



THE EFFECT OF BRAND EXPERIENCE AND BRAND IMAGE ON THE WILLINGNESS TO PAY A PRICE PREMIUM MEDIATED BY BRAND LOVE ON CUSTOMERS OF A COFFEE SHOP

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Article info		ABSTRACT	
<p>Corresponding Author:</p> <p>Erwin Erwin12@gmail.com Universitas Bina Nusantara Jakarta</p>		<p>This study aims to examine the influence of brand experience and brand image on willingness to pay a price premium, with brand love as a mediating variable among customers of a coffee shop in Medan. A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected through questionnaires distributed to 131 customers. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The results show that brand image has a positive and significant effect on willingness to pay a price premium, while brand experience does not. Both brand experience and brand image have positive and significant effects on brand love. Furthermore, brand love significantly influences willingness to pay a price premium. However, brand love does not mediate the relationship between brand experience and willingness to pay a price premium, nor between brand image and willingness to pay a price premium. These findings offer valuable implications for coffee shop marketing strategies in building strong and emotional brand perceptions to enhance customers' willingness to pay higher prices</p>	
		<p>Keywords: <i>Brand Experience, Brand Image, Brand Love, Willingness to pay a price premium</i></p>	
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INTRODUCTION

The global coffee industry continues to demonstrate strong growth and offers promising opportunities for businesses across all levels. With a growing market, increasing consumer awareness of health and environmental concerns, and the rise of entrepreneurship and product diversification, the coffee business has become one of the most attractive sectors (BCA, 2024). According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), global coffee production reached 170 million 60-kg bags in 2022/2023. Indonesia ranked as the world's third-largest coffee producer after Brazil and Vietnam, contributing 11.85 million bags, including 1.3 million Arabica and 10.5 million Robusta (Indonesia Baik, 2023). Coffee is not only a cultural staple but also an economically significant commodity for exporting countries like Indonesia, serving as a key source of foreign exchange and rural employment (Lantura et al., 2021).

In recent years, Indonesia has witnessed a rapid expansion of the coffee shop business, driven by consumer demand for high-quality beverages and unique in-store experiences. The growing coffee shop trend in 2024 reflects increasing consumer expectations for taste, ambiance, and innovative service. Coffee shops now offer creative drink variants and aesthetic spaces that align with contemporary lifestyle trends (Pratama, 2024; Amoda, 2024).

One such emerging business, XYZ Coffee, has positioned itself as a popular lifestyle brand among urban consumers. It promotes local Indonesian coffee with a "fresh-to-cup" concept while incorporating modern presentation and classic flavor offerings. The brand has gained strong mental positioning and symbolic significance, often associated with prestige, exclusivity, and a high-end lifestyle. However, this symbolic positioning also raises concerns about shifting consumption behavior, as consumers increasingly view premium coffee consumption as a social identity marker.

Consumers with a high-end lifestyle are often willing to pay a price premium (Dewi & Gosai, 2020). The willingness to pay a price premium (WTPPP) refers to the consumer's readiness to pay more for a product beyond its functional value, often driven by prestige, emotional attachment, or perceived uniqueness (Fahira et al., 2022; Li et al., 2019; Grunert et al., 2024).

Two key antecedents influencing WTPPP are brand experience and brand image. Brand experience refers to customers' sensory, emotional, and behavioral responses triggered by brand-related stimuli (Amin & Nika, 2022). A positive brand experience may enhance consumer motivation to pay more for a brand (Hidayar et al., 2022). Meanwhile, brand image, the emotional interpretation of a brand—can create perceived superiority, encouraging consumers to pay premium prices (Joshi & Grag, 2020; Munir et al., 2017).

Brand love—a consumer's emotional attachment and affection toward a brand—has also been shown to directly influence WTPPP. Consumers who feel emotionally connected to a brand are more likely to remain loyal and pay more for it (Sohaib et al., 2023; Magano et al., 2024). Research suggests that brand experience and brand image can act as antecedents to brand love (Safeer & He, 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2023), and that brand love can mediate their influence on WTPPP (Aulianda et al., 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2024).

Based on these theoretical foundations and the dynamic growth of the coffee shop industry, this study aims to investigate the effect of brand experience and brand image on willingness to pay a price premium, mediated by brand love, using customers of XYZ Coffee as the research context.

METHOD

Data in this study were collected using a structured questionnaire. A questionnaire is defined as a set of pre-formulated written questions to which respondents record their answers, typically within a close-ended format (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The measurement items in the questionnaire were adapted from prior validated studies and adjusted to fit the research context. The sampling technique employed in this research is judgment sampling, a non-probability sampling method where the selection of participants is based on specific criteria. In this case, the respondents were customers who had purchased products from XYZ Coffee at least three times. This criterion was chosen to ensure that the respondents had sufficient brand interaction and experience. The minimum sample size was determined based on the guidelines by Hair et al. (Latan, Hair Jr., & Noonan, 2022), which suggest that the

ideal sample size in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) should be at least five times the number of measurement indicators. As this study uses 25 indicators, the minimum required sample size is 125 respondents. The questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to capture the intensity of respondent attitudes and perceptions. Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4, a variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) software. SmartPLS is suitable for exploratory studies and is widely used for assessing complex models with multiple constructs, especially when the data does not meet the assumptions of multivariate normality. The software supports both measurement model evaluation (validity and reliability) and structural model testing (path coefficients, R^2 , and mediating effects).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis testing is used to determine whether there is an influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables.

Table 1. Hypothesis Test

Path	<i>t statistic</i>	<i>P value</i>	Result
Brand Experience → Willingness to pay a price premium	1,678	0,093	Brand experience has no significant effect on willingness to pay a price premium.
Brand image → Willingness to pay a price premium	4,029	0,000	Brand image has a significant effect on willingness to pay a price premium.
Brand experience → Brand love	2,553	0,011	Brand experience has a significant effect on brand love.
Brand image → Brand love	4,056	0,000	Brand image has a significant effect on brand love.
Brand love → Willingness to pay a price premium	2,004	0,045	Brand love has a significant effect on willingness to pay a price premium.
Brand experience → Brand love → Willingness to pay a price premium	1,400	0,162	Brand love does not mediate the relationship between brand experience and willingness to pay a price premium.
Brand image → Brand love → Willingness to pay a price premium	1,788	0,074	Brand love does not mediate the relationship between brand image and willingness to pay a price premium.

Conclusion Based on the Path Analysis Table:

1. **Brand experience on willingness to pay a price premium** has a t-statistic of 1.678 < 1.96 and a p-value of 0.093 > 0.05, therefore **brand experience has no significant effect** on willingness to pay a price premium.

2. **Brand image on willingness to pay a price premium** has a t-statistic of $4.029 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, therefore **brand image has a significant effect** on willingness to pay a price premium.
3. **Brand experience on brand love** has a t-statistic of $2.553 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.011 < 0.05$, therefore **brand experience has a significant effect** on brand love.
4. **Brand image on brand love** has a t-statistic of $4.056 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, therefore **brand image has a significant effect** on brand love.
5. **Brand love on willingness to pay a price premium** has a t-statistic of $2.004 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.045 < 0.05$, therefore **brand love has a significant effect** on willingness to pay a price premium.
6. **Brand experience on willingness to pay a price premium through brand love as a mediator** has a t-statistic of $1.400 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.162 > 0.05$, therefore **brand love does not significantly mediate** the relationship between brand experience and willingness to pay a price premium.
7. **Brand image on willingness to pay a price premium through brand love as a mediator** has a t-statistic of $1.788 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.074 > 0.05$, therefore **brand love does not significantly mediate** the relationship between brand image and willingness to pay a price premium.

Research Implications

The relationship between brand experience and willingness to pay a price premium shows a t-statistic of $1.678 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.093 > 0.05$, indicating **no significant effect**. This finding aligns with Nida & Sukresna (2023), who found that brand experience does not significantly affect the willingness to pay a premium price. In this context, the brand experience perceived by consumers does not motivate them to purchase products at premium prices.

In contrast, brand image shows a t-statistic of $4.029 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a **significant effect** on willingness to pay a price premium. Brand image is defined as the perception of a brand as reflected by brand associations stored in consumers' memory. A strong brand helps communicate customer values and preferences, ultimately serving as a strategic identity management tool for achieving recognition and status (Lin, Lin, & Wang, 2020). This finding supports the results of Hibban & Wahyudi (2022), who emphasized that a positive brand image increases consumers' willingness to pay premium prices.

Brand experience also has a significant effect on brand love, with a t-statistic of $2.553 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.011 < 0.05$. Brakus et al. (2009) conceptualized brand experience as consumers' internal and subjective responses to brand-related stimuli such as design, identity, packaging, communication, and environment (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). This result is consistent with Kazmi & Khalique (2019), who found that pleasant brand experiences generate emotional responses that increase brand affection. Therefore, positive brand experiences enhance consumers' emotional attachment to the brand.

Brand image also significantly influences brand love, as shown by a t-statistic of $4.056 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. Brand images are shaped by brand associations in the consumer's memory and serve as a critical marketing tool to differentiate one business from another (Dam, 2020). This is consistent with the findings of Rahmawati, Astuti, & Kusmantini (2023), who stated that a positive brand image has a strong relationship with

brand love. When a brand image is perceived positively, consumers' emotional attachment and love toward the product increase. Conversely, a negative brand image weakens this attachment. Dam (2020) further affirms that brand image is an antecedent to brand love and has a positive impact on it.

Brand love also shows a significant effect on willingness to pay a price premium, with a t-statistic of $2.004 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.045 < 0.05$. Brand love is conceptualized as a relational construct representing emotional attachment between a satisfied customer and a specific brand (Rodrigues & Brandao, 2021). This is in line with Santos & Schlesinger (2020), who argued that brand love enhances consumers' willingness to pay premium prices. This is driven not only by emotional attachment but also by the functional values associated with the brand, which reinforces purchasing intentions.

However, the mediating role of brand love between brand experience and willingness to pay a price premium is not supported, with a t-statistic of $1.400 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.162 > 0.05$. This finding is consistent with Kurniawan, Cuandra, & Putra (2024), who argue that brand love does not mediate the relationship between brand experience and willingness to pay a price premium. This may be due to the nature of brand experience being based on first impressions. To achieve consumer loyalty, repeated purchasing and long-term engagement are required, which brand experience alone cannot ensure.

Similarly, the mediating effect of brand love between brand image and willingness to pay a price premium is not supported, as indicated by a t-statistic of $1.788 < 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.074 > 0.05$. This finding also aligns with Kurniawan, Cuandra, & Putra (2024), who suggest that even consumers who love a brand may continue purchasing it at premium prices regardless of their perception of the brand image. In this case, brand love operates independently and does not function as a mediator in the relationship between brand image and willingness to pay a price premium.

Managerial Implications

1. Brand Experience.

Based on respondent answers, the highest mean score was found in item BE6 ($M = 4.634$): "I have had a positive experience when visiting XYZ Coffee." This suggests that most respondents agree they have had a positive experience at XYZ Coffee. The lowest mean score was in item BE2 ($M = 4.527$): "XYZ Coffee's products have a pleasant aroma." This indicates that many respondents do not perceive the aroma of the products as appealing. Therefore, it is recommended that XYZ Coffee improve product quality by innovating with ingredients and brewing techniques to enhance aroma and flavor. This recommendation aligns with Tawakkada & Utami (2023), who emphasized the importance of maintaining product quality and developing flavorful products to meet consumer expectations.

2. Brand Image

The highest mean score among respondents was for item BI3 ($M = 4.771$): "XYZ Coffee provides high-quality products," indicating strong agreement among customers regarding product quality. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score was in item BI2 ($M = 4.557$): "I visit XYZ Coffee because it offers a wide selection of menu items." This implies that menu variety is not a strong attribute in the minds of customers. Therefore, it is advisable for XYZ Coffee to enhance its brand image by offering more attractive and diverse menu items, while ensuring consistent product quality. This is in line with Pandean & Budiono

(2021), who suggested that expanding menu options and maintaining quality consistency can reinforce a positive brand impression.

3. **Brand Love**

Respondents gave the highest score to item BL5 ($M = 4.756$): “XYZ Coffee has an excellent reputation,” indicating strong customer agreement. The lowest score was in item BL2 ($M = 4.687$): “I always follow the developments of XYZ Coffee.” This suggests that many customers do not actively keep up with the brand’s updates. As such, XYZ Coffee is advised to innovate continuously and leverage modern technology to provide up-to-date information. Following Frenredy & Dharmawan (2020), brands that regularly introduce innovations and adapt to current trends are more likely to maintain customer interest and emotional attachment.

4. **Willingness to Pay a Price Premium (WTPPP)**

The highest-rated item for WTPPP was WTPPP1 ($M = 4.718$): “The menu quality at XYZ Coffee is consistent,” suggesting that respondents recognize and value consistency in product quality. However, the lowest score was in WTPPP4 ($M = 4.580$): “I prefer visiting XYZ Coffee over other coffee shops.” This indicates that brand loyalty in terms of preference is still relatively weak. It is recommended that XYZ Coffee enhances its customer retention strategy by leveraging social media to provide promotional content, discounts, or merchandise as incentives for loyalty. This aligns with Leviana (2019), who proposed that companies should utilize social media to share informative and promotional content, thus encouraging repeat visits and stronger brand preference over competitors.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of brand experience and brand image on willingness to pay a price premium, with brand love as a mediating variable, in the context of XYZ Coffee consumers. The findings revealed several important insights:

1. **Brand images** play a significant role in shaping consumers’ willingness to pay a price premium. A strong and positive brand image motivates consumers to perceive the brand as valuable and worth paying more for.
2. **Brand experience**, although positively associated with brand love, does not directly influence consumers’ willingness to pay a price premium. This suggests that a pleasant experience alone may not be sufficient to justify higher prices unless it is strongly tied to emotional connection and perceived value.
3. Both **brand experience** and **brand image** significantly influence **brand love**, reinforcing the idea that emotional bonds with a brand are shaped by both tangible experiences and perceived brand meaning.
4. **Brand love** has a significant effect on consumers’ willingness to pay a price premium, highlighting the critical role of emotional attachment in driving purchasing behavior beyond rational considerations.
5. However, **brand love does not significantly mediate** the relationship between brand experience or brand image and willingness to pay a price premium, implying that the direct effects of brand image are more influential, while the path through brand love may not be strong enough to serve as a full mediator.

Overall, these findings suggest that while emotional branding strategies (such as enhancing brand love) are important, the perceived quality and strategic image of the brand remain dominant factors in influencing premium pricing decisions.

1. **Enhance sensory-based brand experience.** Although brand experience does not directly influence the willingness to pay a price premium, it significantly influences brand love. Therefore, XYZ Coffee should improve aspects of sensory and emotional experience—particularly enhancing product aroma and in-store ambiance—to strengthen emotional attachment to the brand.
2. **Strengthen and communicate brand image consistently.** Since brand image directly influences willingness to pay a price premium, XYZ Coffee must focus on reinforcing its image as a high-quality, innovative, and socially relevant brand. Brand storytelling and consistent visual identity can enhance consumer perception and brand equity.
3. **Cultivate deeper emotional connections (brand love).** Even though brand love did not act as a mediator, its direct influence on willingness to pay a premium is significant. The brand can cultivate love through personalized interactions, customer appreciation campaigns, or loyalty programs that foster a sense of exclusivity and belonging.
4. **Monitor gaps between perception and experience.** The study revealed disparities between certain brand experience and image indicators (e.g., product aroma, menu variety, or customer engagement). XYZ Coffee should conduct regular consumer feedback assessments to identify and bridge these gaps.

Some recommendations that could be applied forward:

1. **Product Development:** Focus on improving sensory aspects, such as enhancing the aroma and flavor profile of products, to create memorable brand experiences that emotionally resonate with customers.
2. **Menu Innovation and Expansion:** Develop new and diverse menu offerings that reflect customer preferences while maintaining consistent product quality to support a strong brand image.
3. **Digital Engagement and Innovation:** Invest in technology and trend-aligned innovations to maintain brand relevance and keep consumers engaged through timely updates, product launches, or interactive digital campaigns.
4. **Loyalty and Promotion Strategies:** Utilize social media platforms to deliver targeted promotions, limited time offers, or branded merchandise as tools to reinforce loyalty and increase the likelihood of premium purchases.
5. **Strategic Communication:** Craft marketing messages that highlight brand values, quality, and emotional appeal. Use narrative branding to convey stories that strengthen brand meaning and justify premium pricing in the minds of consumers.

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