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The Role of Brand Channel Mix Complexity and Brand Associations in Influencing Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty: A Study on Beauty Brands in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT:
As the Indonesian beauty industry has grown rapidly, it intensifies the competition among them through the emergence of strong local brands. This study investigates the effects of Brand-Channel Mix complexity and Brand Association, measured by Attitude Toward the Brand, Perceived Quality, and Brand Uniqueness on Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty within inclusive channels. Data were collected from 386 Brand X brand users in Indonesia using purposive sampling and an online questionnaire, then analyzed with Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Results indicate that Brand-Channel Mix has a significant negative effect on Self-Brand Connection, indicating that greater Brand-Channel Mix complexity is associated with lower levels of Self-Brand Connection. Conversely, Brand Associations exert a positive and significant influence on both outcomes, emphasizing the critical role of consumer perceptions in shaping loyalty. In addition, Product Involvement does not significantly moderate the relationship between Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening Brand Associations to foster Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty, while indicating that greater channel complexity alone may not contribute to stronger consumer–brand relationships.

Keywords:
Brand-Channel Mix, Brand Associations, Attitude towards Brand, Perceived Quality, Brand Uniqueness, Self-Brand Connection, Brand Loyalty

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian beauty industry has experienced significant growth, marked by a rise in local brands and increasing consumer interest in beauty and personal care products. By 2022, beauty and personal care products revenue was projected to continue growing, with earnings estimated at USD 9.59 billion by 2027. BPOM data recorded a five-year high in cosmetic distribution permits, with a 20.6% increase in companies and an 83% rise in SMEs. To remain competitive, established beauty brands are focusing on accessibility by expanding across multiple channels, both online and offline. Statista (2024) identified e-commerce as the leading shopping channel at 68%, alongside other platforms like cosmetic stores, social media, and supermarkets.

In this increasingly competitive and channel-diverse market, brands are not only expanding their presence but also shaping how consumers perceive and relate to them. Prior research suggests that consumers form stronger relationships with brands through key perceptual factors, such as brand associations, perceived quality, and brand uniqueness, which contribute to self-brand connection and, ultimately, brand loyalty (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Kemp et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2023). Self-brand connection reflects how consumers integrate a brand into their self-concept, leading to emotional attachment and repeat purchase behavior (Park et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2017).

These relationships are particularly relevant in high-involvement product categories such as beauty, where products play a role in self-expression and identity, resulting in deeper consumer engagement (O'Cass, 2004; Guthrie & Kim, 2008). As a result, consumers may be more sensitive not only to brand attributes but also to how brands are presented and experienced across different channels. However, despite the importance of these psychological and relational processes, existing research has primarily focused on internal brand factors, with limited attention to how broader market strategies—such as multichannel presence—may shape these outcomes.

Rodríguez- et al. (2023) explored how exclusive marketing channels can enhance self-brand connection a construct introduced by Escalas and Bettman (2003) which reflects the extent to which a brand becomes integrated into an individual's self-concept. However, there is limited empirical work examining how a brand-channel mix in inclusive channels might similarly foster self-brand connection and brand loyalty. Previous studies have mainly focused on how distribution intensity influences outcomes such as brand equity and purchase behavior (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004; Avery et al., 2012; Keller, 2013). However, fewer studies whether and how channel accessibility and the complexity of a brand-channel mix influence identity-related outcomes, particularly the development of self-brand connection, where consumers use brands to express their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Park et al., 2010). Thus, existing research provides limited insight into whether greater complexity within an inclusive brand-channel mix has implications for consumers' identity-based connection with a brand, beyond the functional benefits of accessibility and availability.

In the Indonesian beauty market, the focal beauty brand (hereafter referred to as "Brand X") represents an inclusive multichannel strategy, blending offline (supermarkets, minimarkets, drugstores) and online (e-commerce platforms, official websites) distribution, and maintaining roughly a 26% market share. While such accessibility may strengthen brand visibility and purchase convenience, it remains unclear whether and how this inclusive channel presence contributes to consumers' self-brand connection and subsequent loyalty. This highlights a critical gap between existing theory—largely focused on exclusive channels and brand-intrinsic factors—and the practical reality of widely accessible brands, where

channel inclusivity may play a meaningful yet underexamined role in shaping identity-based consumer–brand relationships.

Escalas and Bettman (2003) assert that self-brand connection fosters emotional attachment, which strengthens consumer–brand relationships and leads to brand loyalty. Subsequent studies confirm that consumers tend to prefer and remain loyal to brands that reflect their self-concept, resulting in repeat purchases and advocacy (Lin et al., 2017). However, these relationships have been predominantly examined through brand-intrinsic factors, such as brand associations, perceived quality, and brand personality, as well as consumer-level characteristics like involvement.

Less attention has been given to the role of external brand touchpoints—particularly distribution and marketing channels—in shaping self-brand connection. While prior research emphasizes the importance of consistent brand communication across channels, it remains unclear how an inclusive channel mix, characterized by broad accessibility and multiple points of interaction, contributes to consumers' identity-based connection with a brand. This represents an important gap, as channels are not merely functional delivery mechanisms but also convey symbolic meanings that may influence how consumers relate to a brand.

This gap becomes even more relevant in high-involvement product categories such as beauty, where consumers engage more deeply with brands due to their role in self-expression (Guthrie & Kim, 2008). In such contexts, an inclusive channel presence may reinforce or dilute self-brand connection depending on how it aligns with consumers' identity needs. Therefore, further research is needed to understand how inclusive channel strategies interact with product involvement to shape self-brand connection and, ultimately, brand loyalty.

Based on these phenomena, this study focuses on the role of brand channel mix complexity, particularly in inclusive channels, on self-brand connection and brand loyalty also examines the role of brand associations reflected in attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and brand uniqueness in shaping self-brand connection and brand loyalty. Additionally, the study examines the role of product involvement as a factor that may strengthen the relationship between self-brand connection and brand loyalty, particularly for high-involvement products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Management

A brand can be defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design—or a combination of these elements—intended to identify the goods or services of one seller and differentiate them from those of competitors (Keller, 2013). Beyond its functional role as an identifier, brand management involves developing and maintaining meaningful and consistent brand experiences through which consumers form perceptions of a brand.

In contemporary markets, consumers encounter brands through multiple touchpoints, including communication, retail environments, digital platforms, and other points of interaction. These interactions contribute to consumers' perceptions of brand meaning and influence how they evaluate and relate to a brand (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Singh et al., 2021). Therefore, consistency across brand touchpoints is important in establishing a coherent brand experience and strengthening consumer–brand relationships.

This perspective is particularly relevant in multichannel environments, where consumers may interact with the same brand through different online and offline channels. These

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multiple points of interaction provide consumers with different opportunities to encounter and evaluate the brand. Accordingly, brand management in this study is considered from a consumer-oriented perspective, with particular attention to how the configuration of brand channels may relate to consumers' self-brand connection and subsequent brand loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Singh et al., 2021).

2.2 Brand Channel Mix

Marketing channels play a crucial role in ensuring the timely and accurate transfer of products from producers to consumers (Verhoef, 2015). In contemporary markets, marketing channels function not only as distribution mechanisms but also as symbolic touchpoints through which brand meaning is constructed and communicated. In multichannel environments, consumers interact with brands across multiple platforms, forming perceptions based on the consistency and coherence of these experiences (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Singh et al., 2021). These interactions contribute to how consumers interpret a brand's identity and its relevance to their own self-concept.

From an identity-signaling perspective, channels can convey meanings related to accessibility, exclusivity, and social positioning. An inclusive channel mix—characterized by broad availability across online and offline platforms—may signal approachability and relevance to a wider audience. However, inconsistencies across channels may disrupt narrative coherence, weakening the brand's ability to form a unified identity in consumers' minds (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019).

Thus, beyond functional benefits, a brand's channel mix plays a critical role in shaping identity-based consumer–brand relationships by influencing how brand meaning is experienced across touchpoints.

H_1: Brand Channel Mix has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection.

2.3 Brand Association

Keller (1993) expanded on this by stating that brand associations are information nodes connected to the brand node in memory, providing meaning to consumers about the brand. Marketers use brand associations to create positive attitudes and affection towards the brand, as well as to differentiate and position the brand in the market (Low & Lamb, 2000).

Contemporary research emphasizes that strong, favorable, and unique associations enhance a brand's ability to signal identity-relevant meanings, thereby strengthening consumers' psychological attachment and relational bonds (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Dwivedi et al., 2019). Through this process, brands become integrated into consumers' self-narratives, supporting both emotional connection and long-term loyalty.

Consumers rely on brand associations not only to process, organize, and access information in memory (Low & Lamb, 2000), but also to build, develop, and express their identities. In this study, Brand Association is conceptualized as an umbrella construct reflected through three distinct brand-related dimensions: Attitude Toward the Brand, Perceived Quality, and Brand Uniqueness. These dimensions are examined separately to assess how different aspects of consumers' brand perceptions contribute to Self-Brand Connection.

2.4 Attitude Toward Brand

Attitude toward a brand reflects consumers' overall evaluative judgments, which are shaped by their experiences and interactions across brand touchpoints. This includes all relevant elements in the consumer's mind, such as brand usage experience, packaging, advertisements, brand attributes, and the benefits of the brand (Langaro et al., 2015).

In addition to representing an overall evaluation, brand attitude can reflect the extent to which consumers perceive a brand positively and find its meaning compatible with their own values and identity (Keller, 2013). Recent research suggests that favorable attitudes strengthen emotional bonds and reinforce identity congruence, which are essential for developing self-brand connection (Rather et al., 2022).

Therefore, a favorable attitude toward a brand may strengthen consumers' psychological connection with the brand when its perceived meaning is consistent with their self-concept (Rather et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study proposes that a positive attitude toward Brand X strengthens consumers' self-brand connection.

H_2: Attitude Toward Brand has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection.

2.5 Perceived Quality

While traditionally viewed as a functional attribute, perceived quality can also reinforce symbolic and relational meanings, particularly in high-involvement categories (Gao et al., 2024; Sun, 2024). Perceived quality reflects consumers' evaluation of a brand or product based on its expected performance, reliability, and ability to fulfill its promises (Reeves & Bednar, 1994).

Product quality can foster trust and confidence among consumers (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011). Beyond functional evaluation, perceived quality may contribute to consumers' psychological relationship with a brand. When consumers perceive a brand as reliable and credible, these positive perceptions can support the integration of the brand into their self-concept (Netemeyer et al., 2004). This relationship is particularly relevant in the Indonesian skincare context, where recent JMI research found that product quality contributes to brand image, which subsequently plays a role in consumer purchase decisions (Istanti & Soliha, 2025).

Therefore, this study proposes that perceived quality strengthens self-brand connection by reinforcing consumers' confidence in the brand and its relevance to their self-concept.

H_3: Perceived Quality has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection.

2.6 Brand Uniqueness

Brand uniqueness refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as distinct and differentiated from other brands (Tian et al., 2001). This distinctiveness can provide symbolic value by enabling consumers to express individuality and differentiate themselves through brand choice (Tian et al., 2001; Netemeyer et al., 2004).

Brand uniqueness reflects the extent to which a brand is perceived as distinct and differentiated in the marketplace. Beyond functional differentiation, uniqueness serves as an

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identity signal, enabling consumers to express individuality and distinguish themselves from others through brand choice (Tian et al., 2001; Netemeyer et al., 2004).

From a symbolic consumption perspective, consumers are more likely to connect with brands that offer distinctive meanings aligned with their desired self-image. Unique brands provide symbolic value that enhances self-expression and strengthens psychological attachment (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Dwivedi et al., 2019). Thus, when consumers perceive a brand as distinctive and relevant to their desired self-image, the brand may become more closely incorporated into their identity, strengthening self-brand connection.

Therefore, this study proposes that perceived brand uniqueness strengthens consumers' self-brand connection by providing distinctive and identity-relevant meanings.

H_4: Brand Uniqueness has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection.

2.7 Self-Brand Connection

When brands align with a consumer's values and identity, they can serve as tools for self-expression and identity reinforcement. Escalas and Bettman (2003) conceptualized self-brand connection as the extent to which a brand becomes part of a consumer's self-concept. Consumers use brands to build and express their identity and project it both to themselves and others (Ratneshwar et al., 2000). In beauty categories, this process may become particularly salient when consumers perceive products as personally relevant to their personality, needs, and desired self-image. Because brands can become incorporated into consumers' self-concepts and serve as resources for identity expression, brand choices that align with consumers' desired self-image may be more likely to foster self-brand connection (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Ratneshwar et al., 2000).

According to Trudeau and Shobeiri (2016), a consumer's brand experience influences the strength and sustainability of brand connection and brand loyalty. Self-brand connection is expected to persist over time when supported by positive brand attitudes and experiences (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Moreover, connections are strengthened when brands are associated with relevant social or reference groups, allowing consumers to communicate and validate their identity through brand usage (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

Building on this perspective, self-brand connection is not formed in isolation but emerges through consistent and meaningful brand experiences across multiple touchpoints. These interactions enable consumers to construct coherent brand narratives that align with their identity (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Singh et al., 2021). When such experiences are consistent and identity-relevant, they reinforce emotional attachment and strengthen long-term consumer–brand relationships.

As a result, self-brand connection functions as a key psychological mechanism that translates brand-related perceptions—such as channel experiences, attitudes, perceived quality, and uniqueness—into behavioral outcomes. Strong self-brand connection has been shown to enhance brand loyalty by encouraging repeat purchases, advocacy, and sustained engagement over time (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021; Rather et al., 2022).

In the context of beauty brands, where identity expression is central, self-brand connection becomes particularly critical in explaining how brand strategies influence loyalty. This research therefore examines how self-brand connection links brand channel mix and

brand-related perceptions to the development of brand loyalty.H5: Self-Brand Connection has a direct and positive effect on Brand Loyalty.

H_6: Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Brand Channel Mix and Brand Loyalty.
H_7: Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Attitude Toward Brand and Brand Loyalty.
H_8: Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Perceived Quality and Brand Loyalty.
H_9: Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Brand Uniqueness and Brand Loyalty.

2.8 Brand Loyalty

According to brand-customer relationship theory, the stronger the relationship between the consumer and the brand, the greater the brand loyalty. As consumer trust in the brand increases, brand loyalty also grows. Kotler et al. (2014) define "repeated purchasing behavior" as a sign of brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is characterized as consumer preference for a specific brand and repeat purchases of the same brand, regardless of external factors or competitor marketing efforts attempting to alter consumer behavior. Brand loyalty is measured by the strength of the emotional connection between the consumer and the brand and the frequency of repeat purchases (Liu et al., 2012). It refers to the level of attachment a consumer feels toward a specific brand, which is regarded as a key outcome of the brand-consumer relationship (He et al., 2012).

In this study, brand loyalty is linked to how a beauty brand, specifically Brand X, uses channels and brand associations, including attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and brand uniqueness, to foster self-brand connection between the consumer and Brand X. The expected brand loyalty outcomes include purchase intention and brand advocacy, which will benefit Brand X in the long term. Consumers with a strong self-brand connection to Brand X are anticipated to become loyal customers, continue using the brand, and recommend it to others. Self-brand connection has been recognized as a crucial factor in maintaining consumer relationships because it positively influences brand loyalty (Lin et al., 2020).

2.9 Self-Brand Connection

According to Kotler et al. (2014), the consumer decision-making process is a cognitive one, involving steps where consumers (1) identify problems, (2) search for information, (3) evaluate alternatives, (4) make purchase decisions, and finally (5) exhibit post-purchase behavior. In this study, Product Involvement refers to the degree to which consumers perceive beauty products as personally relevant or important in their purchase decisions. Although beauty products may involve considerations related to identity and appearance, the level of involvement may vary across consumers and product types. Therefore, this study treats Product Involvement as a consumer-level characteristic rather than assuming that beauty products are uniformly high-involvement. Consumers tend to choose products that maximize their alignment with the desired self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

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H_{10}: Product Involvement moderates the relationship between Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty.

3. METHODS

This study expands on the work of Rodríguez-Torrico et al. (2023), which examined how brand channel-mix use intention and word-of-mouth (WOM) intention are influenced by channel strategies in Inditex brands such as Zara, Pull&Bear, and Massimo Dutti. Their findings revealed a positive relationship between brand-channel mix and self-brand connection, with self-brand connection acting as a mediator in the relationship with WOM intention and channel-mix use intention. However, product involvement as a moderator did not significantly strengthen these relationships. The study highlights the need for products with varying involvement levels to assess product involvement's role in self-brand connection further. It proposes a new approach for customer retention through diverse channels and interactions while emphasizing the importance of consumer-related variables beyond satisfaction and trust.

Kemp et al. (2012) explored how self-brand connection develops through brand associations, specifically attitude toward the brand, perceived quality, and brand uniqueness, emphasizing their influence on brand loyalty and advocacy. Self-brand connection encourages consumers to be more loyal to a brand as it plays an integral role in defining their self-identity (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Self-brand connection drives loyalty behavior due to the brand's symbolic meaning in preserving self-identity (Park et al., 2010). Lin et al. (2017) further supported this by demonstrating a significant link between self-brand connection and brand loyalty in the green marketing context, where consumers' perceived brand benefits and transparency shaped stronger emotional connections with brands, leading to long-term loyalty and repeat purchasing behavior. Therefore, this study proposes the following research model to address the research questions based on findings from previous studies.

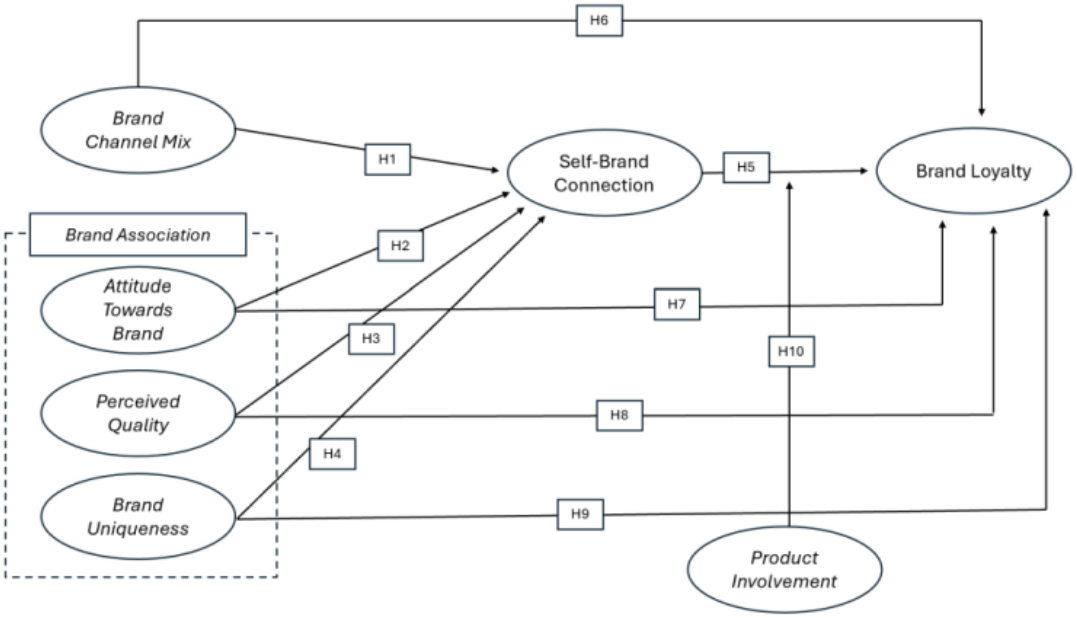

Figure 1. The Research Conceptual Model

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach, as the phenomenon discussed can be identified and depicted through several hypotheses. Furthermore, the study adopts an explanatory research design to examine the relationships among the variables within the proposed conceptual model, rather than merely describing the characteristics of the respondents or the variables under investigation. Specifically, the study examines the direct effects of Brand-Channel Mix, Attitude Toward Brand, Perceived Quality, and Brand Uniqueness on Self-Brand Connection; the effect of Self-Brand Connection on Brand Loyalty; the mediating role of Self-Brand Connection; and the moderating role of Product Involvement. The primary goal of this research is to empirically test the proposed relationships and explain how these brand-related factors contribute to the development of Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty (Malhotra, 2020).

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

In this study, the unit of analysis is female respondents who are at least 18 years old, have made a purchase from Brand X through both online and offline channels, and have used Brand X products within the past three months. The selection of these characteristics is based on the consideration that respondents who have interacted with both online and offline channels are exposed to information from different sources, and the time frame of their usage indicates that the purchase was recent, which helps ensure more objective responses in the questionnaire and ensures that respondents can evaluate their recent interactions and experiences with the brand across the relevant purchase channels. The distribution of the questionnaire was conducted online using a 6-point Likert scale. The decision to distribute the questionnaire online was made considering that online surveys provide access to respondents who may be difficult to reach through conventional methods, and it is expected to reach a broader and more diverse audience (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.3 Population and Sample

The population includes respondents who meet specific criteria: first, female respondents; second, respondents who have made purchases of Brand X products through both online and offline channels; third, respondents who have made at least two purchases; and fourth, respondents who have used Brand X products in the last three months. These criteria were applied to ensure that respondents had sufficient recent experience with the brand and had interacted with Brand X across both online and offline channels, which is relevant to the assessment of Brand-Channel Mix and Self-Brand Connection. Based on these criteria, this study employs a non-probability sampling technique, which does not give each member of the population an equal chance of being selected. This method does not involve random selection but instead relies on the convenience or personal judgment of the researcher (Malhotra, 2020). A total of 386 valid responses were obtained using purposive sampling. Data collection took place between September and November 2024 via an online questionnaire due to the absence of a comprehensive list of potential respondents (Malhotra et al., 2020). The purposive sampling technique is then applied, where specific parameters are set according to the research objectives, ensuring that the sample will provide relevant answers to the research questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). This method was chosen due to data limitations from all potential respondents in Indonesia.

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3.4 Method of Analysis

Before the main survey, a wording test was conducted to assess the clarity and comprehensibility of all questionnaire items. Based on the wording test, revisions were made to four questionnaire items, namely BC2 for Brand Channel Mix, ATB3 for Attitude Toward Brand, and SBC1 and SBC4 for Self-Brand Connection. The revisions focused on improving the clarity of the statements and facilitating respondents' understanding without changing the underlying constructs being measured.

Table 1. Wording Test Result

Construct	Code	Item (Before)	Item (After)
Brand Channel Mix	BC2	Brand Channel mix makes it easier for me to get the best shopping decision	Brand channel mix provides me with more information to make my shopping decision
Attitude Toward Brand	ATB3	The branding carried out by Brand X is enjoyable for me	My overall attitude toward Brand X is pleasant
Self-Brand Connection	SBC1	Brand X represents me	Brand X reflects who I am
	SBC4	Brand X can communicate who I am	I use Brand X to communicate who I am to other people

The questionnaire was subsequently pre-tested with 40 respondents who met the same eligibility criteria as the target respondents. The results of the validity and reliability testing indicated that all questionnaire items were valid and all constructs were reliable. Therefore, no further substantive revisions to the questionnaire were required before the main data collection.

Table 2. Pre Test Result

Study Construct	Code	KMO	Barlett's test	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha
Brand Channel Mix	BC1	0.786	0.000	0.842	0.906
	BC2			0.703	
	BC3			0.782	
	BC4			0.841	
	BC5			0.739	
Attitude Toward Brand	ATB1	0.740	0.000	0.899	0.889
	ATB2			0.928	
	ATB3			0.900	
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.753	0.000	0.914	0.906
	PQ2			0.933	
	PQ3			0.916	
Brand Uniqueness	BU1	0.800	0.000	0.910	0.902
	BU2			0.897	
	BU3			0.826	
	BU4			0.886	
Self-Brand Connection	SBC1	0.751	0.000	0.796	0.938
	SBC2			0.913	
	SBC3			0.930	
	SBC4			0.902	
	SBC5			0.927	
	SBC6			0.775	
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.810	0.000	0.854	0.882
	BL2			0.855	

Study Construct	Code	KMO	Barlett's test	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha
Product Involvement	BL3	0.692	0.000	0.849	0.789
	BL4			0.891	
	PI1			0.813	
	PI2			0.847	
	PI3			0.886	

The structural model was used to assess the direct effects and mediation relationships, while the moderation analysis examined whether Product Involvement changes the strength of the relationship between Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty. Researchers employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the SmartPLS platform for the main test data analysis. SEM is a confirmatory technique designed to estimate dependency relationships among concepts represented by measurable variables and integrated into a unified model. It is used to validate models rather than explore new ones (Malhotra, 2020). SEM can estimate multiple interrelated dependencies, identify unobserved concepts, and calculate measurement errors. Compared to regression and multivariate methods, SEM provides the advantage of simultaneously applying both structural and measurement models (Hair et al., 1998).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

This study utilized the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, which has two main stages: the assessment of measurement models and the evaluation of structural models, as outlined by Hair et al. (2017). This study involved 386 female Brand X users, with the majority being Gen Z, aged between 18 and 27 years. Most respondents were employees with a bachelor's degree (S1) education level, and the monthly spending on beauty products typically ranged between 500,000 and 1,000,000 rupiah.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of The Respondents

	Particulars	Frequency	%
Age	18-27	231	60%
	28-42	123	32%
	43-57	20	5%
	>57	12	3%
Domicile	Java	364	94%
	Outer Java	22	6%
Education	Doctoral Degree	5	1%
	Master's degree	16	4%
	Bachelor's degree	271	70%
	Diploma Degree	32	8%
	Highschool	62	16%
Occupation	Student	17	4%
	Employee	216	56%
	Government Employee	69	18%

	Particulars	Frequency	%
Beauty products Expenses	Entrepreneur	45	12%
	Housewife	34	9%
	Other	5	1%
	< 500.000	61	16%
	500.000 - 1.000.000	222	58%
	1.000.000 - 1.500.000	83	22%
	> 1.500.000	20	5%

Table 4. Validity and Reliability

Study Construct	Item	Item's loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Channel Mix	BC1	0.825	0.887	0.902	0.687
	BC2	0.832			
	BC3	0.828			
	BC4	0.838			
	BC5	0.823			
Attitude Toward Brand	ATB1	0.858	0.852	0.855	0.772
	ATB2	0.891			
	ATB3	0.887			
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.907	0.881	0.882	0.808
	PQ2	0.904			
	PQ3	0.886			
Brand Uniqueness	BU1	0.864	0.894	0.894	0.758
	BU2	0.878			
	BU3	0.858			
	BU4	0.882			
Self-Brand Connection	SBC1	0.918	0.948	0.949	0.794
	SBC2	0.888			
	SBC3	0.897			
	SBC4	0.902			
	SBC5	0.885			
	SBC6	0.857			
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.927	0.917	0.919	0.801
	BL2	0.887			
	BL3	0.913			
	BL4	0.851			
Product Involvement	PI1	0.912	0.853	0.891	0.771
	PI2	0.873			
	PI3	0.848			

Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of the 386 respondents who participated in this study. The majority of respondents (60%) are between the ages of 18 and 27, with 231 respondents falling within this age group. Most respondents reside in Java (94%). In terms of education, 70% of respondents hold a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 56% of respondents work as private employees, followed by government employees (18%) and entrepreneurs (12%). Monthly expenditure on beauty products primarily falls between IDR

500,000 and 1,000,000 (58%). These findings describe the demographic characteristics and beauty-product expenditure patterns of the respondents included in this study.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity – Cross Loadings

	Attitude Towards Brand	Brand Channel Mix	Brand Loyalty	Brand Uniqueness	Perceived Quality	Product Involvement	Self-Brand Connection
ATB1	0.858	0.708	0.611	0.681	0.705	0.627	0.633
ATB2	0.891	0.630	0.660	0.716	0.722	0.572	0.712
ATB3	0.887	0.629	0.632	0.657	0.718	0.622	0.682
BC1	0.579	0.825	0.332	0.407	0.485	0.697	0.348
BC2	0.626	0.832	0.370	0.463	0.515	0.631	0.382
BC3	0.615	0.828	0.432	0.520	0.570	0.662	0.456
BC4	0.578	0.838	0.395	0.448	0.541	0.643	0.424
BC5	0.663	0.823	0.514	0.555	0.612	0.617	0.557
BL1	0.652	0.415	0.927	0.795	0.738	0.411	0.857
BL2	0.646	0.470	0.887	0.694	0.704	0.439	0.801
BL3	0.615	0.427	0.913	0.722	0.705	0.391	0.814
BL4	0.677	0.504	0.851	0.732	0.753	0.492	0.784
BU1	0.681	0.531	0.720	0.864	0.681	0.513	0.722
BU2	0.706	0.523	0.730	0.878	0.711	0.480	0.776
BU3	0.635	0.466	0.687	0.858	0.682	0.450	0.724
BU4	0.690	0.525	0.728	0.882	0.708	0.493	0.727
PI1	0.659	0.686	0.509	0.561	0.642	0.912	0.567
PI2	0.585	0.688	0.393	0.465	0.559	0.873	0.464
PI3	0.557	0.692	0.339	0.413	0.529	0.848	0.389
PQ1	0.741	0.633	0.759	0.761	0.907	0.647	0.786
PQ2	0.704	0.561	0.714	0.715	0.904	0.550	0.756
PQ3	0.751	0.601	0.710	0.676	0.886	0.589	0.748
SBC1	0.673	0.445	0.850	0.791	0.761	0.478	0.918
SBC2	0.692	0.466	0.803	0.755	0.770	0.488	0.888
SBC3	0.696	0.497	0.798	0.754	0.773	0.483	0.897
SBC4	0.678	0.450	0.810	0.760	0.752	0.476	0.902
SBC5	0.654	0.447	0.783	0.731	0.712	0.495	0.885
SBC6	0.727	0.567	0.823	0.739	0.772	0.530	0.857

Tables 4 and 5 present the evaluation of the measurement model based on the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2017). The results show that all constructs meet the requirements for reliability and validity. The indicator loadings are all above 0.7, indicating that each item properly represents its corresponding latent variable. The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceed 0.8, confirming strong internal consistency among the indicators within each construct. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are greater than 0.5, demonstrating that each construct explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators, thus fulfilling the criterion for convergent validity.

The discriminant validity assessment in Table 4 also meets the standards recommended by Hair et al. (2017). The loading values for each construct are higher on their respective indicators than on other constructs, indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct and that respondents clearly differentiated among them. This finding verifies that the

measurement model possesses both conceptual clarity and statistical soundness. Consequently, the results confirm that all variables used in this study are valid and reliable, ensuring that the subsequent structural model analysis can be conducted with confidence.

Table 6. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Attitude Towards Brand	Brand Channel Mix	Brand Loyalty	Brand Uniqueness	Product Involvement	Perceived Quality	Self-Brand Connection
Attitude Towards Brand	0.879						
Brand Channel Mix	0.765	0.809					
Brand Loyalty	0.723	0.525	0.895				
Brand Uniqueness	0.779	0.610	0.823	0.871			
Product Involvement	0.690	0.806	0.483	0.556	0.878		
Perceived Quality	0.819	0.689	0.810	0.799	0.663	0.899	
Self-Brand Connection	0.771	0.557	0.916	0.851	0.558	0.851	0.886

Table 7. F-Square

Construct	BC	ATB	PQ	BU	SBC	BL	PI
Attitude Towards Brand					0.032		
Brand Channel Mix					0.053		
Brand Loyalty							
Brand Uniqueness					0.310		
Perceived Quality					0.311		
Product Involvement						0.007	
Self-Brand Connection						3.514	

Table 7 presents the results of the f-square (effect size) analysis used to evaluate the strength of relationships between variables, following the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2017). The findings show that Self-Brand Connection has a large effect size on Brand Loyalty ($f^2 = 3.514$), indicating that this variable strongly contributes to explaining variations in loyalty. Brand Uniqueness and Perceived Quality exhibit medium effect sizes ($f^2=0.310$ and $f^2 = 0.311$), suggesting that these factors play a moderate but meaningful role in influencing Self-Brand Connection. In contrast, Attitude Toward Brand and Brand Channel Mix demonstrate small effect sizes ($f^2=0.032$ and $f^2=0.053$), showing limited influence on the model. Overall, these results highlight that emotional and perceptual aspects, particularly Self-Brand Connection, exert the greatest impact on building Brand Loyalty, while structural factors such as channel mix contribute less significantly.

Table 8. R-Square

	R- Square	R-Square Adjusted
Brand Loyalty	0.841	0.840
Self-Brand Connection	0.817	0.815

Based on the R-square values presented in Table 8, the R-square for the Brand Loyalty variable is 0.841. This indicates that 84.1% of the variance in Brand Loyalty is explained by the predictors included in the structural model, with the remaining 15.9% attributable to factors outside the model. Furthermore, the R-square value for Self-brand Connection is 0.817, meaning that 81.7% of the variation in Self-brand Connection is explained by Brand Channel Mix, Attitude Toward the Brand, Perceived Quality, and Brand Uniqueness, with the remainder influenced by other variables. These results indicate that the proposed structural model explains a substantial proportion of the variance in both endogenous constructs.

Table 9. Q-Square

	Q2	Remarks
Brand Loyalty	0.668	Strong predictive power
Self-Brand Connection	0.636	Strong predictive power

Based on Table 7, the Q^2 values for Brand Loyalty (0.668) and Self-Brand Connection (0.636) are both greater than zero, indicating that the model demonstrates predictive relevance for both endogenous constructs. These results complement the R^2 findings by indicating that the proposed model has not only substantial explanatory power but also predictive relevance for Brand Loyalty and Self-Brand Connection.

Table 10. Structural Model Assessment

No	Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	T Value	P Value	Conclusion
H_1	Brand Channel Mix has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection	-0.152	-0.147	3.334	0.000	Not Supported
H_2	Attitude Toward Brand has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection	0.161	0.158	2.598	0.005	Supported
H_3	Perceived Quality has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection.	0.474	0.469	6.188	0.000	Supported
H_4	Brand Uniqueness has a direct and positive effect on Self-Brand Connection	0.433	0.438	7.058	0.000	Supported
H_5	Self-Brand Connection has a direct and positive effect on Brand Loyalty	0.926	0.926	40.677	0.000	Supported

Table 11. Structural Model Assessment – Mediation Analysis

No	Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	T Value	P Value	Conclusion
H_6	Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Brand Channel Mix and Brand Loyalty	-0,141	-0,136	3,382	0,000	Not Supported
H_7	Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Attitude Toward Brand and Brand Loyalty	0,149	0,146	2,606	0,005	Supported

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No	Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	T Value	P Value	Conclusion
H_8	Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Perceived Quality and Brand Loyalty.	0,439	0,434	6,185	0,000	Supported
H_9	Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between Brand Uniqueness and Brand Loyalty	0,401	0,406	6,828	0,000	Supported

Table 12. Structural Model Assessment – Moderation Analysis

No	Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	T Value	P Value	Conclusion
H_{10}	Product Involvement moderates the relationship between Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty.	-0,018	-0,016	1,141	0,127	Not Supported

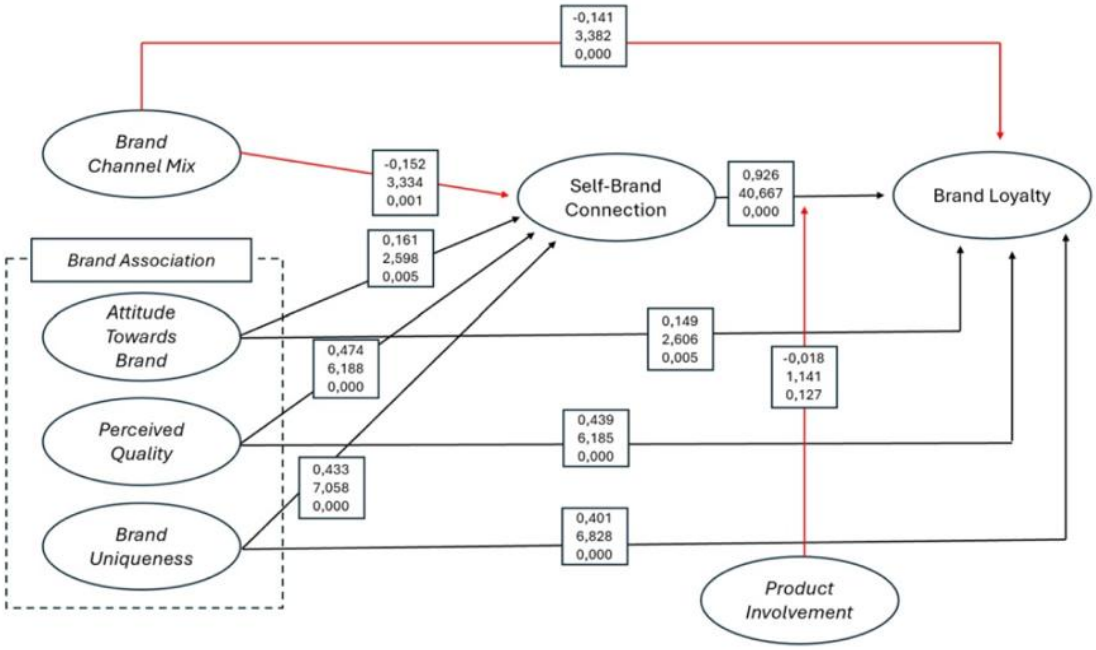

Figure 2. Path Analysis Model

Figure 2 illustrates the final structural model derived from the path analysis, which highlights five direct relationships and four indirect effects within the tested framework. In this model, Self-Brand Connection operates as a mediating variable, while Product Involvement functions as a moderator influencing the strength of the relationships. The analysis employed a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples and a total of 386 valid responses, in accordance with the guidelines of Hair et al. (2017). The statistical outcomes obtained from the structural model estimation are detailed below.

The findings indicate that Brand Channel Mix has a significant negative effect on Self-Brand Connection (β=-0.152, t=3.334, p<0.001) (H_1), indicating an inverse relationship in which higher Brand-Channel Mix scores are associated with lower Self-Brand Connection.

Therefore, although the relationship is statistically significant, the direction of the effect is opposite to the positive relationship hypothesized in H_1.

Attitude Toward Brand has a positive and significant influence on Self-Brand Connection (β=0.161, t=2.598, p=0.005) (H_2), showing that favorable consumer perceptions strengthen emotional identification with the brand. Similarly, Perceived Quality (β=0.474, t=6.188, p=0.000) (H_3) and Brand Uniqueness (β=0.433, t=7.058, p=0.000) (H_4) both demonstrate strong positive effects on Self-Brand Connection, meaning that consistent quality and distinctive brand identity enhance the depth of consumer–brand relationships. Finally, Self-Brand Connection exerts a strong positive influence on Brand Loyalty (β=0.926, t=40.677, p<0.001) (H_5), indicating that higher Self-Brand Connection is associated with higher Brand Loyalty.

The mediation analysis results in Table 11 further reveal that Self-Brand Connection significantly mediates the relationships between Attitude Toward Brand (β = 0.149, t = 2.606, p = 0.005) (H_7), Perceived Quality (β=0.439, t=6.185, p=0.000) (H_8), and Brand Uniqueness (β=0.401, t=6.828, p=0.000) (H_9) with Brand Loyalty. These results imply that positive brand attitudes, high perceived quality, and strong brand distinctiveness enhance loyalty indirectly by fostering stronger emotional bonds with the brand. However, Self-Brand Connection significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Channel Mix and Brand Loyalty, but the indirect effect is negative (β=-0.141, t=3.382, p<0.001) (H_6). Thus, although the indirect relationship is statistically significant, its direction is opposite to the positive relationship hypothesized in H_6.

Finally, the moderation test in Table 12 shows that Product Involvement does not significantly moderate the relationship between Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty (β=-0.018, t=1.141, p=0.127) (H_{10}). Therefore, the proposed moderating effect of Product Involvement is not supported.

Overall, the findings indicate that Self-Brand Connection has a strong positive relationship with Brand Loyalty, while Attitude Toward Brand, Perceived Quality, and Brand Uniqueness are positively associated with Self-Brand Connection. In contrast, Brand Channel Mix shows a significant negative relationship with Self-Brand Connection, and its indirect relationship with Brand Loyalty through Self-Brand Connection is also negative. Product Involvement does not significantly moderate the relationship between Self-Brand Connection and Brand Loyalty. These findings provide empirical evidence regarding the different roles of channel-related and brand-related perceptions in the proposed consumer–brand relationship model.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into how emotional and symbolic connections between consumers and brands influence loyalty in the Indonesian beauty industry. The results show that consumer attachment to a brand is not determined by how widely the brand is distributed but by how consistently it communicates authenticity, meaning, and identity alignment across every touchpoint. In a market dominated by Generation Z, brand relationships are increasingly shaped by emotional experience and shared values. Achmad and Jatmiko (2025) found that interactions on social media help shape cognitive evaluations, emotional responses, and trust perceptions that eventually reinforce

loyalty. This reflects the idea that loyalty is no longer transactional in nature but emotional, formed through a sense of identification between the consumer and the brand.

The negative link between channel mix complexity and self-brand connection in this study suggests that excessive exposure across multiple platforms can weaken the symbolic meaning of a brand. When a brand is present everywhere, consumers may feel a loss of exclusivity or coherence in brand identity. Hu et al. (2023) noted that cultural differences play a significant role in shaping how consumers interpret multi-channel experiences. In the Indonesian beauty market, where accessibility is already high, consumers appear to prioritize consistency and authenticity over convenience. This finding highlights the importance of maintaining a unified narrative and emotional resonance across channels rather than focusing solely on expanding distribution.

In contrast, brand associations such as perceived quality, brand attitude, and uniqueness emerged as strong determinants of loyalty. These associations serve as emotional cues that enable consumers to express who they are and what they value. Sulhaini et al. (2022) emphasized that superior brand quality ensures consistency in brand promises, which forms the foundation of a strong self-brand connection. In beauty products that are closely tied to personal image, perceived quality also functions symbolically because only credible and high-quality brands are considered worthy of representing one's identity. Superior quality creates brand pride and advocacy, turning satisfaction into emotional commitment. This indicates that loyalty is not simply a behavioral outcome but an expression of self and social identity.

The findings further strengthen the argument that self-brand connection acts as a bridge between perception and loyalty. Once consumers internalize a brand as part of their identity, they exhibit a deeper level of commitment that transcends functional benefits. Achmad and Jatmiko (2025) confirmed that emotional experience, brand love, and trust mediate the impact of engagement on loyalty among Generation Z. This pattern aligns with the present study, showing that emotional alignment is the key to sustaining long-term brand relationships. Within the context of halal beauty products, emotional bonding is also shaped by moral and cultural identity. Qurniawati et al. (2023) demonstrated that religious belief significantly influences loyalty toward halal skincare brands through brand love. This suggests that the integration of faith-based identity with brand meaning creates a stronger emotional attachment among consumers in Indonesia.

From a theoretical perspective, these insights refine the understanding of consumer–brand relationships by differentiating between symbolic and functional pathways to loyalty. Accessibility and convenience alone are insufficient to build deep attachment unless supported by emotional meaning and authenticity. Song et al. (2021) found that perceived product quality enhances repurchase intention through satisfaction and reduced risk, reinforcing that quality serves as a trust signal that underpins emotional loyalty. Furthermore, message consistency and transparency have become essential elements of brand integrity. Hultman et al. (2021) reported that inconsistency in brand communication across online and offline channels disrupts customer experience and increases the likelihood of switching brands. Similarly, Sadovska et al. (2020) showed that transparency in product ingredients and ethical practices strengthens brand trust and reinforces consumer loyalty. Together, these findings highlight that emotional authenticity and communication coherence are central to sustaining brand relationships in the modern marketplace.

Practically, the results of this study emphasize the need for brand managers to focus on emotional storytelling, identity consistency, and ethical credibility rather than only expanding market reach. Each interaction with consumers should reflect coherent values and reinforce the brand's symbolic meaning. Transparency about product ingredients, ethical sourcing, and halal assurance can help strengthen trust and perceived authenticity. Collaborations with influencers who share the same values can also enhance self-brand connection and humanize brand communication. By prioritizing emotional resonance and message coherence, cosmetic brands can build stronger, more enduring loyalty in a market that increasingly values authenticity and identity alignment.

5. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the essence of brand loyalty lies in emotional and symbolic connection. Consumers do not stay loyal merely because a brand is available or affordable, but because it reflects who they are and what they believe in. When a brand is perceived as authentic, consistent, and meaningful, consumers integrate it into their self-concept and continue to support it over time. This insight reinforces that in today's inclusive and dynamic beauty industry, loyalty is not about repetition but about resonance. The study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered for future research. Firstly, the research was focused on inclusive channels, and it is recommended to compare the use of both exclusive and inclusive channels to understand the interactions they generate. Secondly, the majority of respondents were female Gen Z from Java Island, Indonesia, so conducting a multigroup analysis based on age would be beneficial to assess whether different age groups interact with the brand differently. Furthermore, expanding the scope of the study by including male respondents could provide more comprehensive insights. Lastly, it is suggested that this model be tested in other industries with varying levels of product involvement to evaluate the effectiveness of brand-channel mixes and brand associations.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The author is solely responsible for all aspects of this work.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The research was conducted in accordance with applicable ethical standards. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents and their data were maintained throughout the research process.

THE USE OF AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used ChatGPT (OpenAI) for language editing and grammar improvement. The author(s) reviewed and edited the output and took full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the published work.

CONFLICT OF INTERERST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

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Appendix

Construct	Code	Item
Brand Channel Mix	BC1	Brand channel mix allow me to have the best price
	BC2	Brand channel mix provide me with more information to make my shopping decision
	BC3	Brand channel mix help me in the shopping decision
	BC4	Brand channel mix make me feel more certain about the shopping decision
	BC5	Brand Channel mix improve my shopping experience
Attitude towards brand	ATB1	My overall attitude toward [brand] is Good
	ATB2	I like the branding done by [brand]
	ATB3	My overall attitude toward [brand] is pleasant
Perceived Quality	PQ1	[brand] is high quality
	PQ2	The quality of [brand] is extremely high.
	PQ3	[brand] is good
Brand Uniqueness	BU1	[brand]'s branding efforts are different from another brand
	BU2	[brand]'s brand is unique in comparison to another brand.
	BU3	[brand]'s brand stands out from another brand
	BU4	[brand]'s branding efforts are distinct from that of another brand
Self-brand connection	SBC1	[brand] reflects who I am
	SBC2	I can identify with [brand]
	SBC3	I feel a personal connection to [brand]
	SBC4	I use [brand] to communicate who I am to other people
	SBC5	I think [brand] helps me become the type of person I want to be
	SBC6	[brand] suits me well
Brand Loyalty	BL1	I prefer to purchase this [brand] to other brands
	BL2	I intend to continue buying [brand]
	BL3	Overall, [brand] will be my first choice.
	BL4	I will recommend [brand] to other people
Product Involvement	PI1	Beauty product is very important to me personally
	PI2	Compared with other products, beauty product is essential to me
	PI3	I'm interested in beauty products

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