

Effect of brand experiences on brand loyalty mediated by brand love: the moderated mediation role of brand trust

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this study is to examine how brand trust moderates the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty mediated by brand love in the context of Korean smartphone users. The authors examine the relationships focused on Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy phone.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors designed the conceptual model based on theoretical and empirical background. The authors collected data using a self-administered structured questionnaire through an online research company. The authors tested the hypotheses using a structural equation modeling in AMOS and PROCESS macro model number 8 based on 598 Korean smartphone users.

Findings – The authors found that brand experiences affect brand love, and brand love affects brand loyalty. The authors found that brand experiences affect brand loyalty directly, and brand love mediated the relationship between brand experiences and brand loyalty. The authors found that brand trust had a moderating effect between brand experiences and brand love but had no moderating effect between brand experiences and brand loyalty. Finally, the authors found that brand trust has a moderated mediation role between brand experiences, brand love and brand loyalty.

Originality/value – This is the first study to examine the moderated mediation role of brand trust in the relationship between brand experiences, brand love and brand loyalty focused on Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy phone users in the Korean context.

Keywords Brand experience, Brand love, Brand loyalty, Brand trust, Moderated mediation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

According to recent data, the average person spends 3 h and 15 min on their phone each day (Exploding Topics, 2022). Consumers experience many things while using their smartphone brands. Through this brand experience, consumers have feelings of love for a specific brand and have loyalty to that brand (Albert and Merunka, 2013; Bagozzi *et al.*, 2017; Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Coleman, 2018; Huang, 2017; Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021; Pan *et al.*, 2012). In the smartphone industry, brand love and loyalty can be influenced by a variety of factors, including the hardware and design of the phone, the software and features it offers, and the level of customer support provided by the brand. Brands that consistently deliver high-quality products and offer excellent customer service are more likely to foster brand love and loyalty among their customers. In the context of smartphone brands, the brand experience and brand love that a customer has can be influenced by a variety of factors (Christino *et al.*, 2020). For example, a customer may have a positive brand experience with a smartphone brand if they find the brand's phones to be reliable, easy to use and aesthetically pleasing. On the other hand, if a customer has had negative experiences with a brand's phones (e.g. frequent malfunctions, poor customer service), they may have a negative brand



experience and be less likely to have brand love for the brand. Among the smartphone brands, iPhone and Galaxy are the top two brands in the global market (Counterpoint, 2022). As competition in the smartphone market intensifies, Apple and Samsung are attempting to increase their brand loyalty. To increase brand loyalty, it is necessary to provide customers with a favorable experience related to the brand they use. In that context, Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy are striving to create memorable customer experiences. An example of a customer experience associated with a smartphone brand is a sensory experience (e.g. the color of my smartphone is attractive). It is critical to understand which brand experience factors are the determinants of brand loyalty. Marketing scholars have recognized that consumers wish to buy brands that provide memorable experiences (Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Coleman, 2018). It is necessary to understand which factors affect brand love and brand loyalty among the factors that consumers experience while using smartphones. In this context, the brand experience construct has received much attention from marketing scholars (Andreini *et al.*, 2018; Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Ding and Tseng, 2015; Huang, 2017; Sahin *et al.*, 2011).

Attaining a high level of customer loyalty is critical to achieving firm performance (Griffin, 2002). Brand loyalty affects a company's performance in terms of market share and profits (Griffin, 2002; Watson *et al.*, 2015). Marketing scholars have proposed and tested various constructs, including brand attachment (Mostafa and Kasamani, 2021; Park *et al.*, 2010; Thomson *et al.*, 2005), brand commitment (Burmam and Zeplin, 2005; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), brand experience (Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Iglesias *et al.*, 2011), brand love (Albert and Merunka, 2013; Albert *et al.*, 2009; Batra *et al.*, 2012) and brand trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2001), which can affect brand loyalty. All these constructs would be categorized as a consumer-brand relationship (Fournier, 1998). According to consumer-brand relationship theory, the stronger the consumer-brand relationship, the greater the brand loyalty. Among these constructs, this study focuses on the relationships between brand experience, brand trust and brand love, with the potential to affect brand loyalty in two best-selling smartphone brands (i.e. iPhone and Galaxy) in Korea. Also, we seek to examine whether the relationship between brand experience, brand trust, brand love and brand loyalty differs between these two brands.

Brand trust is an essential predictor of customer loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Pan *et al.*, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Prior research on brand trust has mainly focused on the direct or indirect effect of brand loyalty (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2001; Wang, 2002). The role of brand trust in developing brand loyalty has been debated. Some scholars have maintained that brand trust directly affects brand loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Pan *et al.*, 2012). In contrast, others have asserted that mediating variables are required to develop brand loyalty (Matzler *et al.*, 2008; Yasin and Shamim, 2013). Research on the moderating role of brand trust in the relationships between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty is scarce in the brand management literature (cf., Kim and Jones, 2009). Kim and Jones (2009) investigated the moderating role of brand trust by focusing on online shopping. In that respect, there is a research gap between the prior study and this study. Therefore, it is necessary to fill the research gap. We guess this is because most researchers viewed brand trust as a direct factor for brand love and brand loyalty. However, we expect that brand trust plays a moderating role in the relationship between them. We predict that the greater the brand trust, the greater the relationships between brand experience and brand love. Investigating this relationship is meaningful because it clarifies the relationship between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty. Brand trust leads to brand loyalty because trust creates exchange relationships that are highly valued (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). If customers have more trust in the brand, their brand loyalty will increase. We propose that brand trust plays a moderating role in the relationship between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty. We expect that the higher the brand trust, the

stronger the relationship between them. One of the purposes of this study is to examine how brand trust moderates the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty mediated by brand love in the context of Korean smartphone users.

This study contributes to the extant brand management literature by addressing the following research issues. First, we seek to examine the brand experience and brand love in terms of multidimensional constructs. We conceptualize the brand experience as composed of four dimensions (i.e. sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral). We conceptualize brand love as composed of two dimensions (i.e. intimacy and passion). Multidimensional constructs are theoretically more fruitful than individual dimensions (Edwards, 2001; Law and Wong, 1999). Two views have been proposed regarding multidimensional constructs: *factor view* and *composite views* (Edwards, 2001; Law and Wong, 1999; Law *et al.*, 1998). A factor view is similar with the *superordinate construct* proposed by Edwards (2001). This study conceptualizes brand experience and brand love as a factor view because the relationship between these constructs and their dimensions revealed different manifestations of multidimensional constructs. A few studies related to brand experience and brand love have been conducted from a multidimensional perspective (Santos and Schlesinger, 2021; Singh *et al.*, 2021). Singh *et al.* (2021) studied brand experience from a multidimensional construct. Santos and Schlesinger (2021) studied brand experience and brand love as multidimensional constructs.

Second, prior research on the role of brand trust in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty mainly focused on brand trust as an independent variable or mediator of brand loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2001). However, this study seeks to examine how brand trust moderates the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty, mediated by brand love. By examining the moderating role of brand trust in the relationship between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty, we confirm that brand trust can be a moderator of brand loyalty. Finally, there is limited research on the antecedents and consequences of brand love. By addressing the role of brand love as a mediator in a conceptual framework, this study aims to highlight the importance of brand love in developing brand loyalty. In the remainder of the paper, we review key concepts from the brand management literature to build our conceptual framework of the brand experience on brand loyalty. Next, we present the research methodology and data analysis. Finally, the study concludes by discussing the theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and areas for future research.

Literature review and hypotheses development

The effect of brand experience on brand love

Brakus *et al.* (2009, p. 53) conceptualized brand experience as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments.” In addition, Brakus *et al.* (2009) classified the brand experience into four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. The sensory brand experience is the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile stimulation provided by the brand (Andreini *et al.*, 2018). Affective brand experiences are feelings and sentiments induced by the brand. Intellectual brand experience refers to the brand’s ability to make customers think (Bapat and Thanigan, 2016). Behavioral brand experience includes bodily experiences, lifestyles and brand interactions (Bapat and Thanigan, 2016; Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006, p. 81) defined brand love as “the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name.” Batra *et al.* (2012) conceptualized brand love as a higher-order construct composed of three first-order factors: self-brand integration, passion-driven behaviors and positive emotional connection. Albert *et al.* (2009) conceptualized brand love as a second-order construct composed of two

first-order factors: affection and passion. We conceptualize brand love as a higher-order construct composed of two first-order factors: intimacy and passion. This conceptualization is consistent with Sarkar *et al.* (2012). Sarkar *et al.* (2012) conceptualized brand love as intimacy and passion. The intimacy dimension refers to the extent to which consumers attach degrees to the brand. The passion dimension refers to the extent to which consumers' sense of "rightness" about the relationship includes a strong desire for the brand (Batra *et al.*, 2012). As consumer experience products or services, they develop favorable or unfavorable emotions toward the brand. Customers who are satisfied with the brand experience will increase their love for the brand (Albert *et al.*, 2009; Batra *et al.*, 2012; Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Joshi and Garg, 2021; Iglesias *et al.*, 2011; Roy *et al.*, 2013). Positive brand experiences encourage consumers to attach to a brand and develop positive love toward that brand (Safeer *et al.*, 2021; Singh *et al.*, 2021). Based on these arguments, we expect that experience stimulated by a brand affects brand love. Thus, we propose H1 as follows:

H1. Brand experience has a positive effect on brand love.

The effect of brand experience on brand loyalty

We define brand loyalty as a consumer's preference for a specific brand and the repurchase of the same brand, despite the circumstances and marketing efforts to induce conversion behavior (Aaker, 1996; Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty consists of behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Odin *et al.*, 2001; Oliver, 1999; Watson *et al.*, 2015). Behavioral loyalty captures consumers who repeatedly purchase the same brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Attitudinal loyalty includes consumers' psychological commitment to the brand (Odin *et al.*, 2001). Among these two components, this study focuses on behavioral loyalty.

Since positive brand experiences lead to pleasurable outcomes, we expect consumers to repeat these positive experiences. In other words, positive brand experiences affect consumer brand loyalty. Consumers with favorable brand experiences are more likely to repurchase a brand, recommend it to others and be less likely to buy an alternative brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Oliver, 1999). Francisco-Maffezzoli *et al.* (2014) found no direct relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty for perfume and bath soap brands. Iglesias *et al.* (2011) studied the relationship between brand experience, brand loyalty and affective commitment for car, laptop and sneaker brands. They found that brand experience did not affect brand loyalty directly. They revealed that affective commitment mediates the role between brand experience and brand loyalty. Ong *et al.* (2018) showed that brand experience affects brand loyalty in the context of Malaysian restaurant brands. As described above, prior research on the direct relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty shows conflicting results. If brands deliver an excellent experience to consumers, brand loyalty can be built (Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Iglesias *et al.*, 2011; Ong *et al.*, 2018). We predict a positive relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. Based on this theoretical and empirical background, we hypothesize H2 as follows:

H2. Brand experience has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

The effect of brand love on brand loyalty

Consumers prefer to purchase brands that they love. Loyalty to the brand is determined by the degree of emotional commitment of a consumer to a specific brand (Bagozzi *et al.*, 2017; Park *et al.*, 2010). Subsequently, brand love stimulates brand loyalty (Kazmi and Khalique, 2019). Kazmi and Khalique (2019) found that brand love is positively related to brand loyalty based on empirical results from Pakistani cosmetics brands. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) found that brand love is positively related to brand loyalty. Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) showed that brand love affects brand loyalty through two survey-based studies that focused

on the iPod and Panadol brands. Based on this theoretical and empirical background, we hypothesize H3 as follows:

H3. Brand love has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

The mediating role of brand love

As discussed previously, brand experience leads to brand love, which, in turn, leads to brand loyalty. Thus, we propose the mediating role of brand love in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty (Roy *et al.*, 2013; Trivedi and Sama, 2021; Yim *et al.*, 2008). Huang (2017) studied the mediating role of brand love in the relationship between brand experience and loyalty. He classified brand experience into sensory, intellectual, and behavioral experiences and brand loyalty into behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. He tested the mediation effect of brand love and found that it has a full mediation role in the behavioral experience, behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Kazmi and Khalique (2019) found a mediating effect in the link between brand experience and brand loyalty through brand love for Pakistani cosmetic brands. Roy *et al.* (2013) proposed a theoretical framework for the antecedents and consequences of brand love. They suggested that brand love has a mediating role in the link between brand experience and loyalty, although they did not test the relationship. Francisco-Maffezzoli *et al.* (2014) examined the mediating effect of brand relationship quality on the relationship between brand experience and loyalty, focusing on perfume and bath soap consumers. They found that brand experience had no direct effect on loyalty, however, when mediated by love/passion, the effect was significant. Santos and Schlesinger (2021) found that brand love mediates the relationship between brand experience and loyalty. Based on this theoretical and empirical background, H4 is proposed as follows:

H4. Brand love mediates the positive relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.

The moderating role of brand trust

Brand trust is critical in determining consumer–brand relationships. If consumers have more trust in a brand, the perceived risks associated with purchasing the brand will decrease (Wang, 2002). If consumers perceive the brand to be more reliable, the perceived risk associated with purchasing the brand will decrease. Brand trust is defined as “the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function” (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). This study examines the moderating role of brand trust in the relationship between brand experience and brand love. This study also investigates the moderating role of brand trust in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. Brand trust is gradually built on consumers’ experiences with the brand. Most studies on the relationship between brand trust and brand love have focused on brand trust as a direct effect of brand love (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Joshi and Garg, 2021; Pande and Gupta, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Urban *et al.* (2000) argue that trust not only builds consumer-brand relationships, but it also stimulates brand loyalty. This study assumes that brand trust plays a moderating role in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. This is because the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty varies depending on the level of brand trust. We expect that the greater the brand trust, the stronger the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. Therefore, we propose H5 as follows:

H5. Brand trust moderates the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty, such that this effect is stronger for higher levels of brand trust.

Garg *et al.* (2016) provide insights into the moderating role of brand trust in the relationship of brand experience to brand love. Customers develop emotional and cognitive feelings toward

the brand based on their brand experience. Consumers' trust in a brand depends on brand attributes such as brand reliability and confidence. Consumers trust those brands which have provided a pleasant experience in the past. Thus, consumers may develop a sustainable relationship with the brand. Brand trust reflects the credibility of the branded product and motivates consumers to make regular purchases (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Therefore, consumers develop an affinity with branded products that offer a pleasant and memorable experience (Bairrada *et al.*, 2018; Park *et al.*, 2010). Based on this theoretical and empirical background, we propose H6 as follows:

H6. Brand trust moderates the effect of brand experience on brand love, such that this effect is stronger for higher levels of brand trust.

The moderated mediation role of brand trust

Assuming brand trust moderates the association between brand experience and brand love, it is also likely that brand trust will conditionally influence the strength of the indirect relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty – thereby demonstrating a pattern of moderated mediation between the study variables, as depicted in Figure 1. We predict a weak (strong) relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty when brand trust is low (high). As a result, we propose H7 as follows:

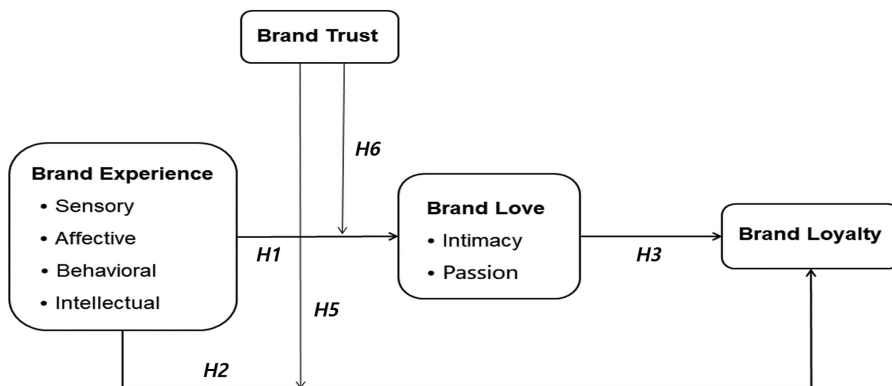
H7. The mediating effect of brand experience on brand loyalty through brand love is moderated by brand trust, such that this effect is stronger for higher levels of brand trust.

We develop a conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1, based on the previously mentioned empirical and theoretical background.

Research methodology

Data collection and sample

To test the hypotheses proposed in the conceptual model, we collected data using a structured questionnaire through a convenience sampling technique in May 2021. This study focused on smartphone brand users in the Korean context. Since the smartphone is a product we use every day, it was judged that it is most suitable for research on brand experience, so the



Note(s): H4: Mediation Effect of Brand Love (Brand Experience → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty) H7: Moderated Mediation (H4 is moderated by Brand Trust)

Figure 1.
Conceptual framework

smartphone was selected as a research object. We asked them to respond only to those who use Samsung Galaxy Phones and Apple iPhones. As of 2021, Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy smartphones are among the top two brands in Korea. Approximately 63% of consumers use Samsung Galaxy phones, and about 20% use Apple iPhones (Gallup Korea, 2021). We collected data through a self-administered survey conducted by an online research company. The online research company reached 616 respondents. Among the respondents who answered the questionnaires, 18 cases were removed because of outlier testing. Finally, 598 respondents were included in the data analysis. Of the sample, 49.7% were iPhone users ($n = 297$), and 50.3% were Galaxy users ($n = 301$). The mean age of the sample was 37 years, and 48.7% were women ($n = 291$). Occupation of the sample covered 26% students ($n = 154$), 21% employees ($n = 124$) and 16% self-employment ($n = 94$). The residential area of the sample was distributed throughout the country.

Measures

Except for the demographic variables, all constructs were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The existing scales were adapted for each construct. The measurement items are shown in Appendix 1. Brand experience was measured using Brakus *et al.*'s (2009) scale, which is composed of four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. The sensory experience was measured using four items (e.g. "The color of my smartphone brand is cool"). The affective experience was measured using four items (e.g. "I feel happy when using my smartphone brand"). The behavioral experience was measured using three items (e.g. "My smartphone brand is suitable for my lifestyle"). The intellectual experience was measured using four items (e.g. "My smartphone brand stimulates my intellectual curiosity"). The scale developed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) was used to measure brand trust with four items (e.g. "I trust this brand"). Brand love was measured using the scales of Batra *et al.* (2012), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), and Sarkar *et al.* (2012) which comprises two dimensions: intimacy and passion. The intimacy dimension was measured using four items (e.g. "I feel affection for my smartphone brand"). The passion dimension was measured using four items (e.g. "I am obsessed with my smartphone brand"). Brand loyalty was measured using Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) scale, which is composed of four items (e.g. "I will continue to purchase my smartphone brand").

Data analysis and results

Measurement model analysis. We employed structural equation modeling implemented in Amos to assess the psychometric properties of the constructs. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to assess the discriminant and convergent validity of all eight constructs (brand experience indicated by four dimensions [i.e. sensory brand experience, affective brand experience, behavioral brand experience and intellectual brand experience], brand trust, brand love indicated by two dimensions [i.e. intimacy and passion] and behavioral brand loyalty). The measurement model showed an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 3.287$, CFI = 0.934, TLI = 0.924, RMSEA = 0.074, SRMR = 0.04). The factors had an average variance extracted (AVE) above 0.50, and construct reliability (CR) above 0.70, demonstrating convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The factor loadings in the CFA, Cronbach's alpha, AVE and CR for each construct are presented in Table 1, and the correlation coefficients of paired constructs are presented in Table 2. We employed the HTMT approach to further assess the discriminant validity using SmartPLS 3.3 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015; Voorhees *et al.*, 2016). The HTMT ratios are presented in Table 2. The results met the HTMT_[.85] criteria, except between affective and behavioral experience, providing support for discriminant validity.

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Sensory experience	Sens1	5.36	1.13	0.817	0.907	0.909	0.716
	Sens2	5.54	1.10	0.927			
	Sens3	5.53	1.07	0.861			
	Sens4	5.47	1.09	0.771			
Affective experience	Affe1	5.31	1.08	0.851	0.906	0.910	0.716
	Affe2	5.11	1.12	0.862			
	Affe3	4.63	1.28	0.789			
	Affe4	5.09	1.16	0.880			
Behavioral experience	Beha1	5.19	1.17	0.849	0.882	0.884	0.717
	Beha2	4.93	1.20	0.840			
	Beha3	5.34	1.07	0.848			
Intellectual experience	Inte1	4.84	1.28	0.856	0.891	0.894	0.679
	Inte2	4.57	1.32	0.852			
	Inte3	4.96	1.35	0.814			
	Inte4	4.66	1.45	0.772			
Intimacy	Inti1	4.50	1.29	0.863	0.945	0.943	0.805
	Inti2	4.43	1.28	0.869			
	Inti3	4.89	1.23	0.937			
	Inti4	4.95	1.19	0.918			
Passion	Pass1	4.60	1.40	0.856	0.941	0.943	0.804
	Pass2	4.92	1.31	0.912			
	Pass3	5.04	1.33	0.938			
	Pass4	5.10	1.34	0.879			
Brand trust	Trus1	5.14	1.29	0.920	0.924	0.938	0.792
	Trus2	5.39	1.31	0.932			
	Trus3	4.70	1.55	0.841			
	Trus4	4.86	1.56	0.863			
Brand loyalty	Loya1	5.33	1.20	0.915	0.958	0.960	0.856
	Loya2	5.14	1.29	0.935			
	Loya3	5.05	1.30	0.928			
	Loya4	5.30	1.24	0.913			

Note(s): CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted

Table 1.
Measurement model

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Sensory	<i>0.846</i>	0.730	0.702	0.561	0.534	0.656	0.607	0.781
2. Affective	0.719	<i>0.846</i>	0.875	0.781	0.777	0.845	0.749	0.744
3. Behavioral	0.688	0.868	<i>0.847</i>	0.757	0.729	0.793	0.756	0.784
4. Intellectual	0.528	0.749	0.749	<i>0.824</i>	0.791	0.815	0.704	0.698
5. Intimacy	0.506	0.760	0.746	0.765	<i>0.897</i>	0.840	0.764	0.703
6. Passion	0.627	0.825	0.786	0.768	0.859	<i>0.897</i>	0.794	0.764
7. Brand trust	0.580	0.740	0.752	0.671	0.760	0.780	<i>0.890</i>	0.793
8. Brand loyalty	0.572	0.737	0.782	0.672	0.720	0.772	0.775	<i>0.925</i>

Note(s): The italicized diagonal value is the square root of AVE. Below the diagonal elements are the correlation values between the constructs. Above the diagonal elements are the HTMT values

Table 2.
Fornell-Larcker
criterion and HTMT

Common method variance check. As we collected self-reported measures from the respondents, common method variance (CMV) may be a concern. To check for a potential common method bias, we applied two statistical approaches. First, our CFA showed that the

eight-factor model fit significantly better than the one-factor model, indicating no significant CMV (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Single-factor model of all constructs yielded a $\chi^2 = 6236.7$, $df = 434$ compared with $\chi^2 = 1740.5$, $df = 406$ for the eight-factor measurement model. Since the one-factor model was significantly worse than the measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4496.2$, $\Delta df = 28$, $p < 0.001$), CMV is not a serious threat to this study. Second, CMV is modeled by specifying factor loadings from the ULMC (unmeasured latent method construct) which has no unique indicators of its own for all substantive items suspected of CMV contamination (Richardson *et al.*, 2009). The inclusion of ULMC resulted in a model with a slightly improved fit to the data ($\Delta\chi^2(32) = 534.917$, $p < 0.001$, $\Delta RMSEA = 0.013$, $\Delta CFI = 0.025$ and $\Delta TLI = 0.025$). Although the overall chi-square statistics are significant, other fit indices yielded a slight improvement, suggesting that the method effects are insignificant (Richardson *et al.*, 2009). The results of both statistical analyses revealed that common method bias was not a substantial concern.

Hypothesis testing

It is important to clarify the nature of the relationships between multidimensional constructs and their dimensions (Edwards, 2001, p. 145). Two types of higher-order constructs are common (Edwards, 2001; Law *et al.*, 1998; Law and Wong, 1999). If the relationship flows from the construct to its dimensions, it is termed a *superordinate construct*. For the *aggregate construct*, causality flows from lower-level constructs to higher-order factors. We conceptualize brand experience and brand love as *superordinate constructs* because these two constructs cause their dimensions. Prior research on brand experience and brand love conceptualized them as unidimensional rather than multidimensional (Safeer *et al.*, 2021). Although this approach benefits from testing each unidimensional effect, it is limited in its ability to analyze higher-order factors. Therefore, to overcome this limitation, this research seeks to analyze the brand experience and brand love as high-order constructs (e.g. Singh *et al.*, 2021). We test hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4 as second-order factor models based on the superordinate view.

To test hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4, we performed structural equation modeling using Amos. The results show that all the direct effects of brand experience and brand love on brand loyalty are statistically significant (see Table 3). The brand experience was positively associated with brand love ($b = 1.501$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1 was supported. Brand love was positively associated with brand loyalty ($b = 0.382$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H2 was supported. The brand experience was positively associated with brand loyalty ($b = 0.868$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H3 was supported. To examine the indirect effect of brand experience on brand loyalty through brand love, we used the bootstrapping method (2,000 re-samples, non-parametric bootstrap) in Amos. The indirect effect of brand experience on brand loyalty via brand love was significant ($b = 0.574$, $p < 0.01$, 95% CI [0.162, 1.094]). Therefore, H4 was supported.

To test H5, H6 and H7, we performed moderated mediation analysis using the regression bootstrapping method with 5,000 samples and a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI)

Path: hypothesis	b	β	SE
Brand experience → Brand love: H1	1.501***	0.929	0.100
Brand love → Brand loyalty: H2	0.382***	0.349	0.122
Brand experience → Brand loyalty: H3	0.868***	0.490	0.202
Brand experience → Brand love → Brand loyalty: H4	0.574**	95% CI [0.162, 1.094]	

Note(s): b = Unstandardized estimate, β = Standardized estimate, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3.
Results of direct effect (H1, H2, H3) and indirect effect (H4)

in PROCESS 4.0 (Model 8) developed by Hayes (2018). To test H5, H6 and H7, we summed the scores of the relevant items and mean-centered to form overall indices of all constructs (Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh, 2016). We present the conditional process analysis results in Table 4.

Moderating effect of brand trust on the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty is not statistically significant ($b = 0.001$, $SE = 0.002$, $t = 0.582$, $p = 0.561$). Therefore, H5 was not supported. More specifically, the conditional direct effect at the low level of brand trust (M-1SD) ($b = 0.127$, $SE = 0.019$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.090, 0.164]), at the medium level of brand trust (M) ($b = 0.132$, $SE = 0.017$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.099, 0.165]) and at the high level of brand trust (M+1SD) ($b = 0.137$, $SE = 0.019$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.100, 0.173]). Moderating effect of brand trust on the relationship between brand experience and brand love is statistically significant ($b = 0.009$, $SE = 0.003$, $t = 2.736$, $p = 0.006$). Therefore, H6 was supported. We present this moderating effect graphically in Figure 2.

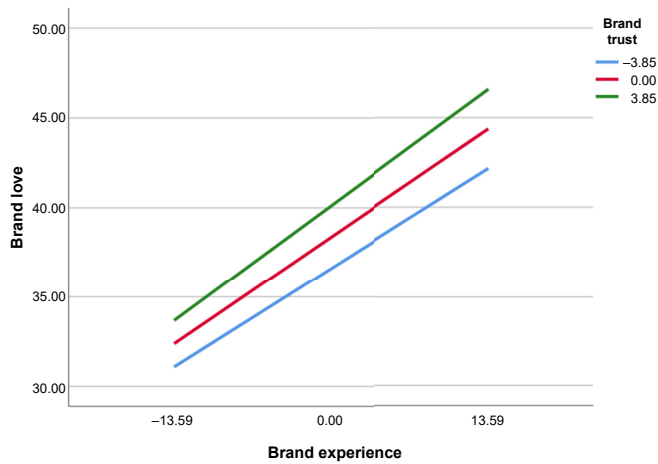
The index of moderated mediation was significant (index = 0.002, $SE = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.0001, 0.003]), therefore, H7 was supported. The index of moderated mediation quantifies the effect that a moderator has on a mediated relationship (Hayes, 2015, 2018). This result indicates that brand trust moderates the mediating effect of brand love on the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty (see Table 4). More specifically, the conditional indirect effect at the low level of brand trust (M-1SD) was significant ($b = 0.071$, $SE = 0.031$, 95% CI [0.046, 0.097]), at the medium level of brand trust (M) was significant ($b = 0.077$, $SE = 0.014$, 95% CI [0.049, 0.105]) and at the high level of brand trust (M+1SD) was significant ($b = 0.083$, $SE = 0.016$, 95% CI [0.053, 0.114]). This result indicates that the greater the brand trust, the greater the mediating effect (Hayes, 2015, 2018).

Additional analysis. We performed two additional analyses to examine the relationship between brand experience and brand love. First, we analyzed the effect of brand experience on brand love from a unidimensional perspective. Batra et al. (2012) maintained that it would

	b	SE	t	p
<i>Mediator (brand love)</i>				
Brand experience	0.441	0.017	25.593	<0.001
Brand trust	0.456	0.060	7.548	<0.001
Brand experience × brand trust: H6	0.009	0.003	2.736	0.006
<i>Dependent variable (brand loyalty)</i>				
Brand experience	0.132	0.017	7.886	<0.001
Brand trust	0.220	0.042	5.216	<0.001
Brand love	0.174	0.027	6.341	<0.001
Brand experience × brand trust: H5	0.001	0.002	0.582	0.561
	b	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
<i>Conditional direct effect</i>				
M-1SD (-3.848)	0.127	0.019	0.090	0.164
M (0.000)	0.132	0.017	0.099	0.165
M+1SD (3.848)	0.137	0.019	0.100	0.173
<i>Conditional indirect effect</i>				
M-1SD (-3.848)	0.071	0.013	0.046	0.097
M (0.000)	0.077	0.014	0.049	0.105
M+1SD (3.848)	0.083	0.016	0.053	0.114
<i>Index of moderated mediation: H7</i>	Index: 0.002	0.001	0.0001	0.0032

Table 4.
Results of conditional
process analysis (H5,
H6, H7)

Figure 2.
Moderating effects of brand trust on the relationship between brand experience and brand love



be more fruitful to analyze the individual components of brand love separately if the research purpose is to understand all the elements available for increasing brand love. In line with their assertion, we analyzed the relationships between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty based on individual components. The results are presented in Appendix 2. The behavioral experiences did not affect intimacy among the four brand experience factors. Behavioral and sensory factors did not affect passion among the four brand-experience factors. Intimacy and passion affected brand loyalty. We also analyzed the relationships based on the two smartphone users by multi-group analysis. The results showed that there were no statistical differences between the two groups (see Appendix 3).

Second, we performed a multi-group analysis to compare the parameters between the two groups in terms of a multidimensional perspective (Kline, 2016). The results in Appendix 4 indicate that the influence of brand experience on brand love was found to be significantly greater for iPhone users than for Galaxy users ($b_{iPhone} = 1.919, \beta_{iPhone} = 0.941, b_{Galaxy} = 1.390, \beta_{Galaxy} = 0.902, t = -2.215$). The influence of brand love on brand loyalty was found to be significantly greater for Galaxy users than for iPhone users ($b_{iPhone} = -0.220, \beta_{iPhone} = -0.201, b_{Galaxy} = 0.647, \beta_{Galaxy} = 0.611, t = 3.192$). The influence of brand experience on brand loyalty was found to be significantly greater for iPhone users than for Galaxy users ($b_{iPhone} = 2.173, \beta_{iPhone} = 0.974, b_{Galaxy} = 0.488, \beta_{Galaxy} = 0.299, t = -2.944$). In conclusion, the influence of brand experience on brand love and brand loyalty was found to be greater for iPhone users than for Galaxy users.

Discussion and conclusion

Consumers experience their smartphone brand in their daily lives. The more consumers experience their brand favorably, the more they love it, thus leading to brand loyalty. This study investigates the role of brand love and brand trust in the link between brand experience and brand loyalty. Specifically, this study focuses on the moderating role of brand trust and mediating role of brand love in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. We seek to examine these effects in the context of Korean consumers' top two smartphone brands (i.e. iPhone and Galaxy). The main findings of this study are as follows.

First, brand experience positively affected brand love, suggesting that the more favorable the brand experience of consumers is, the more the brand love will be. This result was consistent with the findings of Sarkar *et al.* (2012), Brakus *et al.* (2009), and Roy *et al.* (2013). Second, brand

experience positively affected brand loyalty, implying that consumers' positive brand experiences increase their loyalty to the brand. This result was consistent with the findings of Brakus *et al.* (2009), Iglesias *et al.* (2011), and Ong *et al.* (2018). Third, brand love positively affected brand loyalty, revealing that consumers' positive brand love enhances their loyalty to the brand. This result is consistent with the findings of Batra *et al.* (2012), Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), and Huang (2017). Fourth, brand love mediated the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty, suggesting that brand love plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. This result is consistent with the findings of Huang (2017), Kazmi and Khaliq (2019), and Roy *et al.* (2013). Fifth, brand trust moderated the relationship between brand experience and brand love. This result indicates that a higher level of brand trust results in a stronger relationship between brand experience and brand love. Sixth, it was found that sensory, affective and intellectual experience factors affected intimacy, and affective and intellectual factors affected passion. Among these factors, affective experience emerged as the most important dimension in influencing intimacy and passion. Intimacy and passion affected brand loyalty, respectively. Among passion and intimacy elements, passion is a more important factor than intimacy in determining brand loyalty. Seventh, this study shows that brand trust moderates the mediating effect of brand love in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. This finding is unique in the brand management literature, and we expect this finding contributes to the brand management literature. Previous studies on the role of brand trust have focused on the determinants of brand loyalty and brand love. Finally, we compared the parameters between two smartphone brand users. The results indicate that the effect of brand experience on brand love was significantly stronger for iPhone users than for Galaxy users. The effect of brand love on brand loyalty was significantly stronger for Galaxy users than for iPhone users. The effect of brand experience on brand loyalty was significantly stronger for iPhone users than for Galaxy users.

Theoretical and managerial implications

This study makes several theoretical implications for the brand management literature. First, prior research on brand experience, brand love, brand trust and brand loyalty has conceptualized brand trust as an independent variable of brand loyalty. However, this study conceptualizes brand trust as a moderating variable in the relationship between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty. The results show that brand trust moderates the relationship between brand experience and brand love. That is, the greater the brand trust, the stronger the relationship between brand experience and brand love. Therefore, this study has theoretical implications in that brand trust moderates the relationship between brand experience and brand love. Second, this study conceptualizes brand experience and brand love as high-order factors. Existing studies on these concepts have been conceptualized from a first-order factor perspective. This study provides theoretical implications that brand experience and brand love can act as a higher-order factors. Third, this study provides theoretical implications that brand trust plays a moderated mediating role in the relationship between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty. It was found that the greater the brand trust, the greater the relationship between brand experience, brand love and brand loyalty.

This study has significant managerial implications. First, this study reveals that the effect of brand experience on brand love was stronger for iPhone users than for Galaxy users. Apple lovers do not see Apple as a mere product, but as a creative person who makes their life convenient and enjoyable. This is the difference between Samsung Galaxy and Apple iPhone (MacInnis *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, Samsung should strive to enhance customers' brand experiences and brand love. To do this, we suggest two main points. (1) From a design point of view, aesthetic pleasure should be given to the customer. (2) From a functional point of view, it is necessary to solve various difficulties of customers. When these two elements are in place,

the brand will be loved by customers. Second, this study reveals that the effect of brand love on brand loyalty was greater for Galaxy users than for iPhone users. This result can be affected by consumer ethnocentrism. In other words, customers want to repurchase Samsung Galaxy produced by a Korean company in the future. It has been a fact for several years that consumer loyalty to Apple iPhone in the US is higher than that of Galaxy and other brands of smartphones. According to a Morgan Stanley survey in May (2017), 92% of US consumers said they would repurchase an Apple iPhone within a year, surpassing Samsung's 77% and LG's 59%. In other words, loyalty to the iPhone is higher than to other smartphones. Third, the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty was greater for iPhone users than for Galaxy users. Therefore, Samsung should strive to provide a more favorable brand experience to customers. In sum, Samsung should effort to provide a more favorable brand experience and brand love than Apple. To achieve this, Samsung managers need to provide various sources of brand experience, such as events, campaigns and storytelling (Khan and Rahman, 2015).

Limitations and future research

This study focuses on two best-selling smartphone brands (i.e. iPhone and Galaxy) in a Korean context. A limitation of this study is that it focuses only on the smartphone product category. The results of this study were obtained from Korean smartphone users. Therefore, the results may vary depending on the country or product category, which necessitates expanding this research to other countries or product categories. Galaxy is produced by Samsung, a representative Korean company. Korean consumers' ethnocentrism may affect the results among the constructs (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003; Sun *et al.*, 2021). Sun *et al.* (2021) found that domestic smartphone brands affect directly brand equity, but foreign brands did not. Therefore, it is necessary to research expanding the country. The effects of brand experience dimensions (i.e. sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral) on brand love may depend on the type of product or service offered (Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to research expanding the product category.

We modeled the brand experience as the sole predictor of brand love and brand loyalty. Other variables, such as brand characteristics (e.g. quality level), may affect brand love. In addition to brand trust, other variables, such as consumer variables (e.g. personality traits) and relationship attributes (e.g. relationship length), may act as moderating variables, which calls for investigation in future research.

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Appendix 1

Construct	Items	Description	Sources	
Brand experience	Sensory experience	Sens1	The color of my smartphone is cool	Brakus <i>et al.</i> (2009)
		Sens2	I like the design of my smartphone	
		Sens3	I like the shape of my smartphone	
		Sens4	The material of my smartphone feels good	
	Affective experience	Affe1	I enjoy using my smartphone brand	
		Affe2	I am happy to use my smartphone brand	
		Affe3	I was moved by my smartphone brand	
		Affe4	It feels good to use my smartphone brand	
	Behavioral experience	Beha1	My smartphone brand fits my lifestyle	
		Beha2	My smartphone brand drives positive behavior	
		Beha3	My smartphone brand is easy to use	
		Intellectual experience	Inte1	
Inte2	My smartphone brand makes me think			
Inte3	After using my smartphone brand, I learned something new			
Inte4	When I see an advertisement for my smartphone brand, I think about it			
Brand love	Intimacy	Inti1	I feel affection for my smartphone brand	Batra <i>et al.</i> (2012), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), Sarkar <i>et al.</i> (2012)
		Inti2	I feel the warmth of my smartphone brand	
		Inti3	I love my smartphone brand	
		Inti4	My smartphone brand feels familiar	
	Passion	Pass1	I am obsessed with my smartphone brand	
		Pass2	I feel attracted to my smartphone brand	
		Pass3	My smartphone brand delights me	
		Pass4	My smartphone brand is what I want	

Table A1.
Measures

(continued)

Construct	Items	Description	Sources
Brand loyalty	Loya1	I will continue to purchase my smartphone brand	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)
	Loya2	I will recommend my smartphone brand to others	
	Loya3	I want to introduce my smartphone brand to others	
	Loya4	I will speak favorably of my smartphone brand to others	
Brand trust	Trus1	I trust my smartphone brand	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)
	Trus2	I can rely on my smartphone brand	
	Trus3	My smartphone brand does not disappoint me	
	Trus4	I have confidence in my smartphone brand	

Table A1.

Appendix 2

Path	Unstand estimates	Stand estimates	SE	t-value	p
Sensory experience → Intimacy	-0.140	-0.105	0.056	-2.518	0.012*
Affective experience → Intimacy	0.508	0.463	0.087	5.830	***
Behavioral experience → Intimacy	0.101	0.081	0.093	1.092	0.275
Intellectual experience → Intimacy	0.442	0.446	0.051	8.609	***
Sensory experience → Passion	0.081	0.057	0.053	1.538	0.124
Affective experience → Passion	0.546	0.465	0.084	6.520	***
Behavioral experience → Passion	0.096	0.072	0.088	1.081	0.280
Intellectual experience → Passion	0.398	0.376	0.049	8.163	***
Intimacy → Brand loyalty	0.218	0.227	0.045	4.853	***
Passion → Brand loyalty	0.543	0.602	0.045	12.165	***

Note(s): * $p < 0.05$

Table A2.
Results of
unidimensional
analysis

Appendix 3

Path	iPhone (n = 297)	Galaxy (n = 301)	Parameter comparison †
Sensory experience → Intimacy	-0.255 (0.070)**	0.531 (0.856)	0.916
Affective experience → Intimacy	0.677 (0.114)**	-11.169 (11.169)	-1.067
Behavioral experience → Intimacy	0.192 (0.116)	11.165 (10.491)	1.046
Intellectual experience → Intimacy	0.325 (0.070)**	1.453 (1.132)	0.994
Sensory experience → Passion	0.008 (0.064)	1.651 (6.240)	0.263
Affective experience → Passion	0.795 (0.111)***	-39.684 (134.440)	-0.301
Behavioral experience → Passion	0.136 (0.108)	38.349 (127.281)	0.300
Intellectual experience → Passion	0.212 (0.064)**	3.921 (11.828)	0.314
Intimacy → Brand loyalty	0.090 (0.071)	0.197 (0.088)**	0.937
Passion → Brand loyalty	0.607 (0.074)***	0.626 (0.086)***	0.169

Note(s): Standard errors are given in parentheses. † Parameter comparison means critical ratios for differences between parameters. More than ± 1.96 means the two parameters are statistically significant differences between them at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A3.
Results of parameter
comparison between
two smartphone
brand users

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Table A4.

Results of parameter comparison between two smartphone brand users

Path	iPhone (<i>n</i> = 297)	Galaxy (<i>n</i> = 301)	Parameter comparison †
Brand experience → Brand love	b = 1.919(0.206), β = 0.941, <i>t</i> = 9.317	b = 1.390(0.121), β = 0.902, <i>t</i> = 11.464	-2.215*
Brand love → Brand loyalty	b = -0.220(0.248), β = -0.201, <i>t</i> = -0.889	b = 0.647(0.112), β = 0.611, <i>t</i> = 5.791	3.192**
Brand experience → Brand loyalty	b = 2.173(0.547), β = 0.974, <i>t</i> = 3.976	b = 0.488(0.170), β = 0.299, <i>t</i> = 2.879	-2.944**

Note(s): Standard errors are given in parentheses. **p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01, b = unstandardized estimate, β = standardized estimate, † Parameter comparison means critical ratios for differences between parameters. More than ± 1.96 means the two parameters are statistically significant differences between them at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level

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