


Brand Authenticity Effects On Brand Image : Brand Study Of Converse Sneakers For Gen Z

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Brand Image, Continuity, Originality, Perceived Value.	The swift transformation of the fashion industry, driven by the distinct preferences of Generation Z, has turned sneakers from mere functional footwear into emblems of social status and personal identity. Among the leading brands in this sector is Converse, which consistently secures its status as a top brand through a blend of quality, exclusivity, and authenticity. However, the influence of brand authenticity—comprising originality, perceived value, and continuity—on shaping brand image remains insufficiently explored. This study examines how these aspects of brand authenticity affect the brand image of Converse sneakers among Generation Z in Jabodetabek. Utilizing purposive sampling, 100 respondents aged 18 to 27 participated in this research via an online questionnaire. The analysis conducted with SEM-PLS reveals that originality does not have a significant impact on brand image, while perceived value and continuity positively and significantly influence it. These findings underscore the importance of perceived quality and a consistent brand identity in establishing a robust brand image. It is recommended that Converse focus on delivering exceptional value and maintaining its authenticity to foster loyalty within the Gen Z demographic.
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INTRODUCTION

As digital culture and technology evolve, so does the local fashion market. The growing market is populated by many well-known brands that have become the world's fashion mecca. Fashion today is not just about clothes, it has extended to things like accessories and shoes. Fashion represents lifestyle, culture, way of life, and embodies how people want to present themselves and how they choose not to (JUNG, 2023). Fashion is not just clothes, for Gen Z following trends whether it is expensive clothes, sneakers, or accessories from well-known designers is an obligation, social media involvement cannot be separated from the development of this luxury clothing trend (Chae et al., 2020). Gen Z is willing to queue for days at the launch of the product. Not to be separated from that, they sometimes resell these items at a price 3 to 4 times the purchase price. According to (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018) Indonesia, the fashion industry contributes to GDP of around 18.01 percent with a growth rate of 4.05 percent annually. Indicating that the development of the fashion industry

in Indonesia has great potential, directly proportional to its economy which continues to grow with an increase of 5.04% per year by 2023 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

For Gen Z, sneakers have gone from being a functional item to a symbol of their social status. This phenomenon is interesting in that well-known brands now not only focus on product quality but how this brand can represent the identity of its users. Brand authenticity acts as a bridge that connects the values held by the brand and consumer expectations of the brand (Morhart et al., 2015). Gen Z, which is always aware of social issues and the global environment, likes brands that have transparency, are sensitive to social issues, and are sustainable. Gen Z is more emotionally attached to a particular brand that they like, this is a challenge for how the brand builds exclusive and sustainable products. This is supported by research (Fritz et al., 2017) which shows that brand authenticity plays an important role in creating a deeper emotional connection between consumers and brands, and increasing brand loyalty.

One of them is the Converse Shoe Brand, a 112-year-old industrial company that has been able to maintain the Converse brand until now. Surveys conducted by Top Brand Index from 2017 to 2020, Converse has always been included in the Top Brand Award. Throughout 2017 to 2020 Converse has always managed to become the top brand winner by being in the first position. Converse with a percentage value of 34.6% in 2017 won first place then in 2018 Converse is also still in first place even though this time the percentage value has decreased, which is only 20.89%. In 2019 Converse remained in first position with an increase in percentage value of 47.8% which then in the following year, 2020, Converse's percentage value increased to 48.1%. The Top Brand Award itself is an award given to the winning brand based on the results of a mind share, market share and commitment share survey organized by the Frontier Consulting Group (TOP BRAND AWARD, 2021). According to Keller (1993), brand image is defined as the perception of a brand shaped by the associations that consumers hold in their memories. Converse not only delivers high-quality products but also highlights its authenticity through unique designs and the values inherent in its offerings. The brand's approach of partnering with well-known personalities for limited-time releases introduces an aspect of exclusivity, which enhances the perceived value and uniqueness for consumers. This sense of exclusivity plays a crucial role in shaping brand image, particularly among Generation Z, who often link such products to social status and specific lifestyles. A genuine and exclusive brand image fosters a feeling of belonging to an elite community among consumers, thus deepening their emotional bond with the brand (Morhart et al., 2015).

Previous research conducted by (Ligaraba et al., 2024) analyzed how brand authenticity influences luxury sneaker brand preferences among young people (18-35 years old) in South Africa with the mediating variable being brand image. The scope of the study examined eight dimensions of brand authenticity such as (originality, authenticity, continuity, perceived value, logo, integrity, brand signature, and brand heritage). While the current study focuses on three elements of brand authenticity (Originality, Perceived Value, and Continuity). The current study focuses on the Authenticity of the Converse brand towards its brand image among Gen Z Indonesia.

This research aims to investigate the effect of brand authenticity on the brand image of Converse sneakers within Generation Z. It also looks into how authenticity plays a role in creating a favorable brand image, especially as Gen Z, with its unique preferences, increasingly influences the market. By comprehending this relationship, marketers can formulate more focused and effective strategies to engage and retain young consumers, whose impact in the marketplace continues to expand.

Brand Authenticity

Brand authenticity is a concept that assesses the extent to which a brand is considered genuine and trustworthy by consumers. Coary (2013) states that brand authenticity includes elements such as uniqueness, tradition and culture, all of which play an important role in influencing purchasing decisions. Morhart et al. (2015) added that *brand authenticity* consists of three components: *originality*, *perceived value*, and *continuity*, which together shape consumers' perceptions of the brand. For Gen Z consumers in particular, values such as brand honesty and transparency are highly valued, especially in the context of luxury products. Bruhn et al. (2012) emphasize that brand authenticity also contributes to the formation of a strong emotional connection, which in turn strengthens brand image and increases consumer loyalty, particularly for products such as luxury sneakers. Therefore, it is important to understand how brands can create perceived value through customer experiences and social interactions.

Brand Image

(Aaker, 1996) states that *brand image* refers to the overall perception that consumers have of a brand, which includes various elements such as product quality, reputation, and the values represented. This brand image is influenced by a number of factors, including the level of trust and emotional associations formed. In the context of luxury sneakers, this image is shaped by how consumers, especially Gen Z, perceive the values and narrative behind the product. They tend to choose brands that not only offer high quality but also match their identity and lifestyle (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2005). In addition, Hennigs et al. (2012) noted that luxury sneakers are often associated with status, exclusivity, and a certain lifestyle, which are important factors in purchase decision-making among consumers of luxury products. Further research is needed to explore originality measurement methods and their applicability in marketing strategies.

Originality

Brand authenticity is a critical aspect of brand genuineness that significantly influences brand image. Napoli et al. (2014) emphasized that authenticity greatly contributes to positive consumer perceptions, especially in the luxury goods industry. Luxury sneaker brands that are authentic not only capture attention but also build trust and loyalty among young consumers, particularly Gen Z. With a growing appreciation for creativity and innovation, Gen Z tends to prefer sneakers that offer uniqueness in design and storytelling, as they view them as a way to express individuality and self-identity. Therefore, an in-depth analysis is essential to understand how brands can build and sustain a positive image in today's digital era.

Continuity

Continuity in brand authenticity is critical to maintaining relevance and consumer trust, especially in an era of rapidly changing trends. Napoli et al. (2014) state that continuity in brand image and value makes it easier for consumers to recognize and connect with the brand, creating a strong emotional attachment. For Generation Z, who value originality and integrity (Fromm & Read, 2018), this continuity helps build long-term loyalty. Beverland (2005) emphasizes that maintaining product value and authenticity makes consumers feel more trusting and comfortable. In the case of Converse, continuity is seen through iconic designs that remain relevant across generations, reflecting the brand's commitment to authenticity that is valued by young consumers (Fritz et al., 2017). Keller (1993) asserts that brand image continuity strengthens associations in the minds of consumers, increasing loyalty, while Chae et al. (2020) add that social media-supported continuity helps brands extend reach and emotional attachment, keeping Converse authentic and relevant.

Originality and Brand Image

Research by Rodrigues et al. (2021) emphasizes that the authenticity dimension in brands can significantly strengthen brand image. Consumers tend to have a stronger emotional attachment to brands that are considered authentic and unique, especially in products that reflect cultural values and traditions. In this context, originality not only attracts consumers' attention, but also helps build trust and long-term loyalty. These findings suggest that originality as an element of brand authenticity is highly effective in creating a positive image and deep emotional connection with consumers.

H1: *Originality* has a positive effect on *Brand Image*

Perceived Value and Brand Image

Research conducted by Sumarno (2020) shows that consumers' perceived value strongly influences brand image, especially for products that emphasize exclusivity and status. This is relevant for Generation Z in the sneakers industry, where they seek not only physical products but also emotional and symbolic attachments to brands. For Gen Z, sneakers are not only seen as functional items, but also as identity and status statements, which enhance brand image when they perceive value for money.

H2: Perceived Value has a positive effect on Brand Image

Continuity and Brand Image

Continuity in brand authenticity plays a crucial role in establishing a positive brand image and creating an emotional bond between consumers and the brand, especially regarding Converse sneakers. Research conducted by Rodrigues et al. (2021) indicates that continuity, along with other authenticity factors such as originality, reliability, and naturalness, shapes how consumers perceive brand image. These results reinforce the idea that brand authenticity is a vital foundation for brand image, which in turn affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Consequently, the proposed hypothesis suggests that continuity in brand authenticity has a positive influence on brand image, thereby enhancing consumer trust and loyalty.

H3: Continuity positively influences Brand Image.

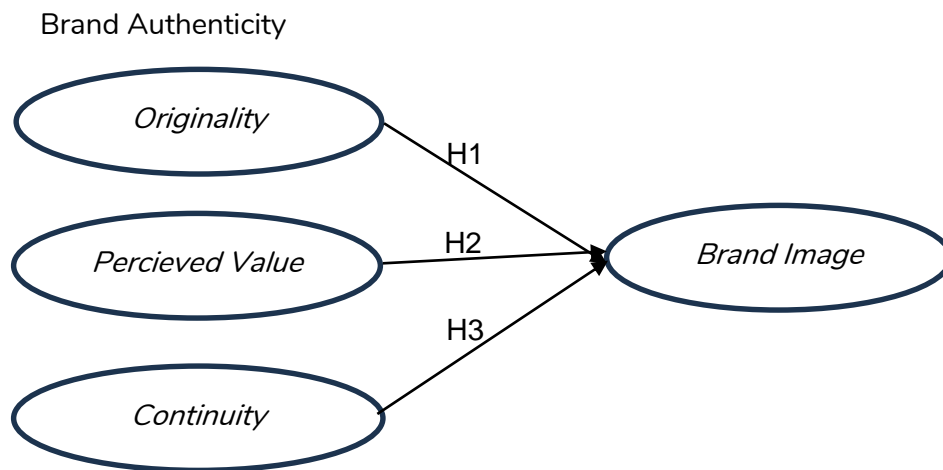


Figure 1. Research Framework

*)data source : (Ligaraba et al., 2024)

METHODS

This research utilizes a quantitative approach, which is appropriate for the study as it allows for the collection of extensive data through questionnaires (Creswell, 2016). Primary data was obtained through a survey conducted via Google Forms, featuring questions aimed at eliciting responses from potential participants. The demographics of respondents in this study are generation Z, born from 1997 to 2012, domiciled in Jabodetabek, occupation and income of respondents, and know Converse sneaker products. This study uses purposive sampling with a sample size of 100 respondents. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that relies on the researcher's judgment to select people (Berndt, 2020). This technique includes maximum variation sampling, expert sampling, and typical case sampling. This research was processed using Smart PLS Version 4.1.0.8. The steps used in Smart PLS are the first to use the PLS-SEM Algorithm to test the validity and reliability as well as the outer loading value. The second step uses Bootstrapping to test the research hypothesis. Measurements were conducted using a 4-point Likert scale, with respondents asked to rate their agreement with various statements given. The number of data collected was 109 respondents, after sorting there were some incomplete or invalid data, resulting in only 100 respondents. The data was examined using a multiple regression model, aiming to analyze the effect of brand authenticity on brand image on the Converse brand among Generation Z).

Tabel I. Measurement instrument items and statements

Item	Statement	References
Originality	Converse brand is different from other brands The Converse brand stands out among other brands I think the Converse brand is a unique brand The Converse brand insists on being different from the rest.	OR1 to OR4 (Bruhn et al., 2012)

Item	Statement	References
Perceived Value	I trust the brand quality of Converse	PV1 to PV3 (Ligaraba et al., 2024)
	Converse brand has very good quality The Converse brand offers advantages	
Continuity	I think the Converse brand is consistent over time	CO1 to CO4 (Bruhn et al., 2012)
	I think the Converse brand remains consistent with its identity	
	The Converse brand promises sustainability	
	The Converse brand has a clear concept and strives to realize it	
Brand Image	The Converse brand has a personality that sets it apart from competitors	BI1 to BI4 (Ligaraba et al., 2024)
	The Converse brand does not disappoint its customers	
	The Converse brand is one of the best brands on the market	
	The Converse brand is a strong brand in the market	

*)data source : (Bruhn et al., 2012), (Ligaraba et al., 2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Demographics

The participants in this research are Indonesian residents from the Jabodetabek area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) who are familiar with the Converse brand. Data was gathered using Google Forms, resulting in a total of 100 respondents. The demographic profile includes variables such as gender, birth year, occupation, monthly expenses, and place of residence.

The sample comprised 54 female respondents and 46 male respondents. Most participants were born between 2001 and 2004, totaling 77 individuals, followed by those born from 2005 to 2008 (11 individuals), from 1997 to 2000 (10 individuals), and from 2009 to 2012 (2 individuals). In terms of occupation, the largest group consisted of students, with 75 respondents, followed by university students (16 respondents), individuals in other professions (6 respondents), and freelancers (3 respondents).

Regarding monthly expenses, the largest segment reported spending between IDR 1,000,000 and IDR 2,000,000 (45 respondents), followed by those spending between IDR 2,000,000 and IDR 3,000,000 (39 respondents). Additionally, 10 respondents indicated monthly expenses of less than IDR 1,000,000, while 6 respondents reported spending between IDR 3,000,000 and IDR 5,000,000.

Validity, Hypothesis and Reliability Test Result

Validity Test Result

This research performed validity tests, reliability tests, and hypothesis testing on the variables of Originality (OR), Perceived Value (PV), Continuity (CO), and Brand Image (BI).

The purpose of the validity test is to assess whether a measurement instrument is valid or invalid (Janna & Herianto, 2021). A questionnaire is deemed valid if its items accurately measure the intended constructs. The primary criteria for evaluating whether the validity threshold is achieved include the external loading values and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Sherlyta et al., 2024).

Table 2. Validity Test Result

Indicator	Loading Factor	Description
OR1	0,770	Valid
OR2	0,858	Valid
OR3	0,812	Valid
OR4	0,801	Valid
PV1	0,706	Valid
PV2	0,776	Valid
PV3	0,802	Valid
CO1	0,953	Valid
CO2	0,717	Valid
CO3	0,955	Valid
CO4	0,863	Valid
BI1	0,792	Valid
BI2	0,862	Valid
BI3	0,805	Valid
BI4	0,760	Valid

*)data source : Primary Data Processed in 2024

Table 2 shows that all indicators meet the feasibility aspects of the research variables with outer loading values exceeding 0.7, providing a strong basis for research. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.5 so that the factors explain most of the total variance of the original data (Araújo et al., 2023). The highest outer loading value on a construct can indicate a significant similarity between related indicators.

Reliability Test Result

Then proceed with testing the reliability of each variable by looking at the results of the Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability values as in table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Test Result

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BI	0.820	0.825	0.881	0.649
CO	0.896	0.904	0.930	0.770
OR	0.827	0.837	0.884	0.657
PV	0.647	0.666	0.806	0.581

*) data source : Primary Data Processed in 2024

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures the average squared factor loadings for a construct, with a threshold value set at >0.5. An AVE greater than 0.5 indicates that the construct accounts for more than half of the variance in its indicators. While the Perceived

Value variable does not meet the stricter threshold of >0.7 , it does exceed the minimum requirement of 0.5, rendering it acceptable. The other variables surpass the 0.7 threshold, confirming their validity. Among all the variables, Continuity has the highest AVE value at 0.770, whereas Perceived Value has the lowest AVE value at 0.581.

Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis results can be accepted if the significance level (P-Value) or sig is 5% (0.05). The results of hypothesis testing with the Bootstrapping test can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Result

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Originality -> Brand Image	0,138	0,157	0,158	0,877	0,381
Perceived Value -> Brand Image	0,379	0,372	0,160	2,373	0,018
Continuity -> Brand Image	0,220	0,218	0,009	2,216	0,027

*) data source : Primary Data Processed in 2024

Based on the test results in the table above, the Originality variable has a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.138$) to Brand Image, but the effect is not significant because the P value of 0.381 is more than 0.05. Thus, hypothesis H1 is rejected. Furthermore, the Perceived Value variable has a positive ($\beta = 0.379$) and significant effect on Brand Image with a P value of 0.018, which indicates that hypothesis H2 is accepted. Then, the Continuity variable also shows a positive ($\beta=0.220$) and significant effect on Brand Image with a P value of 0.027, so hypothesis H3 is accepted.

Discussion

This research investigates how brand authenticity—comprising originality, perceived value, and continuity—affects the brand image of Converse sneakers among Generation Z. The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that originality does not have a significant impact on the brand image of Converse sneakers for this demographic. In other words, Generation Z tends to prioritize factors other than originality when assessing a sneaker brand's image.

Conversely, perceived value shows a significantly positive correlation with brand image. This finding supports previous research by Ligaraba et al. (2024), which emphasizes that consumer-perceived value is crucial in shaping a brand's image. Additionally, the continuity variable also positively influences brand image, aligning with Rodrigues et al. (2021), who identified continuity as a vital component of brand authenticity that affects both brand image and enhances consumer satisfaction and emotional attachment.

These findings suggest that while originality has a positive association with the brand image of Converse sneakers among Generation Z, its impact is not significant. Therefore, it is essential for companies to concentrate on improving perceived value and implementing

sustainable practices, as these elements significantly affect the brand image of Converse sneakers within this generation.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of brand authenticity including originality, perceived value, and continuity on the brand image of Converse shoes among Gen Z in the Jabodetabek area. First, Originality does not have a significant impact on Brand Image for Converse sneakers among Gen Z, indicating that respondents in this demographic do not prioritize originality when assessing the brand image of Converse shoes. Second, Perceived Value has a significant impact on Brand Image, this shows how Converse meets consumer expectations for the quality of their products, how Converse products meet their expectations regarding style, comfort and durability. Furthermore, how the superiority perceived by consumers provides emotional value that makes Converse feel more comfortable and desirable to the local shoe market. Finally, Continuity also has a significant positive impact on Brand Image, this shows how important it is to maintain consistent brand values and identities over time as a way to improve brand perception among Gen Z. Recommendations for future research include several important steps that can be taken. Further research can expand additional dimensions of brand authenticity to provide a more comprehensive view. In addition, studies also need to be conducted with a wider geographic scope to understand cultural differences in perceptions of brand authenticity and brand image. Research should also link brand image to consumer behavior, particularly how brand image influences purchase intention and brand loyalty among Generation Z. Finally, it is important to analyze the impact of desirability on brand authenticity and perceived brand image, particularly in the context of ethical consumerism.

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