

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

THE IMPACT OF BRAND IMAGE ON BRAND LOYALTY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND LOVE

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Citation (APA): Mahothan, T., Laohavichien, T., Srivardhana, T., Lertlop, W., Lakviramsiri, A., Chantabutr, P. (2022). The Impact of Brand Image on Brand Loyalty: The Mediating Role Of Brand Love. *International Journal of eBusiness and eGovernment Studies*, 14 (2), 18-34. doi:10.34111/ijepeg. 202214122

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—Abstract—

Brand loyalty is essential for maintaining a business's clients. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate its causes and effects. However, this research does not adequately explain brand loyalty's cognitive and emotional antecedents, particularly for expensive products. Prior research viewed brand image as a cognitive component of consumer behavior. In contrast, brand love is a dynamic marketing construct that has been found to influence crucial marketing variables such as word-of-mouth and buy intent. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to validate a model that examines the antecedents of brand loyalty, namely brand image and brand love, in the context of the mobile sector. The conceptual model and accompanying hypotheses are evaluated using a sample of 400 mobile industry consumers. The data were examined using structural equation modeling. The results indicate robust links between brand image and brand love, as well as between brand love and its consequence (brand loyalty).

Keywords: Brand Image, Brand Love, Brand Loyalty, Brand Identification

1. INTRODUCTION

In a world that is becoming more networked, businesses confront greater competition and more product and service options than ever before (Mahir et al., 2021). The discussion surrounding the company's brand focuses on customer loyalty, and sustaining partnerships with customers is crucial to business success in the present day. A company's and its customers' relationship can be mutually beneficial (Zhang et al., 2016). In a competitive market, businesses must establish and maintain consumer loyalty (Al-Suraihi et al., 2020). Brand loyalty enables customers to make more informed purchasing decisions and reduces the possibility that they will move to a competing brand (Suryawardani et al., 2020).

Sarwar et al. (2021) also emphasize the importance of brand loyalty to businesses, claiming that brand loyalty can bring value to businesses by reducing marketing

expenses, increasing trade, recruiting new customers, and allowing more time to respond to the threat of competition. [Marliawati et al. \(2020\)](#) also explained that loyal customers would purchase more, they are not price-sensitive, they are not susceptible to advertisements from other competitors, they cost less, spread positive word-of-mouth about the product, and give positive product recommendations to other customers, thereby making the company more competitive.

Clients who remain faithful to a single brand over an extended period benefit the business financially ([Budur, 2021](#)). Maintaining a positive customer experience is also essential to a company's long-term performance, and this can be achieved by preserving some core service activities that foster client loyalty ([Sangwan et al., 2018](#)). Customers evaluate goods and services in contentment and discontentment, with the latter being the more likely outcome of their purchases ([Soelasih, 2020](#)). It is necessary to believe in a brand to develop brand loyalty ([P. S. Coelho et al., 2018](#)). Several factors, such as a customer's prior interactions with a brand and the company's reputation, can influence brand trust ([P. S. Coelho et al., 2018](#)). This new marketing construct measures satisfied consumers' intense emotional attachment to a particular brand name. It is commonly referred to as "brand love," comprised of hedonic products and brand self-expression ([A. Coelho et al., 2019](#)). Many researchers then attempt to identify the antecedents of brand love, which include brand passion ([Huang, 2017](#)), brand identification ([P. S. Coelho et al., 2018](#)), brand trust ([Kazmi et al., 2019](#)), corporate social responsibility: CSR ([Tanveer et al., 2021](#)), and brand commitment ([Jamshidi et al., 2021](#)), among others.

Unlike "brand image," which is described as "me-ness" and "not me-ness" ([Mai et al., 2021](#)), "brand self-expressiveness" is not often utilized in the mobile industry. In the first instance, "me-ness" and "not me-ness" are equivalent ideas ([Hien et al., 2020](#); [Mai et al., 2021](#)). There is a distinction between brand image and self-expressiveness; brand self-expressiveness is the use of a brand to express one's inner self and enhance one's social self. This suggests that brand self-expression can be divided into two distinct components: internal and social self-expression. Consequently, buyers begin to equate luxury brands with enhancing their feeling of self and social standing ([Kato, 2022](#)). This is why luxury products have a beneficial effect on the inner and social selves of buyers. Brand image is the consumer's recall of the brand due to prior consumption or service and advertising or word-of-mouth from the referral group. In contrast, the brand image is the consumer's remembering of the brand. Therefore, the author is curious whether a company's brand image precedes its affection for its brand.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Social identity theory and attachment theory serve as this investigation's conceptual framework and hypotheses. The notion of social identity explains why consumers form links with brands and businesses and why they feel a sense of belonging to a company

(Kazmi et al., 2019). According to attachment theory, a person has an attachment to a focal object when there are distinct and targeted emotional relationships between the human and the item (e.g., individual, brand and company). It displays a person's commitment and participation in a brand's connection by exhibiting their complete devotion to the brand. It indicates a person's commitment to a particular brand (Arghashi et al., 2021). According to this idea, people's level of brand attachment reflects their cognitive solid and emotional views of a particular brand in the minds of consumers (Anwar et al., 2020). This study intends to develop a novel model based on social identity theory and attachment theory to investigate mobile brands' cognitive and emotional components. These conversations are the basis for this research.

2.2 Brand Image

The concept that gave rise to the phrase "brand image" first developed from the concept of "experiential marketing." According to Lari et al. (2021), brand image is a collection of consumer memory-related associations. Also, according to Marliawati et al. (2020), brand image is based on consumer impressions of a particular brand. These views are kept in the consumer's memory as a network of connections, which can be converted into three crucial characteristics of the brand's image: the favorability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations. Mohammed et al. (2018) created the concept of "brand image" by describing it as the customer's perception of the quality of the supplied product or service, leading to a more favorable consumer mentality. The brand's image is a potent tool that can be utilized to differentiate the company's products from those of its competitors. According to Munir et al. (2017), the brand image results from the interplay between the product stimuli and the recipient. In the past ten years, scholars in the fashion, tourism, automobile, and insurance industries have become increasingly interested in the brand image approach (Lari et al., 2021). Moreover, several studies have demonstrated that brand image has a favorable impact on marketing structures such as brand satisfaction, brand trust, brand loyalty, brand equity, and readiness to pay a premium price (Jamshidi et al., 2021; Munir et al., 2017).

2.3 Brand Love

Before the first discussion of brand love by Carroll et al. (2006) , Shimp et al. (1988) developed love-like feelings for goods based on Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, which describes a person-to-person relationship that combines three psychological components (commitment, intimacy, and passion). In addition, Shimp and Madden assert that love-like feelings for items combine commitment, liking, and longing. Therefore, interpersonal love and brand love vary in that interpersonal love is bidirectional, and brand love is unidirectional, according to Huang (2017). Currently, the love construct is quantified using two different brand love measures (Carroll et al., 2006; Thomson et al., 2005), even though both scales contain significant conceptual and statistical inaccuracies. Albert et al. (2010) created a brand love scale of interpersonal love components derived from four separate scales. The proposed

instrument includes two dimensions, passion and attachment, and twelve items. The psychometric characteristics of the scale appear to be satisfactory from a statistical standpoint. In addition, [Carroll et al. \(2006\)](#) defined brand love as "a person's degree of strong emotional attachment to a particular trade name." And many studies on brand love indicate that consumers are willing to forgive the mistakes of the businesses they love, they will disseminate positive remarks about the brands they love ([Arghashi et al., 2021](#); [Carroll et al., 2006](#)), and when there is a brand love, consumers will repeat purchase ([Carroll et al., 2006](#); [A. Coelho et al., 2019](#); [Thomson et al., 2005](#)). In addition to brand loyalty decreasing price elasticity ([Huang, 2017](#); [Thomson et al., 2005](#)), consumers are more resistant to negative brand news. Moreover, brand love is crucial in marketing since it correlates favorably with brand loyalty and word-of-mouth ([Anwar et al., 2020](#); [Carroll et al., 2006](#)).

2.4 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is one of the most frequently discussed notions in marketing, with academics recognizing the variety of advantages it provides. According to [Popp et al. \(2017\)](#), brand loyalty requires good buying behavior and a favorable brand opinion. [Budur \(2021\)](#) defined brand loyalty as "a firmly held commitment to continuously repurchase a preferred product or service in the future, notwithstanding the possibility for situational effects and marketing efforts to induce switching behavior." Brand loyalty affects purchasing intent and word-of-mouth ([Civelek et al., 2019](#)). [Huang \(2017\)](#) examined brand loyalty and concluded that there are two types: cognitive and affective (attitudinal) loyalty and behavioral loyalty (conative and action). According to [P. S. Coelho et al. \(2018\)](#), brand loyalty may be classified into two categories: (1) emotional loyalty, which is based on a positive attitude toward a brand, and (2) rational loyalty, which is based on logic. When a customer is loyal to a brand, it provides a constant or increased market share and competitive advantage, according to [Mai et al. \(2021\)](#), since loyal consumers will continue to purchase products. Customers with brand loyalty will not move to a different brand, are willing to pay a premium for that brand, and speak favorably about it to others ([Hiranrithikorna et al., 2019](#)).

2.5 Hypothesis and Research Model

Brand image refers to a consumer's brand memory as experienced through brand associations ([Hien et al., 2020](#)). As a basis for tactical marketing mix difficulties and for developing a long-term brand image, research has long been recognized as the core of marketing and advertising study ([Arifin et al., 2020](#)). A brand's image was defined as a customer's perception of the brand based on brand associations ([Mohammed et al., 2018](#)). The brand image was also the customer's reaction to the brand's name, symbol, or impression and served as an indicator of product quality. This was a collection of assets and liabilities associated with the brand name, indicating that the assets and liabilities might increase or decrease the value by offering items or services to customers ([Arifin et al., 2020](#)). Since time immemorial, a brand's reputation has affected customer purchases. A more extraordinary brand image indicated that the

offered product quality had surpassed a certain level. However, purchasers' lack of confidence in items was reflected in a low brand image or the absence of a brand (Mai et al., 2021). If the community's reasonable opinion of the brand were regularly maintained, the firm's products and services would gain a stronger financial position, a sustainable competitive advantage, and an increase in market share or performance (Hien et al., 2020). Affiliations are a type of informational node linked to the brand node in a consumer's memory, the node where the brand's meaning is kept (Kato, 2022). According to Lari et al. (2021), the product image results from the interaction between the receiver and the product stimuli, such as product qualities, the company, the marketing mix, the individual perceptions of the brand, personal values, and customer experiences. Numerous studies, including those conducted by Mai et al. (2021), Eklund (2022), and Al-Haddad (2019), suggest that a company's brand image can influence the extent to which people love and remain loyal to its products or services.

Consequently, we expect that brand image will also affect brand affection and loyalty. Therefore:

H1. Brand image will have an impact on brand love.

H2. Brand image will have an impact on brand loyalty.

Since the inception of brand management, brand affection has been a hot topic among brand managers. Customers can treat a brand as if it were a person and fall in love with it like they would a person (Razak et al., 2020). Scholars based their idea of the consumer–brand connection on the three-part tripartite conceptualization of interpersonal love, i.e., intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment (Cassepp-Borges, 2021). There are two types of emotions connected with brands: affection and desire. A person's initial purchase of a product or service is indicative of their short-term liking and desire for that brand. However, their long-term commitment is demonstrated by repeated purchases of the same product or service. Since corporations have realized that consumer love for their brands is essential in establishing strong customer relationships, brands that can make their customers love their brands are more effective at sustaining a long-term competitive advantage and out-competing their competitors (Palusuk et al., 2019). Marketing researchers have examined the phenomenon of brand loyalty (Hsu et al., 2018). The solution provided by Gumparathi et al. (2020) was that consumers might develop feelings of affection for a brand and form strong ties with it. Brand love has been defined by Palusuk et al. (2019) as "the degree of intense emotional attachment that a person has for a specific brand name," which is a combination of emotion and passion. (1) passion for a brand, (2) brand attachment, (3) favorable evaluation of the brand, (4) pleasant feelings in response to the brand, and (5) professed love for the brand" are all defining characteristics of consumer love. (Gumparathi et al., 2020). Singh et al. (2021) coined the term "brand love" to describe consumers who are devoted to their favorite brands. Consumers should not desire sexual closeness with businesses, a sensation often associated with intense

interpersonal affection. Interpersonal love is bidirectional, but brand love is unidirectional. Moreover, love is sometimes viewed as distinct from liking; that is, love is not an extreme form of liking but rather a concept distinct from but related to liking (Otero et al., 2018).

We, therefore, hypothesize that brand affection will affect brand loyalty. Therefore:

H3. Brand love will have an impact on brand loyalty

Then, Figure 1 is displayed the conceptual model.

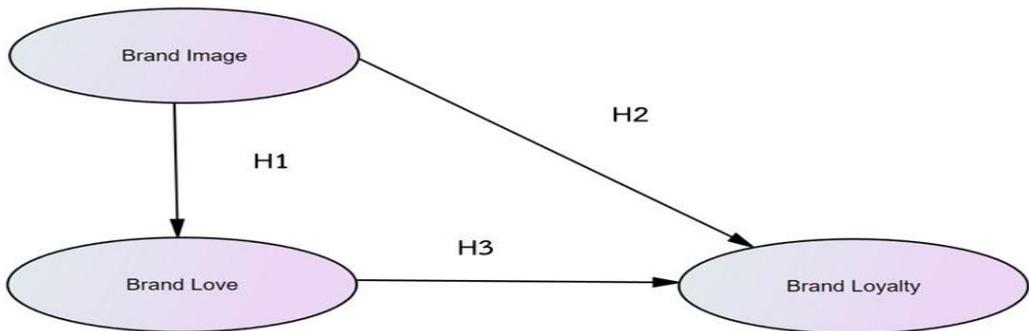


Figure 1: The conceptual model

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study's primary objective is to identify the characteristics influencing brand loyalty. The effect of brand image on brand love was investigated for this aim. In addition, the role of brand love in brand loyalty was investigated. This study's population margins consist of current iPhone users who have used the device for at least six months from iMoD, a Thai Facebook-based online community. There are 1,707,914 members of iMoD, and the poll began with a filter to guarantee that the respondent was an iPhone user. The sampling technique utilized was known as the convenience sampling technique. It was determined that the sampling size should be $n=400$, and the margin of error should be $e=5\%$. This was accomplished inside the 95% confidence interval. After eliminating improperly or poorly completed questions, the total number of questionnaires used for analysis was 400. January of 2022 marked the completion of the questionnaire.

The brand image scale was created by Park et al. (1986) and Aydin et al. (2005). The brand love scale was created by Carroll et al. (2006), whereas Oliver created the brand loyalty scale Oliver (1999). The variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, with five indicating strong agreement and one indicating significant disagreement. A structural equation model, or SEM, was utilized to validate the model. For the sake of this endeavor, the statistical programs SPSS 16 and AMOS 16 were used. A set of relationships between continuous or discrete independent variables and one or more continuous or discrete dependent variables can be analyzed using a series

of statistical techniques known as structural equation modeling (SEM). These techniques comprise the collection of statistical methodologies. Both the independent and dependent variables could simultaneously be factors or measured variables. Structural equation modeling also goes by the titles causal modeling, causal analysis, simultaneous equation modeling, analysis of covariance structures, route analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. A synonym for structural equation modeling is confirmatory factor analysis. The latter two types of SEM are regarded to be specialized types.

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency; for the reliability to be deemed acceptable, the value must be at least 0.7, while a value greater than 0.8 is considered good reliability. In addition, we found that Cronbach's alpha scale for the brand image is 0.821, while the scales for brand love and brand loyalty are 0.952 and 0.946, respectively.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Data

As indicated previously, the mobile sector serves as the context for our analysis. The mobile industry is amid a war, and as of the fourth quarter of 2021, the iPhone is the most popular smartphone in Thailand. (iPhone 22% market share, Samsung 20%) Xiaomi 12 percent , Oppo 9 percent , and Vivo 8 percent). The study specializes in young consumers for various reasons: It is common knowledge that millennials are the generation most competent at acquiring new skills and investigating new technology (Amoroso et al., 2018). In addition, Bairrada et al. (2018) find that brand intimacy only affects perceived value among young consumers. We collected a total of 400 convenience samples. The sample was composed of 55.5% men and 44.5% women. The percentage of respondents between the ages of 25 and 34 was 37.75 percent, while the percentage of respondents between the ages of 15 and 24 was 39.25 percent. Generation Z and millennials comprise the great majority of this study's participants and span the age range covered by this investigation. The percentage of individuals with less than a bachelor's degree is 47.5 percent, while the percentage of those with a bachelor's degree is 46.0 percent. They are students 33.25 percent of the time and employed by the company 44.75 percent of the time. Recent research indicates that millennials are more emotionally committed to their shopping decisions than previous generations. Moreover, despite having lower salaries, millennials continue to purchase expensive things (Shin et al., 2017). Therefore, the elements mentioned above may influence their consumption behaviors.

4.2 Measurement Model

An item is significant if its loadings are superior to 0.6, which means that the factor explains 50% of their variance. This study is no indicator with a loading lower than 0.6

from the affective dimension of brand image, brand love, and brand loyalty. Then we did not remove any of the indicators.

Table 1: Modification-fit Index

Goodness of fit index	Before modification	After modification	Acceptable fit
Chi-Square	1079.16	265.52	
Degree of Freedom	87	74	
Chi-square/df	12.40	3.59	≤ 5.00
GFI	0.749	0.926	> 0.900
NFI	0.846	0.962	≥ 0.900
RFI	0.815	0.946	≥ 0.900
IFI	0.857	0.972	≥ 0.900
TLI	0.827	0.961	≥ 0.900
CIF	0.857	0.972	≥ 0.900
RMSEA	0.169	0.080	≤ 0.080

Notes: All these values are within the acceptable range of fit.

According to the findings of the goodness-of-fit index applied to the measurement model, comprised of 15 questions and three variables, the measurement model had a poor fit. After that, the change needs to be implemented. [Table 1](#) displays the values that best describe the fit before and after the adjustment. [Table 2](#) displays the standardization of the regression weights as well as the construct reliability.

The Chi-square statistic examines the difference between the observed and estimated data. This figure is projected to be extremely near to 0. In contrast, the degree of freedom is essential when the number of accessible samples is relatively large. If the Chi-square/df ratio is fewer than five, the model and the data point are a good match ([Arbuckle, 2006](#)). According to our investigation's findings, this ratio should be 3.59. The fact that this result was attained suggests that the datum and the model are an excellent match. The outcomes of the path analysis performed on the research model are depicted in [Figure 2](#).

[Table 3](#) demonstrates that, except for the variety-seeking criterion, all of the fit criteria have acceptable values. As determined by the study, there was an association between brand image and brand love ($B=0.916$, $p=0.000$) and brand loyalty ($B=0.285$, $p=0.009$). And brand love was discovered to influence brand loyalty ($B=0.723$, $p=0.000$). The following is a collection of findings that support the hypotheses investigated during the research regarding the potential explanations.

H1. Brand image will impact brand love; the hypothesis has been accepted.

H2. Brand image will impact brand loyalty; the hypothesis has been accepted.

H3. Brand love will impact brand loyalty; the hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 2: Standardized Regression Weights and Construct Reliability

Construct	Standardized Regression Weights	Construct Reliability	Construct	Standardized Regression Weights	Construct Reliability
<u>Brand Image</u>		0.821	<u>Brand Love</u>		
BI1	0.693		BL4	0.886	
BI2	0.770		BL5	0.836	
BI3	0.634		BL6	0.896	
BI4	0.848				
<u>Brand Love</u>		0.952	<u>Brand Loyalty</u>		0.946
BL1	0.910		BT1	0.991	
BL2	0.815		BT2	0.774	
BL3	0.915		BT3	0.750	
			BT4	0.773	
			BT5	0.987	

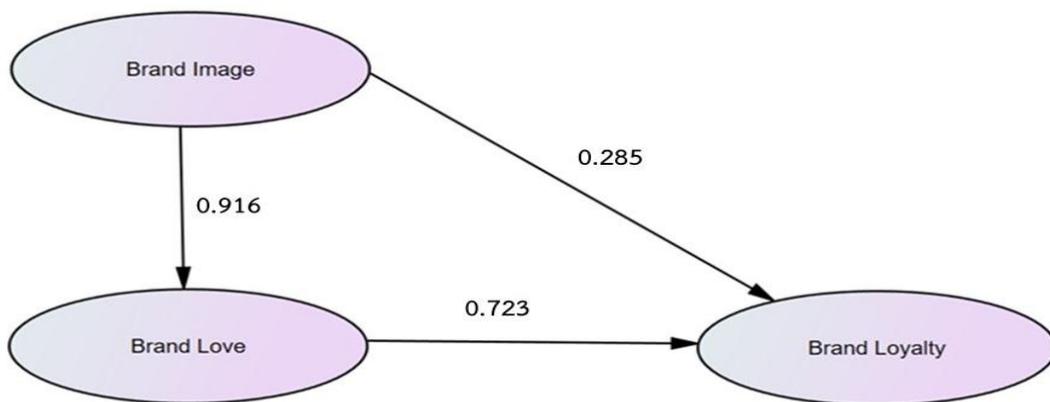


Figure 2: Path Analysis

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Table 3: Estimated Values and Fit Criteria for the Model

Relationships in the model	Direct impact	Indirect impact	Total impact	SE.	p-Value
Brand image-Brand love	0.916		0.916	0.059	0.000
Brand image-Brand loyalty	0.285	0.662	0.947	0.109	0.009
Brand love-Brand loyalty	0.723		0.723	0.097	0.000

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The goal of the current study was to determine the correlations between brand love and brand image concerning brand loyalty. In addition, the study will examine the direct relationship between brand love and brand image. Businesses not only want their customers to be satisfied with the things they purchase but also want them to remain brand loyal. Consequently, satisfaction alone is insufficient to induce a consumer to create a lasting relationship with a brand. Building "brand love" is crucial, which refers to an emotional connection between a client group that transcends essential product or service satisfaction.

According to the research, there is a direct relationship between the quality of a company's image and the level of brand loyalty among consumers. Contrary to this, the findings of several studies do not support this position (Kato, 2022; Tanveer et al., 2021; Yen et al., 2022). There was no association between the expansion or contraction of brand image and brand loyalty. The research discovered the unique realization that brand love is the central element in determining behavioral loyalty. This result was not at all what I had anticipated. According to the findings of this study, "brand love" was conceptualized as comparable to a transient romantic passion, and it was hypothesized that this could result in "short-term responses" or behavioral loyalty. According to the findings of this study, brand love, characterized as a transitory emotional feeling, is directly responsible for short-term behavioral loyalty, such as completing a purchase. This is a profound realization.

To contribute to the growth of client affection for a brand, it must possess a brand image. Brand image has a substantial influence on brand love, and brand love substantially affects brand loyalty. The relevant research findings support these findings. The influence of brand image on brand love is consistent with the findings of Mai et al. (2021) and Gumparathi et al. (2020). In contrast, the effect of brand image on brand loyalty is consistent with the findings of Jatiyananda et al. (2021). And the outcome of the effect of brand love on brand loyalty corresponds to the findings of Santos et al. (2021).

Customers will then purchase a specific product and brand because they believe it is a good fit. If the brand's image is positive, more individuals will love the brand. When a customer loves a brand, they develop brand loyalty and are more likely to promote the brand to individuals in their immediate vicinity.

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This study gives management ideas for developing client brand love and loyalty activities, focusing on the mobile phone industry. Through brand love, companies seeking to develop behavioral loyalty should employ sensory marketing techniques (see, feel, touch, smell, and hear). These techniques include sight, touch, smell, and hearing. On the other hand, companies seeking to promote attitude loyalty are advised

to employ a similar strategy, sensory marketing, but via brand image. This is because sensory marketing is more likely to elicit good feelings. Putting this into practice could be accomplished by, for instance, designing a stylish product appearance to increase customer loyalty to the brand and equipping mobile phones with dependable product functions to enhance the brand image of mobile phone companies. Alternately, this could be achieved by creating a product with a user-friendly interface to increase client loyalty. Alternately, businesses can shape customers' intellectual loyalty through intellectual or behavioral marketing methods via brand love and develop customer loyalty via brand image. This can be achieved by building a positive brand image in customers' minds. These techniques could be implemented by utilizing specialized social media platforms such as WeChat, Line, and Facebook, as well as online games to encourage client engagement and participation. Additionally, these tactics could be used to acquire new clients. Consequently, organizations are heavily pushed to cultivate strong feelings of love and loyalty for their brands, regardless of the client acquisition strategy they choose to employ.

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