

# Perceived Ease of Use and Price Fairness on Customer Loyalty Among Shopee Users: The Role of Brand Love as a Mediating Variable

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study aims to analyze the direct and indirect effects of perceived ease of use and price fairness on customer loyalty, using brand love as a mediating variable among Shopee users.

**Research Method:** A quantitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected from 72 active Shopee users in Dompus Regency via purposive sampling using a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS.

**Results and Discussion:** Perceived ease of use directly enhances customer loyalty but fails to foster brand love. Conversely, price fairness significantly builds brand love without directly impacting customer loyalty. Furthermore, brand love fully mediates the relationship between price fairness and customer loyalty, but does not mediate the relationship between price fairness and perceived ease of use.

**Implications:** E-commerce platforms must prioritize transparent and fair pricing to build emotional connections, as operational ease is merely a standard requirement. Future studies should expand the sample size and geographic scope, and incorporate variables such as live streaming and e-WOM.

**Originality:** This study extends the Theory of Reasoned Action by demonstrating that rational price evaluations alone do not secure permanent behavioral loyalty; affective transformation (brand love) is required.

**Keywords:** brand love; customer loyalty; e-commerce; perceived ease of use; price fairness.

## 1. Introduction

Rapid technological advancements have brought about a fundamental transformation in the e-commerce sector, delivering cost and time efficiencies that have shifted global consumer behavior toward a digital-first approach (Aisyah et al., 2021; Nurcholis & Susanti, 2025; Saptaria et al., 2025). Amid this global phenomenon, Indonesia occupies a strategic position with the highest projected e-commerce growth rate in the world by 2024, reaching 30.5% according to ECDB data, surpassing other developing nations such as Mexico (26.8%) and Thailand (22.9%) (Nurcholis & Susanti, 2025). This dynamic has given rise to intense market competition among e-commerce platforms, including Shopee.



For digital service providers, sustaining business viability amid intense competition heavily depends on their ability to build customer loyalty (Tarigan et al., 2024).

Both theoretically and practically, customer loyalty is a long-term strategic asset that is far more cost-effective to retain than acquiring new customers (Kuncoro et al., 2021). Customer loyalty is characterized by repeated repurchase behavior, resistance to competitors' enticements, and a willingness to voluntarily provide positive referrals (Tarigan et al., 2024; Fitriadi & Nainggolan, 2025; Mustika et al., 2025; Khairunnisah & Aanggriani, 2026). However, a practical challenge for platforms like Shopee is maintaining that loyalty when consumers are confronted with so many alternatives in the market. The main issue in this study concerns how functional-technological elements, such as the app's perceived ease of use, and transactional elements, such as price fairness, can be managed simultaneously to secure customer loyalty. Several studies have sought to map the factors influencing customer loyalty on digital platforms. In the technology domain, perceived ease of use (perceived ease of use), rooted in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), has been identified as a key predictor (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). A clear, easy-to-understand application system fosters confidence and reduces the effort required of users to transact (Fadillah & Zainurossalamia, 2023). Research on the Gojek platform in Batam City showed that perceived ease of use made the most significant contribution in explaining variations in customer loyalty (Jimmy & Suhardi, 2026). This research is supported by Ramadan and Cahyono (2025), who found a direct positive impact of app usability on Shopee user loyalty. However, these studies often limit their analysis to purely technical and functional aspects without considering deeper emotional attachment.

From a financial perspective, price fairness—that is, consumers' subjective assessment of the alignment between monetary sacrifice and the value of benefits received—is also recognized as a key driver of loyalty (Insani & Madiawati, 2020; Riandini & Budiono, 2023). When consumers perceive prices on a platform as fair and reasonable, they tend to feel satisfied and are reluctant to switch to competitors (Riandini & Budiono, 2023). Research on online trading platforms indicates that perceptions of fair pricing positively contribute to long-term loyalty, both directly and through the mediation of customer satisfaction (V. A. Pertiwi et al., 2022). However, the limitations of previous studies (Satriawan & Purwo, 2026) lie in their focus, which tends to be short-term and transactional, making them less capable of capturing how this price evaluation transforms into a lasting emotional relationship. Furthermore, recent research has begun to shift toward an emotional approach, focusing on the concept of brand love. Brand love reflects the deep emotional bond that satisfied consumers feel toward a brand, developed through a cumulative experience. Consumers who have reached the brand love stage are not merely behaviorally loyal (actional loyalty) but also possess strong affective attachment, are willing to recommend the brand enthusiastically, and even defend it against negative sentiment (Cuong, 2020). The integration of these emotional variables is crucial because high-quality products or systems reinforce consumers' joy and trust, which, in turn, intensify their desire to remain committed to the brand.

Although numerous studies on customer loyalty have been conducted, an empirical gap remains, as prior research has yielded inconsistent findings. Regarding the ease-of-use variable, while Ramadan & Cahyono (2025) found a significant positive effect, Fariscka & Tartiani (2023) argued that loyalty cannot be built solely through operational ease but must be supported by other external factors, such as trust and service quality. A similar contradiction is found regarding the price fairness variable. Pertiwi et al. (2022) state that price has a positive and significant effect on Shopee customer loyalty.



Conversely, Qismatuldiyah & Ramdani (2018) found that price does not have a significant effect on customer loyalty on the same platform. In addition to the empirical gap, there is a theoretical gap in modeling relationships among variables. Most previous studies generally position customer satisfaction as the sole mediating variable between utility stimuli and customer loyalty. This study aims to extend this conceptual model by introducing “brand love” as a new mediating variable, replacing traditional transactional satisfaction with affective-emotional constructs. The inclusion of brand love is intended to bridge the inconsistencies in the direct effects of perceived ease of use and price fairness on customer loyalty. This theoretical route has not been thoroughly explored in the context of Shopee users.

Based on the gap analysis above, the research question posed is: Do perceptions of ease of use and price fairness influence Shopee users’ customer loyalty, either directly or indirectly through brand love? In line with this, the study aims to analyze and test the direct impact of perceptions of ease of use and price fairness on customer loyalty, and to demonstrate the mediating role of brand love. The novelty of this study lies in the simultaneous integration of functional technology evaluation (perceived ease of use) and financial transactional evaluation (price fairness), which converge on psychological-emotional consequences (brand love) to foster strong customer loyalty within the Shopee ecosystem. Practically, this research contributes to Shopee’s management in formulating experiential marketing strategies amid an increasingly aggressive digital competitive landscape.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a literature review and hypothesis development. Section 3 presents the research method and design. Section 4 provides the results and discussion. Section 5 is Concluding Remarks and Recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

This study is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) to explain the rational behavior of Shopee consumers. Based on the fundamental principles of TRA, where behavioral intention is shaped by users’ cognitive perceptions of functional (ease of use) and transactional (fairness of price) aspects—acting as initial stimuli (beliefs)—which in turn foster positive emotional attitudes in the form of brand love (mediator). Ultimately, it is this affective attachment that naturally drives sustained behavioral intent, leading to long-term customer loyalty.

### 2.2 Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use is defined as an individual’s level of confidence that a technology can be used easily without requiring excessive cognitive or physical effort (Meileny & Wijaksana, 2020). Perceived ease of use, rooted in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (2014), is a key pillar of technology acceptance. This dimension is measured through four main indicators: (1) Ease to learn (how easy the system is for new users to learn); (2) Clear and understandable (the clarity of the system’s workflow); (3) Ease to use (general ease of operation); and (4) Become skillful or Overall easiness (the confidence that users can become proficient thanks to a system that is not complicated).



## 2.3 Price Fairness

Price fairness is an essential cognitive evaluation in measuring customer satisfaction levels, as consumers use price as the primary metric for assessing the value of the services they receive (Sever et al., 2020). (Putra & Sukresna, 2024) found that perceptions of fair pricing are positively correlated with consumer trust and satisfaction. Conversely, perceived unfairness or unreasonable prices will have a detrimental effect on repurchase intent. Citing (Opata et al., 2019), price fairness is a critical determinant because it represents an individual's financial sacrifice. Indicators for measuring price fairness include: (1) Treatment Experience, (2) Price Knowledge, (3) Price Expectation, and (4) Price Information.

## 2.4 Brand Love

Brand love represents the degree of closeness, passion, and deep emotional connection that consumers feel toward a brand (Astuti & Kurniawati, 2024). This construct goes beyond mere customer satisfaction, entering the affective realm in which consumers feel the brand is part of their identity. High-quality products or platforms with a positive image have been shown to foster increased consumer brand love following consistent interactions. Indicators for measuring Brand Love include: (1) Love, (2) Enchantment, (3) Admiration, (4) Pleasure, (5) Feeling good and alive, (6) Liking, (7) Attachment and uniqueness, and (8) Memories.

## 2.5 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a customer's deep commitment to continue subscribing to or repurchasing a product or service consistently in the future, regardless of situational influences or competitors' marketing efforts that could potentially trigger switching behavior (Bettencourt et al., 2014). Indicators of customer loyalty focus on behavioral and advocacy manifestations, namely: (1) repeated and sustained purchases, (2) Cross-line purchases of the same product or service, (3) recommending the brand to others (Word of Mouth), and (4) resisting competitors' enticements.

## 2.6 Hypothesis

### 2.6.1 The Effect of Perceived Ease of Use on Customer Loyalty

Ease of use is a key prerequisite for consumers to remain on a digital platform. Intuitive apps, clear navigation, and seamless transactions reduce users' cognitive load (Fadillah & Zainurossalamia, 2023). Research by Ramadan and Cahyono (2025) demonstrates that consumers accustomed to the ease of Shopee's features exhibit high retention and are reluctant to switch to competitors due to switching costs—namely, the need to learn a new system.

**H1:** *The perception of ease of use has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty.*

### 2.6.2 The Effect of Price Fairness on Customer Loyalty

Fair pricing is a powerful catalyst for shaping behavioral commitment. When users perceive that the prices and costs paid—including shipping and service fees on Shopee—are fair, transparent, and competitive relative to the value received, their tendency to remain on the platform increases. This aligns with Pertiwi et al. (2022), who state that the perception of fair pricing empirically reduces consumers' intention to seek alternatives on other platforms.



**H2:** Fair pricing has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty.

### 2.6.3 The Effect of Perceived Ease of Use on Brand Love

According to the TRA approach (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), positive perceptions (beliefs) of functional attributes shape emotional attitudes (attitude). The ease of use of the Shopee app eliminates frustration during shopping. A seamless interface and user-friendly features, such as real-time order tracking and a digital wallet, create an enjoyable shopping experience. This operational convenience gradually evolves from mere acceptance of the technology into a sense of brand loyalty.

**H3:** Perceptions of ease of use have a positive and significant effect on brand love.

### 2.6.4 The Effect of Price Fairness on Brand Love

Consumer evaluations of pricing are not merely rational calculations; they also trigger psychological responses. When a platform sets reasonable prices and offers attractive promotions without hidden conditions, consumers feel valued and treated fairly. This sense of financial security and feeling of being benefited fosters deep appreciation, which leads to the formation of an emotional bond between consumers and the platform (Cuong, 2020).

**H4:** Fair pricing has a positive and significant impact on brand love.

### 2.6.5 The Impact of Brand Love on Customer Loyalty

In the hierarchy of consumer behavior, emotions serve as the strongest driver of long-term loyalty. Consumers with a high level of brand love for Shopee make purchases not merely out of functional necessity, but because they feel proud, happy, and connected to the platform. This intense emotional attachment manifests in enthusiastic brand advocacy and resistance to competitors' aggressive discounts (Putra & Sukresna, 2024).

**H5:** Brand love has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty.

### 2.6.6 The Mediating Role of Brand Love Between Perceived Ease of Use and Loyalty

Inconsistencies in previous research suggest that simply creating a functional, user-friendly app is not always enough to foster absolute loyalty without an emotional connection. The experience of interacting with a flawless interface must first be transformed into a sense of comfort and brand love, which in turn will secure customer loyalty. Brand love bridges the gap between technical ease and long-term behavioral commitment.

**H6:** Brand love mediates the effect of perceived ease of use on customer loyalty.

### 2.6.7 The Mediating Role of Brand Love Between Price Fairness and Loyalty

Rational and transactional price evaluations are vulnerable to wavering when competitors offer lower prices. However, when fair pricing creates a sense of value that grows into brand love, consumers will tolerate future price fluctuations and remain loyal to the platform. It is this affective attitude that completes the TRA logic chain, moving from rational price perception (trust) toward affective attachment (attitude), and culminating in lasting commitment (behavior).

**H7:** Brand love moderates the effect of price fairness on customer loyalty.



### 3. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design to test the hypothesis (Sugiyono, 2019) among the population of Dompu Regency who are active Shopee users, estimated at 270,660 people. Using a sample size calculator with a 95% confidence level and a 10% margin of error, a minimum sample size of 72 respondents was determined, selected via purposive sampling according to specific criteria (Sugiyono, 2019). Primary data were collected via online and manual questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions of four main variables (Table 1).

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS, which is robust for processing complex mediation models despite a relatively small sample size (Hair et al., 2014). The analysis involved two stages: first, the outer model to evaluate the reliability and validity of the instruments, including discriminant validity via the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). Second, the inner model used a bootstrapping procedure to test the significance of the relationships between variables (T-statistic > 1.96; P-values < 0.05), as well as to measure the effect size (f2) to assess the predictive contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable (Cohen, 1988).

**Table 1. Variables and Measurements**

Variable	Code	Indicator	Source
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	PEU.1	Easy to learn	(Davis, 2014)
	PEU.2	Clear and easy to understand	
	PEU.3	Easy to use	
	PEU.4	Becoming skilled	
Price Fairness (PF)	PF.1	Treatment experience	(Sever et al., 2020)
	PF.2	Price information	
	PF.3	Price Forecast	
	PF.4	Pricing Information	
Brand Love (BL)	BL.1	Love	(Astuti & Kurniawati, 2024)
	BL.2	Enchanted	
	BL.3	Amazed	
	BL.4	Fun	
	BL.5	Feeling good and alive	
	BL.6	Favorite	
	BL.7	Bound and unique	
	BL.8	Memories	
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL.1	Repeat and ongoing purchases	(Bettencourt et al., 2014)
	CL.2	Cross-product or cross-service purchases	
	CL.3	Recommending a brand to others	
	CL.4	Immune to competitors' temptations	

Source: Previous Research (2026)

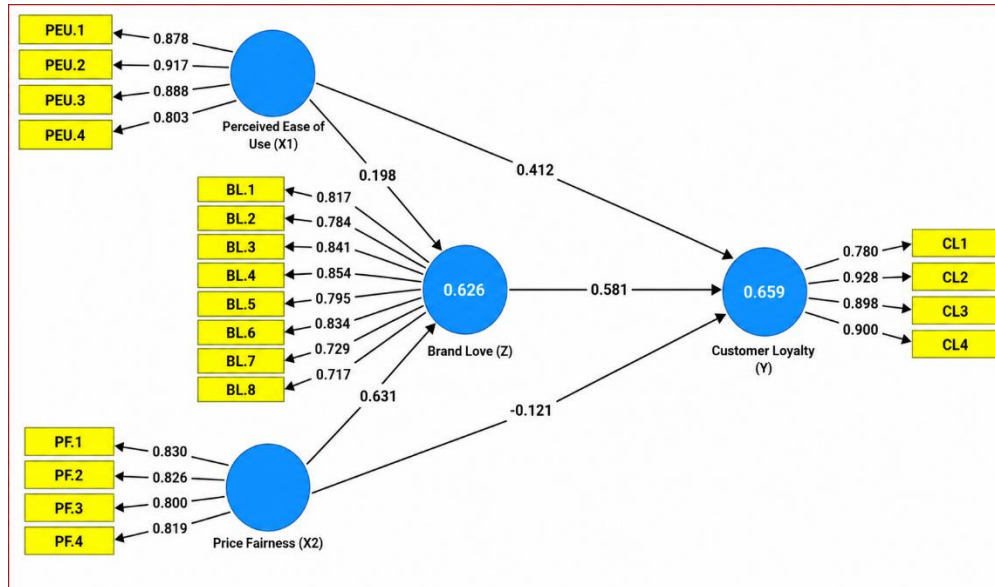
### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Analysis Results

This study included 72 residents of Dompu Regency. The entire sample was purposively selected to ensure that participants fully met the primary criterion: being active users of the Shopee e-commerce app. The key characteristics of these respondents represent the profile of local digital consumers who



regularly interact and transact on the platform; consequently, their evaluations of the app’s functional ease of use and price fairness are considered highly relevant and valid for measuring the level of brand love formation and customer loyalty commitment.



Source: Primary data analyzed using SmartPLS (2026)

Figure 1. Path Analysis

Table 2. Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability Testing

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	PEU.1	0.878	0.895	0.927	0.761
	PEU.2	0.917			
	PEU.3	0.888			
	PEU.4	0.803			
Price Fairness (PF)	PF.1	0.830	0.836	0.890	0.670
	PF.2	0.826			
	PF.3	0.800			
	PF.4	0.819			
Brand Love (BL)	BL.1	0.817	0.918	0.933	0.636
	BL.2	0.784			
	BL.3	0.841			
	BL.4	0.854			
	BL.5	0.795			
	BL.6	0.834			
	BL.7	0.729			
	BL.8	0.717			
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL.1	0.780	0.899	0.930	0.771
	CL.2	0.928			
	CL.3	0.896			
	CL.4	0.900			

Source: Primary data analyzed using SmartPLS (2026)



The results of the outer model evaluation in Table 2 indicate that the research instrument is highly valid and reliable. Convergent validity is established through the Outer Loading values (>0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (>0.50). At the same time, the instrument’s reliability is confirmed by Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability values, all of which exceed the 0.70 threshold. This excellent measurement quality confirms that the data are free of validity and reliability issues, making them fully suitable for proceeding to the hypothesis-testing stage (inner model).

**Table 3. Results of the Discriminant Validity Test (HTMT Criteria)**

Variable	Brand Love	Customer Loyalty	Perceived Ease of Use	Price Fairness
Brand Love				
Customer Loyalty	0.835			
Perceived Ease of Use	0.740	0.788		
Price Fairness	0.890	0.740	0.871	

Source: Primary data analyzed using SmartPLS (2026)

The test results in Table 3 show that all correlations between variables have Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values below the critical threshold of 0.90, with the highest value in the relationship between Price Fairness and Brand Love at 0.890. Meeting this criterion confirms that the research instrument has achieved an excellent level of discriminant validity. This means that each construct or variable measured empirically is proven to be unique and distinct from the others, thereby preventing the research model from suffering from indicator overlap.

**Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)**

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted	Category
Brand Love	0.626	0.615	Moderate
Customer Loyalty	0.659	0.644	Moderate

Source: Primary data analyzed using SmartPLS (2026)

Based on Table 4, the structural model of this study exhibits moderate to strong predictive power. Ease of use and price fairness account for 62.6% of the variance in Brand Love. Meanwhile, 65.9% of the variation in Customer Loyalty is explained by ease of use, price fairness, and brand love, while the remaining 34.1% is explained by other factors outside the model.

**Table 5. Effect Size (f<sup>2</sup>)**

Relationships Between Variables	The value of f <sup>2</sup>	Criteria (Cohen, 1988)
Perceived Ease of Use → Customer Loyalty	0.205	Moderate
Price Fairness → Customer Loyalty	0.013	Weak
Perceived Ease of Use → Brand Love	0.045	Small
Price Fairness → Brand Love	0.459	Strong
Brand Love → Customer Loyalty	0.370	Strong

Source: Primary data analyzed using SmartPLS (2026)



Based on Table 5, the effect size analysis indicates that the strongest predictive effects (large category) occur in the path from Price Fairness to Brand Love (0.459) and from Brand Love to Customer Loyalty (0.370). The weak direct effect of Price Fairness on Customer Loyalty (0.013) further underscores the crucial role of Brand Love as the primary mediator, transforming price evaluations into strong customer loyalty.

**Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct and Mediating Effects)**

Hip.	Path	Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Values	Description
<b>Direct Relationship</b>					
H1	Perceived Ease of Use → Customer Loyalty	0.412	3.371	0.001	Accepted
H2	Price Fairness → Customer Loyalty	-0.121	0.869	0.385	Rejected
H3	Perceived Ease of Use → Brand Love	0.198	1.224	0.222	Rejected
H4	Price Fairness → Brand Love	0.631	4.533	0.000	Accepted
H5	Brand Love → Customer Loyalty	0.581	4.651	0.000	Accepted
<b>Indirect Relationship (Mediation)</b>					
H6	Perceived Ease of Use → Brand Love → Customer Loyalty	0.115	1.162	0.246	Rejected
H7	Price Fairness → Brand Love → Customer Loyalty	0.366	2.948	0.003	Accepted

Source: Primary data analyzed using SmartPLS (2026)

- Direct Effects. Perceived Ease of Use was found to increase Customer Loyalty but failed to foster Brand Love. Conversely, Price Fairness strongly fosters Brand Love even though it has no direct impact on Customer Loyalty.
- Mediating Effect. Brand Love fully mediates the effect of Price Fairness on Customer Loyalty. However, Brand Love does not serve as a mediator between Perceived Ease of Use and Customer Loyalty.

## 4.2 Discussion

### 4.2.1. The Effect of Perceived Ease of Use on Customer Loyalty (H1)

The results of the statistical tests confirm that perceived ease of use has a direct, positive, and significant effect on customer loyalty; therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. This finding suggests that when a platform minimizes users' cognitive load through an intuitive interface, a smooth search process, and a seamless checkout, consumers are more likely to continue using the platform. The primary reason is the presence of switching costs—or consumers' reluctance to waste time and energy learning a new competitor's application system.

From the perspective of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), consumers' rational evaluation of the system's functionality and cognitive trust directly drives the intention to sustain the behavior, namely, loyalty. This finding fully supports the core concept of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (2014). It aligns with research by Fadillah & Zainurossalamia (2023) and Ramadan & Cahyono



(2025), which confirms that operational ease is the primary foundation directly contributing to user retention in the digital business space.

#### 4.2.2. *The Effect of Price Fairness on Customer Loyalty (H2)*

A particularly intriguing aspect of these research results is the rejection of Hypothesis 2, which found that price fairness had no significant direct effect on customer loyalty. Why is this the case? In today's e-commerce ecosystem, consumers face an extremely aggressive price war among platforms. Fair or low prices are viewed merely as transactional bait. If a consumer makes a purchase solely to find the lowest price, their loyalty is highly fragile; they will immediately switch or become disloyal as soon as a competitor offers a slightly larger discount.

This finding explicitly contradicts the research (Pertiwi et al., 2022) that previously argued that fair pricing empirically minimizes consumer switching intentions. Conversely, these findings support the study by Qismatuldiyah & Ramdani (2018), which argued that rational, calculative price evaluations do not automatically bind consumer loyalty to the Shopee platform without other supporting factors.

#### 4.2.3. *The Effect of Perceived Ease of Use on Brand Love (H3)*

The analysis results indicate that perceived ease of use does not significantly influence the formation of brand love; therefore, Hypothesis 3 is rejected. The explanation behind this phenomenon lies in the shifting expectations of modern consumers. For giant e-commerce platforms like Shopee, an easy-to-use interface is no longer considered a unique feature capable of touching consumers' affective realm, but rather a minimum standard or mandatory prerequisite.

Consequently, a smooth shopping experience provides only rational or functional comfort. However, it is not strong enough to be transformed into a sense of love, pride, or deep emotional attachment to the brand. This indicates a deviation from the TRA framework, in which technology-related perceptions operate independently and mechanically, without influencing the formation of affective attitudes. This finding confirms the argument (Fariscka & Tartiani, 2023), which previously warned that strong and deep customer relationships cannot be built solely on operational ease but require the influence of other factors that go beyond mere functional technical aspects.

#### 4.2.4. *The Influence of Price Fairness on Brand Love (H4)*

Unlike ease of use, price fairness was found to have a highly significant and strong positive impact on building brand love, thus Hypothesis 4 is accepted. When Shopee sets transparent prices, offers reasonable promotions without deceptive terms, and charges fair service fees, this triggers a positive psychological response from consumers. Consumers feel valued, treated fairly, and not financially disadvantaged.

It is this sense of security and benefit that gradually fosters a deep appreciation, transcending calculative evaluation and evolving into affective attachment or brand love. This mechanism reinforces the TRA framework, demonstrating that transactional stimuli related to rational price trust can effectively permeate and shape consumers' emotional attitudes, in line with the study by Cuong (2020) on the emotional bond formed through the accumulation of positive experiences.

#### 4.2.5. *The Influence of Brand Love on Customer Loyalty (H5)*



Hypothesis 5 is convincingly accepted, proving that brand love is a very strong predictor of customer loyalty. In the hierarchy of consumer behavior, love for a brand represents the highest degree of passion. Consumers who have brand love for Shopee no longer transact solely because they need goods, but because of comfort, pride, and a sense that the platform is part of their consumer identity.

The pinnacle of this strong emotional bond is the emergence of irrational loyalty. Consumers will willingly provide enthusiastic word-of-mouth, defend the brand against criticism, and, most importantly, become highly resistant to promotional enticements from competing apps. This finding provides comprehensive empirical validation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), in which strong emotional attitudes (attitude) serve as the primary driver of sustained behavioral intentions (behavioral intention). This reinforces the perspective of Putra & Sukresna (2024) on the importance of emotions in long-term customer retention.

#### 4.2.6. *The Mediating Role of Brand Love Between Usability and Loyalty (H6)*

Since the perception of usability was found to fail to foster brand love (H3 rejected), Hypothesis 6 regarding its mediating role is consequently also rejected. Brand love cannot serve as a bridge between usability and customer loyalty. This failure of mediation indicates that customer loyalty arising from the convenience of the app's interface is purely operational, calculative, and mechanical, not grounded in affective or emotional attachment. Shopee users choose to remain loyal to an easy-to-use system solely for rational, practical reasons to avoid cognitive load and the reluctance to bear the switching costs involved in learning a competitor's app. Within the context of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), this finding suggests that technological utility or ease of use has an independent pathway to behavioral intent or loyalty, without first being transformed into an emotional attitude. This simultaneously affirms the argument (Fariscka & Tartiani, 2023) that emotionally based customer loyalty cannot be built solely through an app's operational ease.

#### 4.2.7. *The Mediating Role of Brand Love between Price Fairness and Loyalty (H7)*

The most significant finding in this study is the acceptance of Hypothesis 7, which demonstrates that brand love mediates the influence of price fairness on customer loyalty. Given that price fairness fails to have a direct impact on loyalty (H2 is rejected) yet successfully fosters brand love (H4 is accepted), which in turn successfully triggers loyalty (H5 is accepted), this model indicates a full mediation effect. Practically speaking, this implies that fair and transparent pricing strategies will not automatically foster long-term loyalty if they fail to address consumers' emotional needs. Consumers require a sense of being valued through this financial fairness first to cultivate an affective bond—or brand love—which ultimately secures their commitment, making them resistant to competitors' temptations. This phenomenon refines the logical framework of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), in which purely rational transactional evaluations must be transformed into deep affective attitudes to realize permanent, sustained behavioral intentions.

## 5. Concluding Remarks and Recommendation

This study aims to examine the influence of perceived ease of use and price fairness on Shopee customer loyalty, mediated by brand love. Based on PLS-SEM analysis of 72 respondents in Dompu Regency, the



results show that ease of use directly increases loyalty but does not foster brand love. Conversely, price fairness strongly fosters brand love despite having no direct impact on loyalty. The brand love variable fully mediates the effect of price fairness on loyalty, but fails to mediate the effect of ease of use.

This study expands the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by identifying distinct psychological pathways between functional and transactional stimuli. The novelty of this research underscores that rational price evaluation absolutely requires an affective bond—or brand love—to secure customer loyalty. In practice, e-commerce management is advised not to rely solely on the application's operational ease. Corporate strategies must focus on price transparency and fairness to foster consumer affection, which has proven to be the primary foundation for winning long-term competition.

The main limitation of this study is the small sample size of 72 respondents and its demographic focus on Dompu Regency, which limits the generalizability of the results. Future researchers are advised to increase the sample size and expand the geographical scope to ensure more representative findings. Future research should also explore additional variables relevant to current digital trends, such as interactive service quality (e.g., live streaming), electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), or data security trust, to enhance the model's predictive power for customer loyalty.

### Statement of Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the author used generative artificial intelligence tools to support the scientific writing process. Grammarly was used to check grammar, refine writing style, and improve clarity in scientific writing. All interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this study are the sole responsibility of the author.

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