The Role of Brand Love in Mediating the Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty and Willingness to Pay for Green Skincare Products in Indonesia

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The purpose of his study analyze the relationships between a selection of variables, such as brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, and willingness to pay, to identify post-purchase customer perceptions of the "green" skincare product. This research uses a non-probability sampling technique. This research uses Structural Equation Modeling analysis tools through Smart-PLS software with a total sample of 200 respondents, 53 men, and 147 women, and a minimum age of 18 years. In 2023, the population will consist of Indonesian consumers who have used products categorized as green skincare. The sample used as respondents in this study was made up of men

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and women who had used green skincare more than twice. Brand attachment grows as a result of positive brand experiences. These favorable brand experiences are also very important for establishing brand loyalty and affecting customers' willingness to spend. Additionally, brand attachment has been shown to increase brand loyalty and alter customers' willingness to pay. This study was conducted to look at how consumers in Indonesia who purchase "green" skincare products behave after making their purchases. This research can identify the root of the problems that occur related to consumer behavior about green products in the process of solving research problems.

Keywords: Theory planned of behavior (TPB); green product; brand experience; brand loyalty; willingness to pay; brand love.

1. INTRODUCTION

Skincare products have the highest demand compared to other care products, and it can be seen that, from 2010 to 2023, the demand for skin care products will continue to increase. In recent years, consumers have tended to pay more attention to safe, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible skincare products [1]. Consumer awareness of the environment is increasing; according to research conducted by Nielsen (2022), 81% of consumers want the company's contribution to improving environmental conditions. Further research is related to consumer awareness of environmental responsibility, which is 85% among millennials and 80% among Gen Z people. Green products include cosmetics made from natural or organic ingredients Environmentally friendly cosmetics have several advantages, namely more efficient use of water, materials, and energy, little or no pollution of nature, and packaging that is more environmentally friendly or recyclable [2].

Using skincare products will create the experience of using a brand for consumers [3]. Experience is an internal consumer response (sensation, feeling, cognition, and behavioral response) generated by the encouragement of a brand [4]. A great influence occurs when customer interactions have a strong feeling of love that can lead to brand loyalty. Brand love is an emotion towards a particular brand where customers feel more intensely towards the brand. [5]. Brand Love is a consumer relationship in the form of emotional responses and arousal based on the consumer's experience with a type or brand of product [6].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TBH) is employed to predict an individual's behavior. It rests on two primary factors when assessing a person's intent to act: attitude towards the behavior and subjective norm. An underlying assumption in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TBH) is that behavior is influenced by a person's inclination or disinclination to perform a particular action [7].

2.2 Brand Experience

A brand experience is an experience generated by the brand for consumers [8]. Brand Experience is a form of experience and insight that consumers gain through their interactions with the brand. Brand Love is affected by Brand Experience, which encompasses emotional and functional aspects. The relationship between Brand Experience and Brand Love is significant, with a direct correlation between the intensity of Brand Experience and the level of brand loyalty. Customers who encounter emotionally engaging and functionally satisfying experiences tend to develop a strong sense of attachment and loyalty belonging to the brand [9].

Brand experience has a strong impact on brand love, based on previous research [6]. The study found a positive relationship between brand loyalty and experience in the digital context, In agreement with more studies brand experience affects brand love significantly [6]. Brand affection and experience, which operate as crucial factors for swaying consumers, are two aspects that depend on brand loyalty. These characteristics provide a practical purpose in encouraging brand loyalty [10]. As was already indicated, validated that brand experience significantly impacts brand loyalty [11].

The expression "willingness to pay" describes what is the most expensive a customer is willing to spend on a good or service. Because they realize the value of benefiting their experiences as individuals, consumers are prepared to pay

for companies that speak to their preferences. Experiential purchases typically result in higher levels of satisfaction than material ones. When they have a valuable and satisfying experience, customers are more likely to pay. As a result, consumers are more likely to be prepared to pay a premium or higher price for the product when they have a pleasant experience with the brand [12]. The results of the earlier study led to the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive correlation between Brand Experience and Brand love.

H2: There is a positive correlation between Brand Experience and Brand loyalty.

H3: There is a positive correlation between Brand Experience and Willingness to pay.

2.3 Brand Love

Brand Love is based on the word love. The word love has many meanings, and each person has a different meaning and perspective[13]. The word love is defined as a combination of emotions, cognition, and behavior that humans have in creating close relationships of a romantic nature [14]. Emotion describes a sense of liking, cognition is based on deep recognition, and human behavior shows a response in the form of action [15].

In a previous study, it was analyzed that in his research, it was empirically validated that different brands strongly influence loyalty in customers [16]. Brand Loyalty is described as a strong commitment to making repeat purchases in favor of a preferred product or service consistently in the future. The connection between satisfaction and loyalty is indirectly related, and brand love acts as a mediating factor in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty [17]. Brand love has a positive and notable impact on brand loyalty. Similar findings were observed in other studies where Brand Love was found to influence brand loyalty [18]. In addition, brand loyalty and beneficial brand characteristics affect consumers' willingness to pay a premium price [19].

Individuals develop attachments to brands due to assuming it's irreplaceable, which appears in behaviors like a willingness to pay a higher price to obtain a specific brand [20]). Loved brands will also be valued and felt unique by consumers. Thus, consumers will not complain if there is a

price increase because there is no other choice, and they will still benefit from good emotions related to the beloved brand [21]. From the results of previous research, a hypothesis was found:

H4: There is a positive correlation between Brand Love and Brand Loyalty.

H5: There is a positive correlation between Brand Love and Willingness to pay.

2.4 Brand Loyalty

A commitment to often repurchase a selected good or service in the future, despite external influences and the potential to choose an alternative, is referred to as loyalty [22]. Brand loyalty enables customers to remain loyal to specific brands despite changes to the features or cost of the product [23]. When consumers make constant purchases in the marketplace, this behavior is known as behavioral brand loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty, on the other hand, denotes an emotional or psychological attachment to a particular brand [6].

2.5 Willingness to Pay

Price plays a significant role in determining the quality of a product, a price premium represents a consumer's willingness to pay more than the fair price when the worth of the product justifies it. Of this, higher-quality products typically come with a higher price tag [24].

2.6 The Mediator Role of Brand Love

Customer experience with a brand leaves a positive impression, directly influencing their affection towards the brand, a stronger brand experience leads to a higher level of brand affection, thereby acting as a catalyst for customer loyalty. Brand loyalty can be fostered through brand experiences, coupled with the emotional connection of brand love [25].

According to, price plays a significant role in determining the quality of a product [26]. Based on research, brand love serves as a mediator between brand experience and brand loyalty [27]. The correlation between brand experiences and brand loyalty is also mediated by other factors, such as hedonic emotions and brand passion and customers must have positive experiences with the brand and establish an emotional connection with it for it to generate brand love [27].

According to, price plays a significant role in determining the quality of a product [23]. The

personal elements that a company offers to foster loyal customers are expressed by brand love, functioning as a mediating factor. Brand love is a mediator between brand experience and willingness to pay, according to earlier research [28]. The influence of brand experience on willingness to pay is indirect and is mediated between perceived uniqueness and brand legitimacy [19]. Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are formulated for this study:

H6: Brand Love mediates the positive relationship between Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty.

H7: Brand Love mediates the positive relationship between Brand Experience and Willingness to Pay.

The Fig. 1 shows framework of the study.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Data Collection Technique

This research uses quantitative methods with descriptive data methods. This study uses primary data, namely data obtained directly by distributing questionnaires through social media such as WhatsApp and Instagram. The data collection method uses Google Forms or an online platform used in data collection, where respondents only need to fill it out directly and send it back to the researcher.

The operational variables of this study are measured by measurement instruments in the form of a questionnaire on a Likert scale. Each answer choice will be given a score so that the

respondent can describe the statement, and either agree or disagree with the statement. The researcher uses a Likert scale in the question, five alternative answers will be provided with each score.

3.2 Measure

The structural equation model (SEM) is part of PLS and one of the fields of statistical studies that can be used in solving research problems. The structural Equation Model (SEM) can be used to test simultaneously a series of relationships that are quite difficult to measure [29].

In conducting research, it is ensured that the instruments used are valid and reliable, so the instrument results can be trusted. In this study, the Smart-PLS method was used to test the validity and reliability of the indicators to be used in the study. Before the questionnaire was distributed, a pre-research stage involved 40 respondents. This pre-research aims to see the extent to which the instruments in the questionnaire can be understood by respondents and how well the instruments work before being carried out or used in the main research.

3.3 Sample, Population, Research Approach

Anyone can become a sample in this study provided that the respondent has purchased Green Skincare products more than twice because loyalty is a condition of the duration of consumer purchasing actions no less than twice [30]. The population in this study is all consumers who know products in the green skincare category in Indonesia with a minimum age of 18 years.
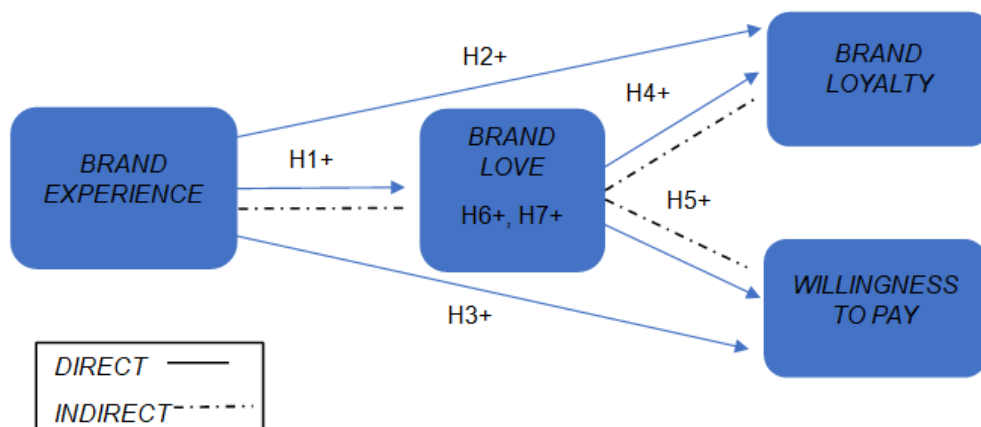

Fig. 1. Research Model

This research contains post-purchase sentiment towards the green skincare category in Indonesia. This research uses a quantitative approach, which includes surveys, experiments, structured observations, and interviews. This research produces quantitative data obtained through surveys by giving questionnaires to consumers or customers in the Green Skincare category in Indonesia.

The data collected is primary data obtained directly from respondents. This research uses a survey method, in which respondents are asked to fill out a questionnaire containing the research variables. The survey results were then analyzed quantitatively using Smart-PLS 3.0 software. The analysis includes outer model evaluation, inner model evaluation, and hypothesis testing. The results of further analysis are presented in the research report. The following is a framework:

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

A total of 147 respondents (73.5%) of the female *gender* dominate in purchasing *green products* (skincare). While as many as 53 (26.5%) respondents in the male gender indicated that the purchase of green products (skincare) is dominated by users aged 18–25 years, Age range: 18–25 years. income of Rp. 1,000,000–Rp. 5,000,000 by 52% with 104 people and most of the respondents had an undergraduate education, namely 63% with 126 people. The Table 1 shows demographic description.

4.2 Structural Equation Model Analysis

In this study, the PLS-SEM *(Partial Least Squares Equation* Model*)* structural equation model was used and involved several steps. The first step is to create a path diagram, which reflects the relationship between the variables in the study. Next, an evaluation of the external model or measurement model is carried out, as is the use of an internal model or structural model to see the relationship between variables in the research model. After the model evaluation stage, hypothesis testing is carried out to test the relationship between variables in the model. The entire data processing process in this study uses Smart-PLS 3.0 software to analyze and interpret data to produce relevant and accurate results.

Validity and Reliability tests: An item will be considered valid if the significance of the r count is (>) (smaller) 5% or 0.05. Reliability in this study shows reliable results, namely the results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient> (greater than) 0.70. Table 2. shows that each variable has a *composite reliability* value, and *Croncbach's alpha is* above 0.7, meaning that the contract is declared reliable.

In this study, there is significance by having criteria, namely a t-value of 1.96 with a significance value of 0.05 or 5% (Ghozali, and Latan, 2015). If the *t*-statistic value > *t-table* and *p-value* <0.05, the hypothesis is accepted or there is a significant effect between exogenous variables on endogenous variables on each hypothesis**.** Based on Table 3, the recapitulation of the hypothesis test explains that the coefficient influences the relevant variables.

Table 1. Descriptive demographics

Variables	Description	Total	Proportion
Gender	Male	53	26,5%
	Female	147	73,5%
Age	18 - 25	118	59,0%
	26 - 35	64	32,0%
	36 - 45	11	5,5%
	> 45	7	3,5%
Income/month	No income yet	24	12,0%
	< Rp. 1,000,000	21	10,5%
	Rp. 1,000,000 - Rp. 5,000,000	104	52,0%
	Rp. 5,000,000 - Rp. 10,000,000	42	21,0%
	>Rp. 10,000,000	9	4,5%
Last education	High School	30	15,0%
	Diploma	24	12,0%
	Bachelor	126	63,0%
	Postgraduate	20	10,0%

Table 2. Validity and Reliability test results

Variable	CRONBACH'S Alpha	Rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand loyalty	0,904	0,905	0,929	0,723
Brand experience	0,888	0,889	0,918	0,691
Brand love	0,917	0,917	0,938	0,751
Willingness to pay	0,933	0,934	0,949	0,789

Table 3. Recapitulation of hypothesis test results

Hypothesis		Original Sample (O)	*T* Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*P* Values	Description
H1	Brand Experience -> Brand Customer Loyalty	0,397	4,409	0,000	ACCEPTED
H2	Brand Experience -> Brand Love	0,856	31,973	0,000	ACCEPTED
H3	Brand Experience -> Willingness to Pay	0,264	2,816	0,005	ACCEPTED
H4	Brand Love -> Brand Customer Loyalty	0,479	4,890	0,000	ACCEPTED
H5	Brand Love -> Willingness to Pay	0,591	6,469	0,000	ACCEPTED

Sumber: Primary data processing, 2023

4.3 Discussion

If consumers or buyers have a good experience when using a particular brand or product category, the brand will feel that it provides more value to consumers, and ultimately consumers will love the brand or product category. This assumption increases the possibility of experience with a product involved in these processes and leads to a type of quality in a brand relationship, namely brand love.

Individuals or groups only participate once, and there is a possibility that consumers will respond based on recent evaluations of the green skincare product category rather than general buyer feelings. Green products ensure that customers get a good experience and feel comfortable. Consumers also feel positive feelings such as a sense of security and calm when using the green product (skincare) category. So that with a positive experience through these things, consumers have the desire to continue to use and repurchase.

When consumers have an individual or personal experience with a particular brand or product category, they are likely to be willing to pay for the product. Products with greens tend to have a stronger and more positive influence on consumer experiences related to safety and environmental friendliness. This statement shows that a positive brand experience can increase consumers' willingness to pay more.

Consumers will be loyal to a brand if they fall in love with the green skincare category. The more love that arises in consumers, the higher the level of consumer loyalty to a brand or product category. Increasing consumer love for the green product (skincare) category will lead to a feeling of always needing green products (skincare) and not switching to conventional products or skincare, which can encourage consumers to continuously purchase green products (skincare). Loyalty to the green product category provides a sense of security, so there is no intention to switch to the conventional skincare product category.

The more love there is for a particular brand or product category, the higher the willingness of consumers to pay a higher price. Consumer love for a product creates an emotional bond with the brand. Brand love can influence consumers' tendency to make purchases, and consumers who have a love for a particular brand or product will be willing to sacrifice more or less time, effort, and even money to be able to own or use the products they love. Thus, an increase in love for a brand or product can increase the willingness to pay for green products.

Brand love can mediate the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty. The brand experience should aim to evoke positive emotions. The higher the experience felt towards a brand or green product (skincare), the higher the love of experience towards green products (skincare). Thus, a positive experience can be an attraction for customers to become loyal to a brand or green product. Brand love can grow through experience with green skincare, which is considered natural skincare made from natural resources such as plant or vegetable ingredients and fruits. Thus, consumers or users of green products provide high loyalty.

Within the realm of brand love, consumers derive positive experiences and establish a strong emotional connection with a specific category of green skincare products. Engaging the senses creates a profound impact, serving as a valuable foundation for fostering a positive and enduring relationship between the consumer and the brand.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results, hypothesis testing, and discussion that has been carried out by researchers, it can be concluded that:

- Brand love and brand experience have a big impact on each other. Thus, it can be said that Brand Experience has positive effects on Brand Love. So brand love increases as brand experience does.
- Brand loyalty and brand experience have significant effects on each other. Therefore, it can be said that Brand Experience has a positive effect on Brand Loyalty. Customers are more devoted when brand experience is higher.
- Brand experience has a major impact on consumers' willingness to pay. Therefore, it can be assumed that Brand Experience has a positive impact on desire to spend. Future consumer willingness to pay will increase in direct proportion to how highly consumers experience about the brand.
- Brand love and brand loyalty have a big impact on each other. Therefore, it can be said that brand love has a beneficial impact on brand loyalty. The more a brand is loved, the more loyal customers or buyers there will be.

- Brand loyalty has a big impact on willingness to pay. Therefore, it can be said that brand love has a positive impact on willingness to pay. Consumers will be willing to spend more in the future the more brand love they experience.
- Brand experience has a major effect on brand loyalty through brand love. Therefore, it can be said that Brand Experience has a positive effect on Brand Love.
- Brand experience has a significant effect on consumers' willingness to pay through brand love. Therefore, it can be acknowledged that Brand Experience has a positive effect on Brand Love.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the results of the calculations that have been carried out, we know the role of brand experience in the green product category (skincare). So, it is suggested by researchers, namely:

- For future researchers, this study is expected to be able to help identify the root causes of problems that occur related to consumer behavior about green products in the process of solving research problems.
- For further research, it can re-examine the effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty and willingness to pay by adding new mediating variables and using other green product research objects that also enter the Indonesian market.
- For further research, it can re-examine the effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty by adding new mediating variables and using green product research objects with other green products that enter the Indonesian market.

CONSENT

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COMPETING INTERESTS

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