Article

The Mediating Role of Brand Love between Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty: A Study on SMEs Traditional Woven Fabric in Indonesia

Wan Laura Hardilawati (Corresponding Author)
Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business,
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan &
Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau
Email: a19e0008f@siswa.umk.edu.my

Noor Hasmini Abd Ghani
Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business,
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan.
Email: hasmini.ag@umk.edu.my

Abstract – This paper aimed to examine the impact of brand personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, and competence) on brand loyalty. In addition, the role of brand love is explored through mediation models. A total of 384 valid and usable responses collected from a consumer of Traditional SME Traditional Woven fabric in Indonesia were analyzed through the structural equation model (SEM). A research model examined several hypotheses underpinned by multidimensional brand loyalty and interpersonal love. The findings showed that sincerity and competence had a significant impact on brand loyalty and brand love, but excitement had no significant impact on brand loyalty and brand love. Moreover, brand love mediated the relationship between sincerity and competence, but excitement had an insignificant impact. The results of this study indicate that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the traditional woven fabric industry should foster emotions to establish a robust consumer-brand connection. Furthermore, it is critical to prioritize the development of robust attributes, as traditional woven textiles possess deeply ingrained cultural significance. This study contributes to the current knowledge of brand loyalty literature by exploring the characteristics of brand personality and brand love. The findings imply that when consumers' brand personality is mixed with brand love, it will result in increased loyalty towards the brand.

Keywords: "Sincerity", "Excitement", "Ruggedness", "Brand Love", "Brand Loyalty", "SMEs"

1. Introduction

In the ever-changing and competitive world of business, the interaction between consumers and brands has become more intricate and diverse. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly those in the traditional craft sector, are struggling to create robust brand ties to cultivate consumer loyalty (Ong et al., 2015; Elmadag & Peneklioglu, 2018). Roy & Banerjee, (2012) underline the importance of strategic branding in helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) differentiate themselves in the commercial market.

Nowadays, the business environment has many challenges and increasingly complicated issues. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly the focus of global interest (Hardilawati, 2021). SMEs are crucial to the economy, with a significant impact on innovation and the development of new jobs. Small and medium-sized businesses account for a sizable proportion of global business activities. Since SMEs have the greatest

number of units that contribute to the national economy and make up more than 90% of businesses worldwide, they are unquestionably considered the foundation of any economy (Iqbal et al., 2023). Data on the increase in SMEs in Indonesia is presented below.

Table 1. Data on the growth of SMEs in Indonesia 2018-2023

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of SMEs (million)	64.19	65.47	64	65.46	65	66
Growth of SMEs (%)		1.98	-2.24	2.28	-0.70	1.52

Sources: Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2024

Based on Figure 1, Currently, SMEs are currently experiencing a positive trend, with their numbers increasing year after year. This positive trend will have a positive impact on the Indonesian economy. This shows that SMEs in Indonesia have the potential to develop and contribute more to the economy (Junaidi, 2023).

The study delves into the intricate interplay between brand personality, brand love, and brand loyalty in SMEs that specialize in traditional woven fabric, a culturally significant Indonesian woven cloth. Given the ongoing impact of globalization on consumer behavior, SMEs must comprehend the underlying factors that lead to brand loyalty to secure their long-term viability. The Ministry of Tourism and the Creative Economy is focusing on the development of SMEs in traditional woven fabric, a handwoven cloth that is an important material of Indonesian culture and history. With a long history and diverse designs, hues, and weaving methods, these textiles are highly valued for their artistry and symbolism, often embodying regional identities and narratives. The traditional woven fabric industry contributes considerably to Indonesia's economy, and as SMEs in various regions flourish, each brand must preserve its brand identity and attract loyal consumers who not only buy but also recommend their products.

Brand loyalty is an ongoing topic that gets a lot of discussion, and it has evolved into a variable that academics and marketing practitioners are thoroughly investigating (Dawes, 2022). The importance of brand loyalty in marketing has grown as a result of consumers' propensity to base their purchases on preconceived notions of a brand rather than the actual features or qualities of the product itself (Dick & Basu, 1994). Building brand loyalty is crucial for SMEs. Brand loyalty is important for SMEs in Indonesia because it offers them a competitive edge, encourages consumer retention, enhances word-of-mouth marketing, and encourages sustainable growth in a changing market. Investing in building and sustaining brand loyalty may assist SMEs to succeed and remain stable over the long run.

It takes the right strategy to build brand loyalty to SMEs' traditional woven fabric brands. Brand loyalty, according to Aaker (1997), demonstrates a continuous and long-lasting favorable attitude toward a brand and a propensity to purchase a certain brand over time. Brand loyalty develops when people identify with a brand's personality or self-identity, adding value to the brand's personality. As a result, consumers will be happier and more devoted to a brand if it is more closely associated with human characteristics (Brakus et al., 2009). Creating a strong brand personality is essential for increasing consumer brand loyalty.

A brand personality is a set of human characteristics and traits attributed to a particular brand. It fosters emotional connections with consumers, enhances brand recognition, and encourages repeat purchases (Zainudin et al., 2019). When a brand's product matches the consumer's personality, loyalty to the brand develops naturally (Jamshidi & Rousta, 2021).

Building a solid consumer-brand relationship is mostly dependent on brand personality (Su, & Tong, 2015). In 1997, Aaker developed the brand personality scale (BPS), comprising five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, to elucidate a brand's personality. Excitement greatly influences the level of consumers' trust and loyalty to a company. Luffarelli et al., (2023) stated that excitement also has a notable and favorable impact on buyers' preferences for certain brands. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that sincerity has a favorable and substantial impact on brand loyalty (Su, & Tong, 2015), trust, and consumers' affection for a brand. Additionally, the study by Brakus et al., (2009) discovered that ruggedness had a significant impact on brand loyalty. Additionally, Ramaseshan & Stein, (2014) found that ruggedness had an impact on brand loyalty. This assertion runs counter to Su, & Tong's, (2015) results, which indicated that brand loyalty is unaffected by a brand's rough personality. Even though prior studies have extensively examined brand personality and consumer-brand interaction, the results of these studies have produced contradicting results. Moreover, the majority of prior investigations considered the brand personality characteristic as a singular dimension. Each factor that collectively constitutes brand personality indeed has distinct impacts. Hence, the primary objective of this study is to gain a deeper comprehension of whether the attributes of sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness in a brand's personality could be used as indicators for predicting brand love and brand loyalty.

This study only considers three of the five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness. This study disregards the dimensions of competence and sophistication. This is due to several reasons. In a cultural context, sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness are more relevant to consumer perception and loyalty than competence and sophistication. Consumers' preferred brand personality attributes may differ from those in a global market. Furthermore, the study focuses on traditional woven fabric SMEs, where competence and sophistication are less relevant or noticeable than other dimensions. In traditional woven fabric SMEs, the products they produce are regarded as authentic, serving as the foundation of Indonesian culture, implying that competence and sophistication do not play a significant role. Therefore, this study ignores the dimensions of sophistication and competence.

Moreover, the outcomes derived from this investigation are expected to provide valuable insights to marketing managers on the extent to which brand personality impacts consumer-brand relationships. These insights may serve as a foundation for making informed decisions regarding future marketing strategies to enhance efficiency and precision.

This study seeks to explore the intermediary function of brand love, a notion that is gaining popularity in modern marketing literature, in influencing the connection between brand personality dimensions and brand loyalty. Focusing on the unique qualities of traditional woven cloth, we examine how these companies' innate personality characteristics influence consumers' emotional attachment to them and ultimately impact their brand

loyalty. Indonesia, with its rich and varied cultural fabric, offers an attractive setting for this inquiry. The traditional woven fabric showcases the cultural essence of many areas with its elaborate weaving methods and vivid patterns. Long-term success in the present market in this area requires an awareness of the many facets of how consumers perceive, feel about, and stick with a brand.

The brand love strategy, which is based on Ahuvia, (1993) theory of interpersonal love, will strengthen the relationship between brand personality and brand experience, resulting in consumer loyalty to a brand. A lot of people develop deep emotional bonds with certain "love objects," which he defined as anything other than another person.

This study proposes a model to address these significant yet unresolved research concerns, which are generated by brand personality, mediated by brand love, and concluded with a result of brand loyalty. In particular, this paper investigates the following three issues: (1) Do brand personality dimensions (i.e., sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness) have a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty?; (2) Do brand personality dimensions (i.e., sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness) have a positive and significant effect on brand love?; and, (3) Does brand love mediate the relationships between brand personality dimensions (i.e., sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness) and brand loyalty?

This study examines brand loyalty from the perspective of consumers of traditional woven fabric SMEs. This study focuses on the extent to which brand personality dimensions affect brand loyalty, as well as analyzes the mediating role of brand love in supporting the relationship between brand personality dimensions and brand loyalty. This essay is divided into the following sections. The next section of the article will address the pertinent current literature. The research technique is described in the third section. A discussion will take up the fourth section of the paper, and research implications and future study directions will be covered in the last section.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Brand Loyalty
Brand loyalty is a crucial aspect of consumer behavior. It is described as a long-term devotion to a brand or product over time, extending beyond mere contentment. It involves the formation of emotional and psychological bonds between the consumer and the brand, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon (Wilk et al., 2021; Dissanayaka & Ragel, 2022). Brand loyalty is a traditional marketing concept that emphasizes the cultivation of an enduring consumer-brand connection. It has been utilized to assess effective marketing strategies (Kim, 2007).

Acquiring new consumers may be costly for companies, making it advantageous for them to nurture a base of loyal clients. This statement asserts that the sole foundation for long-lasting and sustainable growth is brand loyalty (Bae & Kim, 2023). Brand loyalty refers to the level of consumer attachment and trust that a brand has developed over time as a result of its positive reputation and brand awareness. This loyalty ultimately leads to better sales and greater profit margins compared to rival brands. According to Ong et al., (2018), loyalty can be defined as a strong and enduring commitment to continuously repurchase or continue

using a chosen product or service in the future, despite being tempted to switch by outside circumstances or marketing strategies.

Consumers' brand loyalty can be categorized into four aspects: cognitive, emotional, conative, and action. Cognitive loyalty refers to the connection between brand qualities, whereas emotional loyalty focuses on having a positive attitude towards a brand and enjoying the brand. Cognitive loyalty refers to a strong propensity to engage in future transactions and places emphasis on the brand's performance characteristics. On the other hand, action loyalty refers to a strong dedication to a specific product and a firm intention to continue purchasing it, regardless of the marketing strategies employed by competitors. Emotional loyalty, as defined by Mostafa & Kasamani, (2021) refers to the favorable mindset that consumers have when their needs are fulfilled.

2.2. Brand Personality

In a highly saturated and cutthroat market, brands strive to distinguish themselves beyond product attributes and performance. They are more aware of the power of emotional connections and make efforts to develop unique identities that appeal powerfully to their target consumers. According to Chung & Park, (2017), brand personality refers to a collection of human traits associated with a brand. Brand personality enhances the subjective significance of the product for the consumer and establishes a strong relationship between the consumer and the product. Tolstoy et al., (2022) addressed this matter in their studies into consumer behavior. Dissanayaka & Ragel (2022) highlighted the significance of brand personality as a crucial factor in consumers' decision-making process when choosing between two brands. Consumers have been proven to choose brands in a manner akin to choosing friends, as they ascribe human qualities to the brands.

Brand personality is founded on the concept that consumers frequently attribute human-like traits to companies, which affect their perceptions and impact their decision-making. Further studies have expanded and modified this framework, incorporating further aspects and modifications to include the many aspects of brand personality. Brands, like humans, have characteristics, beliefs, and emotions that consumers perceive and utilize to establish connections with them. Aaker, (1997) presented "The Big Five" approach, which outlines five fundamental dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, to include these varied attributes.

2.3. Brand Love

Brand love is a marketing term that refers to the intense emotional attachment and fondness that people have for a specific brand. It surpasses simple brand loyalty, which is developed via repeated purchases and favorable encounters. Brand love encompasses a profound and significant connection between the consumer and the brand, typically marked by ardor, confidence, and a mutual alignment of principles.

According to Carroll & Ahuvia, (2006), brand love refers to the intensity of emotional attachment that a pleased consumer has towards a specific brand. The term "brand love" describes the intense emotional connection and fervent devotion that consumers show to a particular brand (Meiske & Balqiah, 2019). Brand love is a complex concept that involves several key elements. It is based on emotional connections, shared values, consistent positive experiences, authenticity, community, innovation, and advocacy. Emotional connections

occur when consumers feel a strong emotional bond with a brand, which extends beyond the functional benefits of the product or service. Loyal consumers, who become brand ambassadors, can significantly contribute to brand love, as satisfied consumers often create brand loyalty.

2.3. Hypothesis Development

2.3.1. Relationship between Brand Personality, Brand Love, and Brand Loyalty.

According to Aaker (1997), brand personality is a collection of human traits that are linked to a brand. These traits can be categorized into five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and roughness. Brand personality plays a crucial role in establishing a robust brand by fostering connections with consumers and facilitating self-expression. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of studies regarding the specific aspects of brand personality that significantly influence brand loyalty. While there are claims that brand personality increases consumer preference and loyalty, little study has been done on the importance of these attributes. Louis &Lombart (2024) proposed that future research should investigate the impact of brand personality on additional outcomes, such as consumer loyalty. Mabkhot et al. (2017) conducted a study that suggests a relationship between brand loyalty and personality.

The strong bond between a brand and its consumers is indicative of the significant influence and heightened emotional response elicited by that brand. Merunka, (2013) demonstrated a notable impact of brand affection on brand dedication, indicating that brand affection influences cognitive loyalty and, subsequently, influences enduring brand connections. Thus, devoted consumers, swayed by their emotions, are those who possess a deep affinity for a specific brand and exclude other alternatives from their deliberation. As a result, the influence of brand loyalty is evident in the tendency to make a subsequent purchase. Moreover, the correlation between brand personality and brand loyalty has exhibited inconclusive findings. While several studies demonstrated a favorable impact (Nysveen et al., 2013), others discovered no noteworthy impacts (Liu et al., 2019).

It is expected that consumers will develop intense emotions, like fondness, for some brands because brand love is one of the six components of consumer-brand relationships (Fetscherin & Dato 2012). The impact of many characteristics of brand personality and the inferences made about partner quality, as discussed by Li et al., (2020) can enhance the connections between consumers and brands. Consumers can form a deep emotional connection with a brand that possesses a distinct personality. This is because consumers often perceive brands as individuals and assign them certain personality traits. Brand personality, similar to individual personalities, plays a significant role in fostering connections and engagement between brands and consumers (Bouhlel et al., 2011). Aguilar, et al(2006) proposed that a brand's perceived positivity is directly correlated with its perceived sincerity and competence, increasing the likelihood of its acceptance. Based on previous discussions, this study hypothesizes that brand personality and love enhance brand loyalty, with brand love potentially mediating the relationship between these elements:
H1: Sincerity has a direct positive and significant effect on brand loyalty.
H2: Excitement has a direct positive and significant effect on brand loyalty.
H3: Ruggedness has a direct positive and significant effect on brand loyalty.
H4: Sincerity has a direct positive and significant effect on brand love.

H5: Excitement has a direct positive and significant effect on brand love.
H6: Ruggedness has a direct positive and significant effect on brand love.
H7: Brand Love has a direct mediating effect on sincerity and brand loyalty.
H8: Brand Love has a direct mediating effect on excitement and brand loyalty.
H9: Brand Love has a direct mediating effect on ruggedness and brand loyalty.

2.4. Conceptual Framework
The conceptual Framework for Brand Personality dimensions, Brand love, and Brand loyalty of SMEs' traditional woven fabric is presented in Figure 1.

3. Methodology of Study

3.1. Measurement and questionnaire development
A survey questionnaire was designed using a comprehensive analysis of existing literature. The questionnaire underwent a finalization process after its pilot testing. Despite several criticisms about the generality of Aaker, (1997) theory of brand personality, the majority of brand personality research uses the Aaker scale, rendering it the most appropriate for contemporary study. Aaker, (1997) defined brand personality as a variety of human characteristics that are associated with a brand (p. 347). The measurement of brand personality includes three distinct aspects: sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness, which are examined using a comprehensive set of 11 question items. The dependent variable in this study is brand love, which refers to the level of emotional attachment that a satisfied consumer has towards a specific brand name (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). The assessment of brand love is conducted through the utilization of unidimensional data, consisting of a set of 10 question items. In this study, brand loyalty is defined as the inclination, or behavioral reaction, exhibited over time by a decision-making entity towards one or more alternative brands from a group of brands. Psychological processes have an impact on it. according to Jacoby and Kyner (1973, p. 2), the measurement of brand loyalty has two distinct aspects, specifically attitudinal brand loyalty and behavioral brand loyalty, which are assessed using a set of eight question items. A Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5 is used to score each question item. According to Shiau et al., (2019), structural equation modeling (SEM) is widely recognized as a prominent research methodology. This study utilized SEM-PLS 3.0. The primary reason for employing this method is its capacity to investigate the connections between structural models and assess the validity and reliability of constructs made up of multiple items (Hair Jr. et al., 2021). In this study, a two-step process of PLS Path Model Assessment was used, namely Assessment of the Measurement model and Assessment of the structural model, including testing the mediating effect.
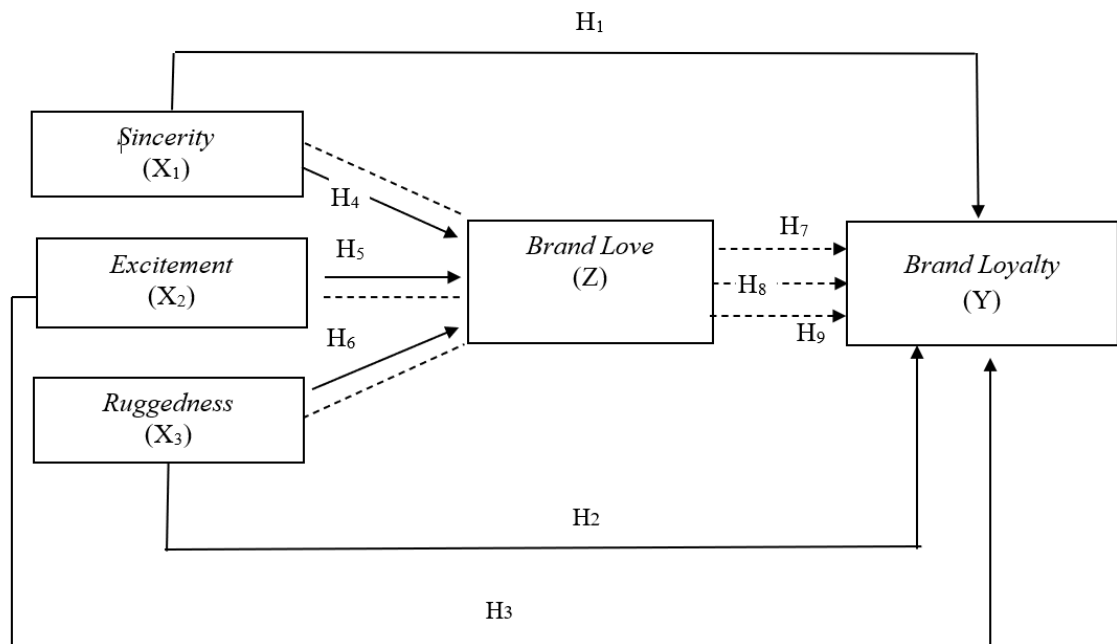
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.2. Sampling and data collection

The current study utilized a quantitative research design. The data gathering method used a cross-sectional study design, using a survey as the major instrument. The sampling technique employed was simple random sampling. Additionally, a purposive sample strategy was employed in this study. Purposive sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research; however, it can also be utilized in quantitative research which aims to extend the generalizability of the findings. This research employed expert sampling, namely choosing experts and respondents who are relevant to the research objectives, specifically consumers from SMEs of traditional woven fabric brands (Rai & Thapa, 2004)

The participants in this study were owners of small and medium-sized enterprises' conventional woven cloth. The recommendation formula from Krejcie et al., (1970) provided the foundation for this. This study included a sample of 384 respondents who were consumers of traditional woven cloth from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The chosen study site is situated on the Sumatra Island, which has diverse traditional woven fabrics in each area. The study was conducted at two separate research sites: Medan in North Sumatra and Palembang in South Sumatra. Consumers must be over the age of 17 and have purchased at least three pieces of traditional woven fabric to be eligible to participate as respondents. This is to ensure brand loyalty, as we do not allow first-time buyers to participate as respondents.

The sample size was 384 participants, with 87.2% female (335) and 12.8% male (49). The majority of individuals who buy traditional woven textiles are aged 45 and older, accounting for 36.5% of the total. The majority of respondents were employed in the private sector, namely 167 individuals (43.5%), with the highest average salary ranging from IDR 3,000,000 to 5,000,000, accounting for 189 individuals (49.2%). The majority of participants

had a bachelor's degree, with 178 individuals (46.4%) possessing this educational background. It was found that 224 respondents, or 58.4%, said that they last made the largest purchase between one and twelve months ago.

4. Findings

4.1. Assessment of The Measurement Model

The study employed a two-step process to assess both the measurement and structural model, as recommended by Hair Jr. et al. (2021) and Henseler et al. (2009). The measurement model was initially evaluated using SmartPLS 3.0's algorithm. The measurement model underwent evaluation, and Table 2 displays several significant findings. The mentioned measurements include the square root of the average variance extracted, the correlation of latent variables, the average variance extracted, Cronbach's alpha, and the composite reliability. Table 1 demonstrates that the measurement model has good convergent validity, as determined by analyzing each underlying component. An average variance extracted (AVE) which is greater than 0.50 indicates strong validity for both constructs and individual variables. Hair Jr. et al. (2021) discovered that all 29 items had loadings greater than 0.50, with values ranging from 0.693 to 0.890. Please refer to Table 2 for further details. The fact that the measuring model followed the rule of thumb of keeping items with loadings between 50 and 70 demonstrates its reliability and relevance for testing and assessing the structural model.

Table 2. Item Loadings, Average Variance Extracted, Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha

Constructs	Items	Loadings	*(AVE)	*(CA)	*(CR)
BP - Sincerity			0.651	0.820	0.881
	BP 1	0.858			
	BP 2	0.819			
	BP 3	0.728			
	BP 4	0.816			
BP - Excitement			0.671	0.835	0.890
	BP 5	0.763			
	BP 6	0.859			
	BP 7	0.858			
	BP 8	0.792			
BP - Ruggedness			0.716	0.800	0.883
	BP 9	0.890			
	BP 10	0.855			
	BP 11	0.790			
Brand Love			0.555	0.911	0.925
	BL 1	0.723			
	BL 2	0.739			

	BL 3	0.735			
	BL 4	0.716			
	BL 5	0.748			
	BL 6	0.693			
	BL 7	0.811			
	BL 8	0.767			
	BL 9	0.711			
	BL 10	0.796			
Brand Loyalty			0.591	0.901	0.920
	BLY 1	0.732			
	BLY 2	0.731			
	BLY 3	0.801			
	BLY 4	0.726			
	BLY 5	0.774			
	BLY 6	0.741			
	BLY 7	0.794			
	BLY 8	0.844			

Note: * AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite Reliability, CA= Cronbach's Alpha, BP=Brand Personality

4.2. Determining The Discriminant Validity

In the cross-loading study, we evaluated discriminant validity by comparing the loadings of the indicator with other indicators representing similar constructs. Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend using the average variance extracted (AVE) with a minimum threshold of 0.50 to evaluate discriminant validity. To provide adequate discriminant validity, it is necessary for the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) to be greater than the correlations between latent constructs. There is evidence to demonstrate the necessary ability to distinguish between different latent constructs. Table 3 presents the discriminant validity result.

Table 3. Latent variable correlations and square roots of average variance extracted

	Brand Love	Brand Loyalty	Excitement	Ruggedness	Sincerity
Brand Love	0.745				
Brand Loyalty	0.907	0.769			
Excitement	0.806	0.839	0.819		
Ruggedness	0.810	0.804	0.830	0.846	
Sincerity	0.860	0.904	0.855	0.754	0.807

4.3. Assessment Of Structural Model

This section explores theories about the initial and intermediate impacts. This study employed the Partial Least Squares (PLS) standard bootstrapping approach with 5,000 bootstrap samples to evaluate the statistical significance of the route coefficients (Hair Jr. et al., 2021). Table 4 displays the estimations for the complete structural model, encompassing all variables.

Table 4. Result of Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypotheses	Relation	Beta Value	T value	P value	Findings
H1	Sin ->BLy	0.409	8.515	0.000	Supported
H2	Exc ->BLy	0.070	1.485	0.138	Not Supported
H3	Rug ->BLy	0.095	2.546	0.011	Supported
H4	Sin -> BL	0.574	11.071	0.000	Supported
H5	Exc -> BL	0.007	0.113	0.910	Not Supported
H6	Rug -> BL	0.370	8.056	0.000	Supported
H7	Sin -> BL ->BLy	0.243	7.359	0.000	Supported
H8	Exc -> BL ->BLy	0.003	0.112	0.911	Not Supported
H9	Rug -> BL ->BLy	0.156	6.908	0.000	Supported

Note: Sin = Sincerity, Exc = Excitement, Rug = Ruggedness, BL = Brand Love, BLy = Brand Loyalty

The results presented in Table 4 indicate a strong and positive correlation between sincerity and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.409$, t = 2.123, p = 0.000), providing support for hypothesis 1. The results shown in Table 4 indicate that there is a weak positive correlation between excitement and brand loyalty; however, this correlation is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.070$, t = 1.485, p = 0.138). Thus, hypothesis 2 was not corroborated. A strong positive correlation was found between roughness and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.095$, t = 2.546, p = 0.011). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was confirmed. The findings for Hypothesis 4 revealed a strong and statistically significant correlation between sincerity and brand love ($\beta = 0.574$, t = 11.071, p = 0.000). The study revealed a negligible positive correlation between excitement and brand love ($\beta = 0.007$, t = 0.113, p = 0.910). Thus, hypothesis 5 was not corroborated. Empirical evidence also confirmed Hypothesis 6. The findings revealed a statistically significant and positive correlation between ruggedness and brand love ($\beta = 0.370$, t = 8.056, p = 0.000). Therefore, hypothesis 7 was confirmed. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated a substantial mediating impact of brand love on the relationship between sincerity and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.243$, t = 7.359, p = 0.000). Nevertheless, the various outcomes indicated that there was no statistically significant mediating influence of love on the relationship between excitement and brand loyalty. The values for β, t, and p are 0.003, 0.112, and 0.911, respectively. The findings for hypothesis 9 indicate that brand love plays a substantial role in mediating the relationship between ruggedness and brand loyalty. The regression analysis revealed a beta coefficient of 0.156, indicating a strong positive influence, with a t-value of 6.908 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating high statistical significance. Therefore, the theory was confirmed.

5. Discussions

This study investigates the role of brand love as a mediator in the relationship between brand personality attributes (such as honesty, excitement, and roughness) and brand loyalty

in SMEs that specialize in Indonesian traditional woven cloth. In Indonesian SMEs that produce traditional woven fabrics, the study finds a relationship between brand loyalty and three aspects of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, and ruggedness. Sincerity and ruggedness are crucial for brand loyalty, as they foster trust and credibility. Sincerity is demonstrated through transparent business practices, ethical sourcing of materials, and a commitment to cultural heritage. Ruggedness signifies a brand's durability and resilience, which are key purchasing considerations in the textile industry. In this case, SMEs can strengthen their market position and ensure sustainability and growth. However, excitement has a non-significant impact on brand loyalty, as consumers prioritize authenticity, quality, and cultural significance over excitement. SMEs in niche markets often have long-term relationships with consumers, reducing the impact of excitement on brand loyalty.

In the correlation between brand personality dimension and brand love, the study reveals that sincerity and ruggedness are key factors in fostering brand love among SMEs producing traditional woven fabrics in Indonesia. Sincerity, characterized by honesty, genuineness, and reliability, reinforces the value and uniqueness of the brand in the industry. Ruggedness, associated with strength and durability, resonates with consumers who value the enduring qualities of traditional woven fabrics. However, excitement, typically associated with energy, youthfulness, and innovation, does not significantly impact brand love in this context. Emphasizing sincerity and ruggedness in branding strategies can effectively cultivate brand love.

The correlation between brand personality dimensions, specifically excitement, yielded varied results. The results demonstrated that excitement did not significantly impact brand loyalty or brand love. Furthermore, the results proved that brand love was unable to mediate the relationship between excitement and brand loyalty. This can be explained since, unlike modern exuberance, traditional woven fabrics, which are frequently anchored in cultural values and legacy, are unique items that promote brand loyalty and love. Consumers prioritize authenticity, craftsmanship, and cultural significance over-excitement, leading to a stronger connection to tradition. Emotional connections are more enduring, as consumers may buy woven fabrics because they respect tradition or have personal memories. The special nature of traditional woven fabrics and their emphasis on quality craftsmanship and unique designs may not align with fast fashion or innovative products.

The expected outcome of this study was that it would align with the prevailing consensus from several other studies, which have conclusively demonstrated that brand personality has a substantial impact on brand loyalty. Notable examples are the works of Villagra et al., (2021); Zainudin et al., (2020) who found that brand personality fosters brand loyalty by promoting emotional connections, differentiation, trust, consistency, brand identity expansion, and advocacy. In SMEs, a traditional Woven Fabric brand should revolve around values such as heritage, authenticity, craftsmanship, creative mastery, environmental stewardship, and proactive community engagement. SMEs can promote strong brand loyalty by consistently embodying these traits, which are critical to the long-term success of their business and the development of their brand image.

The study discovered that in Indonesian SMEs that specialize in traditional woven fabric, brand love significantly mediates the relationship between sincerity and ruggedness dimensions, as well as brand loyalty. Sincerity fosters a deep emotional connection with consumers, whereas excitement, characterized by daring and imagination, does not always result in long-term emotional attachment or brand loyalty. The findings have implications

for SMEs in the production and marketing of traditional woven fabric, suggesting a balanced approach combining excitement, sincerity, and ruggedness for immediate attraction and long-term loyalty.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigates the correlation between brand personality and brand loyalty in traditional Woven fabric SMEs in Indonesia, finding that brand personality significantly influences brand love, which in turn influences brand loyalty. Traditional woven fabric brands with strong, distinct personalities are more likely to foster deep emotional connections with consumers, enhancing brand love. This emotional bond subsequently enhances consumer loyalty, demonstrating that brand love serves as a crucial mediator in this relationship. The study underlines the necessity of creating a compelling brand personality to nurture brand loyalty among consumers, as well as cultivating emotional connections with consumers for long-term company success in niche markets such as traditional textiles. For SMEs in the traditional woven fabric industry in Indonesia, recommendations include developing a distinctive brand personality, instilling a sense of brand love through emotional engagement, enhancing consumer engagement through social media, and maintaining consistency in brand communication across all marketing channels. Implementing robust feedback mechanisms and investing in quality and innovation can help SMEs enhance brand loyalty, contribute to their long-term sustainability, and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

7. Limitations of the Study

A small sample size may limit the study's generalizability to all Indonesians or other SMEs. The cultural and contextual specificities of Indonesian traditional woven fabric SMEs may limit the result's applicability to different types of businesses or cultural settings.

8. Suggestions for Future Research

The study on brand love and loyalty among SMEs in Indonesia offers valuable insights. However, the study is limited to SMEs. It is suggested that the research could benefit from extending the investigation to other geographical contexts, conducting longitudinal studies to understand the long-term impacts of brand personality and love on loyalty, and exploring the impact of digital marketing on brand personality, love, and loyalty. In addition, further research could also explore psychological and emotional factors of brand love, understand consumer attitudes and experiences through a mixed-methods approach, and examine the role of brand communication in fostering brand love and loyalty.

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