The Factors Influencing Brand Love and Willingness to Pay among iPhone Consumers in Indonesia

Efrita Soviyanti[1]; Nofrizal[2*]

[12]Program Studi Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Lancang Kuning
Kota Pekanbaru, Indonesia 28266
[1]efritasoviyanti@unilak.ac.id; [2]nofrizalfe@unilak.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The iPhone has become a globally exclusive and luxurious item, including in Indonesia, and it even serves as a high social status symbol for its owners. Almost every launch of a new series product always garners attention and sells out, despite its high price compared to competitors with slightly different specifications. The research aimed to identify the factors influencing brand love and willingness to pay among iPhone consumers in Indonesia. Consumer behavior and personality factors, such as social status, self-expression, hedonism, and perceived quality, were utilized as determinant variables of brand love and willingness to pay. A total of 654 iPhone users participated in filling out surveys on social media, in Apple stores, and through online forms via Google Forms. Smart-PLS 4.0 software was employed for statistical data analysis, utilizing Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS). In the results, it is proven that the positive factors driving iPhone customers' brand love come from perceived quality, social status, and self-expression. Meanwhile, the factors driving willingness to pay are brand love, perceived quality, social status, and self-expression. However, hedonism does not have a positive impact on brand love and willingness to pay. The research results suggest that the hedonic experience of the product may not be the main factor influencing consumers in the context of premium products such as the iPhone. The strong and luxurious branding of iPhone is the main reason for its customers. In addition, brand love is a key variable that mediates willingness to pay.

Keywords: brand love, willingness to pay, customer behavior

INTRODUCTION

Apple dominates the global smartphone market, with the iPhone consistently outperforming competitors such as Samsung (Business Wire, 2022). It is ranked as the world's most valuable brand, surpassing Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Samsung with a value of $482,215 (SyncForce, n.d.). Apple success is due to its significant 30% market share among college students and teens in the past five years (The Campus Agency, n.d.; Bargoni et al., 2023). By positioning itself as a high-end retailer, Apple maintains a premium brand image, attracting users who associate ownership with exclusivity (Hawari & Rustiadi, 2022; Lumba, 2019). Despite the high price, the iPhone series is very popular among Indonesian millennials and is considered a luxury product in the country (WorldBank, 2020).

This brand love among iPhone customers is deeply rooted in emotional attachment and loyalty, influenced by factors like brand image, identity, personality, experience, and loyalty (Mao et al., 2020; Sanjaya et al., 2020). Brand love includes a psychological connection and emotional bond with the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Factors that influence brand love from several studies such as self-congruity, consumer-brand relationship, attachment, trust, loyalty, experience, sympathy, empathy, perceived injustice, anxiety, addiction, online engagement, shared value creation, product quality, expressive relationship, commitment, concern for the environment, and self-expressive brand (Shimul & Phau, 2023; Madadi et al., 2022; Aro et al., 2023; Marmat, 2023; Bae & Kim, 2023; Anggara et al., 2023; Ahmad & Guzmán, 2023; Junaid et al., 2022; Arizal et al., 2024; Wallace et al., 2022; Bairrada et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2020; Zhang

et al., 2020; Wong, 2023; Sreen et al., 2021; Song & Kim, 2022; Singh et al, 2021; Putra & Keni, 2020; Mustafa et al, 2022).

Furthermore, willingness to pay is the maximum amount that consumers are willing to pay for food products (Varian, 1992). However, research on the latest willingness to pay for smartphone products like iPhone is still limited. Willingness to pay has only been tested on objects such as clean water (Jeon et al., 2021), public health care (Wolff et al., 2024), renewable energy research and development (Lin & Xie, 2024), reliable electricity (Casati et al., 2024), green roofs (Cristiano et al., 2023), and electric vehicles (Chang & Woo, 2024). In addition, the iPhone prices in Indonesia are very expensive. Still, many users are willing to go into debt or incur installments to buy an iPhone, with 55% of users using the installment method being higher than Android users (Bestari, 2023). The iPhone also serves as a tool to show social prestige and lifestyle, which further strengthens user loyalty to this brand (Satria, 2023).

There are only three studies related to Apple iPhone products. Those are about brand love, commitment, trust, customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty (Fatmala & Setiawan, 2022). Product quality, continuous innovation, and the Apple brand name contribute to increased customer loyalty and willingness to pay premium prices (Rickard et al., 2013). Meanwhile, from other objects, willingness to pay is influenced by safety, innovation, brand equity, and high price association with products that have a high level of safety and innovation (Wong et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). Several studies have identified additional factors that influence willingness to pay, including premium price, trial consumption, family income, familiarity, safety awareness, cultural distance, consumer innovativeness, novelty seeking, trust, health confidence, perceived quality, brand credibility, perceived uniqueness, subjective and objective knowledge, demographics, perceived risk, satisfaction, and loyalty (Zhao et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021; Tsuchiya et al., 2022; Yildirim et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2022; Ren et al., 2022; Lee, 2022; Nofrizal et al., 2024; Efendi & Farida, 2021; Ghali-Zinoubi, 2021; Donoghue et al., 2021; Anselmsson et al., 2014).

Based on the previous discussion on brand love and willingness to pay, there is limited exploration of the iPhone, which is known as a luxury good and a symbol of high social status in Indonesia. Despite having a higher price compared to competitors with the same specifications, it always attracts attention and sells out every time they are launched. However, there is no comprehensive research that identifies the factors that influence consumers' love and willingness to pay among iPhone users in Indonesia. Variables such as social status, self-expression, hedonism, and perceived quality are thought to play important roles, but their respective contributions to brand love and willingness to pay remain unclear. The novelty of the research is that the framework model has never been tested

together before, only testing its effect separately. The research object is iPhone users in Indonesia, which is categorized as a developing country with low income. The research aims to analyze and test the partial impact of social status, self-expression, hedonism, and perceived quality on brand love and willingness to pay and test the mediating impact of brand love between exogenous and endogenous variables on iPhone users in Indonesia. Hence, the research aims to identify why customers love brands and their willingness to pay for Apple smartphones in the millennial generation. The research questions are: 1) What is the most dominant factor in influencing and causing brand love? 2) What is the most dominant factor in influencing and causing willingness to pay? 3) Does brand love positively and significantly mediate willingness to pay? Figure 1 shows the research model.

The research, supported by Rahman et al. (2021) and Abrar et al. (2021), emphasizes the important role of emotional connection, known as brand love, in driving desired behavioral changes such as brand loyalty and willingness to pay. According to Santos and Schlesinger (2021), brand loyalty influences consumers' willingness to pay higher prices for streaming Internet TV services. In addition, brand love is highlighted as a predictor that significantly impacts consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for a brand (Wallace et al., 2022). The mediating role of brand love is clearly seen to have a positive impact between brand trust and willingness to pay high prices for high-end cosmetics (Saygili, 2023). Furthermore, the previous research result about the readiness of customers who love the Starbucks brand to pay high prices for beverage products strengthens the basis of the research (Efendi et al., 2021). Hence, the proposed hypothesis is as follows.

H1:   Brand love has a positive effect on willingness to pay.

Customers' perceived product category, hedonism, significantly impacts brand love (Wong, 2023; Nuzula & Wahyudi, 2022). Hedonism plays an important role in driving brand love for traditional luxury brands (Scarpi, 2020), offering emotional experiences and hedonic benefits that shape perceptions of symbolic values, luxury, and exclusivity (Blackston, 2018). However, for brands such as streaming services, e-commerce platforms, or social media networks, hedonism may not be the main factor influencing brand love. Instead, these brands may rely on aspects such as brand experience, image, personality, hedonism, and trust to positively impact building emotional connections to consumers' brand love (Santos & Schlesinger, 2021). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2:   Hedonism has a positive effect on brand love.

Hedonism is also a factor that can affect consumers' willingness to pay for healthy drinks sold
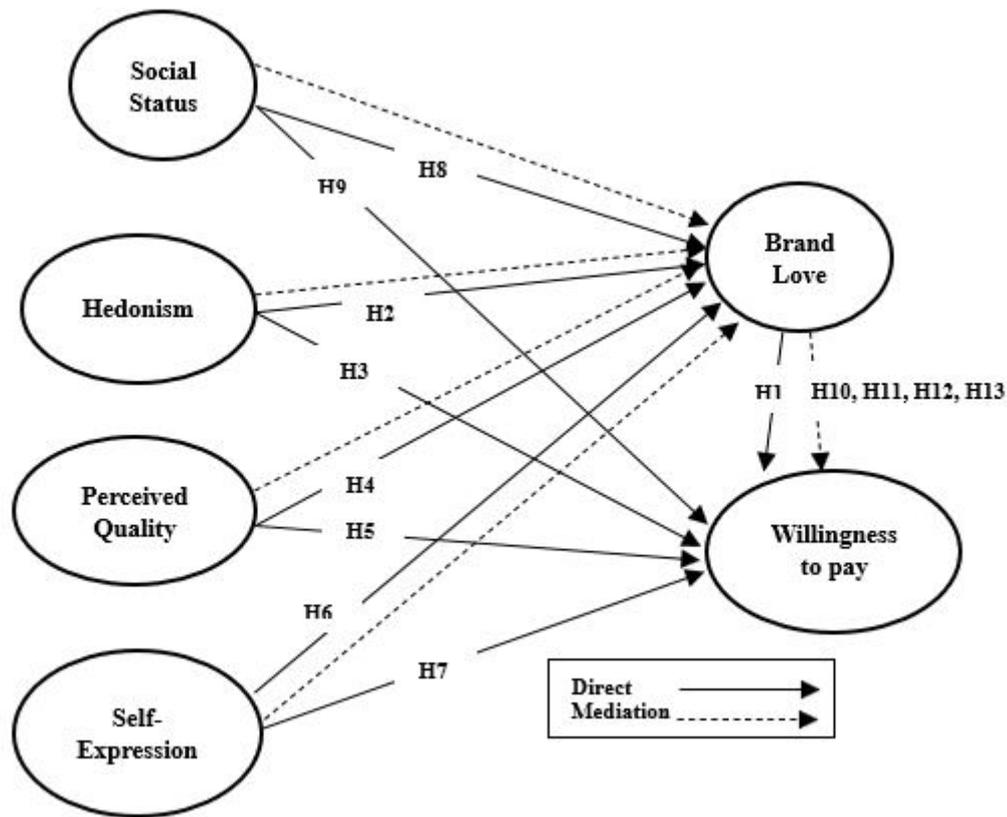
Figure 1 Research Model

by hospitality businesses (Hallak et al., 2022). The hedonism effect, which refers to people's tendency to value what they have more highly than what they do not have, is also found to influence willingness to pay in the second-hand clothing market (Chen-Yu et al., 2022; Bu, 2023). Hedonic and emotional factors drive willingness to pay responses for different types of beer in Brazil (Zanetta et al., 2021). Hence, hedonism has a significant and positive impact on willingness to pay (Hallak et al., 2022), and the hypothesis is proposed as follows.

H3:   Hedonism has a positive effect on willingness to pay.

Next, perceived quality is positively and significantly correlated with brand love. For consumers, brands with high perceptions have a solid relationship that can influence brand love (Mustafa et al., 2022; Auditya & Mirzanti, 2022). The relationship between perceived quality and brand love strengthens consumers in buying Asus Laptop products in Indonesia (Azizah, 2019; Liao, 2021). There is also the relevance of perceived quality to brand trust, fostering brand loyalty and love in social media marketing (Akoglu & Özbek, 2021). Then, there is a relationship between perceived quality and brand love for PC tables (Zhang et al., 2020). Perceived quality triggers brand love in restaurant customers (Putra & Keni, 2020). So, the hypothesis proposed is:

H4:   Perceived quality has a positive effect on brand love.

Willingness to pay for quality change depends on the level of perceived heterogeneous quality (Armstrong & Kotler, 2023; Mukherjee et al., 2023). Perceived quality can affect customer value and willingness to buy (Siddique & Rajput, 2022). Perceived quality can influence willingness to pay for products, such as red wine, which has beneficial effects on health (Ruso et al., 2021). In addition, the perceived quality experience of product brands affects consumers' willingness to pay premium prices directly and indirectly through brand credibility, perceived quality, perceived uniqueness, and social image in industries with low and high involvement in mobile phone products (Khan & Siddiqui, 2020). So, the next hypothesis is as follows.

H5:   Perceived quality has a positive effect on willingness to pay.

Self-expressive products are preferred by consumers (Bai et al., 2021), leading to a higher likelihood of increasing brand love (Siddique & Rajput, 2022). Self-expression has a positive and significant impact and can foster greater brand love (Ghorbanzadeh, 2024). It facilitates reflection of innermost feelings or social identity on social media, influencing various pathways to brand love

(Wallace et al., 2022). Self-expression inwardly and socially has a positive and significant impact on brand love, which influences brand advocacy through word of mouth and acceptance of brand advocacy (Septyani & Alversia, 2020). So, the next hypothesis is as follows.

H6:   Self-expression has a positive effect on brand love.

This type of self-expression, such as customization to express individual identity, can increase consumers' willingness to pay for products (Lei et al., 2020). Self-expression benefits and natural experiences have been found to positively influence consumers' attitudes and increase their willingness to pay for green products (Hwang & Kim, 2021). In addition, consumers' needs for uniqueness and self-expression can influence their brand awareness, brand name fanaticism, and willingness to pay for branded merchandise (Ghorbanzadeh, 2024). So, the hypothesis proposed is as follows.

H7:   Self-expression has a positive effect on willingness to pay.

In Chinese consumers, social status and brand involvement significantly and positively influence Apple brand love (Sohaib et al., 2022). Social status can positively and significantly drive brand love and can be an effective strategy for increasing brand equity and sales revenue for fashion products (Ferreira et al., 2022). Social status and brand love are two concepts that can influence consumer behavior differently (Sohaib et al., 2022). Then, the hypothesis is proposed as follows.

H8:   Social status has a positive effect on brand love.

The urge to indicate one's social rank causes people to be willing to pay higher prices for luxury products (Balabanis & Stathopoulou, 2021; Xue, 2022). For example, consumers' socioeconomic status has a significant positive effect on their willingness to pay for organic food which has a perceived utilitarian value (Ghali-Zinoubi, 2021). Social status, physical activity, and socio-demographics also encourage a willingness to pay for a basket of organic food (Knaggs et al., 2022). In addition, social status and perceived risk significantly impact the intention to buy counterfeit luxury products in the Arab Gulf (Elsantil & Bedair, 2022). Then, the next proposed hypothesis is as follows.

H9:   Social status has a positive effect on willingness to pay

Last, brand love positively mediates between brand trust and willingness to pay high prices for high-end cosmetics (Saygili, 2023). Brand love can also mediate the relationship between perceived quality and restaurant customers' loyalty (Putra & Keni, 2020). Brand love is also proven to mediate brand image and willingness to pay for iPhone in Generation Z positively and significantly (Hibban & Wahyudi, 2022). Hence, the last hypotheses are as follows.

H10:   Brand love has a positive mediation effect between hedonism and willingness to pay,

H11:   Brand love has a positive mediation effect between perceived quality and willingness to pay,

H12:   Brand love has a positive mediation effect between self-expression and willingness to pay,

H13:   Brand love has a positive mediation effect between social status and willingness to pay.

METHODS

A cross-sectional online survey is conducted using a quantitative research design to test the hypotheses, as illustrated in Figure 1. The research focuses on iPhone users, ensuring that participants have previous experience using an iPhone through two screening questions in the survey. Only respondents who state ownership and mention their iPhone model are eligible to participate. Subsequently, over six months, from November 2022 to May 2023, a mixed-method survey is conducted with iPhone users in Indonesia using Google Forms, direct distribution, and assistance from Apple Stores (Hair et al., 2019). Out of 761 participants, 654 are included after eliminating incomplete responses. This survey undergoes a careful five-step design process. The demographic insights from 654 respondents show a diverse sample, forming the basis for subsequent formal analysis.

The survey questions use a 1 to 5 Likert scale, 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. The survey instrument is developed from operational research variables. In social status, it has idol/role models, education, income, family, and upper class (Faustine, 2015; Abdulsyani, 2012). Then, hedonism has social buying, benefit shopping, interest, high satisfaction, and financial management (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Evanschitzky et al., 2014; Torrington et al., 2020). Perceived quality consists of beautiful exhibition, sophisticated applications, perfect design, a whole collection of applications, and great qualities (Rumapea et al., 2022). Meanwhile, self-expression reflects character and inner self, contributes to lifestyle, enhances others' view of self, and gives a positive view of the self (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Willingness to pay has compassion, perceived excellence, customer retention individuality, and associated brands (Anselmsson et al., 2014), and brand love includes quality, self-conformity, passion for the brand, brand loyalty, brand delight, and satisfaction (Wallace et al., 2014; Roy et al., 2013).

In the research, SmartPLS 4.0 is used for component-based Partial Least Squares - Structural

Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS), having the advantages of being non-parametric and free of data distribution assumptions (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity is examined with Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha (α). Then, discriminant validity is evaluated by correlation and highest item loading (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Next, R^2 values indicate the quality of the prediction model (Sarstedt et al., 2021), while hypothesis testing uses bootstrapping with a t-test (Hoyle, 1995). Before testing hypothesized relationships, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is conducted to validate the measurement model. Factor loadings exceed 0.70 ($p < 0.01$), and AVE surpasses 0.50, confirming convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Then, scale reliability is affirmed through Cronbach's alpha, CR, and rho_A. All should surpass the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis in Table 1 (see Appendices) shows a higher representation of female respondents at 56%, with most being in the age group of 26−29 years at 31%. Most purchases are made in cash at 91%, and new products dominate over used products at 85%. Social media and YouTube are the main sources of information at 25−26%, reflecting their influence on the willingness to pay for iPhone.

Detailed CFA results for brand love and willingness to pay for the Apple smartphone (iPhone) are presented in Table 2 (see Appendices) that all variables have strong reliability (Composite Reliability (CR) > 0.7) and adequate convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5). The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is 0.079, meeting the requirement to assess the extent to which the tested structural model fits the observed data. SRMR values between 0.80−0.10 indicate that the model has a good fit (Henseler et al., 2015).

The research uses the approach of Fornell and Larcker (1981) to assess discriminant validity. The results in Table 3 (see Appendices) show that the square root of the AVE for each latent construct is greater than the correlation between variables. The result confirms that each construct has a clear distinction, and discriminant validity has been achieved. All variables in the matrix meet the discriminant validity criteria, indicating that each variable can be well distinguished from each other.

Heterotrait-Monotrait analysis (HTMT) confirms discriminant validity, with all scores below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). The result is in Table 4 (see Appendices). It shows fairly strong inter-variable correlations between willingness to pay, perceived quality, and hedonism and between brand love and self-expression. Social status is seen to have a lower correlation compared to the other variables, indicating less influence in the tested context.

R^2 values measured by 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered strong, moderate, and weak, respectively. Figure 2 shows that willingness to pay has R^2 of 0.647 or 64.7%. It indicates that the model has a good ability to predict a person's willingness to pay. Although it is not as strong as 75%, it is still in the medium to high category. Meanwhile, brand love has an R^2 of 0.720 or 72%, indicating a strong explanatory power. So, this model effectively predicts the factors that influence love for the brand. The research also shows good observation values with a Q-square greater than 0 on the dependent variable. It means that the model can reliably predict variables such as willingness to pay and brand love. These results are in accordance with the suggested guidelines (Hair et al., 2014).

After validating the measurement model, the structural model is tested through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. Results in Table 5 (see Appendices) reveal that brand love significantly influences willingness to Pay ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H1. Meanwhile, hedonism does not affect brand love ($\beta = 0.094$, $p > 0.05$) or willingness to pay ($\beta = -0.064$, $p > 0.05$). The results do not support H2 and H3. Next, perceived quality positively influences brand Love ($\beta = 0.590$, $p < 0.01$) and willingness to pay ($\beta = -0.352$, $p < 0.01$), confirming H4 and H5. Similarly, self-expression positively affects brand love ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.01$) and willingness to pay ($\beta = 0.170$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H6 and H7. Social status also positively influences brand love ($\beta = -0.088$, $p < 0.05$) and willingness to pay ($\beta = 0.201$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H8 and H9. Then, brand love does not mediate hedonism with a willingness to pay ($\beta = 0.034$, $p > 0.05$), not supporting H10. However, Brand love positively mediates perceived quality ($\beta = 0.215$, $p < 0.01$), self-expression ($\beta = 0.114$, $p < 0.05$), and social status ($\beta = 0.032$, $p < 0.05$) with willingness to pay, supporting H11, H12, and H13.

Based on Table 5 (see Appendices) the analysis of the first research question regarding factors influencing brand love, perceived quality emerges as the most significant variable, accounting for 59% of its influence on iPhone customers' brand love. It has the highest descriptive score value. The result supports the previous researchers (Ghorbanzadeh, 2024; Siddique & Rajput, 2022). This perception encompasses various aspects like built quality, design, and user experience, aligning with Apple reputation for delivering products with high perceived quality.

Moving on to the second research question about factors influencing willingness to pay, bootstrapping results indicate that brand love is the most dominant factor contributes 36% to iPhone customers' willingness to pay with descriptive score value than the other variables (see Table 5 in Appendices). The result is in line with Song and Kim (2022) and Santos and Schlesinger (2021). Brand love, defined as a psychological connection to the brand, encompasses emotional attachment and loyalty, often driven by product quality, design, and the overall Apple
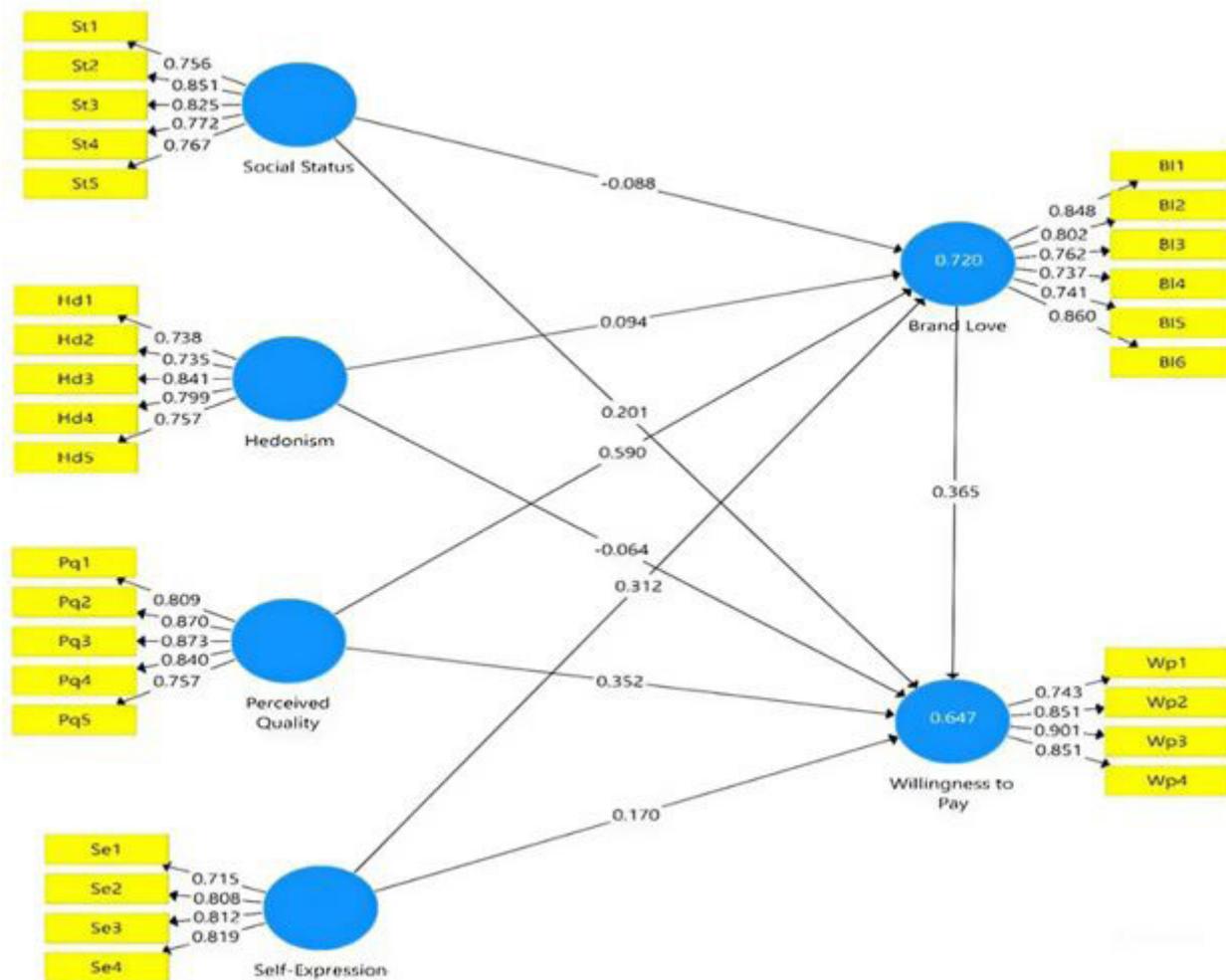
Figure 2 The Structural Model

ecosystem. Enthusiastic advocates of the brand with "brand love" are known to be loyal customers willing to pay premium prices.

The analysis reveals that brand love positively mediates the effects of self-expression, perceived quality, and social status on willingness to pay, addressing the third research question on the mediating role of brand love. The results support Efendi and Farida (2021). However, hedonism does not show significant mediation by brand love. The result suggests that consumers' emotional connection with Apple plays a vital role in how their perceived personality influences their willingness to pay for Apple smartphones (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

Next, the research provides three significant contributions to the existing literature on brand love and willingness to pay, particularly in the context of smartphone products. First, brand love has traditionally been influenced by self-congruence, consumer-brand relationship, and brand attachment (Shimul & Phau, 2023; Nofrizal et al., 2024; Madadi et al., 2022). Recent studies have also considered factors like social media, brand trust, customer experience, customer-brand relationships empathy, consumer anxiety, and online brand engagement (Aro et al., 2023; Marmat, 2023; Bae & Kim, 2023; Anggara et al., 2023; Santos & Schlesinger, 2021; Ahmad & Guzmán, 2023; Junaid et al., 2022; Wallace et al., 2022; Bairrada et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020; Wong, 2023; Sreen et al., 2021; Song & Kim, 2022; Singh et al., 2021). The research enriches the understanding by emphasizing the roles of self-expression, perceived quality, and social status as significant drivers of brand love (Zhang et al., 2020; Putra & Keni, 2020; Septyani & Alversia, 2020; Octavia & Tamerlane, 2017). The research demonstrates that the alignment of consumers' psychological and behavioral roles with a particular brand that suits their personality leads to brand love, particularly concerning Apple smartphones (Sohaib et al., 2022).

The result shows that hedonism or the pursuit of pleasure and personal fulfilment has no significant influence on brand love and willingness to pay among iPhone customers. This result is based on the p-values that indicate statistical significance: for brand love, the p-value is 0.094 (greater than 0.05), and for willingness to pay, the p-value is -0.064 (greater than 0.05). It means that the effect of hedonism on both

factors is not statistically significant does not support the findings (Zanetta et al., 2021; Azizah, 2019; Liao, 2021; Akoglu & Özbek, 2021). Indonesian customers' cultural values emphasize collective priorities and practical functions over individual pleasure, as well as social motivations to own an iPhone as a status symbol. In addition, economic considerations and a focus on the use of technology in daily life may also reduce the influence of hedonism on consumer behaviour in this context.

The pursuit of sensory pleasure and satisfaction, often associated with hedonism, is not impactful in this case due to the high pricing. The product category does not fall under hedonistic characteristics (Blackston, 2018; Santos & Schlesinger, 2021) despite Apple reputation for focusing on creating user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing technology, which can contribute to a hedonistic experience for its customers. The design, user interface, and overall user experience of Apple products are often cited as elements that bring joy and satisfaction to users.

Second, the research successfully contributes to the literature that affects willingness to pay, especially for smartphone brands, namely self-expression with a p-value of 0.014 < 0.05. It has a positive and significant effect. Perceived quality, brand love, and social status also have a positive and significant effect with a p-value of 0.002 < 0.05. The result complements the willingness to pay for studies on iPhone that have previously been tested in several studies, such as brand commitment, brand trust, customer experience, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Fatmala & Setiawan, 2022; Jeon et al., 2021; Wolff et al., 2024; Lin & Xie, 2024; Casati et al., 2024).

Additionally, maintaining and improving product quality, along with continuous innovation, strengthens customer loyalty and brand strength, leading to an increased willingness to pay premium prices. The Apple name can also influence consumers' judgments and willingness to pay. Willingness to pay refers to the amount a person is willing to pay for a particular good or service (Wong et al., 2020). Customers are willing to pay a premium for high-safety and innovative products (Johnson et al., 2020). A high willingness to pay for a product or service, often associated with strong brand equity, allows goods to command effective high prices in the market (Dwivedi et al., 2018). Furthermore, willingness to pay is influenced by factors such as price premium (Zhao et al., 2020), eco-friendly packaging (Nguyen et al., 2021), cultural distance (Tsuchiya et al., 2022), consumer innovativeness (Yildirim et al., 2021), health beliefs regarding COVID-19 vaccines (Wong et al., 2020), online brand engagement (Wallace et al., 2022), consumer community culture, socio-demographics, visual aesthetics (Lee, 2022; Ren et al., 2022; Knaggs et al., 2022), brand loyalty (Efendi & Farida, 2021), perceived values in organic food (Ghali-Zinoubi, 2021), label information, brand image (Anselmsson et al., 2014; Donoghue et al., 2021). As a result, these findings contribute to and complement the limited literature on the theory and objects, particularly in the context of smartphones and the Apple brand. These results support previous findings (Ruso et al., 2021; Khan & Siddiqui, 2020).

Last, the research contributes by emphasizing the role of brand love as a significant and positive mediator in driving the willingness to pay for Apple smartphones (iPhone). These findings support the role of brand love in mediating the influence of intensive distribution and social media promotion on brand loyalty and electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) (Saini et al., 2023). Furthermore, brand love serves as a mediator for the impact of intensive distribution on customer loyalty, brand perception, and e-WOM. It also mediates the influence of social media promotion on brand loyalty and e-WOM (Suartina et al., 2022). Simultaneously, the contribution of brand love plays a mediating role in preserving the effects of novelty and brand identification in reevaluating intent and premium pricing (Liu et al., 2020). Brand love has also been found as a significant predictor of brand loyalty, positive WOM, willingness to pay a premium price, and resistance to negative information about smartphone brands in the context of Pakistan (Khan, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

The research highlights factors influencing brand love and willingness to pay among Apple smartphone (iPhone) consumers in Indonesia. Despite the premium price of the iPhone in a country with low spending levels, the research identifies significant determinants, including social status, self-expression, hedonism, and perceived quality. With a sample of 654 iPhone users, SmartPLS 4.0 analysis using SEM-PLS reveals that consumers exhibit brand love and willingness to pay premium prices for Apple smartphones. Notably, brand love emerges as an important mediating factor in influencing consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for the brand, emphasizing the importance of emotional connection in consumer

The research is limited to analyzing the factors that influence brand love and willingness to pay among iPhone users in Indonesia. It focuses on social status, self-expression, hedonism, and perceived quality. The sample consists of 654 users, a relatively small number of iPhone users compared to other smartphone brands. Moreover, the samples are drawn through surveys rather than observations or experiments on social media, Apple stores, and online forms with limitations. Data analysis is conducted using the SEM-PLS method, which still has weaknesses compared to other software such as LISREL and AMOS. Moreover, the research does not include iPhone users outside Indonesia and does not consider other external behavior variables. Hence, future research can take into account factors such as cultural values and economic conditions that may improve the generalizability of the findings. Then, incorporating qualitative methods, such as in-

depth interviews or focus groups, may offer richer insights into the underlying motivations and emotions that drive brand love and influence willingness to pay among Apple smartphone consumers in Indonesia.

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APPENDICES

Table 1 Demographics of Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Total	Percentage %
Gender	Female	428	56
	Male	226	44
Age Group	15−17 years	32	5
	18−21 years	112	17
	22−25 years	150	23
	26−29 years	206	31
	30−33 years	154	24
Duration of Last iPhone Purchase	1−12 months	98	15
	1−3 years	169	26
	4−6 years	246	38
	7−9 years	119	18
	10−12 years	13	2
	> 13 years	9	1
Purchase Method	Cash	587	91
	Credit	67	9
Sources of Information	Social media	170	26
	YouTube	165	25
	Website	154	24
	E-commerce	94	14
	Store	54	8
	Friends	12	2
	Family	5	1
Types of Purchased Products	New products	553	85
	Second-hand products	101	15
Total		654	100%

<p align="center">Table 2 The Results of Instrument Measurement, Construct Reliability, Validity, Composite Reliability
(CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</p>

No	Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	CR	AVE
1	Social Status (X1)	St1. Idol/role model	0.756	0.883	0.603
		St2. Education	0.851		
		St3. Income	0.825		
		St4. Family	0.772		
		St5. Upper Class	0.767		
2	Hedonism (X2)	Hd1. Socially buying	0.738	0.855	0.545
		Hd2. Benefit shopping	0.735		
		Hd3. Interest	0.841		
		Hd4. High satisfaction	0.799		
		Hd5. Financial management	0.757		
3	Perceived Quality (X3)	Pq1. Beautiful exhibition	0.809	0.917	0.690
		Pq2. Sophisticated applications	0.870		
		Pq3. Perfect design	0.873		
		Pq4. A whole collection of applications	0.840		
		Pq5. Great qualities	0.757		
4	Self-Expression (X5)	Se1. Reflecting character and inner self	0.715	0.869	0.624
		Se2. Contributing to lifestyle	0.808		
		Se3. Enhancing others' view of self	0.812		
		Se4. Giving a positive view of the self	0.819		
5	Willingness to Pay (Y2)	Wp1. Compassion	0.734	0.872	0.638
		Wp2. Perceived excellence	0.851		
		Wp3. Individuality of customer retention	0.901		
		Wp4. Associated brands	0.851		
6	Brand Love (Y1)	Bl1. Quality	0.848	0.910	0.629
		Bl2. Self-conformity	0.802		
		Bl3. Passion for the brand	0.762		
		Bl4. Brand loyalty	0.737		
		Bl5. Brand delight	0.741		
		Bl6. Satisfaction	0.860		
	Fit Model Test	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) below 0.08−0.10	Result	0.079	Matching

<p align="center">Table 3 Results of Discriminant Validity Using Fornell-Larcker Criterion</p>

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Brand Love	**0.793**					
Hedonism	0.679	**0.738**				
Perceived Quality	0.709	0.669	**0.831**			
Self-Expression	0.631	0.536	0.491	**0.790**		
Social Status	0.138	0.409	0.190	0.242	**0.777**	
Willingness to Pay	0.737	0.627	0.716	0.587	0.333	**0.799**

Table 4 Results of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Brand Love						
Hedonism	0.777					
Perceived Quality	0.709	0.687				
Self-Expression	0.752	0.680	0.577			
Social Status	0.297	0.493	0.281	0.271		
Willingness to Pay	0.678	0.753	0.813	0.711	0.373	

Table 5 Bootstrapping Results for Direct and Moderating Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis	Direct Effect	Influence Value	T-Statistics	P-Values	Information
H1	Brand Love → Willingness to Pay	0.365	3.222	0.001	Accepted
H2	Hedonism → Brand love	0.094	1.219	0.111	Rejected
H3	Hedonism → Willingness to Pay	-0.064	0.686	0.246	Rejected
H4	Perceived Quality → Brand Love	0.590	8.459	0.000	Accepted
H5	Perceived Quality → Willingness to Pay	0.352	3.352	0.000	Accepted
H6	Self-Expression → Brand Love	0.312	3.708	0.000	Accepted
H7	Self-Expression → Willingness to Pay	0.170	2.208	0.014	Accepted
H8	Social Status → Brand love	-0.088	2.094	0.018	Accepted
H9	Social Status → Willingness to Pay	0.201	2.942	0.002	Accepted
H10	Hedonism → Brand love → Willingness to Pay	0.034	1.231	0.109	Rejected
H11	Perceived Quality → Brand Love → Willingness to Pay	0.215	3.362	0.000	Accepted
H12	Self-Expression → Brand Love → Willingness to Pay	0.114	1.968	0.025	Accepted
H13	Social Status → Brand love → Willingness to Pay	0.032	1.976	0.023	Accepted