

Could Modify Marketing Mix with Relatability Factor Affect Consumers' Brand Advocacy at Small Medium Enterprises?: a Literature Review

Ayu Nur Utami Siwi Hariyati¹

¹Universitas Sumatera Utara

Jl. Dr. T. Mansur No.9, Padang Bulan, Kec. Medan Baru, Kota Medan, Indonesia

*Email: ayunurhariyati18@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article will bring a discussion about the relatability factor that applied to marketing mix strategy could result in consumers' brand advocacy. A business, big or small, needs its consumers, their loyalty, and their advocacy in order to gain maximum profit. Through this article, there will be an answer on how the applied relatability factor on marketing mix strategy could affect SMEs' brand advocacy. This study is using literature and systematic review to discuss the related topic. Incorporating various relatability factors into the marketing mix strategy does indeed make the company gain a positive impact, thus resulting in a positive effect on brand advocacy. Creating differentiation between competitors in a marketing mix could lead to a more impactful presence of SMEs in the market, and incorporating relatability into the marketing mix strategy is one way to gain the company many benefits in the future.

Keywords: brand advocacy, digital marketing, marketing mix, relatability

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INTRODUCTION

Before becoming big and worldwide scaled size, many businesses that are famous nowadays come from small and medium enterprises (SMEs). A business, big or small, needs its consumers, their loyalty, and their willingness to recommend the products or services to the people around the consumers themselves. The right product may guarantee the incoming consumers, and one company's consistency in business should ensure the consumers' loyalty, but not every consumer has the willingness to recommend what they already consume to other people for many reasons. This willingness then could be called a brand advocate.

Brand advocacy, if it is possessed by SMEs, could really affect and help the success of their business, because it could really elevate a brand through a word-of-mouth method (Sprout Social, 2023). Through various positive reviews left by brand advocates on the internet, SMEs could gain so many positive side effects from this phenomenon, such as increasing popularity and even sales, because consumers in today's age will definitely search online reviews or ratings before buying something.

Brand advocacy is one of the powerful marketing strategies (Sprout Social, 2023), because brand advocates could be SMEs' sources of evaluation through their critics and bits of advice related to their experience with no intention to harm the business. While doing that, brand advocates genuinely hope for the best for the business and continue to repurchase the products or services (Nasution, 2022). In order to achieve brand advocacy, SMEs need to do the best marketing strategy in order to gain a positive attitude from their consumers. Because a positive attitude toward SMEs is the most determinant factor that could affect consumers' intention to be a brand advocate (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2022).

People usually do not advocate things that they don't have a positive attitude towards (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2022), either dislike the products and services or have some kind of bad experience. In order to ensure SMEs consumer have a positive view of the products, SMEs need to do their best with the development of their products, best price offering, a good marketing strategy, find a suitable venue to do business, and have good and qualified employees. One company's ability to show a good brand attitude to consumers could influence their revisit intentions, and word-of-mouth (Foroudi et al., 2021), in other words, SME companies need their maximum capabilities to ensure their company is having the best brand attitude by developing their product, promotion, price, place, and people to the best.

Entrepreneurship that most SMEs have is positively affected by the marketing mix, and marketing mix also has a huge impact on SMEs' promotion (Ghezali & Boudi, 2021). Because the marketing mix could hugely impact a company's image and consumers' brand perception through promotion, success will be also bound to the great marketing mix strategy. And strong brand perceptions is very crucial to SMEs' thriving (Kemp et al, 2012). When company has a strong brand associations, through consumer's perception, both consumer and company could develop a deep connection that could result in gaining consumers as brand advocates (Kemp et al., 2012). At last, we could argue that a good development in marketing mix strategy could affect turning consumers into brand advocates.

Marketing mix refers to the marketing elements that could be controlled which together form basic consumers' perception of a company (Judd, 2003). Creating differentiation between competitors in a marketing mix could lead to a more impactful presence of SMEs in the market. Traditionally, the marketing mix consists of four points which often be called 4Ps, that include products, prices, places, and promotion. All of these

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factors heavily influenced how consumers see SMEs, moreover their brand advocacy. However, in this digital era, those four points are not reliant anymore, digitalization changes how human lifestyle and interaction, including how people do business, which results in additional factors affecting the marketing mix. Various aspects of the marketing mix, the 7Ps, which are product, price, place, promotion, process, and physical evidence, could be used as an attempt to achieve consumer satisfaction (Yuliantine et al., 2018). Because marketing is basically still an art, SMEs need to creatively create a combination of marketing mix aspects to advance the short and long-term interests of a company.

The way people do business significantly changed through the years, and SMEs need to change their way of interacting with consumers. Consumers in all-digital-modern-day as like now no more looking to shop from what they do not have a relationship with. Digital consumers nowadays prefer a business that has a more honorable cause or purpose, not only a profit-oriented business (Lane, 2021). Being connected and relatable is considered one of the most important traits between companies to this day, relatability does indeed affect how consumers see the company, their attitude and behavior are heavily influenced by the company's attitude. SMEs obviously need to practice this trait as the main focus while making any of the company's strategies.

An influencer or company that has big relatability with its target consumer has a bigger impact and deeper connection rather the one company that simply has huge popularity. The relevancy of a company to consumers and their life hold a big power in steering the wheel of mass opinion (Harden-Henry, 2020). Consumers nowadays rather choose from a company that has big relevance to their life than just any company that only focuses on profit-making without showcasing any deep connection to its consumers. Relatability when done properly could result in soaring brand sentiment that could change everything (Harden-Henry, 2020).

By being relatable, SMEs could be more trusted by their target consumers. A company could showcase and prove its credibility. Relatability also enables a company to display empathy and feeling that are needed by consumers, behave more personally and humanely, and also seem more reliable (Bergér, 2022). SMEs could try to be more relatable which could gain trust and connection and could possibly meet the company's target.

One of the reasons why SMEs should apply the relatability aspect to their marketing mix strategy is because SMEs tend to have several weaknesses due to their new and undeveloped state, sometimes SMEs have difficulties in standardizing their products, or making the marketing plan to show up their company (Putra, 2021). This unstandard practice could cause SMEs' products not to be properly absorbed by the market. Improving all of the aspects marketing mix will definitely help the SMEs to achieve their goal. Relatability is all about connection and relationship, also the interaction need to be personal. If a company do a more personal interaction with their consumers, it will allow the company to issue a specific message that cater to the target consumers (Dominici, 2009), because people tend to be attracted to something more personal to them. The advertising strategy will be using more personas or characters who are more relatable to the audience. Marketing content in general needs relatability so much in order to relate closer to the consumers. That is why influencers will have the most power in today's marketing movement because as far as consumers feel the relatability with the influencer, they will be influenced to do the purchase (Harden-Henry, 2020) and could hopefully become an advocate.

Brand advocacy speaks a lot about how an individual recommends one product or service, a high self-representation between the product and the consumer will likely make the influence to buy grows stronger (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2022). SMEs could

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consider this as they produce their strategy to gain profit and consumers because applying relatability may possibly influence the brand advocacy from the consumers. Building on these premises, this research aims to identify whether applying relatability to SMEs’ marketing mix strategy really affects their consumers’ brand advocacy.

METHOD

This study intends to review and analyze existing research on related topic, and present evidence based on the findings. This study will be using systematic review and start by finding research gaps from related research related to the topic. The journals will be listed, and this research will only use the Emerald Group Publishing database as the reference due to its focus on high-quality research, published in peer-reviewed journals, acknowledged conferences, and books. Some keywords are used to narrow down the scope of the research such as, “digital marketing, marketing, marketing mix, relatability, consumer interaction, brand loyalty, and brand advocacy”.

In order to filter the most fitted references from various articles, this study implements some methods, which are:

1. The papers need to use the English language
2. The articles selected are only the ones from 2018 onward
3. The articles refer to digital marketing, marketing, marketing mix, relatability, consumer interaction, brand loyalty, and brand advocacy

After about 20 articles were chosen and reviewed, to understand whether applying relatability to SMEs’ marketing mix strategy indeed affects their consumers’ brand advocacy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, related articles will be listed and analyzed regarding the used methodology. The table below contains selected articles from the Emerald Group Publishing database for this literature review.

Table 1. Systematic Literature Review on Marketing Mix, Relatability & Brand Advocacy

No.	Year	Author(s)	Article Title	Journal Title
1.	2018	Nagaraj Samala, Sapna Singh	Millennial’s engagement with fashion brands: A moderated mediation model of brand engagement with self-concept, involvement, and knowledge	Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal
2.	2018	Miguel Ángel Moliner, Diego Monferrer, Marta Estrada	Consequences of customer engagement and customer selfbrand connection	Journal of Services Marketing
3.	2018	Fedric Kujur & Saumya Singh	Emotions as predictor for consumer engagement in YouTube advertisement	Journal of Advances in Management Research
4.	2019	Ding Hooi Ting, Amir Zaib Abbasi, & Sohel Ahmed	Examining the mediating role of social interactivity between	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics

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			customer engagement and brand loyalty	
5.	2019	Devika Vashisht	Effect of interactivity and congruence on brand advocacy and brand acceptance	Arts and the Market
6.	2019	Jin-Ae Kang, Glenn T. Hubbard & Sookyeong Hong	Gender and credibility in branded storytelling	Gender in Management: An International Journal
7.	2019	Hemant Sashittal, Avan Jassawalla	Preliminary evidence of brand acquaintancing on Snapchat	Marketing Intelligence & Planning
8.	2020	Jenna Jacobson	You are a brand: social media managers’ personal branding and “the future audience”	Journal of Product & Brand Management
9.	2020	Hyojung Park & Yangzhi Jiang	A human touch and content matter for consumer engagement on social media	Corporate Communications: An International Journal
10.	2020	Oliver Cruz-Milan	Hotels’ marketing mix responses at insecurity-stricken destinations: a study in the US–Mexico border	International Hospitality Review
11.	2020	Ville Lahtinen, Timo Dietrich & Sharyn Rundle-Thiele	Long live the marketing mix. Testing the effectiveness of the commercial marketing mix in a social marketing context	Journal of Social Marketing
12.	2020	Muhammad Azeem Abro, Rohaizat Baharun & Ahsan Zubair	Information credibility and organizational feedback; a solution to plethora of consumer advocacy, brand avoidance and community usefulness	The Bottom Line
13.	2021	Davood Ghorbanzadeh & Atena Rahehagh	Emotional brand attachment and brand love: the emotional bridges in the process of transition from satisfaction to loyalty	Rajagiri Management Journal
14.	2021	Mollika Ghosh	Product placement by social media homefluencers during new normal	South Asian Journal of Marketing
15.	2021	Evmorfia Karampournioti & Klaus-Peter Wiedmann	Storytelling in online shops: the impacts on explicit and implicit user experience, brand perceptions and behavioral intention	Internet Research
16.	2021	Fatima Ghezali & Abdessamad Boudi	The moderating effect of information technology capabilities on the relationship between marketing mix and corporate entrepreneurship	PSU Research Review

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17.	2022	Sasu Tuominen, Helen Reijonen, Gabor Nagy, Andrea Buratti & Tommi Laukkanen	Customer-centric strategy driving innovativeness and business growth in international markets	International Marketing Review
18.	2022	Maria Fregidou-Malama, Ehsanul Huda Chowdhury & Akmal S. Hyder	International marketing strategy of emerging market firms: the case of Bangladesh	Journal of Asia Business Studies

Eighteen scientific papers from 2018 to 2022 were identified as research samples and then thoroughly analyzed. Most of these papers are indirectly related to all of the used variables in this study yet still relevant to the keywords of the topic. After analyzing all of the samples, there were found some key definitions that connect all the variables of this study. Below is the table of the key definitions from the sampled paper.

Table 2. Key Search Definitions on Consumer's Interaction, Relatability & Entertainment Factor

Key Search Definition	Author(s)	Key Contribution to the Topic
Relatability has a positive effect on brand advocacy	Nagaraj Samala, Sapna Singh (2018)	High involvement enhances a positive relationship between brand love, brand engagement, and brand advocacy, engagement with a self-concept plays a high moderating rule.
	Fedric Kujur & Saumya Singh (2018)	Positive emotional appeals like contentment, happiness, and love have a positive influence on consumer engagement.
	Ding Hooi Ting, Amir Zaib Abbasi, & Sohel Ahmed (2019)	Empirical results reveal that there is a significant and positive impact of social interactivity on consumer engagement behavior and brand loyalty.
	Devika Vashisht (2019)	High-interactive game, congruent condition results in higher brand advocacy and superior brand acceptance.
	Hemant Sashittal, Avan Jassawalla (2019)	Social media users' fear of self-disclosure triggers a search for acquaintances on the medium, acquaintances are sought over friends and intimates.
	Muhammad Azeem Abro, Rohaizat Baharun & Ahsan Zubair (2020)	There is a strong relationship between consumer advocacy and society's usefulness.
	Davood Ghorbanzadeh & Atena Rahehagh (2021)	The results showed that brand love is the strongest antecedent of brand loyalty and are the only variable that directly influences brand loyalty in comparison to satisfaction and emotional brand attachment.

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Incorporating various relatability factors into the marketing mix strategy will gain a positive impact on the company	Jin-Ae Kang, Glenn T. Hubbard & Sookyeong Hong (2019)	There was a relationship between a male speaker’s perceived authoritative and audiences’ favorability to the ad, but no such relationship when the speaker was a woman.
	Miguel Ángel Moliner, Diego Monferrer, Marta Estrada (2018)	The direct experience between the brand and consumers has a higher impact on profit.
	Jenna Jacobson (2020)	Personal branding practices target the future audience, which includes unknown and unanticipated audiences.
	Hyojung Park & Yangzhi Jiang (2020)	Data indicate that the motivations of entertainment and remuneration are positively associated with consuming and contributing to brand content on social media.
	Oliver Cruz-Milan (2020)	Market segment diversification, type of ownership, the magnitude of investments and promotion organizations, media coverage, and consumers’ flow volume to the firms as they affect their marketing mix implementation.
	Fatima Ghezali & Abdessamad Boudi (2021)	Marketing mix and information technology capabilities positively affect entrepreneurship.
	Ville Lahtinen, Timo Dietrich & Sharyn Rundle-Thiele (2020)	A full application of the marketing mix is more effective than a promotion-only campaign.
	Mollika Ghosh (2021)	Relevance and relationship have a role in getting consumers’ positive comments for home influencers.
	Evmorfia Karampournioti & Klaus-Peter Wiedmann (2021)	By applying the storytelling technique, the online shop increased visitors’ UX on explicit and implicit information processing levels and increased the online shop’s overall perceived attractiveness.
	Sasu Tuominen, Helen Reijonen, Gabor Nagy, Andrea Buratti & Tommi Laukkanen (2022)	Customer orientation and customer relationship orientation do not directly affect business growth, instead, they drive innovativeness to materialize as business growth.
	Maria Fregidou-Malama, Ehsanul Huda Chowdhury & Akmal S. Hyder (2022)	Adapting and customizing products to the importers’ requirements to make them visible and increase understanding between product providers and local customers will make the business grows.

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DISCUSSION

Relatability has a positive effect on brand advocacy

Basically, brand advocacy needs strong brand confidence because there is a reputational risk if a bad rumor ever breaks out or maybe a strong disagreement about the recommended brand in the public. That's why a positive attitude toward the brand is needed to spread a good image and gain recommendations on social media (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2022). In one study, there is found that a brand's high involvement could enhance a positive relationship between brand love, brand engagement, and brand advocacy. A self-related concept between brand and consumers pays a high moderating effect (Samala & Singh, 2018). SMEs could consider incorporating relatability to all their business aspects because the company that practices this strategy gains positive results on their brand advocacy.

Relatability is a connecting factor that could bridge a company and consumers to talk and connect. Relatability relies on emotion a lot, and SMEs should paying attention to gain an advantage using this factor. Positive emotion like contentment, happiness, and love plays a huge role in attaining positive influence on consumer engagement (Kujur & Singh, 2018). There is also another study that supports whether showing positive emotion could affect consumers' brand advocacy. Showing a loving factor in brands' marketing content is the strongest antecedent of brand loyalty and the only variable that directly influences brand loyalty and brand advocacy, compared to satisfaction and emotional brand attachment (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020).

Because there is a significant and positive impact of social interactivity on consumer engagement behavior and brand loyalty (Ting et al., 2021), SMEs could direct this to gain brand advocacy as the final goal. And also, having a high-interactive game could become a way to form connections and relatability with target consumers. High-interactive results in a high brand advocacy level and superior brand acceptance (Vashisht, 2019). Another way to gain brand advocacy is by taking advantage of social media because social media users usually having fear of self-disclosure, which will cause users to search for acquaintances on the medium (Sashittal & Jassawalla, 2019). This connection could benefit SMEs' business because by creating a connection between existing consumers and target consumers and having electronic word-of-mouth spread, in the end, brand advocacy could be gained because consumers tend to trust other consumers more.

Various tactics could be incorporated with relatability such as engaging in consumer reviews and testimonials, also offering data-driven visualizations that could stimulate an emotion is highly effective in building connection (Bergér, 2022). Empathy from target consumers could be gained by working on messaging and articulating the right values consistently. Even though not everyone will agree with the brand values projected to the public, people could see if a brand is authentic or not. Authenticity to consumers and also the company is important because it can help to spread the brand's message and voice across channels as flexibly as possible.

Incorporating Various Relatability Factors into The Marketing Mix Strategy Will Gain a Positive Impact on The Company

The marketing mix strategy contains various aspects as explained before, such as product, place, price, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Relatability could be incorporated into these various aspects while making the best strategy for SMEs' future. One aspect that could be incorporated with the relatability factor is the promotion factor. There was a relationship between the speaker's gender and the consumer's favorability in an

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advertisement (Kang et al., 2019). This relationship shows that creating a promotion that has a relatability to the consumer could result in a positive impact such as favorability. Relationships between brands and consumers that have relevance is playing a huge role in attracting consumers' positive comments (Ghosh, 2022).

Relatability is also could be gained by applying the storytelling technique to the promotion agenda. By applying the storytelling technique in the promotional content, the number of online visitors increased and the overall brand's perceived attractiveness is also increased (Karampournioti & Wiedmann, 2022). Storytelling in a promotional content of a brand could also become an entertainment to a brand, despite being a personal branding and delivering information. Personal branding practices are used to target the future, unknown and unanticipated audiences (Jacobson, 2020). Storytelling as a way to be related to consumers could also be the motivation of entertainment and affect target consumers increasing consumption of online marketing content (Park & Jiang, 2021).

Relatability could also be applied in people aspects such as the product providers or the employees. Because product providers that have an understanding of their customers will likely make the business grows bigger (Fregidou-Malama et al., 2022). People aspects of the marketing mix that could be incorporated with relatability are not only the product providers but also the consumers because market segment diversification and consumers' flow volume to the company could also be tinkered into having a connection with the company (Cruz-Milan, 2022). Paying attention to consumers is always a must thing to do as a company, more as an SME. Even though customer orientation and customer relationship orientation do not directly affect business growth, both drive innovativeness that then materializes into business growth (Tuominen et al., 2022). In the products aspect of marketing mix strategy, applying relatability to the product design or variant selection could help SMEs gain more value and profits. Adapting and customizing products related to the consumers' requirements will make the business grows (Fregidou-Malama et al., 2022).

In the end, incorporating relatability into the marketing mix strategy could gain the company many benefits in the future, because the direct experience that consumers get from the brand has a higher impact on the company's profit (Moliner et al., 2018). Relatability helps to create the right marketing mix strategy because the marketing mix positively affects entrepreneurship (Ghezali & Boudi, The moderating effect of information technology capabilities on the relationship between marketing mix and corporate entrepreneurship, 2021). A strategy with a full application of the marketing mix is more effective than only a promotion (Lahtinen et al., 2020).

IMPLICATIONS

This article mainly focused on general ideas of how relatability could affect the marketing mix to gain brand advocacy based on a thorough literature review, however more specific research with various objects research could be done in the future. This study only marks a starting point for further exploration related to this topic. This article also only includes several previous research from the Emerald Group Publishing database, so more research in the future could use another reference related to the topic.

This study also provides insights for practitioners in marketing and business sectors. Although the findings are still limited and could be improved for future research, SME practitioners are suggested to apply the relatability factor to their marketing mix strategy in order to gain consumers' brand advocacy.

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CONCLUSION

Brand advocacy is one of the most powerful marketing strategies (Sprout Social, 2023), and in order to achieve brand advocacy, SMEs need to do their best marketing strategy in order to gain a positive attitude from their consumers. Because a positive attitude toward SMEs is the most determinant factor that could affect consumers' intention to be a brand advocate (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2022). Entrepreneurship that most SMEs have is positively affected by the marketing mix, and marketing mix also has a huge impact on SMEs' promotion (Ghezali & Boudi, 2021). When a company has a right marketing mix strategy figures out, it could results in having a good brand presence, and a company that has a strong brand association, through consumer's perception, both consumer and company could develop a deep connection that could result in gaining consumers as brand advocates (Kemp et al., 2012). At last, we could argue that a good development in marketing mix strategy could affect turning consumers into brand advocates. Consumers need a strong brand presence in order to become an advocate, because there is a reputational risk that could happen if a company does not have it, such as bad rumors or public hatred.

Marketing mix refers to the marketing elements that could be controlled which together form basic consumers' perception of a company (Judd, 2003). Creating differentiation between competitors in a marketing mix could lead to a more impactful presence of SMEs in the market. There is a shift in how consumers today do shopping, digital media plays a huge role in changing how the market is shifting. Digital consumers nowadays prefer a business that has a more honorable cause or purpose, not only a profit-oriented business (Lane, 2021). Being connected and relatable is considered one of the most important traits between companies to this day because without seeing consumers face to face, becoming connected and having a relatable image does indeed affect how consumers see the company, their attitude and behavior are heavily influenced by the company's attitude. There is also been found that a brand's high involvement could enhance a positive relationship between brand love, brand engagement, and brand advocacy. A self-related concept between brand and consumers pays a high moderating effect (Samala & Singh, 2018).

Relatability is a connecting factor that could bridge a company and consumers to talk and connect. Relatability relies on emotion a lot, and SMEs should pay attention to gain an advantage using this factor. High-interactive results in a high brand advocacy level and superior brand acceptance (Vashisht, 2019). Various tactics could be incorporated with relatability such as engaging in consumer reviews and testimonials, also offering data-driven visualizations that could stimulate an emotion is highly effective in building connection (Bergér, 2022).

The marketing mix strategy contains various aspects, such as product, place, price, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. One aspect that could be incorporated with the relatability factor is the promotion factor. There was a relationship between the speaker's gender and the consumer's favorability in an advertisement (Kang et al., 2019). Relationships between brands and consumers that have relevance is playing a huge role in attracting consumers' positive comments (Ghosh, 2022). In the products aspect of marketing mix strategy, applying relatability to the product design or variant selection could help SMEs gain more value and profits. Adapting and customizing products related to the consumers' requirements will make the business grows (Fregidou-Malama et al., 2022).

In the end, incorporating relatability into the marketing mix strategy could gain the company many benefits in the future, because the direct experience that consumers get from

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the brand has a higher impact on the company's profit (Moliner et al., 2018). A strategy with a full application of the marketing mix is more effective than only a promotion (Lahtinen et al., 2020).

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