

The Impact of Brand Experience to the Brand Loyalty Mediated by Emotional Brand Attachment

Zulfikar Azaria Rahman¹, Ihwan Susila^{2*}

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

² Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

Corresponding author. *Ihwan Susila.2 Email: ihwan.susila@ums.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research is about the influence of brand experience on brand loyalty mediated by the emotional brand attachment. The focus of this research was to determine the influence of Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) in mediating the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. Research was conducted on Apple Smartphone consumer involving 100 Respondents. This research utilized Partial Least Squares (PLS) as the data analysis technique, which was facilitated by SMARTPLS 3 software. Brand passion and self-brand connection had a significant influence on the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty, however, brand affection had no have a significant influence on the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty.

Keywords: *Brand experience, Brand passion, Self-brand Connection, Brand affection, Brand Loyalty*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the present day, information technology is massively developing. The technology development has brought collective changes in people's lives, especially in the social and communication aspects. Along with the development in the information technology setting, mobile phones that have become sophisticated and more complete capabilities, commonly known as smartphones, are widely used across the world [1].

Iphone is a Smartphone designed and marketed by Apple.Inc. Based on the data from gs.statcounter.com, Apple led the Smartphone selling in the world with proportion of 28.23%, while Samsung came at the second rank with 27.04% per September 2020 – July 2021. The variety of smartphone models and brands available nowadays forces users to be more careful and selective in purchasing. Consumers' brand experience is one of the variables that influence their decision to purchase a product from a specific brand.

Brand experience can be attained by providing positive experience to the customer; positive experience will more likely allow consumers to re-purchase a product or service from the same brand rather than

buying from the brand competitors [2]. Loyalty is influenced by many factors, including service quality, price, and brand image. However, customer loyalty can be achieved when a customer feels satisfied with the company services. To achieve customer satisfaction, a company must be able to provide quality service [3]. Brand loyalty should be achieved since loyal customers will actively promote, provide recommendations to family and friends, make products as the main choice [4].

Smartphones company is currently competing to provide best experience to their brand in order to build positive brand experience with the consumer so the consumer will re-purchase their product. As many as 65% of consumers would repurchase based on their previous buying history. Thus, many of the brand's products are designed to provide clients with an incredible experience [5].

To attract the consumer attention, a brand should give a minimum focus on the brand contact point management with the customer and emotional attributes. However, what distinguishes the brand from competitors relies heavily on their ability to develop a customer contact based on the experience, such as the visual, pleasure, and engagement [6]. Consumers are not only looking for the

noticeable and functional values anymore but also the principle of intangible assets, such as experience in procuring a product and experience in the use of it. Therefore, marketing professionals have identified that people are drawn to brands that provide unique and memorable experience [7].

The relationship between a consumer and a brand has evolved into a focal point of the product sales process. The brand experience serves as the primary stimulant for this association, and brand loyalty serves as the primary reward. However, a favorable and profitable customer reaction to a brand is encouraged by the brand experience [8]. As a result, the importance of brand experience involves consideration of emotional repercussions. Additionally, there are three critical dimensions that depict emotional aspects: Brand Passion, Self-brand connection, and Brand attachment, each of which has a large impact on the results [9]. Authors chose Apple Smartphones product because their product has a unique positive fascination regardless of a high price than the average competitors. Consumers will buy every Apple Smartphones series as proven by the sales data of Apple smartphones that exceed beyond the sale of its competitors. Furthermore, Apple smartphones have better after-sales market price compared with its competitors. This research tested the re-evolution of branding theory using the research model of [10], in which the tester attempted to re-test the influence of brand experience on brand loyalty mediated by the dimensions of emotional brand attachment (brand passion, self-brand connection and brand affection). So, the research model of this testing was implemented on teenage consumers who currently use Apple smartphone.

Based on the previous research, a research gap between this research and former studies is noticeable in term of object and respondents. This research took the Apple consumers as the object and teenage Apple consumers as the respondents, while the previous studies used smartphone brand in general and all age in general. This research aimed to explore the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty mediated by the dimensions of the EBA (emotional brand attachment), namely: Brand Passion, Self-brand connection, Brand affection.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1. Brand Experience

Brand experience is the result of the stimulus that trigger the enthusiasm and satisfaction of the customers, thus encourage them to repeat such experiences from time to time [11]. Brand experience should not only affect the previous satisfaction but also the loyalty of the future consumers [12]. Customers will be attracted to

repeat and suggest the product to others. Brand experience is a critical aspect in creating and sustaining corporate success, as well as in developing a long-term link with the consumer [13].

The statement is in line with the previous research of [10,11,14] that brand experience significantly influence brand loyalty. According to the aforementioned statement, the first hypothesis proposed by the authors is as follows:

H1: Brand experience variable affects brand loyalty.

2.2. Brand Passion

Brand passion is defined as an emotional attachment to a brand that people believe is valuable, strong desire to own and utilize the brand, to transform it into a personal identity, and to spend resources for a specified amount of time [15]. Customer with strong desire is more likely to buy products/services of a brand in an impulsive manner [9]. The statement is in line with the previous research conducted by [10] that Brand Passion mediated the relationship between Brand Experience and Brand loyalty. According to the preceding statement, the second hypothesis proposed by the authors is as follows:

H2: Brand passion variable mediates the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty.

2.3. Self-Brand Connection

Self-brand connection is defined as the extent to which an individual puts the brand concepts into themselves [16]. Furthermore, customers' self-connection with the brand is as a result of the experiences encountered. Specifically, an extraordinary and impressive experience will affect the customer to be loyal with the brand [17]. The individual is not only purchasing and consuming products or services to meet their needs but boosting experience related to the self-attachment and association [18]. The statement corresponds to the previous research carried out by [19] that self-brand connection mediated the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. According to the preceding statement, the third statement proposed is as follows:

H3: Self-brand connection variable mediates the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty.

2.4. Brand Affection

Brand affection is the brand strength that raises the consumer emotional experience [20]. Research by [9] shows that consumers who were compassion towards a particular brand were more likely to be in a long-term relationship. Therefore, the brand experience will lead the customer to maintain affection toward a brand or in short, loyalty.

The argument is consistent with past research, specifically the one studied by [10,21] that brand affection mediated the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. According to the statement, the fourth hypothesis proposed by the authors is as follows:

H4: Brand affection variable mediates the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In this research the authors used quantitative methods. This research attempted to test the influence of Apple smartphone user brand experience towards the brand loyalty with brand passion, self-brand connection, and brand affection as a mediating variable. This research applied purposive sampling as the sampling technique with a questionnaire obtained directly from the respondents through the Google Form as a tool to collect data from the respondents of teenage consumers using Apple smartphone. The measurement of these variables were performed using a questionnaire by means of Likert scale with 5 variants.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Respondents Profile

The respondents' profile was used to identify the respondents' characteristics obtained from the personal data at the first page of the questionnaire, such as age, gender, education, and amount of income.

4.1.1. Respondent characteristic based on gender

Table 1. Respondent characteristic based on gender

Gender	Numbers of Respondents	Percentage
Male	39	39 %
Female	61	61 %

Source: primary data 2021

Based on the Table 1, the respondent characteristic based on gender obtained that the respondents with the male gender consisted of 39% or 39 people, while respondents with female gender consisted of 61 people, or 61%. It can be determined that the respondents were dominated by the female participants.

4.1.2. Respondents' characteristics based on age

Table 2. Respondent characteristic based on age

Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
20	12	12%
21	55	55%
22	22	22%
23	4	4%
24	3	3%
25	4	4%

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Source: primary data 2021

Based on Table 2, the respondent characteristic according to the age yielded respondents aged 20 years, totaling 12 respondent with a proportion of 13% and was followed by respondents aged 21 years as many as 55 respondent with a percentage of 55%. Meanwhile, respondents aged 23 years encompassed 4 participants with a proportion of 4%, aged 24 years as many as 3 people with a proportion of 3%, and aged 25 years as many as 4 people with a proportion of 3%. This confirms that respondents under the age of 21 years dominated the portion.

4.1.3. Respondent characteristic based on education

Table 3. Characteristics based on education

Education level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
High School	20	20%
Associate Degree	10	10%
Bachelor	70	70%

Source: primary data 2021

Based on the Table 3, the respondent characteristic based on education implies that respondents with High School level found 20 participants with a percentage of 20%. Following that, respondents with Associate Degree totaled 10 people with a percentage of 10%. Meanwhile, respondents with Bachelor degree had 70 participants or 70%. These findings confirm that respondents with Bachelor degree dominated the total quantity.

4.1.4. Respondent characteristic based on income

Table 4. Respondent characteristic based on income

Income Amount	Number of Respondents	Percentage
< 1.000.000	38	38 %
1.000.000 - 2.500.000	39	39 %
2.500.000 - 4.000.000	13	13 %
4.000.000 - 5.500.000	3	3 %
> 5.500.000	7	7 %
Total	100	100%

Source: primary data 2021

Based on Table 4, the respondent characteristic based on the income amount shows that the respondents with income of < 1.000.000 had 38 people with the percentage of 38%. Further, those with income of 1,000,000 - 2,500,00 obtained 39 people with a percentage of 39%. Respondents with income of 2.500.000 - 4.000.000 consisted of 3 people with a percentage of 3%. The respondents with an income of <5.500.000 gathered 7 people with a proportion of 7%. This confirms that respondents with an income of 1,000,000 – 2,500,000 are the majority.

4.2. The Analysis Results

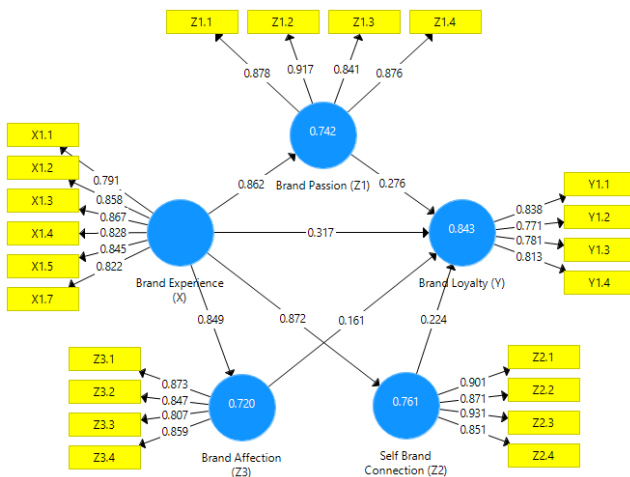


Figure 1. Outerloading

4.2.1 Convergent validity

Convergent validity can be assessed by looking at the validity indicators shown by the loading factor value. The proper loading factor value is > 0.70 [22]. After the data were processed with SmartPLS 3.0 software, the loading factor value is described in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Outer loading

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading
Brand Experience (X)	X ¹	0.791
	X ²	0.858
	X ³	0.867
	X ⁴	0.828
	X ⁵	0.845
	X ⁷	0.822
	Brand Passion (Z1)	Z1 ¹

Self-Brand Connection (Z2)	Z1 ²	0.917
	Z1 ³	0.841
	Z1 ⁴	0.876
	Z2 ¹	0.901
Brand Affection (Z3)	Z2 ²	0.871
	Z2 ³	0.931
	Z2 ⁴	0.851
	Z3 ¹	0.873
Brand Loyalty (Y)	Z3 ²	0.847
	Z3 ³	0.807
	Z3 ⁴	0.859
	Y ¹	0.838
Brand Loyalty (Y)	Y ²	0.771
	Y ³	0.781
	Y ⁴	0.813

Source: primary data 2021

Based on the outer loading value, Table 5 shows that all values of the loading factor had a value above 0.7. This implies that variable indicators are collectively valid and meet the convergent validity criteria.

4.2.2 Discriminant validity

Table 6. Cross Loading

	BE (X)	BL (Y)	BP (Z1)	SBC (Z2)	BA (Z3)
X1.1	0.791	0.761	0.878	0.592	0.786
X1.2	0.858	0.807	0.885	0.684	0.836
X1.3	0.867	0.753	0.654	0.794	0.708
X1.4	0.828	0.622	0.562	0.736	0.569
X1.5	0.845	0.692	0.641	0.765	0.693
X1.7	0.822	0.786	0.649	0.814	0.624
Y1.1	0.7	0.838	0.738	0.58	0.693
Y1.2	0.709	0.771	0.738	0.719	0.791
Y1.3	0.591	0.781	0.619	0.606	0.651
Y1.4	0.823	0.813	0.645	0.759	0.599
Z1.1	0.791	0.761	0.878	0.592	0.786
Z1.2	0.753	0.758	0.917	0.647	0.787
Z1.3	0.75	0.777	0.841	0.756	0.736
Z1.4	0.73	0.715	0.876	0.613	0.783

Z2.1	0.793	0.754	0.703	0.901	0.716
Z2.2	0.695	0.696	0.53	0.871	0.637
Z2.3	0.831	0.789	0.69	0.931	0.746
Z2.4	0.776	0.731	0.707	0.851	0.785
Z3.1	0.775	0.724	0.768	0.764	0.873
Z3.2	0.747	0.738	0.779	0.669	0.847
Z3.3	0.644	0.694	0.765	0.56	0.807
Z3.4	0.704	0.741	0.671	0.749	0.859

Source: primary data 2021

Based on the cross loading value that has been presented in Table 6, it shows that each of the indicators research variables had the biggest cross loading value on the variables it made, compared to the other cross loading value variables. Based on the results above, it can be determined that all the variable indicators are deemed valid and meet the discriminant validity.

Besides assessing the discriminant validity by the cross loading value, discriminant validity can also be assessed by observing the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value, the eligible validity for AVE value is more than 0.50 [21]. After the data were processed, it obtained the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value in Table 7.

Table 7. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Experience (X)	0.698
Brand Passion (Z1)	0.772
Self-Brand Connection (Z2)	0.791
Brand Affection (Z3)	0.717
Brand Loyalty (Y)	0.642

Source: primary data 2021

According to Table 7, all variable indicators are valid for discriminant validity.

4.2.3 Reliability test

Reliability test shows the consistency level of measuring instruments or research tool in terms of measuring construct [22]. Reliability test was done using composite reliability and Cronbach alpha.

Table 8. Cronbach Alpha and Composite reliability

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability
Brand Affection (Z3)	0.868	0.91
Brand Experience (X)	0.913	0.933

Brand Loyalty (Y)	0.814	0.877
Brand Passion (Z1)	0.901	0.931
Self-Brand Connection (Z2)	0.911	0.938

Source: primary data 2021

In order to test the reliability of a construct, composite reliability should exceed 0.7, Cronbach's α (alpha) is the statistical techniques used to measure the internal consistency in the reliability test of the instrument or psychometric data. If the value of Cronbach Alpha > 0.60, it can be determined that all indicators are reliable [22].

4.2.4 Inner model evaluation

Inner model analysis should be done to show correlation between manifest variable and latent predictor variable, mediation and outcome of a complicated model. Model fit is divided into 2, the R-square and Q-square

Table 9. R-square

Variable	R-square
Brand Affection (Z3)	0.720
Brand Loyalty (Y)	0.843
Brand Passion (Z1)	0.742
Self-Brand Connection (Z2)	0.761

Source: primary data 2021

Given the value of R-square (R^2), Table 9 shows that all the R-square value had a value of above 0.67 (strong), with the value of the variable brand passion obtained 0.742, variable self-brand connection had 0.761, variable brand affection was 0.720 and variable brand loyalty obtained 0.843. Based on the value of R Square, it can be concluded that all variables in this research have strong values.

The Q-square value in this structural model test was carried out by looking at the predictive relevance value. The Q-square value can be used to measure how accurate the observation is. Models which have predictive relevance are models that have Q-square value > 0, while the models with < 0 are categorized as less predictive relevance.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Q-Square} &= 1 - ((1 - R^2_1) \times (1 - R^2_2) \times (1 - R^2_3) \times (1 - R^2_4)) \\
 &= 1 - ((1 - 0.742) \times (1 - 0.761) \times (1 - 0.720) \times (1 - 0.843)) \\
 &= 1 - (0.258 \times 0.239 \times 0.280 \times 0.157) \\
 &= 0.997289338
 \end{aligned}$$

According to the calculation result above, the model's Q-square value was 0.997, indicating that this model is was able to explain 99.72 percent of the data from one research, whereas other research models were able to explain 0.28 percent.

4.2.5 Hypothesis testing

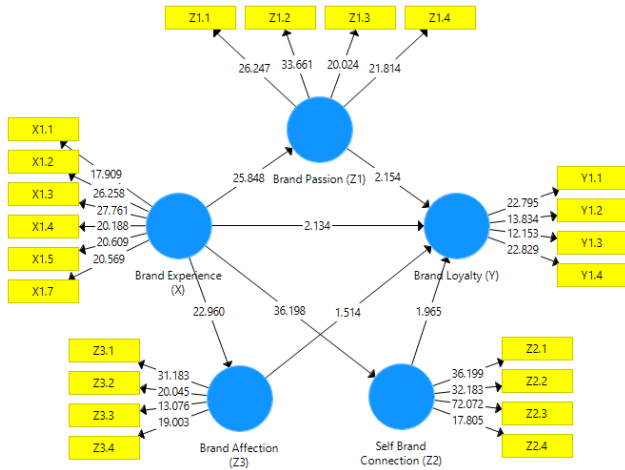


Figure 2. Bootstrapping

Hypothesis testing can be seen from the coefficient path value towards the direct effect and specific indirect effect. Path coefficient test with the bootstrapping process attempts to see the T-statistics or P-values (critical ratio) and the original sample value which can be obtained from the process. P value < 0.05 denotes that there is a direct effect but no indirect effect while P value > 0.05 shows no direct or indirect value. In this research, the significance value was the T-statistic of 1.96 (significant level = 5%)

Table 10. Path Coefficient (Direct Effect)

Variable	Original Sample	P Values	T Statistics	Description
BE (X) -> BL (Y)	0.317	0.033	2.134	Positive, Significant

Source: primary data 2021

Table 11. Specific indirect effect

Source: primary data 2021

As a result of the data analysis, the following conclusions are drawn:

First, the test results support H1 and reveal that brand experience had a positive influence and significant impact on brand loyalty. This corresponds to the tester expectation based on the theory and research presented by [12] that brand experience should not only affect the satisfaction assessment of the past but also the costumers loyalty. The consumers will be more likely to re-purchase and recommend it to other people. In addition, the brand

experience is a critical aspect in creating and maintaining corporate success, as well as in developing a long-term relationship with the consumer. [13]

The statement is in line with research that has been carried out by [10,11,14] that brand experience significantly influenced brand loyalty. Therefore, these research findings support the previous research.

Second, the test results support H2 and reveal that brand passion mediated partially the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. This is similar with the researcher expectations based on the theory and research by [9] that the customer contract is described as a propensity desire to purchase products/services of a brand in an impulsive manner. Brand experience is the key factor that plays a role in achieving and sustaining business success and building a long-term bond with the consumer[13].

The statement is in line with the previous research by [10] that brand passion mediated the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. Thus, these research results support the previous research.

Third, the test results support H3 and reveal that self-brand connection mediated partially the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. This corresponds to the tester expectations based on the theory and research by [17] that an extraordinary and impressive experience will affect the brand loyalty. A customer is not only buying and consuming products and services to meet their needs but also acquiring the brand to boost experience which are related and associated to them [18].

The statement is in line with the previous research by [19] and [10] that self-brand connection mediated the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty.

Fourth, the test results contrast to the H4. Based on the research data, it can be determined that the brand affection variables did not mediate the influence of the brand experience variables on brand loyalty

This research results oppose to the previous research by [10] that brand affection mediated the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. Therefore, this research does not support the previous research as the

Variable	Original Sample	P Values	T Statistics	Description
BE (X) -> BP (Z1) -> BL(Y)	0.238	0.035	2.11	Significant
BE (X) -> SBC (Z2) -> BL (Y)	0.195	0.049	1.976	Significant
BE (X) -> BA (Z3) -> BL (Y)	0.137	0.136	1.495	Not Significant

brand affection in this research was unable to prove the

mediation effect on the correlation between brand experience variables and brand loyalty.

Based on the authors research supported by [10] research model, there was a difference on the data results, in which the brand affection variables did not mediate the influence of independent variables (brand experience) on the dependent variables (brand loyalty). Therefore, it can be summarized that the difference of the respondents and the object of research can influence the results. In the research by [10], the object on the smartphone consumers was in general and the use of respondents was in general as well. Meanwhile, in this research, the object is Apple smartphone using the respondents of teenage consumers.

5. CLOSING

Based on the results, it can be observed that the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty had a positive and significant influence. Moreover, brand passion and self-brand connection mediated partially the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. However, the authors' expectations did not meet the theory that the brand affection variable mediates the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty

This research is limited to the research site that was only carried out in one country, Indonesia. Thus, the future research is encouraged to expand it. Another limitation is this research only focused on the Apple smartphone, thus the future research may use the brand in general. A suggestion for the future research is to include the brand trust variable and customer satisfaction.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Zulfikar Azaria Rahman carried out data collection and data analysis and Ihwan Susila contributed to compiling research designs and discussion of research results.

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