

# THE ROLE OF VISUAL CONGRUENCE AND SELF-EXPRESSIVE BRAND IN FORMING BRAND LOVE THAT CAN IMPROVE E-WOM: A SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION AMONG SNEAKERS LOVERS

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**Abstract:** Advances in information technology have created a new generation with new and distinct behaviors, particularly in terms of product or service consumption. Social media has evolved into a platform for consumers to share their product-consuming experiences by leaving evaluations based on perceived pleasure. Satisfied customers form attachments and closeness with the brand, resulting in a sense of love for it. Brand love stems from a brand's capacity to represent its customers, and it may also be evident in the visual compatibility between the two parties. Therefore, this study aims to determine the effect of visual congruence, self-expressive brand, on increasing e-WOM mediated by brand love especially among shoes consumers. This explanatory study used respondents from the sneakers-loving population. The purposive sampling technique is used. This research instrument was tested using PLS, validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests. The hypothesis was tested using the t-test. Data analysis technique using Path Analysis. This finding emphasizes the significance of Visual Congruence and Self-Expressive Brand in developing Brand Love and e-WOM, particularly for items that are closely tied to the manner of expression and social behavior of their customers.

**Keywords:** self-expressive brand, visual congruence, brand love, e-WOM

## INTRODUCTION

The biggest challenge that business people have to face today is the increasingly fierce business competition. Many similar products are starting to appear on the market, business people must be able to create products that have a competitive advantage, are able to establish and maintain relationships with their consumers. The development of increasingly advanced technology accompanied by digitalization which has shifted the era of using print media as a medium for disseminating information makes marketers have to consider marketing strategies through digital media and online platforms. For this reason, it is important for

business people to formulate a structured marketing strategy by establishing good relationships with consumers through digital media, so that it will form a sense of love for the brand and positive infections.

Consumers will feel satisfied if the product can meet expectations or even exceed their expectations but consumers will also not feel satisfied if the expected product does not match the reality. But new findings today reveal that satisfying consumers is not enough to continue to succeed in a highly competitive market. Research conducted by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) introduced the term Brand love, a new form of marketing that explains and predicts variations

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in desired post-consumption behavior among satisfied consumers.

Brands are not only chosen because of their usefulness values but also because of the symbolic benefits, namely self-concept and identity. Escalas and Bettman (2003) argue, consumers use brands to establish themselves, present themselves to others or achieve their identity goals. Brands are able to reflect on important factors of consumer identity and express significant aspects of the self (Fournier, 1998). Consumers will have an emotional attachment to a particular trademark. Brand love will generate positive opinions by customers about the brand, regarding the extent to which the brand can meet customer expectations to reflect itself.

Sneakers products are one of the most popular fashion items used today because they come with various forms of the best selected models that make the appearance much more stylish. In its development, this sneaker product has become one of the hedonic products, namely products that offer hedonic benefits for consumers in the form of pleasure, happiness, or satisfaction. Emotional reactions will then arise from the experience of buying or using the product (Messina, 2018). Some studies have also shown that hedonic products can elicit a positive emotional response because the hedonistic value obtained can meet the needs of individual ethical and the growth of love for a brand. Hedonistic products have many symbolic benefits, so consumers often use hedonistic products as a means of expressing themselves or as social symbols.

For example, Converse brand of sneakers products, consumers who use Converse brand sneakers will have high emotions of happiness or pleasure because they think Converse brand sneakers can give a casual and sporty impression when consumers wear which is a represen-

tation of themselves that others will see. By using a certain brand and showing love for the brand, consumers can indirectly express themselves to others (Huber et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2014). Therefore, the importance of attachment between consumers and brands can build consumers' love for the brand which encourages consumers' desire to share their positive opinions along with the increasing duration of consumption of these products.

In digital media, visuals are vital. People share their lives through social media and other online media by uploading photos or videos that match their interests and identities, including lifestyle. Consumers also tend to follow what suits their interests, therefore there is a visual concept of congruence, which means that there is harmony between consumer uploads and the content they follow. Marketers can use this concept to build relationships with customers (Argyris et al, 2020), because basically when two parties share the same interests, they will feel closer to each other, so this concept can be done as a medium to build closeness and love for a brand.

The Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) communication process is becoming increasingly potential as the way consumers communicate changes with the availability of a common space to share opinions and reviews. Consumer opinions can be read by other consumers around the world, and thus have a great potential range. Recent research shows that e-WOM influences consumer behavior (Jiménez & Mendoza, 2013), as well as company sales (Duan et al., 2011). Because e-WOM allows customers to receive real-time information from previously unavailable sources. In addition, it makes it easier for consumers to share and collect brand-related information in a timely and cost-effective manner, thereby accelerating the diffusion of e-WOM (Burnasheva et al., 2019).

Self-expressive brand and visual congruence through brand love are factors that can influence the increase in e-WOM. To find out how far these things affect the love of consumer brands in increasing e-WOM, this study aims to determine the influence of self-expressive brand on brand love, the influence of self-expressive brand on e-WOM, the indirect influence of self-expressive brand on e-WOM through brand love, the influence of visual congruence on brand love, the influence of visual congruence on e-WOM, indirect influence of visual congruence on e-WOM through brand love, and the influence of brand love on e-WOM.

This research is expected to be able to add science to the concepts of visual congruence, self-expressive brand, and brand love in influencing e-WOM. In addition, it can also find out how things have a significant effect and can affect the increase in e-WOM. It is also expected to be a consideration to evaluate the marketing strategy that the company has been doing. The results of this study are also expected to be used as reference material for future research.

First, the research conducted by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) entitled “Some Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Love”. In this study, the respondents involved were 334 adult consumers, with the most composition being white (non-hispanic) people. The distribution between men and women, age, and income was well mixed using the cross-sectional survey method in this study. The results of the study found that the Brand Love mediates the relationship between exogenous variables (Hedonic Product and Self-Expressive Brand) and endogenous variables (Brand Loyalty and Word of Mouth). The second is a study from Ramadhina (2017), the sample taken in this study amounted to 113 people from Starbucks consumers in Malang.

The results of the research obtained are (1) Hedonic Product, and Satisfaction, have a positive and significant effect on Brand Love. (2) Self-Expressive Brand and Brand Love variables have a positive and significant effect on Brand Loyalty. Another research conducted by Hermanto (2019), with sample in this study was 30 consumers from Zara retail stores taken using the non-probability sampling method. The conclusions of this study are (1) the variables Hedonic Product and Self-Expressive Brand have a significant influence on Brand Love. (2) The Brand Love variable has a significant influence on Willingness to Pay A Premium. Another research was conducted by Argyris et al. (2020) entitled The effects of visual congruence on increasing consumers’ brand engagement: An empirical investigation of influencer marketing on Instagram using deep-learning algorithms for automatic image classification. The sample used in this study was 30 influencer accounts selected through the probability sampling method, from these Instagram accounts then randomly, about 45,000 photos were selected as material to test the research hypothesis. The conclusion of this study is (1) Visual congruence has a positive relationship with follower engagement on influencer posts. (2) Engagement on influencer uploads will increase follower engagement on brand uploads. (3) The positive relationship between visual congruence and brand engagement is mediated overall by influencer engagement.

### **Self-Expressive Brand**

Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014) define self-expression as as a consumer’s perception of the extent to which a brand improves one’s self or perceived social identity. Then Escalas and Bettman (2003) explain that self-expression acts as a

symbol of personal achievement, giving self-esteem, allowing one to distinguish oneself, express the individual, and help people through life transitions. According to Escalas and Bettman (2003) consumers use brands to build themselves, present themselves to others or achieve their identity goals. Brands are able to reflect on important factors of consumer identity and express significant aspects of the self (Fournier, 1998). Consumers will have an emotional attachment to a particular trademark.

### **Visual Congruence**

Visual congruence is a condition when there are similarities in visual elements or themes between influencers' posts and their followers (Argyris et al, 2020). The occurrence of visual congruence indicates that influencers and their followers share the same interests, values and beliefs, because they tend to upload photos or videos that match who they are (Song et al, 2018). In a study conducted by Argyris et al. (2020) stated that the concept of visual congruence can be used as a tool to increase the engagement of a product that allows marketers to first build closeness with consumers by uploading uploads with the same visual elements. This similarity is basically what will build a closeness between the two parties, until it will eventually form interactions to trust and intimacy (Argyris et al, 2020).

### **Brand Love**

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) define brand love as the level of emotional attachment of satisfied consumers to a particular brand. Fournier and Mick in Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) explain the difference between brand love and brand satisfaction. Brand love is part of the satisfaction shared by some satisfied consumers. The differ-

ence can be seen from several things. First, brand love has more interrelationships with affection, whereas brand satisfaction is based on cognitive judgment. Second, brand satisfaction arises from meeting consumer expectations of the brand they consume, while brand love is the result of a long time in the consumer's relationship with a particular brand. Third, brand satisfaction is based on expectations and expectations by consumers for the brand while brand love does not require this. Consumers already know what to expect from the brand. Finally, brand love requires the brand's involvement in the consumer's identity so that they can proudly use it. In this case, brand satisfaction does not require it. Ismail and Spinelli (2012) explain that consumers love brands, in this case fashion brands, because of the passion that the brand brings. Consumers want to appear with neat and good clothes and get information about emerging trends. The love of this brand arises because fashion companies are able to identify their target market in young people who want to express themselves using fashion. This has proven to be effective because companies are able to have strong relationships with consumers who have a love of the brand who will eventually be able to provide good feedback to other consumers.

### **Brand Love Linkage**

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) explains that brand love is related to several things, including: passion for the brand, association or attachment to the brand, positive response to the brand, positive emotions towards a brand, and declaration of love towards the brand.

### **Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)**

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined electronic word of mouth or E-WOM as any posi-

tive or negative statement made by a potential customer, actual customer, or past customer that is accessible to all people and institutions on the internet. According to López and Sicilia (2014) although WOM and e-WOM both provide consumer opinions about a product or brand, they do not use the same channels to transmit information. WOM occurs in a two-way, face-to-face conversation between the source and receiver. But in e-WOM the conversation does not have to happen simultaneously and both ways. Unlike WOM, sources that share information and recipients usually don't know each other in e-WOM. Goyette et al. (2010) divided e-WOM into three dimensions which were also used as indicators in measuring the influence of E-WOM in this study. The three dimensions are Intensity, Positive opinion, and Content. Intensity is the number of opinions written by consumers on social media. A positive opinion is a positive opinion of consumers regarding products, services and brands, which have two properties, namely negative and

positive. Content is the content of information from social media related to products and services.

## Hypothesis

Based on the interim answer to the formulation of the research problem, the hypothesis framework of this study can be described as shown in Figure 1.

- H1: The *Visual Congruence* variable has a significant influence on Brand Love.
- H2: The *Visual Congruence* variable has a significant influence on e-WOM.
- H3: The *Visual Congruence* variable has an indirect influence on e-WOM.
- H4: The *Self-Expressive Brand* variable has a significant influence on Brand Love.
- H5: The *Self-Expressive Brand* variable has a significant influence on e-WOM.
- H6: The *Self-Expressive Brand* variable has an indirect effect on e-WOM.
- H7: Variabel *Brand Love* has a significant influence on e-WOM.

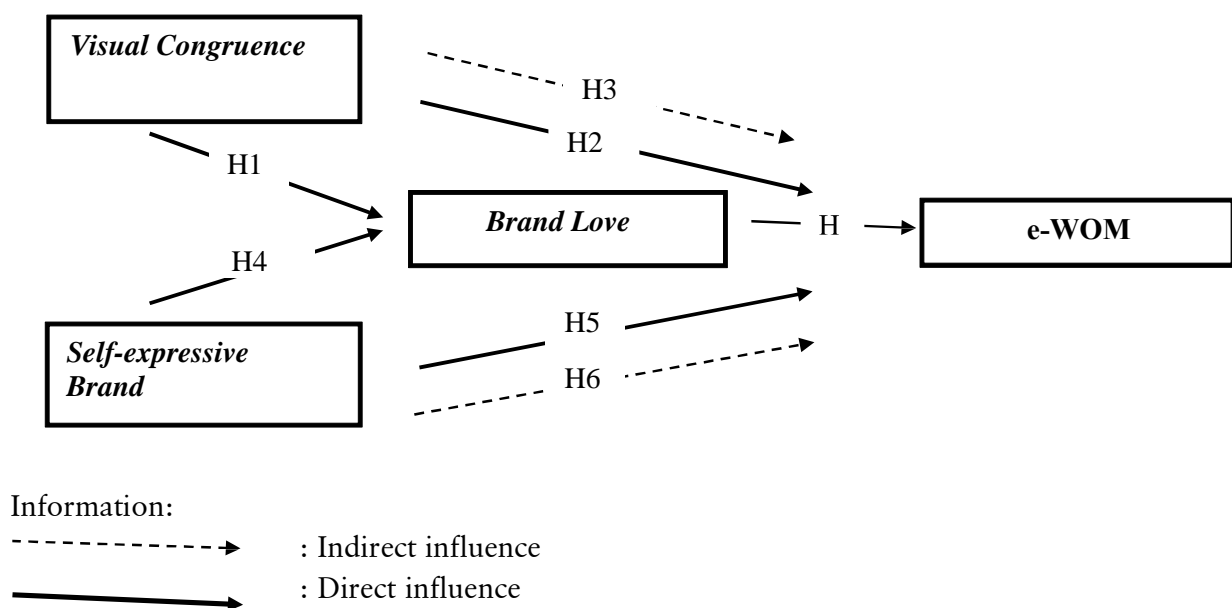


Figure 1 Hypothesis Framework

## METHOD

### Population

The population in this study is consumers among sneaker lovers. This population includes a demographic group of consumers who have unique characteristics that indicate that they are lovers of sneaker products, otherwise known as sneakersheads. The number of this population cannot be known with certainty or infinite.

### Sampling Methods

Sampling in this study used a nonprobability sampling technique with purposive sampling technique. The criteria for respondents to be sampled in this study are living in Indonesia, have a minimum of 1 pair of sneakers collected, have knowledge of sneakers, especially the Converse brand, and express loving for sneakers.

### Data Collection Methods

This study used questionnaires as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was developed from previous research tailored to the context of this study. The questionnaire was distributed to the research sample online. The questionnaire uses a semantic scale of 7 levels of consent. Self-expression brands were measured by six statements in the questionnaire about respondents' responses regarding approval that converse brands can reflect personality, symbolization of identity, image creation, the way people see themselves, and social imagery. Visual congruence was measured by conducting experiments where respondents were presented with 4 images of the conformity of the converse brand with background colors, influencers, activities, and poses, then measured by responses in the questionnaire. Brand love is measured by eight statements in the questionnaire about re-

spondents' responses to whether the converse brand is a good/attractive/alluring brand, happy, truly admirable, truly satisfying, providing an exhilarating experience, passionate about the brand, emotionally attached to the brand, and love of the brand. e-WOM Measured by five statements in the questionnaire about respondents' responses to the intensity of interacting with other users on the Converse social networking site, actively making many comments on the Converse social networking site, spreading positive information on the Converse social networking site, co-recommending on the converse social networking site, actively rate on the social networking site Converse.

### Characteristics of Respondents

The dissemination of the questionnaire was carried out online and has generated 141 responses. Information demography obtained in this study includes age, gender, address, education, occupation and income. There were more female respondents than male respondents. This can be seen from the number of 58.2% for female respondents and 41.8% for male respondents. Age below 20 years accounted for the largest percentage of 58.9%, followed by 20–30 years old at 38.3%, and 30–40 years old at 2.8%. Responden domiciled in East Java contributed the largest percentage at 74.5%, followed by DKI Jakarta at 9.3%, West Java at 5.6%, Banten at 2.1%, and in other regions at 8.5%. Responden with the last educational background of high school/equivalent accounted for the largest percentage of 70.2%, followed by undergraduates at 26.3%, and Masters at 3.5%. Students and students accounted for the largest percentage, namely 89.3%, followed by private employees 4.2%, Entrepreneurship 3.6%, and Others 2.9%. From the data above, it can be



seen that many sneaker users are dominated by students. This is likely due to changes in the lifestyle of young people who tend to want to highlight self-expression through shoe brands they like based on their environment and to increase self-confidence. The respondents' output of < 1,000,000 made up the largest percentage, namely 58.8%, followed by 1,000,000–3,000,000 at 27%, 3,000,000–5,000,000 at 7.1%, and >5,000,000 at 7.1%.

### Data Analysis

The data from the study were analyzed using SmartPLS software version 3.0.

### Outer Model Test

This research model consists of 4 constructs, namely Visual Congruence, Self-expressive brand, Brand Love, and e-WOM. The step in evaluating the validity and reliability of a construct is carried out by evaluating the measurement model. Here is a path diagram of the study (Figure 2).

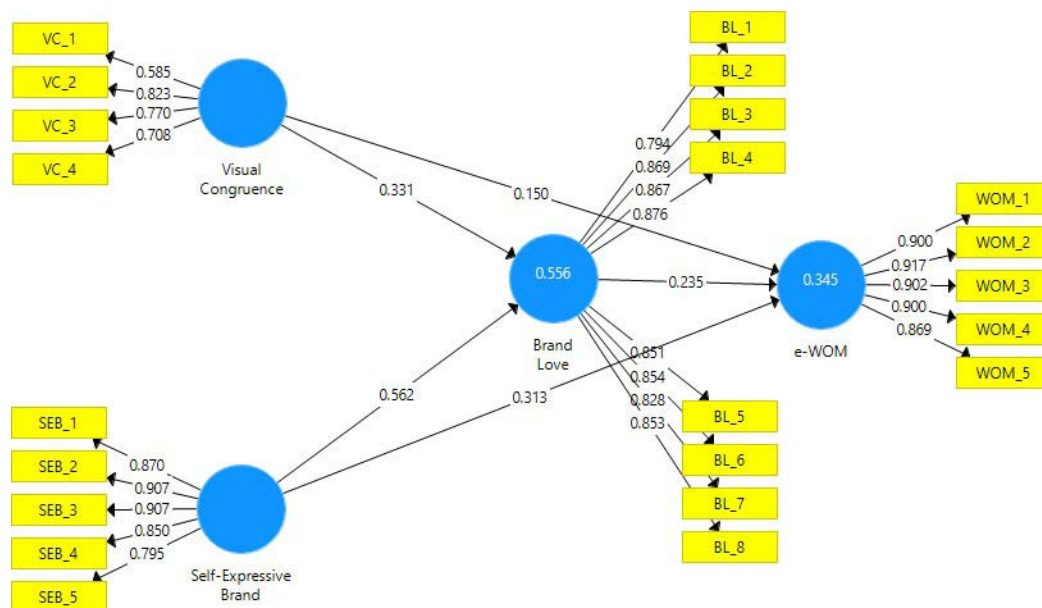


Figure 2 Path Diagram 1 Outer Loadings (Pilot Test)

### Convergent Validity

This research is an explanatory study so that the loading factor value must be > 0.5 and if there is a loading factor value that is below 0.5, it is recommended to be eliminated. The results showed that all assumptions of convergent validity had been met.

### Discriminant Validity

Based on the calculation of the Cross Loading Factor, it can be seen that overall the indicators of Brand Self-Expression, Brand love, visual congruence and e-WOM have a greater loading factor value compared to the value of the cross loading factor in other variables, so that each indicator is discriminatorily valid and can explain variables that correspond to the indicators and can be used to measure research.

### Reliability Test

Based on the results of the reliability test (Table 1), it is known that the *composite reliability value, cronbach alpha* in each variable

Table 1 Cronbach Alpha, Composite Reliability & AVE (Pilot Test) Calculation Results

| Variable              | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | Information |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Brand Love            | 0.945            | 0.954                 | 0.721                            | Reliable    |
| Self Expressive Brand | 0.917            | 0.938                 | 0.751                            | Reliable    |
| Visual Congruence     | 0.694            | 0.815                 | 0.528                            | Reliable    |
| e-WOM                 | 0.940            | 0.954                 | 0.806                            | Reliable    |

has a value of  $> 0.7$  and an *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) of  $> 0.5$ , so it can be concluded that the overall calculation results are reliable.

### Inner Model Test

The following is the result of the calculation of  $R^2$  using SmartPLS 3.0 which is presented in the Table 2.

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing can be seen through Path Coefficients for direct influence and Specific Indirect Effects for influence indirectly by being tested using bootstrapping on SmartPLS

3.0. Through the calculations obtained, there is a model formed as Figure 3.

### Direct Influence Testing

The direct influence testing can be seen in the Table Table 3.

## DISCUSSION

### History of Sneakers

Sneakers comes from the word sneak which can be translated as sneaking. At first, sneakers were used as an epithet for keds shoes. The shoe was introduced in 1892 with the U.S. Rubber Company as the company that pro-

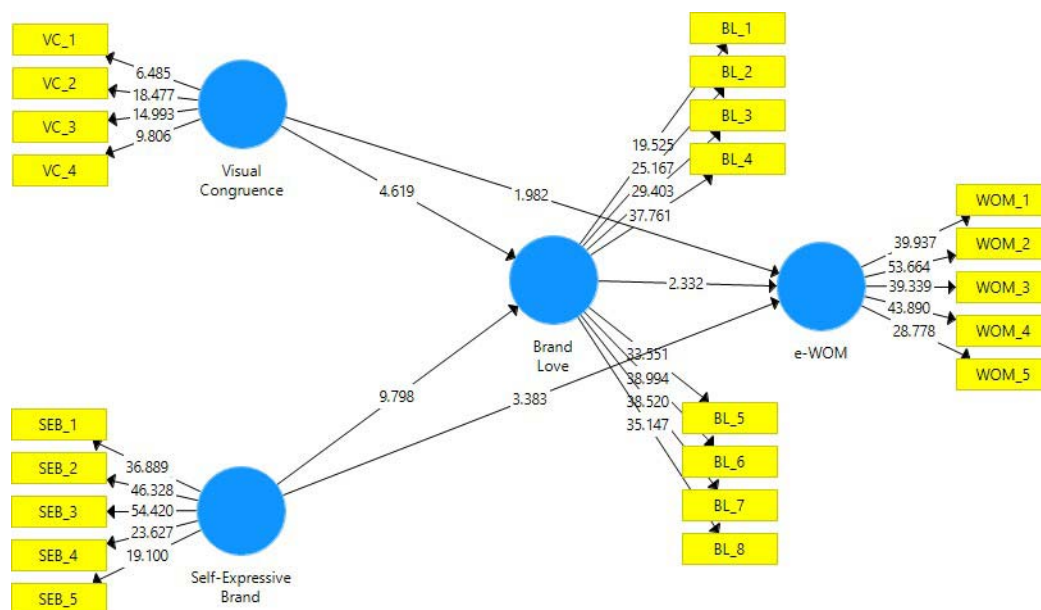


Figure 3 Hypothesis Test Path Diagram



Table 2 Value of Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

| Variable   | R Square (R <sup>2</sup> ) | R Square Adjusted |
|------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Brand Love | 0,556                      | 0,549             |
| e-WOM      | 0,345                      | 0,330             |

duced it. In the early 20th century, the use of sneakers was still only used for sports. In 1923 he made a special basketball shoe which became known as the Chuck Taylor All Stars. Sneakers began to enter the international market in 1924 through the Drassler brand owned by Adi and Rudolf Dassler. This brand is the one that gave birth to two of several well-known shoe brands, namely Adidas and Puma. Around the 1950s, sneakers began to be used as part of fashion, not just used in sports activities. This was due to the influence of James Dean, an actor who used sneakers on the popular film at the time, Rebel Without a Cause. Over time, the use of sneakers began to become a trend in the 70s following hip hop and rock 'n roll culture.

The development of sneakers later created a term known as 'Sneakerhead' which was famous in the early 1980s in the United States which divided it into two groups, namely Sneakerheads among basketball lovers and hip hop fans. Nowadays, the term Sneakerhead is also used for sneaker lovers and collectors. In addition to being used as part of fashion items, they also collect and sell special or limited edition shoes to fellow sneaker lovers. In this

study, the *sneaker* brand used as the choice of research object was the Converse brand. The Converse brand was founded in 1908 precisely in February in Malden, United States by the Marquis Mills Converse. In 2003 the company was purchased for \$305,000,000 as a subsidiary of Nike, Inc. Until now, Converse has spread across more than 160 countries located on 5 continents, namely America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Africa. Based on the information that can be found on the official website, Converse's product line is divided by gender, children's shoes, limited edition and shoes that are on sale. Each of the product lines consists mainly of shoes, clothing, and a variety of accessories.

### The Visual Influence of Congruence on Brand Love

The results showed that when there is a match between Brand Converse and the background color, customers will find this something awesome and fun. The more it fits the look of the Converse brand with the look and pose of the model, it will make customers think the Converse brand is a very attractive brand. Similarly, when the appearance of the Converse

Table 3 Path Coefficients

| Hypothesis                           | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T-Statistics (  O/STDEV  ) | P Values |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| Brand_Love -> e-WOM                  | 0.235               | 0.243           | 0.101                      | 2.332                      | 0.020    |
| Self-Expressive_B rand -> Brand_Love | 0.562               | 0.564           | 0.057                      | 9.798                      | 0.000    |
| Self-Expressive_B rand -> e-WOM      | 0.313               | 0.309           | 0.092                      | 3.383                      | 0.001    |
| Visual_Congr uence -> Brand_Love     | 0.331               | 0.332           | 0.072                      | 4.619                      | 0.000    |
| Visual_Congr uence -> e- WOM         | 0.150               | 0.152           | 0.076                      | 1.982                      | 0.048    |

**Table 4 Specific Indirect Effects**

| Hypothesis                     | Original<br>Sample (O) | Sample<br>Mean (M) | Standard<br>Deviation<br>(STDEV) | T-Statistics<br>(  O/STDEV ) | P Values |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| Visual_Congruence -> e-WOM     | 0.078                  | 0.080              | 0.038                            | 2.027                        | 0.043    |
| Self-Expressive_Brand -> e-WOM | 0.132                  | 0.137              | 0.059                            | 2.249                        | 0.025    |

brand matches the activity of the model in the advertisement displayed, the ad provides an interesting experience and provides a cross-legged for its customers. In general, Converse marketers should style the appearance of the brand in such a way with other visuals in the appearance of the advertisement, so that customers can have an interesting experience and can love their products. Based on the results of hypothesis tests that have been carried out, it shows that Visual Congruence has a positive and significant effect on Brand love. These results are in line with the research of Argyris et. al (2020).

#### **The Visual Influence of Congruence on e-WOM**

The results showed that when there is a match between Brand Converse and the background color in the visual appearance of their advertisement, it will be possible for customers to spread positive information on their social networks. The more it fits the look of the Converse brand with the look and pose of the model, this will make likes to leave comments and interact with other customers to create an electronic word of mouth. Similarly, when the Converse brand looks according to the model's activity in the ad shown, the ad will be more likely to be given a high rating by its customers. In general, Converse marketers should style the look of the brand in such a way with other visuals in the appearance of the ad, so that customers can provide a positive impact on

their electronic social networks. Based on the results of hypothesis tests that have been carried out, it shows that Visual Congruence has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM. These results are in line with the research of Argyris et. al (2020) which has been done before.

#### **Indirect Influence of Visual Congruence on e-WOM**

Based on the results of hypothesis tests that have been carried out, it shows that Visual Congruence has a positive and significant indirect effect on e-WOM. These results are in line with previous research, namely Argyris et. al (2020). The results showed that there was an indirect influence of Visual congruence on e-WOM mediated by Brand love. This means that customers will want to do a positive impact if there is a brand love that was previously shaped by the suitability of the appearance in Converse visual ads. When there is a match between the Converse Brand and the background color in the visual appearance of their advertisement, customers will feel amazed and happy, and then more likely to spread positive information on their social networks. The more it fits the look of the Converse brand with the look and pose of the model, this will make likes to leave comments and interact with other customers to create an electronic tular getuk, if previously in the happy, satisfied and happy with the visuals of the ad. Likewise, when the Converse brand looks according to the model's activities in the

advertisements displayed, the customers will be more happy and love the Converse brand and will then be more likely to be given a high rating by their customers. In general, Converse marketers should style the look of the brand in such a way with other visuals in the appearance of the ad that can create an emotional bond and customer love for the brand, so that customers can provide a positive impact on their electronic social networks.

### **The Influence of Self-Expressive Brand on Brand Love**

The results showed a positive relationship between the suitability of the brand to the self and the love of the brand. The more Converse is perceived to reflect the customer's personality, the more customers will feel attached to the brand. When a brand can create an image or symbolize one's self, then the love for the brand also increases. Customers will feel more satisfied if their sneaker brand matches their desire to form their identity. In general, Converse marketers or other sneakers must be able to create a brand match with the social image and image of their customers to be able to increase their love for the brand products offered. Based on the results of hypothesis tests that have been carried out, it shows that Self-Expressive Brand has a positive and significant effect on Brand love. These results are in line with previous studies. Based on research conducted by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) were found that the Brand Love variable mediated the relationship between exogenous variables (Hedonic Product and Self-Expressive Brand) and endogenous variables (Brand Loyalty and Word of Mouth). In a previous study, conducted by Ramadhina (2017). One of the results of his research found that the Self-Expressive Brand and Brand Love vari-

ables have a positive and significant effect on Brand Loyalty.

### **The Effect of Self-Expressive Brand on e-WOM**

The results showed a positive relationship between the brand's suitability to self with e-WOM or electronic infection. If Converse is increasingly considered to reflect the personality of the customer, then the customer will be more likely to make positive comments. If a brand is considered to be able to create an image or symbolize one's self, then customers will tend to be willing to give recommendations to others. Likewise, customers will be more interested in interacting with other customers in electronic media if their sneaker brand matches their desire to form their identity. In general, Converse marketers or other sneakers must be able to create a brand match with the social image and image of their customers to be able to increase the potential for infection by their customers. This is very important as a form of passive marketing that is very effective in today's digital age. Based on the results of hypothesis tests that have been carried out, it shows that Self-Expressive Brand has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM. These results are in line with the research of Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) that has been done before.

### **The Indirect Influence of Self-Expressive Brand on e-WOM**

The results of this study show a positive relationship between brand conformity to self with e-WOM or electronic infection mediated by brand love. Customers will be more likely to leave positive comments, if Converse is increasingly perceived as reflecting the customer's personality that makes him feel in love with the

Converse brand. Customers will tend to be willing to give recommendations to others if a brand is considered to be able to create an image or symbolize one's self, and he feels happy and satisfied with it. Likewise, customers will be more interested in interacting with other customers in electronic media if they love the brand because previously their sneaker brand was in accordance with the desire to form their identity. In general, converse marketers or other sneakers must be able to create a love for the brand through the suitability of their brand with the social image and image of their customers to be able to increase the potential for infection by their customers. Based on the results of hypothesis tests that have been carried out, it shows that Self-Expressive Brand has a positive and significant indirect effect on e-WOM. These results are in line with the research of Carroll & Ahuvia (2006).

### **The Influence of Brand Love on e-WOM**

The results showed a positive influence between brand love and electronic infection. It is generally found that a customer who loves a brand, then it will be more likely for that customer to spread positive things about the brand of the product he loves. Specifically in this study, it was found that when customers are satisfied and have emotional ties, it will be possible for customers to spread positive information on their social networks. The happier a customer feels, this will make likes to leave comments and interact with other customers to create electronic infections. Likewise, when customers are satisfied and emotionally bound by a brand, then advertising ads from that brand will be more likely to be given a high rating by its customers. In general, Converse

marketers need to be able to create emotional bonds for customers and make customers love their brand, so that customers can provide a positive impact on their electronic social networks. Based on the results of hypothesis tests that have been carried out, it shows that Brand love has a positive and significant effect on e-WOM. These results are also in accordance with the research that Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) conducted earlier. This is then related to Agatha & Widiartanto's previous research (2020). The conclusion obtained from this study is that the variables Brand Image and Brand Love have a positive and significant influence on Brand Loyalty.

### **Managerial Implications**

The implication of this research is how marketers can consider visual congruence, self-expressive brand in shaping brand love to henceforth can create e-WOM which is needed in today's digital marketing. The results showed that the highest score of these four studies was respondents' answers to questions about Visual Congruence. From the visual display in Converse's social media ads, customers notice a compatibility of Converse's message framing with the accompanying visual display. This should continue to be maintained by Converse marketers and sneakers in general, given the importance of visuals in digital advertising today. The Love brand of Converse products was found to be quite good in this study. Converse needs to continue to maintain this brand love, considering that the emotional factor of customers will be very crucial in maintaining loyal customers in the midst of future competition. Historical facts show that the fashion brands that survive are brands that are deeply loved by their cus-

tomers. This love brand needs to be maintained by Converse marketers for cross-generations in order to support its existence in the long term. The results showed that the Self-expressive brand score for Converse was not as high as Visual congruence or Brand love. Converse marketers need to reemphasize the suitability of their brand with the self-expression of its customers. Converse marketers need to re-maximize its product lines that are specifically aimed at specific customers. This possibility is motivated by the spirit of Converse which seeks to target a relatively general market, in contrast to Vans which tends to be associated with skaters, as well as Nike and Adidas which focus on sports enthusiasts. The results showed a lack of interest in sneakers lovers to do electronic shocks of Converse products. Converse marketers need to formulate certain marketing programs so that Converse's e-WOM can be improved. Natural infections will certainly greatly help the company's marketing both in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. The formation of positive perceptions, motivations, and other psychic factors, including brand love, can occur in the presence of massive electronic shocks. Converse marketers need to try strategies both mainstream and non-mainstream to increase this electronic impact.

Visual congruence can affect the brand love of sneakers users, so it can be interpreted that the more appropriate the visual appearance of the advertisement, the higher the love of the sneakers brand. Visual Congruence has an influence on e-WOM. The more appropriate the framing of Converse ads, the higher the likelihood of consumers to do positive infections digitally. Visual Congruence has an indirect influence on e-WOM. However, the results of the

study show a partial indirect influence, this means that even without Brand love, sneakers users can virtualize a brand after seeing the suitability of the ad display. Self-expressive brand can affect the brand love of sneaker products, so it can be interpreted that the higher the suitability of the product with one's self-concept, the higher the love for the brand. Self-Expressive Brand has a significant influence on e-WOM. The higher the suitability of the product with one's self-concept, the higher the possibility of consumers to do positive infections digitally. Self-Expressive Brand has an indirect effect on e-WOM. However, the results of the study show a partial indirect influence, this means that even without Brand love, sneakers users can virtualize a brand if the brand is considered to be able to express its identity. The Love brand has a significant influence on e-WOM. As high as consumers' love for a brand, the higher the possibility of consumers to do positive infections digitally.

Sneakers marketers need to maintain brand identity associations with their customers with various Integrated Marketing Communication efforts consistently. In today's digital and social media era, sneakers marketers need to display the best visual appearance that matches the development of the current generation which is their potential market through the use of various filters that exist in social media platforms. Brand love can be increased by marketers through various integrated marketing programs, as well as through CRM programs to increase brand attachment to their identity associations. Results of this study can be used as a reference in future studies by considering other variables beyond the variables that have been used in the researcher in this study.

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