

Original Article

The Influence of Brand Experience and Self-Expressive Brand on Willingness to Pay Premium with Brand Love as a Mediating Variable (Study on Buttonscarves Hijab Consumers in Surabaya City)

¹Calista Fredlina Irma Thahirah, ²Sumiati, ³Wahdiyat Moko
^{1,2,3}Department of Management, University of Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia.

Received Date: 15 May 2024

Revised Date: 24 May 2024

Accepted Date: 27 May 2024

Published Date: 06 June 2024

Abstract: This research aims to examine the relationship between brand experience and self-expressive brand willingness to pay premium through brand love among Buttonscarves hijab consumers in Surabaya. This is explanatory research using a quantitative approach. 200 respondents completed online surveys to provide data, which was subsequently examined using the Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) technique. The results showed that brand experience and self-expressive brand directly influence brand love and willingness to pay a premium. Additionally, the findings indicate that brand love partially mediates the relationship between brand experience and self-expressive brand willingness to pay premium.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Self-Expressive Brand, Brand Love, Willingness to Pay Premium.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, modest fashion in Indonesia has transformed into a lifestyle for a segment of society, emerging as a fresh trend. The advancement of modest fashion in Indonesia is evidenced by data released in the State of Global Islamic Economy (SGIE) 2023/2024, which shows that Indonesia ranks third in the global modest fashion sector, following Turkey and Malaysia [29]. The hijab has become the most iconic item of modest fashion because the most noticeable difference between Islamic dress style and other dress styles lies in the use of the hijab as a head covering. Today, the hijab not only functions as a head covering reflecting a Muslim woman's identity but has also evolved into a fashion attribute that combines various patterns and colors with the use of diverse materials.

In Indonesia, the popularity of premium-priced hijabs has been rapidly growing and is now easily found in the market. One of the pioneers of local premium hijab brands in Indonesia is the brand Buttonscarves. The price of Buttonscarves hijabs ranges from IDR 475,000 to IDR 575,000. Despite being sold at a high price, Buttonscarves hijabs remain popular among Indonesian Muslim women. The high consumer attention towards Buttonscarves hijabs and their strong market acceptance is reflected in the size of their customer community, known as BS Lady.

Nevertheless, Buttonscarves faces intense competition in the modest fashion industry. According to data from the World Economic Forum (2022), the total consumption of hijabs in Indonesia stands at 1.02 billion products per year, with transaction values reaching Rp 91.135 trillion. However, it is noted that only 25% of these products are from local brands [32]. This fact indicates that Buttonscarves not only faces competition from local brands but also from global brands.

Based on this data, Buttonscarves needs to understand the brand-related factors that drive consumers' willingness to pay premium prices in order to remain competitive amidst intense competition and the emergence of new premium brands. In this study, these factors include brand experience, self-expressive brand, and brand love. This study is explanatory research with a quantitative approach, aiming to understand the relationship between brand experience and self-expressive brand willingness to pay the premium, with brand love as a mediating variable.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A) Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory

The S-O-R theory explains how stimuli (S) from the external environment influence the cognitive and affective states of consumers, referred to as the organism (O), which mediate and translate these stimuli into behavioral responses. Consumers exhibit these responses through attitudes such as like-dislike, agree-disagree, and approach-avoid [25].



This study considers brand experience as a stimulus with varying intensity and sensation, inclusively viewed as a combination of sensory, intellectual, affective, and behavioral elements, where the entirety of these elements constitutes the level of brand experience [18]. This study also considers self-expressive brands as a stimulus. Social identity theory explains that individuals express their self-identity and differentiate themselves through specific brands [5]. The presence of these brands provides individuals with a means to express themselves [1] and can also stimulate individual purchasing behavior reactions [5].

Furthermore, the organism represents the individual's affective and cognitive states. The affective state reflects the feelings conveyed by consumers as a reaction to environmental stimuli [16], while the cognitive state encompasses all thoughts in the consumer's mind regarding the processing, retention, and retrieval of information [12]. The use of brand love in the S-O-R model as the organism has been supported by previous research, such as the studies [4][8]; thus, this study incorporates brand love as the organism variable.

This study uses willingness to pay a premium as the response element. When individuals engage with a brand, they encounter various stimuli in the form of experiences and brand image, which affect their affective and cognitive aspects, resulting in brand love. This, in turn, produces a behavioral reaction in the form of willingness or unwillingness to pay a premium price. The use of willingness to pay the premium as the response element in the S-O-R theory has been supported by previous research [21][17][30].

B) Brand Experience

Brand experience is defined by Brakus et al. [6] as the emotions, feelings, thoughts, and reactions that a brand elicits in consumers. These responses are caused by stimuli that are produced by the brand's circumstances, people, promotional materials, and design. Customers explore, examine, assess, buy, utilize, and receive after-sales services to create the brand experience [27].

H1: Brand experience has a significant effect on willingness to pay premium

H2: Brand experience has a significant effect on brand love

C) Self-Expressive Brand

Self-expressive brand refers to consumers' perception of how much a brand can reflect their inner self and social self [9]. According to Albert et al. [2], brands that express consumers' selves and align with their values can trigger desired post-consumption behaviors, including the willingness to pay a higher price for the brand.

H3: Self expressive brand has a significant effect on willingness to pay premium

H4: Self expressive brand has a significant effect on brand love

D) Brand Love

Carroll and Ahuvia [9] define brand love as a degree of the passionate relationship between the brand and the consumer, similar to interpersonal relationships. The degree of psychological attachment that satisfied customers feel for a specific brand is known as brand love [9] and encompasses several interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements [6].

H5: Brand love has a significant effect on willingness to pay premium

H6: Brand love mediates the effect between brand experience and willingness to pay premium

H7: Brand love mediates the effect between self-expressive brand and willingness to pay premium

E) Willingness to Pay Premium

Willingness to pay, or the willingness to pay a price, is defined as the amount customers are willing to pay for a preferred brand among comparable brands [23]. Premium pricing is often referred to as prestige pricing, indicating a high-quality product to position it within the upscale or premium consumer segment [23]. Srinivasan and Chan Su Park [24] propose premium pricing as the maximum price difference between the most preferred brand and the least preferred brand that consumers find acceptable.

F) Research and Methodology

This study uses an explanatory approach by testing the relationship between each variable; conduct the instrument uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) before the result is tested using statistical procedures in line quantitative approach. The population of this study consist of consumers of Buttonsscarves hijab in Surabaya City, with the sample comprising 200 respondents measured using purposive sampling. The criteria for respondents in this survey are women aged 18 or above who have purchased and used Buttonsscarves hijabs at least once and currently live in Surabaya City. The extracted data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling by Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) since the variables in this study are unobserved and shall be measured using several indicators [22]. Henceforth, the SEM-PLS method was chosen.

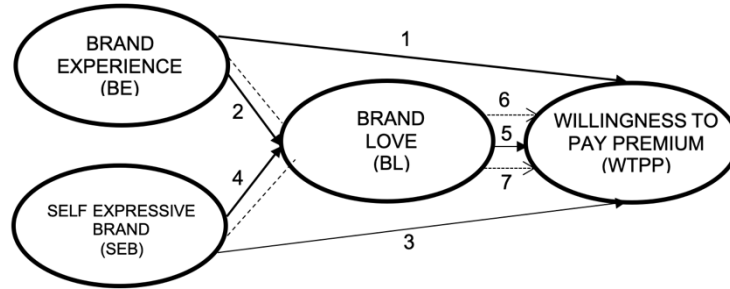


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework

Each variable in this study using indicators adapted from Dwivedi et al. [11], Santos and Schlesinger [26], Huang [14], Ferreira et al. [13], Wallace et al. [31], Kostitsa et al. [19], Carroll and Ahuvia [9], Siddique dan Rajput [28], Netemeyer et al. [23], Djohan and Brahmana [10].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A) Respondent Characteristics

Table 1 presents data characteristics related to respondent identities. It is known that 77.5% of the total respondents who are consumers of Buttonsarves hijabs are mostly aged between 26-41 years. At this age, women have a better understanding of themselves and know the needs and desires that can support their identity and self-worth. Within this age range, women generally have financial independence, are in the process of building their careers, and develop their professional lives. This drives the need for premium products to support comfort and demonstrate success.

Furthermore, it is known that the majority of consumers of Buttonsarves hijabs have a Bachelor's/Diploma education, amounting to 71.5%. This finding indicates that higher education makes women more selective in choosing the best products for their use. The minimum education level of Bachelor's/Diploma mostly places Buttonsarves hijab consumers as Private Sector Employees, at 49%. This finding suggests that Buttonsarves hijab consumers are dominated by productive workers who have their own income. The use of premium hijabs can boost confidence while working, thus supporting their appearance in socializing in the office environment.

Findings also show that the majority of Buttonsarves hijab consumers have a monthly income ranging from IDR 5,000,000 to IDR 10,000,000. This amount is above the regional minimum wage of Surabaya City, which is at IDR 4,725,479. This indicates that Buttonsarves hijabs are not affordable for all groups, considering their expensive price and alignment with Buttonsarves' target market, which is modern Muslim women with high-end lifestyle preferences.

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics

	Category	Frequency	%
Age	18 – 25	25	12
	26 – 33	96	48
	34 – 41	60	30
	42 – 55	16	8
	> 55	4	2
Educational Level	Junior High School	0	0
	Senior High School	36	18
	Bachelor Degree	143	72
	Master Degree	19	9
	Doctoral Degree	2	1
Occupation	Entrepreneur	21	10
	Civil Cervant	33	16
	Private Employee	98	49
	Student	29	14
	Housewife	6	3
	Others	13	6
Income Level	< IDR 3.000.000	12	6
	IDR 3.000.001 – 5.000.000	37	19
	IDR 5.000.001 – 10.000.000	126	63
	> IDR 10.000.000	25	12

B) Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement of validity analysis involves evaluating the outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) using SMARTPLS 3.0. The results of this validity analysis are presented below.

Table 2: Validity Analysis

Measurement Item(s)	Convergent Validity		Discriminant Validity	
	Outer Loading	Result	AVE	Result
Brand Experience			0,534	
I experience a positive visual appeal through the patterns and colors used in Buttonscarves hijabs.	0,795	Valid		Valid
I feel comfortable when wearing Buttonscarves hijabs due to the quality of the material used.	0,731	Valid		Valid
Wearing Buttonscarves hijabs evokes a sense of pride.	0,710	Valid		Valid
Wearing Buttonscarves hijabs can influence my mood.	0,715	Valid		Valid
The positive experience with the Buttonscarves brand encourages me to make a purchase.	0,716	Valid		Valid
The positive experience with the Buttonscarves brand motivates me to participate in the brand's programs.	0,712	Valid		Valid
The Buttonscarves brand prompts me to increase my knowledge about the brand.	0,728	Valid		Valid
Information related to the Buttonscarves brand heightens my curiosity.	0,735	Valid		Valid
Self-Expressive Brand			0,600	
The Buttonscarves brand reflects my true personality.	0,828	Valid		Valid
The Buttonscarves brand represents my personal values.	0,711	Valid		Valid
The Buttonscarves brand is an extension of my self-concept.	0,786	Valid		Valid
The Buttonscarves brand supports the self-image I present in social settings.	0,718	Valid		Valid
The Buttonscarves brand enhances how others perceive me.	0,764	Valid		Valid
I receive positive impressions regarding others' evaluations of me when wearing Buttonscarves hijabs.	0,832	Valid		Valid
Brand Love			0,560	
I am very enthusiastic about owning Buttonscarves hijabs.	0,788	Valid		Valid
I prioritize wearing Buttonscarves hijabs over those from other brands.	0,710	Valid		Valid
Buttonscarves hijabs are a fantastic local brand.	0,708	Valid		Valid
I feel confident when wearing Buttonscarves hijabs.	0,740	Valid		Valid
I love Buttonscarves!	0,793	Valid		Valid
Willingness to Pay Premium			0,631	
I am willing to pay a higher price for Buttonscarves hijabs even though other brands offer more attractive deals.	0,848	Valid		Valid
I am willing to purchase Buttonscarves hijabs even if the price increases.	0,752	Valid		Valid
I am willing to pay a higher price for Buttonscarves hijabs because of their unique characteristics that I cannot find in other brands.	0,780	Valid		Valid

As shown in Table 2, the outer loading scores from each item in brand experience, self-expressive brand, brand love, and willingness to pay premium scored more than 0.7, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) also scored above 0.5, which was confirmed as valid. Thus, this result fulfils the prerequisite for subsequent analysis. The assessment of reliability analysis is by examining the value of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Brand Experience	0,875	0,901
Self-Expressive Brand	0,803	0,864
Brand Love	0,866	0,900
Willingness to Pay Premium	0,706	0,837

Table 3 displays the composite reliability value for each variable exceeding 0.7, along with Cronbach's Alpha value also exceeding 0.7. Consequently, it is concluded that all items are considered reliable.

C) Structural Model Test

The inner model analysis is used to predict the causal or cause-and-effect relationships of the variables under study and is conducted through two approaches: the coefficient of determination (R-Square) and Predictive Relevance (Q-Square). The determinant coefficient on each variable was tested, the highest R-Square value is found in the variable willingness to pay premium at 0.565. This means that 56.5% of the variability in the willingness to pay premium variable is influenced by brand experience, self-expressive brand, and brand love. Followed by brand love, with an R-Square value of 0.53, which means that 53% of the variability in the brand love variable is influenced by brand experience and self-expressive brand. The predictive relevance value in this study is 0.795, meaning that this study meets the criteria, and the proposed research model can be categorized as a good model.

D) Hypothesis Test

The direct influence can be observed through the values of t-statistics and p-values from one variable to another using bootstrapping techniques. Here are the results of the direct influence testing. Hypotheses were deemed significant if the t-statistic score surpassed 1,97 with a 5% significance level and the p-value was below 0,05.

Table 4: Direct Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Result
Brand experience → Willingness to pay the premium	0,224	3,010	0,003	Accepted
Brand experience → Brand love	0,239	2,740	0,006	Accepted
Self-expressive brand → Willingness to pay the premium	0,358	4,497	0,000	Accepted
Self-expressive brand → Brand love	0,544	7,165	0,000	Accepted
Brand love → Willingness to pay the premium	0,267	3,628	0,000	Accepted

Table 4 explains direct hypothesis testing: brand experience has a significant effect on willingness to pay the premium ($\beta = 0,224$; $t = 3,010$; $p < 0,05$) and brand love ($\beta = 0,239$; $t = 2,740$; $p < 0,05$). Self-expressive brand has a significant effect on willingness to pay premium ($\beta = 0,358$; $t = 4,497$; $p < 0,05$) and brand love ($\beta = 0,544$; $t = 7,165$; $p < 0,05$). Brand love also significantly affects willingness to pay premiums ($\beta = 0,267$; $t = 3,628$; $p < 0,05$). As a result, H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5 are supported.

By using mediating variables, the indirect effect seeks to evaluate the indirect relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables. Indirect effects are deemed to be statistically significant when the p-value is less than 0.05, or the t-statistics exceed the t-table (1,97). The table below displays the indirect affect outcomes of the test:

Table 5: Indirect Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Result
Brand experience → Brand love → Willingness to pay premium	0,064	0,039	2,070	Accepted
Self-expressive brand → Brand love → Willingness to pay premium	0,145	0,001	3,269	Accepted

According to Table 5, the result of the indirect effect of brand love between brand experience and willingness to pay a premium ($\beta = 0,064$; $t = 3,039$; $p < 0,05$) and brand love between self-expressive brand and willingness to pay premium ($\beta = 0,145$; $t = 0,001$; $p < 0,05$) show mediating effect towards willingness to pay premium. The association between the self-expressive brand and readiness to pay premium, as well as the relationship between the experience of the brand and readiness to pay the premium, are found to be somewhat mediated by brand love. Consequently, hypotheses H6 and H7 are supported.

E) Discussion

Theoretical contributions to ideas of brand experience, self-expressive brand, brand love, and a readiness to pay a premium have been made by the results of the study. This study can serve as a reference for studies in the field of fashion marketing, especially for local premium brands targeting upper-class consumers amidst increasing competition and the emergence of many new brands. This research highlights factors that can drive consumer willingness to pay premium prices for fashion products

In relation to the S-O-R theory used in this study, it can be concluded that brand experience and self-expressive brand act as stimuli that influence consumers' perceptions and emotions. These stimuli are then processed internally by consumers, resulting in feelings of brand love. Subsequently, brand love drives consumers to be willing to pay a premium price as the final response.

Brand experience, measured through four indicators—sensory experience (pertaining to the senses), affective experience (related to emotions), intellectual experience (connected to cognitive aspects), and behavioral experience (associated with consumer behavior)—has been proven to enhance willingness to pay a premium.

Self-expressive brands are elucidated through two indicators: inner self and social self. The inner self reflects how a brand can aid individuals in expressing and reinforcing their personal identity, whereas the social self represents how a brand can assist individuals in enhancing their self-image and social relationships.

The results of this study show that brand experience and self-expressive brand can increase willingness to pay a premium both directly and indirectly through the mediation of brand love. Empirically, this research supports previous studies conducted by Dwivedi et al. [11], Brakus et al. [7], Kostritsa et al. [19], and Lei et al. [20].

This study indicates that when consumers love a brand, their willingness to pay a premium price increases. In this study, brand love is measured using five indicators adopted from previous research of Carroll and Ahuvia [9], which include confessions of love for the brand, enthusiasm for it, devotion to it, favorable opinions of it, and positive feelings in response to it. The results of this study are consistent with research conducted by Albert and Merunka [3], Djohan and Brahmana [10], and Hermanto and Jaolis [15], which found that willingness to pay a premium is significantly influenced directly by brand love.

Finally, it is known that the willingness to pay a premium price is influenced by the degree to which consumers experience brand love. These factors contribute to a higher perceived value of the brand, thereby increasing consumers' willingness to pay a higher price. This willingness is further enhanced by the connection with the brand experience, as well as self-expressive brand attributes that help individuals express and reinforce both their inner and social selves.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of this research indicate that two predictor variables, brand experience and self-expressive brand, have a significant impact on the willingness to pay a premium. Furthermore, brand love is shown to partially mediate the relationship between brand experience and self-expressive brand in relation to the willingness to pay a premium. This indicates that even without brand love, brand experience and self-expressive brand can still influence the willingness to pay a premium. However, this effect is significantly stronger when mediated by brand love.

Therefore, premium brands need to focus on efforts to build and maintain close relationships with consumers. This can be achieved through loyalty programs and consistent marketing campaigns that effectively communicate the brand's value. Buttonsarves should effectively convey its brand values and product benefits to consumers, clarifying the reasons behind the premium pricing of each product, such as design innovation, social value, or other added benefits. This will help consumers understand why Buttonsarves products are priced higher than similar offerings from other brands.

For future research, it is necessary to further explore other independent variables related to willingness to pay a premium, such as brand equity, brand credibility, or consumer perception. Furthermore, it is important to broaden the diversity of research objects, such as cosmetic brands or electronic brands, because these brands provide different brand experiences, which may result in different findings compared to fashion brands.

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