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The Effect of Co-Branding and Brand Equity Mcdonalds X BTS on Purchase Intention of BTS Meal Products

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the effect of co-branding and brand equity of the BTS Meal product which is the result of the collaboration of the McDonalds serving company with the famous music group BTS. BTS Meal has become a very popular product, especially in Indonesia through campaign activities carried out by ARMY as a fandom of BTS. BTS Meal has received various responses from consumers regarding the uniqueness of the product, especially in the packaging of the product. The method used in this research is library research, where the researcher uses sources based on the literature to discuss the effects caused by the BTS Meal co-branding product and the applied brand equity. The results and discussion in this study indicate that the influence of branding between the two companies before the implementation of co-branding greatly affects the popularity of BTS Meal products. Through digital marketing and campaigns carried out by ARMY, BTS Meal has become a best-selling product in the market. In addition, the popularity of this product is influenced by its brand equity by displaying the uniqueness of the packaging and the combination of the McDonalds and BTS logos. With the influence of the popularity of BTS Meal products and their brand equity, it affects the purchase intention of consumers to buy BTS Meal products based on the preferences made by ARMY on social media. The conclusion of this study shows that there is a very significant effect between co-branding and BTS Meal brand equity on consumers' purchase intentions.

Keywords: BTS Meal; Co-Branding; Brand Equity; Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

All companies at the national and multinational level certainly need an acknowledgment or introduction from their customers. Especially if we look at the conditions of increasingly complex global dynamics, both individuals and businesses will be faced with more and more choices to expand their business but with less time to make those choices. So that through these conditions, the ability of a business to make their business brand strong by simplifying the decision making of business companies to serve consumers, reduce risks, and set business goals by taking into account the various risks in it. Therefore, more and more companies and other organizations are realizing that one of their most valuable assets is the brand name or brand associated with their products or services (Keller, 2003).

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Every company always has goals and hopes to develop new products in order to be very successful and famous, so that every individual feels proud to own the product (Hultink, 2010). Of course, this requires a mature strategy that can be used as a way to build branding for the entire target market so that they can choose products from the company. Various strategies have received studies from various experts to find the right strategy in building a strong branding. According to a survey conducted by McKinsey Company in 2018, millennial consumers tend to look for things that have a prestigious and unique value in a product, so that company activities to carry out brand building and product innovation in large-scale markets or mass-markets have become an issue. competitive in developing Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) products (Kelly et.al, 2018). In addition, the market landscape of FMCG is very competitive considering that there are many products that can be sold with the same type and use, so efforts are needed to become a superior product in this market.

Seeing such a competitive situation, of course, companies need an effective strategy as a way to expand market share and consumers. One strategy that is often carried out by companies and is often analyzed is proven to be able to expand market share is through co-branding activities (Helmig et.al, 2008). Shahri (2011) through his understanding makes a distinction between product brands and company brands, then later states that product brands are only related to products and customers, while company brands are related to the organization as a whole. This difference clearly affects the interpretation of entrepreneurs to distinguish branding efforts for a company or product. A co-branding within a company can be interpreted as a process of adding value to the product, either goods or services, provided by the company (Khan et al., 2016). This post will determine a consumer's level of understanding and familiarity with the company.

The activities of co-branding often make many companies to form collaborative activities between lesser-known company brands and well-known brands so that it can affect the results of co-branded collaboration products and can lead consumers to buy or promote the lesser known brand as a preference for themselves and their customers. others. Obviously, this will be beneficial for companies that use co-branding as a way to increase company revenues, expand new market share, and improve company image and credibility (Chang, 2009). This activity is also important in influencing the equity of a product brand or brand equity. Davcik and Sharma (2015) view brand equity as a brand value that is embedded in the minds of customers and appears in their perceptions and expectations when choosing to get results from using the product. Most observers from the marketing field also agree with the basic principles of brand equity in providing diverse experiences to consumers. This ultimately gives companies a common denominator to interpret their marketing strategy and value their brand in society (Keller, 2003).

Recently, a fast food F&B company from California, McDonalds has shocked people's lives through its collaboration with a music group from South Korea, namely

BTS. Social media belonging to the entire community at that time was filled with introducing the collaboration between McDonalds or McD and BTS as an influencer. Influencers in terms of marketing are briefly understood as people or groups with a large number of followers on social media and are believed to be able to influence many people on a large scale (Wielki, 2020). McD chose to work with music group company BTS in order to increase consumer awareness of McD's fast food products, which are the target market with the aim of increasing the company's profits. McDonalds' creative marketing strategy is now targeting the army, which is the name for BTS fans. Through products with the "BTS Meal" brand, there are several reports showing that BTS is able to influence the level of sales and price intentions of McDonalds companies within a few days (Amanah, 2021).

It is interesting to study and further understand the effects of the co-branding pattern and branding equity resulting from the collaboration between McDonalds and BTS through the BTS Meal product. Through the collaboration that is built between the two parties, it will affect the popularity of co-branded products that are able to have a spillover effect on the host company's brand. This study specifically increases the understanding of consumers' purchase intentions for co-branded products from BTS Meal products, which invites BTS as a well-known music group to create co-branded products by following the following research questions: 1) What are the conditions that can affect the co-branding between McDonalds and BTS to create BTS Meal products?, 2) How can McDonalds and BTS increase the brand equity of BTS Meal?

METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research is a positioned movement that finds an audience in the world. This includes the quality of explanations, applicable materials that make creations real. By this it means qualitative: researchers study the items in their ordinary sets, trying to make intelligence, or understand, phenomena in terms of the implications people take for them (Creswell,

2007). According to Lexy J Moleong, qualitative methods are research procedures that obtain written and oral descriptive data from people and their observed behavior (Moleong, 2010).

The process used to collect data is based on analysis on library research. According to Nazir (2005), library research is a research activity that examines literature as an important and main material where the researcher decides on the research topic, then the next step is to study the topic in discussing the research topic. In researching concepts in the literature, researchers collect relevant and available document information. This research involves a collection of several textbooks, journals, articles, virtual resources and internet access. The main source of this research is the literature on co-branding, brand equity, price intention, and BTS meal.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Conditions That Can Affect Co-Branding Between McDonalds and BTS To Create BTS Meal Products

Food and beverages are seen as basic needs that have a high value in improving consumer behavior. Initially, food and beverage products had nothing to do with culture, because it seemed trivial compared to other cultural products. So it is not surprising that people are not aware of the process of cultural change that occurs in their daily lives through the inclusion of food and beverage products (Bentley, 2007). This situation continues to occur in Indonesia because McDonald's as a fast food product creates communication and collaboration with local and international food or culture. McDonalds uses various ways, such as creating a menu that fits a certain day/theme, then mixing traditional and global concept ideas that complement each other (Herminingrum, 2020). It can be said that McDonalds often carries out an activity to carry out acculturation or cultural diffusion.

Along with its expansion activities to various countries outside the United States, McDonalds has implemented various strategies to increase consumer interest in the menus they offer, which are characterized by the local menu of the area. All of this was done in an effort to meet their marketing targets which began in the 1980s. McDonalds is very active in introducing various menus according to consumer tastes that continue to change over time. One example is the incorporation of a rice meal component for an Asian franchise as a sign of understanding the importance of an Asian staple, which is also a promising offering. Through various innovations that have been carried out, McDonalds has in turn succeeded in revolutionizing the fast food restaurant business into a very modern business and is not limited to only food and beverage management (Febrian & Mahabarata, 2020).

McDonalds is known to be very fast in responding to changes that occur in the life of the global community, one of which is the trend of popularity from the realm of music. This statement was then supported by the action of McDonalds which did co-branding with one of the famous music groups from South Korea, namely BTS, which is famous for several of its works in various parts of the world (including in Indonesia). BTS is a music group or band from South Korea which has seven male musicians and is managed by their entertainment agency, namely Big Hit since June 2013. The abbreviation for BTS is "Bangtan Sonyeondan" which describes the challenges faced by the younger generation in the era of modern social life. as it is today (Abbes, 2019). The focus given by the international media on BTS reflects the fact that their global emergence can affect various aspects of people's lives, especially for their fans. There have been many studies or

literature studies that seek to discuss the strength of BTS in influencing the social life of society in the modern era.

Interestingly, from various studies conducted by academics, the main highlight that makes BTS a world-famous music group is the presence of a fandom figure or commonly known as ARMY. ARMY or Adorable Representative MC for Youth is a term for fans who are loyal to the presence of BTS. ARMY has been known for various online and offline activities including flash mob gatherings, producing BTS related content, tweeting news about BTS, watching BTS music videos in bulk on YouTube, creating trending BTS hashtags, collective voting on music charts as well as Billboard, and various forms of charity work that make their movement such as the social community movement affiliated with the music group (Parc et.al, 2020). One of McLaren and Jin's (2020) studies focuses on BTS and ARMY in the context of transnational and transcultural flows of hybridized popular culture in the era of new media technology. They argue that BTS' popularity can be explored in the context of fans' use of social media and in their identification with BTS through online content, music, and the group's image. They also show the special relationship between BTS and their fans that has been established through social media, causing a lot of activity between BTS and ARMY as their fandom (Mclaren & Jin, 2020).

The buzz of BTS' works echoing on social media doesn't dim, even in the pandemic era. BTS' 2020 chart-topping single, "Dynamite," became the first Korean music group (K-Pop) song to be sung entirely in English, creating an economic effect in the form of an increase in the country's foreign exchange of \$1.43 billion. Furthermore, according to the South Korean ministry of culture, the release of this song spurred a massive increase in merchandise exports and the creation of 8,000 jobs in tourism and other sectors in South Korea (Borowiec, 2021). The main pillar of the expansion will be bringing artists to Weverse, a web service developed by Big Hit Entertainment that combines the functions of Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube into an integrated channel for communication with fans. The platform generates payments of around \$90 million per quarter, through the sale of merchandise and tickets from the band.

Seeing the phenomenon of the successful branding carried out by BTS, McDonalds then quickly carried out a co-branding process by launching the latest product in the form of "BTS Meal". BTS Meal is a product that takes over the main McDonalds product, namely chicken nuggets with the addition of a new collaboration. One package contains 10 Pieces of Chicken McNuggets, limited edition sauce chosen by BTS, Fries or French fries, and Coke (Source: McDonalds.com). BTS Meal is one of the most viral cobranding products and has received praise from various marketing experts, such as Bayu Sutikno from Gadjah Mada University. McDonalds through this BTS Meal product takes the main target, namely the BTS fandom, ARMY, which is estimated to have more than 18 million people. The BTS Meal campaign is a brilliant tactic to respond to the global and national economy due to the pandemic situation (Salma, 2021).

We can see that these two companies have very strong branding. Judging from the BTS Meal co-branding campaign through the marketing scope, BTS really has the potential to drive more consumers to McDonalds through its ARMY. BTS can take advantage of their growing global fame and have the most influence. Demographically, BTS can attract Millennials and Gen Z are more likely to visit celebrity endorsements of fast food restaurants. With such a large BTS fan group, it's not hard to imagine BTS' food going viral and McDonald's sales increasing sharply (Li, 2021).

How McDonalds and BTS To Increase Brand Equity from BTS Meal

The success of the BTS Meal product launch cannot be separated from the two companies with strong branding, such as McDonalds and BTS. The two companies that held this co-branding had a strong influence in influencing consumers to remember the products they released, namely BTS Meal. According to an expert in the field of Managing Partner Inventure, Yuswohady, he analyzed the phenomenon of the successful launch of the BTS Meal product at McDonalds. Furthermore, Yuswohady pointed out that there was a dynamic in the marketing pattern that changed from vertical marketing with a brand to customer scheme to horizontal marketing with a customer to customer scheme. Changes that occur in marketing activities are in line with the development of social media which produces various platforms. Through promotions carried out on social media, it will create trust or word-of-mouth between one customer and another.

The implementation of brand equity in the context of BTS Meal is inseparable from the success of McDonalds management, which is classified as superior in terms of Marketing, Operations, Human Resources (HR) and Finance. The integration in brand naming between these two companies plays an important role for both McDonalds and BTS in marketing the brand identity of BTS Meal. Previously, the McDonalds brand identity was more than just one offer to customers, but rather a series of offerings that made products from this brand desired by customers. Improved customer experience is an important element used by companies in building brand equity.

If you look at the unique side of its appearance, then we will see a characteristic that combines McDonalds with BTS. The use of the McDonalds logo in product packaging is closely related to their flagship brand name, namely the letter "M". Sometimes these are called Golden Arches which are shown through their distinctive subtle forms and look the same as those in their name. This kind of intelligent connotation enhances brand recall and recognition that the product belongs to McDonalds (Sliwka, 2010). Then in terms of BTS, the use of purple is the color characteristic of BTS's branding. In addition, the presence of this collaboration is further emphasized by juxtaposing the McDonalds logo with BTS. The direct relationship between the two provides space to remember the cobranding that was carried out between the two. The ease of placing it on the product offered or in any form of advertising found, is a brand building element that is primarily important in enhancing the brand equity experience.

Through the online marketing side, BTS Meal provides updates on the importance of an influencer who plays a role in encouraging the purchase of a product. McDonalds management skills in the media and advertisements are able to attract attention, making the choice of this fast food restaurant spontaneous and almost unconscious. Expectations about the type and quality of food served are always met, so that positive associations are formed in the minds of consumers, which encourage future decisions. Apart from McDonalds, the success of BTS is its high engagement with fans on social media where each member of this music group shares visual stories about their lives, preferences for aesthetic values, and comments about their work (Chang & Park, 2019).). Different types of tweets, Instagram posts, and other social media updates also allow fans from all over the world to connect with BTS members. ARMY (BTS fandom) also demonstrated how to effectively use social media for participatory fandom, including using Twitter, Facebook, Vlive, Reddit, etc. as a form of campaign (Yoon, 2020). Various streaming campaigns, donations, and hashtags in which fans participate require them to use these apps and services.

The active and participatory nature of fans should encourage designers of commercial music services to think about the features they might use to support fan activity and maintain a strong community. One idea might be to explore features in commercial music services where fans and artists can interact. While existing social media platforms already offer a venue for artist-fan interaction and community discussions, commercial music services can offer other unique types of interaction (Lee & Nguyen, 2020). McDonalds uses social media intensively to disseminate information on BTS Meal so that it will immediately go viral and be known by many people in the world. Using the concept of a brand community created by BTS with a large number of ARMYs combined with intense social media marketing makes it easier for McDonalds to get BTS Meal customers. So with this, we can optimize the horizontal marketing concept of BTS Meal.

The Influence of Buyers' Attitudes towards Co-Branded Products Can Influence **Purchase Intentions**

Through the co-branded products embedded in BTS Meal and efforts to increase the brand equity owned by the collaboration of the two companies, of course it is important to see how the motivations of consumers have in having purchase intentions or purchase intentions for BTS Meal products. Intentions that arise from consumers are certainly very important to understand as an important analysis in companies to develop brands from their products. This purchase intention is an important factor for companies to encourage and improve company performance in an effort to influence consumers to buy their products.

In a research journal article belonging to Mochtar et.al (2021) entitled "The Influence of Product and Social Media Innovation Against Buying Interest in BTS Meal Volume 4 Number 1, March 2022. Pages 53-64

at Mcdonald's (Case Study on FEB Students, UNISMA Management Study Program 2017)" explained several research results that analyzed the effect of BTS Meal products on purchase intention in students. Through various variable analyzes that create research results, it was found that the innovation variable for McDonalds products with activities carried out by ARMY on social media had a significant influence on purchase intention through the F test results with F = 19.392 and a significance value of 0.000 < 0.05. Through these results, it can be stated that there is a significant influence between the innovation variables provided by McDonalds through BTS Meal products and ARMY activities on social media on the purchase intention of BTS Meal products so that it can prove that social media has an important role for media promotion of a product and can influence consumer behavior patterns in choosing or determining a product.

Furthermore, in a research journal article belonging to Singer & Hidayat (2021) it is explained that there are several things that encourage purchase intention or purchase intention towards BTS Meal. According to the research data, the level of preferential interest has a strong influence on the purchase intention of BTS Meal with a Beta value of 0.504. This means that an increase in preference can lead to an increase in the probability of buying BTS Meal. This preference has a correlation with buyer behavior, where the activity of buying BTS Meal is based on the results of other people's preferences. Furthermore, the reason is because this is a BTS Meal which is a co-branded product between two very well-known companies, so people will want to buy it. The more one likes BTS, the more likely one is to buy BTS Meal, therefore this proves the positive influence of the relationship between consumers and brand distribution (Jahn & Kunz, 2012 in Singer & Hidayat, 2021).

Further data shows how strong the influence of the Role Model of BTS which in this study is stated to have a strong influence on consumers in buying BTS Meal with Beta 0.244. This interprets that when someone uses their idol as a role model or inspiration based on the qualities they have, it will stimulate consumers to want to buy goods from that role model. This supports a statement that fans of the role model can make an emotional investment that significantly influences buyer behavior (Lacasa et.al in Singer & Hidayat, 2021). The decision to encourage purchases made by consumers of this co-branded product can increase the popularity of the role model.

Finally, the research data shows that the purchase of BTS Meal has a significant effect on the quality of Social Empathy with a Beta result of 0.255. The results of this research data indicate that when someone makes a purchase for BTS Meal products, these consumers tend to express empathy towards social groups, in this case by donating to drivers of online food delivery applications. When this buying behavior increases, in line with social actions in the form of donations it also increases. This statement can be triggered by affective actions or sharing when someone identifies behavior with other people's experiences to carry out social activities donating (Segal et.al, 2013 in Singer & Hidayat, 2021). The behavior of affiliated consumers towards the motivation for giving

donations can benefit cobranding companies through massive social activities and campaigns carried out by consumers. This will increase their co-branded products or other products that are personally owned.

Through the existing research data, researchers can interpret that the increased brand equity by co-branded products has an influence on the level of buying interest from consumers (especially an ARMY affiliated with BTS). When researchers seek to evaluate the determinants in a successful marketing strategy, it is necessary to understand both the theoretical and managerial importance of understanding and testing the boundary conditions in each variable. Understanding the relationship between causal attributes and consumer purchase intentions is critical to maximizing the effectiveness of a given environment. Consumers' interest in the context of this research when the activities carried out by ARMY can encourage their overall evaluation of the BTS Meal purchase intention. Consumer curiosity and the need to participate drive their intention to buy a product. Consumers who are affiliated in this community will later need to be present during the process of selling co-branded products to collect and assess details about the product. In addition, the information gathered during these moments increases the positive feelings in the minds of consumers that influence their overall evaluation of the sale of the product.

Purchase intention becomes an assessment for a company to carry out certain behaviors to build and apply its strategy. Research on co-branded products has shown that many variables can be applied to explain behavior. Mostafa (2009) shows that environmental awareness and knowledge affect consumers' intentions to buy environmentally friendly products. Kaiser and Gutscher (2003) reported that more than 50% of the explanatory capacity for the purchase intention of green products can be used to explain consumer buying behavior towards environmentally friendly products. This data can be used to explain consumer buying behavior towards environmentally friendly products in the global market share and its implications for the brand equity of each company as well as co-branded products.

CONCLUSION

According to Hultink (2010) every company always has goals and hopes to develop new products to become very successful and famous, so that every individual feels proud to have these products. Through these conditions, the ability of a business to make their business brand strong by simplifying decision making business enterprises to serve consumers, reduce risks, and set business goals by taking into account the various risks in them. Therefore, more and more companies and other organizations are realizing that one of their most valuable assets is the brand name or brand associated with their products or services (Keller, 2003). One of the strategies that can be done is co-branding as done by McDonalds and BTS by issuing BTS Meal products. BTS Meal is one of the products that hits and is favored by the wider community due to the creation of brand equity that Volume 4 Number 1, March 2022. Pages 53-64

is very attractive to consumers.

In terms of purchasing products that are supported by their idol music groups, ARMY as a fandom community considers several things to help sell BTS Meal products. The relationship between consumers and celebrities involves some endorsed brand distribution. Therefore, there are several factors that influence purchase intention and behavior. Factors that influence BTS Meal Purchase are Preferences and Role Models, Insights and behaviors possessed by BTS Meal consumers can encourage better distribution decisions for these products. Therefore, it is important to know how consumers or fans react to a product distribution using celebrity endorsements and the reasons behind their social empathy related to purchasing the product. This can have significant implications in distributing products, where distributors and marketers can consider strategies involving celebrities who demonstrate quality in winning the hearts of fans through the co-branding strategy.

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