



The Influence of Brand Personality, Brand Love, and Brand Image on Brand Advocacy (A Study of iPhone Users in Cirebon)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the influence of brand personality, brand love, and brand image on brand advocacy among iPhone users in Cirebon City. Amid fierce competition in the premium smartphone market, the iPhone has managed to maintain high user loyalty despite not holding the largest overall market share. Using a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, data were collected from 259 respondents through purposive sampling and analysed using SmartPLS 4.0. The results of the study show that brand personality, brand love, and brand image simultaneously have a significant effect on brand advocacy, with a combined contribution of 74.3%. Partially, brand love proved to be the most dominant predictor, indicating that deep emotional attachment is more effective in driving voluntary advocacy behaviour than rational factors alone. Brand personality and brand image also contribute positively by strengthening users' self-expression and sense of social prestige. The implications of this study suggest that Apple's marketing strategy should continue to focus on strengthening emotional branding and maintaining its premium reputation. The primary limitation of this study lies in its geographical focus on a single local area; future studies are therefore recommended to expand demographic and geographic coverage for broader generalisability.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, interest in brand advocacy has increased significantly, particularly in line with the development of digital technology, the growth of social media, and the increasingly dynamic competition in the premium smartphone market in Indonesia. International studies (Loureiro et al., 2024) demonstrate that brand personality, brand love, and brand image play important roles in promoting brand advocacy. More specifically, Maulani et al. (2023) found that brand personality and brand love each have a positive and significant influence on brand advocacy. However, in Indonesia — particularly in relation to premium smartphone users such as iPhone owners in Cirebon City — research that comprehensively examines the relationships between brand personality, brand love, brand image, and brand advocacy remains very limited. Demand for smartphones in Indonesia continues to increase year on year, intensifying competition among both global and local brands (Afitania & Widiati, 2025; Calderón-Fajardo et al., 2023). Top Brand Award 2025 data shows that Samsung (30.40%) and Oppo (24.70%) still dominate the Top Brand Index (TBI) in the smartphone category, while the iPhone ranks third with a TBI of 16.40%, followed by Realme (8.70%) and Redmi (7.90%). Although the iPhone's TBI is relatively lower than that of the two market leaders, the Top Brand trend over

the 2021–2025 period shows that the iPhone index has in fact experienced a consistent increase, while Samsung has remained stagnant and Oppo has been rising but appears to be approaching a saturation point.

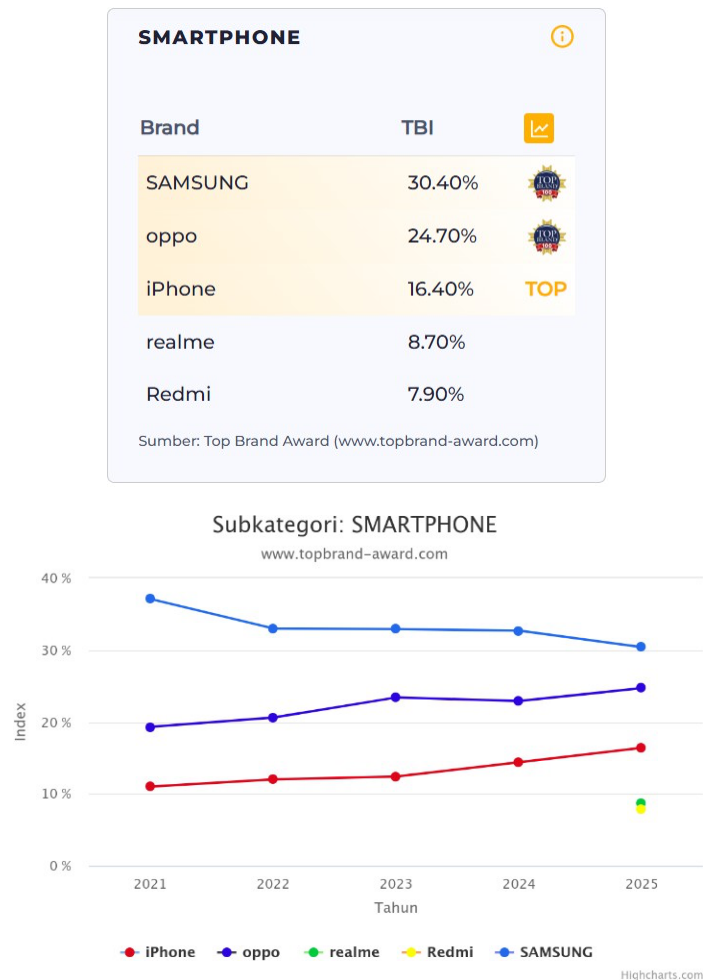


Figure 1 Ranking of the Five Best-Selling National Smartphone Companies Based on Top Brand Awards for the 2021-2025 Period

This pattern indicates that the iPhone has managed to build a stronger and more loyal consumer base despite not being the national market share leader. In other words, the iPhone has a narrower user base but demonstrates a high level of brand attachment, reflected in its consistently increasing TBI and increasingly positive brand perceptions (Rachmawati & Akbar, 2025; Wilk et al., 2021). This condition makes iPhone users in the premium segment — particularly in Cirebon City — an interesting subject of study from the perspective of brand personality, brand love, brand image, and brand advocacy, as the phenomenon concerns not merely the size of market share but the strength of emotional relationships and consumers' willingness to actively recommend and defend the brand (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021; Hayanimasy et al., 2025).

The launch of the iPhone 17, accompanied by a massive global campaign — including the promotional video "Introducing iPhone 17 Pro" and the premium "Gold Collection" edition of the iPhone 17 Pro — reaffirmed the iPhone's image as a symbol of status, prestige, and modern lifestyle. This momentum not only generated enthusiasm and initial purchases but also encouraged users to voluntarily recommend, defend, and share information about the iPhone

with others, thereby demonstrating strong brand advocacy behaviour among iPhone users, even though the brand's market share remains relatively small compared to Android competitors in Indonesia (Fatkhurroh et al., 2024; Fournier et al., 2015).

A prior study by Shimul and Phau (2023a), conducted in Samarinda, showed that brand identification and brand image among iPhone users have a positive and significant influence on brand love and brand loyalty, even though the product is more expensive and has lower overall user adoption rates than Samsung or Xiaomi. This suggests that there is a strong emotional and psychological mechanism underlying iPhone user loyalty. Shimul and Phau (2023b) further demonstrated that brand congruence contributes to brand love and brand loyalty, which in turn promotes brand advocacy through a sequential mediation mechanism. Aldisa and Yunus (2024), meanwhile, found that self-expressive brand, brand attachment, and brand trust influence brand advocacy through the mediation of brand love, highlighting that emotional and trust-based factors are essential to encouraging voluntary consumer advocacy.

The urgency of this research is driven by several factors. First, the consistent increase in the iPhone's Top Brand Index from 2021 to 2025, despite lower market share than Samsung and Oppo, points to a unique loyalty phenomenon that warrants empirical investigation. Second, the launch of the iPhone 17 with its large-scale campaign provides a natural opportunity to observe brand advocacy behaviour in real time. Third, the premium smartphone segment in Indonesia — particularly in cities such as Cirebon — represents a growing market with distinct consumer behaviour patterns that have not been adequately studied. Fourth, understanding what motivates iPhone users to become brand advocates has practical implications for Apple's marketing strategy in Indonesia, especially in the context of competition with Android brands that hold larger market shares. Without such research, Apple may miss opportunities to leverage emotional branding to increase market penetration.

While previous studies have examined the relationships between brand personality, brand love, and brand image with loyalty or satisfaction, most have focused on the fashion, cosmetics, or luxury goods sectors. The role of these three variables in brand advocacy within the smartphone sector — particularly for the iPhone — has not been comprehensively investigated in the Indonesian context, nor at the local level of Cirebon City. This opens further research opportunities to understand how brand personality, brand love, and brand image influence brand advocacy among iPhone users in Cirebon, particularly in the context of the enthusiasm and innovation surrounding new products such as the iPhone 17.

This research aims to contribute to the development of consumer–brand relationship theory in the context of premium technology in Indonesia, as well as to provide practical implications for the marketing and brand management strategies of Apple and its authorised distributors in Indonesia, with a view to maximising customer retention, promoting positive word-of-mouth, and strengthening long-term loyalty in the premium smartphone market segment.

METHOD

This study applied a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design to test the causal relationships between the independent variables (brand personality, brand love, and brand image) and the dependent variable (brand advocacy). The study was conducted in Cirebon City in 2025, with a population comprising all iPhone consumers in the region. As defined by

Creswell (2009), a population is a group of subjects with relevant characteristics that constitute the primary source of data for drawing conclusions. Given the large and indeterminate size of the population, the sample was determined using purposive sampling — the deliberate selection of respondents based on the criteria of iPhone ownership and experience — so that the data obtained would be relevant to the phenomenon under study. The sample size was established in accordance with the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019), which recommend a minimum sample of 5 to 10 times the number of variable indicators. With a total of 37 indicators in the research model multiplied by 7, a sample of 259 respondents was obtained, which is considered sufficiently representative of the characteristics of the iPhone user population in the region.

The type of data used is quantitative primary data. According to Sugiyono (2023), primary data is data sourced directly from respondents without intermediaries. This data was collected directly from respondents through the distribution of online closed-ended questionnaires to iPhone consumers in Cirebon City. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale to accurately measure respondents' perceptions of brand personality, brand love, and brand image, which were then analysed to test the research hypotheses.

Data analysis was carried out using SmartPLS software and comprised two main stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and assessment of the structural model (inner model). Evaluation of the outer model focused on Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the validity and reliability of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha threshold of ≥ 0.7 . Following confirmation of instrument validity and reliability, evaluation of the inner model and hypothesis testing were conducted by analysing path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values to determine the significance of the relationships between variables. In addition, the strength of the model was assessed through the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the effect size measure (f^2) to comprehensively understand the behavioural mechanisms influencing brand advocacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that there were 259 respondents who completed the questionnaire, as described in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondent Description

Categories	Possible Answer	F	%
Gender	Male - Male	110	42,5%
	Women	149	57,5%
Age	< 19 years old	56	21,6%
	19 – 25 Years	179	69,1%
	> 25 Years	24	9,3%
Using the Product	Ya	259	100%
	No	0	0%

A total of 259 respondents, the majority were female (149 respondents) and most were in the age range of 21-25 years. All respondents were iPhone users. This pattern reflects the characteristics of consumers who have high attention to iPhone products, and are open to Brand Personality, *Brand Love*, and *Brand Image* in *Brand Advocacy* for iPhone products in Cirebon City today. Analysis outside the model was carried out to ensure that the measurement model applied in this study was appropriate. This conformity is evaluated through reliability and validity testing. Outer loading, average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, and construct reliability are some of the analytical tests conducted to ensure that the research data is valid and reliable. Each test method in this study serves to assess the extent to which the indicators used can show the measured construct, as well as to ensure the internal consistency of each variable in the research model.

Tabel 2 Measurement Model

Variable	Indicators	Outer loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<i>Brand Personality</i>	BP 1	0.751	0.955	0.955	0.633
	BP 2	0.810			
	BP 3	0.898			
	BP 4	0.758			
	BP 5	0.757			
	BP 6	0.725			
	BP 7	0.782			
	BP 8	0.804			
	BP 9	0.908			
	BP 10	0.793			
	BP 11.1	0.754			
	BP 11.2	0.751			
	BP 12.1	0.731			
	BP 12.2	0.888			
<i>Brand Love</i>	BL 1.1	0.862	0.961	0.961	0.698
	BL 1.2	0.824			
	BL 2	0.826			
	BL 3	0.779			
	BL 4	0.838			
	BL 5	0.866			
	BL 6.1	0.865			
	BL 6.2	0.835			
	BL 7	0.862			
	BL 8	0.808			
<i>Brand Image</i>	BI 1	0.782	0.914	0.916	0.626
	BI 2	0.815			
	BI 3	0.824			
	BI 4	0.750			

	BI 5	0.782			
	BI 6	0.745			
	BI 7	0.784			
	BI 8	0.840			
	BA 1	0.718			
	BA 2	0.774			
	BA 3	0.826			
	BA 4	0.822			
	BA 5	0.751			
<i>Brand Advocacy</i>	BA 6.1	0.831	0.942	0.943	0.633
	BA 6.2	0.785			
	BA 7	0.776			
	BA 8	0.813			
	BA 9.1	0.813			
	BA 9.2	0.837			

Based on Table 2, it shows that the outer loading value for each item has met the criteria with a value above 0.7. The extracted mean variance value (AVE) of each variable is more than 0.5. This shows that all of these variable indicators applied in this study are valid. In addition, the results of the reliability test showed that the reliability values of the alpha and Cronbach composites also met or met the criteria. Thus, it can be concluded that the research subject is valid and reliable for further analysis. Model analysis aims to assess the structural model used in predicting causal relationships between latent variables, i.e. variables that cannot be measured directly. The assessment in this study was carried out using indicators such as Adjusted R-squared (R^2) and Adjusted R-squared (Adjusted R^2) as shown in Table 3.

Tabel 3 R Square and Adjusted R Square Output

Vaiabel	R-square	R-square adjusted
<i>Brand Advocacy</i>	0.743	0.740

According to the structural model analysis using the partial least squares (PLS) method, the value of R (Ghozali & Latan, 2015)² of each endogenous variable can be examined. The change of R^2 is used as a tool to show the influence of each variable on the model's prediction results. There are several classifications of the value of R^2 : if R^2 is 0.75, the value has a strong influence; if R^2 is 0.50, the value has a moderate influence; and if R^2 is 0.25, the value has a weak influence. Based on the table above, the $R^{\text{value of } 2}$ for *Brand Advocacy* is 0.743 indicating moderate influence. Results using the F^2 indicator provided in Table 4.

Table 4 F-Square Output

Variabel	F Square
<i>Brand Personality (X1) -> Brand Advocacy (Y)</i>	0,034
<i>Brand Love (X2) -> Brand Advocacy (Y)</i>	0,224
<i>Brand Image (X3) -> Brand Advocacy(Y)</i>	0,097

Referring to the guidelines (Hair et al., 2019) , F^2 values are classified into three categories: 0.02 indicates weak influence, 0.15 moderate influence, and 0.35 strong influence. Based on Table 4, the Brand Love variable has an F^2 value of 0.224, which indicates moderate (close to strong) influence. Meanwhile, Brand Personality (0.034) and Brand Image (0.097) had an F^2 value below 0.15 but above 0.02, indicating a weak influence on dependent variables. The hypothesis test results are available in Table 5.

Table 5 Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Test Result	Conclusion Hypothesis
<i>Brand Personality -></i>	-0.257	-0,252	0,116	2.225	0.026	Signifikan	Accepted
<i>Brand Advocacy</i>							
<i>Brand Love -> Brand Advocacy</i>	0.734	0,726	0,129	5.682	0.000	Signifikan	Accepted
<i>Brand Image -> Brand Advocacy</i>	0.387	0,394	0,085	4.539	0.000	Signifikan	Accepted

1. The first hypothesis tests whether *Brand Personality* (X1) has a positive and significant effect on *Brand Advocacy* (Y). The table above shows a t-statistical value of 2.225 with an influence of -0.257 and a p-value of 0.026. With a t-statistical value of > 1.968 and a p-value of < 0.05 , it can be concluded that hypothesis one is accepted.
2. The second hypothesis tests whether *Brand Love* (X2) has a positive and significant effect on *Brand Advocacy* (Y). The table above shows a t-statistical value of 5.682 with an influence of 0.734 and a p-value of 0.000. With a t-statistical value of > 1.968 and a p-value of < 0.05 , it can be concluded that the second hypothesis is accepted.
3. The third hypothesis tests whether *Brand Image* (X3) has a positive and significant effect on *Brand Advocacy* (Y). The table above shows a t-statistical value of 4.539 with an influence of 0.387 and a p-value of 0.000. With a t-statistical value of > 1.968 and a p-value of < 0.05 , it can be concluded that the second hypothesis is accepted.
4. The fourth hypothesis tests whether *Brand Personality* (X1), *Brand Love* (X2), and *Brand Image* (X3) simultaneously have a significant effect on *Brand Advocacy* (Y). Table 3 R Square and Adjusted R Square Output shows the R^2 value for *Brand Advocacy* is 0.743 indicating moderate influence.

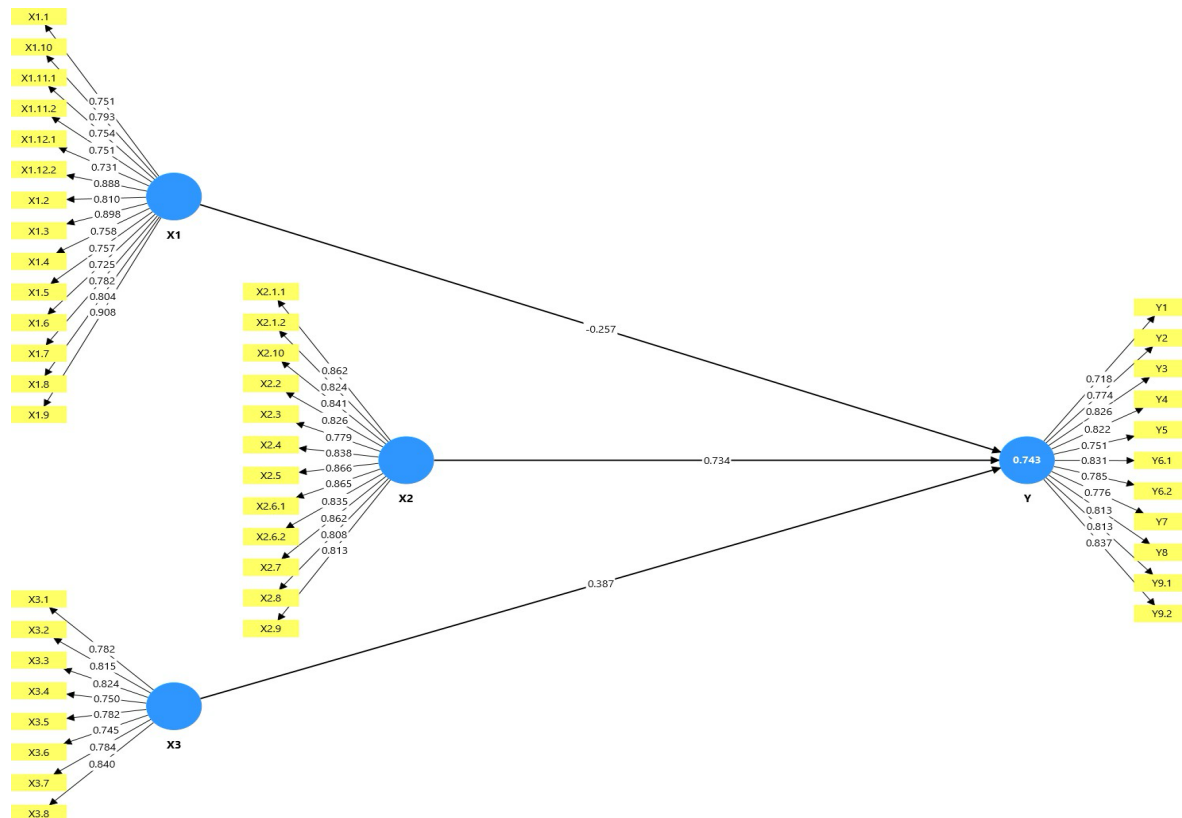


Figure 2 Path Analysis Output

H1: The Influence of *Brand Personality* (X1) on *Brand Advocacy* (Y)

Based on the results of the study with the help of the calculation of the SmartPLS 4.0 program, a t-statistical value of 2,225 with an influence of -0.257 was obtained. With a t-statistical value of > 1.968 and has a p-value of < 0.05 or $0.026 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that the *Brand Personality* variable has a positive and significant effect on *Brand Advocacy*.

The results of the analysis of the *Brand Personality* variable show that iPhone user respondents perceive the product to have a strong and distinctive character, especially in the *dimensions of Sophistication* (sophistication/prestige) and *Competence* (reliability). Users feel that elegant, prestigious, and innovative iPhone characters are able to represent their *self-concept* in a social environment. However, there are still limitations to certain *perceptions of Sincerity*, where some users feel that the relationship with the brand is more transactional functional than deeply emotional. This condition indicates that although the *iPhone Brand Personality* has succeeded in building a premium image that encourages user pride, the level of pure emotional attachment (*brand intimacy*) needs to be increased so that users not only wear, but also more actively defend the brand voluntarily.

This is in line with research that shows that (Maulani et al., 2023) *Brand Personality* has a positive and significant influence on *Brand Advocacy*, where a clear brand character helps consumers to more easily identify with the brand and recommend it to others. In addition, research on Apple (Zendra & Ferdinand, 2021) *smartphone* users found that the compatibility between brand personality and consumer personality (*self-congruity*) is a crucial factor that drives loyalty and advocacy. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the previous finding that a strong *Brand Personality* is able to increase user motivation to advocate (positive word-of-

mouth), but its optimization is highly dependent on the ability of brands to continue to maintain the relevance of innovative and classy characters in the eyes of their users.

H2: The Influence of *Brand Love* (X2) on *Brand Advocacy* (Y)

Based on the results of the study with the help of the calculation of the SmartPLS 4.0 program, a t-statistical value of 5,682 was obtained with an influence of 0.734. With a t-statistical value > 1.968 and a p-value of < 0.05 or $0.000 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that the *Brand Love* variable has a positive and significant effect on *Brand Advocacy*.

The results of the analysis of the *Brand Love* variable showed that the respondents of iPhone users had a very strong and deep emotional bond with the brand. Users feel a high passion and feel that the iPhone is not just a communication tool, but an integral part of their lifestyle and identity. The high coefficient value (0.868) indicates that the greater the consumer's love for the brand, the greater their desire to voluntarily recommend and defend the product to others. However, there are still challenges in the exclusivity aspect of the ecosystem (*walled garden*), where although users love the product very much, some are hesitant to recommend the iPhone to relatives on a budget due to the relatively high price of devices and accessories. However, these financial barriers do not reduce their personal loyalty, but are only ethical considerations when advocating to others.

These findings are in line with recent research by which proves that (Mayasari et al., 2024) *Brand Love* has a positive and significant effect on *Brand Advocacy*, where strong emotional bonds are the main driver for consumers to become brand advocates voluntarily. In addition, research on iPhone users in Surabaya also found that (Ningsih & Siregar, 2025) *Brand Love* plays a vital role in mediating brand experience into loyalty and advocacy, because consumers who are "in love" tend to ignore other alternatives and actively spread positive things. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the previous finding that *Brand Love* is the most effective predictor in increasing *Brand Advocacy*, but its optimization still requires a brand strategy to maintain the relevance of values so that the "love" is not eroded by increasingly competitive price considerations.

H3: The Influence of *Brand Image* (X3) on *Brand Advocacy* (Y)

Based on the results of the study with the help of the calculation of the SmartPLS 4.0 program, a t-statistical value of 4.539 was obtained with an influence of 0.387. With a t-statistical value of > 1.968 and a p-value of < 0.05 or $0.000 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that the *Brand Love* variable has a positive and significant effect on *Brand Advocacy*.

The results of the analysis of the *Brand Image* variable show that respondents perceive the iPhone as a product that has a premium, innovative, and high-class reputation. The exclusive image attached to the iPhone has created social *pride* for its users, so they feel confident to recommend this product to others as a symbol of status and quality assurance. However, there are still challenges to the perception of "affordability" and flexibility, where "expensive" imagery and *walled gardens* sometimes make users hesitant to fully advocate to audiences that are more price-sensitive or that require high customization. Nonetheless, these doubts do not weaken their overall positive perception, as a strong image of quality and safety remains the main argument as they defend the brand in the face of criticism.

These findings are in line with research that proves that (Fatkhurroh et al., 2024) *Brand Image* has a positive and significant effect on brand equity and loyalty in iPhone users, where a strong positive image is the main foundation for consumers to continue to support and

talk about brands in a positive way. In addition, the study also found that a good brand image significantly predicts loyalty and willingness to recommend products ((32) *word of mouth*) in *smartphone* users, as consumers tend to associate a positive brand image with a satisfaction guarantee that is worth sharing. Thus, the results of this study reinforce the previous finding that *a solid brand image* not only attracts buying interest, but also effectively converts consumers into brand advocates, as long as the perception of the premium value remains proportional to the real experience received.

H4: The Simultaneous Influence of Brand Personality, *Brand Love*, and *Brand Image* on *Brand Advocacy*

Based on the results of the structural model testing, it was found that brand personality, brand love, and brand image together — that is, simultaneously — have a significant and strong influence on brand advocacy. This is evidenced by a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.743, indicating that the combination of these three independent variables is able to explain 74.3% of the variation in brand advocacy intentions among iPhone users in Cirebon City. In accordance with the R^2 classification criteria of Hair et al. (2019), a value approaching 0.75 is categorised as a strong or substantial model. The remaining 25.7% of the variation is explained by other variables outside the scope of this study's model.

The results of this analysis indicate that advocacy behaviour among iPhone users in Cirebon City is not formed by a single factor but is rather the outcome of a synergy between a strong brand character, deep emotional bonds, and a prestigious brand reputation. When a consumer feels that the iPhone's personality resonates with their own self-concept (brand personality), holds a deep emotional attachment to the product (brand love), and trusts the premium reputation it projects (brand image), the impulse to defend and recommend the brand becomes deeply entrenched. The synergy of these three elements creates a form of positive brand enthusiasm, in which users not only remain loyal to the product but also actively function as voluntary brand advocates within their social environments.

These findings affirm the concept of Customer-Based Brand Equity, wherein brand advocacy represents the culmination of a hierarchy of consumer relationships built through rational perception (brand image) and emotional bonding (brand love and brand personality). For users in Cirebon City, the iPhone is perceived not merely as a sophisticated technological device but also as a lifestyle symbol that combines prestige with emotional attachment. A company strategy that successfully integrates brand character building, emotional engagement, and image maintenance simultaneously has therefore proven effective in mobilising consumers to become loyal advocates, even in the face of intense price competition (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024; Hayanimasy et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the tests and discussions carried out, it can be concluded that brand love is the most dominant driving factor of brand advocacy. The deep emotional bond and passion that users feel towards the iPhone has succeeded in creating a form of fanatical loyalty that transcends rational consideration. This emotional attachment makes users willing to become active brand advocates, even when they are aware of the price barriers or the high exclusivity of the Apple ecosystem. Brand personality also contributes significantly, providing strong brand characteristics such as sophistication and reliability that enable users to express

their identity through the products they use. These characteristics reinforce both the logical and emotional reasons for users to showcase and recommend the product to others.

Furthermore, a positive and premium brand image serves as the foundation of social trust. The iPhone's reputation as a high-quality and prestigious product instils a sense of confidence and social pride in users when they engage in advocacy. Although the perception of high pricing can occasionally present a challenge when recommending the product to certain consumer segments, a consistent image of quality remains the primary argument that validates users' advocacy behaviour. It can therefore be concluded that optimal brand advocacy among iPhone users is formed from the synergy between brand characteristics that are relevant to users' personal identity, a prestigious image that builds trust, and a deep emotional bond of love that motivates consumers to voluntarily become loyal brand promoters.

Based on the research findings, Apple is advised to continue strengthening its emotional branding strategy as the key driver of brand advocacy through humanistic marketing campaigns, community building, and personalised service that highlights the brand's innovative character. Apple should also manage the perception of price exclusivity judiciously — for example, through trade-in programmes — so that users do not hesitate to recommend products to a broader consumer segment. In line with these practical implications, future research is encouraged to enrich these insights by exploring additional variables such as brand trust, customer experience, or economic aspects such as perceived price fairness as a moderating variable, as well as broadening the scope of investigation through intergenerational comparisons or qualitative approaches to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of emotional attachment underlying user loyalty.

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