The Role of Brand Love in Mediating the Influence of Brand Image and Customer Experience on Consumer Loyalty of Pond's Cosmetics (A Study Among Students of the University of Mataram)

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Abstract

This study analyzes brand love's mediating role in the relationship between brand image and customer experience on consumer loyalty toward Pond's Whitening Cream among University of Mataram students. The cosmetics industry in Indonesia demonstrates rapid growth at 5.35% annually, yet Pond's market share declined significantly from 25.3% in 2023 to 9.5% in 2024, necessitating comprehensive consumer behavior investigation. This quantitative research employed an explanatory design with 150 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via online questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale encompassing 19 items across four constructs: brand image, customer experience, brand love, and consumer loyalty. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0 software analyzed the data through outer and inner model evaluation, incorporating 5,000 bootstrap permutations. Results demonstrate that brand image exerts the strongest direct effect on brand love ($\beta = 0.567$, $p = 0.000$), while customer experience demonstrates lesser influence ($\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.001$). Both variables maintain significant direct pathways to consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.420$ and $\beta = 0.194$ respectively). Critically, brand love mediates both relationships with substantial effect magnitude ($\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.000$). The study concludes that brand love functions as a pivotal mediating mechanism, with brand image representing the paramount antecedent for emotional brand attachment. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs, expand sample composition to non-academic populations, and investigate supplementary mediating variables including brand authenticity and perceived value.

INTRODUCTION

Research Phenomenon

The cosmetics industry in Indonesia has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors in national economic expansion, demonstrating a projected annual growth rate of 5.35% from 2024 to 2028. Data from Statista indicates that the cosmetics sector's revenue increased from US$1.31 billion in 2021 to US$1.94 billion in 2024, representing a 48% increase over a three-year period. This explosive growth is driven by demographic factors, as Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation with a majority of young residents actively utilizing cosmetic products in their personal care routines. The lifestyle transformation of younger generations has fundamentally altered perceptions regarding cosmetics, transitioning from a secondary necessity to an integral

component of personal identity, self-confidence, and social interaction. This phenomenon compels cosmetic companies to extend their focus beyond product quality alone, necessitating the cultivation of consumer loyalty as a strategic mechanism to sustain competitive advantage within an increasingly dynamic and competitive marketplace.

Pond's, a prominent international cosmetic brand with longstanding presence in the Indonesian market, is widely recognized for its facial whitening cream products specifically formulated to brighten skin, conceal dark spots, and maintain facial skin health. Pond's products have attained international quality standards and comply with applicable Indonesian regulations, including distribution authorization from the BPOM (Indonesian Drug and Food Supervisory Authority) and Halal certification from the MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council), thereby ensuring safety for public consumption. Nevertheless, these products face intense competition from diverse local and international brands offering comparable innovations at competitive price points. Data from the Top Brand Index reveals that Pond's market share in the facial cleansing soap category experienced a significant decline of 15.2% from 2023 to 2024, decreasing from 25.3% to merely 9.5%. This substantial market contraction indicates intensified competition from innovative emerging brands and reflects shifting consumer preferences toward products formulated with natural and organic ingredients.

Research Problems

The challenges confronting Pond's reflect the complex dynamics of Indonesia's cosmetics market, wherein consumers, particularly younger generations, demonstrate increasing criticality in product selection and convenient access to information via internet and social media platforms. The phenomenon of Pond's market share deterioration necessitates comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior, specifically regarding how brand image perception, customer experience, and emotional attachment to brands collectively influence consumer loyalty. Prior research has demonstrated that positive brand image can enhance customer satisfaction and establish robust emotional bonds with consumers. However, the mechanisms through which brand image and customer experience simultaneously affect consumer loyalty via emotional brand attachment (brand love) warrant further investigation, particularly within the context of facial whitening cosmetic products in Indonesia.

Brand love has emerged as a paramount focus in contemporary marketing and is perceived as a critical variable linking consumer perception to long-term loyalty behaviors. According to Carroll & Ahuvia (2006), brand love constitutes a profound emotional attachment between consumers and brands, with increasing strength of this attachment corresponding to elevated consumer loyalty, satisfaction, and product or brand engagement. Research by Rahayu & Ruswanti (2024) established that brand love plays a substantial role in augmenting consumer loyalty by mediating the relationship between brand experience and loyalty in food and beverage products, thereby affirming the significant role of brand love in enhancing consumer loyalty. Beyond brand love, brand image equally contributes to consumer loyalty development. Kotler & Keller (2016) elucidate that brand image derives from consumer perceptions and brand associations retained within consumer memory. Research by Nurfitriana et al. (2020) demonstrated that brand image exerts significant influence on Wardah consumer loyalty, particularly when reinforced by brand love.

Customer experience, an equally significant factor, encompasses the totality of consumer interactions with brands across all touchpoints, whether preceding purchase, during the transaction, or following acquisition. This comprehensive experience framework shapes consumer

perception of the brand and plays an instrumental role in cultivating consumer loyalty toward the brand. Layna & Hidayat (2023) identified that positive consumer experiences with green skincare products enhance loyalty, with brand love functioning as a mediating variable. Although multiple studies have corroborated the influence of brand love, brand image, and customer experience on consumer loyalty (e.g., Rahayu & Ruswanti 2024; Nurfitriana et al. 2020; Layna & Hidayat 2023), research specifically examining Pond's Whitening Cream products remains limited.

Research Objectives, Urgency, and Novelty

This research aims to analyze the mediating role of brand love in the relationship between brand image and customer experience on consumer loyalty toward Pond's Whitening Cream products, with particular emphasis on students at the University of Mataram. The research urgency derives from the necessity to provide comprehensive understanding of mechanisms underlying Pond's market share decline and identify appropriate marketing strategies to maintain and enhance consumer loyalty amid intense competitive pressures. The research novelty resides in the application of a brand love mediation model within the context of Indonesian facial whitening cosmetic products, which remains insufficiently investigated in extant literature, coupled with focus on the student consumer segment, which represents a strategically significant market for the cosmetics industry. This research is anticipated to contribute academically to expanded investigation of consumer loyalty within Indonesia's cosmetics sector and furnish practical implications for industry stakeholders to enhance brand love as a pivotal factor in establishing competitive advantage and facilitating growth within Indonesia's facial whitening cosmetics sector.

METHODS

Research Design and Methodology

This investigation employs a quantitative research design underpinned by positivist epistemology and deductive methodology. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research methodology is grounded in positivist philosophy and is utilized for examining populations or samples through structured instrumentation, with data analysis comprising quantitative or statistical approaches aimed at hypothesis verification. The explanatory research design, as recommended by Creswell & Creswell (2023), facilitates the analysis of causal relationships between variables through rigorous hypothesis testing. This research examines the influence of brand image (independent variable) and customer experience (independent variable) on consumer loyalty (dependent variable), while simultaneously assessing the mediating role of brand love in these relationships. The employment of explanatory design permits comprehensive investigation of both direct and indirect effects within the proposed theoretical framework, thereby enabling elucidation of the mechanisms through which brand image and customer experience engender consumer loyalty via emotional brand attachment. The population under investigation comprises all students at the University of Mataram who have utilized Pond's Whitening Cream cosmetics on a minimum of two occasions, thereby ensuring respondents possess sufficient product familiarity to provide informed assessments regarding brand perception, experiential quality, and loyalty dimensions.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The research population encompasses undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at the University of Mataram who have demonstrated consistent engagement with Pond's Whitening Cream through repeated consumption. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was implemented to recruit participants specifically aligned with the research objectives. Memon

et al. (2025) elaborate that purposive sampling encompasses systematically selected participants most probable of yielding contextually relevant and substantive information conducive to research aims. This technique proves particularly efficacious when examining specific consumer segments characterized by particular product utilization patterns. The sampling framework employed criterion sampling, a purposive sampling subtype wherein participants were selected based on clearly articulated, research-objective-aligned criteria: active utilization of Pond's Whitening Cream for a minimum of two occasions, current student status at the University of Mataram, and willingness to participate in the investigation. These criteria were established to ensure participant homogeneity regarding product experience while maintaining representativeness across the target academic population. According to Hair et al. (2014), sample size determination in structural equation modeling necessitates consideration of model complexity, anticipated effect magnitude, and statistical power objectives. The sample comprised 150 respondents, a figure aligned with Hair et al. (2014) recommendations for PLS-SEM implementation, which stipulate that samples should be either minimally ten times the maximum number of arrows directed toward any single construct or a minimum of 30 to 100 respondents, whichever exceeds the other. In this investigation, the sample of 150 participants sufficiently satisfies these criteria while accommodating the proposed five-construct model with multiple directional pathways.

Research Instrumentation and Data Collection

Data were systematically collected through an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms, employing the Likert scale as the measurement framework. The Likert scale, a psychometric instrument extensively utilized across diverse academic disciplines for measuring respondent attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral intentions, was implemented with five-point scaling ranging from 1 to 5. The response categories comprised: 1 equals Strongly Disagree, 2 equals Disagree, 3 equals Neutral, 4 equals Agree, and 5 equals Strongly Agree. According to Elegunde et al. (2024), while diverse Likert scale configurations (2-point through 9-point and beyond) exist, the 5-point and 6-point Likert scales remain optimal for management science and consumer behavior research applications due to their enhanced response discrimination capacity and diminished respondent cognitive burden. The 5-point Likert scale selected for this investigation facilitates nuanced respondent differentiation while maintaining participant engagement and response completion rates. The questionnaire encompassed four measurement constructs: brand image (consisting of five items), customer experience (consisting of five items), brand love (consisting of four items), and consumer loyalty (comprising five items), yielding a total of 19 measurement items. Each item was meticulously formulated to directly correspond with its respective construct's operational definition. Item formulation adhered to established instrument development protocols, ensuring clarity, conciseness, and theoretical alignment. The measurement instruments were previously validated through literature review and expert consultation to confirm content validity and appropriateness within the Indonesian cosmetics consumption context. Questionnaire distribution transpired via social media platforms managed by the research team, enabling expansive dissemination across the University of Mataram student population. This distribution methodology facilitates efficient respondent recruitment while enabling geographically dispersed participation. The online delivery mechanism additionally permits asynchronous completion, accommodating respondents' temporal constraints. Data collection procedures prioritized informed consent procurement prior to questionnaire administration, ensuring respondents comprehended research objectives, maintained participation autonomy, and possessed explicit understanding of confidentiality protocols.

Data Analysis Techniques and Statistical Procedures

The analytical framework employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) utilizing SmartPLS version 3.0 software, a methodological approach extensively utilized for examining complex multivariate relationships within consumer behavior and marketing research domains. Hair et al. (2021) delineate that PLS-SEM constitutes a powerful multivariate analytical technique particularly advantageous when investigating complex models incorporating multiple independent variables, dependent variables, and mediating constructs. The analytical procedure encompassed two sequential analytical phases: outer model evaluation and inner model assessment. In the outer model evaluation phase, convergent validity was examined through evaluation of factor loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) coefficients. Factor loading values exceeding 0.70 indicate robust construct representation, while values between 0.50 and 0.70 demonstrate acceptable validity. Average Variance Extracted values exceeding the recommended 0.50 threshold substantiate convergent validity, confirming that each construct adequately captures its intended measurement domain. Discriminant validity assessment through cross-loading examination ensured that indicator loadings on designated constructs exceeded their loadings on alternative constructs, thereby confirming construct distinctiveness and preventing conceptual overlap. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were computed to evaluate internal consistency and measurement reliability, with both metrics requiring minimum threshold values of 0.70 to establish adequate reliability. The inner model assessment examined hypothesized structural relationships through path analysis and coefficient estimation. Path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values were extracted to evaluate hypothesis acceptance or rejection, with statistical significance established at p-value thresholds below 0.05, consistent with conventional social science research standards. Mediation analysis, implemented through specific indirect effect assessment, examined brand love's mediating influence on the relationship between brand image, customer experience, and consumer loyalty. The indirect effect magnitude, computed as the product of path coefficients, was evaluated alongside corresponding t-statistics and p-values to determine mediation significance. According to Hair et al. (2021), mediation processes require that both the direct relationships and indirect pathways through mediating constructs demonstrate statistical significance, alongside substantial indirect effect coefficients. Bootstrap resampling procedures, conducted through 5,000 permutations as recommended by Sarstedt et al. (2024), were executed to generate confidence intervals and p-values for all path coefficients and indirect effects, thereby enhancing result robustness and generalizability. The integration of these analytical procedures within the PLS-SEM framework facilitates comprehensive assessment of both measurement reliability and validity alongside rigorous evaluation of theoretical hypotheses, thereby supporting evidence-based conclusions regarding the proposed mediating model.

Research Procedure and Ethical Considerations

The research implementation proceeded through sequential, systematically organized phases commencing with ethical approval procurement from institutional review bodies to ensure compliance with human subjects research protocols. Following ethical authorization, the research team conducted comprehensive questionnaire pilot testing with a small respondent subsample (n=30) to evaluate instrument clarity, identify potential comprehension difficulties, and confirm measurement reliability prior to full-scale implementation. Pilot testing facilitated refinement of questionnaire items, response options, and administrative procedures, thereby enhancing data quality and respondent comprehension. Subsequently, full-scale data collection commenced

through online questionnaire distribution via social media platforms, with recruitment messaging clearly articulating research objectives, participation requirements, and respondent rights. Respondents accessed the questionnaire through secure hyperlinks, ensuring data transmission security and protection of respondent privacy. The questionnaire administration procedure incorporated informed consent documentation immediately preceding measurement items, ensuring respondents explicitly acknowledged comprehension and voluntary participation consent prior to data provision. No personally identifiable information was collected, ensuring respondent anonymity throughout the investigation. Respondents could discontinue participation at any point without consequence or penalty. Upon questionnaire completion, responses were stored within secure servers accessible exclusively through password-protected authentication protocols. Data entry and coding procedures incorporated automated data quality verification procedures to identify and address missing values, response inconsistencies, or outliers. Following complete data compilation and verification, exploratory data screening incorporated normality assessment, outlier detection, and multicollinearity examination to verify data compatibility with PLS-SEM analytical assumptions. The comprehensive analytical procedure was subsequently executed through SmartPLS software implementation, with output validation conducted through supplementary bootstrap procedures and sensitivity analyses to confirm result stability and robustness. These systematic research procedures, underpinned by rigorous methodological transparency and ethical compliance, establish a robust empirical foundation supporting credible inferences regarding the investigated research questions and theoretical propositions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is a description of the 150 respondents in the study as presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Statement	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender :		
Male	14	8.5 %
Female	136	91.5%
Age :		
18–20 years	25	15.8 %
21–25 years	119	79.5%
26–30 years	6	4.7%
field of study :		
Faculty of Economics and Business	62	41.3%
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education	48	32.0%
Faculty of Law	40	26.7%
Semester :		
1	45	30.0%
3	58	38.7%
7	47	31.3%

Source: Processed data (2025)

Based on Table 2, it can be concluded that female respondents with a percentage of 91.5% dominate over males, with 8.5 %. This indicates that the consumers of Pond's whitening products are mostly female. In terms of age, the 21-25 age group is the largest respondent group with a percentage of 79.5%, while the 26-30 age group is the smallest with a percentage of 4.7%

This condition illustrates that younger individuals are more likely to use Pond's whitening products due to personal care needs and the influence of beauty trends.

In terms of faculty, most respondents came from the Faculty of Economics and Business 41.3%, followed by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education 32.0%, and the Faculty of Law 26.7%. This distribution indicates that the respondents come from diverse academic backgrounds, providing broader representation and enhancing the generalizability of the research findings. Regarding semester levels, the majority of respondents were from semester 3 38.7%, followed by semester 7 31.3%, and semester 1 30.0%.

This finding suggests that students from all academic levels are interested in Pond's products, with the highest proportion found among mid-level students who tend to have greater awareness of personal care and appearance. These respondent characteristics also support the research variables, where a strong brand image of Pond's is able to attract young female consumers, positive customer experience fosters brand love, and ultimately strengthens consumer loyalty to the product.

Outer Model Evaluation

The Outer Model is employed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constituent indicators forming each construct. In addition to ensuring the consistency and reliability of the measurements, testing the Outer Model aims to confirm that each indicator used appropriately reflects the variable or construct for which it was designed. Usually, this analysis is carried out by looking at the Composite Reliability to gauge the model's overall reliability and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to gauge convergent validity. These numbers help researchers decide whether the PLS model's indicators are appropriate or need to be adjusted. The tested PLS model, which graphically depicts the connections between constructs and their corresponding forming indicators, is shown below.

Figure 2. SEM Analysis Result
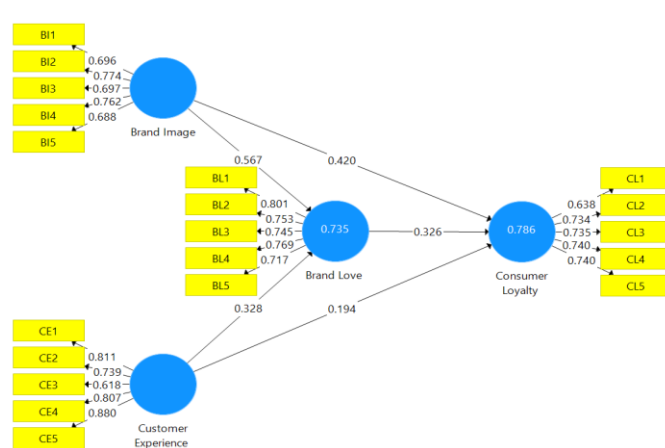
Source: Processed data (2025)
Figure 2. SEM Analysis Result

Validity Test
Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is a technique to determine how well the relationship between items reflects the same construct. To measure the intended variable or construct, this test aims to ensure that each indicator used is truly relevant and consistent. If the indicator factor loading is at least 0.5, the indicator is considered valid because it shows that the indicator can represent the construct well. Furthermore, an indicator is regarded as having a strong correlation with its construct if the loading factor exceeds 0.7, signifying that the indicator is highly relevant and significant in forming the construct Ghozali (2016).

As presented in Table 2, the outer loading values for all indicators under the variables brand image, customer experience, brand love, and consumer loyalty, range from 0.618 to 0.881. These results indicate that all indicators have met the minimum threshold for convergent validity. Indicators with loading values above 0.7 reflect a high level of consistency and accuracy in measuring their respective constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the measurement model in this study satisfies the criteria for convergent validity and is appropriate for further analysis.

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Construct	Item	Outer Loading (Factor)
Brand Image (BI)		
(BI1)	Pond's facial whitening cream has a positive image in my mind	0.696
(BI2)	I consider the quality of Pond's facial whitening cream to be better compared to other brands.	0.774
(BI3)	Pond's facial whitening cream has distinctive features/uniqueness that are easy for me to remember.	0.697
(BI4)	Pond's facial whitening cream suits my style and self-identity.	0.762
(BI5)	I believe Pond's whitening face cream is a brand that can be relied on.	0.688
Customer Experience (CE)		
(CE1)	Information about Pond's facial whitening cream is easy for me to obtain.	0.881
(CE2)	The process of buying Pond's facial whitening cream is easy and enjoyable.	0.739
(CE3)	Using Pond's facial whitening cream provides an enjoyable experience.	0.618
(CE4)	The results of using Pond's facial whitening cream meet my expectations.	0.807
(CE5)	The customer service/after-sales service of Pond's facial whitening cream is satisfactory.	0.880
Brand Love (BL)		
(BL1)	I emotionally love Pond's facial whitening cream.	0.801
(BL2)	I feel excited when using Pond's facial whitening cream.	0.753
(BL3)	I feel attached to Pond's facial whitening cream.	0.745
(BL4)	I am proud to use Pond's facial whitening cream.	0.769

Source processed data (2025)

Table 3. AVE test

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Description
Brand Image	0.525	valid

Customer Experience	0.602	valid
Brand Love	0.574	valid
Consumer Loyalty	0.517	valid

Source processed data (2025)

Validity testing can be conducted by evaluating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The recommended AVE value is at least 0.5. Based on the data in Table 4, the AVE value of each variable is greater than 0.5. Thus, all variables used in this study are declared valid.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant Validity is a employed to evaluate the extent to which a lattent construct is genuinely distinct and separate from other constructs within a research model. According to Fornell & Larcker (1981) discriminant validity ensures that each construct captures a unique aspect of the model and is not overlapping with other constructs. A high discriminant validity value indicates that the construct possesses distinctive characteristics and can be clearly distinguished from others.

In this study, discriminant validity was assessed using the cross-loading approach, which compares the loading value of each indicator on its original construct with its loadings on other constructs. When an indicator's loading on its designated construct is higher than its cross-loadings, it confirms that the indicator accurately represents the intended construct. This procedure ensures that each construct in the model maintains conceptual uniqueness, in line with the theoretical principles described by Hair et al. (2017). The results of the discriminant validity evaluation are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

Variable	Brand Image	Customer Experience	Consumer Loyalty	Brand Love	Information
BI1	0.696	0.599	0.542	0.583	Valid
BI2	0.744	0.549	0.673	0.611	Valid
BI3	0.697	0.514	0.555	0.642	Valid
BI4	0.762	0.692	0.693	0.645	Valid
BI5	0.688	0.625	0.615	0.549	Valid
CE1	0.605	0.474	0.697	0.584	Valid
CE2	0.652	0.739	0.634	0.644	Valid
CE3	0.512	0.618	0.480	0.465	Valid
CE4	0.719	0.807	0.683	0.699	Valid
CE5	0.677	0.880	0.670	0.657	Valid
BL1	0.715	0.618	0.646	0.801	Valid
BL2	0.649	0.730	0.635	0.753	Valid
BL3	0.573	0.474	0.638	0.745	Valid
BL4	0.670	0.673	0.653	0.769	Valid
BL5	0.545	0.486	0.577	0.717	Valid
CL1	0.672	0.481	0.638	0.453	Valid
CL2	0.542	0.542	0.634	0.649	Valid
CL3	0.639	0.621	0.735	0.642	Valid
CL4	0.575	0.571	0.740	0.665	Valid
CL5	0.639	0.645	0.740	0.574	Valid

Source processed data (2025)

Reliability testing

Reliability testing is conducted to evaluate the consistency and dependability of the measurement model by examining the extent to which each item explains its underlying indicator.

The purpose of this test is to ensure that the research instrument can produce stable and consistent data if applied repeatedly. An instrument or measurement tool is considered reliable if the obtained Cronbach's Alpha value exceeds 0.7 Ghozali (2016).

Table 5. Reliability testing

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Information
Brand Image	0.773	Reliable
Customer Experience	0.831	Reliable
Brand Love	0.814	Reliable
Consumer Loyalty	0.765	Reliable

Source processed data (2025)

Hypotheses Testing

All of the suggested hypotheses had a positive and statistically significant effect ($P < 0.05$), according to Table 7's structural model analysis results.

Table 6. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P values	Information
H1: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on brand love.	0.567	5.848	0.000	Accepted
H2: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty.	0.420	4.647	0.000	Accepted
H3: Customer experience has a positive and significant effect on brand love.	0.328	3.309	0.001	Accepted
H4: Customer experience has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty.	0.194	2.318	0.021	Accepted
H5: Brand love mediates the effect of brand image and customer experience on consumer loyalty	0.328	3.520	0.000	Accepted

Source processed data (2025)

According to the analysis, brand image and brand love have the biggest correlation, followed by brand image's impact on customer loyalty and customer experience's impact on brand love. These results are in line with Hair et al. (2019), who claimed that when the p-value is less than 0.05, relationships between constructs are deemed significant. Consequently, the findings support the soundness of the conceptual framework put out in this research.

DISCUSSION
The direct influence of brand image on brand love for Pond's facial whitening cosmetic products.
The analysis results hypothesis 1 in this study, it can be proven that brand image has a positive and significant effect on brand love for Pond's facial whitening cosmetic products. Show an original sample value of 0.567, a t-statistic of 5.848, and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant positive effect. In other words, customers' emotional attachment to Pond increases with the extent to which they perceive the brand.

This suggests that a consistent and positive brand image creates a favorable impression in the minds of customers, which can develop into admiration and trust. Consequently, brand image functions well both as a product identity and as an important component in building lasting emotional relationships with customers. This hypothesis is in line with the results of research by Dam et al. (2020) which showed the same results as hypothesis 1, which stated that brand image has a positive influence on brand love and strengthens consumer commitment to a brand.

H1: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on brand love.

The direct influence of brand image on consumer loyalty for Pond's facial whitening cosmetic products.

The findings from the second hypothesis test indicate that brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty toward Pond's facial whitening products. The analysis results show that this relationship is significant, with an original sample value of 0.420, a t-statistic of 4.647, and a p-value of 0.0000.

This suggests that consumers are more likely to continue purchasing Pond's products and recommend them to others if they have a more favorable opinion of the brand. Customers with a positive opinion of the brand tend to be more satisfied, trusting, and proud of it, which will enhance brand loyalty over time and strengthen the brand's position in the market. This hypothesis aligns with research by Safitri & Mauludi (2022), which showed similar results to Hypothesis 2, stating that brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty for Emina cosmetic products. These results confirm that a good brand image is a crucial factor in building consumer loyalty for both Emina and Pond's cosmetic products.

H2: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty.

The Direct Influence of Customer Experience on Brand Love.

Based on the results of the third hypothesis test in this study, it can be concluded that customer experience has a positive and significant effect on brand love for Pond's facial whitening products. With an original sample value of 0.328, t-statistic 3.309, p-value 0.001.

A satisfying experience with the brand emotionally influences consumers, both through product usage and digital interactions such as social media. Love for the brand ultimately increases through comfortable experiences, emotional closeness, and a sense of satisfaction. These findings are in line with Mustafa et al. (2022), who supports hypothesis 3, showing that online customer experiences can enhance brand love. Therefore, positive customer experience is a crucial factor in building consumer brand love.

H3: Consumer experience has a positive and significant effect on brand love.

The Direct Influence of Customer Experience on consumer loyalty.

The analysis results of hypothesis 4 in this study indicate that customer experience has a positive and significant impact on consumer loyalty toward Pond's facial whitening cosmetic products. The findings show an initial sample value of 0.194, a t-statistic of 2.318, and a p-value of 0.021, indicating a significant positive relationship.

In other words, consumer loyalty to Pond's products increases through positive direct experiences such as product usage, purchasing activities, and interactions with staff. These pleasant experiences strengthen trust, satisfaction, and emotional commitment, which play an important role in maintaining long-term loyalty. These findings are consistent with Zakiah et al (2024), which demonstrated that positive customer experiences significantly foster consumer loyalty. This highlights that good customer experience plays an important role in building loyalty, both for the cosmetic products studied and for the Pond's brand.

H4. Customer experience has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty.

The indirect influence of brand love mediates the influence of brand image and customer experience on consumer loyalty.

The indirect effect of brand love acts as a mediating variable in the influence of brand image and customer experience on consumer loyalty. Based on the results of hypothesis 5 testing in this study, it can be concluded that brand love functions as a mediator in the influence of brand image

and customer experience on consumer loyalty for Pond's facial whitening products. The findings indicate that brand love is an important mediator, with an original sample of 0.328, a t-statistic of 3.520, and a p-value of 0.000.

Customers develop a strong emotional bond with Pond's when they experience positive interactions and hold favorable views of the company. This relationship, sometimes referred to as brand love, enhances loyalty and leads to repeat purchases, sustained preference, and word-of-mouth recommendations. These findings are consistent with the research of C. Siahaan et al. (2023), which shows that brand love has a positive and significant impact on consumer loyalty, both in terms of attitudes and behavior. In addition, the findings of Aulia Melani et al (2024) support this result, by showing that brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty, both directly and through brand love.

H5: Brand love mediates the effect of brand image and customer experience on consumer loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This empirical investigation conclusively demonstrates that brand love functions as a substantial mediating mechanism in the relationship between brand image, customer experience, and consumer loyalty toward Pond's Whitening Cream among University of Mataram students. The analytical findings reveal that brand image exerts the most robust direct influence on brand love ($\beta = 0.567$, $p = 0.000$), substantially surpassing the effect of customer experience ($\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.001$), thereby establishing brand image as the paramount antecedent for cultivating emotional brand attachment. Furthermore, the research confirms that both brand image and customer experience maintain significant direct pathways toward consumer loyalty, with coefficients of 0.420 and 0.194 respectively. Most significantly, brand love mediates these relationships with considerable effect magnitude ($\beta = 0.328$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that emotional attachment profoundly amplifies the conversion of positive brand perceptions and satisfactory customer experiences into sustained purchasing behavior and product advocacy. These findings substantiate the theoretical proposition that emotional brand engagement transcends transactional interactions, creating enduring psychological commitment that reinforces both direct and indirect pathways toward consumer loyalty. The research contributes substantially to consumer behavior literature by empirically validating the mediating role of brand love within the cosmetics sector, specifically addressing a research gap in understanding Pond's market position among academic consumer segments in Indonesia.

However, this investigation acknowledges several methodological limitations that warrant consideration in interpreting findings and delineating future research trajectories. First, the research employed cross-sectional design utilizing data collection at a single temporal point, precluding longitudinal examination of mediational processes and dynamic consumer preference evolution over extended periods. Second, the sample restriction to University of Mataram students, while strategically justified, potentially constrains generalizability to broader consumer demographics, including non-academic populations and alternative age groups within Indonesia's cosmetics market. Third, although the study examined three primary constructs, alternative mediating mechanisms such as brand trust, satisfaction, or engagement remain unexplored, suggesting that unmeasured variables may influence the proposed relationships. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs tracking consumer behavior changes across multiple temporal intervals, expand sample composition to encompass geographically dispersed urban and rural populations, and investigate supplementary mediating and moderating variables including brand authenticity, perceived value, digital marketing exposure, and cultural factors influencing

cosmetic product selection. Additionally, comparative investigations examining brand love's mediating effects across competing cosmetic brands would illuminate competitive dynamics and market positioning strategies, while qualitative inquiry into emotional attachment formation mechanisms would enrich quantitative findings and provide actionable marketing insights for industry practitioners. From a practical standpoint, companies should prioritize strategic brand image management through consistent messaging and quality assurance, develop customer experience initiatives emphasizing satisfaction and emotional connection, and cultivate emotional brand engagement as a critical differentiator in the competitive Indonesian cosmetics market.

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