

EXPLORING BRAND LOVE THROUGH A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW: CONCEPTUALIZATION, DRIVERS, AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Ramayani Yusuf¹, Istiharini²

Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, Jalan Ciumbuleuit 94 Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: 9012401009@student.unpar.ac.id; Isti@unpar.ac.id

ABSTRAK

This study examines brand love through a systematic literature review (SLR) to map its conceptualization, antecedents, and managerial implications. Brand love refers to consumers' deep emotional attachment to a brand that goes beyond rational evaluation and transactional loyalty. The review identifies brand trust, brand experience, brand image, perceived quality, and emotional attachment as key antecedents. Outcomes associated with brand love include stronger loyalty, positive word of mouth, advocacy, and willingness to pay premium prices. Using the PRISMA framework, 1,830 articles were screened across databases such as ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, Emerald, and EBSCO, with 22 studies published between 2010 and 2025 selected for analysis. Results indicate significant growth in brand love research, especially in digital and social media contexts where online communities foster emotional bonds. Research gaps remain in Southeast Asian contexts, generational differences, and the role of sustainability and cultural values. This study offers a structured synthesis and provides practical insights for marketers on building emotional consumer-brand relationships.

Key words: Brand Love; Brand Trust; Brand Loyalty; Word of Mouth; Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, study of consumer-brand relationships has experienced rapid growth (Albert & Merunka, 2013). In the beginning, marketing emphasized the transactional aspect (Blake, 2021), where the primary focus was the exchange of goods or services for money (Komalasari et al., 2024). However, changes in consumer behaviour and market dynamics suggest that merely transactional relationships are insufficient to create a competitive long-term advantage (Prihadi & Novani, 2015). The relational marketing concept (Coelho et al., 2019) emerged by emphasizing the importance of building customer loyalty and satisfaction. (Yusuf et al., 2021). However, as consumer psychology develops, it is found that loyalty is not only formed from rational experience (Rather, 2020) but also from deep emotional attachment (Achmad & Rahmawati, 2020). It is at this stage that the concept of emotional branding (Deng & Gu, 2020) evolving, which emphasizes that consumers form relationships with brands like human relationships, involving trust, affection, self-identity, and even love (Bagozzi et al., 2017).

From a psychological perspective, consumers use brands not only to fulfill functional needs, but also to fulfill affective and symbolic needs (Anandya & Oktavia, 2020). Brands become a means for consumers to express who they are, how they want to be perceived, and their values (Junaid et al., 2020), which they embraced. Thus, emotional attachments, such as brand attachment (Liu et al., 2018) and brand love, are the differentiating factors that explain why some consumers exhibit exceptional loyalty (Fatmah Cholid Bawazir, 2020) towards a particular brand.

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) introduced the idea of brand love as consumers' emotional feelings of love for the brands they love. Since then, brand love has developed into one of the main topics in marketing research. Empirical and conceptual research shows that brand love does not stand alone. Still, it has a close relationship with other variables: (1) Brand trust - Consumers' trust in the brand is considered the foundation of brand love (Wotrlich et al., 2017). Consumers will only develop emotional bonds if they believe the brand is reliable (2) Brand loyalty - Brand love has proven to be a reliable indicator of consumer loyalty. Unlike satisfaction, loyalty born out of love for a brand is much more durable despite competitors offering similar value (Fatmah Cholid Bawazir, 2020; Veraya & Kuswati, 2024). (3) Word of mouth – Consumers who love brands tend to provide voluntary advocacy through recommendations, positive reviews, and defense of the brand (Meiske & Balqiah, 2019), (4) Purchase intention - Emotional bonds encourage consumers to repurchase, be willing to pay premium prices, and even make the branded element of their identity (Rakhmanita et al., 2023).

Since 2010, research on brand love has expanded across a range of contexts: from consumer goods (Qibtiyah, 2020) to services and digital products. The latest study also highlights Brand love's function on social media (Ula Ananta Fauzi et al., 2021), e-commerce, and creative industries (Nimatov & Imamova, 2021). Recent literature emphasizes that in the digital age, brand love is not only formed through in-person interactions, but also through online experiences, influencer marketing (Rajput & Gandhi, 2024), and virtual communities. The development of digital technology has changed the landscape of consumer relationships with brands (Anandya & Oktavia, 2020). Social media presents a new space where customers can engage with companies more deeply and individually. User-generated content and influencer marketing strengthen emotional closeness (Wood & Masterman, 2008) more authentically.

This study aims to define and trace the evolution of the notion of brand love in the marketing literature, as well as investigate the different determinants that affect how consumers and brands develop emotional ties. In addition, this study also aims to examine the impact of brand love on consumer behavior, including brand trust, brand loyalty, advocacy through word of mouth, and purchase intention. By using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this research is expected to present a more structured, comprehensive, and valuable research mapping both theoretically and practically.

METHOD

This study used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to examine how the notion of brand love evolved, its determinants, and its impact on consumer behaviour. SLR was chosen because this method allows researchers to browse, select, and analyze literature systematically and transparently, resulting in a comprehensive and replicable knowledge mapping. Research data was obtained from various reputable international journal databases, namely:

1. Ebsco 8 articles
 2. Taylor and Francis 460 articles
 3. ScienceDirect 957 articles
 4. Emerald Insight 365 articles
- Total 1.830 articles

The following inclusion criteria were developed in order to preserve the data's quality and usefulness:

1. Articles published in scientific journals that have undergone peer review.
2. The publication timeframe spans from 2015 to 2025, in line with the research objective of reviewing cutting-edge developments.
3. Articles that explicitly examine the concept of brand love, either in a conceptual framework, theoretical model development, or through empirical research.
4. Articles that looked at the connection between brand love and other factors like purchase intention, word-of-mouth, brand loyalty, and brand trust.

The four primary steps of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow served as the basis for the literature review procedure:

1. Identification - The researcher conducted an initial search of articles using keywords such as "brand love," "consumer-brand relationship," "brand trust and love," and "brand loyalty and love."
2. Screening - Articles that were duplicated or did not fit the inclusion criteria were screened out.
3. Eligibility - Researchers assessed article suitability by reviewing the abstract and complete content, ensuring direct relevance to the theme of brand love.
4. Inclusion - Articles that met all criteria were included in the final list for analysis.

Technical Analysis

Thematic analysis and content analysis were used to examine the collected data. Content analysis was used to extract important information from each article, such as research methods, industry context, variables studied, and key results. Meanwhile, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the literature, specifically related to the determinants and outcomes of brand love.

The collected articles were then categorized into several groups:

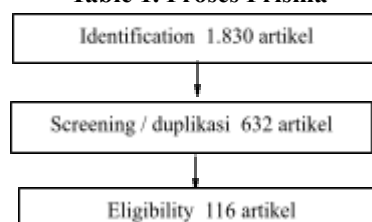
1. Determinants of Brand Love – factors that encourage the formation of brand love, such as brand trust, brand experience, self-brand integration, authenticity, and brand community.
2. The effects of brand love, such as enhanced brand loyalty, favorable word-of-mouth, advocacy, and purchase intention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Research Data

Based on the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method of literature selection, several articles were identified that met the inclusion criteria, specifically peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2025. From the initial search involving more than 1,830 articles, the articles were screened based on relevance, relevance to the topic of brand love, and full-text availability. The final results showed that there were 22 articles worthy of further analysis. It is further explained using the following table:

Table 1. Proses Prisma



Inclusion 22 artikel

Source: processed by the author, 2025

The distribution of articles by year shows a significant increase in publications related to brand love. Since 2015, the number of publications has increased sharply, along with the rise of studies on consumer-brand relationships. The years 2020-2025 mark an important phase, with more research linking brand love in the context of digital, social media, and e-commerce. In terms of journal distribution, most articles are published in reputable journals such as *Journal of Brand Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, and *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. In terms of methods, around 65% of the research is quantitative with survey approaches and statistical analysis, 20% qualitative research with in-depth interviews or case studies, and 15% conceptual research that offers new theoretical models.

Analysis of the literature shows that several factors are driving the formation of brand love:

1. Brand trust - Trust in the brand is the main prerequisite for the birth of brand love. Consumers who believe in the reliability, consistency, and integrity of the brand are more likely to develop an emotional attachment to it. (Joshi & Garg, 2021; Kim, 2022).
2. Brand experience – Consumers' positive experiences when interacting with the brand, both functionally and emotionally, have been shown to strengthen brand love. (Harison, 2020; Iglesias et al., 2011).
3. Brand image – Consumers' perception of a positive brand image and reputation influences the extent to which they feel emotionally close to the brand (Joshi & Garg, 2021).
4. Perceived quality – Consistent, consumer-recognized quality reinforces a sense of satisfaction and affective attachment (Cristela Maia Bairrada, 2016).
5. Emotional attachment – Emotional bonds formed from personal associations, memories, and self-identity make consumers more likely to love the brand (Junaid et al., 2020).

In addition to the drivers, the literature also points to various important impacts of brand love:

1. Brand loyalty – Consumers with high brand love tend to survive and be loyal to the brand even though there are other alternatives (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).
2. Positive word of mouth – Love for the brand encourages consumers to voluntarily recommend the brand to others, both verbally and through digital platforms (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Cristela Maia Bairrada, 2016).
3. Willingness to pay a premium price – Consumers who have strong emotional attachments show a willingness to pay more compared to other brands (Liu et al., 2020).
4. Advocacy – Consumers are not only buyers, but also act as brand advocates, defending and supporting brands in the face of external criticism (Jignesh Bhatt; Baxiskumar Patel, 2020).

4. Discussion

The study's conclusions support the fundamental premise of the link between consumers and brands. (Fournier, 1998), this highlights how consumer-brand relationships might be similar to interpersonal relationships. Brand love emerges as a deeper form of emotional attachment than mere satisfaction or transactional loyalty. Factors such as brand trust, brand experience, brand image, and perceived quality prove to be the foundation that enables the formation of such emotional bonds.

From a consumer psychology perspective, brand love can be explained in terms of the basic human needs for affection, self-identity, and social status symbols. Consumers not only purchase products for utilitarian purposes, but also to fulfil expressive and emotional needs. It aligns with the concept of emotional branding, which emphasizes the importance of narratives, personal associations, and emotional experiences in fostering strong bonds with consumers. The research findings show that brands that successfully build brand love are not only perceived as reliable but are also able to "fill the emotional space" of consumers, making the brand an integral part of their identity.

The effects of brand love on good word-of-mouth and brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium price, and advocacy confirms that emotional bonds provide more substantial long-term effects than price or promotion-based marketing strategies. Consumers who love the brand will remain loyal despite competitor offers that are cheaper or more practical. It indicates that brand love acts as a buffer against market fluctuations and competitive pressures.

The findings of this SLR align with Carroll & Ahuvia's research (2006), who first introduced the concept of brand love and found that this variable plays an important role in increasing loyalty and positive word of mouth.

Further research (Batra et al., 2012) also asserts that brand love includes interrelated affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Research conducted between 2015 and 2017 has primarily emphasised the conceptual relationship between brand love, brand trust, and brand loyalty. For example, Albert & Merunka (2013) show that *brand love* serves as a mediator between consumer satisfaction and long-term loyalty. These findings are in line with the results of the analysis in this study, which found that *brand trust* is an important prerequisite in the formation of *brand love*.

In the period 2017–2019, empirical research is increasingly developing using survey methods and structural analysis. Studies during this period show consistency that brand-loving customers are more inclined to actively promote and are prepared to pay a higher price. It is again reinforced by the results of SLR, where *brand loyalty* and *positive word of mouth* emerged as the most frequently researched impacts.

Interestingly, cutting-edge research 2020–2025 begins to emphasize the digital context. Studies in e-commerce and social media (Wallace et al., 2020; Hegner et al., 2021) found that brand love is formed through intensive interactions on digital platforms, such as consumer engagement with brand content, relationships with influencers, or participation in online communities. Compared to previous studies that focused more on physical interactions, recent research highlights that brand love is now formed in a more dynamic and interactive virtual space.

Identifying Research Gaps

Although the literature on *brand love* has grown rapidly, there are still some research *gaps* that need to be addressed, especially in the contemporary context:

1. Brand Love by Era Digital
Numerous studies confirm the significant role of social media and digitalization in shaping brand loyalty. However, there is still a limited number of studies exploring how algorithms, *personalized content*, or AI-based interactions affect consumers' emotional connection with brands.
2. Brand Love in a Local Context (Indonesia and Southeast Asia)
The majority of research was conducted in the Western context, so generalizations to Asian markets, including Indonesia, are still limited.
3. The Role of Culture in Brand Love
Literature still rarely discusses how the cultural dimension (e.g., *individualism vs collectivism* or *high vs low context culture*) moderates the relationship between the determinants of *brand love* and its impact.
4. Brand Love in the New Generation (Gen Z and Alpha)
Most studies use young adult respondents or general consumers. However, new generations such as Gen Z and Alpha have consumption behaviors that are more digital-native, more quickly connected to trends, and more critical of sustainability values.
5. Integration of Brand Love with Social and Sustainability Issues
The phenomenon of *brand activism* and increasing environmental awareness poses new challenges for brands. Consumers tend to love brands that align with their moral and social values.
6. Research Methodology
Most studies use a quantitative approach with surveys, resulting in generalist data. However, in-depth qualitative studies that explore consumers' emotional narratives or longitudinal approaches that monitor the long-term development of *brand love* are still rare.

Synthesis and Implications

Overall, the results of this study confirm the importance of *brand love* in building a strong and sustainable consumer-brand relationship. These findings contribute to the development of *consumer–brand relationship* theory by showing how *brand love* plays a key role as a key variable that connects determinants (such as *trust*, *experience*, *image*, *quality*) with strategic outcomes (loyalty, advocacy, *premium willingness*).

From a practical perspective, these findings provide direction for marketers to focus not only on delivering functional value but also on creating authentic and meaningful emotional experiences. In the digital era, marketing strategies must be more adaptable in leveraging online interactions, fostering brand communities, and maintaining a consistent brand narrative.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that creating a deep emotional bond between customers and brands requires brand love. The main basis for the development of brand love has been shown to be elements like brand trust, brand experience, brand image, perceived quality, and emotional attachment. Increased brand loyalty, customer advocacy through positive word-of-mouth, readiness to pay premium prices, and the active engagement of consumers as brand advocates are just a few of the major effects of this emotional connection.

Through the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) approach to 22 selected articles, this study also found that the study of *brand love* is growing rapidly, especially in the context of digital, social media, and online

communities. However, there are still research gaps, especially in the context of Southeast Asia, cultural influences, new generations (Gen Z and Alpha), and sustainability issues.

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