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## Customer-Brand Attitude Congruence and Purchase Intentions Among Thai Media Students in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Sansiri Brand

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### Abstract

This research investigates the influence of customer-brand attitude congruence on purchase intentions, with a particular focus on young Thai university students, utilizing the Sansiri brand as a case study. The study draws upon the theoretical framework of brand community and explores the intricate interplay between attitude similarity, brand value, brand awareness, brand image, reliability, sentiment engagement, community, and purchase intentions. Employing a survey methodology, a total of 434 participants responded to a self-rated questionnaire, utilizing a seven-point Likert scale for their evaluations. The analytical approach included descriptive statistics, internal consistency analysis, and the application of a structural equation model to assess the mediating effect of attitude similarity.

The outcomes of the study indicate a favorable disposition among participants towards the Sansiri brand, revealing a noteworthy connection between brand value, attitude similarity, and purchase intentions. The findings suggest a partial mediation effect, shedding light on the nuanced relationship dynamics within the consumer-brand interface. Furthermore, the study underscores the significance of brand awareness, image, and reliability as pivotal predictors influencing positive consumer behavior. Acknowledging certain limitations, such as a relatively modest sample size and the reliance on self-reported questionnaires, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in brand management.

**Keywords:** brand activism, attitude congruence, Sansiri, brand value, purchase intention, customer-brand relationship.

### 1. Introduction

The rapid growth of the internet and mass media platforms have enabled consumers to share their perspectives concerning controversial issues and events rapidly and efficiently. The proliferation of new media technologies has allowed consumers to share their viewpoints on a grander scale with an international community. Consumers have leveraged the availability of information on the web to examine and question the motive of organizations operating in society. The growing consumer awareness coupled with easy information access has made firms the target of growing advocacy groups culminating in the long-term establishments of social-political activism (Hollenbeck, Zinkhan, 2006). Since consumers are increasingly questioning firms' contributions besides generating profits, companies could no longer stay neutral and remain

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detached from environmental happenings. They had to take a stand on political and social issues in the public domain through activism.

In the past, companies were extremely cautious about aligning themselves with polarizing matters. Numerous brands shied away from adopting a stance on controversial matters fearing that this would hurt their brand. As more firms in recent years openly adopt a perspective on public issues, customers have begun defining their purchase intentions based on congruence with the brand's position. Recent research established that 37 % of customers exhibited their inclination to suggest a brand to family and friends when they share a similar stand with a brand (Sprout Social, 2019). Moreover, customers believe that adopting a stand on political and social issues improves a brand's image. Nonetheless, they must exercise caution since brand activism can result in negative outcomes when the activism is incongruent with the core values or attitudes of the customer base. It may invite boycotting or backlash from loyal consumers who share varied perspectives on the matter. In this regard, it can be argued that brand activism is an art and a science. If correctly utilized, it can promote brand value as well as purchase intentions.

Several scholars (Wettstein, Baur, 2016; Moorman, 2020) advance that brands are presently comfortable isolating particular customers to adopt a position of controversial political and social issues from same-sex marriage, LGBTQIA (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and asexual) rights, immigration, gun control, racism, and sexual harassment. D.B. Holt (Holt, 2002) asserts that when brands turn into activists concerning socio-political issues, they invite more scrutiny, and this may yield negative outcomes which can hurt the brand's equity and revenues. Customers may no longer trust or believe a brand when the firm utilizes activism (Alhouti et al., 2016; Bhattacharya, Sen, 2010). Marketing practitioners and academicians have the dangers of companies not "walking the talk" and the significance of authenticity when using activism (Kotler, Sakar, 2017; Unilever, 2019b). Similarly another study found that approximately 56 % of the customer held that companies utilize societal issues as a marketing tool to sell more products (Edelman, 2019).

On the same line few scholars advance that consumers progressively expect established brands to adopt a stance on socio-political issues (Hoppner, Vadakkepatt, 2019). Approximately 65 % of consumers want CEOs and organizations to assume a position on public issues (Barton et al., 2018; Edelman, 2018; Larcker, Tayan, 2018). Therefore, achieving congruence in attitudes between a brand and its consumers on socio-political issues emerges as critical in realizing the success of brand activism efforts. Real estate giant Sansiri is the first Thai firm to pledge to address discrimination against LGBTQIA people and support same-sex marriage. The company has signed the United Nations Global LGBTQIA Standards of Conduct for Business. It has partnered with Unilever and dtac to promote the joint vision of accomplishing equality in all dimensions (Bangkok Post, 2020; Bohwongprasert, 2022; Sansiri, 2022).

There is a budding interest among small and established brands to leverage brand activism to communicate their position on key public issues. However, information is scarce concerning how a customer's perceived congruence between the brand and themselves influences their brand attitude as a response to a brand taking a perspective. The current study seeks to determine the importance of congruence between customers and brands and how it affects brand value and purchasing intentions, within the context of Sansiri. The findings from this study will enhance the literature on brand activism which is scarce and inform companies how their perspectives on social issues affect their brand value and customers' intent to purchase.

## 2. Materials and methods

The study adopted a quantitative research design to collect data from Thai university students regarding customer-brand attitude congruence with special emphasis on the Sansiri brand. A total sample of 434 participants was attained in this study. Fifty self-rated questionnaires were administered to students selected randomly at the 12 publicly funded universities in Thailand between April and June 2022. The first section of the questionnaire sought to collect demographic statistics about the sample. The second part comprised items regarding the measures of the study: attitude similarity, awareness, image, reliability, sentiments engagement, and intentions. A seven-point Likert scale was used to frame the statements: (7) strongly agree, (6) agree, (5) somewhat agree, (4) neither agree, (somewhat disagree), (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree. Participants were required to respond to the items by using a tick to the extent to which they agreed with statements concerning consumer-brand attitude congruence. No incentives were provided to the respondents

for participating in this study. The study focuses on young Thai university students, hence participants who were not students from these settings were excluded from the research. This was indicated by missing data on responses after administering the initial screening questions. The data used in this study were collected within the scope of a broader project. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Faculty graduate program at Chulalongkorn University.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was leveraged to compute the standard deviation, mean, max, and medium while the R software was utilized to calculate Omega estimates of internal consistency for each scale. A structural equation model was calculated to respond to the second research question. The interpretation of model fit and output parameters was guided by Kline (2015). Statistically significant associations and differences were exemplified by p-values < 0.05.

### 3. Discussion

A significant body of evidence has concentrated on the cases of congruence that promote customers' positive brand attitudes and purchasing intentions (Gupta, Pirsh, 2006). Based on the self-congruity theory, congruence is the degree to which two or more variables have similar traits (Kulkarni et al., 2008). Isolating points of congruence is vital for customers since they can foster their identity by identifying and connecting with an ideology (socio-political) which helps them to connect with other consumers (Flight, Coker, 2022). Literature establishes that highly congruent data connects with an individual's identity better than incongruent data (Moore et al., 2005). This results in highly congruent data being considered more favorable.

Enhancing customer engagement through positive brand experiences can foster favorable word-of-mouth and, consequently, boost purchase intent (Verhoef et al., 2020).

Few scholars suggest that consumer – product congruence enhances product attitudes and reduces advertising recognition via affective motive inference... This, in turn, strengthens purchase intentions (Belanche-Gracia et al., 2021).

Some scholars investigated the impact of self-concept congruence with brands on purchase intention while others explored the role of brand experience in building brand loyalty (Chavda et al., 2020; Farooq et al., 2021). Evidence shows that customers generate more positive attitudes toward brands when congruency is established, which is termed customer-brand congruence (Bhattacharya, Sen, 2004), and greater purchasing motives (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). When consumers see a brand as aligning with who they are, they tend to form positive opinions about it. This alignment between self-identity and brand perception can create a good brand interaction, which can then impact the likelihood of making a purchase (Chaudhuri, Chowdhury, 2020).

Consumer behavior literature on congruence maintains that personalities have a preference for particular brands or products due to their practical value or symbolic meanings. This cognitive match between the consumer's identity and the brand's image is described by scholars as self-congruity or self-image congruence (Hosany, Martin, 2012; Leigh, Gabel, 1992), with studies elaborating its tremendous role in stimulating customer behavior (Kressmann et al., 2006; Sirgy et al., 1991).

Another research explores how corporate social responsibility (CSR) affects brand perception and the intention to purchase, with brand identification acting as a mediator. While not directly addressing customer-brand congruence, this study underscores the connection between brand attitude and the intent to buy (Lee et al., 2021).

Previous research has also shown that self-congruity between consumers and brands enhances customers' brand attitude and promotes purchasing intention (Ekinici, Riley, 2003; Sirgy et al. 1991). Another scholar corroborate the findings as they found that congruence between a brand and a customer was positively correlated with the customer's purchase intention for an organization practicing corporate social advocacy (Hong, Li, 2021). Congruence was negatively correlated with the customer's intention to boycott the brand. Attitude towards the brand mediated the relationship between customer-brand socio-political perspective congruence. On the same line, other studies have confirmed that when a customer and a brand have a mutual perspective on socio-political matters, the customers will have a positive attitude toward the brand which will enhance purchasing intention (Baek, 2010; Bhattacharya, Sen, 2004; Swimberghe et al., 2011). Based on these findings it is likely that customer-brand congruence mediates the relationship between brand value and purchasing intention.

A brand refers to much more than a name, product/service, symbol, tagline, or business name. It covers a set of mental connections held by the customer which determines the perceived

value of a good or service (Kapferer, 2004; Kotler, Keller, 2014). Brand value has been a subject of extensive debate since there are two conflicting perspectives in marketing about it. One school of thought considers brand value as the brand's financial or monetary worth. The second perspective, which was adopted in this study regards it as the perceived value of a brand or the significance customers attach a brand to their life. Studies demonstrate that greater brand awareness, image, reliability, brand-related sentiments, brand engagement, and brand community promotes the perceived worth of a brand, which further enhances its monetary worth (Bailey, Ball, 2006; Ball, Barnes, 2017; Barhemmati, Ahmad, 2015; Cheng et al., 2015; Horsfall, 2020; Malik et al. 2013; Wang et al., 2019).

Brand awareness addresses the extent to which consumers can recognize or recall a brand. The customer's aptitude to recall or recognize a brand determines willingness to make a purchase. Consumers cannot purchase a brand unless they are first aware of it. Awareness does not imply that the customer must recognize or recall a particular brand name, rather the consumer must remember the unique features of the brand to make a purchase. Few scholars that brand awareness is strengthened through repetitive exposure to the product or service. They consider brand awareness as the most basic knowledge about a brand which involves at least the identification of the brand's name or its development (Kotler, Keller, 2003; Shahid et al., 2017).

Learning about a brand is not sufficient enough to stimulate a purchase (Pelissari, Azzari, 2013). They found that brand awareness did not directly affect the intent to purchase. It was mediated by brand loyalty, brand association, and perceived quality. Perceived quality and brand awareness as antecedents of the purchasing decision. Nonetheless, scholars found that brand loyalty and brand awareness were positively correlated with purchasing intention. Existing studies suggest that brand awareness as a single construct is not enough to stimulate positive purchasing decisions. Other factors should be considered to promote consumers' perception of a brand (Malik et al., 2013; Martono, 2020).

Scholars consider brand image important for enterprises since it has been found to promote brand value (Bailey, Ball, 2006). Brand image refers to the feeling and perception that customers have concerning brands (Aaker, 1996; Zhang, 2015). It is the perception regarding a brand as exemplified by the consumer's brand associations embedded in the brain. Despite the varied definitions, scholars concur that brand image occurs in the consumers' minds based on the perception and interpretation of a brand (Hatch, Schultz, 2001; Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 1993). It is affected by consumption, communication, and social influence. Hung (2017) adds that brand image is formed through mutual interaction between consumer perception and brand stimulation. Organizations must align the brand's image with their vision to prevent and minimize ambiguity (Hatch, Schultz, 2001). Another study found that brand image enhances consumers' purchasing intention (Chen et al., 2014).

Brand reliability is one of the primary elements for evaluating customer trust in the marketing world. It occurs when a company or brand assumes responsibility for its behavior and consistently shows up in significant ways for the personalities it cares about. The modern consumer is increasingly aware of environmental happenings due to the proliferation of new media technologies and the internet. Consumers search for a trustworthy brand that is available when needed and stands by its claims. Brand reliability is exemplified in how consumers receive support and care. Existing studies have covered brand trust as a key predictor of brand reliability. A study found that the reliability aspect of brand trust enhanced consumers' willingness to make a positive purchasing decision online (Cheng et al., 2015). Another researcher identified brand trust as a major determinant of a brand's reliability and commitment (Sallam, 2017). Few others held that trust in an acquired product or service can be regarded as the fruit of its credibility and results in repetitive purchases (Sahin et al., 2011).

Brand sentiments are the opinions or fundamental emotions linked with a company and its goods and services. Attaining a favorable brand sentiment is essential for all firms since it has been revealed to generate better business outcomes and consumer loyalty. Notable factors that affect brand sentiment include the perception of a brand (negative, neutral, or positive feeling towards the product or service) and word associations (phrases or words that appear in the brain when a consumer thinks about a brand). Scholars assert a customer's brand perception openly impacts their brand trust, as well as purchasing decisions (Xue et al., 2020). A different study by H. Horsfall (Horsfall, 2020) made similar revelations that positive brand-related sentiments strengthen the likelihood of consumers making a purchase.

A brand community refers to a group of individuals brought together by their mutual interests and beliefs in the brand. The authors identified three key features of a brand community (Muniz, O'Guinn, 2001). It comprises members with a consciousness of a kind, a sense of moral obligation, and shared traditions and rituals. Brand communities are similar to contemporary fan clubs for customers. A robust brand community signifies high customer engagement and loyalty. Previous research has demonstrated the positive aspect of brand communities in promoting the relationship between consumers and brands (Ball, Barnes, 2017; Wang et al., 2019). Another group of scholars discovered that identification of a customer's brand community had a positive correlation with private and public loyalty (Mills et al., 2022). Needless to mention, constant engagement in the brand community by members is vital for its long-term success. Through promoting the experiences of brand communities, firms can strengthen customer loyalty and positive purchasing behavior. Participation can assume different forms such as appreciating, ranking, celebrating, mingling, assisting, and emphasizing (Hollebeek et al., 2017).

Brand engagement is the mechanism through which customers and brands reinforce their relationships (Hollebeek, 2011). Brands engage with customers to realize positive outcomes such as delivering services or goods with impeccable quality. Customer engagement can yield beneficial outcomes for both the brand and the customer (Barhemmati, Ahmad, 2015). They found that engaged consumers exhibit positive purchasing behavior for a particular brand. Brand engagement flourishes into brand love which enhances brand equity and purchasing decisions. Also, that brand engagement is a solid determinant of brand loyalty and promotes brand equity, as well as intent to purchase (Goyal, Verma, 2022; Verma, 2021).

In recent years, there have been various student movements in Thailand advocating for gender equality (UN Women, 2019). One of the most notable movements is the *Bad Student* movement, which began in 2020 and has since called for a curriculum overhaul, equality, and relaxation of rigid rules in high schools. Another student movement is the *HeForShe University Tour*, which is aimed at promoting gender equality on university campuses.

In addition, young people in Thailand are taking an active role in shaping conversations around gender equality, as seen in the intergenerational series for the Generation Equality campaign. Furthermore, a group of young female university students recently won the *Ambassador for a Day* video contest, where they spoke about the climate crisis and gender inequality, highlighting the importance of technology and education as possible solutions.

However, gender inequality is still prevalent in Thailand, with the country ranking 80th in the Gender Inequality Index, according to the 2020 UNDP Human Development Report (Kovavisarach, 2021). Only 14 % of parliamentary seats are held by women, and the percentage of women receiving secondary education is lower than that of men. Nevertheless, young people in Thailand are continuing to push for change and advocate for gender equality.

Gender equality has been legally advanced in Thailand, particularly through the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 and its Optional Protocol in 2000, the endorsement of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, and the commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. SDG Goal 5 for gender equality includes targets to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls and eliminate all forms of violence against them. UNDP has made gender equality central to its work in Thailand. The Thai government promulgated the Gender Equality Act in 2015, which was celebrated as a milestone, despite the coup government's appointment of only 5 % of women to its National Legislative Assembly. Despite these advancements, inequality in Thailand continues to affect the young Thai population, particularly with regards to adolescent pregnancies. Inequality is cited as the underlying cause of adolescent pregnancies in Thailand. Nevertheless, there are initiatives by the UN and other organizations to promote gender equality and address gender-based stereotypes, discrimination, and abuse through education and creative expression. There are also successful efforts to promote girls' education in Thailand, with the Ministry of Education granting all children a twelve-year education and the successful promotion of girls' right to education.

Sansiri appears to be a company that has demonstrated a strong commitment to gender equality in its organization. The company has celebrated *SansiriPride* events that aim to promote gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Sansiri, 2022). Sansiri has committed to the United Nations Global Standards of Conduct for Business to tackle discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people. In 2022, Sansiri was determined to equate equality as the new norm – as the first organization in Thailand and one of the top

200 companies worldwide that has committed to diversity and equality. The president of Sansiri has stated that gender equality and inclusivity are a priority and the company needs to reach out as much as possible to make Sansiri a truly inclusive organization. It is evident from the web search results that Sansiri is committed to promoting and celebrating gender equality in the workplace (Bangkok Post, 2020).

#### 4. Results

The demographic findings reveal that 434 respondents participated in this study with a majority of the sample 53 % being women and 47 % being men. All participants were 18-24 years old and students of different universities in Thailand. The descriptive data (Table 1) suggest that participants generally exhibited positive attitudes toward the Sansiri brand. Participants expressed the lowest (yet still relatively high) levels of agreement with items measuring the sense of community (i.e., perceived belonging to the Sansiri brand advocacy group), while the highest agreement was measured regarding items of awareness and image. In line with these findings, participants also exhibited relatively strong purchase intentions. Sharing opinions on social issues with brands was also evaluated as important, which provides initial arguments in favor of the relevance of the congruence between the attitudes of brands and consumers.

**Table 1.** Descriptive data of brand value, attitude congruence, and purchase intentions among citizens of Thailand (N = 434)

	item	min	max	M	SD
attitude similarity	You are more likely to buy products or services from brands that have the same stance as yours.	1	7	5.74	1.40
	You are less likely to buy products or services from brands that have the opposite stand to yours.	1	7	5.21	1.56
	You will continue to support brands that stand up for or express their opinions on current issues.	2	7	5.49	1.35
awareness	You can easily think of the Sansiri brand.	1	7	5.42	1.48
	You can recognize the Sansiri brand among other competing brands.	1	7	5.31	1.55
	You think of the Sansiri brand as the first brand when deciding to buy a product or service.	1	7	4.93	1.55
image	You feel good about the image of the Sansiri brand.	1	7	5.62	1.42
	Sansiri brand is more attractive than other brands	1	7	5.20	1.61
	Sansiri brand is different from other brands.	1	7	5.15	1.56
reliability	Sansiri brand can meet the promise made by the brand advertisers.	1	7	5.36	1.39
	The Sansiri brand has a reputation that can be trusted.	1	7	5.50	1.41
	The Sansiri brand is very interesting to you.	1	7	5.04	1.55
sentiment	You trust the Sansiri brand.	1	7	5.45	1.41
	You feel good supporting the Sansiri brand.	1	7	5.04	1.56
	Others feel good when they see that you support the Sansiri brand.	1	7	4.52	1.57
community	You feel part of the Sansiri brand advocacy group.	1	7	4.90	1.71
	You feel close to the Sansiri brand advocacy group.	1	7	4.23	1.61
	You feel a sense of fraternity with the Sansiri brand supporters.	1	7	4.10	1.58
engagement	You feel it is worth taking the time to support the Sansiri brand.	1	7	5.06	1.71

	item	min	max	M	SD
	You feel it is worth doing something more to support the Sansiri brand.	1	7	4.80	1.77
	You feel it is worth paying more money to support the Sansiri brand.	1	7	4.41	1.76
intentions	You will find out more about the Sansiri brand as it supports equal marriage.	1	7	5.29	1.68
	In a near future, if you have a chance, you are likely to buy products or services from the Sansiri brand as it supports equal marriage.	1	7	4.35	2.08
	You will not support products or services from the Sansiri brand as it supports equal marriage. (R)	1	7	2.87	1.85
	You will support products or services from the Sansiri brand as it supports equal marriage.	1	7	5.14	1.88

However, the previous estimates were based on self-observation: we may think some characteristics are important to us, but neglect them when making important decisions. Therefore, we tested the statistical model where the relationship between brand value and purchase intentions was mediated by the perceived similarity of attitudes, measured by the item "How much do you support the Sansiri brand's standpoint regarding the issue of equal marriage in Thailand?". The model fit was acceptable (robust CFI = .950, robust RMSEA = .090 [.083, .097], SRMR = .027). The complete model is presented in Figure 1. The model-implied bivariate relationships between attitude similarity and purchase intentions ( $r = .85, p < .001$ ) and brand value and purchase intentions ( $r = .95, p < .001$ ) were strong and positive, indicating that individuals perceiving a greater brand value and those exhibiting a stronger relevance of similarity in attitudes also exhibited stronger purchase intentions, respectively.

Omega estimates of internal consistency for each scale were obtained as follows: 0.95 (brand awareness) 0.99 (brand image), 0.99 (brand-related sentiment), 0.99 (brand-reliability), 0.95 (brand community), 0.97 (brand engagement), and 0.92 (intentions).

The direct path between brand value and purchase intentions was significant ( $\beta = .77, p < .001$ ), as well as the total path ( $\beta = .95, p < .001$ ). Since the indirect path was significant, as well ( $\beta = .18, p < .001$ ), we can conclude that a partial mediation occurred. In other words, a non-negligible part of the relationship between brand value and purchase intentions seems to be determined by the similarity of attitudes on relevant social issues between participants and brands.

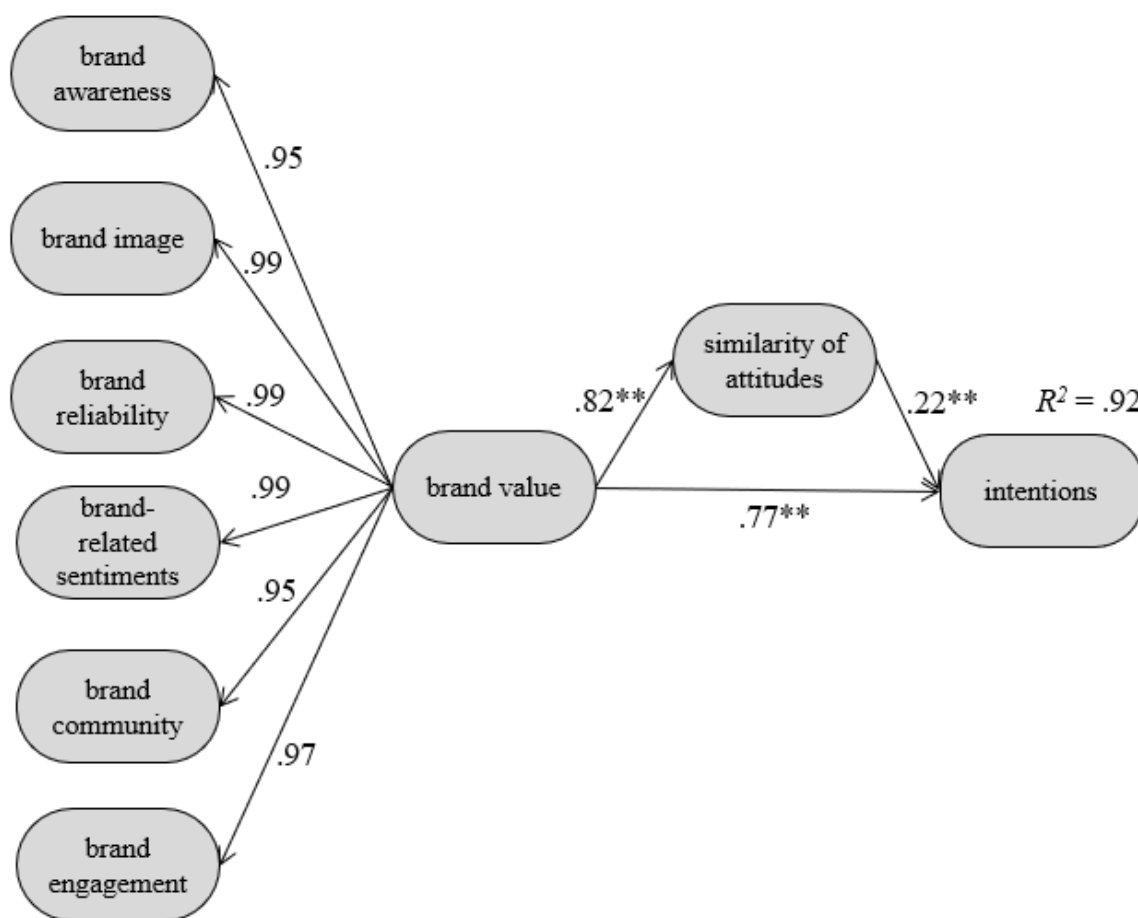
The findings suggest that the participants had various instances of congruity which enhanced their attitude toward the Sansiri Brand. The respondents indicated that they were more likely to purchase services or products from brands that had the same stance as theirs denoted by a strong mean of 5.74 and SD (1.40). In addition, the respondents noted that they were less likely to purchase services or products from brands that had an opposite stance from them. The findings are consistent with previous findings which found that congruency can stimulate more positive attitudes and diminish unfavourable ones (Moore et al, 2005; Bhattacharya, Sen 2004).

Further, the findings established that the respondents would continue supporting brands that stand up or express their perspectives on current issues. This is consistent with mainstream findings which indicate that approximately 65 % of consumers desired brands and executives who shared their perspectives on public or socio-political issues (Barton et al., 2018; Edelman, 2018; Larcker, Tayan, 2018).

Concerning the second item, brand awareness, the respondents indicated the highest agreement with the item. They asserted that they can easily think of the Sansiri brand as exhibited by mean (5.42) and SD (1.48). In addition, they could recognize the Sansiri brand among rival brands (mean=5.31, SD=1.55) and often thought of the Sansiri brand as the first brand when considering purchasing a brand (mean=4.93; SD=1.55). Nonetheless, the current findings indicate that the respondents had strong exposure to the Sansiri brands, and had sufficient knowledge about the brand which is central whenever consumers are making a purchasing decision.

The results in Table 1 indicate a high agreement with the statements or items concerning the brand image. The respondents noted that they felt good about the image of the Sansiri brand (mean=5.62, SD=1.42) and found it more attractive than other brands (mean=5.20, SD=1.61). Notably, they felt that the Sansiri brand was different from other brands in the market (mean=5.15,

SD=1.56). Existing studies hold that brand image is formed in the consumer's mind depending on the interpretation and perception of a brand (Hatch, Schultz, 2001; Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 213).



**Fig. 1.** The similarity of attitudes as a (partial) mediator of the relationship between brand value and purchase intentions

The participants held that the Sansiri brand fulfils the promise made by its adverts (mean=5.36, SD=1.39) and that the brand's reputation can be trusted (mean=5.50, SD=1.41). The participants also found the Sansiri brand interesting (mean=5.04, SD=1.55). The findings are consistent with (Sahin, 2011; Sallam, 2017) which found trust as a key driver of a brand's reliability. Regarding brand-related sentiments, the results revealed a significant agreement with item statements. Researchers including (Xue et al., 2020) maintained that brand-related sentiments which are the emotions and feelings associated with a brand often affect brand trust and intent to make a purchase. This is consistent with the current study findings whereby the respondents advanced that they trust the Sansiri brand (mean= 5.45, SD=1.41), they feel good supporting it (mean=5.04, SD=1.56), and other people felt good when they saw them supporting the Sansiri brand (mean=4.52, SD= 1.57).

A brand community is a powerful tool used by firms to create loyal members and create emotional connections. Participants in this study exhibited the lowest, yet still relatively significant levels of agreement with the item statements evaluating the sense of community or the perceived belonging to the Sansiri brand. They expressed they felt part of the Sansiri brand advocacy group (mean=4.90, SD=1.71), felt close to the brand (mean=4.23, SD=1.61), and felt a sense of fraternity with the Sansiri brand supporters (mean=4.10, SD=1.58). The findings align with earlier studies of (Ball, Barnes, 2017; Wang et al., 2019) which have confirmed that brand communities enhance the consumer-brand relationship. Concerning brand engagement, the results revealed a moderate agreement with the item statements. They observed that they felt part of the Sansiri brand advocacy group (mean=5.06, SD=1.71), felt it was worth doing something more to support the brand (mean=4.80, SD=1.77), and felt it was worth paying more money to support the Sansiri brand (mean=4.41, SD=1.76).



Brand activism gives customers a chance to compare themselves with a particular brand identity within the dimension of socio-political standing. Studies posit that customers who greatly identify with a particular brand often establish more favourable attitudes towards the brand (Bhattacharya, Sen, 2004) along with greater intentions to make a purchase (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). The results of the current study align with these previous findings as the respondents' scores indicated relatively strong purchase intentions. They maintained that they would support the Sansiri brand as it supports equal marriage (mean=5.14, SD=1.88), would research more about the brand (mean=5.29, SD=1.68) and shortly whenever a chance presents itself, they would purchase services or products from the Sansiri brand (mean=4.35, SD=2.08). The participants disagreed with the statement that they would not support the Sansiri brand and its services or products due to its support for equal marriage (mean=2.87, SD=1.85). As exemplified by the findings, vocal brands that share the perspective concerning public issues in Thailand such as LGBTQIA and same-sex marriage are likely to witness an improvement in brand value and purchasing intention.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, our study delves into the impact of congruence between consumer attitudes and brand values on purchase intentions, focusing on young Thai university students and utilizing the Sansiri brand as a case study. Rooted in the theoretical framework of brand community, our research explores the intricate relationships among attitude similarity, brand value, brand awareness, brand image, reliability, sentiment engagement, community, and purchase intentions. The findings reveal a positive inclination among participants towards the Sansiri brand, highlighting a significant association between brand value, attitude similarity, and purchase intentions. Our study provides insights into the nuanced dynamics shaping the relationship between consumers and the brand. Additionally, the research underscores the importance of brand awareness, image, and reliability as influential factors guiding positive consumer behavior. These outcomes suggest that fostering congruence between consumer attitudes and brand values positively influences brand value and encourages positive purchase intentions. Specifically, our sample of millennials exhibited predominantly favorable consumer behaviors towards the Sansiri brand, primarily attributed to shared attitudes on LGBTIQ issues and same-sex marriage. Our study emphasizes the significance of brands taking a stance on socio-political matters, particularly among millennials in Thailand. It implies that brand managers need to strategically navigate activism, aligning it with the brand's core beliefs and values while conveying sincerity in their advocacy. However, we acknowledge certain limitations, such as a relatively modest sample size, reliance on self-reported questionnaires, and the potential influence of generational differences.

Future research could explore attitudes among older individuals (above 40 years) toward brands supporting LGBTIQ and same-sex marriage, considering potential variations in perspectives. Despite these limitations, our study contributes to the field of brand management, underlining the positive influence of attitude congruence on brand-related outcomes and providing valuable insights for strategic brand communication.

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