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# **CREATING A BRAND STRATEGY FOR THE FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY**

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# Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to create a brand strategy for the Indonesia footwear industry using Keller's Brand Equity Model and Critical to Quality Tree Model.

**Design/methodology/approach** - This research was conducted using qualitative research approach. The collection of data through interview, observation, documentation and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Then, data was analyzed using a Keller's Brand Equity Model framework and Critical to Quality Tree Model for Identifying Customer Needs.

**Findings** – The finding confirms the Keller's Brand Equity Model and Critical to Quality Tree in creating a brand strategy for the Indonesia Footwear Industry context. In addition, the customer's perception on the brand salience of Keller's Brand Equity Model are important to develop the brand identity. While, Critical to Quality Tree Model contribute to identifying the needs of the brand.

**Originality/value** – This research enhances the existing brand's model to strategize a brand equity of the footwear industry from the customer's perspective.

**Keywords:** Brand salience, brand performance, brand image, brand judgment, brand feeling, brand equity, and critical to quality tree.

Paper type Research paper

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

The brand equity can be categorised to cognitive based psychological approach, economic based approach, and the biological, sociological and anthropological-based approach. A cognitive-based psychological approach are adopting associative network memory models to construct theory and hypotheses (Keller, 2013; Aaker, 1991). Thus, brand is seen as a memory-related node associated with different associations and with varying strengths.

Second, economic-based approach uses an information-economic perspective on values that consumers perceive come from brand (Erdern, 1998; Erdern and Swait, 1998). The main focus is on the role of credibility as a dynamic interaction between the firm and the customer as the primary determinant of consumer-based brand equity.

Third, the biological, sociological and anthropological-based approach focuses on the cultural meaning of brands and products (McCracken, 1993). Brand has value because brand adds value through change of meaning in product. The cultural meaning of a brand can be gender meaning (maleness or femaleness), social status (meaning status), nationality (country meaning), and

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ethnicity (multicultural meaning). Thus, cultural meaning can be invested in the brand through the process of transfer of meaning. The three of theoretical approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, especially related to the specific discipline field (Keller, 2002). From the above discussion cognitive-based psychological approach are the basis of creating the brand strategy for this study in the Indonesia Footwear Industry.

The footwear industry has been given prioriting by the government in accordance with the direction and policy of the national industry to generate foreign income. (Kemenperin, 2017a). In addition, it also labor-intensive of the footwear industry (Kemenperin, 2017b) that will be impact the increasing of labor income. In the long run, the development industry is directed at strengthening competitiveness and encouraging the growth of industrial networking patterns that it necessary for the industry to develop a strong brang strategy (Kemenperin, 2017a).

The ability to improve the quality of footwear production is vital to meet the ever-changing market demands and enhance the competitiveness of the products. Quality improvement is done by improving the quality of materials, the availability of experts, the design of footwear and the ability to build a strong brand of footwear.

The building a brand of authentic Indonesian footwear is very challenging. For instance, many Indonesian original footwear brands are less accepted by Indonesian consumers. The data shows only 48.5% of Indonesian original footwear brands controlled by Yongki, Fladeo, Carvil, Buccheri, Nevada, Ardiles, and League (Silitonga, 2018). As a compared to Malaysia Footwear Industry, there are several popular original such as Dr. Caradin, Crocodile, John Bird, Larrie and Vincci. These brands have received 80% from the total market share in Malaysia. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to create a brand strategy for the Indonesia footwear industry from the perspective of customer. The two model synthesed by Keller (2013) and Mindtools (2017) were employed in order to help the development brand strategy of footwear industry.

# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

# 2.1. BRAND EQUITY AND BRAND STRATEGY

Brand equity is the added value given to products and services. Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities that increase or decrease the value of a product or service based on the customer's perspective. This value is reflected in the way consumers think, feel, and act in accordance with the customer perceived through marketing programs. The definition and element of Aaker brand equity integrates the attitude and behavioral dimension (Aaker, 1991), while most brand equity operations tend to focus only on one of the consumer perception dimensions (brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality) and behavioral dimensions (brand loyalty, willingness to pay a higher price) (Cobb Welgran, et al., 1995; Pappu, et. al., 2005).

Brand equity is an important intangible asset that has psychological and financial value for the company in strategizing their brand. The value of brand equity depends on the number of people who buy regularly (Aaker, 1996). It is formulated from a managerial point of view and corporate strategy, although its main foundation is consumer behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2015).

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The dimensions such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand perceived quality are needed to maintain brand equity (Aker, 1996; Motameni & Shahrokhi, 1998; Yoo, B., et. al., 2000; Keller, 2002; Hoeffer and Keller, 2003). There are two different perspectives on brand equity i.e. financial and customer based. The financial based perspective evaluates the asset value of the brand name (Farquhar, 1995; Avis, 2011). Its will increase discounted future cash flows and revenues compared to the same product that does not have brand name (Motameni & Shahrkhi, 1998). The second perspective on the customer-based, the strength of brand equity lies in what customers have responded to, see, read, hear, learn, think, and feel about brands over time.

In other words, brand power lies in the existing mind or potential customers and what they have experienced directly and indirectly about the brand. Customer-based brand equity ultimately encourages financial returns to the company (Lassar et al, 1995). Therefore, this study will adopted Customer based brand equity (CBBE) as a basis in creating the brand strategy.

# 2.2. KELLER'S BRAND EQUITY MODEL

Keller Brand Equity Model is known as Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE). The concept behind Brand Equity Model is simple to build a strong brand, shape the way customers think, and feel about the product. The right type of experience needs to be built around the brand, so customers have specific thoughts, perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and opinions and positive about the brand.

The CBBE (Keller, 2013) focuses more on the perspective of consumer behavior. The central assumption of this model is that a brand's strength lies in what consumers learn, perceive, see, and listen to about the brand as a result of their experience over time (Keller, 2013).

The strong brand equity will makes customers buy more, recommend to others, more loyal, and tend to eliminate to other brands (Murphy, 1990). This model is shown in Figure 1 which illustrates the four steps that need to be followed to build a strong brand equity.



Figure 1: CBBE Model (Keller, 2013)

In building brand equity, there are four stages to be taken. The first stage is the formation of brand identity to explain the identity of the brand. The second is the brand meaning to explain the meaning of a brand. The third is the brand response to explain customer response to a brand. The fourth is the brand relationship to show the relationship between customers with brands in sequence (Keller, 2013).

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The middle portion is illustrated by a triangular shape called brand building block. This section describes the components that build the stage of the brand. In the second and third stages there are two blocks for each stage. The blocks on the left illustrate the rational side (judgment and performance), while the right side portrays the emotional side (feeling and imagery) of the customer (Keller, 2013).

In other to create a brand strategy, this study has combine to Critical to Quality Trees Model in the stage 2 of the CBBE model.

# 2.3. CRITICAL TO QUALITY TREE MODEL

Critical to Quality (CTQ) Trees were originally developed as part of Six Sigma. CTQ Trees are diagram based tools to translate broad customer needs into specific, actionable, measurable performance requirements (Mindtools, 2017). For each customer's need a quality drives should be identified as there are factors commonly used by customers to evaluate the product quality. Finally, identify measurable performance requirements that each brand owner must satisfy if you are really want to actually provide a high quality product to customer's.

A step by step process for developming a CTQ tree are identify critical needs, identify quality drives and identify performance requirements (Ray, Sanjit, et. al., 2009). Identify critical needs to fit product and customer. Identify Quality Drives to fit quality and perception. The last, identify performance requirements to identify the minimum performance requirements that satisfy for each quality driver in order to provide a quality product (Mahanti, et. al., 2005). The critical measures of the process output CTQ is defined next along with their specifications, by measuring and monitoring of which, the process quality and level of control can easily be found out.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses qualitative research approach. Informants in this research are footwear customers (6 persons), manufacturers (4 persons), government officer (4 persons) and academician (1 person). Informant selection is done by snowball sampling technique.

The main data collection is conducted with Focus Group Discussion (FGD) twice. While the observation and documentation are used to support the FGD data.

Analysis of the data was employed the CBBE model framework as follows:

Step 1: Brand Identity - Who Are You?

Step 2: Brand Meaning - What Do You Do?

Step 3: Brand Response - What Do I Think or Feel about You?

Step 4: Brand Resonance - How Big a Connection Will I Like With You?

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The Critical to Quality Tree Model will be embedded in the Step 2 above for getting the model customer requirements and translate customer needs to be translated into brand meaning through performance and image.

# 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The below steps is the result from the discussion with informants through focus group.

### **STEP 1: BRAND IDENTITY**

At this stage the goal is to create "brand salience" or awareness by ensuring that its brand stands out and customers recognize and realize it. This stage begins by recognizing who the customer is to gain an understanding of how customers see the brand.

There are two types of male consumers namely masculine and tendency of feminine. Consumers feminine tendency are consumers who behave feminine despite men. They are a fanatical consumer with a certain brand and anti with a new brand. For example when buying, they will see the writing or vocabulary of the brand. As good as any brand but not original, they will not like it, the important is originality and creativity.

The masculine consumer wants the brand that makes them look cool, not sluggish, mean something and not dependent on one brand. FGD participants expect owner of the brand to see "cool" as other company do in other countries for comparison. In their perception, brand connotes with price. If the brand is cool then the price will also follow. The important thing for them are interesting design, comfortable to wear, and worth the price. As discussed in this FGD as follows; "Any brand is not a problem because it is not visible. For to be cool, only have to see who's wearing it. If you are cool then you will add cool." In the fashion world known as the hypebeast phenomenon. This refers to people using streetwear products that are hype or trends and even makes the existing elegant fashion products start to glance at the style.

### **STEP 2: BRAND MEANING**

The purpose of the second step is to identify and communicate "what the brand means" and "what it means to customers". The two building blocks in this step are performance and image.

PERFORMANCE determines how well the product meets the customer's needs. According to FGD participants from six performance categories in the CBBE model for footwear there are only three relevant performance ie models and designs, product reliability (convenience) and price while characteristic and features, durability and serviceability are irrelevant. Models and designs related to the ability of a brand to follow the trend that is up to date in terms of: sole, material, shapes, color, and wearing styles. Reliability of products related to comfort (relief, attachment, and arousing) of a footwear brand when used at a price in accordance with the target market. Forming the purchase price for consumers is the benefit of product, product value, and price of similar products. However, the use of the word Mojokerto has the connotation that artificial footwear craftman less smooth seam, the sole is easy to loose, and less comfortable to wear even though the model in accordance with the existing trends.

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On the other hand, FGD participants agreed and revealed that the image of the brand of Mojokerto footwear driven by the its fame as a shoe town and its products have been marketed out of East Java. This description encourages and reinforces the use of the brand of Mojokerto as a brand of footwear to meet customer needs on a social and psychological aspect.

From social aspect, artificial footwear of Mojokerto City have impression of model have followed trend, only just less strong. But this is not a problem because in the customer's view, aesthetic value is more important than quality. From psychological, consumers want when they use the brand of Mojokerto footwear can increase self-confidence. Based on the theory of social constructivism (Gergen, Kenneth J., 1994), the brand has a symbolic meaning for example the brand is often used by individuals in expressing themselves and their past, personal values, religious beliefs, ethnic identity, self-competence, social strength and status, and differentiation of themselves with others.

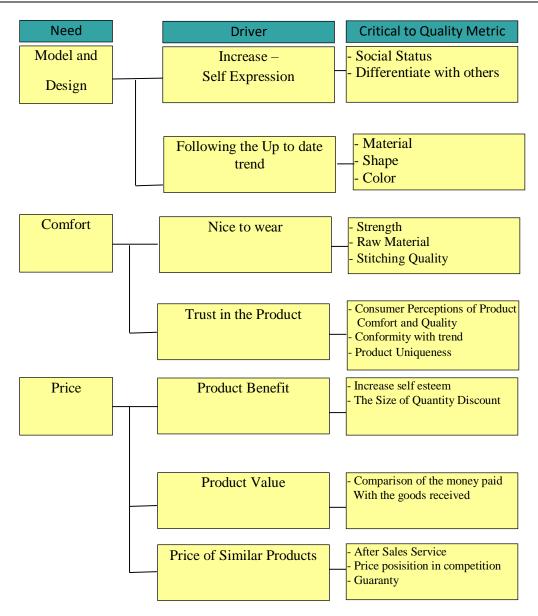
Brands will meet the needs of consumers directly through the experience of using the product or indirectly through word of mouth. Int the FGDs disclosed attractively that the brand will grow following the growth process experienced by customers. When consumers are still below average earnings then any brand is not a problem. Most importantly the price is affordable. However, when consumers income increases, they begin to shift to familiar brands. If the brand user does not get a reaction as expected, then they will reconsider the use of the brand. The decoding process of brand meaning and brand value is the engagement of consumers towards the brand image.

FGD participants revealed that to enhance the brand meaning for consumers, brand of Mojokerto footwear needs to be posted to websites that tell the personal experience of company starts from getting leather and other raw materials, handmade production processes and on-time delivery process. By doing this, the brand of Mojokerto footwear provides education about how profitable the product is for its users. Similarly, the values communicated by the brand of Mojokerto footwear must be consistent with the intended social and cultural group. The meaning of the social and cultural can be invested in the brand through the process of transfer of meaning.

Modeling customer requirements and translating customer needs to produce high quality footwear can be done using Critical to Quality (QTC) Tree Model as shown in Figure 2.

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# **Source: Primary Data Process (2019)**

Comfort is related to asymmetry. Asymmetry can be an issue where different components of shoes do not line up as they should. Some examples of asymmetry commonly found on a pair of shoes are: (1) where the sole does not line up with the body, (2) where tongue of the shoe are not straight, and (3) where part of one shoe is higher or lower than the same part of its counterpart in pair (often called hi-low) (Knack, 2016).

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According to the cue utilization theory (Richardson, et al., 1994), consumers use dirrerent cues in making their assessments of a product (Zeithaml, 1988). They are two classified as extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic cues are considered to be lower level that can be changed without changing the physical product (e.g. price, brand name, country of origin and warranty).

Fabric, style and quality as an intrinsic cues are high level cues directly related to the product (Aqueveque, 2006). Intrinsic cues for evaluations, if customers are familiar with the product, but extrinsic cues uses for consumer are not familiar with the products (Brucks, 1985).

# **STEP 3: BRAND RESPONSE (BRAND RESPONSE)**

Customer response to the brand is divided into two categories ASSESSMENT and FEELING. Customers will assess about quality, credibility, consideration and excellence.

The **quality of the product** or brand is rated by the customer on the basis of actual and perceived quality. From the results of strength tests conducted by the Indonesian Center for Industrial Development (BPIPI), Tanggulangin showed the results of 1.35 to 2.81 from the standard 3. The test results of the strength of the brand Mojokerto footwear shows it is still below the standard so that the brand of Moker is less powerful.

In FGD, customers assess **credibility** based on three dimensions of expertise, trust and attractiveness. Moker brand footwear crafters are able to make footwear with modern designs and even craftsmen who have become champions in Guangzho footwear design competitions. The Mojokerto's people believe that the models or design of Moker footwear are good and have been distributed to out of East Java but when they order, the settlement time is long and less strong. To increase the attraction need to multiply the choice of products with various models, variations of materials, asensoris, and color. Brand credibility can be further enhanced by adhering to the development of modern footwear designs from world-renowned footwear brands, improving five-star services training to improve the quality of craftsman service, store management, display and merchandising and attend national-level exhibitions. Brand trusts and brand affect determine purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty to increase consumers' willingness to pay premium prices (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

**Consideration** of the customer based on the relevance of a product with its unique needs. When the FGD process, it was revealed that the customer's need for footwear is comfortable to wear, not easy to loose soles, durable, design follow the market, and use quality leather as raw materials. Taking into the unique needs and personality of the customer, these values will be transferred to the values on the brand of Moker to be a consideration of consumers in making footwear purchasing decisions. Those values will be strengthened through a brand strategy to create a perception that their brands are high quality by communicating USP "Cool model, comfortable to wear, and the price fits." Communication is done through online and offline media either above the line or below the line. Creating micro moments as part of consumer journey while visiting e-commerce sites by positioning itself as an advisor to potential customers can provide product recommendations based on interest, provide informative input and no longer any product sales to all consumers.

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Customers will respond to brand of Mojokerto footwear according to WHAT CUSTOMER'S WANT. According to CBBE model, there are six positive brand feelings ie warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval, and self respect.

Performance and image in the product will form "brand personality". In order to create a differentiation it is necessary to add emotional value to its brand and communicate through the metaphor of brand personality. Brand personality is associated with the idea that the brand has a human-like personality that is fashionable, stylish, and comfortable. This personality flavor will be able to distinguish the brand with another brand.

### **STEP 4: BRAND RESONANCE**

The goal in the final stage of the pyramid of CBBE model is to strengthen each category of resonance to encourage behavioral loyalty. Towards the end of the FGD process, it was revealed that a measure of customer engagement to a brand is by building brand loyalty. An authentic brand value and an attractive brand identity is a powerful communication tool for building brand loyalty. Brand Value is in charge of building and expanding the central theme of the brand essence. These values inform all aspects of the company in running its business, including product design and development, service delivery, target market and promotion.

Loyalty can be used to increase membership status. Each membership has different advantages for each status starts from Classic, Silver, Gold and Platinum with the level of loyalty that must be collected up to 100 thousand points. The benefits gained for each membership level in the form of free shipping, discount and cashback. By maintaining customer loyalty, marketing costs will be more efficient than if you continue to acquire new users.

FGD participants also reminded to always embodies and affirms brand values with human touch, enthusiasm and fun. The close and authentic connection as shown in the mother and child relationship will makes the brand readily acceptable. Forming a social networking framework to engage customers in a fair trade organization effort, and create forums on company websites where customers can discuss the growth and development of brand loyalty.

#### **5. IMPLICATION**

By conducting consumer analysis based on **brand identity**, they can be segmented based on "brand response" and "product response" to six segments as shown in **Table 1**. Brand responses are divided into two groups: "brand fanatic" and "no matter brand". Despite being in a group that is brand fanatic but they are still rational in their buying decisions. Fanaticism is linked to loyalty, devotion, consumer brand relations, and identity formation. The formation of identity becomes a common thread in the lives of consumers with diverse fanaticism (Seregina, Anastasia, 2011). Fans with identities and thoughts alike will form a community known as fandom (Thorne and Bruner, 2006).

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Information		BRAND RESPONSES	
		<b>Brand Fanatic</b>	No Matter Brand
PRODUCT RESPONSES	Design	1	2
	Confort	3	4
	Price	5	6

 Table 1: Market Segmentation of the Footwear Industry

Sources: Primary Data Processed, 2019

After identifying consumers based on "brand responses," the next step is to identify consumers based on "product responses" that can be grouped into consumers who have the need for the model and design of footwear, convenience, and the right price. Customers will narrow down the choice and make decisions between a brand and a competitor's brand based on the three such preferences as shown in Table 3.

By analyzing consumer responses to products and brands is what will determine how well a brand will stand out at the key stages of this process. Based on the segmentation that has been done then it could be determinated that the target market Moker is a man with concern for the brand and care about the design, comfort, and price of a footwear (No: 1, 3, and 5). For that, the message will be delivered (positioning) is "Cool model, comfortable to wear, and the price fits" as a unique selling proposition (USP) and its brand is "Moker" stands for "Mojokerto Keren" (Cool Mojokerto) as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Moker Brand Footwear** 

To improve **brand meaning** related to the performance of the brand of Moker need to do technical and non technical testing before marketed as quality control. The technical tests include: strength test (tensile test and glue test), raw material test (leather, sole, rubber, PVC, yarn, glue, and premier) and stitching quality. Non technical tests include consumer perceptions of product comfort and quality, adaptation to trends and product uniqueness.

High footwear performance should also be supported by the effectiveness of the organization's services. Consumers will be disappointed with manufacturers who do not keep promises, lack empathy with complaining customers and after-sales service. To enhance the brand meaning for consumers, brand of Moker needs to be posted to communicate the personal experience of company starts from raw materials, handmade production processes and delivery process. By doing this, the brand of Moker provides education about how profitable the brand is for its users.

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To improve perceived product quality or brand it is necessary to formulate Moker brand footwear quality standards, establish testing mechanisms and feasibility assessments and need assessment teams or verifiers.

Customers assess brand advantage by comparing with competing brands. Currently, brand of Moker has not been able equated with other brand shoes that have been there since a long like Yongki, Fladeo, Carvil, Buccheri, Nevada, Ardiles, and League.

Fladeo and Nevada are private brands owned by Matahari Department Store. Carvil (PT Carvil Abadi) and Buccheri (PT Vigano Cipta Perdana) are Indonesian footwear brands that have been developed since the 1980s. Yongki is Indonesian original shoe brand. This brand is taken from the owner's namely "Yongki Komaladi" like the other famous designers brand of Armani and Donna Karan or luxury brands like Louis Vuitton and Hermes. Ardiles (PT Ardiles Ciptawijaya) and League (Barca Retail Sportindo) are a brand developed since the 2000s. Moker as a new brand of footwear should pay attention to the activities of the brands that have long and strengthen the values that the needs of footwear consumers in accordance with its target market.

The expected response from brand of Moker customers is self respect by giving the impression of cool and warmth by providing comfort so as to make the walking style becomes more perfect. To create a sense of self-respect and warmth using several strategies.

First strategy is to make the product manually and 100% handmade. Every detail of the footwear is done carefully so that the uniqueness of each Moker brand footwear is clearly visible. Originality and handmade will be widely exposed. Second strategy is to sell products in specialty stores and locations that enable this brand to be promoted by rewarding certain purchases and organizing customer loyalty programs by collecting points. This brand gives the impression not only made with care but also hard to find. The third one is the benefits of technology to maintain the level of quality such as the thickness of the leather used and efficient pattern drawing so that the effectiveness of manual work will be well preserved not for to replace.

### 6. CONCLUSION

The process of creating a brand strategy by using CBBE model for the footwear industry can be applied by generating the brand of Moker. **The first step** is brand identity for knowing who the customer is to get a thorough understanding of how customers see the brand. The result is customers can be grouped into six groups based on brand response and product response. Its target market is three groups that choose design, convenience and price, For that, the message will be delivered is "Cool model, comfortable to wear, and the price fits" as a unique selling proposition or USP with Moker as the brand.

The goal of a **second step** is to identify and communicate what the brand means and what it means to customers. Two building blocks in this step are performance and imagery. PERFORMANCE determines how well the product meets the customer's needs. The performance categories that consumers consider for brand of Mojokerto footwear are models and designs, product reliability and price. To improve the performance of Moker it is necessary to

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perform technical and non technical testing before it is marketed and improve the effectiveness of the organization's services by using the critical to quality tree model.

The Image of Moker footwear brand is driven by the fame of Mojokerto City as a shoe town. Its products have started to distribute out of East Java. This description encourages and reinforces the brand of Moker to meet customer needs on a social and psychological level.

Customer response to brands in the **third stage** of the CBBE model is divided into two categories ie ASSESSMENT and FEELING. Customers will assess about quality, credibility, consideration and excellence. The quality of the product or brand is rated by the customer on the basis of actual and perceived quality. Credibility is assessed by customers based on three dimensions of expertise, trust and attractiveness. "Moker" footwear craftsman is able to make footwear with modern designs. Considerations are valued by customers based on how relevant a product is to its unique needs ie comfortable to wear, not easy to loose soles, durable, its design follows the market and made of quality leather as raw material. Excellence is valued by a customer based on how superior a brand compares to a competitor's brand.

Customers will respond to Moker brand footwear according to WHAT CUSTOMER WANTS. According to CBBE model, there are six positive brand feeling: warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval and self respect. The expected brand feeling response by using Moker brand footwear is self respect by giving the impression of cool and warmth by providing comfort so as to make the gait more perfect. To create a sense of self respect and warmth using several marketing strategies that have been discussed in the implications section.

The goal in the **final stage** of the pyramid in CBBE model is to strengthen each category of resonance to encourage behavioral loyalty with the customer engagement to a brand. An authentic brand value and an attractive brand identity is a powerful communication tool for building consumer loyalty.

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