DIJEFA: Dinasti International Journal of Economics, Finance & Accounting
E-ISSN: 2721-303X
P-ISSN: 2721-3021
https://dinastipub.org/DIJEFA dinasti.info@gmail.com +62 811 7404 455
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38035/dijefa.v6i6

Country of Origin, Brand Image, and Customer Loyalty: The Investigation of Users of Skincare Products

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of country of origin (COO) and brand image (BI) on customer loyalty (CL), and the influence of COO on BI. Using survey data collected between March and April 2024 and a covariance-based structural equation model, this study confirms three positive relationships, as supported by the goodness-of-fit indices. The higher the COO and the BI, the higher the CL, and the higher the COO, the higher the BI. Practically, this study suggests that manufacturers of local and foreign skincare products prioritize creating a brand image that fosters consumer loyalty by focusing on producing safe products for consumers, and the company hiring influencers must inform them with the necessary knowledge and benefits, supported by their testimony after using the skincare products freely given in advance.

Keywords: brand image, country of origin, customer loyalty, skincare products.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, public behavior has been significantly altered. Unlike before the pandemic, during the pandemic, people wear facemasks to avoid inhaling droplets from infected individuals (Tesfaldet & Ndeh, 2022). They also avoid crowded places to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (Stroom et al., 2021). Instead, people must do all activities from home, such as praying, studying, and working from home (Melinda & Fitriyah, 2020) through online platforms (Murwendayoko, 2023; Tj & Tanuraharjo, 2020; Xiao et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, people working from home have more leisure time. Therefore, they use it to engage in activities such as painting and exercising (Morse et al., 2021).

Additionally, purchasing skincare and makeup products during the COVID-19 pandemic (Effendy & Mustikadara, 2024) via e-commerce platforms is a common practice among Indonesians (Derivanti et al., 2022). Unlike makeup goods, they purchase and use skincare products (Effendy & Mustikadara, 2024). It occurs because they focus on health and its long-term benefits, such as resolving fundamental skin problems. Moreover, this tendency is likely to persist until the normal situation returns (Anggraeni et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, skincare sales in 2020 grew from the previous year and accounted for the largest share of total revenue between 2020 and 2023, as seen in Figure 1. The highest sales of

skincare products occur through ongoing interactions and repeat purchases by loyal customers of local and foreign brands (Amilinda & Ilftiriah, 2025).

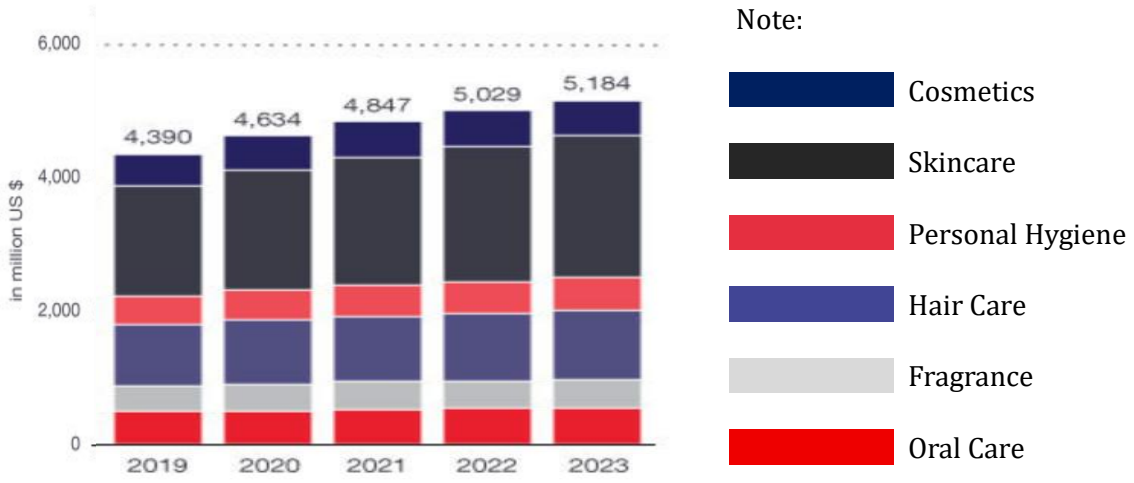

Figure 1. Skincare Market Share Growth in Indonesia
Source: Modified from Utami and Harsoyo (2024), taken from Pasxmedia Holding (2020)

Generally, based on the previous studies, the CL is positively affected by country of origin (COO) (Ayyildiz & Cengiz, 2007; Hasan & Noorliana, 2022; Monica et al., 2019; Šapić et al., 2018) and brand image (BI) (Ab Hamid et al., 2023; Abbas, 2024; Dam & Dam, 2021; Mulyati et al., 2024; Permadhi et al., 2024; Wan Nawang et al., 2024). Unfortunately, these facts are inconsistent, as evidenced by studies that show no association between COO and CL (Reonald et al., 2025) and between BI and CL (Haryadi & Syharuddin, 2023). Additionally, several researchers have revealed a positive relationship between COO and brand image (Blanco-Encomienda et al., 2024; Ellen & Tunjungsari, 2019; Furukawa & Terasaki, 2025; Heriyati et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2020; Prabowo et al., 2019; Suria et al., 2016; Xu, 2021). However, this result is unpredictable, as Li and Setiowati (2023) document no association between COO and BI.

Previous studies have yielded inconsistent results across COO, BI, and CL; hence, this study aims to reexamine these relationships in the context of skincare. The first is between the COO and CL. The second is between the BI and CL. The third is between COO and BI. It also employs users of skincare, as similar to Abbas (2024), differing from scholars who utilize consumers of global goods (Šapić et al., 2018), Korean cosmetic (Ellen & Tunjungsari, 2019), Grab-Foods (Haryadi & Syharuddin, 2023), hot spring (Ayyildiz & Cengiz, 2007), branded foods (Reonald et al., 2025), supermarket (Dam & Dam, 2021), coffee shops (Mulyati et al., 2024), fashions (Hasan & Noorliana, 2022; Heriyati et al., 2024; Monica et al., 2019; Suria et al., 2016), hydraulic excavator (Prabowo et al., 2019), electric household appliances (Nguyen et al., 2020), electric vehicles (Li & Setiowati, 2023), telecommunication service providers (Ab Hamid et al., 2023; Wan Nawang et al., 2024), smartphones (Blanco-Encomienda et al., 2024; Xu, 2021), and restaurants (Permadhi et al., 2024).

METHOD

The variables employed in this investigation are country of origin (COO), brand image (BI), and customer loyalty (CL). The indicators of COO from Lie and Bernarto (2019) are chosen because they affect customer perceptions of technology, reputation, innovation, and influencers. Moreover, the indicators of brand image from Lie and Bernarto (2019) are selected because they reflect uniqueness, such as an upright image, high quality, and a good-looking appearance. Finally, the CL indicators proposed by Habibi and Zakipour (2023) are selected

because they reflect actions taken after consumers become loyal to the brand. Exhaustively, the related indicators for COO, BI, and CL are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Variable Definition

Variable	Indicator	Source
Country of origin	The country where the skin care product comes from: a. Uses advanced technology to produce it (COO1) b. Has a good reputation for producing it (COO2) c. Has good innovation for resulting in it (COO3) d. Uses influencer to promote it (COO4)	Lie and Bernarto (2019)
Brand image	This skincare product has an upright image (BI1) and high quality (BI2), making me look good-looking like a country idol (BI3).	Lie and Bernarto (2019)
Customer Loyalty	I intend to repurchase this skincare product (CL1). I always give positive feedback to others on the skincare website (CL2). I recommend others to buy this skincare product (CL3) I prioritize buying this skincare product (CL4). I rarely buy a similar skin care product (CL5).	Modified from Habibi and Zakipour (2023)

The population in this study consists of customers of skincare products. Due to the unknown population, this study employs a snowball sampling technique based on networks (Hartono, 2014) and strong connections with respondents (Augustine & Kristaung, 2019). Unfortunately, after distributing the online questionnaire, this study received 188 responses from Java, outside Java, and abroad. According to Sugiyono (2022), responses to the indicators are measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = extreme disagreement, 5 = extreme agreement). Given that this number is below 200, this research employs the variance-based structural equation model (VBSEM), as suggested by Ghozali (2021), and the intended models are displayed in Equations 1 and 2.

$$CL = \gamma_1 COO + \beta_1 BI + \xi_1 \quad \text{(Eq. 1)}$$
$$BI = \gamma_2 COO + \xi_2 \quad \text{(Eq. 2)}$$

Variance-based SEM (VBSEM) does not require normality testing (Ghozali, 2021). However, it still needs validity and reliability testing. Therefore, the loading factor and average variance extracted must be larger than 0.7 and 0.5, respectively, to demonstrate an accurate response, and composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha must be greater than 0.7 to verify reliable responses (Hair et al., 2022). Besides, this model must fit the empirical data based on goodness-of-fit measures, such as the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), which should be below 0.10 (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). In VBSEM, multicollinearity is examined using the variance inflation factor (VIF) for the structural model; it is deemed absent if the VIF is less than 5 (Hair et al., 2021). Then, to be predictive, the models must have Q-squared above 0. The R-squared criteria, as defined by Ghozali (2021), are 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 to indicate the large, middle, and small contributions of explanatory variables to the explained variable. Finally, this study uses Smart PLS to display these values, as Ghozali (2021) recommends.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey, conducted between March 2023 and April 2024, collected data from 188 users of skin care products in Indonesia (183) and abroad (3). Their features, classified by age, domicile, product usage situation, and country of origin, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The features of users joining the survey

Features	Description	Sum	Ratio
Location	Java (Indonesia)	180	95.74%
	Outside Java (Indonesia)	3	1.60%
	Abroad	5	2.66%
Age	Below 15	1	0.53%
	Between 16 and 25	183	97.34%
	Above 26	4	2.13%
The time to use the skin care product	Every day	117	62.23%
	When going to places that are ray-excessively exposed places	24	12.77%
	Infrequently or never	35	18.62%
	In the night	12	6.38%
The country where the skin care products are from	Indonesia	104	55.32%
	South Korea	60	31.91%
	The United States	3	1.60%
	Other	21	11.17%

Based on age, the majority of users are between 16 and 25 years old (97.34%). Primarily, they use skin care products daily (62.23%), and the majority of these products are from Indonesia (55.32%). By age, the smallest group is those under 15 (0.53%). Furthermore, they tend to use skin care products at night (6.38%), and their products are predominantly from the United States (1.60%).

In the initial phase of the validity examination, the loading factor (LF) of COO4 is lower than 0.7, specifically 0.594. Hence, this study removes COO4. As a result, LF for COO1, COO2, COO3, BI1, BI2, BI3, BI4, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, and CL5 are above 0.7: 0.845, 0.936, 0.950, 0.869, 0.918, 0.921, 0.894, 0.714, 0.879, 0.802, and 0.800, one-to-one. Thus, accurate answers are obtained, as confirmed by AVE values exceeding 0.5 for COO (0.832), BI (0.811), and CL (0.631). Furthermore, the consistent response also exists because composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha are above 0.7 for COO (0.937 and 0.900), BI (0.945 and 0.922), and CL (0.895 and 0.853) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Final validity and reliability examination results of the country of origin, brand image, and customer loyalty

Indicator	LF	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
COO1	0.845	0.832	0.937	0.900
COO2	0.936			
COO3	0.950			
BI1	0.869	0.811	0.945	0.922
BI2	0.918			
BI3	0.921			
BI4	0.894			
CL1	0.714	0.631	0.895	0.853
CL2	0.879			
CL3	0.769			
CL4	0.802			
CL5	0.800			

Table 4 presents SRMR, VIF, R-square, and Q-square, and the VBSEM estimation results. In this table, SRMR is lower than 0.1: 0.081; hence, the model fits the empirical data. Besides, the VIFs for COO and BI in the CL model and for COO in the BI model are all lower than 5: 1.303, 1.303, and 1; therefore, multicollinearity does not exist. Meanwhile, Q-square for the CL and BI models is higher than 0: 0.463 and 0.184, respectively; thus, the predictive models exist.

The R-squared of 0.744 indicates a substantial contribution of COO and BI to the CL model, as it exceeds 0.67. Lastly, the R-squared of 0.232 indicates a semi-moderate contribution of COO to the BI model, as it lies between 0.19 and 0.33. This low R-squared value shows that there are other variables that have not yet been studied in this investigation.

Table 4. The estimated result of VBSEM

Directional Impact	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	t-statistic	Probability	VIF	Q-squared	R-squared
H_1: COO → CL	0.801	0.032	24.833	0.000	1.303	0.463	0.744
H_2: BI → CL	0.482	0.063	7.643	0.000	1.303		
H_3: COO → BI	0.116	0.047	2.467	0.014	1	0.184	0.232
Standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)						0.081	

The first hypothesis is acceptable because its probability is lower than 5% (0.000), indicating that the country of origin (COO) positively influences customer loyalty. COO refers to the location where a product is designed, manufactured, and branded (Johnson et al., 2016). Consumers use COO as the standard for judging product quality rather than relying on missing information (Lusk et al., 2006). In the research context, COO is reflected in the efforts of related producers to utilize advanced technology with natural substances derived from nature, which are safe for the skin, and are supported by reputable countries that regulate safety for users. Influencers should be involved in the promotion. This situation will make customers loyal after they purchase the products for the first time. Therefore, this result confirms the findings of Ayyildiz and Cengiz (2007), Šapić et al. (2018), and Monica et al. (2019), who investigated consumers from Turkey, Serbia, and Indonesia, as well as those of Hasan and Noorliana (2022), who studied Indonesians. On contrary, this positive tendency contradicts with Reonald et al (2025), who documented no effect of COO on CL in Indonesia when investigating the McDonald's consumers during the 2025 conflicts between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The second hypothesis is supported because its probability is lower than 5% (0.000), indicating that brand image positively influences customer loyalty. For the company, brand image is an essential component of a marketing strategy (Ge & Ge, 2023) and a tool (Dam & Dam, 2021). This image also reflects the consumer's perception, impression, and emotional response to the product's name, symbol, and cultural meaning (Ge & Ge, 2023), which differ from those of its competitors (Kotler et al., 2022). In this research, brand image is reflected in skincare quality, as verified by the National Agency of Drug and Food Control. Then, consumers must experience the upright image and good-looking appearance. Indeed, this situation will make customers loyal after they purchase the products for the first time. Therefore, this study aligns with Abbas (2024), who found a positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty among skincare customers in Indonesia. Even though using different objects, this result confirms Dam and Dam (2021) with supermarket consumers, Ab Hamid et al. (2023) and Wan Nawang et al. (2024) with users of Islamic banks and telecommunication service providers, respectively, and Mulyati et al. (2024) and Permadhi et al. (2024) based on the perception of customers of coffee shops and restaurants. On the contrary, this positive inclination differs from that of Haryadi and Syharuddin (2023), who found no association between BI and CL among users of Grab transportation applications.

The third hypothesis is supported, as the probability is below 5% (0.014), indicating that the country of origin positively influences brand image. It suggests that the better consumers' perceptions of the country of origin, the better the brand image. A better brand image means that consumers have a deep understanding of the products. For manufacturing companies producing and exporting skincare products, such as those in South Korea and the United States, familiarity with their skincare brands in Indonesia will be beneficial, as it will increase sales and revenue. Hence, this study confirms the findings of researchers who have demonstrated a

positive relationship between COO and BI, as reported by Suria et al. (2016), Ellen and Tunjungsari (2019), Prabowo et al. (2019), Nguyen et al. (2020), Xu (2021), Blanco-Encomienda et al. (2024), Heriyati et al. (2024), and Furukawa and Terasaki (2025). On the other hand, this positive propensity does not align with Li and Setiowati (2023), who found no association between COO and BI among buyers of Chinese electric vehicles in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

After investigating the perceptions of 188 users of skincare products, this study concludes that the more reasonable the country of origin (COO) and brand image (BI), the greater the loyalty of consumers. Besides, the more judicious the COO, the greater the brand image. At the very least, this result academically confirms the related evidence of previous scholars. Operationally, this study recommends that manufacturers of local and foreign skincare products prioritize building a brand image that fosters consumer loyalty by producing safe products. Furthermore, the company hiring influencers must equip them with the necessary knowledge, supported by their testimony after using the skincare products freely given in advance.

This study has some limitations. The first is the sampling method utilized, i.e., snowball sampling, which cannot be generalized from the result: It only gathers a limited young consumers aged 16–25, as the total dominant sample. Therefore, the next scholars are expected to use a probability technique, such as simple or stratified random sampling, to select respondents from the known population. The second is the determinants of brand image, still having a low R-squared of 0.232 (see Table 4). Hence, the next researcher can use the marketing mix elements as the exogenous factors, such as price, distribution, products, and promotion.

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