



# “Factors influencing brand love: A case study of Apple in Saudi Arabia”

<b>AUTHORS</b>	Fethi Klabi  Abdulrahim Meshari
<b>ARTICLE INFO</b>	Fethi Klabi and Abdulrahim Meshari (2023). Factors influencing brand love: A case study of Apple in Saudi Arabia. <i>Innovative Marketing</i> , 19(3), 21-33. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.21511/im.19(3).2023.03">10.21511/im.19(3).2023.03</a>
<b>DOI</b>	<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/im.19(3).2023.03">http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/im.19(3).2023.03</a>
<b>RELEASED ON</b>	Friday, 28 July 2023
<b>RECEIVED ON</b>	Wednesday, 19 April 2023
<b>ACCEPTED ON</b>	Monday, 17 July 2023
<b>LICENSE</b>	 This work is licensed under a <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License</a>
<b>JOURNAL</b>	"Innovative Marketing "
<b>ISSN PRINT</b>	1814-2427
<b>ISSN ONLINE</b>	1816-6326
<b>PUBLISHER</b>	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”
<b>FOUNDER</b>	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

**47**



NUMBER OF FIGURES

**3**



NUMBER OF TABLES

**6**

© The author(s) 2023. This publication is an open access article.



## BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES



LLC "CPC "Business Perspectives"  
Hryhorii Skovoroda lane, 10,  
Sumy, 40022, Ukraine  
[www.businessperspectives.org](http://www.businessperspectives.org)

**Received on:** 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 2023

**Accepted on:** 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023

**Published on:** 28<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023

© Fethi Klabi, Abdulrahim Meshari,  
2023

Fethi Klabi, Ph.D., Assistant Professor,  
College of Business, Marketing and  
Electronic Commerce Department,  
King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia.  
(Corresponding author)

Abdulrahim Meshari, Ph.D., Assistant  
Professor, College of Business, Business  
Administration Department, King  
Khalid University, Saudi Arabia.



This is an Open Access article,  
distributed under the terms of the  
[Creative Commons Attribution 4.0  
International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits  
unrestricted re-use, distribution, and  
reproduction in any medium, provided  
the original work is properly cited.

**Conflict of interest statement:**

Author(s) reported no conflict of interest

Fethi Klabi (Saudi Arabia), Abdulrahim Meshari (Saudi Arabia)

# FACTORS INFLUENCING BRAND LOVE: A CASE STUDY OF APPLE IN SAUDI ARABIA

## Abstract

This paper aims to explore the factors that drive brand love for Apple in Saudi Arabia, which have not been studied previously. The study utilized the PROCESS macro on SPSS with models 4 and 15 to analyze the data collected from Saudi Arabian consumers. The findings confirmed that self-image congruence has both a direct effect, which equals 0.429, and an indirect effect through price perception, amounting to 0.083, on brand love. This means consumers who perceive themselves as similar to the brand in terms of personality, values, and lifestyles are more likely to develop a strong affection for Apple. The study also revealed the negative moderation of prestige sensitivity in the relationship between self-image congruence and brand love. In fact, the effect of self-image congruence on brand love is significantly higher (0.504) among individuals displaying low prestige sensitivity compared to those exhibiting high prestige sensitivity (0.323). However, the results did not support the moderation of prestige sensitivity in the relationship between price perception and brand love. Overall, this paper contributes to the existing literature on brand love, self-image congruence, price perception, and prestige sensitivity. The findings provide valuable insights for marketers to develop effective strategies to enhance consumers' emotional connection with their brands. By understanding the importance of self-image congruence and considering the role of prestige sensitivity, marketers can better tailor their marketing messages and branding efforts to appeal to Saudi Arabian consumers. This study highlights the importance of cultural differences in consumer behavior and provides a basis for future research.

## Keywords

brand love, brand-customer relationship, consumer behavior, prestige sensitivity, price perception, Saudi Arabia, self-image congruence

## JEL Classification

M31, L68

## INTRODUCTION

The scientific problem addressed in this study concerns comprehending the factors that influence brand love for the Apple brand in Saudi Arabia, with a particular emphasis on self-image congruence, price perception, and prestige sensitivity. By examining the Apple brand in Saudi Arabia, the study fills a significant gap in the existing literature, as there is limited research conducted on this topic in emerging countries. Thus, this study represents the first attempt to investigate the effects of the variables mentioned above on brand love, explicitly exploring the Apple brand in an emerging Arab country like Saudi Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia, the Apple brand is prominent and associated with high quality, innovation, luxury, wealth, and status. Understanding the factors that influence brand love in this context is crucial due to Saudis' deep-seated devotion and strong affinity toward the Apple brand. By investigating the antecedents of brand love for Apple in Saudi Arabia, this study provides valuable insights into consumer behavior and brand management strategies in an emerging market. It establishes the foundation for further research and provides practical implications for brand managers in similar contexts.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to self-image congruence theory, individuals tend to respond positively to brands whose images are aligned with their self-concept, self-identity, or the way they think about themselves. When people perceive that a brand or product is concordant with their self-image or personality, they are more likely to be attracted to it and form a positive attitude toward it. This is because the brand or product is seen as a reflection of their own identity or values. On the other hand, if people perceive that a brand or product does not align well with their self-image, they are less likely to be interested in it or to form a positive attitude toward it (Sirgy et al., 2018). On an empirical level, many studies have substantiated the effect of self-image congruence on consumer satisfaction, brand passion, brand preference, brand loyalty, intention to use, and purchase intention (Tavera-Mesias et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020).

Price perception is crucial in consumers' evaluation of a product's performance. It depends on how consumers perceive the price/performance ratio of the product, which is influenced by how they compare the benefits of purchasing the product to the sacrifices involved (Zielke, 2011). If consumers perceive the sacrifices to outweigh the benefits, they tend to have a negative price perception, which reduces their likelihood of purchasing the product. In contrast, if they perceive the benefits to exceed the sacrifices, they tend to have a positive price perception, which increases their purchase intention (Benhardy et al., 2020; Cakici & Tekeli, 2022; Yasri et al., 2020).

Consumers are capable of developing, maintaining, and expressing strong emotions toward brands (Fournier, 1998). Brand love represents the most intense level of a consumer's relationship with a brand, referring to consumers' emotional attachment to a particular brand (Batra et al., 2012). Similar to studies on interpersonal love (Fehr et al., 2009), brand love encompasses multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors such as deep affection, separation distress, intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment (Langner et al., 2016). Brand love develops from a positive evaluation and is expressed through a passionate desire to use its products and a long-term attachment to

the brand (Batra et al., 2012). As a result, brand love has been found to influence brand image, brand loyalty, and purchase intention (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

Prestige sensitivity refers to the perception that purchasing a product of a certain category or brand reflects a positive image in society. It relates to an individual's tendency to be influenced by the prestige or status of a product or brand (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). People who are highly prestige sensitive may be willing to pay a premium price for a product or service because they believe the higher price indicates prestige or exclusivity (Meng, 2011). This is related to price perception, as individuals with high prestige sensitivity may perceive a higher price as a sign of quality, exclusivity, or desirability. On the other hand, individuals with low prestige sensitivity may be more price-sensitive and less likely to pay a premium price for a product or service (Ailawadi et al., 2001).

Research has shown that self-image congruence can have a significant impact on emotional brand attachment and brand love (Afridawi & Rasool, 2022; Al-Haddad, 2019; Alnawas & Altarifi, 2016; Batra et al., 2012; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). When consumers perceive that a brand is congruent with their self-image, they tend to have a more positive attitude toward the brand and are more likely to develop positive feelings toward it (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Congruence between the consumer and the brand can also result in a favorable perception of the prices of the brand's products (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). This is because consumers who align themselves with a brand's values may place a higher value on the products or services associated with that brand, leading to a heightened price perception (Sarkar et al., 2021).

Price perception has its attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. When consumers perceive a price positively, they will show more positive attitudes toward brands, such as loyalty (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015; Garretson et al., 2002). When consumers perceive a brand's products as reasonably priced or offering good value for money, it can lead to a positive perception of the brand overall, which can further strengthen their emotional attachment to the brand. This study proposes that price perception helps to explain how self-image con-

gruence affects brand love. Thus, price perception plays a mediating role in the relationship between self-image congruence and brand love.

The effect of self-image congruence on brand love may be more pronounced for consumers who are more price-conscious and less sensitive to prestige. Consumers who highly value prestige may be more focused on the symbolic value associated with a brand and, therefore, may be less influenced by the perceived congruence between their self-image and the brand's image when developing an emotional connection to the brand. In other words, they may be less likely to develop a strong emotional attachment to a brand based solely on self-image congruence. They may require additional cues, such as the brand's perceived prestige and exclusivity.

Based on the findings of Kucukergin et al. (2020), who found that prestige sensitivity moderates the effect of price perception on tourist emotions (joy), the study expects that the relationship between price perception and brand love weakens as consumers' prestige sensitivity increases. Consumers who highly value prestige may be less influenced by price in forming an emotional connection with a brand. Instead, they may place greater importance on the symbolic value associated with the brand, which may override any negative perceptions of price.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of self-image congruence on brand love through price perception. Additionally, it seeks to explore the moderating role of prestige sensitivity in the relationships between self-image congruence, price perception, and brand love. To accomplish these objectives, the paper focuses on the case of the Apple brand in Saudi Arabia – an emerging Arab country. By examining the cognitive, psychological, and social factors contributing to the love Saudis demonstrate towards the Apple brand, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the underlying reasons behind this phenomenon.

According to the above, the following hypotheses are presented:

*H1: Self-image congruence has a direct positive effect on brand love and an indirect effect mediated by price perception.*

*H2: Prestige sensitivity negatively moderates the effect of self-image congruence on brand love. The more prestige-sensitive people are, the weaker the effect of self-image congruence on brand love.*

*H3: Prestige sensitivity negatively moderates the effect of price perception on brand love. The more prestige-sensitive people are, the weaker the effect of price perception on brand love.*

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Data collection and sample

The study conducted a survey to test research questions during the first two months of 2023 using the Google Forms platform. The electronic questionnaire was shared through WhatsApp, a widely used mobile application in Saudi Arabia. A convenience sample of 455 individuals was obtained. Online surveys offer several advantages over traditional paper-based methods, including cost savings, faster survey administration, and the ability to reach individuals in distant places more easily. The subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire in their native language, specifically in Arabic. To ensure accurate translation, two experts translated the items from English to Arabic using the 'translation and back-translation' technique. Before answering the questions, the subjects could consult a brief presentation about Apple and its main products: "Apple Inc. is a multinational technology company headquartered in California, USA. It designs, develops, and sells consumer electronics, computer software, and online services. Its popular products include the iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple Watch".

The questionnaire comprises two sections. The first part evaluates statements related to self-image congruence, brand love, price perception, and prestige sensitivity. The second part comprises demographic questions such as gender, age, education, and income level. Additionally, there is a question on whether the respondent owns an Apple product. Based on the findings, 47% of the respondents were male, and 53% were female, indicating a nearly even distribu-

tion. The sample's age categories were evenly distributed, with a slight dominance of the "25 to 35" age group (28%). Additionally, 61% of the subjects had a university-level education, and 48.2% reported a monthly income exceeding 7000 SAR (\$1867).

## 2.2. Measures

The questionnaire items were drawn from prior studies. To assess self-image congruence, the study used the direct method (Sirgy et al., 1997). Participants were instructed to imagine the typical user of an Apple product and indicate the degree to which they agreed with the statement: "Apple is consistent with how I really see myself." Specifically, the analysis focused on actual self-image congruence, which relates to the motive of self-consistency. Self-consistency reflects the tendency to purchase and use products that affirm and strengthen individuals' self-perceptions (Šegota et al., 2022). Recent studies have demonstrated that actual self-congruence strongly impacts consumer attitudes and behavior compared to other facets of self-image congruence (Klabi, 2020; Wang et al., 2017). These findings suggest that consumers are more likely to be positively influenced by brands and products that align with their actual self-concept, as opposed to their ideal or social self.

The study used a four-item measurement scale adapted from Kumar et al. (2021) to assess brand love. The scale was originally developed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006). The scale consists of items that capture the emotional attachment consumers have with a brand, such as "I love [brand]" and "I am very attached to [brand]." The analysis adopted a measurement scale from Yasri et al. (2020) to measure price perception. The scale includes three items that reflect a positive perception of the brand's pricing, such as "For me, the prices of Apple products are reasonable" and "The prices of Apple products reflect their quality." A five-item measurement scale adapted from Ferreira and Coelho (2015) was used to assess prestige sensitivity. The scale was designed to capture consumers' enjoyment of purchasing high-priced Apple products and their perception of the status gained from using them. The items include statements such as "I enjoy the prestige of buying high-priced Apple products" and "Buying the most expensive

brand of the smartphone (Apple) impresses other people." All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (5 points).

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Exploratory factor analysis

The kurtosis and skewness values for all items are close to zero, which indicates that the data distribution is approximately normal. In order to handle missing data, the study used mean imputation. A factor analysis with Varimax rotation on SPSS was used to reduce observed variables or items to a smaller set of latent factors (Table 1). 12 observed variables were included in the analysis, consisting of four variables reflecting brand love, five variables representing prestige sensitivity, and three variables for price perception. It is worth noting that the sole item representing self-image congruence was not introduced at this stage. The factor analysis yielded a three-factor solution that explained 71.8% of the total variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index was 0.871, which exceeded the recommended value of 0.5, indicating that the sample was highly adequate for the analysis (Kaiser, 1974; Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that the data did not produce an identity matrix and supporting factor analysis (Field, 2000; Pallant, 2020). Furthermore, all the communality values for the variables were above 0.5, indicating that the factors well explained the variables.

The factor analysis revealed that the first factor had an eigenvalue of 5.402, accounting for 27.5% of the variance in the original data. This factor comprised five items related to prestige sensitivity (PS1, PS2, PS3, PS4, and PS5). The second factor had an eigenvalue of 2.124 and explained 26.8% of the variance. This factor contained four items reflecting brand love (BL1, BL2, BL3, and BL4). The third factor comprised three items representing price perception (PP1, PP2, and PP3) and had an eigenvalue of 1.091, accounting for 17.5% of the total variance. The reliability of the variables was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha index, and the values for PS, BL, and PP were all above 0.7, in-



**Table 1.** Factor analyses

Items	Prestige sensitivity (PS)	Brand love (BL)	Price perception (PP)	% variance explained	KMO	Cronbach's Alpha	
PS1	0.677			27.5	0.871	0.874	
PS2	0.733						
PS3	0.820						
PS4	0.797						
PS5	0.798						
BL1		0.825		26.8		0.871	0.913
BL2		0.917					
BL3		0.849					
BL4		0.855					
PP1			0.704	17.5			0.871
PP2			0.816				
PP3			0.786				

dicating good internal consistency and suggesting that the variables were reliable measures of the underlying constructs (Peterson, 1994).

### 3.2. Convergent and discriminant validity

The results revealed that all factor loadings linking observed and latent variables were equal or above 0.7. The average variance extracted (AVE) values for brand love (BL) (0.743), price perception (PP) (0.593), prestige sensitivity (PS) (0.588), and self-image congruence (SIC) (1) were all above the standard cutoff of 0.5. The values of construct reliability (CR) for brand love (0.920), price perception (0.813), prestige sensitivity (0.877), and self-image congruence (1) were all superior to 0.7. Therefore, all these indicators satisfy the criteria of convergent validity of the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009).

The analysis compared the AVE value to the highest squared correlation with other latent variables for each latent variable (BL, PP, PS, and SIC) to assess the discriminant validity of the above constructs. The results showed that for all constructs, this condition is met for all constructs (Table 2).

The heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was applied to further assess discriminant validity. This method previously performed better than the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Henseler et al., 2009). A value of HTMT above 0.85 suggests a lack of discriminant validity of the measurement scale. Others set a 0.90 threshold for that (Gold et al., 2001). According to Table 2, all HTMT values are below 0.85. Accordingly, discriminant validity was confirmed for all latent variables of the measurement model.

### 3.3. One-sample t-test and independent samples t-test

Once the validity of the constructs was established, the study used the one-sample t-test to compare the sample's mean to the a priori value for each construct. A one-sample t-test is a statistical test used to determine whether the mean of a sample is significantly different from a known or hypothesized population mean (Gerald, 2018). Since items were measured on a five-point scale, the test value equals 3. For each variable, a t-value is calculated and compared to a critical t-value for the corresponding degree of freedom (number of cases minus 1) and a desired significance level.

**Table 2.** Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion (upper-right) and the HTMT criterion (lower-left)

Variables	Brand Love (BL)	Price Perception (PP)	Prestige Sensitivity (PS)	Self-image Congruence (SIC)
Brand Love (BL)	0.743	0.384	0.336	0.476
Price Perception (PP)	0.53	0.593	0.577	0.280
Prestige Sensitivity (PS)	0.42	0.68	0.588	0.336
Self-image Congruence (SIC)	0.64	0.49	0.45	1

The mean value for brand love (BL) is 3.81, with a t-value of 18.660 ( $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that the majority of respondents likely reported scores toward the upper end of the scale, indicating high levels of brand love for Apple. This finding is consistent with the notion that Apple is well-appreciated in Saudi Arabia. The perception of Apple as a symbol of innovation, quality, and prestige may have positively influenced the respondents' attitudes toward the brand.

The self-image congruence assessment results indicate that the mean value for this variable was significantly higher than the hypothesized value of 3 ( $m = 3.17$ ,  $t = 3.166$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that, on average, respondents in the study reported a high degree of self-image congruence with Apple's brand. This may indicate that Apple reflects personality traits or values that the respondents identify with, such as creativity, sophistication, or innovation.

The result for the price perception variable indicates that respondents in the study did not have a positive perception of Apple's product pricing, as the mean value for this variable was 2.69, below the hypothesized value of 3. Additionally, the statistical significance of the t-value ( $t = -6.424$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) suggests that this difference between the sample mean and the hypothesized value is unlikely to be due to chance. Accordingly, respondents may perceive Apple's products as overpriced relative to their perceived value. Moreover, the findings for prestige sensitivity suggest that respondents in the study did not have a high level of sensitivity to prestige when it comes to purchasing Apple's products, as the mean value for this variable was low (2.64) and significantly different from the hypothesized value of 3 ( $t = -7.218$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The independent samples t-test is a statistical method used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two independent groups (Cressie & Whitford, 1986). In that case, this method would be used to compare the means of self-image congruence, brand love, price perception, and prestige sensitivity in two independent groups: those who possess an Apple product (92.5% of the sample) and those who do not (7.5% of the sample). Based on the results, there are significant differences in self-image congruence,

brand love, price perception, and prestige sensitivity between those who possess an Apple product and those who do not.

Specifically, those who possess an Apple product showed higher mean scores for self-image congruence (3.22 vs. 2.55), brand love (3.91 vs. 2.80), price perception (2.75 vs. 2.12), and prestige sensitivity (2.68 vs. 2.29) compared to those who do not possess an Apple product. These differences were statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  when assuming equal variances. These findings suggest that there may be significant differences in the perceptions and attitudes of individuals who own Apple products compared to those who do not. However, the large percentage of participants who possess an Apple product indicates that the two groups may not be equally represented in the sample, which would need to be considered when interpreting the results of the independent samples t-test.

### 3.4. Hypotheses testing

The study used the PROCESS macro, which is a statistical tool developed by Hayes (2013), to test a mediation model with one independent variable (self-image congruence), one dependent variable (brand love), and one mediator variable (price perception). Specifically, Model 4 in the PROCESS macro tested the direct and indirect pathways between self-image congruence and brand love through price perception. The paper employed 5000 bootstrap samples and a confidence interval of 95% to estimate the effects and assess the precision of the estimates. The results indicate that there is a significant effect of self-image congruence on price perception ( $a = 0.355$ ,  $t = 8.088$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and the bootstrap confidence interval of 0.269 to 0.442 does not include 0, suggesting that the effect is statistically significant. The results also indicate that the direct effect of self-image congruence on brand love in the presence of price perception is  $c' = 0.429$  ( $t = 10.702$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a bootstrap confidence interval of 0.350 to 0.508. The effect of price perception on brand love was also significant ( $b = 0.233$ ,  $t = 4.848$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a bootstrap confidence interval of 0.138 to 0.327. The indirect effect of self-image congruence on brand love by-passing price perception is also significant and equals  $a*b = 0.083$ , with a bootstrap confidence interval of 0.045 to 0.125. This supports the partial

**Table 3.** Mediation analysis summary

Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence interval		Conclusion
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
SIC → PP → BL	0.512	0.429	0.083	0.045	0.125	Partial mediation

Note: SIC = self-image congruence; PP = price perception; BL = brand love.

mediation model, as self-image congruence has a significant indirect effect on brand love through price perception. H1 is then confirmed. The mediation analysis summary is presented in Table 3.

To test H2 and H3, the analysis applied Model 15 from PROCESS macro on SPSS. Model 15 is specifically designed for testing the second-order moderated mediation of a single mediator and moderator for both direct and indirect effects, as explained in Hayes (2013). In this study, self-image congruence (SIC) was used as the independent variable (X), brand love (BL) as the dependent variable (Y), price perception (PP) as the mediator (M), and prestige sensitivity as the moderator (W). The findings of the conditional process are displayed in Table 4, indicating that self-image congruence significantly predicts brand love ( $\beta = 0.637$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Those who perceive a strong alignment between their identity and the brand image demonstrate a greater degree of brand love. The interaction effect (SIC \* PS) also significantly impacts brand love ( $\beta = -0.085$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that the impact of self-image congruence on brand love is considerably weaker for those with higher levels of prestige sensitivity, confirming H2.

Table 5 provides additional insights into the conditional effect of self-image congruence on brand love by comparing the impact of self-image congruence on brand love for individuals with high prestige sensitivity versus low prestige sensitivity. The results of the bootstrapping analysis confirm that the conditional effect of self-image congruence on brand love for high prestige sensitivity (M+1SD) is significantly weaker compared to low prestige sensitivity (M-1SD) (0.323 vs. 0.504).

Figure 1 illustrates the slopes of regression lines for three levels of prestige sensitivity (M+1SD, M, M-1SD) in the relationship between self-image congruence and brand love. The magnitude of the slope indicates the strength of the relationship between self-image congruence and brand love for each level of prestige sensitivity. As shown in Figure 1, the regression line for low prestige sensitivity exhibits a positive and stronger effect of self-image congruence on brand love compared to higher values of prestige sensitivity. This finding provides evidence that the effect of self-image congruence on brand love varies across different levels of prestige sensitivity.

**Table 4.** Results of the conditional model: The moderation and moderated mediation analysis

Variables	M (Price Perception)					Y (Brand Love)				
	$\beta$	t value	p-Value	LLCI	ULCI	$\beta$	t value	p-Value	LLCI	ULCI
SIC (X)	0.355	8.088	0.000	0.269	0.442	0.637	5.954	0.000	0.426	0.847
PP (M)						0.334	2.415	0.016	0.062	0.606
PS (W)						0.459	3.472	0.001	0.199	0.720
SIC*PS (Int_1)						-0.085	-2.166	0.031	-0.162	-0.008
PP*PS (Int_2)						-0.038	-0.861	0.390	-0.126	0.049

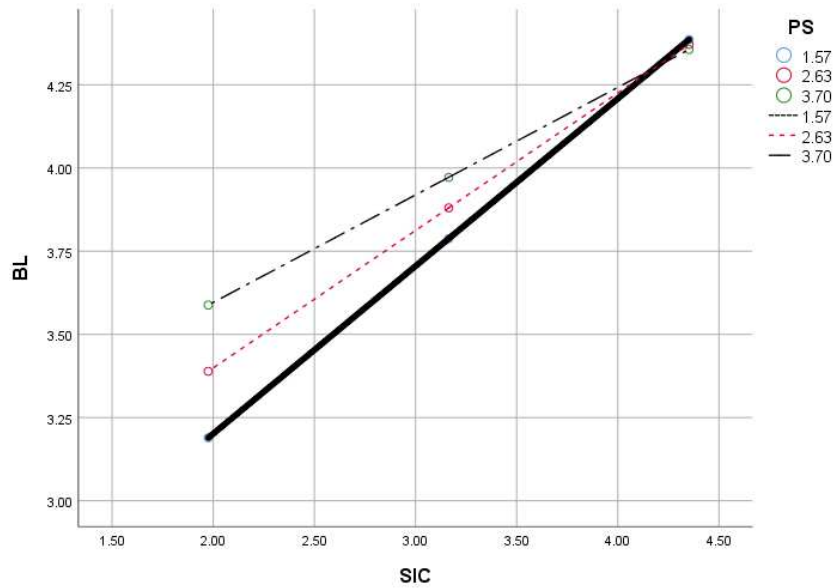
Note: SIC = self-image congruence; PP = price perception; BL = brand love; PS = prestige sensitivity.

**Table 5.** Moderating effect of prestige sensitivity between self-image congruence and brand love

Path	Condition	Effect ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Self-Image Congruence → Brand Love	M-1SD	0.504	9.094	0.000	[0.395, 0.613]
	M	0.413	10.061	0.000	[0.332, 0.494]
	M+1SD	0.323	5.247	0.000	[0.202, 0.444]

Note: SD: Standard Deviation; M = Mean; M-1SD = 1.569; M = 2.634; M+1SD = 3.699; 95% CI: Bootstrap 95% confidence interval.





Note: SIC = self-image congruence; BL = brand love; PS = prestige sensitivity.

Figure 1. Moderating effect of PS on the effect of SIC on BL

Therefore, H3, which states that prestige sensitivity moderates the effect of price perception on brand love, has been rejected. In fact, the interaction term for the conditional effect of price perception on brand love (PP\*PS) had a beta coefficient of  $-0.038$  and a  $t$ -statistic of  $-0.861$ . The 95% confidence interval for this coefficient ranged from  $-0.126$  to  $0.049$ , which included the value 0. This suggests no significant moderation effect of prestige sensitivity on the relationship between price perception and brand love. The index of the moderated mediation was  $-0.014$ , with a bootstrapped standard error of  $0.015$ . The bootstrap confidence interval for this index ranged from  $-0.041$  to  $0.020$ , which includes 0. This indicates that there was no significant moderation effect of prestige sensitivity on the indirect effect of self-image congruence on brand love through price perception.

The results of the conditional indirect effect of self-image congruence on brand love through price perception were significant for all subgroups, with  $SIC \rightarrow PP \rightarrow BL$ . However, this effect showed

no significant differences between high and low prestige sensitivity subgroups.

Figure 2 illustrates no significant differences in the slopes of the conditional effects of price perception on brand love for prestige sensitivity values equal to the mean (M) (2.63), one standard deviation above the mean (M+1SD) (3.70), and one standard deviation below the mean (M-1SD) (1.57). Figure 3 summarizes the findings of this research.

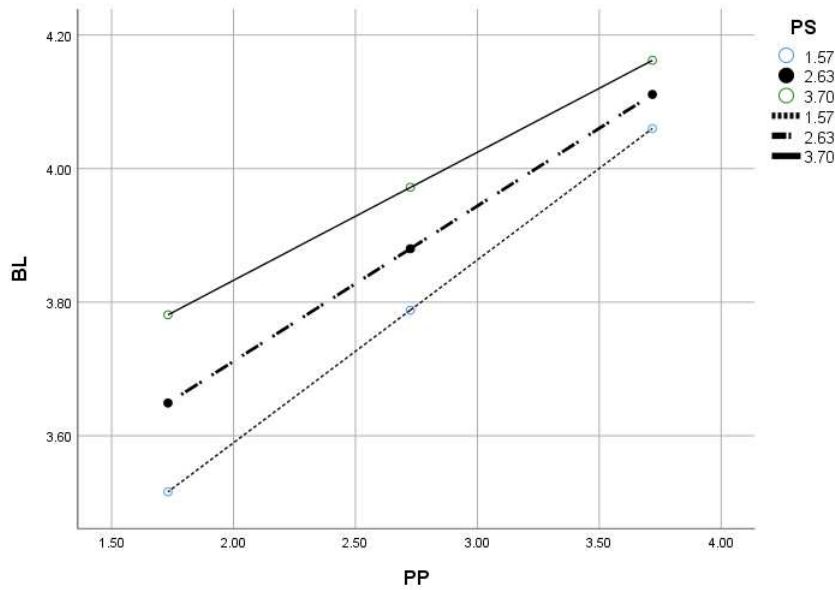
#### 4. DISCUSSION

The results showed that self-image congruence has a significant positive effect on brand love ( $\beta = 0.429$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which is consistent with Afridawi and Rasool (2022), Al-Haddad (2019), and Alnawas and Altarifi (2016). These findings provide empirical evidence that when individuals perceive that their self-image is congruent with the image of a brand, it increases their level of love for that brand.

Table 6. Conditional indirect effect of self-image congruence on brand love

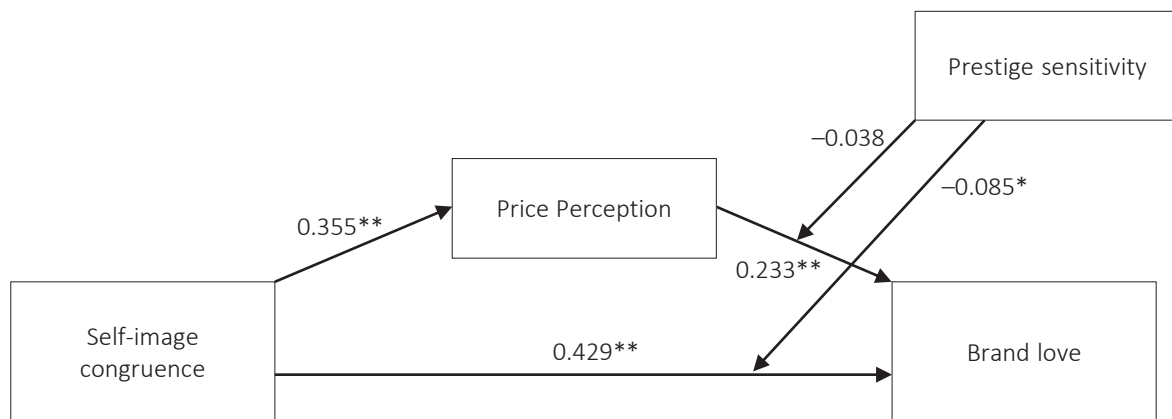
Path	Condition	Effect ( $\beta$ )	Boot SE	95% CI
Self-Image Congruence $\rightarrow$ Price Perception $\rightarrow$ Brand Love	M-1SD	0.097	0.033	[0.033, 0.162]
	M	0.083	0.024	[0.039, 0.133]
	M+1SD	0.068	0.024	[0.029, 0.125]

Note: SD: Standard Deviation; M = Mean; M-1SD = 1.569; M = 2.634; M+1SD = 3.699; 95% CI: Bootstrap 95% confidence interval. Boot SE: Boot standard error.



Note: PP = price perception; BL = brand love; PS = prestige sensitivity.

Figure 2. Conditional effect of PP on BL



Note: \* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Figure 3. Results of the empirical investigation

Furthermore, the results suggest that the effect of self-image congruence on brand love is mediated by price perception. The PROCESS analysis on SPSS confirmed the indirect effect of self-image congruence on brand love through price perception ( $\beta = 0.083$ ). This result is consistent with Escalas and Bettman (2005) regarding the effect of self-image congruence on price perception, as well as the findings of Ferreira and Coelho (2015) and Garretson et al. (2002) regarding the effect of price perception on brand attitudes. These findings suggest that when consumers perceive that a brand aligns with their self-image, it can lead to a positive perception of its price. This positive perception of price, in turn, can further enhance

the consumer's love for the brand. This study provides valuable insights into the complex relationships between self-image congruence, price perception, and brand love, highlighting the importance of considering multiple factors in understanding consumer behavior. When a brand creates a sense of identity and connection, it can positively influence the consumer's perception of its pricing strategy. Specifically, consumers may be less likely to perceive the brand's products as overpriced or not providing value for money when the brand aligns with their self-image. This positive perception of the brand's pricing strategy can further enhance the consumer's love for the brand.

The results also indicate that prestige sensitivity has a negative moderating effect on the impact of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. This suggests that the relationship between self-image congruence and brand love is significantly weaker for consumers who are high in prestige sensitivity. In other words, when a brand aligns with a consumer's self-image, it may have less of an impact on their love for the brand if they are susceptible to prestige. This result could be because consumers susceptible to prestige may be more focused on the status or image associated with the brand rather than their connection to it. As a result, the effect of self-image congruence on brand love may be diminished for these consumers. This finding highlights the importance of considering individual differences, such as prestige sensitivity, when examining the factors influencing consumers' love for a brand.

On the other hand, the finding that prestige sensitivity did not moderate the effect of price perception on brand love is consistent with Kucukergin et al. (2020), who found that prestige sensitivity only moderates the effect of price perception on consumers' joy, not brand love. This result suggests that the impact of consumers' perception of the brand's pricing strategy on their love for the brand remains consistent regardless of their level of sensitivity to prestige. In other words, whether consumers are highly sensitive to prestige or not, the effect of price perception on their love for the

brand is similar. This could be because consumers' perceptions of a brand's pricing strategy may be more objective and less influenced by personal factors such as sensitivity to prestige.

In sum, the fact that self-image congruence significantly affects brand love is consistent with prior research that suggests that when a brand reflects and reinforces a consumer's self-image, it creates a sense of resonance and connection, which can lead to stronger brand love. The mediating role of price perception suggests that when consumers perceive a brand's prices as reasonable or even favorable, they are more likely to develop positive feelings toward the brand, including a greater sense of brand love. The findings also confirm a negative moderation effect of prestige sensitivity in the relationship between self-image congruence and brand love. This suggests that for individuals with high prestige sensitivity, simply having a brand that aligns with their self-concept may not be enough to foster brand love. The brand must also convey prestige and status to capture their attention and loyalty effectively. The lack of significant moderation effect of prestige sensitivity on the relationship between price perception and brand love may be because consumers view price as an objective quality indicator, regardless of their level of prestige sensitivity. It is also worth noting that the results may be influenced by cultural factors specific to Saudi Arabia, as the study was conducted in this context.

---

## CONCLUSION

This study stands as the first work that introduces a comprehensive framework encompassing self-image congruence, brand love, price perception, and prestige sensitivity, specifically focusing on Saudi Arabia and the Apple brand. The results confirm that self-image congruence positively influences brand love, indicating that consumers love brands more when the brand image aligns with their self-concept. Consequently, companies should align their brand image with the self-image of their target consumer group, incorporating those elements into branding, messaging, and marketing campaigns. Additionally, companies can focus on developing an emotionally engaging brand personality, offering personalized experiences, and providing customized after-sale services to cater to consumer needs and preferences.

The analysis also reveals that price perception mediates the relationship between self-image congruence and brand love. Companies are advised to enhance self-image congruence to improve consumers' perception of pricing strategies. For Apple in Saudi Arabia, creating a brand image that resonates with the target consumers is essential, promoting its values and image through various marketing channels. This will lead to a higher perceived value of the products, allowing the company to set higher prices.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that prestige sensitivity negatively moderates the effect of self-image congruence on brand love. This suggests that more than just simply focusing on self-image congruence may be required to build brand love among prestige-sensitive consumers. Managers should also consider other factors necessary to this segment, such as exclusivity or uniqueness of the brand or product. The absence of moderation of prestige sensitivity in the effect of price perception on brand love indicates that a brand's pricing strategy can consistently affect brand love across different consumer segments, irrespective of consumers' varying levels of prestige sensitivity.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Fethi Klabi.

Data curation: Abdulrahim Meshari.

Formal analysis: Fethi Klabi.

Investigation: Fethi Klabi.

Methodology: Fethi Klabi.

Resources: Fethi Klabi.

Software: Fethi Klabi.

Supervision: Abdulrahim Meshari.

Validation: Fethi Klabi, Abdulrahim Meshari.

Writing – original draft: Fethi Klabi.

Writing – review & editing: Abdulrahim Meshari.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for funding this paper through a large group Research Project under grant number RGP2/407/44.

## REFERENCES

1. Afridawi, M. A. K., & Rasool, H. A. A. (2022). Effect of customer-brand identification on brand fidelity: The mediating role of brand love. An applied study of smartphone brands in Iraq. *AL-Qadisiyah Journal for Administrative and Economic Sciences*, 24(3).
2. Ahluwalia, R., Burnkrant, R. E., & Unnava, H. R. (2000). Consumer response to negative publicity: The moderating role of commitment. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 37(2), 203-214. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.37.2.203.18734>
3. Ailawadi, K. L., Neslin, S. A., & Gedenk, K. (2001). Pursuing the value-conscious consumer: Store brands versus national brand promotions. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(1), 71-89. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.65.1.71.18132>
4. Al-Haddad, A. (2019). Social identification, brand image and customer satisfaction as determinants of brand love. In M. Mateev & P. Poutziouris (Eds.), *Creative Business and Social Innovations for a Sustainable Future. Advances in Science, Technology & Innovation* (pp. 255-262). Cham: Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01662-3\\_28](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01662-3_28)
5. Alnawas, I., & Altarifi, S. (2016). Exploring the role of brand identification and brand love in generating higher levels of brand loyalty. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 22(2), 111-128. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766715604663>
6. Batra, R., & Ahtola, O. T. (1991). Measuring the hedonic and utilitarian sources of consumer attitudes. *Marketing Letters*, 2(2), 159-170. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00436035>
7. Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand love. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(2), 1-16.
8. Benhardy, K., Hardiyansyah, H., Putranto, A., & Ronadi, M. (2020). Brand image and price perceptions impact on purchase intentions: Mediating brand trust. *Management Science Letters*, 10(14), 3425-3432. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2020.5.035>
9. Cakici, A. C., & Tekeli, S. (2022). The mediating effect of consumers' price level perception and emotions towards supermarkets. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, 31(1), 57-76. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJMBE-12-2020-0344>

10. Carroll, B. A., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2006). Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 17, 79-89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-006-4219-2>
11. Correia, A., Kozak, M., & Kim, S. (2019). Investigation of luxury values in shopping tourism using a fuzzy-set approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 58(1), 77-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517741005>
12. Cressie, N. A. C., & Whitford, H. J. (1986). How to use the two sample t-test. *Biometrical Journal*, 28(2), 131-148. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bimj.4710280202>
13. Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378-389. <https://doi.org/10.1086/497549>
14. Falsafani, M. (2020). Pengaruh self-image congruence terhadap brand association, perceived quality, brand trust, dan brand loyalty pada milenial di Indonesia. *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Bisnis Indonesia*, 6(1), 1-11. (In Indonesian). Retrieved from <http://jurnal.unmuhjember.ac.id/index.php/JMBI/article/view/3529>
15. Fehr, B., Sprecher, S., & Underwood, L. G. (Eds.). (2009). *The science of compassionate love: Theory, research, and applications*. John Wiley & Sons.
16. Ferreira, A. G., & Coelho, F. J. (2015). Product involvement, price perceptions, and brand loyalty. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(4), 349-364. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2014-0623>
17. Field, A. (2000). *Discovering statistics using SPSS for Windows*. Sage Publications.
18. Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error: Algebra and statistics. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(3), 382-388. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3150980>
19. Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343-373. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209515>
20. Garretson, J. A., Fisher, D., & Burton, S. (2002). Antecedents of private label attitude and national brand promotion attitude: similarities and differences. *Journal of Retailing*, 78(2), 91-99. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(02\)00071-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(02)00071-4)
21. Gerald, B. (2018). A brief review of independent, dependent and one sample t-test. *International Journal of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics*, 4(2), 50-54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.11648/j.ijamtp.20180402.13>
22. Gold, A. H., Malhotra, A., & Segars, A. H. (2001). Knowledge management: An organizational capabilities perspective. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18(1), 185-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421222.2001.11045669>
23. Haitao, N. (2022). Analysis of price perception, purchase interest and marketing performance on purchase decisions. *Dinasti International Journal of Digital Business Management*, 3(4), 693-702. <https://doi.org/10.31933/dijdbm.v3i4.1361>
24. Harrison-Walker, L. J. (2001). The measurement of word-of-mouth communication and an investigation of service quality and customer commitment as potential antecedents. *Journal of Service Research*, 4(1), 60-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109467050141006>
25. Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Guilford Press.
26. Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sinkovics, R. R. (2009). The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. In R. R. Sinkovics & P. N. Ghauri (Eds.), *New challenges to international marketing* (pp. 277-319). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979\(2009\)0000020014](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979(2009)0000020014)
27. Hutcheson, G., & Sofroniou, N. (1999). *The multivariate social scientist: Introductory statistics using generalized linear models*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication. <https://doi.org/10.4135/97808057028075>
28. Kaiser, H. F. (1974). An index of factorial simplicity. *Psychometrika*, 39(1), 31-36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02291575>
29. Klabi, F. (2020). To what extent do conspicuous consumption and status consumption reinforce the effect of self-image congruence on emotional brand attachment? Evidence from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, 8(2), 99-117. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41270-020-00073-9>
30. Kressmann, F., Sirgy, M. J., Herrmann, A., Huber, F., Huber, S., & Lee, D. J. (2006). Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(9), 955-964. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2006.06.001>
31. Kucukergin, K. G., Kucukergin, F. N., & Dedeoglu, B. B. (2020). An overview of the destination physical servicescape with SOR paradigm: The importance of prestige sensitivity. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 25(5), 473-488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2020.1737160>
32. Kumar, S., Dhir, A., Talwar, S., Chakraborty, D., & Kaur, P. (2021). What drives brand love for natural products? The moderating role of household size. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 58, 102329. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102329>
33. Langner, T., Bruns, D., Fischer, A., & Rossiter, J. R. (2016). Falling in love with brands: A dynamic analysis of the trajectories of brand love. *Marketing Letters*, 27, 15-26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11002-014-9283-4>
34. Lichtenstein, D. R., Ridgway, N. M., & Netemeyer, R. G. (1993). Price perceptions and consumer shopping behavior: A field study. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30(2), 234-245. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3172830>



35. Meng, J. (2011). Understanding cultural influence on price perception: empirical insights from a SEM application. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 20(7), 526-540. DOI:10.1108/10610421111181831
36. Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using IBM SPSS*. Routledge.
37. Peterson, R. A. (1994). A meta-analysis of Cronbach's coefficient alpha. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(2), 381-391. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209405>
38. Ricardo, R. (2021). Building purchase intention: Company image, product knowledge and price perception. *Dinasti International Journal of Digital Business Management*, 2(6), 1090-1098. <https://doi.org/10.31933/dijdbm.v2i6.1330>
39. Sarkar, J. G., Sreejesh, S., Sarkar, A., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2021). Impact of self-brand connection on willingness to pay premium: Relevant mediators and moderators. *Psychology & Marketing*, 38(11), 1942-1959. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21554>
40. Šegota, T., Chen, N., & Golja, T. (2022). The impact of self-congruity and evaluation of the place on WOM: Perspectives of tourism destination residents. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(4), 800-817. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875211008237>
41. Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., Park, J. O., Chon, K. S., Claiborne, C. B., Johar, J. S., & Berkman, H. (1997). Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25, 229-241. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0092070397253004>
42. Sirgy, M. J., Lee, D. J., & Yu, G. B. (2018). Self-congruity theory in travel and tourism: Another update. In *Creating Experience Value in Tourism* (pp. 57-69). CABI International. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1079/9781786395030.0057>
43. Tavera-Mesias, J. F., van Klyton, A., & Zuñiga Collazos, A. (2022). Social stratification, self-image congruence, and mobile banking in Colombian cities. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 34(3), 312-331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2021.1955426>
44. Wang, S., Li, J., & Zhao, D. (2017). The impact of policy measures on consumer intention to adopt electric vehicles: Evidence from China. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 105, 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2017.08.013>
45. Wu, S., Ren, M., Pitafi, A. H., & Islam, T. (2020). Self-image congruence, functional congruence, and mobile app intention to use. *Mobile Information Systems*, 2020, 5125238. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2020/5125238>
46. Yasri, Y., Susanto, P., Hoque, M. E., & Gusti, M. A. (2020). Price perception and price appearance on repurchase intention of Gen Y: Do brand experience and brand preference mediate? *Heliyon*, 6(11), e05532. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e05532>
47. Zielke, S. (2011). Integrating emotions in the analysis of retail price images. *Psychology & Marketing*, 28(4), 330-359. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20355>