

## EMPIRICAL TESTING OF EMOTIONAL BRAND ATTACHMENT AND BRAND LOVE MEDIATION BETWEEN BRAND SATISFACTION AND BRAND LOYALTY

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to test for emotional brand attachment and brand love as a mediator of brand satisfaction on brand loyalty. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 150 active users of Samsung smartphones. Furthermore, the data were collected by distributing questionnaires using Google Form, and the hypothesis testing used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results showed brand satisfaction has a positive effect on emotional brand attachment and brand loyalty. Likewise, satisfaction on emotional brand attachment and brand love has a positive effect on brand loyalty. There was a partial mediating role of emotional brand attachment and brand love between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. The implication is that brand loyalty will be stronger with emotional brand attachment and feelings of love for the brand, hence, the more loyal consumers will continue patronage. Subsequent studies can refine this research model by adding variables that affect brand satisfaction, namely perceived quality, perceived cost value, trust, and lifestyle congruence.

### INTRODUCTION

In the current digital era, the development of technology and information is growing rapidly. Therefore, the demand for various types of communication tools is increasing, including smartphones. The structure of the smartphone market in Indonesia is competitive with the largest number based on Android operating system. There are several types of Android-based devices in the country, which include Samsung, Oppo, and Xiaomi. In this research, it turns out that Samsung ranked first for the 2018-2021 phase 1 period. It is estimated that by the end of 2021, phase 2 will exceed the percentage in 2020. To maintain its 1st position in the top brand index, Samsung smartphones need consumer loyalty. This loyalty refers to the willingness of consumers to repurchase the same brand (Sterjadovska & Shuleska, 2017), and voluntarily give positive recommendations to others (Tams et al., 2018).

Loyalty to a brand will arise when consumers are satisfied with the product (brand satisfaction). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), stated that pure customer satisfaction is not enough to sustain success in today's competitive market. The satisfaction that produces brand loyalty requires a collection of long-term experiences and behaviors such as emotional brand attachment and love. The results of Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020), showed that satisfaction with brands has a positive effect on emotional attachment and feelings for brand love.

The emergence of this attachment is due to the bond that connects consumers to the brand and involves feelings (Malär et al., 2011a). Brand love has been considered a relatively new marketing model that helps to explain and predict variations in long-term behavior (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). The emergence of love for brands requires a high emotional attachment from time to time (Triyani & Kristaung, 2014).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Brand Satisfaction**

Satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment because of comparing the perceived performance (outcome) of a product with the expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Hence, overall satisfaction is determined by the comparison between product or service expectations and performance perception (Michalska-Dudek, 2015). Song et al. (2019), on 404 Starbucks consumers in Korea stated that satisfaction was a necessity for the emergence of consumer loyalty. Satisfaction develops due to the level of positive experience over time (Bianchi et al., 2014).

### **Brand Loyalty**

According to Lovelock et al. (2010), brand loyalty is the willingness to continue to subscribe to a company in the long term, by repeatedly buying and using its goods and services, and voluntarily recommending them to others. Therefore, marketers should not only focus on repurchases but also on the reasons that drive repurchases (Kataria & Saini, 2020). Lee and Workman (2015), on 334 consumers of packaged goods in the United States asserted that psychological attachment to certain brands, such as emotion and love is an important determinant of repurchases. It also determines the willingness to voluntarily promote the brand (word of mouth) which ultimately leads to loyalty. When the level of emotional brand attachment continues to increase, it creates a sense of brand love.

### **Emotional Brand Attachment**

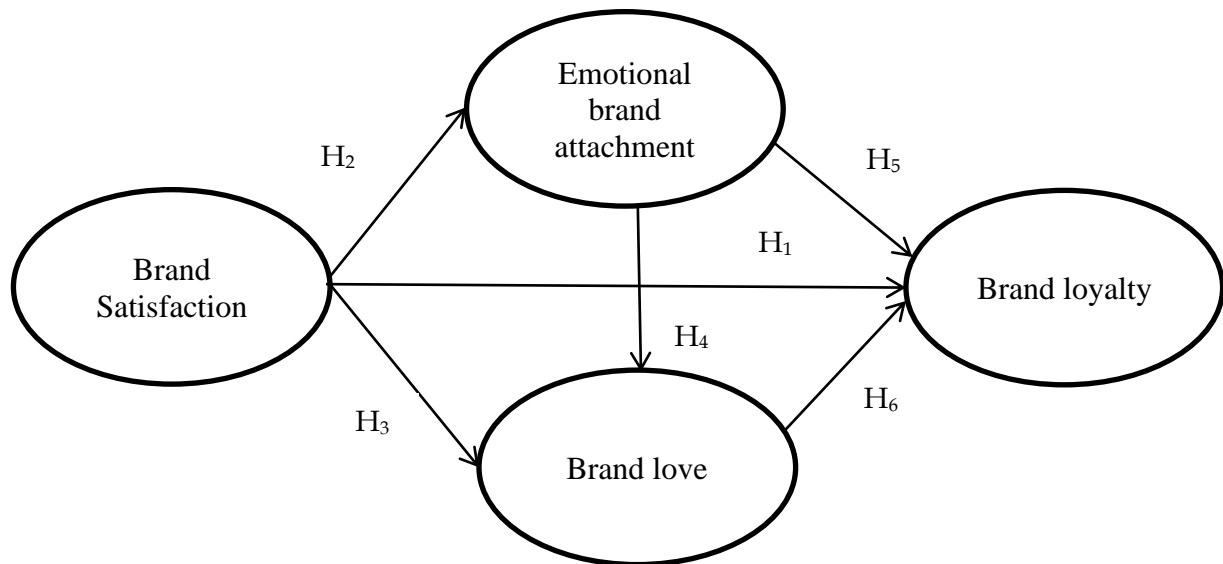
Attachment is an emotional condition in a special relationship between a person and a certain object (Pourazad & Pare, 2014). Emotional attachment reflects the bond that connects consumers to a particular product and involves feelings for that brand (Malär et al., 2011b). Fetscherin and Heinrich (2014), stated that brand love is created by increasing a strong emotional bond over time. Loureiro et al. (2012), research on 329 Toyota, Ford, and Renault car owners in Portugal found that continued and increased emotional attachment will lead to the emergence of brand love. This is explained by Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020), research of 300 Islamic Azad University graduate students on smartphones and fashion in Iran. It was found that consumers who are more emotionally attached will develop brand love.

### **Brand Love**

This love develops from a high level of satisfaction with the brand (Drennan et al., 2015). These positive emotions and attitudes have been associated with greater repurchase intentions, lower price sensitivity, rejection of negative information about brands, and engagement in positive word of mouth (Kaufmann et al., 2016). Love for brands is an antecedent of consumer loyalty (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020). Sallam (2015), suggested that brand love plays an important role in marketing because it is positively related to brand loyalty. A study by Hwang and Kandampully (2012), on 120 Midwestern University students in the United States about luxury fashion brands found that deep feelings of love for brands can trigger consumer loyalty and recommendation to others.

Consumer satisfaction is a prerequisite for achieving loyalty to a brand (Kristaung & Pratomo, 2020). Those who are satisfied with the quality of service and feel that there is a reflection of themselves in a brand will create feelings of emotional attachment (Donio' et al., 2006). The attachments that continue over time have an impact on the formation of passionate feelings of love (Loureiro et al., 2012). When a brand makes consumers have a sense of love, they will become loyal and make repeated purchases. Furthermore, positive reviews will be given to friends, family, and acquaintances (Ahuvia, 2005).

Therefore, based on these previous studies, following conceptual framework is suggested:



**Figure 1:** Research Model

Song et al. (2019) showed that satisfaction is a strong antecedent of loyalty. When consumers are satisfied with a product, it is likely that satisfaction will stimulate them to buy (Mandagie, 2017). Also, when consumers are satisfied with a brand, the level of loyalty will increase (Susanto, 2017). The higher the level of satisfaction when using a product or service, the more the loyalty to the brand.

**H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive influence of brand satisfaction on brand loyalty**

Martin et al. (2008), stated that consumer satisfaction contains an emotional component. Furthermore, Thomson et al. (2005), found that satisfaction is the basis for the emergence of attachment to a brand. Satisfaction and emotional attachment are not the same, where the former can occur directly in one interaction with a brand, while the latter occurs after multiple interactions (Thomson et al., 2005). Smaoui and Behi (2011), asserted that satisfied consumers are more likely to be emotionally attached, and dissatisfied ones will find it difficult to remain committed to a brand. Also, Bahri-Ammari et al. (2016), stated that high consumer satisfaction can lead to emotional attachment. Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020), found that satisfaction has a positive relationship with attachment.

**H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive influence of brand satisfaction on emotional brand attachment**

Satisfaction develops due to the accumulation of consumer experiences with brands over time (Veloutsou, 2015). Pure satisfaction may not be enough to sustain success in today's competitive marketplace (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Also, it has been considered one of the most important links in the main marketing objectives. Brand love is a relatively new marketing model that helps to explain and predict variations in long-term relational behavior among consumers (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Brand

love and satisfaction are different constructs, where satisfaction is usually thought of as a result of transactions, such as the perceived quality of the product or service by consumers exceeding expectations. Meanwhile, brand love is often the result of a long-term relationship (Veloutsou, 2015). The love for brands is developed through very high satisfaction (Drennan et al., 2015), which has a positive effect on love (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020).

**H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between brand satisfaction and brand love**

Loureiro et al. (2012), stated that attachment is an antecedent of brand love. Passion is the strong desire of consumers to get a brand or higher emotions (Triyani & Kristaung, 2014). To love a brand, consumers need to be attached to it, which means to feel that the brand is irreplaceable (Loureiro et al., 2012). Kufmann et al. (2016), suggested that consumers' bond with a brand from time to time can trigger feelings of brand love.

**H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive influence of emotional brand attachment on brand love**

Emotional brand attachment will encourage someone to stay close through repeat purchases. Thomson et al. (2005), stated that high attachment tends to increase emotional dependence on brands. When consumers become more connected, they tend to stay close to that brand (Adam et al., 2018). Furthermore, when they have an emotional attachment, it is possible to make repeated purchases, and a willingness to spend resources (money and effort) to get products from that brand. This ultimately leads to brand loyalty (Lee & Workman, 2015). Hwang and Kandampully (2012), found that consumers' emotional attachment is very important because it encourages the desire to stay loyal.

**H<sub>5</sub>: There is a positive influence of emotional brand attachment on brand loyalty**

A strong emotional attachment that makes consumers feel passionate about the brand will develop into brand love (Loureiro et al., 2012). This love has an impact on loyalty and causes consumers to pay a higher price for the product (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Those who are satisfied and fall in love with a brand are more willing to repurchase and recommend it to others (Loureiro et al., 2012). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), stated that brand love is the antecedent of consumer loyalty. Also, Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020), stated that there is a positive influence of consumer feelings of love on loyalty. Hwang and Kandampully (2012), asserted that brand love can increase brand loyalty.

**H<sub>6</sub>: There is a positive influence of brand love on brand loyalty**

**METHOD**

The population of this research was Samsung smartphone users in Jakarta, which is large, and the number and identity are not clearly known. The selected sample was 150 based on references from (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, the purposive sampling technique was used for selection. A closed questionnaire was used for data collection, which was distributed online.

**Table 1: Respondent Profile**

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Total</b>
Gender	Male	75
	Female	75
Age	18 Years - 22 Years	36
	23 Years - 27 Years	30
	28 Years – 32 Years	28
	33 Years – 37 Years	32
	> 37 Years	24
Last education	Diploma (D1, D2, D3)	19
	S1 (Bachelors)	60
	S2 (Masters)	15
	S3 (Ph.D.)	2
	Senior High School/Equivalent	54
Work	Self-employed	50
	Private employees	49
	Civil servant	19
	Others	32

Source: Processed data, 2021

The measurements used for obtaining answers from the respondents were measured using an attitude scale. It contains six responses, namely strongly disagree/satisfied, disagree/satisfied, disagree/satisfied, quite agree/satisfied, agree/satisfied, and up to strongly agree/satisfied.

### **Indicator**

Brand satisfaction, adapted from (Lam et al., 2004)

- I am satisfied with my decision to buy a Samsung smartphone (BS1)
- I am satisfied to enjoy a Samsung smartphone (BS2)
- Using a Samsung smartphone is an amazing experience (BS3)
- I am satisfied that buying a Samsung smartphone is the right thing (BS4)
- Samsung smartphones live up to my expectations (BS5)
- Overall, I am satisfied with the Samsung smartphone (BS6)

Emotional brand attachment, adapted from (Malar et al., 2011a)

- I have a unique relationship with Samsung smartphones (EBA1)
- I know the background of Samsung smartphones (EBA2)
- I feel comfortable using a Samsung smartphone (EBA3)
- I am proud to use a Samsung smartphone (EBA4)
- I feel that Samsung smartphones are reliable (EBA5)

Brand love, adapted from (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006)

- Samsung smartphones are amazing (BLV1)
- Samsung smartphones make me feel comfortable (BLV2)
- Samsung smartphones are amazing (BLV3)
- Samsung smartphones make me very happy (BLV4)
- I like Samsung smartphones (BLV5)
- Samsung smartphones are fun (BLV6)
- I really like Samsung smartphones (BLV7)
- I am interested in Samsung smartphones (BLV8)

Brand loyalty, adapted from (Fetscherin et al., 2014)

- I have a commitment to Samsung smartphones (BL1)
- I pay more attention to Samsung smartphones than other brands (BL2)
- Samsung smartphones are more attractive than other brands (BL3)
- It is very important for me to own a Samsung smartphone than any other brand (BL4)

The analytical tool used in this validity test is Factor Analysis by looking at the Loading Factor. When the sample used in the study is 150, then the loading factor used should be  $> 0.45$ , hence the indicator is declared valid (Hair et al., 2019).

Reliability testing is carried out by finding the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each variable. When the coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha on each variable  $> 0.60$ , then the variable is acceptable and reliable (Sekaran, 2010). The following are the results of the instrument test (test validity and reliability):

**Table 2:** Validity and Reliability Test

Variables/Indicators	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Decision
<b>Brand Satisfaction</b>		0.729	Reliable & Valid
BS1	0.690		
BS2	0.687		
BS3	0.618		
BS4	0.675		
BS5	0.716		
BS6	0.567		
<b>Emotional brand attachment</b>		0.749	Reliable & Valid
EBA1	0.655		
EBA2	0.690		
EBA3	0.680		
EBA4	0.710		
EBA5	0.744		
<b>Brand love</b>		0.860	Reliable & Valid
BLV1	0.612		
BLV2	0.724		
BLV3	0.620		
BLV4	0.643		
BLV5	0.662		
BLV6	0.653		
BLV7	0.712		
BLV8	0.649		
<b>Brand loyalty</b>		0.802	Reliable & Valid
BL1	0.656		
BL2	0.735		
BL3	0.807		
BL4	0.666		

Source: Processed data, 2021

From Table 2 above, it is known that all statements used in the variables of brand satisfaction, emotional attachment, love, and loyalty are declared valid. This is because the result of the factor loading value of all these statements is  $> 0.45$ , which means that each statement used to measure each variable stated correctly. All are reliable because the results of Cronbach's alpha value of all the variables are  $> 0.60$ , which means the respondents are consistent in answering the statements.

The data analysis method used to test the 6 hypotheses is the Structural Equation Model (SEM) using AMOS software. According to (Hair et al., 2019), the goodness of fit and CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) First Order tests were carried out with the results as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 3:** CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) First Order

Variables/Indicators	Factor Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Construct Reliability
<b>Brand Satisfaction</b>		0.493	0.853
BS1	0.819		
BS2	0.911		
BS3	0.891		
BS4	0.893		
BS5	0.747		
BS6	0.863		
<b>Emotional brand attachment</b>		0.554	0.908
EBA1	0.670		
EBA2	0.700		
EBA3	0.712		
EBA4	0.801		
EBA5	0.766		
<b>Brand love</b>		0.554	0.908
BLV1	0.686		
BLV2	0.859		
BLV3	0.854		
BLV4	0.668		
BLV5	0.703		
BLV6	0.755		
BLV7	0.745		
BLV8	0.654		
<b>Brand loyalty</b>		0.526	0.768
BL1	0.714		
BL2	0.678		
BL3	0.594		
BL4	0.756		

Source: AMOS data processing results, 2021

Based on table 3, the acceptance limit used during the compatibility test is  $N < 250$  because the sample is 150 respondents. Also, it uses a variation of  $12 < m < 30$  because the number of variables studied is only 4 and the indicators are 23 (Hair et al., 2019).

The model that shows a good and significant fit is the supported model (Hair et al., 2019). Based on the goodness of fit test, it can be said that the p-value, RFI, and NFI are declared Good fit. Furthermore, CFI and TLI values are expressed as marginal. Based on the results of the goodness of fit test, the structural model used was acceptable and hypothesis testing was carried out.

**Table 4:** Model Fit Test

Indices	Cut off value	Suggested acceptance limit	Conclusion
P – Value	0.000	Expected significant	Good fit
CFI	0.929	$\geq 0.95$	Marginal fit
TLI	0.907	$\geq 0.95$	Marginal fit
RFI	0.917	$\geq 0.90$ or close to 1	Good fit
NFI	0.914	$\geq 0.90$ or close to 1	Good fit

Source: AMOS data processing results

Furthermore, the analytical tool used is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This is feasible to use because the model involves variables that have a dual relationship, namely emotional brand attachment and brand love. In addition, the interval scale was used.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics aim to provide an overview or description of a variable. The mean value was used to explain the descriptive statistics.

**Table 5:** Descriptive Statistics Test

Variables	Brand Satisfaction	Emotional brand attachment	Brand love	Brand loyalty
Mean	5.23	5.16	5.22	5.27

The mean respondent's answer in Table 5 for the four variables is 5.00. The brand satisfaction variable is 5.23, which means that respondents are satisfied with the decision to buy a Samsung smartphone. Also, the respondents enjoy the brand, they have a good experience, and their expectations are met. The emotional attachment variable of 5.16 indicates that the respondents feel they have a good or high emotional relationship with the smartphones. They find out the background of the device, are proud and comfortable with the usage, and feel that Samsung products are reliable. The brand love variable of 5.22 shows the respondents feel the phones are extraordinary, comfortable, amazing, interesting, and make them happy. Also, the loyalty variable of 5.27 shows that respondents are loyal. They pay more attention to Samsung products than other brands.

The results of hypothesis testing can be seen in Table 6 below:

**Table 6:** Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Estimate	p-value	Decision
H <sub>1</sub> : There is a positive influence of brand satisfaction on brand loyalty	0.101	0.018	supported
H <sub>2</sub> : There is a positive influence of brand satisfaction on emotional brand attachment	0.550	0.000	supported
H <sub>3</sub> : There is a positive influence of brand satisfaction on brand love	0.479	0.002	supported
H <sub>4</sub> : There is a positive influence of emotional brand attachment on brand love	0.666	0.000	supported
H <sub>5</sub> : There is a positive influence of emotional brand attachment on brand loyalty	0.390	0.014	supported
H <sub>6</sub> : There is a positive influence of brand love on brand loyalty	0.509	0.000	supported

Source: *Data Processing Results with AMOS*

Based on the testing, the first to six hypotheses proved to be significant. The testing was carried out on the first hypothesis regarding the positive effect of brand satisfaction on brand loyalty. This research supports Song et al., (2019) on brand loyalty to Starbucks consumers in Korea which stated that satisfaction can lead to brand loyalty. Meanwhile, the second hypothesis has a p-value of 0.000, meaning that it is significant. It can be concluded that there is a positive influence of brand satisfaction on emotional brand attachment. These results support Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020) regarding brand satisfaction in Iran which stated that consumers who are satisfied with smartphones and fashion



will create a good relationship. The third hypothesis has a p-value of 0.002, which means that it is significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a positive influence of brand satisfaction on brand love. This also supports Drennan et al. (2015), regarding the brand love for wine fermentation in five countries, namely Australia, Chile, Mexico, France, and Portugal. It stated that consumer love for brands is developed through very high brand satisfaction. The fourth hypothesis has a p-value of 0.000, which means that it is significant. It can be concluded that there is a positive emotional influence of brand attachment on brand love. These results support Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020), regarding attachment and brand love in Iran which asserted that consumers who have good relations with smartphones and fashion will create brand interest and brand love. The fifth hypothesis has a p-value of 0.014, which means that it is significant. It can be concluded that there is a positive emotional influence of brand attachment on brand loyalty. This supports Hwang and Kandampully (2012), on attachment to luxury fashion brands. It stated that consumers' attachment can encourage the desire to remain loyal. The sixth hypothesis has a p-value of 0.000, meaning that it is significant. It can be concluded that there is a positive influence of brand love on brand loyalty, and the results are in line with the findings of Hwang and Kandampully (2012).

## CONCLUSION

Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty, emotional brand attachment, brand love, and brand engagement. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty, as well as between brand love and brand loyalty. Brand Satisfaction is an important variable in marketing. The more the consumers are satisfied, the higher their emotional brand attachment. Also, the higher the brand love, the more loyal they become. Future research should improve the model by adding variables that affect brand satisfaction, namely perceived quality, cost value, trust, and lifestyle alignment. Furthermore, other brands can be included apart from Samsung. It is recommended that future research should be conducted in big cities with large sample sizes, hence the results can be generalized.

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