

The Impact of Brand Awareness, Brand Identity, and Brand Image on Lovemarks and Brand Evangelism: A Comparative Analysis of Smartphone Users

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Citation: Sukhabot, S., & Phetburi, W. (2025). The Impact of Brand Awareness, Brand Identity, and Brand Image on Lovemarks and Brand Evangelism: A Comparative Analysis of Smartphone Users. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(3), 672–684. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i3.2474>

Published: November 27, 2025

ABSTRACT

The study examines the motivations for brand evangelism in the smartphone sector, along with the determinants of brand love and respect. It also analyzes and compares businesses utilizing diverse marketing strategies to ascertain if the influence metrics and frameworks vary. The study included 800 Thai consumers aged 18 and above who used the two predominant smartphone manufacturers with the biggest market share in 2024. They have utilized these gadgets for over six months. Brand awareness, brand identity, and brand image were evaluated. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling techniques and multiple group analysis. The findings indicated that brand identity and brand image significantly affect brand love and respect, which subsequently promote brand evangelism. Brand awareness directly influenced brand respect, although it did not affect brand love. The brand, despite its extensive awareness, failed to establish a deep emotional connection with individuals. The study provides theoretical insights on Lovemarks and brand evangelism, particularly inside firms that give emotional, social, and functional value. Furthermore, despite the deployment of diverse marketing strategies by these businesses, the research reveals no distinction between the underlying characteristics of brand love and respect and their impact on brand evangelism within the smartphone industry, even across multiple contexts. By employing this strategy, companies may adapt marketing strategies and evaluate brand advocacy across several Asian countries and many industries.

Keywords: Brand Evangelism, Brand Love, Brand Respect, Lovemarks, Smartphone.

INTRODUCTION

Differentiating brands in today's competitive market is increasingly challenging. The concept of *lovemarks* (Kevin, 2005) highlights the emotional connection—specifically love and respect—that consumers develop toward a brand, which often leads to brand evangelism. In this state, customers not only remain loyal but also actively promote and defend the brand through advocacy and opposition to competitors (Jahanvi & Sharma, 2021; Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2021; Harrigan et al., 2021; Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Doss, 2014). Research identifies several key factors contributing to brand love and respect, including brand awareness (Cho et al., 2015; Purnamaa & Riyantob, 2020), brand identity (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015; Pontinha & Vale, 2020), and brand image (Yusniar et al., 2015; Cuong, 2020). However, the impact of brand awareness remains inconclusive, with some studies suggesting inconsistencies in its influence on emotional brand attachment (Cho, 2011; Madadi et al., 2021).

This study focuses on the top two smartphone brands in market share in Thailand (the two leading smartphone brands with the highest market share in 2024 are hypothetically named AAA and BBB). Both brands have been

acknowledged for their distinct value dimensions: Brand AAA is recognized for delivering emotional and social value (Ayie Licsi (2022), whereas Brand BBB is associated with functional or utilitarian value. (Marketeer, 2018). And recognized as 'lovemarks' with strong brand evangelists (Riivits-Arkonsuo et al., 2014; Anggarini, 2018). The research aims to examine the factors that elevate these brands to lovemark status, their influence on brand evangelism, and the invariance of the brand evangelism model between the two (both emotionally and socially driven brands and those that offer functional value) to examine whether the structural relationships among the variables differ between consumers of Brand A and Brand B. (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2018)

The findings offer valuable insights for businesses aiming to create 'lovemarks' that resonate with customers and foster sustainable growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to consumers' ability to recognize or recall a brand, shaped by their familiarity and perceptions (Ismail et al., 2018). Aaker (2008) classified it into four levels: brand unawareness, recognition, recall, and top-of-mind awareness. Studies show that higher brand awareness fosters both brand love and respect, as familiarity often leads to emotional attachment and admiration. For instance, Purnamaa and Riyantob (2020) found that brand awareness enhances love for herbal medicine brands, while Celik (2022), Park and Namkung (2022), and Cho et al. (2015) confirmed similar effects across different sectors. Additionally, brand awareness contributes to respect, as shown in studies by Madeleine (2013), Cho et al. (2015), and Knihová (2016). These findings lead to the following hypotheses:

- H1: Brand awareness influences brand love.
- H2: Brand awareness influences brand respect.

Brand Identity

Brand identity refers to the unique traits that distinguish a brand from competitors and reflect consumers' self-image and aspirations (Mamesah et al., 2020). When customers identify with a brand, it can strengthen emotional bonds and foster brand love (Pontinha & Vale, 2020; Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Albert & Merunka, 2013; Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015; Souri et al., 2021). Moreover, brand identity helps build recognition and trust, leading to brand respect (Kapferer, 2012). Studies by Kusá & Záziková (2016), Shuv-Ami et al. (2017), and Donmez (2020) support that a distinctive identity—whether of products, fans, or partner firms—can enhance respect toward the brand or organization. These insights lead to the following hypotheses:

- H3: Brand identity influences brand love.
- H4: Brand identity influences brand respect.

Brand Image

Brand image refers to consumers' perceptions shaped by associations, experiences, and emotions, influenced by product attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Kotler & Keller, 2016). A positive brand image strengthens emotional attachment, leading to brand love (Yusniar et al., 2015; Dam, 2020), and also fosters brand respect, as seen in Cuong's (2020) study on fast-food brands. Emotional perception of brand image helps consumers recognize a product's core value, reinforcing respect (Mabkhot et al., 2017), with further support from Cho (2011), Cho et al. (2015), and Lari et al. (2021). Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H5: Brand image influences brand love.
- H6: Brand image influences brand respect.

Brand Love

Brand love is the emotional bond customers form with a brand through trust, satisfaction, and positive experiences (Heinrich & Fetscherin, 2014). Rooted in Sternberg's (1986) Triangular Theory of Love—intimacy, passion, and commitment—it drives consumers to become loyal advocates who use, recommend, and defend the brand (Song et al., 2019). Research supports that brand love fosters devotion, loyalty, and brand defense (Porntasri & Khamwon, 2020, 2021; Bagozzi et al., 2017; Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Harrigan et al., 2021). In light of this finding, the following hypothesis is suggested.

- H7: Brand love influences brand evangelism.

Brand Respect

Brand respect is the positive perception consumers have of a brand, shaped by its quality, reliability, and reputation (Chen et al., 2020). It is earned through consistent performance and trustworthiness (Pawle & Cooper, 2006), which fosters customer loyalty in both emotion and behavior (Ndubisi, 2007). This loyalty then drives brand evangelism, as supported by Kim et al. (2018), Montoya-Restrepo et al. (2020), and Jahanvi & Sharma (2021), who found that brand respect strongly influences brand evangelism and word-of-mouth. The following hypothesis arises from this insight.

H8: Brand respect influences brand evangelism.

The mediating effect of brand love on the relationship between brand awareness and brand evangelism

Brand awareness can develop into brand love, characterized by passion and attachment (Aaker, 2008; Purnamaa & Riyantob, 2020; Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020). This love influences evangelistic behaviors such as word-of-mouth and brand protection (Song et al., 2019; Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2021; Madadi et al., 2021).

H9: Brand love mediates the relationship between brand awareness and brand evangelism.

The mediating effect of brand love on the relationship between brand identity and brand evangelism

When brand identity reflects the consumer's self-concept, it fosters a sense of belonging and brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Pontinha & Vale, 2020), which leads to loyalty and active engagement (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015).

H10: Brand love mediates the relationship between brand identity and brand evangelism.

The mediating effect of brand love on the relationship between brand image and brand evangelism

A positive brand image builds favorable perceptions and brand love (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Porter & Claycomb, 1997; Cho, 2011), which in turn promotes brand evangelism (Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2020; Achmad et al., 2020).

H11: Brand love mediates the relationship between brand image and brand evangelism.

The influence of brand respect as a mediator between brand awareness and brand evangelism

Brand awareness fosters brand respect because familiarity leads to confidence in the brand (Aaker, 1991; Madeleine, 2013). This respect relates to consumer loyalty in terms of feelings and behaviors (Pawle & Cooper, 2006; Ndubisi, 2007) and positively affects repurchase intention and word-of-mouth (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018). Brand respect also acts as a mediator between brand awareness and evangelism (Montoya-Restrepo et al., 2020).

H12: Brand respect mediates the relationship between brand awareness and brand evangelism.

The influence of brand respect as a mediator between brand identity and brand evangelism

Brand identity differentiates the brand and builds trust, leading to brand respect (Kapferer, 2012; Klinčeková & Šalgovičová, 2016). This respect enhances brand loyalty and evangelism (Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015; Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018).

H13: Brand respect mediates the relationship between brand identity and brand evangelism.

The influence of brand respect as a mediator between brand image and brand evangelism

Brand image increases value and respect (Lari et al., 2021), which promotes brand evangelism (Cho, 2011). Brand respect also mediates the relationship between brand image and evangelism (Kocyigit, Kucukcivil, & Ozupek, 2022).

H14: Brand respect mediates the relationship between brand image and brand evangelism.

Brand Evangelism

Brand evangelists are highly enthusiastic customers who actively share their experiences, promote the brand through word-of-mouth, and advocate for it by recommending products, speaking positively, and rejecting competitors (Doss, 2014). Unlike loyal customers who stick to a brand without promoting it, evangelists go further by defending the brand against criticism and are even willing to pay a premium (Mamesah et al., 2020).

The relationship between the love and respect model towards brands and its impact on brand evangelism within the smartphone sector

This study examines how brand love and brand respect influence brand evangelism among smartphone users, comparing AAA brands (emotionally and socially driven) (Ayie Licsi, 2022) with BBB brands (focused on functional value) (Marketeer, 2018). Using structural equation modelling, it assesses measurement consistency across groups, highlighting the need for reliable scales in diverse populations (Hair et al., 2018). Previous studies support this, showing no significant loyalty differences across brands (Gravelle, 2021) and no impact of user group differences on the link between brand awareness and perceived value (Jacob, 2021). These findings support the study's hypothesis:

H15: The connection model between brand love and brand respect, along with their influence on brand evangelism, remains consistent among smartphone brands.

METHODOLOGY

The study focused on Thai consumers aged 18+ who had used AAA or BBB smartphones—the country's top two brands (Canalys, 2023)—for at least six months (Hsu, 2019). Using Cochran's formula, 800 respondents (400 per brand) were selected with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Data were collected via a Google Forms questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") and covering six variables: brand awareness, identity, image, love, respect, and evangelism.:

Brand awareness: The ability to recognize and recall a brand's logo or symbols across media, reflecting familiarity and differentiation (Cho, 2011; Han et al., 2015; Homjitr, 2015; Mudzakkir & Nurfarida, 2015; Bernarto et al., 2020).

Brand identity: A unique brand individuals associate with to express their ideal self (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010; Elbanawey, 2017; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2020; Mao et al., 2020).

Brand image: Perception of the brand aligned with self-image—seen as attractive, prestigious, consistent, and innovative—leading to satisfaction and a positive attitude (Unal & Aydin, 2013; Homjitr, 2015; Mabkhot et al., 2017; Bernarto et al., 2020; Dam, 2020).

Brand love: A strong emotional attachment to a brand, marked by passion, closeness, and joy (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Heinrich et al., 2008; Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018; Kazmi & Khalique, 2019; Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020).

Brand respect: Built on trust, clear communication, credibility, and genuine commitment to customer satisfaction (Cho, 2011; Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018; Song et al., 2019).

Brand evangelism: Actively promoting, defending, and spreading positive word of mouth, encouraging repurchase, and influencing others (Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Riorini & Widayati, 2015; Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2020; Harrigan et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2022).

The questionnaire was validated by five experts ($IOC > 0.67$) and demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.745–0.933). Data were collected from December 2023 to February 2024 with ethical approval (PSU-HREC 2023-018-1-3) and electronic consent. Analyses included descriptive statistics, SEM, and multiple group analysis.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

The demographic features of the sample. Half of respondents were males and females. Generation Y was 44.25%. Most of the respondents (79.75%) are bachelor's degree or equivalent. In terms of income per month, 25.38% of respondents had between 20,001-30,000 Baht of income.

Data Analysis

Normality test results show acceptable skewness (-1.644 to -0.545) and kurtosis (-0.238 to 2.719), indicating normal distribution. Pearson's correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships among all latent variables, with coefficients below 0.80, indicating moderate correlations and no multicollinearity concerns. (Hair et al., 2018) (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Normality of observed variables. (n = 800)

Variables	Item	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Awareness (BAW)	1. I am familiar with this brand. (BAW1)	4.25	0.65	-0.545	0.435
	2. I can recognize this brand among other brands. (BAW2)	4.27	0.75	-0.722	-0.099
	3. I can quickly recall symbol or logo of this brand that appeared in the social media. (BAW3)	4.35	0.76	-1.026	0.578
	4. When I see ads or someone talk about this product category, I can recognize this brand. (BAW4)	4.32	0.68	-0.776	0.613
	5. I can think of certain specific characteristics of this brand quickly. (BAW5)	4.35	0.68	-0.764	0.223
	6. When I think about this smartphone category, I can recall this brand name immediately. (BAW6)	4.36	0.67	-0.896	0.900
	7. This brand is always at the top of my minds, when I think of smartphone. (BAW7)	4.38	0.67	-0.798	0.220

Brand Identity (BID)	1.This brand is distinct from other brands. (BID1)	4.58	0.60	-1.093	0.170
	2.This brand is very different from other brands. (BID2)	4.36	0.70	-0.744	-0.238
	3.This brand is unique from other brands. (BID3)	4.47	0.67	-1.090	0.751
	4.I can identify with this brand. (BID4)	4.49	0.63	-1.032	0.824
	5.I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people. (BID5)	4.48	0.69	-1.249	1.220
	6.I think this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be. (BID6)	4.43	0.68	-1.007	0.925
	7.I consider this brand to be me. (BID7)	4.43	0.66	-0.907	0.630
Brand Image (BIM)	1.This brand is attractive. (BIM1)	4.50	0.62	-0.905	0.091
	2.I feel this brand has a prestigious image. (BIM2)	4.50	0.62	-0.962	0.484
	3.This brand is consistent and strong. (BIM3)	4.48	0.64	-0.952	0.362
	4.This brand pioneer innovations and technology. (BIM4)	4.43	0.70	-1.079	0.857
	5.The image of this brand is better than another competing brand. (BIM5)	4.43	0.68	-1.088	1.337
	6.The image of this brand can match with my self-image. (BIM6)	4.44	0.66	-0.942	0.497
	7.I am satisfied with the image of this brand. (BIM7)	4.43	0.69	-1.177	1.576
Brand Love (BLO)	8.I have positive attitude to the image of this brand. (BIM8)	4.43	0.66	-0.794	-0.102
	1.I love this brand. (BLO1)	4.39	0.67	-0.813	0.246
	2.I am passionate about this brand. (BLO2)	4.44	0.65	-0.949	0.745
	3.I feel very close to this brand. (BLO3)	4.42	0.64	-0.785	0.094
Brand Respect (BRE)	4.This brand is a pure delight. (BLO4)	4.44	0.64	-0.950	0.823
	1.Promises made by this brand are reliable. (BRE1)	4.43	0.61	-0.772	0.590
	2.This brand communications do not make false claims. (BRE2)	4.38	0.64	-0.826	1.104
	3.This brand is credible. (BRE3)	4.39	0.65	-0.824	0.588
Brand Evangelism (BEV)	4.This brand is genuinely committed to my satisfaction. (BRE4)	4.36	0.66	-0.704	0.136
	1.I spread positive word of mouth about this brand. (BEV1)	4.42	0.53	-1.027	1.902
	2.In the near future, I intend to buy smartphone from this brand. (BEV2)	4.16	0.77	-1.644	2.719
	3.I will try to protect my brand against criticism. (BEV3)	4.46	0.59	-1.261	2.512

Table 2: Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient of latent variables

	Mean	S.D.	BAW	BID	BIM	BLO	BRE	BEV
BAW	4.33	0.52	1					
BID	4.46	0.50	0.528**	1				
BIM	4.45	0.49	0.433**	0.562**	1			
BLO	4.42	0.51	0.340**	0.459**	0.375**	1		
BRE	4.39	0.51	0.327**	0.355**	0.347**	0.326**	1	
BEV	4.33	0.49	0.254**	0.497**	0.457**	0.440**	0.328**	1

Note: Significance levels: ** $p < 0.01$

BAW = Brand Awareness, BID = Brand Identity, BIM = Brand Image, BLO = Brand Love, BRE = Brand Respect, BEV = Brand Evangelism

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Latent Variables as Follows

1.The measurement model of the latent variable "brand awareness (BAW)," which was assessed using seven observed variables, demonstrated a good fit with the empirical data (Chi-square = 15.342, df = 9, p-value = .082, $\chi^2/df = 1.705$, GFI = .995, AGFI = .983, NFI = .993, TLI = .994, CFI = .997, RMSEA = .002, SRMR = .017).

Table 3: Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency of the Brand Awareness Variable

Latent variable	Observed variable	λ		S.E.	t	R^2	α	AVE	CR
		Un Std.	Std.						
Brand Awareness							0.872	0.508	0.878
	BAW1	0.966	0.776	0.054	17.849***	0.602			
	BAW2	0.946	0.729	0.063	16.493***	0.532			
	BAW3	1.000	0.684	-	-	0.468			
	BAW4	0.868	0.667	0.048	17.909***	0.444			

	BAW5	0.952	0.730	0.056	16.901***	0.533			
	BAW6	0.896	0.691	0.052	17.232***	0.478			
	BAW7	0.912	0.705	0.053	17.132***	0.497			

Note: ***p-value < 0.001.

2. The measurement model of the latent variable "brand identity (BID)," which was assessed using seven observed variables, demonstrated a good fit with the empirical data (Chi-square = 17.754, df = 11, p-value = .087, $\chi^2/df = 1.614$, GFI = .994, AGFI = .984, NFI = .992, TLI = .994, CFI = .997, RMSEA = .028, SRMR = .006).

Table 4: Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency of the brand identity Variable

Latent variable	Observed variable	λ		S.E.	t	R^2	α	AVE	CR
		Un Std.	Std.						
Brand Identity	BID1	0.791	0.656	0.048	16.631***	0.430		0.871	0.587
	BID2	0.940	0.738	0.062	16.900***	0.545			
	BID3	0.926	0.683	0.054	17.249***	0.466			
	BID4	0.920	0.726	0.051	18.178***	0.527			
	BID5	1.000	0.718	-	-	0.515			
	BID6	0.888	0.653	0.049	18.263***	0.426			
	BID7	0.937	0.705	0.053	17.694***	0.496			

Note: ***p-value < 0.001.

3. The measurement model of the latent variable "Brand Image (BIM)," which was assessed using seven observed variables, demonstrated a good fit with the empirical data (Chi-square = 19.266, df = 15, p-value = .202, $\chi^2/df = 1.284$, GFI = .994, AGFI = .986, NFI = .993, TLI = .997, CFI = .998, RMSEA = .019, SRMR = .006).

Table 5: Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency of the Brand Image Variable

Latent variable	Observed variable	λ		S.E.	t	R^2	α	AVE	CR
		Un Std.	Std.						
Brand Image	BIM1	0.866	0.690	0.047	18.474***	0.476		0.884	0.589
	BIM2	0.861	0.686	0.049	17.569***	0.471			
	BIM3	0.876	0.681	0.050	17.441***	0.464			
	BIM4	0.902	0.643	0.053	17.041***	0.413			
	BIM5	0.961	0.705	0.051	18.832***	0.497			
	BIM6	0.946	0.781	0.052	20.056***	0.611			
	BIM7	1.000	0.720	-	-	0.518			
	BIM8	0.903	0.682	0.050	18.217***	0.465			

Note: ***p-value < 0.001.

4. The measurement model of the latent variable "Brand Love (BLO)," which was assessed using seven observed variables, demonstrated a good fit with the empirical data (Chi-square = 0.772, df = 2, p-value = .680, $\chi^2/df = 0.386$, GFI = .999, AGFI = .998, NFI = .990, TLI = .994, CFI = .999, RMSEA = .001, SRMR = .002).

Table 6. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency of the Brand Love Variable.

Latent variable	Observed variable	λ		S.E.	t	R^2	α	AVE	CR
		Un Std.	Std.						
Brand Love	BLO1	1.000	0.705	-	-	0.497		0.786	0.579
	BLO2	0.974	0.709	0.061	15.858***	0.503			
	BLO3	0.930	0.684	0.060	15.514***	0.468			
	BLO4	0.912	0.671	0.060	15.308***	0.450			

Note: ***p-value < 0.001.

5. The measurement model of the latent variable "Brand Respect (BRE)," which was assessed using seven observed variables, demonstrated a good fit with the empirical data (Chi-square = 3.563, df = 2, p-value = .168, $\chi^2/df = 1.781$, GFI = .998, AGFI = .989, NFI = .996, TLI = .995, CFI = .998, RMSEA = .031, SRMR = .004).

Table 7. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency of the Brand Respect Variable.

Latent variable	Observed variable	λ		S.E.	t	R^2	α	AVE	CR
		Un Std.	Std.						
Brand Respect	BRE1	0.974	0.736	0.057	17.034***	0.542		0.803	0.505
	BRE2	0.976	0.708	0.059	16.606**	0.501			
	BRE3	1.000	0.715	-	-	0.512			
	BRE4	0.968	0.683	0.060	16.177***	0.466			

Note: ***p-value < 0.001.

6. The measurement model of the latent variable "Brand Evangelism (BEV)," which was assessed using seven observed variables, demonstrated a good fit with the empirical data (Chi-square = 56.948, df = 43, p-value = .075, $\chi^2/df = 1.324$, GFI = .990, AGFI = .975, NFI = .990, TLI = .995, CFI = .997, RMSEA = .020, SRMR = .018).

Table 8. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency of the Brand Evangelism Variable

Latent variable	Observed variable	λ		S.E.	t	R^2	α	AVE	CR
		Un Std.	Std.						
WOM		0.883	0.733	0.098	9.040***	0.537	0.861	0.540	0.843
	WOM1	0.546	0.503	0.042	13.052***	0.253			
	WOM2	0.592	0.509	0.044	13.536***	0.259			
	WOM3	0.628	0.579	0.040	15.519***	0.336			
	WOM4	0.917	0.757	0.045	20.351***	0.573			
	WOM5	0.843	0.764	0.041	20.800***	0.584			
	WOM6	0.788	0.710	0.041	19.285***	0.504			
	WOM7	1.000	0.757	-	-	0.572			
PROT		1.000	0.634	-	-	0.402	0.883	0.605	0.882
	PROT1	0.775	0.618	0.041	18.969***	0.382			
	PROT2	0.792	0.641	0.041	19.186***	0.411			
	PROT3	1.000	0.913	-	-	0.833			
	PROT4	0.908	0.828	0.035	25.960***	0.686			
	PROT5	0.923	0.845	0.034	27.144***	0.714			
REPE		0.720	0.648	0.079	9.165***	0.419	0.761	0.623	0.766
	REPE1	0.819	0.709	0.073	11.281***	0.503			
	REPE2	1.000	0.862	-	-	0.744			

Note: ***p-value < 0.001.

Upon conducting factor analysis and convergent validity testing, it was found that each construct demonstrated distinctiveness and independence from one another (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, these constructs are deemed appropriate for further structural equation modelling analysis.

Structural Equation Model Testing Procedure Proceeds as Follows

1. The structural equation model, following Hair et al. (2018), demonstrates a good fit with the empirical data. Fit indices meet acceptable thresholds: $p = 0.060$, GFI = 0.971, AGFI = 0.956, NFI = 0.966, TLI = 0.995, CFI = 0.996, RMSEA = 0.012, and SRMR = 0.011 ($\chi^2 = 407.890$; df = 365; $\chi^2/df = 1.118$), confirming the model's consistency with observed data.

2. Path analysis results in Figure 1 show six causal paths from external to internal variables, with five being statistically significant: Brand awareness directly affects brand respect ($\gamma = 0.154$); brand identity influences brand love ($\gamma = 0.450$) and respect ($\gamma = 0.150$); and brand image impacts brand love ($\gamma = 0.114$) and respect ($\gamma = 0.264$). However, brand awareness does not significantly affect brand love.

However, brand awareness does not significantly affect brand love. Additionally, both internal paths are significant: brand love ($\beta = 0.331$) and brand respect ($\beta = 0.135$) directly influence brand evangelism., as shown in Table 9

3. The mediated effects are seen as follows:

Mediation analysis shows that brand love significantly mediates the effects of brand identity and brand image on brand evangelism, but not brand awareness. In contrast, brand respect significantly mediates the influence of brand awareness, identity, and image on brand evangelism. (see Table 9).

Table 9. Causal influence of structural model.

Causes	Mediate	Effects
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		BLO			BRE			BEV		
		DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
BAW	BLO	0.071	-	0.071	0.154**	-	0.154**	0.134**	0.018	0.152**
	BRE							0.134**	0.017*	0.151**
BID	BLO	0.450***	-	0.450***	0.150*	-	0.150*	0.318***	0.109***	0.427***
	BRE							0.318***	0.016*	0.334***
BIM	BLO	0.114*	-	0.114*	0.264***	-	0.264***	0.194**	0.027*	0.221***
	BRE							0.194**	0.028*	0.222***
BLO		-	-	-	-	-	-	0.331***	-	0.331***
BRE		-	-	-	-	-	-	0.135**	-	0.135**
R ²		0.330			0.232			0.647		

Note: Significance levels: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Measurement invariance between AAA and BBB users was confirmed through non-significant Chi-square differences ($\Delta\chi^2$, Δdf), indicating consistent models across groups. Both metric and scalar invariance tests showed no significant $\Delta\chi^2$, confirming measurement stability. Additionally, constraining path coefficients revealed no significant difference, supporting structural invariance. Results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Tests of measurement and structural invariance model.

	χ^2	<i>df</i>	Model Comparison			
			comparison	$s\chi^2$	Δ <i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Single group solutions						
Overall sample	407.890	365				
AAA User Form	400.609	365				
BBB User Form	405.451	365				
Measurement invariance						
1. Configural Model	767.412	706				
2. Metric Model	781.054	733	2 vs 1	13.642	27	0.985
3. Scalar Model	818.365	766	3 vs 2	37.311	33	0.277
Structural invariance						
1. Free parameter	818.365	766				
2. Equal parameter	830.970	777	2 vs 1	12.605	11	0.320

The hypothesis testing results reveal that out of 15 hypotheses, 13 were supported. Brand awareness significantly influences brand respect (H2), but not brand love (H1). Both brand identity and brand image significantly affect brand love and brand respect (H3–H6). Additionally, brand love and brand respect have a direct impact on brand evangelism (H7–H8) and serve as mediating variables between brand identity and brand image and brand evangelism (H10–H14). However, brand love did not mediate the relationship between brand awareness and brand evangelism (H9), thus rejecting that hypothesis. Finally, the connection model between brand love, brand respect, and brand evangelism is consistent among smartphone users (H15).

DISCUSSION

Brand awareness directly impacts brand respect (H2) by enhancing familiarity (Aaker, 2008), supported by studies across various industries (Madeleine, 2013; Cho et al., 2015; Knihová, 2016).

Brand identity significantly affects both brand love and respect (H3, H4), as it reflects consumer aspirations (Mamesah et al., 2020), aligning with Albert & Merunka (2013) and Alnawas & Altarifi (2015). It fosters emotional connection (Kapferer, 2012) and enhances respect through uniqueness (Kusá & Záziková, 2016; Shuv-Ami et al., 2017; Donmez, 2020).

Brand image also strongly influences brand love and respect (H5, H6), enhancing emotional attachment and brand loyalty (Yusniar et al., 2015; Dam, 2020; Cuong, 2020; Cho, 2011; Lari et al., 2021).

The study confirms that brand love and respect drive brand evangelism (H7, H8), in line with Fetscherin & Heinrich (2014) and Song et al. (2019). Brand love builds emotional bonds (Chen et al., 2020), while brand respect is rooted in performance and reliability (Harrigan et al., 2021), contributing to loyalty and advocacy (Kim et al., 2018; Montoya-Restrepo et al., 2020; Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015; Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2020, 2021).

However, brand awareness did not influence brand love (contradicting H1), despite assumptions that familiarity can lead to emotional connection (Aaker, 2008). This finding aligns with Carroll & Ahuvia (2006), who

argue that brand love stems more from satisfaction than awareness. Supporting studies (Cho, 2011; Madadi et al., 2021; Safitri & Albari, 2024) show brand awareness does not always lead to brand love, particularly in fashion and smartphones.

These relationships are explained through the CBBE model (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020), which highlights the role of consumer perception in brand equity. Beginning with brand awareness (salience), consumers engage through brand performance and imagery, leading to judgments and feelings, and ultimately, to true loyalty (resonance). Thus, building brand equity is vital for long-term success.

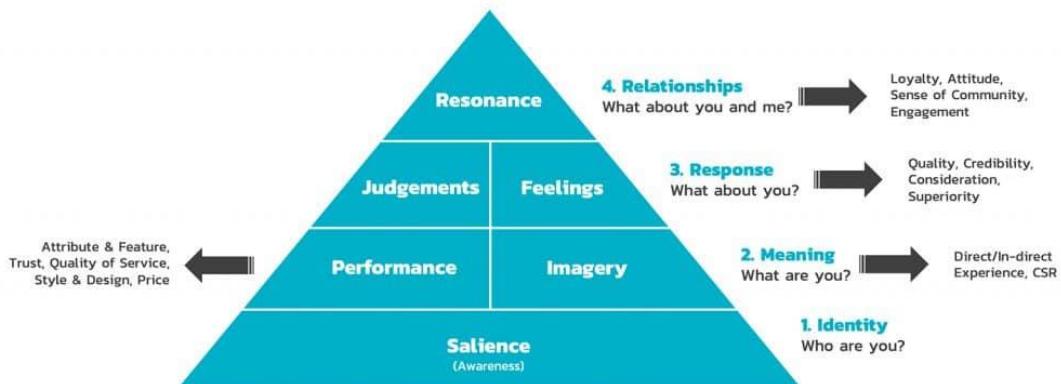


Figure 1. Brand resonance Pyramid (CBBE model).

This study tests the invariance of the relationship model between brand love, brand respect, and brand evangelism across smartphone brands AAA and BBB. Despite AAA's premium, symbolic positioning and BBB's functional focus, the structural model showed no significant differences. Both are global smartphone market leaders (Ayie, 2022; Prasujaritwong, 2023; Marketeer, 2018; IDC, 2024).

This finding aligns with Hair et al. (2018), who emphasize the importance of measurement invariance to ensure constructs yield consistent results across different user segments. Similarly, Gravelle (2021) reported no significant variation in loyalty across 60 brands using the same tool, and Jacob (2021) found user group differences did not affect the relationship between brand awareness and perceived value.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The structural equation model shows that brand awareness, identity, and image explain 64.7% of brand evangelism. While brand recognition influences brand love and respect, the reverse does not hold. Brand identity and image significantly drive emotional responses. Applying the lovemarks concept, the study finds that strong awareness alone may not evoke love, but distinctive products with positive images foster admiration and brand evangelism. The model holds across AAA (emotional/social strategy) and BBB (functional strategy) users, confirming its cross-brand applicability. These findings advance lovemarks theory by identifying brand love and respect as key drivers of evangelism in smartphones. Practically, brands should focus on distinctiveness and consistent quality to build credibility, love, and respect—ultimately encouraging evangelism.

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, brand identity and image enhance brand love and respect, which in turn drive brand evangelism—underscoring the role of emotional bonds in inspiring consumer advocacy through both love and respect.

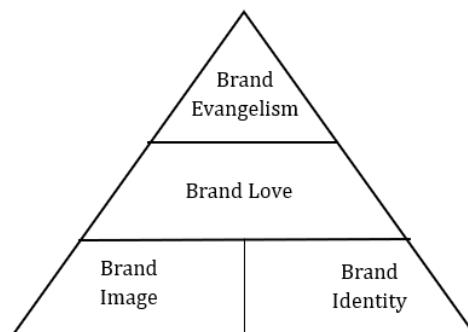


Figure 2. The emergence of brand evangelism through brand love.

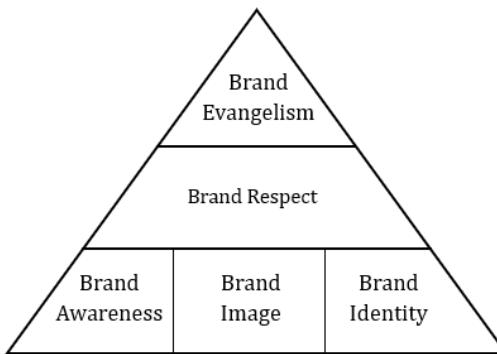


Figure 3. The emergence of brand evangelism through brand respect.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The author extends heartfelt gratitude to all the survey respondents for their invaluable cooperation, which played a vital role in the successful completion of this research.

Funding: Research Grant for Thesis Provided by the Graduate School, Prince of Songkla University.

Conflict of Interest: The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

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