Brand resonance and brand salience in luxury cosmetic products with symbolic value as the mediating variable

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ABSTRACT

Purpose — *Intense competition compels every product to innovate. Luxury brands must employ various strategies to attract consumers, one of which is fostering strong customer relationships, measured by the extent of customers' connection to the brand. This study aims to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the cosmetic luxury brand, using brand resonance as the dependent variable, brand salience as the independent variable, and symbolic value as the mediating variable.*

Method — *This research employs an explanatory research design with a quantitative approach. The study's population consists of consumers of luxury cosmetic brands in Indonesia, with a sample size of 96 respondents. Data analysis is conducted using Partial Least Squares (PLS), a variant of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) capable of performing both model testing and structural model testing simultaneously. The statistical tool employed for this analysis is SmartPLS 4, which provides user-friendly access to multivariate analysis methods.*

Result — *The results indicate that brand salience does not have a significant effect on brand resonance. However, it was found that symbolic value can serve as a mediator in the relationship between brand salience and brand resonance. Brand resonance is a crucial aspect of maintaining consumer loyalty and can be achieved by strengthening the brand's association with customers.*

Contribution — *This research contributes by examining the influence of brand salience on brand resonance, a less-explored aspect of brand management, and introduces the concept of symbolic value as a potential mediator.*

Keywords: *brand salience, symbolic value, brand resonance, luxury brand*

INTRODUCTION

Global competition encourages companies to innovate and create superior products. The emergence of luxury brands is a market goal that remains adaptive and relevant to an ever-changing market. Globalization forces luxury brands to maintain high-quality standards and ensure their products remain exceptional. This situation compels luxury brands to develop sophisticated marketing strategies to attract consumers worldwide and preserve their exclusive image.

When deciding to purchase a product, there are at least two perspectives: the first is buying to fulfill needs, and the other is to fulfill desires. The presence of a luxury brand is often seen as the fulfillment of a desire. Luxury brands, in their efforts to cater to specific markets, emphasize exclusivity, prestige, social status, and investment value. Atwal & Williams (2017) defined luxury as products and services that possess higher levels of quality, taste, and aspiration than other goods in the category but are not so expensive as to be out of reach. Luxury brands are believed to satisfy users' desires and enhance their social status outlook. These brands often offer premium quality and features that increase comfort or provide extra pleasure. The availability of luxury brands enhances consumers' overall satisfaction. Phau et al. (2001) stated that luxury brands compete based on their ability to evoke exclusivity, establish a well-known brand identity, increase brand awareness, and enhance perceived quality, thereby boosting brand preference, purchases, sales levels, and customer loyalty.

In the beauty industry, current cosmetic products are considered essential and indicative of one's social class. Luxury cosmetic brands offer high-quality formulations, elegant or iconic packaging, and sophisticated products. The demand for luxury cosmetic products has steadily increased year by year. According to a survey by www.statista.com, the luxury and prestige beauty market generated approximately 62.3 billion U.S. dollars in revenue in 2022, a figure expected to reach approximately 87 billion dollars by 2028. In 2022, Indonesia ranked 16th in the world's largest revenue for the luxury cosmetics market. The growth of luxury brands continues to align with consumer preferences and market trends. There are several reasons why the interest in using luxury brands is coveted, whether for personalized or interpersonal motives. Ko et al. (2019) confirmed that unique factors contribute to the consumption of luxury brands. The benefits of luxury brands and consumers' consumption value are associated with consumers' affective responses, and their emotional value is conveyed through the consumption experience and usage situation (Han & Kim, 2020). These brands provide an exclusive experience beyond the product itself.

Brand resonance represents the ultimate goal in building a robust brand. When a brand achieves a high level of resonance, consumers tend to become loyal customers who form emotional connections with the brand. This outcome is especially coveted in luxury product and service marketing because it fosters an emotional connection rarely seen in non-luxury contexts (Teah et al., 2023). Brand resonance is a result of consumers' judgments and feelings about the product, which are shaped by their perceptions of the brand's performance and imagery (Duman et al., 2018). This psychological attachment intensifies consumer loyalty to the brand. Consequently, consumers not only make repeat purchases or recommend the brand to others, but they also develop a profound affinity for the brand.

Customers exhibit a high degree of loyalty to brands, actively seeking ways to engage with the brand and share their experiences with others (Latif et al., 2014). The concept of brand resonance suggests that successful brands embrace both emotional and rational elements, contributing to increased brand equity (Swaminathan, 2016). Brand resonance reflects the extent to which consumers feel that the brand's meaning aligns with their self-concept (Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016).

The initial step in building brand resonance is establishing brand salience. Consumers should be able to easily recognize and remember the brand, making it an integral part of their consciousness. Brand salience is often equated with the brand being 'top of mind,' meaning it's the first brand that comes to mind when thinking about a specific product category, aiding retrieval from memory (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004). It represents the power of memory in individuals to recall a particular product's brand, a crucial factor influencing purchase decisions (Lamlo & Selamat, 2021). Furthermore, brand salience manifests in prominence and distinctiveness. Prominence signifies the greater importance attributed to specific brands in a given situation, while distinctiveness refers to a brand's visual standing out or differentiation from competitors (Ngo et al., 2022).

Symbolic value plays a crucial role in strengthening the relationship between brand salience and brand resonance. It contributes to the formation of a robust brand identity in the minds of consumers. When consumers establish an emotional connection with a brand and view it as an essential symbol, brand loyalty is cultivated. For many consumers, using luxury brand products becomes a symbol of importance. Symbolic value also reflects how the public perceives the consumer's social status. A brand's symbolic reputation is a collection of images that customers believe are associated with their self-concept (Saputra et al., 2021). Luxury brands transcend mere functionality, placing emphasis on

individual status and image. Symbolic values linked to luxury brands are primary motivators behind purchasing them (Esmaeilpour, 2015). Symbolic value is the subjective value perceived by consumers, encompassing elements such as prestige and self-expression through brand consumption (Qiu et al., 2017). It mirrors consumers' selves and mediates the strong connection formed through the use of luxury brands.

In the current landscape, the strength of a brand holds significant importance for products and services. Brands play a pivotal role in constructing and fortifying their reputation in the minds of consumers. However, amidst the presence of numerous brands and the varying quality of marketers in conveying brand messages, consumer preferences are greatly influenced. This often leads to consumer confusion when confronted with an array of almost identical choices. To address this, marketers and brand managers can leverage relationship marketing strategies to engage with customers, foster meaningful connections, and ultimately achieve brand resonance (Habib et al., 2021). Despite previous studies by Kang et al. (2022), Akoglu & Özbek (2022), Jiatao & Depeng (2008), and Lee et al. (2019) investigating brand resonance in consumer research, the role of brand salience and symbolic value in enhancing brand resonance remains largely unexplored. Therefore, this research seeks to conduct a comprehensive analysis of brand strength, utilizing brand resonance as the dependent variable, brand salience as the independent variable, and symbolic value as the mediating variable.

METHOD

This study adopts an explanatory research approach aimed at examining the relationships among variables. It employs a quantitative methodology to analyze research data through statistical tests. Primary data collection involved distributing questionnaires to respondents, structured on a five-point Likert scale to gauge their level of agreement: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree and (5) Strongly Agree.

The study's target population comprises all consumers in Indonesia who have purchased luxury cosmetic products from the brands listed in https://editorialist.com/beauty/best-luxury-makeup-brands/. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed, targeting individuals who had bought the same brand at least twice, in line with the criteria specified by Levy & Lemeshow (2013). The sample size was determined to be 96 respondents to gather data from this potentially infinite population.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which enables simultaneous model testing and structural model testing. The chosen statistical tool for this analysis was SmartPLS 4, known for its user-friendly interface and ability to facilitate multivariate analysis, model visualization, and graphical outputs for analysis. The analysis encompassed both outer and inner model evaluations.

The outer model assessed the validity and reliability of the measurement model. Validity was assessed based on outer loadings and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability.

On the other hand, the inner model focused on the structural model, predicting causal relationships between latent variables. Hypothesis testing was performed to ascertain the predicted relationships between variables, which was reflected in the path coefficients.

Hypothesis development

The relationship between brand salience with brand resonance

Brand salience and brand resonance are fundamental concepts in marketing that define how consumers engage with a brand. Brand salience establishes the initial foundation for a consumer's relationship with a brand. When consumers consistently encounter a brand, whether through sight or sound, it becomes more recognizable and is more likely to be remembered when they contemplate a purchase. On the other hand, brand resonance represents the profound emotional and cognitive connection between consumers and a brand, encompassing factors such as high loyalty, affection, and consumer identification.

Brand salience serves as the initial step in building brand resonance. It involves the consistent recognition and recall of a brand, setting the stage for a lasting relationship. However, brand resonance goes beyond mere recognition; it encompasses emotions, feelings, and a strong bond between consumers and brands. In essence, brand salience acts as the initial trigger or entry point for consumers to consider a brand, while brand resonance represents the ultimate goal, creating long-term loyalty.

Moura et al. (2019) affirm that robust brand development involves a series of activities aimed at strengthening various antecedent constructs, including brand salience. The impact of luxury brand salience on luxury brand resonance is positive. When consumers seek luxury items, brand salience can instill a sense of

confidence, leading them to choose well-known luxury brands (Kang et al., 2022). This aligns with the findings of Akoglu & Özbek (2022), which underscore the significant influence of salience on brand resonance.

H1: Brand salience has a significant effect on brand resonance

The relationship between symbolic value with brand resonance

Symbolic value plays a pivotal role in the world of luxury brands, as it is often harnessed to craft an exclusive brand image and foster robust brand resonance. Luxury brands strategically employ symbolic values like status and exclusivity to evoke a sense of uniqueness and distinction among consumers when they use or invest in their products or services. A substantial presence of symbolic value within luxury brands can forge a profound connection with consumers. When consumers associate a brand with concepts such as status, prestige, or luxury, it deepens their emotional bond with that brand. Consequently, it fuels their desire to continually engage with the brand, fostering a sense of belonging to an exclusive community associated with it. In essence, the symbolic values intertwined with a luxury brand provide consumers with a compelling reason to form an emotional connection, which in turn fortifies brand resonance.

Saputra et al. (2021) substantiate that the incorporation of symbolic value significantly enhances the establishment of brand resonance. Symbolic value also wields a pronounced influence on consumers' emotional attachment and their sense of belonging to the brand (Jiatao & Depeng, 2008). Consumers' recognition and evaluation of brand symbols stem from the symbolic meanings attached to a brand. Consequently, the judicious use of brand associations can yield the advantage of heightened resonance (Lee et al., 2019).

H2: Symbolic value has a significant effect on brand resonance

Mediating role of symbolic value on the relationship between brand salience with brand resonance

Symbolic value encompasses the meaning and emotional associations attached to a brand, often revolving around concepts like status, exclusivity, prestige, and other profound values. Brands strategically leverage these symbolic values to cultivate a compelling brand image and set themselves apart from competitors. Brands endowed with robust symbolic values tend to capture consumers' attention swiftly and linger in their memory due to the deep and meaningful connections they evoke.
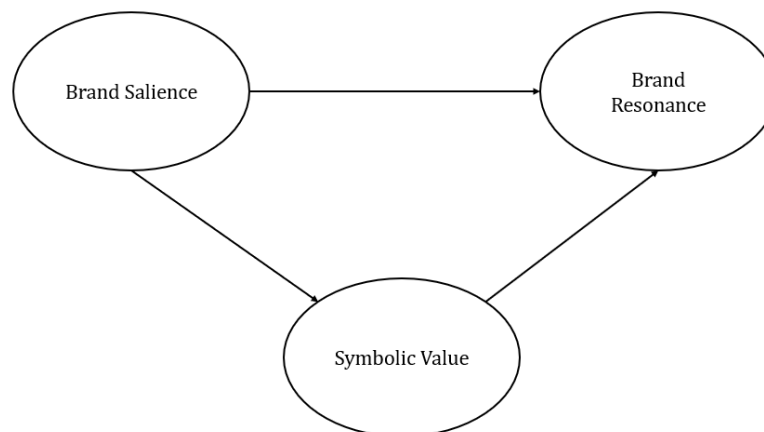
Moreover, strong symbolic values lay the groundwork for robust brand salience because they elevate the brand's prominence in consumers' consciousness. Brand salience serves as the initial touchpoint for consumers to engage with the brand. As consumers continually encounter the brand and experience these symbolic values in their interactions, it catalyzes the formation of profound brand resonance.

To maximize their mediated relationship with brand salience and resonance, brands must carefully plan their marketing strategies, taking into account the symbolic values they aim to communicate. Previous research, such as Esmaeilpour (2015) and He & Lai (2014), has highlighted how brands can enhance brand loyalty by mediating the relationship through functional and symbolic images.

H3: Symbolic value exerts a mediating effect on the influence of between brand salience on brand resonance

The hypothesis model and operationalization of research variables are explained in the following Figure 1:

Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Author's compilation (2023)

The variables and indicators of this study are described in detail in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1 . Research construct

Variables	Statements	Code
Brand Salience	I know how the symbol of luxury brand cosmetics looks like	P1
	I have no difficulties in imagining luxury brand in my mind	P2

	I can recognize luxury brand among other competing brands	P3
Symbolic Value	The luxury brand cosmetics of this brand hold a special meaning for me	P4
	The luxury brand cosmetics help me express myself.	P5
	This luxury brand cosmetics is considered by many symbols of success	P6
	The name of this luxury brand cosmetics is considered by many to be reflective of social status	P7
Brand Resonance	I feel as if I have a close personal connection with the luxury brand I prefer	P8
	I can identify with important luxury brand cosmetics in my life	P9
	I get pleasure when using the luxury brand	P10
	My favorite luxury brand is an important indication of who I am	P11
	Using luxury brand stimulates my interest to learn more about this brand	P12
	I am always interested in recommending to others to buy my luxury cosmetic brand	P13

Source: Author's compilation (2023)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic of respondents

The demographic data of the respondents, based on the questionnaires distributed, are presented in Table 2. The majority of respondents are women (76.7%), and it's important to note that this criterion is not limited to men, as men can also be consumers who purchase cosmetics for professional purposes, such as makeup artists. Respondents' ages range from 25 to 40 years, and the majority are employed. Their average monthly income falls within the range of 20 to 50 million. Additionally, they have been using cosmetics for more than 6 months.
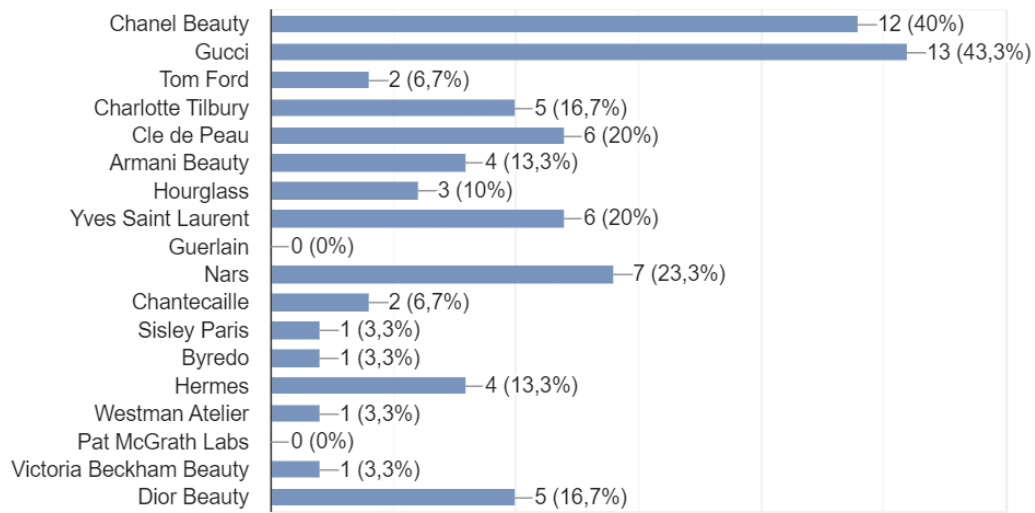
Table 2. Demographic of respondents

Description	Result
Gender	76.7% Female
	23.3% Male
Age	46.7% 25-40 years old
	40% 17-25 years old
	13.3% > 40 years old
Job	33.3% Employee
	30% Makeup Artist
	23.3% Beauty Influencer
	13.3% Entrepreneur
Average income per month	53.3% 20-50 million
	26.7% < 20 million
	20% > 50 million
Period of use	56.7% > 6 months

43.3% 6 months	
17.1% > 3 times a month	

Source: Processed data (2023)

Furthermore, the top 3 cosmetic brands that are often used are Gucci, Chanel, and Nars. The data is detailed and explained in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Luxury cosmetic brands used

Source: Processed data (2023)

Validity test

The validity test is considered practically significant if the loading factors have values greater than 0.5. Based on the statistical test, two indicators (P4 and P12) did not meet the criteria and were consequently removed from the model. A retest was conducted using the indicators that were confirmed to be valid. The results of the validity test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity analysis

Indicators	Brand Salience	Symbolic Value	Brand Resonance
P1	0.818		
P2	0.537		
P3	0.771		
P4		-0.035	
P5		0.624	
P6		0.844	
P7		0.612	
P8			0.622
P9			0.558
P10			0.731
P11			0.642

P12			0.359

<div align="right">Source: Processed data (2023)</div>

Reliability test

The reliability test criteria include Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.6, Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.7, and AVE values surpassing 0.5. The results of the reliability test are presented in Table 4. Based on these results, all indicators are deemed reliable for forming a construct variable.

Table 4. Reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Salience	0.623	0.752	0.518
Symbolic Value	0.619	0.777	0.517
Brand Resonance	0.692	0.751	0.508

<div align="right">Source: Processed data (2023)</div>

Hypothesis testing

The research construct was assessed by examining the R-square value. According to Hair et al. (2011), an independent variable is considered a moderate predictor when the R-square falls within the range of 0.5 to 0.74. In this research, the R-square value is 0.73, indicating a moderate predictor.

Hypothesis testing was conducted through the examination of the inner model, which aimed to measure the relationships between latent variables. A relationship between variables is deemed significant if the T-Statistic value exceeds 1.96 with a P-Value less than 0.05 (alpha level of 5%). The results of the path coefficients are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypothesis test

Variable	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Statistic	P-Values
Brand Salience → Brand Resonance	0.044	0.209	0.168	0.867
Symbolic Value → Brand Resonance	0.481	0.105	4.478	0.000
Brand Salience → Symbolic Value → Brand Resonance	0.243	0.068	3.373	0.001

<div align="right">Source: Processed data (2023)</div>

The results of the statistical tests indicate that there is no direct and significant influence of brand salience on brand resonance, as evidenced by a t-statistic value of less than 1.96 (P-value > 0.05). However, brand salience exerts an indirect and significant influence through symbolic value as a mediating variable, as indicated by a t-statistic value exceeding 1.95 (P-value < 0.05). Furthermore, symbolic value directly and significantly affects brand resonance, as demonstrated by a t-statistic value greater than 1.95 (P-value < 0.05).

Discussion

Brand salience and brand resonance

This research demonstrates that brand salience alone may not suffice to enhance brand resonance. Consumers may not readily form a vivid mental image of a brand, and brand recognition, recall, and top-of-mind association may not be the primary factors guiding their brand choices or purchases. It's essential to recognize that consumer behavior in the realm of cosmetics is influenced not only by brand image but also by factors such as product ingredients, functionality, and suitability for the user's skin. Luxury cosmetic brand consumers often require more than just brand recall; they seek direct experiences to establish a meaningful relationship with the brand. Consumers need to align their skincare needs with the product's ingredients and quality.

Establishing a robust brand identity should be based on a distinct persona. A strong product identity, marked by intrigue and allure, can captivate consumers even through mere recollection and imagination. Previous research, such as Aziz & Yasin (2010), underscores the importance of building brand identity, imbuing it with meaningful brand associations, evoking desired brand responses, and fostering meaningful brand relationships with customers. This suggests that product introduction strategies must be further refined.

Sinha & Ahuja (2022) posit that consumer knowledge about a product leads to improvements in consumer sentiment toward the brand, ultimately facilitating faster product adoption by consumers.

Symbolic value and brand resonance

This research establishes a significant relationship between symbolic value and brand resonance. The respondents' answers underscore that using luxury brands symbolizes success and reflects positively on their self-image. This sense of exclusivity exerts a substantial influence on the connection between

consumers and brand resonance, leading consumers to maintain loyalty as they seek to uphold relationships with trusted brands.

Choosing luxury cosmetic brands elevates consumers to a higher level of status and prestige, contributing to a sense of self-enhancement and confidence. These findings align with prior research by Saputra et al. (2021), Jiatao & Depeng (2008), and Lee et al. (2019).

Marketers must adeptly cultivate deep relationships between brands and customers. Brands that effectively incorporate symbolic values into their strategies and align with consumer expectations regarding these values can foster enduring and robust loyalty. Consumers are inclined to maintain relationships with brands that offer profound meaning and resonate with their personal values. Consequently, marketers must possess a deep understanding of their target market, prioritize high consumer satisfaction, and consistently reinforce the brand's values in the minds of consumers.

Mediating role of symbolic value on the nexus between brand salience and brand resonance

Brand salience exerts an indirect influence through the mediation of symbolic value. This implies that a consumer's memory of a particular brand should be rooted in how effectively the brand reflects or expresses itself. Consumers' attachment to a brand is closely tied to the social status they aspire to convey.

Previous research by Bakış & Kitapçı (2023) has revealed that mediation analyses support the idea that individuals with fixed mindsets are more likely to be influenced by the self-expressive benefits and symbolic attributes or meanings of a product. In other words, when individuals have a fixed mindset, they recognize that a product provides an opportunity to signal their social status, innovativeness, and consciousness to others.

Symbolic value plays an extraordinary role in shaping brand resonance. The presence of a brand can signify the identity of the user, allowing consumers to express their identity through the brands they choose. This level of engagement is precisely what marketers aim to achieve when forging relationships with customers. Consumer loyalty is cultivated not only through their product needs but also through a deeper psychological attachment.

This underscores the importance of comprehending the cognitive and affective consequences of brand relationships, how consumers think, feel, and act, in guiding marketing strategies (Shieh & Lai, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This research aims to analyze the relationships among brand salience, symbolic value, and brand resonance. The study results reveal that brand salience does not have a significant effect on brand resonance. In contrast, symbolic value exerts a significant impact on brand resonance, and it mediates the relationship between brand salience and brand resonance. These findings hold practical implications for marketers aiming to enhance brand resonance.

To achieve this, building a robust brand identity is crucial. A strong brand lingers in consumers' minds, making it easy for them to recall and imagine the product. Such brand memories strengthen consumer attachment. In the realm of luxury brands, this attachment is reinforced by the symbolic value attached to these brands. Luxury brands become part of consumers' identities, signaling their social status and prestige. Strengthening the brand's association with customers is key.

Understanding the target market correctly is essential for formulating an appropriate brand strategy. These findings highlight avenues for future research on consumer responses to brand resonance. Given the diversity of buying behavior and brand image concepts, future studies could explore the impact of various factors on brand resonance, offering practical insights. Additionally, increasing the sample size could facilitate the generalization of research results. Exploring other brand-related variables such as reputation, perceived quality, and influence, especially in the context of digital marketing, could further enrich our understanding of brand resonance.

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