

Brand Experience and Psychological Determinants of Loyalty in Chinese Smart Tablet Brands

Brand Experience and
Psychological
Determinants

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ABSTRACT

Amid intensifying competition in the technology market, understanding the drivers of consumer loyalty has become increasingly critical for brands. This research investigates how brand experience shapes brand loyalty among Indonesian users of Chinese smart tablets. It analyzes four psychological pathways brand love, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework. The study evaluates whether brand experience directly promotes loyalty or works through internal psychological processes. Using survey data from 310 respondents, analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in AMOS, the findings show that brand experience strongly enhances brand love, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust, but lacks a direct effect on brand loyalty. Additional analysis reveals that only brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust are significant mediators; brand love does not mediate this relationship. The discussion interprets these results through psychological mechanisms triggered by brand experience, emphasizing how affective, cognitive, and identity-based processes contribute to loyalty. The study offers insights into the psychological pathways linking brand experience and loyalty in technology markets.

Submitted:
December 12, 2025

Revised:
March 7, 2026

Accepted:
May 22, 2026

Published Online:
May 31, 2026

Keywords: Brand Experience, Brand Loyalty, Brand Love, Brand Satisfaction, Brand Trust, Self-Brand Connection.

INTRODUCTION

The internet penetration rate in Indonesia has been growing rapidly, with the number of internet users reaching 215 million in 2023. This figure is projected to increase to 221 million in 2024 and 229 million by 2025 (APJII, 2025). This surge is driven by shifts in societal behavior, as more individuals engage in various online activities. Consequently, demand for devices such as smart tablets has increased significantly. The number of smart tablet users in Indonesia is expected to rise from 111.3 million in 2023 to 249.95 million by 2029, underscoring the substantial market potential (Statista, 2024). This expanding market has attracted global brands, including Chinese manufacturers such as Xiaomi, Huawei, Realme, and Oppo, which offer competitively priced smart tablets equipped with advanced features.

Despite the market's size and growth, Chinese smart tablet brands struggle to gain significant market share. From 2023 to 2025, Samsung (43.49%) and Apple (25.31%) continue to dominate, while Xiaomi (17.69%), Huawei (0.88%), Realme (0.68%), and Oppo (0.6%) have limited presence (Statcounter, 2025). A major barrier is low consumer trust in product quality and after-sales service, despite affordable prices (Zhao et al., 2021). This highlights the gap between market potential and the adoption of Chinese smart tablet brands.

To address these challenges, relying on price alone is insufficient. Chinese brands must forge stronger emotional and psychological bonds with consumers. A key approach is enhancing brand experience, which has been shown to influence brand satisfaction by

JIMKES

Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen
Kesatuan
Vol. 14 No. 3, 2026
pp. 2725-2738
IBI Kesatuan
ISSN 2337 – 7860
E-ISSN 2721 – 169X
DOI: 10.37641/jimkes.v14i3.4793

Gazi et al. (2025), brand love by Elalfy et al. (2025), self-brand connection by Mostafa and Kasamani (2021), and brand trust by Akoglu and Özbek (2022). Together, these shape long-term brand loyalty. However, prior studies on brand experience have produced inconsistent findings regarding its role in shaping consumer loyalty. While several studies suggest that brand experience positively influences loyalty through mediators such as brand love and brand satisfaction, other studies report insignificant effects, indicating unresolved theoretical inconsistencies in the literature (Gazi et al., 2025). Furthermore, most existing studies focus on industries such as fashion, sports, cosmetics, and smartphones, leaving the smart tablet sector relatively underexplored. This limitation is particularly evident in the context of Chinese technology brands, which face distinct challenges related to consumer trust and perceived product quality in emerging markets (Zhao et al., 2021). In addition, prior studies tend to examine mediating variables separately and rarely integrate self-brand connection, brand love, brand satisfaction, and brand trust simultaneously as mechanisms linking brand experience to brand loyalty. Consequently, the psychological mechanisms through which brand experience translates into consumer loyalty toward Chinese smart tablet brands remain insufficiently understood.

The present study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, which explains how external stimuli influence internal psychological states that subsequently drive behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Jacoby, 2002). In consumer research, it is used to describe how brand-related cues trigger emotions and cognition that shape decision-making (Donovan & Rossiter, 2002). In this study, brand experience acts as the Stimulus (S), influencing internal states of brand love, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust as the Organism (O), which reflect emotional, evaluative, identity-based, and trust-related responses, ultimately leading to brand loyalty as the Response (R). Although widely applied, prior research has primarily focused on retail, service, and fashion sectors, while the consumer electronics industry remains relatively underexplored, highlighting an important research gap.

In addressing these phenomena and research gaps, this study employs the S–O–R theoretical model. The S–O–R perspective explains that external Stimulus (S) encountered by consumers influence internal processes within the Organism (O), including cognition, affect, and other psychological states, which eventually lead to specific behavioral outcomes (R) (Jacoby, 2002). In this study, brand experience is conceptualized as the stimulus, while psychological factors such as self-brand connection, brand love, brand satisfaction, and brand trust represent the organism component. Brand loyalty is positioned as the response.

Accordingly, this research aims to provide theoretical contributions by deepening the understanding of the mechanisms that shape consumer loyalty toward technology brands. It also offers practical implications for Chinese smart tablet companies seeking to improve competitiveness and strengthen consumer acceptance in the Indonesian market. Thus, this research investigates how brand experience shapes brand loyalty among Indonesian users of Chinese smart tablets. It analyzes four psychological pathways brand love, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust within the S–O–R framework. The study evaluates whether brand experience directly promotes loyalty or works through internal psychological processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Effect of Brand Experience

Brand experience shapes consumers' emotional and cognitive responses, fostering brand love as a deep emotional bond with brands (Elalfy et al., 2025). In electronic products, it serves as a key driver by integrating functional, symbolic, and technological meanings (Thoa & Cuong, 2024). Empirical evidence shows that online customer experience has a positive and significant effect on brand love, while experiences that exceed expectations further strengthen emotional attachment (Mustafa et al., 2022; Na et al., 2023). Additionally, brand experience enhances satisfaction when perceived

performance meets or exceeds expectations (Gazi et al., 2025). This effect strengthens with consistent experiences over time, while meaningful interaction quality further reinforces satisfaction (Prasetyo et al., 2024; Wong, 2024). However, satisfaction remains highly sensitive to consistency, as even minor experiential failures can undermine it despite initially positive interactions.

Beyond satisfaction, brand experience also activates identity-related mechanisms by fostering Self-Brand Connection (SBC). Through intense sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral interactions, consumers begin to internalize brand meanings as part of their self-concept (Revaldi et al., 2022). SBC strengthens when brand experiences align with personal aspirations or values (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021). Nevertheless, research indicates that SBC is culturally contingent and varies with consumer involvement levels, suggesting that experiential triggers may not equally generate identity-based bonds across market segments. From a relational perspective, another important outcome of brand experience is its foundational role in developing brand trust. Positive and consistent experiences enhance perceptions of reliability, honesty, and brand integrity (Sahoo et al., 2024). Emotional and sensory experiences further reinforce confidence in the brand's safety and capability (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022; Na et al., 2023). Yet, in technology-related categories, trust formation may also depend on external factors such as data protection and privacy, suggesting that brand experience alone may not fully explain trust, especially in high-risk digital environments.

H1: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand love.

H2: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand satisfaction.

H3: Brand experience has a positive effect on self-brand connection.

H4: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand trust.

The Effect on Brand Loyalty

Brand experience is a key driver of brand loyalty, as positive and consistent experiences strengthen emotional bonds and long-term preferences (Pirooz et al., 2020). Interactions across multiple touchpoints reinforce consumer-brand relationships and support loyalty formation, while effective brand communications further enhance loyalty intentions (Budi et al., 2021). On the emotional side, brand love is a strong predictor of loyalty. Consumers with strong emotional ties show higher commitment, resistance to competitors, and advocacy behavior, as emotional and symbolic closeness strengthens long-term relationships (Firdausiah et al., 2024; Chen & Demirci, 2025). Prior studies consistently confirm brand love as a dominant determinant of loyalty across contexts (Siahaan et al., 2023; Alwashdeh et al., 2025; Pratama et al., 2025; Saktiana, 2025).

Brand satisfaction provides an evaluative basis for loyalty, as consistently fulfilled expectations increase retention tendencies (Plotkina & Rabeson, 2022; Koay & Low, 2025; Nandita & Setyawan, 2025; Baharuddin et al., 2025). Long-term satisfaction strengthens psychological commitment, supporting relationship continuity (Khowjoy et al., 2023; Gazi et al., 2025). However, satisfaction alone may not ensure loyalty without emotional or relational support.

Self-brand connection also influences loyalty through identity-based mechanisms. A brand that reflects consumers' self-expression, values, or aspirations encourages long-term relationships (Hidayat & Kurniawati, 2025). This symbolic and emotional closeness enhances loyalty (Ali et al., 2025). Identity reinforcement is thus central in loyalty formation. Brand trust lays a relational foundation for loyalty. When consumers perceive a brand as reliable, safe, and competent, they develop stronger long-term commitment (Sharma, 2024; Deng et al., 2025; Fitriana et al., 2025). Trust increases consumers' comfort and confidence in their decision-making and serves as a critical determinant of sustainable loyalty (Liu & Liu, 2024; Jung & Kim, 2025).

H5: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

H6: Brand love positively has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

- H7: Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on brand loyalty.
- H8: Self-brand connection has a positive effect on brand loyalty.
- H9: Brand trust has a positive effect on brand loyalty

Mediating Effects on Brand Loyalty

Prior research increasingly highlights the importance of psychological mediator mechanisms explaining how brand experience translates into loyalty. For example, brand love, defined as an individual’s deep emotional attachment to a brand, serves as an emotional mediator, transforming positive experiential stimuli into strong loyalty behaviors (Firdausiah et al., 2024). Sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experiences contribute to this emotional attachment, subsequently driving loyalty (Ding et al., 2022). Brand satisfaction functions as an evaluative mediator, meaning it is a consumer’s overall evaluation of their experiences with a brand that translates positive experiences into sustained loyalty. Evidence shows that satisfaction may act as a full mediator between brand experience and loyalty by Gazi et al. (2025), implying that experiences generate loyalty primarily when they first foster satisfaction by Khowjoy et al. (2023).

From the perspective of identity, experience, and loyalty are mediated by self-brand connection, which is defined as the extent to which people integrate brand-related meanings into their self-concept. When a brand aligns closely with a consumer’s sense of self, it fosters enduring commitment (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021; Revaldi et al., 2022). Brand trust functions as a relational mediator. It reflects consumers’ confidence in a brand’s integrity and dependability. Favorable brand experiences enhance these perceptions of honesty and reliability, which in turn strengthen loyalty (Bawazir et al., 2024). Sensory and affective experiences further reinforce these trust and loyalty outcomes (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Akoglu & Özbek, 2022).

- H10: Brand love mediates the positive effect of brand experience on brand loyalty.
- H11: Brand satisfaction mediates the positive effect of brand experience on brand loyalty.
- H12: Self-brand connection mediates the positive effect of brand experience on brand loyalty.
- H13: Brand trust mediates the positive effect of brand experience on brand loyalty.

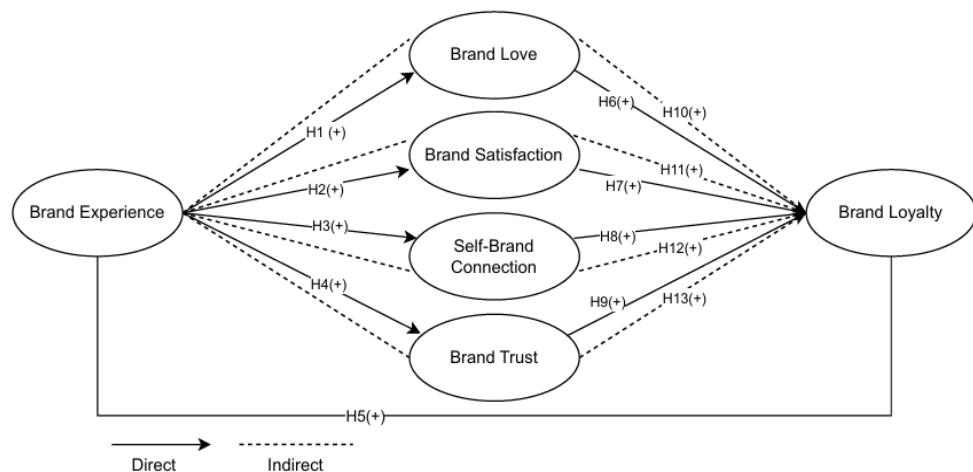


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

Figure 1 presents the proposed framework that positions brand experience as the antecedent of brand loyalty through four internal psychological pathways: brand love, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust. Hypotheses H1–H4 examine how brand experience shapes each of these organism-level constructs, while H5 evaluates whether brand experience exerts a direct influence on brand loyalty. Furthermore, H6–H9

assess the individual contributions of the four psychological variables to loyalty outcomes, and H10–H13 investigate their mediating functions in translating brand experience into brand loyalty.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, causal approach to analyze both the direct and indirect effects of brand experience on brand loyalty, incorporating psychological mediators including brand love, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust. A quantitative approach was chosen because it enables the measurement of relationships among variables objectively and allows hypothesis testing through statistical analysis. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who met criteria aligned with the study's objectives. Users had to have at least a year of experience with the Chinese smart tablet brand of their choice, and the sample consisted of 310 Indonesian participants who were at least 17 years old. By ensuring that respondents had relevant product experience, these inclusion criteria made it possible to accurately assess brand experience, brand satisfaction, brand trust, self-brand connection, and brand loyalty. The minimum age of 17 was chosen because individuals at this age generally possess adequate cognitive abilities and consumer awareness to evaluate a brand both rationally and emotionally.

Data collection was conducted via an online survey using a structured questionnaire hosted on Google Forms and distributed via social media. This method was chosen because it enables a broader, more efficient reach to users of Chinese smart tablets while providing respondents with greater flexibility in completing the questionnaire. The research instrument was developed using indicators adapted from previous studies and measured on a five-point Likert scale, enabling a more standardized assessment of respondents' perceptions.

Brand experience was measured through visual impression, sensory effect, attractive appeal, physical interaction, emotional attraction, and cognitive stimulation. Brand love was assessed through happiness, enthusiasm, liking, special feelings, and emotional attachment toward the brand. Brand satisfaction included service satisfaction, decision correctness, needs fulfillment, brand dependency, and overall happiness. Self-Brand connection was reflected through value reflection, self-identity representation, and a strong connection with the brand. Brand Trust was evaluated through confidence, reliability, integrity, and purchase assurance, while Brand loyalty was measured through positive word-of-mouth, usage intention, continuity intention, premium willingness, and loyalty commitment.

The data was analyzed using AMOS software and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Because it allows for the simultaneous assessment of intricate causal linkages, including direct, indirect, and mediating effects among variables, this method was chosen. Consistent with Hair et al. (2019), construct validity was assessed through standardized factor loadings, with values ≥ 0.50 deemed acceptable. Construct reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha, with a minimum threshold of 0.70. Model fit was evaluated using multiple goodness-of-fit indices, such as p-value, GFI, RMSEA, IFI, TLI, NFI, CFI, and CMIN/DF. In addition, hypothesis testing was performed by assessing parameter estimates and significance levels, using $p < 0.05$ as the benchmark for statistical significance.

RESULTS

A summary of the 310 respondents' demographic details is given in Table 1. Gender, age range, education level, type of occupation, and monthly income are among the several factors covered by the demographic data. These details are crucial for comprehending the backgrounds of the respondents and making sure the sample accurately represents the diversity of the intended customer base.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Items	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	106	34.19%
	Female	204	65.81%
Age	17 – 20 years	95	30.65%
	21 – 30 years	102	32.90%
	31– 40 years	83	26.77%
	Over 40 years old	30	9.68%
	High school / Equivalent	154	49.68%
Education Level	Diploma	23	7.42%
	Bachelor	121	39.03%
	Postgraduate	12	3.87%
Profession	Student	115	37.10%
	Government Employee	39	12.58%
	Private Employee	100	32.26%
	Entrepreneur	26	8.39%
	Others	30	9.68%
Revenue	< IDR 5,000,000	125	40.32%
	IDR 5,000,001 - 8,000,000	74	23.87%
	IDR 8,000,001 - 10,000,000	67	21.61%
	> IDR 10,000,000	44	14.19%
Which brand of smart tablet do you currently use?	Xiaomi	145	46.77%
	Huawei	72	23.23%
	Realme	58	18.71%
	Oppo	35	11.29%
	1 Years	158	50.97%
Duration of Use	2-3 Years	104	33.55%
	> 3 Years	48	15.48%

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the 310 respondents. Female participants dominate the sample (65.81%) compared to males (34.19%), indicating higher engagement with smart tablets or survey participation among women. Most respondents are young, with 32.90% aged 21–30 and 30.65% aged 17–20, followed by 26.77% aged 31–40 and only 9.68% above 40. In terms of education, 49.68% hold a high school diploma, 39.03% a bachelor’s degree, with smaller proportions of diploma (7.42%) and postgraduate (3.87%) holders. Students (37.10%) and private-sector employees (32.26%) dominate the sample, followed by government employees (12.58%), entrepreneurs (8.39%), and others (9.68%), suggesting strong representation of individuals reliant on digital tools.

Regarding income, most respondents earn below IDR 5,000,000 (40.32%), followed by 23.87% earning IDR 5,000,001–8,000,000, 21.61% earning IDR 8,000,001–10,000,000, and 14.19% above IDR 10,000,000, indicating a predominantly lower- to middle-income segment aligned with affordable tablet markets. Xiaomi is the most used brand (46.77%), followed by Huawei (23.23%), Realme (18.71%), and Oppo (11.29%), reflecting Xiaomi’s strong market presence. Most respondents have used their devices for at least one year, with 50.97% at one year, 33.55% for 2–3 years, and 15.48% over three years, ensuring sufficient experience to evaluate brand-related constructs such as brand experience, satisfaction, trust, self-brand connection, and loyalty.

Table 2. Validity and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Cronbach Alpha	Mean	Std. Deviation	Conclusion
Brand Experience (BE)	BE1	0.723	0.908	4.074	1.000	Valid & Reliable
	BE2	0.684		4.374	0.856	
	BE3	0.742		4.119	0.983	
	BE4	0.718		4.296	0.856	
	BE5	0.713		4.316	0.890	
	BE6	0.670		4.361	0.835	
	Average Score			4.257		
Brand Love (BL)		0.681	0.865	4.045	1.035	

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Cronbach Alpha	Mean	Std. Deviation	Conclusion
	BL1	0.765		4.154	0.848	Valid & Reliable
	BL2	0.773		4.161	0.828	
	BL3	0.788		4.067	0.916	
	BL4	0.780		3.987	1.023	
	Average Score			4.083		
Brand Satisfaction (BS)	BS1	0.808	0.890	4.209	0.937	Valid & Reliable
	BS2	0.799		3.958	0.979	
	BS3	0.768		4.187	0.887	
	BS4	0.822		3.996	0.990	
	BS5	0.738		4.209	0.854	
	Average Score		4.112			
Self-Brand Connection (SBC)	SBC1	0.851	0.903	4.096	0.957	Valid & Reliable
	SBC2	0.909		3.987	0.955	
	SBC3	0.854		4.054	0.948	
	Average Score			4.046		
Brand Trust (BT)	BT1	0.686	0.811	4.187	0.769	Valid & Reliable
	BT2	0.673		3.954	1.057	
	BT3	0.746		4.119	0.841	
	BT4	0.798		4.035	0.907	
	Average Score			4.074		
Brand Loyalty (BLY)	BLY1	0.658	0.895	4.158	0.872	Valid & Reliable
	BLY2	0.652		4.174	0.852	
	BLY3	0.876		4.006	1.004	
	BLY4	0.884		4.029	0.970	
	BLY5	0.851		4.129	0.925	
	Average Score		4.099			

Table 2 presents the validity and descriptive statistics of the measurement instruments. All indicators across variables show factor loadings above the acceptable threshold of 0.50, confirming construct validity. For brand experience, loading factors range from 0.670 to 0.742 with a mean of 4.257, indicating positive sensory, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive interactions. Brand love also demonstrates good validity (0.681–0.788) with a mean of 4.083, reflecting strong emotional attachment, while brand satisfaction shows valid indicators (0.738–0.822) and a mean of 4.112, indicating that respondents are generally satisfied with the brand’s performance and value.

The self-brand connection variable exhibits the highest validity among constructs, with factor loadings ranging from 0.851 to 0.909 and a mean of 4.046, suggesting a meaningful alignment between the brand and consumers’ identity. Brand trust also demonstrates adequate validity (0.673–0.798) with a mean of 4.074, indicating that respondents perceive the brand as reliable and trustworthy. Meanwhile, brand loyalty shows acceptable validity with loadings between 0.652 and 0.884 and a mean of 4.099, reflecting strong intentions to repurchase, recommend, and remain loyal. The mean scores across all variables indicate positive consumer perceptions toward brand experience, emotional attachment, satisfaction, identity connection, trust, and loyalty. These findings confirm that all measurement items are valid and appropriately represent their respective constructs, making them suitable for further analysis. Reliability testing using Cronbach’s alpha shows that all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Brand experience (0.908), brand love (0.865), brand satisfaction (0.890), self-brand connection (0.903), brand trust (0.811), and brand loyalty (0.895) all demonstrate high reliability, confirming that the measurement instruments are consistent and appropriate for subsequent statistical analysis.

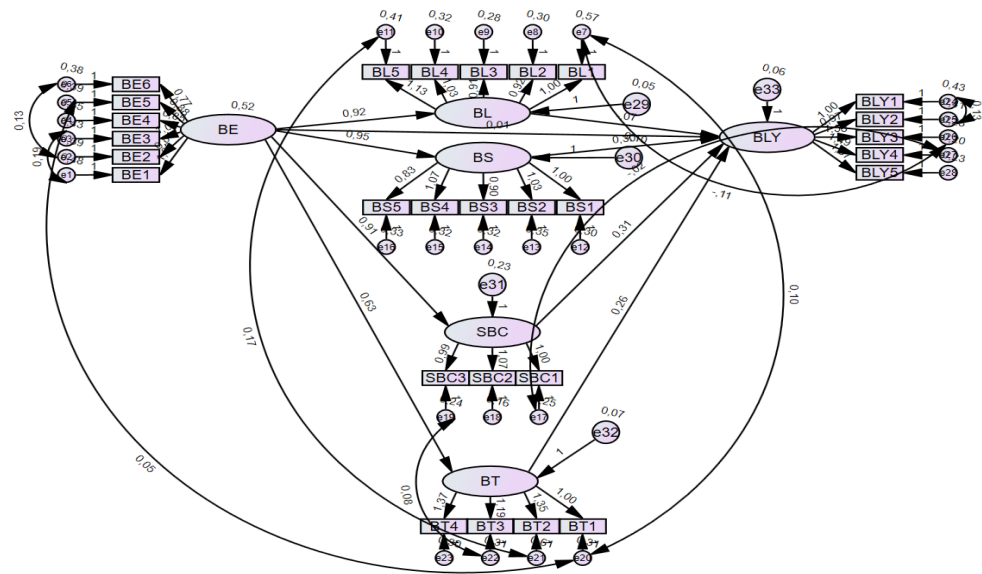


Figure 2. Results of a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Table 3. Goodness of Fit

Measurement Type	Measurement	Fit Model Decision	Processed	Decision
Absolute Fit Measure	p-value	>0.05	0	Poor Fit
	GFI	>0.90	0.795	Poor Fit
	RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.080	Goodness of Fit
Incremental Fit Measure	IFI	>0.90	0.901	Goodness of Fit
	TLI	>0.90	0.887	Poor Fit
	NFI	>0.90	0.858	Poor Fit
	CFI	>0.90	0.901	Goodness of Fit
Parsimonius Fit Measure	CMIN/DF	Between 1 and 5	2.973	Goodness of Fit

The goodness-of-fit in Figure 2 and Table 3 indicates that the model does not fully meet the required criteria based on absolute fit measures. The p-value of 0 (< 0.05) and the GFI value of 0.795 (< 0.90) suggest that the model falls into the poor fit category, meaning that it does not adequately represent the observed data at the absolute level. However, the RMSEA value of 0.080 falls within the acceptable fit range, indicating that the model remains acceptable with respect to approximation error.

For the incremental fit measures, the results show a mixed performance. The IFI (0.901) and CFI (0.901) exceed the recommended cutoff value of 0.90, indicating a good fit and suggesting that the model has strong comparative fit relative to the baseline model. In contrast, the TLI (0.887) and NFI (0.858) fall below the recommended threshold, placing them in the poor fit category. This indicates that although the model shows improvement over the null model, certain aspects of its incremental fit remain suboptimal.

From the parsimony perspective, the CMIN/DF value of 2.973 lies within the recommended range of 1–5, classifying it as a good fit. This demonstrates that the model maintains an appropriate balance between goodness-of-fit and structural complexity. Overall, although several absolute and incremental fit indices indicate less than ideal model fit, the RMSEA, IFI, CFI, and CMIN/DF values confirm that the model achieves an acceptable level of fit and is suitable to proceed to hypothesis testing.

Table 4. Direct Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	p-value	Conclusion
H1	Brand Experience → Brand Love	0.918	0.000	Significant
H2	Brand Experience → Brand Satisfaction	0.954	0.000	Significant
H3	Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.908	0.000	Significant

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	p-value	Conclusion
H4	Brand Experience → Brand Trust	0.629	0.000	Significant
H5	Brand Experience → Brand Loyalty	0.005	0.488	Not Significant
H6	Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	-0.070	0.314	Not Significant
H7	Brand Satisfaction → Brand Loyalty	0.297	0.001	Significant
H8	Self-Brand Connection → Brand Loyalty	0.309	0.000	Significant
H9	Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty	0.258	0.006	Significant

Based on the hypothesis testing results presented in Table 4, H1 is supported, showing that brand experience significantly influences brand love (p-value = 0.000; estimate = 0.918). H2 is also supported, indicating that brand experience has a strong positive effect on brand satisfaction (p-value = 0.000; estimate = 0.954). Similarly, H3 is confirmed, demonstrating that brand experience significantly shapes self-brand connection (p-value = 0.000; estimate = 0.908). H4 is accepted as well, indicating that brand experience has a significant effect on brand trust (p-value = 0.000; estimate = 0.629). In contrast, H5 is not supported, as brand experience does not directly influence brand loyalty (p-value = 0.488; estimate = 0.005). Likewise, H6 is rejected, showing that brand love does not significantly affect brand loyalty (p-value = 0.314; estimate = -0.070).

Furthermore, H7 is supported, indicating that brand satisfaction has a significant positive effect on brand loyalty (p-value = 0.001; estimate = 0.297). H8 is confirmed, demonstrating that self-brand connection significantly contributes to brand loyalty (p-value = 0.000; estimate = 0.309). H9 is also accepted, showing that brand trust positively influences brand loyalty (p-value = 0.006; estimate = 0.258).

Table 5. Indirect Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	p-value	Conclusion
H10	Brand Experience → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	-0.064	0.632	Not Significant
H11	Brand Experience → Brand Satisfaction → Brand Loyalty	0.283	0.002	Significant
H12	Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection → Brand Loyalty	0.280	0.000	Significant
H13	Brand Experience → Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty	0.162	0.015	Significant

Based on Table 5, H10 shows an estimated value of -0.064 with a p-value of 0.632, indicating a non-significant result. These findings indicate that brand love does not mediate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty, meaning that brand experience does not indirectly enhance loyalty through emotional attachment. In contrast, H11 yields an estimate of 0.283 with a p-value of 0.002, indicating a significant effect. This confirms that brand satisfaction successfully mediates the relationship, where positive brand experience increases satisfaction and subsequently strengthens loyalty.

H12 also shows a significant mediating effect, with an estimate of 0.280 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that self-brand connection effectively mediates the influence of brand experience on brand loyalty, as positive experiences strengthen consumers' connection with the brand and, in turn, their loyalty. H13 yields an estimate of 0.162 with a p-value of 0.015, indicating that brand trust also serves as a significant mediator, where brand experience builds trust and subsequently enhances loyalty.

DISCUSSION

This study provides deeper insight into how psychological mechanisms operate within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework for high-perceived-risk technology products. The findings indicate that brand experience functions as a multidimensional stimulus that activates emotional, cognitive, and identity-based

responses. However, only certain internal pathways translate into behavioral outcomes such as loyalty. Brand experience significantly influences brand love, satisfaction, self-brand connection, and trust, highlighting its critical role in shaping consumer reactions. Although brand experience enhances brand love, consistent with Gazi et al. (2025) and Elalfy et al. (2025), this emotional bond does not necessarily lead to loyalty. This suggests limitations of affective responses in utilitarian product contexts and challenges the assumption that positive experiences automatically result in both emotional attachment and loyal behavior.

The significant effects of brand experience on satisfaction and trust support the view that usage experiences function as mechanisms for quality verification and risk reduction (Plotkina & Rabeson, 2022; Sahoo et al., 2024; Gazi et al., 2025). These findings show that experiential stimuli not only evoke affective responses but also build stable cognitive structures, which are crucial in high-risk technology contexts. Additionally, the influence of brand experience on self-brand connection, consistent with Mostafa and Kasamani (2021) and Revaldi et al. (2022), indicates that experiences shape not only functional evaluations but also identity internalization, typically linked to products with symbolic value.

Interestingly, although brand experience acts as a strong stimulus at the organism level, it does not directly influence loyalty. This contrasts with prior studies such as Pirooz et al. (2020) and Akoglu and Özbek (2022), suggesting that in the context of Chinese smart tablets, loyalty depends on deeper internalization processes. In high-risk and evaluation-intensive markets, consumers need to strengthen their beliefs and identity before forming behavioral commitments. These findings extend the S–O–R framework by demonstrating that strong stimuli do not necessarily lead to behavioral responses without sufficient organism mediators, highlighting a key theoretical contribution beyond prior studies that often found direct effects.

The most compelling finding concerns the relationship between brand love and loyalty. Although brand love is formed, it does not predict loyalty, supporting non-significant results and challenging prior studies by Firdausiah et al. (2024) and Chen and Demirci (2025). This indicates that in utilitarian, performance-focused, and risk-laden product categories, emotional attachment alone is insufficient to drive loyalty. Affective mechanisms may weaken before producing behavioral responses, particularly when trust and satisfaction play a more dominant role. These findings refine the theoretical role of brand love and confirm that the effectiveness of the affective pathway is highly context-dependent. By contrast, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and trust act as key mediators between brand experience and loyalty. Khowjoy et al. (2023) and Gazi et al. (2025) show that satisfaction validates positive experiences cognitively. Mostafa and Kasamani (2021) and Revaldi et al. (2022) confirm that self-brand connection is the strongest pathway through identity integration. Akoglu and Özbek (2022) and Bawazir et al. (2024) highlight trust as a key mechanism transforming experience into long-term commitment, especially in high-risk contexts.

The finding that brand love does not mediate, while satisfaction, self-brand connection, and trust do, provides an important theoretical contribution (Na et al., 2023). Loyalty in utilitarian technology categories is mainly shaped by cognitive and identity mechanisms rather than by affective ones. The key pathways are those that reduce uncertainty (trust), validate functional value (satisfaction), and create identity relevance (self-brand connection). This hierarchy is more complex than the linear assumptions in much prior research. This study clarifies that loyalty arises not just from experience, but from layered internalization involving affect, cognition, and identity. This research enriches the S–O–R framework by showing that experiential stimuli elicit behavioral responses only when processed by deeper organismic mechanisms. These findings both reinforce previous work and extend understanding of how consumers process brand experiences in modern, high-risk, and competitive technology categories.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that brand experience does not directly generate loyalty but significantly influences brand love, brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and brand trust, and affects loyalty indirectly through brand satisfaction, self-brand connection, and trust. These findings refine the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework by showing that experiential stimuli must be cognitively and identity-based processed before producing loyalty. The study also identifies a key boundary condition: although brand love is formed, it does not exert either direct or mediating effects on loyalty, indicating that affective responses alone are insufficient in high-risk, utilitarian contexts such as Chinese smart tablets. The results highlight that cognitive (satisfaction, trust) and identity-based (self-brand connection) mechanisms are more dominant than purely emotional factors in shaping loyalty.

Several gaps emerge from the lowest-performing indicators. Weak visual impressions suggest the need for stronger design differentiation, while limited emotional attachment calls for more narrative-driven and lifestyle-oriented communication. Low satisfaction signals the need for clearer value propositions and performance evidence. Weak self-brand connection indicates opportunities for more identity-based positioning, while low trust highlights the importance of transparency, reliability, and after-sales support. Fragile loyalty suggests strengthening retention strategies and ecosystem-based benefits to sustain long-term commitment.

This study has limitations. Its cross-sectional design restricts the ability to observe changes over time, while self-reported data may introduce bias. The focus on Indonesian consumers also limits generalizability across cultural contexts. Future research should apply longitudinal designs to examine the stability of mediating mechanisms, compare utilitarian and hedonic products to test the role of affective factors, and conduct cross-country studies to assess cultural differences. Incorporating variables such as perceived risk, switching costs, and brand reputation may further explain loyalty formation in technology markets.

Acknowledgement

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all parties who supported the preparation and completion of this article, especially the respondents who generously contributed their time to participate in this study.

FUNDING STATEMENT: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not - for - profit sectors.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: The author declares no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT: During the preparation of this article, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Grammarly to assist with paraphrasing, language refinement, and clarity in the academic narrative. After using these tools, the author reviewed, verified, and edited the entire content as necessary and assumes full responsibility for the final version of the publication.

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