higher level of reliability. When it reached .60, the cut-off level of reliability recommended for theory testing research (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). Test of reliability in this study is using SPSS version 15. In summary, the selected items made reliable and valid measures for the nine research constructs. The intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations of the constructs are reported in Appendix A.

We used ready-to-drink tea in PET bottle as our product stimuli in our research because we want to examine brand equity of low involvement product which the competing brand in low involvement product in Indonesia market is very abundance. We only used one brand which is Nu Green Tea as stimuli for retailers to assess the measures, in order to understand retailer's perception for that particular brand. Additionally, since one of the researchers also work for the company, the required data and information are more readily available and the results of the study can be immediately used for decision-making process.

Sample and Procedure

After a pre-test (n = 30) to assess and purify the measures, we conducted the main survey to test the hypotheses, using data obtain from medium-large retailers whose sell Nu Green Tea product. We collected data from the retailers who store and re-sell the Nu Green Tea brand in Indonesia. Most of the retailers approached were already well-established and stored other tea brands as well. The principle author approached these retailers and sought their approval to collect data. This practice is usually performed in a B2B context to conduct surveys and to select the respondents (Noad & Rogers, 2008).

The total respondents are 125 retailers, which are evenly obtained from the major provinces in Java Island, namely, DKI Jakarta, Banten, West Java, Central Java, and East Java. The respondents are at least the supervisor in their respective companies. In terms of gender, the respondents were 64% men and 36% women. The age of respondents is 32% aged 21 – 30 years old, 40% aged 31 – 40 years old, 22% aged 41 – 50 years old, and 6% above 50 years old. The last education of the respondents is 2% elementary school, 10% junior high school, 71% senior high school, 10% diploma, and 6% undergraduate. The duration in which the respondents have operated the store is 19% under 5 years, 40% between 5 – 10 years, 41% above 10 years; number of people employed is 13% no use employee, 66% employ 1 – 5 persons, 19% employ 6 – 10 persons, and 2% employ above 10 persons.

Results

The core aim of the study was to identify the impact of marketing efforts on dimensions of retailer-perceived brand equity and ultimately to brand profitability performance. To test our research hypotheses, we estimated a structural equation model using LISREL 8. The completely standardized solutions are reported in Table 2. Most path coefficients were significant (p<0.05). The p values of the estimates for hypotheses testing were determined in one-tailed t-test. Because of the directional hypotheses, the rule of 1.65 t value was used as the critical value at 0.05 significance level.

----------------------Insert Table 2 about here ----------------------------

The structural coefficients of estimating our model are shown in Table 2. Supplier image (γ_{11} = 0.35, t = 2.33) and distribution (γ_{12} = 0.26, t = 1.65) significantly affected retailer-perceived quality of a brand. Both signs of the coefficients were in the hypotheses direction. Higher supplier image and distribution activities resulted in higher retailer-perceived brand equity. These findings supported H1a and H2a. On the other hand, push strategy promotion (γ_{14} = 0.07, t = 0.59) and pull strategy promotion (γ_{15} = 0.11, t = 1.16) did not significantly affected retailer-perceived quality of a brand. Thus, H4a and H5a not supported.

For retailer loyalty to a brand construct, supplier image (γ_{21} = 0.44, t = 3.14), distribution (γ_{22} = 0.42, t = 3.28), price level (γ_{23} = -0.31, t = -2.53), push strategy promotion (γ_{24} = 0.28, t = 2.50) and pull strategy promotion (γ_{25} = 0.36, t = 4.13) significantly affected retailer-perceived quality of a brand. All signs of the coefficients were in the hypotheses direction. Higher supplier image, distribution, push strategy promotion, and pull strategy promotion activities resulted in higher retailer loyalty brand equity. In the other hand, higher price level resulted in lower retailer loyalty brand equity. These findings fully supported H1b, H2b, H3, H4b, and H5b.

For this construct, supplier image (γ_{31} = 0.55, t = 4.30) significantly affected retailer awareness of and association with a brand. The sign of the coefficient was in the hypotheses direction. Higher supplier image activities resulted in higher retailer awareness of and association with a brand. This finding supported H1c. On the other hand, push strategy promotion (γ_{34} = 0.14, t = 1.24) and pull strategy promotion (γ_{35} = 0.09, t = 0.99) not significantly affected retailer awareness of and association with a brand. Thus, H4c and H5c not supported.

Different with previous research by Baldauf et al. (2009) which state that RPBE significantly impacted brand profitability performance, this research finds that only retailer-perceived quality of a brand (β_{41} = 0.32, t = 2.87) and retailer loyalty to a brand (β_{42} = 0.56, t = 4.03) significantly impacted brand profitability performance. Both signs of the coefficients were in the hypotheses direction. The higher retailer-perceived quality of a brand and retailer loyalty to a brand resulted in higher brand profitability performance. These findings supported H6a and H6a. On the other hand, retailer's awareness of and association with a brand (β_{43} = -0.03, t = -0.38) did not significantly impact the brand's profitability performance. The sign of the coefficient was also not in the hypotheses direction. Thus, H6c not supported.

Discussion

The core aim of present study was to examine the impact of marketing efforts on dimensions of retailer-perceived brand equity and ultimately to brand profitability performance. In the following, the implication of our findings for managers and researchers as well as limitations and future research directions are highlighted.

Supplier image positively impacts retailer-perceived quality of a brand, retailer loyalty to a brand, and retailer's awareness of and association with a brand have all been supported. These results are in line with similar research findings by Baldauf et al. (2009) which stated that supplier image has an important influence on RPBE. Supplier image generally can be a market signal of credibility for retailers and reduce risk and information cost which ultimately affect retailers' perception of the product's quality. The resulting study also supports previous research conducted by Yoo et al. (1993) which discussed about the profits of companies with a good reputation, including higher customer purchase intention. This is in line with Leek and Christodoulides (Leek & Christodoulides, 2011) who argued that establishing and sustaining a strong brand is an important and inherent element of marketing strategy for B2B companies. The better reputation of the company and the higher purchase intention of customers will lead retailers to be more loyal to the brand since the benefits would be larger and easier to achieve without as much efforts in offering these products to consumers.

A company with a good image also has an impact on retailers' awareness of and association with a brand because the brand is renowned by consumers and has positive word-of-mouth among consumer. To increase supplier image, the manager should improve the quality of the product by simultaneously survey perceived quality of a brand. The survey is also useful to learn about the superiority and weakness of the product compared to its competitors, and to determine the wants and needs of consumers which always evolve. To improve and maintain supplier image, the manager can also participate in humanity or relief efforts by donating to the victims of a disaster or to an orphanage. Supplier image also can be improved by sponsoring positive programs such as sports, talent competitions, etc. Supplier image can also be improved by using a public figure that has a positive image in point of view of society as brand ambassador. Stakeholders use these kinds of association with a brand to determine the quality or image of a company – an effective and straightforward guidance given the many available choices on the market (La Rocca & Snehota, 2016).

Distribution positively impacts on retailer-perceived quality of a brand has been supported. There are studies where placement/environment of a brand has been rated imperative by the consumers (Kashif et al., 2015). For retailers, a good distribution will lead to the positive perception of the quality of the product. The company which is concerned with distribution indicates that they have good management and credibility which impact on the good perception of the quality product. It is also notable to mention here that an effective distribution strategy has highly positive effects on a firm's reputation in the minds of key stakeholders (Baldauf et al., 2009) – ultimately contributing to stronger corporate brand images. The corporate brand image safeguards a brand from tough competitors and provides a strong foothold to extend brands for magnificent growth.

Distribution positively impacts on retailer loyalty to a brand also has been supported. The reliable distribution also leads to the satisfaction of retailers. Keeping this in mind, it has implications for retail brand such as Nu Green Tea. For instance, managers should seriously be concerned about the distribution of product and avoid making retailers upset or disappointed. To maintain and control the distribution, the producer should continuously coordinate with the distributor to forecast market demand so the producer can adjust the amount of production and inventory of goods in accordance with purchase order of retailers. Managers also should evaluate the amount of transportation because the most problem of delivery is delay by the lack of transportation. Managers also have to maintain a good relationship with a key account by routinely visit them. A good relationship can lead managers to get market information easily from retailers. Thus, a company can forecast inventory in accordance with the market demand.

Price level negatively impacts on retailer loyalty to a brand has been supported. This result is consistent with previous research by Baldauf et al. (2009). By lowering the price, retailers can adjust the special price for their customers. If retailers can give a special price to their customers and make their customers loyal to them, ultimately retailers will be loyal to the manufacturer. Retailers also take profits from selling price which lower level price is given to retailer, a higher margin that retailers can gain. Managers must set a level price for any order quantity whereas retailers still can gain profit and also competitive with their competitor brands. To set a price level, managers can conduct marketing intelligence to the field or through an in-depth interview with some retailers to get information about the price formation of competitors. By doing this, our price can compete with other brands. For a brand such as Nu Green Tea, price levels must be maintained to establish positive equity in the retailer perception which can then easily influence consumer choice of products (Danziger et al., 2014). However, sometimes, price alone should not be focused when it comes to establishment of brand equity – it must be integrated with other elements of the marketing mix as it is also a product of the surrounding environment (Yoon et al., 2014).

Push strategy promotion has no impact on retailer-perceived quality of a brand and retailer awareness of and association with a brand. This result is also inconsistent with the research by Baldauf et al. (2009) and Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000) who stated that promotion leads positive impact on perceived quality and awareness of and association with a brand. Push strategy promotion does not lead to retailers' perceived quality because of the retailers' expertise in the assessment of the quality of the product. Rather, the quality of the product is influenced by the valuation of consumers, advertising, and reliability of the product. They also face many brands in the market so they cannot remember one by one the specification of brands. Even if the product was giving a trade promotion program, they only consider and focus on the target they must achieve. On the other hand, push strategy promotion has a positive impact on retailers' loyalty to a brand. Push strategy promotion gives value or more profit to retailers, so it will motivate retailers to sell more products and will be loyal to the brand. To succeed in running push promotion, managers should maintain a good relationship with the retailer so they can get market information about competitors' program and create more attractive programs for retailers.

An important implication for Nu Green Tea as a brand is the relationship proposed between push strategy and the retailer perceptions of the quality of a brand which is understandable in light of extant literature available on branding. For instance, it is notable that push strategy is not regarded as a quality-centric strategy to pursue for brands (Glynn, 2012) – pull is the opposite as per perceptions of retailers in a B2B context. Hence, keeping these results in mind, the managers at Nu Green need to opt for a long-term quality centric strategy which can bring everlasting results for brand in the form of superior perceptions (unique, favorable, and strong) and image. On the contrary, pull strategy is not enhancing retailer awareness and image which is understandable in a B2B context. The pull strategy mainly involves mass media activities aimed at consumers and it is understandable that retailers might be missed by the corporate brands. However, at one side where we recommend Nu Green to opt for pull strategy to establish a quality image, we also propose to focus on retailer brand knowledge—an imperative for success (Hyman et al., 2010). Another useful and practical suggestion is to engage the community of key stakeholders (at least) by arranging few corporate social responsibility (CSR) related activities. This will bring retailers and customers closer to each other and also to the Nu Green as a brand. The CSR based approach has been documented as a useful branding activity to rejuvenate brands (Anselmsson et al., 2014).

Retailer-perceived quality of a brand and retailer loyalty to a brand has a positive impact on brand profitability performance. However, retailers' awareness of and association with a brand does not have significant impact on brand profitability performance. This result proves that not all dimensions of retailer-perceived brand equity have an impact on brand profitability performance. The retailer-perceived quality of a brand leads to more sales volume by consumers, and retailers also have more confidence to selling the brand. Retailers which are loyal to a brand give more profit because they will sell more of that brand and can influence the customers to choose that brand instead of the competing brands. On the other hand, retailers' awareness of and association with a brand do not influence sales of the product because it is more influenced by product knowledge of consumers. This has implications for Nu Green Tea managers as they should educate consumers as well as retailers through the marketing campaign. In-store promotions, kiosks, trade promotions, and BTL activities can bring retailers and company much closer. There is compelling evidence that retailer-focused promotions can bring profitable returns on marketing investments made by the company (Luo & Kumar, 2013). Thus, both consumers and retailers can get more knowledge about the product and choose that brand over competing brands.

Limitation and Future Research

This study has limitations in which the product used as the stimuli is only one which is ready-to-drink tea in PET bottle, which means that the result of this study can only represent a small fraction of the fast-moving consumer goods industry. Future studies may use other categories of consumer goods product to better represent the results of research in fast moving consumer goods. In this study, we surveyed medium to large retailers. Further research can separate the study of the medium retailer and a large retailer. Thus, it can gather a more specific point of view of medium retailers and large retailers of marketing efforts undertaken by the company and their relationship with their assessment of brand equity. There are many variables not examined in this study in relation to the impact on brand probability performance. Other variables that could be further investigated in future research include brand trust, brand commitment, brand knowledge, and brand satisfaction.

Appendix A
Construct Inter-correlations

Construct	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*
1. SI	1.								
2. DI	.466(**)	1.							
3. PL	.474(**)	.343(**)	1.						
4. PS	.373(**)	.409(**)	.311(**)	1.					
5. PU	.250(**)	.227(**)	.122	.277(**)	1.				
6. PQ	.415(**)	.463(**)	.342(**)	.258(**)	.272(**)	1.			
7. LY	.561(**)	.607(**)	.314(**)	.507(**)	.514(**)	.426(**)	1.		
8. AS	.500(**)	.410(**)	.291(**)	.331(**)	.321(**)	.526(**)	.500(**)	1.	
9. BPP	.474(**)	.423(**)	.106	.440(**)	.500(**)	.547(**)	.565(**)	.502(**)	1.
M	4.0952	3.9211	4.1203	3.8481	3.8788	4.1519	4.0325	4.0983	3.9282
SD	.37859	.46601	.41688	.44131	.66560	.43127	.44881	.41015	.71301

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

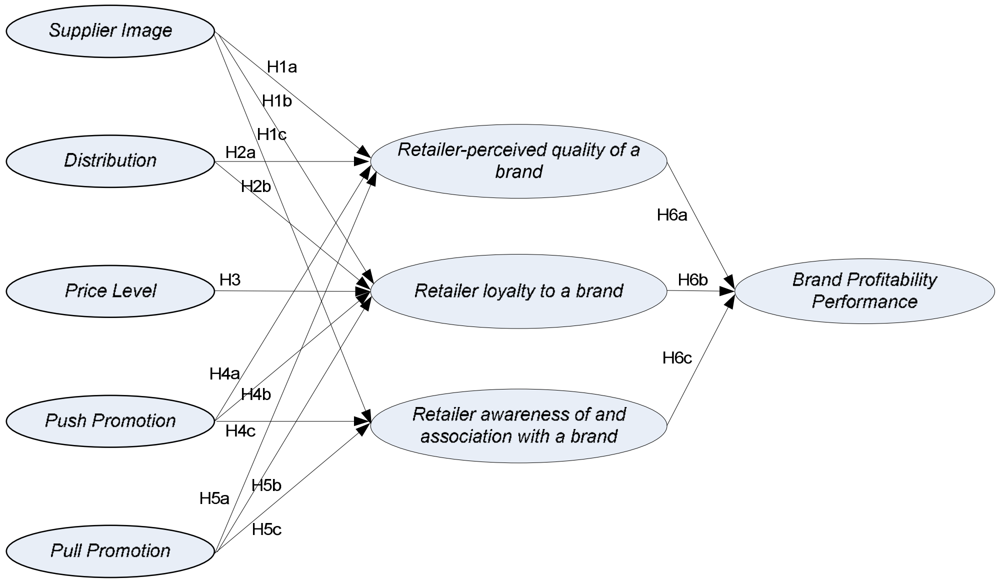

Figure: 1 Conceptual model

Table 1: Operational Measures and Scale Reliability Values[a]

Item	**Stand. loadings**	**t-values**

Supplier Image (α = 0.784)			
SI1	Producer has a reputation that has been famous since a long time	0.57	6.45
SI2	Producer produces high quality of product	0.56	6.29
SI3	Producer having a brand that is known by many people	0.58	6.67
SI4	Producer having a good reputation in industry	0.70	8.22
SI5	Producer having a good image in consumers point of view	0.69	8.04
Distribution (α = 0.814)			
DI1	Distributor has adequate supply of brand X	0.56	6.04
DI2	Total goods of brand X shipped in accordance with the orders	0.64	7.18
DI3	Distributor providing details when brand X are sent	0.67	7.61
DI4	Goods of brand X come in accordance with the promised time	0.72	8.22
DI5	Distributor giving info of brand X if there are delays	0.65	7.18
Price level (α = 0.754)			
PL1	Price X is affordable by the consumers	0.90	11.30
PL2	Price X equal to quality	0.60	6.88
PL3	Price X is cheaper than competitors	0.69	8.32
Push Strategy Promotion (α = 0.702)			
PS1	Trade promotions for X provided by the producer.	0.81	9.96
PS2	Trade promotions for X are more interesting than competitors.	0.61	6.95
PS3	Trade promotions for X are more profitable than competitors.	0.82	10.16
Pull Strategy Promotion (α = 0.877)			
PU1	Producer gives prize promotion of brand X for the consumers	0.94	14.01
PU2	Producer gives prize promotion of brand X for the consumers frequently	0.96	14.01
PU3	Prize promotion of brand X is more interesting than competitors.	0.64	7.91
Retailer-perceived quality of a brand (α = 0.834)			
PQ1	X has a high quality	0.58	-
PQ2	X made from selected raw materials	0.68	7.89
PQ3	X more trusted than other brands	0.76	6.09
PQ4	X safe for consumption	0.70	5.74
PQ5	X cab be consume by everyone	0.72	5.88
Retailer loyalty to a brand (α = 0.790)			
LY1	I have long been selling X	0.60	-
LY2	I have regular customers for X	0.70	8.18
LY3	X would be my first choice	0.71	6.36
LY4	I recommend X to the customers.	0.55	5.13
LY5	I offer more X than rival brands.	0.63	5.73
Retailer awareness and association with a brand (α = 0.835)			
AS1	I know the producer of X	0.65	-
AS2	I trust on producer whose produce X	0.79	9.80
AS3	I recognize X among others rival brands	0.90	7.03
AS4	I can differentiate X with rival brands	0.51	5.03
AS5	Some characteristics of X come to my mind when I hear X	0.51	5.08
Brand Profitability Performance (α = 0.917)			
BPP1	Profit selling X larger than competitive brands.	0.66	-
BPP2	Number of customer X more than competitors.	0.93	8.99
BPP3	Sales volume brand X greater than its competitors.	0.89	8.72
BPP4	X is more in demanding than its competitors.	0.83	8.36
BPP5	X is more behavioural than competing brands.	0.84	8.31

a. Goodness-of-fit statistics of the measurement model of 39 indicators for nine constructs are as follows: $\chi^2_{(125)}$ = 778.82, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) = 0.76, Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.71, Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.91, Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = 0.97, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.98, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.98, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RSMEA) = 0.038

Table 2: Construct, hypotheses, coefficient, findings (n = 125)

Constructs/Paths	Hypotheses/ (expected sign)	Standardized coefficient	t Value	Findings

SI → PQ	H1a (γ_{11}) (+)	0.35	2.33	Supported
SI → LY	H1b (γ_{21}) (+)	0.44	3.14	Supported
SI → AS	H1c (γ_{31}) (+)	0.55	4.30	Supported
DI → PQ	H2a (γ_{12}) (+)	0.26	1.65	Supported
DI → LY	H2b (γ_{22}) (+)	0.42	3.28	Supported
PL → LY	H3 (γ_{23}) (-)	-0.31	-2.53	Supported
PS → PQ	H4a (γ_{14}) (+)	0.07	0.59	Not Supported
PS → LY	H4b (γ_{24}) (+)	0.28	2.50	Supported
PS → AS	H4c (γ_{34}) (+)	0.14	1.24	Not Supported
PU → PQ	H5a (γ_{15}) (+)	0.11	1.16	Not Supported
PU → LY	H5b (γ_{25}) (+)	0.36	4.13	Supported
PU → AS	H5c (γ_{35}) (+)	0.09	0.99	Not Supported
PQ → BPP	H6a (β_{41}) (+)	0.32	2.87	Supported
LY → BPP	H6b (β_{42}) (+)	0.56	4.03	Supported
AS → BPP	H6c (β_{43}) (+)	-0.03	-0.38	Not Supported

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