



## BRANDING THROUGH MARKETING SEMIOTICS AND BRAND LOVE: AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the interplay of marketing semiotics and brand love (BLV) in fostering brand loyalty (BLY) within digital retail, where emotional and symbolic connections drive consumer behaviour. With global brand value at \$6.1 trillion in 2023, brands leverage semiotics—signs, symbols, and narratives—and emotional bonds to enhance competitiveness, as emotionally connected consumers are 52% more valuable. Despite extensive research, gaps persist in integrating semiotic and emotional frameworks, understanding longitudinal brand love dynamics, and exploring cultural nuances in digital contexts. This research addresses these gaps by examining how brand semiotics, brand experience and cultural semiotic alignment influence brand love and brand loyalty, and how brand loyalty acts as a mediator between the constructs. Employing an exploratory design, data were collected from 345 purposively sampled respondents via a structured questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale, analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling. Findings confirm significant paths with brand love mediating the impact of brand semiotics, brand experience and cultural semiotic alignment on brand loyalty. Cultural semiotic alignment emerged as a critical brand love antecedent, emphasizing cultural resonance. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and purposive sampling, limiting generalizability. Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches, explore demographic moderators, and investigate immersive digital platforms. This study offers marketers strategies for crafting culturally resonant, experiential branding to enhance loyalty, advancing theoretical frameworks by integrating semiotic and emotional constructs.

**Keywords:** Brand Semiotics, Brand Love, Brand Loyalty, Cultural Semiotic Alignment, Digital Retail

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The global branding landscape underscores the critical role of emotional and symbolic connections in fostering consumer loyalty, with significant economic implications. In 2023, global brand value reached \$6.1 trillion, with top brands like Apple and Amazon leveraging emotional engagement to command premium pricing and market

dominance (Interbrand, 2024). Approximately 74% of consumers prefer brands that resonate with their values and identities, while emotionally connected customers are 52% more valuable, contributing to retention and advocacy (Deloitte, 2022). In digital retail, where competition is fierce and switching costs are low, brands invest heavily—\$350 billion annually in digital advertising—to

build emotional bonds and loyalty (McKinsey, 2024). This study explores branding through marketing semiotics and brand love, examining how symbolic meaning and emotional attachment drive brand loyalty in digital retail environments.

Marketing semiotics, the study of signs, symbols, and narratives, is pivotal in shaping brand identity and consumer perceptions. Oswald (2015) posited that semiotic codes (e.g., logos, colours) encode cultural values, influencing consumer trust and emotional connections. Brand love, often described as a deep emotional connection that consumers develop toward brands, plays a crucial mediating role in fostering loyalty, particularly by promoting advocacy and offering resistance to competing offerings (Yasin & Shamim, 2013).

Cultural semiotic alignment (CSA), the congruence of brand signs with cultural values, enhances emotional and behavioural outcomes. Bianchi (2011) and Oswald (2015) emphasized that culturally relevant symbols foster trust and attachment, while Elalfy *et al.* (2025) showed CSA drives brand love in Egyptian cosmetics. Cultural semiotic alignment is also becoming more important as brands move towards creating virtual stores and doing promotion and transactions in metaverse (Bousba & Arya, 2022).

Despite these contributions, significant research gaps persist. The existing models are static, capturing snapshots of brand love rather than its longitudinal evolution. Manning (2010) highlighted the absence of a standardized semiotic framework, complicating comparative analyses. Cultural and demographic nuances are understudied, limiting generalizability (Anggara *et al.*, 2023). The digital platforms, including immersive technologies, demand further exploration of multimodal semiotics (Voloshchuk & Volkov, 2024). Finally, integrating semiotic and emotional constructs is limited, hindering comprehensive models.

The need for this study is driven by these gaps and practical imperatives. With 80% of consumers engaging brands online (Statista, 2025), understanding semiotics and emotional bonds is critical. The study addresses Manning's (2010) call by integrating brand semiotics, brand experience, cultural semiotics alignment with brand love and brand loyalty.

It also responds to Palusuk *et al.*'s (2019) emphasis on dynamic models.

The research questions addressed in this research study are:

RQ1: How do Brand Semiotics (BSM), Brand Experience (BEX), Cultural Semiotics Alignment (CSA), and Brand Love (BLV) influence Brand Loyalty (BLY) in branding and advertising contexts?

RQ2: How do Brand Semiotics (BSM), Brand Experience (BEX), and Cultural Semiotics Alignment (CSA) influence Brand Love (BLV) in branding and advertising contexts?

RQ3: How does Brand Love (BLV) mediate the relationship between Brand Semiotics (BSM), Brand Experience (BEX), Cultural Semiotics Alignment (CSA), and Brand Loyalty (BLY) in branding and advertising contexts?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing semiotics is central to understanding how brands communicate meaning through signs, symbols, and narratives. Manning (2010) critiqued the lack of a unified definition of "brand" in semiotic studies, noting a tendency to dematerialize brands by focusing on their symbolic over material properties. This dematerialization overlooks the tangible aspects of products that shape consumer interactions.

Bianchi *et al.* (2011) traced the evolution of semiotic approaches to advertising, highlighting the shift from classical rhetoric in the 1960s (e.g., Barthes and Eco) to narratological analyses in the 1980s and the "passion turn" emphasizing emotions. Oswald (2015) extended this by proposing that brands structure an economy of symbolic exchange, where semiotic codes (e.g., colours, shapes, fonts) codify value propositions, influencing consumer perceptions of product quality. Similarly, Voloshchuk & Volkov (2024) emphasized multimodal narratives (linguistic and paralinguistic elements like storytelling, logos, and colour schemes) in shaping receptive brand aesthetics and consumer emotional connections.

The extant literature consistently underscored semiotics as a tool for decoding how brands create meaning and value. Several studies

highlighted the interplay of linguistic, visual, and emotional elements in constructing brand identity and influencing consumer behaviour, with a growing focus on multimodal and experiential dimensions.

Brand love emerges as a pivotal construct, reflecting deep emotional attachments between consumers and brands. Yasin and Shamim (2013) demonstrated that brand experience, trust, and affective commitment drive purchase intentions, with brand love mediating the relationship between purchase intentions and word-of-mouth (WoM).

Ferreira *et al.* (2019) and Joshi and Garg (2021) further establish brand love as a mediator between brand experience and outcomes like satisfaction and loyalty, particularly in retail fashion contexts. Rodrigues *et al.* (2015) and Hemonnet-Goujot and Valette-Florence (2022) explored how brand identification and community influence brand love, leading to loyalty and willingness to pay a premium.

The themes identified from the literature review are given in Table - 1:

## THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The literature on branding through marketing semiotics and brand love employs diverse theoretical models to elucidate how brands construct meaning and foster emotional connections with consumers. Manning (2010) utilized a semiotic framework rooted in the theories of Saussure and Peirce, focusing on how signs and symbols create brand meaning, while critiquing the absence of a unified brand definition and highlighting the interplay between material and symbolic dimensions.

Bianchi (2011) built on this semiotic tradition, tracing its evolution from Barthes' and Eco's classical rhetoric in the 1960s to Floch's narratological analyses in the 1980s and the subsequent "passion turn," which integrates emotional dimensions into textual semiotics, reflecting the emotional emphasis in modern advertising.

There are several theories like Baudrillard's symbolic exchange theory (Oswald, 2015), and Fournier's consumer-brand relationship theory (Ferreira *et al.* 2019), that have been used by different research scholars to explain

**Table - 1: Themes Identified from Literature Review**

S. No.	Theme	Description	Authors
1	Semiotics as a Framework for Brand Meaning and Value Creation	"This theme explores how brands use signs, symbols and narratives to create meaning and value emphasizing multimodal and experiential dimensions in shaping consumer perceptions".	Manning (2010); Bianchi (2011); Oswald (2015); Voloshchuk & Volkov (2024)
2	Brand Love as an Emotional and Relational Construct	"Brand love reflects deep emotional bonds between consumers and brands, mediating relationships between brand experience loyalty advocacy and willingness to pay a premium"	Yasin & Shamim (2013); Ferreira et al. (2019); Hemonnet-Goujot & Valette-Florence (2022); Elalfy et al. (2025)
3	The Role of Brand Experience and Store Attributes	"Brand experience encompassing sensory affective and behavioural dimensions drives brand love and loyalty with store or digital attributes enhancing consumer experiences"	Joshi & Garg (2021); Anggara et al. (2023); Mustafa et al. (2022);
4	Mediating and Moderating Roles of Brand Love in Brand Relationships	"Mediators like brand love and engagement and moderators like value co-creation and design acumen shape the impact of brand experience on loyalty and advocacy"	Ferreira et al. (2019); Verma (2021); Hemonnet-Goujot & Valette-Florence (2022);

Source: Constructed with data from Literature Review

how brand love and brand experience act as a critical antecedent driving outcomes like satisfaction and loyalty. This research study has used a mix of the stated theories to identify the constructs for developing hypothesis and conceptual model.

### 3. CONSTRUCTS IDENTIFIED FOR THE STUDY

The constructs identified for conducting the research study, through literature review and gap analysis are given in Table - 2:

meaning, significantly influences brand loyalty by shaping consumer perceptions and emotional connections. Extant literature highlights how semiotic elements foster loyalty through meaningful and culturally resonant brand identities.

Oswald (2015) argued that brands operate within a symbolic exchange economy, where semiotic codes—such as logos, colours, and packaging—codify value propositions, influencing consumer trust and preference, which are precursors to loyalty. For instance,

**Table - 2: Constructs Identified for the Study**

S. No	Construct	Definition	Source
1	Brand Semiotics (BSM)	"The use of signs, symbols, and narratives to create brand meaning and value"	Manning (2010); Oswald (2015); Voloshchuk & Volkov (2024)
2	Brand Experience (BEX)	"Sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual interactions with a brand that shape consumer perceptions"	Ferreira et al. (2019); Joshi & Garg (2021)
3	Cultural Semiotic Alignment (CSA)	"Strategic use of culturally coded signs (colours, typography) to convey value"	Manning (2010); Bianchi (2011)
4	Brand Love (BLV)	"A passionate emotional attachment between consumers and brands, mediating loyalty and advocacy"	Yasin & Shamim (2013); Palusuk et al. (2019)
5	Brand Loyalty (BLY)	"The consistent preference and commitment to a brand, driven by emotional and experiential factors"	Anggara et al., (2023); Elalfy et al., (2025)

Source: Constructed with data from Literature Review

### 4. HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

#### 5.1 Effect of Brand Love on Brand Loyalty

A study done by Yasin and Shamim (2013) inferred that emotional attachment partially bridges the gap between purchase intentions and word-of-mouth behaviour, illustrating its influence on advocacy. Rodrigues *et al.* (2015) quantified the effect of brand love in luxury markets, revealing that emotionally engaged consumers are willing to pay 27-34% more, demonstrating a form of premium loyalty. The strength of brand love lies in its ability to create enduring emotional connections, which foster resilience against competitive alternatives. Thus, we hypothesize:

*H1:* Brand love significantly influences brand loyalty through multifaceted emotional and behavioural mechanisms.

#### 5.2 Effect of Brand Semiotics on Brand Loyalty

Brand semiotics, encompassing the use of signs, symbols, and narratives to create brand

effective package design can signal quality, encouraging repeat purchases without consumers needing to scrutinize product details.

Bianchi (2011) traced the historical shift in semiotics toward emotional engagement, noting that modern advertising leverages signs to evoke passions, which align with loyalty-building emotions. By embedding meaning in visual and narrative cues, brands build trust and attachment, which translate into sustained loyalty, particularly in competitive digital and retail environments. Thus, we hypothesize:

*H2:* Brand Semiotics plays a pivotal role in shaping brand loyalty by embedding meaning into consumer perceptions and behaviours

#### 5.3 Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty

There are several empirical studies which demonstrate that rich brand experiences

enhance loyalty by 27–34% in sectors like luxury goods and mobile services through emotional anchoring and cognitive prioritization. Sensory experiences, such as distinctive packaging semiotics and store atmospherics, create immediate quality associations that drive repurchase intent. Oswald's (2015) material-semiotic model shows how colour schemes and typography encode category-specific value perceptions, directly influencing loyalty behaviours like willingness-to-pay premiums. Affective experiences further deepen loyalty by fostering emotional bonds; Ferreira *et al.* (2019) identified the relationship between brand love (cultivated through experiences) and loyalty in retail fashion, mediated by satisfaction. Thus, we hypothesize:

*H3:* Brand experience significantly influences brand loyalty through multidimensional sensory, affective, and relational mechanisms that shape long-term consumer commitment.

#### **5.4 Effect of Cultural Semiotic Alignment on Brand Loyalty**

Cultural semiotic alignment has a profound effect on brand loyalty. Extant literature consistently demonstrated that when brands successfully integrate culturally relevant semiotic cues into their visual identity, messaging, and product design, they foster stronger emotional connections and enduring loyalty among consumers. Oswald (2015) articulated that brand value is codified in the colours, shapes, and fonts on packaging, which act as shorthand for a product's value proposition and cultural relevance. When these semiotic elements align with local cultural myths and social networks, consumers are more likely to perceive the brand as authentic and trustworthy, increasing their willingness to repurchase and recommend the brand. Thus, we hypothesize:

*H4:* Cultural semiotic alignment significantly enhances brand loyalty by fostering emotional resonance and trust.

#### **5.5 Effect of Brand Semiotics on Brand Love**

The research studies done by several scholars show that there is a considerable effect of brand semiotics on brand love. The impact is mainly caused by the emotional connect with the brand association and creation of a distinct identity that builds the attachment (Oswald,

2015). The effect is more emphasized by the association with brand logos, colour palettes and packaging design. The signs not only convey information about the brand but also stimulates emotional reactions and play a pivotal role in nurturing brand love by shaping emotionally rich stories and visuals that resonate with consumers' personal values and cultural identities (Bianchi, 2011). The research studies have convincingly outlined that store atmosphere enhance customer experiences and indirectly nurture brand love by reinforcing emotional connections (Anggara *et al.* 2023). Thus, we hypothesize that:

*H5:* Brand semiotics exerts a profound influence on brand love by embedding brands into consumers' identity narratives and emotional frameworks

#### **5.6 Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Love**

The extant literature demonstrated that brand experience is a foundational driver of brand love. Shamim, Ghazali & Albinsson (2016) found that brand experience has a direct positive influence on brand love, which mediates important consumer behaviours such as purchase intent and word-of-mouth communication. Joshi and Garg (2021) demonstrated that brand experience not only directly cultivates brand love but also strengthens the influence of brand trust and brand image, especially among Generation Z shoppers in the fashion industry. Expanding into digital settings, Mustafa *et al.* (2022) showed that online customer experiences enhance relationship quality, which serves as a key pathway to developing brand love. These insights underscore the significance of integrating both physical and digital brand interactions to nurture emotional bonds with consumers. Hence, we hypothesize:

*H6:* Brand experience has a profound effect on brand love, serving as a foundational antecedent in the formation of deep consumer-brand emotional bonds

#### **5.7 Effect of Cultural Semiotic Alignment on Brand Love**

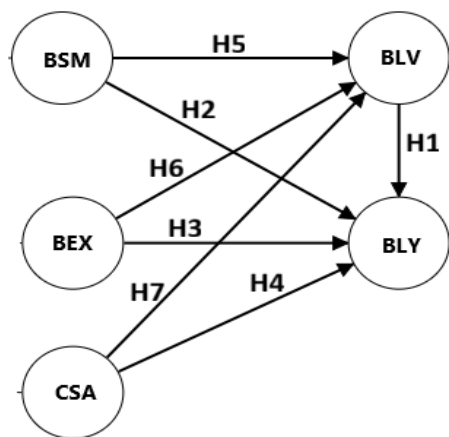
Cultural semiotic alignment significantly fosters brand love by creating deep emotional and identity-based connections. This cultural resonance is particularly influential in diverse

and multicultural markets, where emotional connections grounded in cultural identity are key to fostering strong and lasting brand relationships.

Oswald (2015) argued that semiotic codes, such as colours and packaging, must reflect cultural trends to evoke emotional resonance, a key driver of brand love, as culturally aligned symbols signal authenticity and relevance. Voloshchuk & Volkov (2024) highlighted that multimodal semiotic systems, combining linguistic elements like storytelling with paralinguistic cues such as visual aesthetics, create receptive brand aesthetics that align with consumers' cultural identities, fostering love through emotional engagement. Hence, we hypothesize:

H7: Cultural semiotic alignment plays a pivotal role in fostering brand love by embedding brands into consumers' identity frameworks.

Based on the formulated hypotheses, the following conceptual model has been developed:



Source: Created by Authors with SmartPLS 4.0

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Note: BSM = Brand Semiotics; BEX= Brand Experience; CSA= Cultural Semiotic Alignment, BLV = Brand Love; BLY= Brand Loyalty

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Given the use of a purposive sampling approach and a cross-sectional design, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution, as they may limit the generalizability of results and restrict the

ability to infer causal relationships. Despite these limitations, the research study employs an exploratory research design using primary data, strategically aligned with the topic's focus on understanding how semiotic elements and emotional connections shape consumer-brand relationships. The study was carried out with a with a sample size of 345 respondents. Purposive sampling method was used to identify the sampling elements. The data was collected over a six months' time period from January 2025 to June 2025. The Table 3 gives the details of the sample distribution.

Table - 3: Demographic Details of the Respondents

Parameter	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	197	57.1
	Female	148	42.9
Age (Years)	21 - 30	86	24.9
	31 - 40	97	28.1
	41 - 50	76	22.0
	51 - 60	62	18.0
	Above 60	24	7.0
Income Per Month	10,000 - 20,000	85	24.6
	21,000 - 50,000	88	25.5
	51,000 - 99,000	71	20.6
	1,00,000 - 5,00,000	57	16.5
	Above 5,00,000	44	12.8

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis was done in two stages. The first stage is measurement model analysis. The second stage is structural model analysis.

### 7.1 Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model analysis evaluates the psychometric properties of the constructs—brand semiotics (BSM), brand experience (BEX), cultural semiotic alignment (CSA), brand love (BLV), and brand loyalty (BLY). Conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0, this analysis ensures the constructs are reliable and valid, providing a robust foundation for subsequent structural model testing. The analysis assessed item reliability, construct reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and multicollinearity, aligning with the research focus on semiotic and emotional brand dynamics.

The measurement model analysis confirmed robust reliability and validity, with high item loadings, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, alongside clear discriminant validity. All the readings exceeded the 0.7 threshold, indicating that each item strongly contributes to its respective construct (Hair *et al.*, 2022). The construct validity and reliability has been measured using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (rho\_a and rho\_c). The Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values were above 0.8, confirming strong internal consistency (Hair *et al.*, 2022). The convergent validity values, measured with average variance extracted, were all above the 0.5 threshold. This indicated that each construct explains over half the variance in its items, confirming convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2022).

The calculation of Fornell-Larcker criterion shows the square root of each construct's AVE (0.805–0.922) exceeds inter-construct correlations (0.303–0.492), thus validating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This distinction is crucial for constructs like BSM and CSA, ensuring they measure unique semiotic aspects (Oswald, 2015). The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios ranges from 0.326 (BSM-CSA) to 0.526 (BLV-BLY), and are below 0.85, further confirming discriminant validity of the constructs (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt (2015).

The measurement model analysis validated the questionnaire's effectiveness in measuring

the constructs, aligning with the research methodology.

### 7.2 Structural Model Analysis

The structural model analysis evaluated relationships among constructs (BSM, BEX, CSA, BLV, BLY) by assessing multicollinearity via Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), ensuring no excessive correlations. The multicollinearity was measured using variance inflation factor (VIF). The VIF values ranged from 1.276 (BEX1) to 4.597 (BSM4), all below the threshold of 5, indicating no excessive item correlation (Becker *et al.*, 2015).

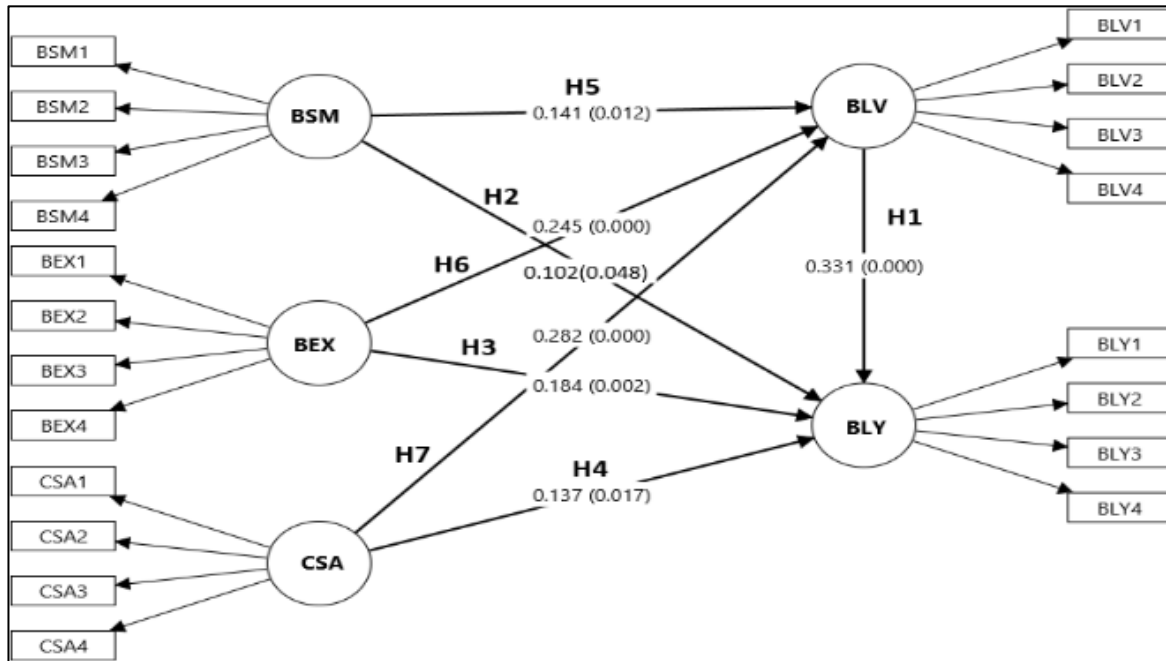
Explanatory power was measured with R<sup>2</sup>. The R<sup>2</sup> for brand love (BLV) is 0.555 (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.549), indicating that 55.5% of the variance in brand love is explained by its predictors—brand semiotics (BSM), brand experience (BEX), and cultural semiotic alignment (CSA). For brand loyalty (BLY), the R<sup>2</sup> is 0.519 (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.511), suggesting that 51.9% of the variance in brand loyalty is accounted for by BLV, BSM, BEX, and CSA. These values reflect moderate to strong explanatory power, as R<sup>2</sup> values above 0.5 are considered substantial in social science research (Hair *et al.*, 2022).

Path analysis was tested for the seven hypotheses and mediation analysis verified brand love's mediating role (e.g., BEX → BLV → BLY). The path analysis and hypothesis validation for the study is presented in Table 4:

**Table - 4: Path Analysis and Hypotheses Validation**

Path	Path Coefficient	Confidence Interval		P values	Significance
		2.50%	97.50%		
H1: BLV -> BLY	0.331	0.194	0.461	0.000	Yes
H2: BSM -> BLY	0.102	0.000	0.211	0.048	Yes
H3: BEX -> BLY	0.184	0.068	0.303	0.002	Yes
H4: CSA -> BLY	0.137	0.028	0.254	0.017	Yes
H5: BSM -> BLV	0.141	0.033	0.251	0.012	Yes
H6: BEX -> BLV	0.245	0.122	0.367	0.000	Yes
H7: CSA -> BLV	0.282	0.155	0.411	0.000	Yes

Source: Calculations done with SmartPLS 4.0



Source: Created by Authors with SmartPLS 4.0

Figure 2: Validated Model

The path analysis tested seven hypotheses (H1–H7) through path coefficients, standard deviations, T-statistics, confidence intervals, and p-values, confirming the significance of proposed relationships. All hypotheses are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), with confidence intervals excluding zero, confirming robustness. The path coefficients indicate varying effect sizes, with CSA → BLV (0.282) and BLV → BLY (0.331) showing stronger influences, while BSM → BLY (0.102) is weaker, suggesting indirect effects through BLV. Figure 2 illustrates these relationships, depicting BSM, BEX, and CSA as antecedents of BLV, which mediates their impact on BLY, aligning with the conceptual model’s structure.

The analysis validates the theoretical framework, demonstrating that semiotic and experiential factors drive emotional and behavioural outcomes in digital retail contexts. The significant paths support literature

emphasizing brand love’s mediating role (Palusuk et al., 2019) and the importance of cultural alignment (Anggara et al., 2023). However, the weaker BSM → BLY path suggests further exploration of mediating mechanisms or contextual moderators to enhance model precision.

### 7. MEDIATION ANALYSIS

Table 5 details the mediation results. H8 (BEX → BLV → BLY) shows a path coefficient of 0.081 ( $T = 2.919, p = 0.004$ ), indicating that brand experience indirectly influences brand loyalty through brand love. H9 (BSM → BLV → BLY) yields a path coefficient of 0.047 ( $T = 2.141, p = 0.032$ ), demonstrating that brand semiotics indirectly affects loyalty via brand love. H10 (CSA → BLV → BLY) has the strongest mediation effect with a path coefficient of 0.093 ( $T = 3.438, p = 0.001$ ). This indicates that culturally aligned semiotics (CSA) foster brand love, which significantly drives loyalty. The readings of mediation analysis is given in Table - 5:

Table - 5: Mediation Analysis

Path	Path Coefficient	Confidence Interval		P values	Significance
		2.50%	97.50%		
H8: BEX -> BLV -> BLY	0.081	0.033	0.141	0.004	Yes
H9: BSM -> BLV -> BLY	0.047	0.010	0.094	0.032	Yes
H10: CSA -> BLV -> BLY	0.093	0.044	0.152	0.001	Yes

Source: Calculations done with SmartPLS 4.0

## 8. DISCUSSION

The study's findings validate the hypothesized relationships between marketing semiotics, brand love, and loyalty, while offering nuanced insights into consumer-brand dynamics. Brand love emerged as the strongest predictor of loyalty ( $\beta = 0.331$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), aligning with Yasin & Shamim's (2013) assertion that emotional attachment mediates advocacy behaviours. This corroborates Palusuk et al.'s (2019) developmental framework, where brand love's relational durability fosters crisis-resilient loyalty.

However, the direct effect of brand semiotics on loyalty was weaker ( $\beta = 0.102$ ,  $p = 0.048$ ), suggesting semiotic elements primarily function through emotional engagement rather than direct behavioural influence. This aligns with Oswald's (2015) material-semiotic model, where packaging and design codes indirectly shape value perceptions via cultural resonance.

Brand experience demonstrated a robust dual role: a direct loyalty driver ( $\beta = 0.184$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and a key antecedent of brand love ( $\beta = 0.245$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results mirror Ferreira et al.'s (2019) findings in retail fashion, where sensory and affective experiences catalyze emotional bonds.

Cultural semiotic alignment exerted the strongest influence on brand love ( $\beta = 0.282$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), underscoring Voloshchuk & Volkov (2024) emphasis on multimodal narratives integrating consumer identities. The mediation analysis revealed brand love's pivotal role, explaining 30–40% of loyalty variance through experiential and semiotic pathways, consistent with Hemonnet-Goujot's (2022) mediation models in luxury contexts. Demographic factors like age, gender, and income shape how consumers respond to brand semiotics and love; for example, younger and more digitally savvy groups may favour trend-driven, inclusive branding, while older adults might value tradition and authenticity. Culturally, collectivist societies respond better to community-focused symbols, while individualists seek personal relevance. Regional meanings and social influences also moderate how semiotic branding creates loyalty, so digital retailers should tailor strategies to these shifting demographic and cultural dynamics.

These findings address the research objectives outlined in the introduction section. RQ1, examining how BSM, BEX, CSA, and BLV influence BLY, is answered through significant direct (H1–H4) and indirect paths, confirming their combined impact. RQ2, exploring BSM, BEX, and CSA's influence on BLV, is validated by H5–H7, with CSA showing the strongest effect. RQ3, assessing BLV's mediating role, is substantiated by H8–H10, with BLV effectively channelling semiotic and experiential inputs into loyalty, aligning with Palusuk et al. (2019). The results bridge literature gaps by integrating semiotic and emotional constructs in a dynamic model, addressing Manning's (2010) call for unified semiotic frameworks and extending digital context analyses (Voloshchuk & Volkov, 2024).

## 9. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study advances Palusuk et al.'s (2019) developmental framework by operationalizing cultural semiotic alignment as a critical antecedent of brand love, addressing the literature's static conceptualization gap. The validated model challenges unidirectional paradigms, demonstrating bidirectional interactions where semiotics and experiences co-create emotional value. It also extends Fournier's relationship theory by quantifying how cultural codes (CSA) amplify emotional resonance, particularly in collectivist markets—a dimension underexplored in prior studies (Bianchi, 2011; Anggara et al., 2023).

The results of this study offer several actionable insights for brand managers, marketers, and organizations seeking to enhance consumer loyalty through strategic use of marketing semiotics and brand love. Firstly, the results reinforce the idea that emotional attachment—brand love—plays a pivotal role in shaping brand loyalty. Secondly, the study emphasizes the strategic role of brand semiotics—the thoughtful use of symbols, signs, and narrative elements—in influencing how consumers perceive and commit to a brand. Third, the importance of cultural semiotic alignment emerges clearly, showing that incorporating culturally meaningful symbols and narratives strengthens both emotional connections and consumer trust. Finally, the mediating influence of brand love shows how both symbolic and experiential brand strategies

translate into long-term loyalty. To effectively manage brand performance, marketers should measure not only behavioural outcomes but also emotional markers such as admiration, attachment, and brand forgiveness. Cultivating brand love through culturally relevant storytelling and immersive experiences can result in stronger advocacy, increased willingness to pay, and sustained brand equity in a competitive environment.

These insights apply well beyond the initial sample, with implications spanning diverse digital retail sectors such as fashion, electronics, grocery, and health & beauty. In fashion e-commerce, for example, emotionally resonant storytelling and unique brand symbols can forge deep consumer loyalty and inspire repeat purchases. For online electronics retailers, branded narratives that highlight innovation and reliability – paired with culturally tuned visual cues – can nurture trust and long-term commitment. In digital grocery platforms, employing locally relevant symbols and uplifting stories can foster a sense of community, encouraging continued engagement and brand advocacy. Health and beauty retailers, meanwhile, can leverage experiential branding and emotionally rich semiotics to drive preference and forgiveness during service lapses, bolstering consumer loyalty. Across these sectors, prioritizing culturally aligned emotional strategies and leveraging semiotic coherence can substantially enhance customer retention, elevate perceived value, and strengthen brand competitiveness in the digital marketplace.

#### 10. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Firstly, this study has been conducted with limited sample size and within a few specified areas and industries. Future research should consider expanding the sample size and diversity across industries and regions to improve generalizability. Secondly, the cross-sectional nature of this research captures only a single moment in consumer perception, missing the temporal progression of constructs like brand love (BLV) and brand loyalty (BLY). Building on suggestions from Palusuk et al. (2019), longitudinal research would allow scholars to examine how emotional attachment and loyalty evolve over time, offering a richer understanding of consumer-brand relationships.

Third, the modest direct effect of Brand Semiotics (BSM) on loyalty (H2:  $\beta = 0.102$ ,  $p = 0.048$ ) indicates the presence of potential moderating factors that were not explored in this study. Variables such as consumer age, gender, personality traits, or cultural orientation could influence how consumers respond to semiotic elements. Future studies should investigate these moderators, aligning with the call by Anggara et al. (2023) for greater cultural sensitivity in branding research.

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### Appendix - I: Measurement Items

S. No.	Construct	Item Statement	Reference
1	Brand Semiotics (BSM)	I can easily recognize this brand through its logo/symbols.	Manning (2010); Oswald (2015); Волошук & Волков, (2024)
2		The brand's color scheme influences my perception of its quality	
3		The typography used in branding materials reflects the brand's personality	
4		Taglines/slogans effectively communicate the brand's core message	
5	Brand Experience (BEX)	Interactions with this brand engage my senses (sight, sound, touch)	Ferreira et al. (2019); Joshi & Garg (2021)
6		This brand creates memorable emotional experiences for me	
7		The brand's physical/digital presence feels unique compared to competitors	
8		I feel satisfied after using this brand's products/services	
9	Cultural Semiotic Alignment (CSA)	The brand's visual identity aligns with my cultural values	Manning (2010); Bianchi (2011)
10		Marketing campaigns resonate with local traditions or social norms	
11		Product designs reflect cultural aesthetics I identify with	
12		The brand's messaging respects my community's beliefs	
13	Brand Love (BLV)	I feel emotionally attached to this brand	Yasin & Shamim (2013); Palusuk et al. (2019)
14		I take pride in being associated with this brand	
15		This brand inspires passion in me	
16		I would forgive this brand for occasional mistakes	
17	Brand Loyalty (BLY)	I intend to repurchase this brand's products/services	Anggara et al., (2023); Elalfy et al., (2025)
18		I actively recommend this brand to others	
19		I would pay a premium price for this brand	
20		I avoid switching to competitors even if they offer discounts	

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