
Research article

The Mediating Effect of Brand Addiction in the Brand Love and Post-Purchase Regret Relationship: Evidence from the Mobile Phone Users

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Abstract: Academic research on branding is continuously considering the connectedness between consumers and brands. Literature in this area studies the consumers' degree of attachment considered as brand love and even addiction, alongside the outcomes of both concepts, whether negative or positive. Although studies related to the negative outcomes are still limited. The current research directs the attention to one of the outcomes that is post-purchase regret. The data was collected using an online questionnaire reaching the sample of 393 mobile users. The data was analysed by WarpPls8 using PLS-SEM as a statistical method. The study's hypothesis regarding the relationship between brand love, addiction and post-purchase regret were accepted. Whereas brand addiction partially mediated the relation between brand love and post-purchase regret. No statistically significant difference has been detected for gender difference in the relationship among the constructs.

Keywords: Brand love, Brand addiction, post-purchase regret.

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Introduction

The pursuit of the paper is to give further understanding to consumer-brand relationships and provide clarity about brand love and brand addiction in the Egyptian mobile brands market. The study also refines the knowledge of adverse effects of tight consumer–brand relationships manifested in post-purchase regret. As reported by the Egyptian ministry of Communication and information technology (IT) the mobile use is witnessing a yearly increase in Egypt, reaching a 98.89% mobile penetration in the period between October and December 2023 (Technology Institute, 2023). In 2024, the Egyptian of 3.6% till the end of year 2025. Even more, the Egyptian smartphone market is projected to grow by

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6.29% annually, to reach 20.3 million phones by 2029. Although the economic challenges Egypt is facing, the mobile phone market is increasing in demand driven by the tech-savvy young population (Statista, 2024).

In markets with a lot of brand choices, each brand competes to be the first choice for customers. Organizations need to have a strong position and foster good long-term relationships with customers to achieve this goal. In the past decades a numerous positive brand relationships constructs have been presented and examined, such as brand liking (Anselmsson et al., 2008), brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), brand admiration (C. W. Park & MacInnis D. J., Eisingerich, 2016), brand attachment (Dennis et al., 2017) and brand passion (Swimberghe et al., 2014). The aforementioned constructs are correlated with beneficial outcomes for both customers and companies. For customers they aid them in achieving a desirable self-identity, enrich their lives (Bagozzi et al., 2017), and maintain wellness (Junaid et al., 2020). Concurrently for businesses, the outcomes are linked to positive WoM (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), increased brand loyalty (Holbrook & Chaudhuri, 2001), price premium and increased profitability (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Customers may develop an array of emotional connections with a brand from just liking elevated to addictive obsession (Junaid et al., 2022). Brand love and addiction share similarities; however, research on brand addiction indicates its uniqueness (Cui et al., 2018; Junaid et al., 2022). Few research studied the relation between brand love and brand addiction, also researches on the addiction of brands is still evolving. The finding of some studies related to brand addiction discuss negative consequence of brand addiction, like irritability and obsessive and compulsive behaviour (Francioni et al., 2021), also compulsive buying behaviour is to be a negative outcome of brand addiction (EL-Mekebbaty & Saleh, 2023).

On the other hand, studies exclaimed that brand addiction could generate positive consequence like positive WoM, readiness to pay a premium price (Junaid et al., 2022; Le, 2020), life satisfaction (Mrad & Cui, 2020), and even brand support after scandal and love for material possessions (Le et al., 2025). The dichotomy in the aftereffects of brand addiction and the lack of research concerning the relation between brand love and brand addiction calls for further investigation on the topic. The current study refines the comprehension of the consequences of close consumer–brand relationships manifested in post-purchase regret. Regarding the anticipated increase in the use of mobile phones in Egypt, especially among the young population, it is significant to further expand research in this market sector and to study the affective connection between users and their phones. By addressing consumers' attitudes and attachment towards brands, we can limit the probability of not meeting expectations that repeatedly lead to regret. Since the Egyptian smartphone market is dynamic and highly competitive, marketing managers need to evaluate the key drivers of consumer engagement. Thus, to enable brands to implement strategies that foster deeper and more sustainable relationships, as well as there is a need to assess the negative consequence of brand addiction to avoid brand switching.

Another important point to realize is that since no two generations are alike, marketers shouldn't treat them all the same (Williams et al., 2011). Generations differ in their expectations, experiences, and demographics and these factors shape purchasing behavior. Consequently, when addressing a certain generation, the distinct client traits, lifestyles, and attitudes are considered. This research

focuses on millennials (born between 1980s and mid-1990s) also referred to as GenY, who matured during the internet and smartphone development, are competent at online commerce, and related digital services (Statista Research Department, 2024). They also maintain significant connectivity through social media (Balon, 2024). Since around 20 percent of the Egyptian population are millennials and actively engaged in the workforce (Galal, 2024), they were the targeted for the study.

Based on the introduction, the research paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine the effect of brand love on each brand addiction and post-purchase regret in the Egyptian mobile market.
- To assess the impact of brand addiction on post-purchase regret.
- To determine the mediating effect of brand addiction in the relation of brand love and post-purchase regret.
- To explore if there is any difference in the relationships according to the demographic of factor gender.

Literature review and hypothesis

Brand Love

It unfolded as a concept in marketing and consumers' psychology by representing strong emotional bonds between the consumers and their brands. Batra et al. (2012) describes brand love as the long-term based bond between consumers and their brands, building on several interconnected cognitive, behavioural and emotional factors. Brand love includes affective aspects, which sets it apart from brand loyalty. That is mostly based on behavioural and transactional concepts. This makes brand love a better indicator of ongoing consumer brand relations (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Research delineates various factors that can cultivate brand love, including satisfaction (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), and brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009). As for the outcomes of brand love, studies have determined positive outcomes manifested in positive WoM (Karjaluoto et al., 2016), brand loyalty (Batra et al., 2012), and also defending the brands in crises (Hegner et al., 2017). The psychological intensity of brands love can lead to brand evangelism, where the consumer is motivated by their emotional bond with the brand (Wallace et al., 2014). Contrariwise, literature provided minimal insights into the adverse effects linked to brand love (Junaid et al., 2022).

Brand Addiction

Consumer research defines brand addiction as a powerful, compulsive attachment to a brand. Earlier work described brand addiction as “a psychological state that entails an obsessive relationship between the consumer and a specific brand” (Mrad & Cui, 2017). In other words, brand addiction refers to an intensive and compulsive connection to a brand, marked by strong emotional bonds and uncontrollable urges to acquire brand products. Mrad & Cui (2017) define it as an extreme form of consumer–brand relationship where the consumers' psychological condition related to a self-brand relationship is characterized by good emotions and satisfaction with a certain brand, along with a persevering desire to acquire the brand's products. This definition underlines that brand addicts not only love the brand but furthermore experience compulsive tendencies akin to addictions (though

without necessarily the dysfunction of substance abuse). Crucially, empirical studies find brand addiction to be distinct from, but sometimes comorbid with compulsive buying. For example, Mrad & Cui (2019) show that compulsive buys and brand addiction can co-exist but still are different, as for brand addicts are proud of their passion and often declare it, whereas compulsive buyers tend to feel guilty and try to keep their purchases a secret.

Brand addiction versus Brand love:

Both brand love and addiction as constructs involve intense affect for a brand, but the latter secrecy emphasizes compulsive urges and gratification, whereas brand love emphasizes enduring passion and emotional bonding (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Mrad & Cui, 2017). That is both brand addiction and brand love involve emotional engagement, but their mechanisms differ as for brand love arises from positive experiences and associating with a brand. Brand love is driven by self-brand congruence and the fulfilment of personal or social needs as consumers think highly of the brand, feel positive emotions toward it (joy, pride, belonging), and repeatedly choose it over time (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). On the other hand, mechanism of brand addiction is like that of behavioral addiction, which is marked by compulsive cravings and emotional fulfillment. Qualitative studies identify features such as obsession, dependence, hoarding, lack of self-control, and intrusive thoughts about the brand (Mrad et al., 2020). Thus, from a marketing point of view, brand addiction may boost revenue in the short term but carries ethical and long-term risks, including consumer distress and potential backlash. Both concepts involve strong self-brand connections and positive feelings. However, brand love is mainly unidirectional (concern for what the brand offers me) without altruism, whereas addiction adds an impulsive, anxiety-driven component.

In summary, brand love yields loyalty and goodwill (a brand asset), whereas brand addiction adds compulsive consumption and potential harm. While both constructs overlap in intensity of attachment, they differ in valence and psychological control: brand love is a stable with positive affection, while brand addiction reflects a compulsive and anxiety-driven dependency (Junaid et al., 2022; Mrad et al., 2020).

Post-purchase regret

The concept is a prime focus in consumer behaviour research as understanding consumers' emotions after purchase is a necessity to ensure brand loyalty and successful satisfaction strategies. Post-purchase regret originated from the broader theory of cognitive dissonance end of the 1960's by Festinger (Festinger, 1957), where post-purchase behaviour was detected as one of the essential phases for the consumers' emotional adjustment in studying consumer behaviour and psychology. It is an emotional outcome that influences satisfaction levels and also shapes future consumption patterns, such as customer retention (Inman et al., 1997). Post-purchase regret has been defined by several researchers including (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007) who said that regret is the emotional reaction by people when they consider what may have happened had they chosen a different product. Also, regret is a result of feeling bad about one's current situation in relation to lost opportunities that later on may

influence further decisions making behavior (Chen et al., 2020). The type of regret is an emotional response to wrong decision making especially when there are alternative products available (Tsiros & Mittal, 2000). It can be defined as a negative emotional response that consumers encounter when they regard a purchase decision as improper or insignificant. It is often a result of perceived dissonance between what has been expected and actual performance of products or also the missed opportunity of a choosing a better product instead (Tsiros & Mittal, 2000). Lee & Cotte (2009) parted post-purchase regret into outcome and process regret. Outcome regret is consumers' feeling of guilt due to the choice of a product over another, while the alternative could have been more favorable. It is the individuals feeling of remorse at the time of noticing that the alternatives seem to be superior to those that had been chosen (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007).

Furthermore, after making the purchase decision, regret may arise due to the person's perception of not actually needing the product. As individuals tend to evaluate products contingent on how well they satisfy their needs. On the other hand, process regret takes place when an individual regrets not giving the purchase process enough thought. They feel remorse for not abiding by the planned decision-making process. If customers believe they don't have the necessary information to make an informed choice, or otherwise spend too much time and effort on information, they often will regret their purchase. Apart from inadequate information, too much information also makes a customer feel guilty. They will feel that the purchasing process has wasted their time and effort (Lee & Cotte, 2009). In the current research post-purchase regret will be discussed as a one-dimension construct.

Regret Theory

The current research is related to the regret theory. Regret theory has expanded its scope beyond only psychology to include marketing. When a customers' expectations are not met, post purchase regret might be felt (Zulkarnain et al., 2019), that may occur either online or offline (Chen et al., 2020). There are several reasons why customers feel regret as attributable to weak performance of the product, pricing issues and features in comparison to competing brands (J. Park & Hill, 2018). Post-purchase regret is a paradoxical situation that has negative outcomes affecting both customers and brands. As brands experience excessive return procedures, decreasing sales, and less customer loyalty. As for the customers, they suffer reputational harm and problems with self-esteem (Keaveney et al., 2007; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007). Although consumers perhaps blame themselves for their poor purchasing choices and so for post-purchase regret (Lee & Cotte, 2009; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007), organizations' actions could also be an impacting factor (Herweg & Müller, 2021).

Brand love and brand addiction:

Junaid et al. (2022) uncovered that brand love and brand addiction are related concepts. Actually, brand love may serve as a precedent to addiction: all the greater a consumer's affection for a brand, the easier it may be to lapse into compulsive attachment under certain conditions. This study was also confirmed by Le et al. (2025) finding that brand love can result in brand addiction based on consumers buying technology products online in Vietnam. Another study examining consumer preferences for

their favourite brands found a strong correlation between brand love and brand addiction (Le, 2023), deriving the first hypothesis:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between brand love and brand addiction.

Brand love and post-purchase regret:

The moment customers perceive brand trust, their tendency to regret purchasing the brands' products tends to be less and so implies that brands can be an essential element in regulating post-purchase regret. So noting that strong relationships with a brand, may diminish negative outcomes, as in the case minimizing regret (Zulkarnain et al., 2019). In contrast to (Jain & Sharma, 2019) who stated that when there is a strong relationship with a brand the negative outcomes may be more intense and negative in the case of not meeting consumers' expectations, as the customer feels betrayed. As results are contradicting further research is needed leading to the second hypothesis:

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between brand love and post purchase regret.

Brand addiction and post-purchase regret

Direct research on brand addiction leading to postpurchase regret is scarce. However, models of consumer–brand relationships offer clues. Some recent work hints at the “dark side” of brand addiction: for instance, Francioni et al. (2021) report that highly addict-like consumers can feel irritability and anxiety when they cannot engage with the brand. Brand addiction involves compulsive urges and strong emotions, which in principle could make negative experiences more painful. Both theory and some findings imply that a strong brand–self link tends to shield consumers from regret. Davvetas & Diamantopoulos (2017) demonstrates that consumer–brand identification protects the brand from the adverse effects of purchase regret. These results suggest that brand addicts may be less susceptible to regret. Thus, it is an open question whether brand addicts simply feel less regret overall - because they discount negative information - or if they experience a different mix of negative emotions (e.g. frustration or obsession). As in the research by (Mrad & Cui, 2020), brand addiction acted as a favorable mediator, and thereby mitigating the adverse impacts of compulsive buying on the outcomes such as debt avoidance. Also, the increasing trust by consumers' in their brand usually leads to a decrease in their post-purchase regret (Zulkarnain et al., 2019). As results are contradicting and actual relations between brand addiction and regret are scarce, there is further needed to investigate leading to the third hypotheses:

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between brand addiction and post purchase regret.

Mediating brand addiction between brand love and post-purchase regret

Consumers loving their brands often develop deeper emotional bonds that extend beyond functional evaluation, as when the affection intensifies it turns into brand addiction, exhibiting compulsive behaviours (Fetscherin, 2014; Junaid et al., 2022). Although brand love is mostly associated with positive outcomes, such as advocacy and loyalty, the progression into addiction has

been linked to negative outcomes such as excessive spending, compulsive buying and anxiety (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Both compulsive purchases and impulsive purchases have the tendency to cause post-purchase regret, as demonstrated by Obukhovich et al. (2024). Accordingly, research reveals that although brand love may commence as a favourable emotional bond, it may develop into brand addiction and when acting as a mediator connecting to unfavourable consequences like regret after a purchase.

H4: Brand addiction mediates the relation between brand love and post purchase regret.

Gender difference

Previous research took into consideration the gender differences when studying consumer behavior. According to Saleh (2012) males are more sensitive compared to females towards post-purchase regret in the case of impulsive buying. Contradicting with Imam (2013) who stated that female customers feel more regret after buying impulsively. Le (2023) claimed that brand love exerts more pronounced influence on brand addiction for males than females. Based on the differences among gender the fifth hypothesis was proposed:

H5: There is a statistically significant difference among female and male consumers in the relation between brand love on post-purchase regret mediated by brand addiction.

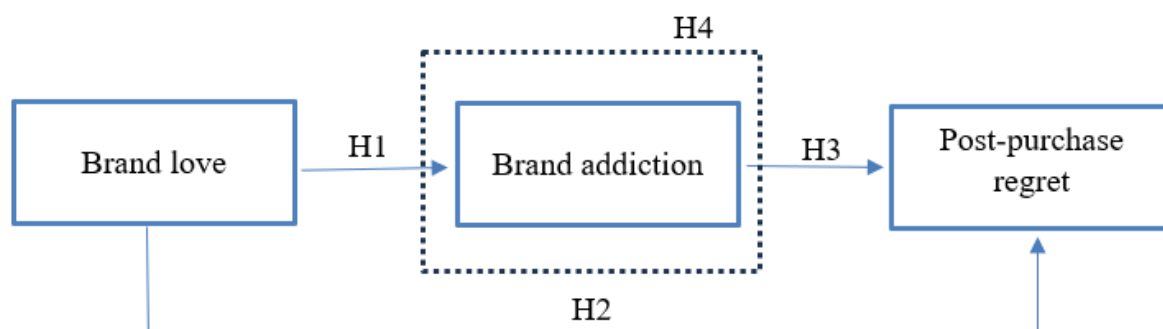


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Importance of research and literature gap

Despite increasing interest in studying concepts related to the extremes of brand relationships, there is still a gap in understanding brand love when turning into brand addiction, and both concept's effect on post-purchase regret. Mainly, research detected that brand love has positive outcomes as the willingness to pay higher prices, enhanced loyalty and positive WoM (Rahman et al., 2021) but not the contrasting behavior as regret. As for brand addiction which originally has shown to involve anxiety, and obsessive behavior (Francioni et al., 2021). Junaid et al. (2022) indicated that brand addiction occurring in contexts like fashion act as a mediator of negative behaviour namely anxiety and excessive spending, however the effects on post-purchase regret are limited whether it be mitigating or intensifying. Since post-purchase regret is commonly related to high-involvement purchases including that the reward of decision-making and at the same time the risks are higher (Bui et al., 2011), it is important to comprehend consumers' emotion to implement according marketing strategies, and in

order to reach a more inclusive framework for examining regret. Consumers engage deeper in evaluating products within high value categories and thus they are more viable to post-purchase regret if their expectations are not met as claimed by the brand, since they scrutinize their decisions more critically (Pandey et al., 2023). This represents an innovational direction for further investigation. The study of consumer behavior and their attachment towards brand and its outcomes as post-purchase regret offers high value insights related to purchase decisions. As contemporary consumer behaviour continues to be changing, the study of post-purchase regret is critical to further ensure consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Research methodology

A thorough literature review was completed to detect the correlation amongst brand love and addiction and whether it affects post-purchase regret. An empirical study was conducted to investigate the research framework and its hypotheses. This article's focus was on consumer-brand relationships, particularly in brand love, brand addiction, and post-purchase regret. The goods category (mobiles) was chosen as the background for this research.

Measurement

The measures were established using scales from previous research in the related field of consumer behavior as in table (1). First, the questionnaire measures the variables; the independent variable brand love adapted from (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). The mediator brand addiction from (Ghorbanzadeh, 2024) and the dependent variable: post-purchase regret was adopted from (Lee & Cotte, 2009). The scale was a 5-point Likert scale varying from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The second part is directed at collecting demographic information from the sample and the type of mobile brands they possess.

Sample and procedure

The study's population are millennials mobile phone users in Egypt. The survey was created via google forms and was available online for a month beginning first of June 2025. The questionnaire distributed was in Arabic, and to make sure of the phrasing of each item and that it is comprehensible the backtranslation process was implemented. A total sample of 393 complete questionnaires was collected after removing the incomplete ones. A screening question had to be included to ensure that only respondents from the millennial age group (born between 1980 and mid 1990's) were included in the sample. The percentage of male to female was 51% to 49%. The mobile brands according to preference were 26% Samsung, 19% Apple, 16.5 % Oppo, 15% Xiaomi, 7% Huawei and 16.5 % for other types. These results are quite similar to the report of Statcounter the Egyptian market share of the mobile vendor market that is divided as follows: Samsung 26.12%, Oppo 16.85%, Apple 13.85%, Xiaomi 13.53%, Realme 10.2%, Huawei 6.54% and leaving a 12.91% share for the other competing vendors (StatCounter, 2024). The variance between percentage of iPhone may be due to the age group to which the research is applied.

Data analysis and results

The data underwent analysis using version Warp-pls8, as the authors employed partial-least-square structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze causal relations among the variables, so as to reach an answer to the hypothesis.

Measurement model assessment

The researchers used reflective measurement model statistics the way recommended by (Ringle et al., 2012) that are presented by indicator reliability, internal consistency, discriminant and convergent validity, where the mentioned indicators are measured by Cronbach's α , composite reliability, cross loadings and the AVE.

Table (1): Measurement items, validity and reliability analysis

Variables	Measurement items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's α	Comp. rel.	AVE
Brand love	1-This brand is a perfect brand.	0.786	0.909	0.928	0.652
	2-The brand makes me feel good.	0.798			
	3-My brand is a wonderful brand.	0.903			
	4-The brand makes me happy.	0.823			
	5-I like this brand.	0.852			
	6-I am passionately devoted to the brand.	0.719			
	7-This brand is delightful.	0.842			
Brand addiction	1- I frequently fail to control myself buying my favourite mobile brand 's products.	0.727	0.860	0.896	0.590
	2- I generally remember previous experiences with my favorite brand.	0.738			
	3- I keep up with my favorite mobile brand's updates all the time.	0.854			
	4- My favorite mobile brand is always on my mind.	0.770			
	5- I plan in the future to purchase the latest mobile of my favorite brand.	0.700			
	6- I am willing to support my favorite mobile brand.	0.811			
Regret	1- If I could go back in time, I might buy another brand.	0.826	0.898	0.925	0.712
	2-I regret buying the product because it is not as vital as I had anticipated.	0.809			
	3- I wish I had not purchased the product as it has no use to me.	0.915			
	4- I regret buying the product because it didn't serve its purpose.	0.788			
	5-I regret my purchase cause it was unnecessary.	0.873			

As presented in table (1): indicator loadings surpass the value of (0.05) as is put forward by (Joe

F. Hair et al., 2011). Values of Cronbach's α higher than 0.8 refers to good internal consistent reliability (Cronbach, 1951). As well as composite reliability ought to be above (0.8) (Nunnally, 1994). AVE values also are above 0.5, so the convergent validity was attained (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In table (2) the discriminant validity is reached, as AVE of each latent variable holds a larger value when comparing to the variables' greatest squared correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table (2): Descriptive data and variable correlation with squared root of AVE

Construct	Brand love	B. addiction	regret
Brand love	0.807		
Brand addiction	0.395	0.768	
Regret	-0.074	0.300	0.844
Mean	3.693	3.061	1.936
Standard deviation	1.387	1.572	1.403

*Bold numbers present AVE

Table (3): Combined and cross loadings

	Brand Love	Brand Addiction	Regret	P-value
BL1	0.786	-0.038	-0.226	<0.001
BL2	0.798	-0.095	0.249	<0.001
BL3	0.903	0.056	-0.165	<0.001
BL4	0.823	-0.161	0.188	<0.001
BL5	0.852	-0.015	-0.209	<0.001
BL6	0.719	-0.016	0.262	<0.001
BL7	0.842	0.249	-0.013	<0.001
BA1	-0.201	0.727	-0.092	<0.001
BA2	0.155	0.738	-0.053	<0.001
BA3	0.074	0.854	0.029	<0.001
BA4	-0.143	0.770	0.155	<0.001
BA5	0.188	0.700	0.174	<0.001
BA6	-0.064	0.811	-0.198	<0.001
Reg1	-0.004	0.050	0.826	<0.001
Reg2	-0.024	-0.082	0.809	<0.001
Reg3	0.106	-0.123	0.915	<0.001
Reg4	-0.096	0.222	0.788	<0.001
Reg5	0.001	-0.043	0.873	<0.001

Combined and cross loadings: The loadings obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis, in table (3) are significant at $P < .001$, demonstrating that the model presents acceptable convergent validity.

The next step is Structural model assessment where both model fit assessment and model validity

are measured and so by checking model's validity (Joseph F. Hair et al., 2013).

Model fit assessment

Table (4): Model Fit and quality indices

Fit measures	actual	ρ -values	accepted fit
Average path coefficient	.333	$\rho < .001$	$\rho < 0.05$
Average R-square	.181	$\rho < .001$	$\rho < 0.05$
Average adjusted R-square	.178	$\rho < .001$	$\rho < 0.05$
average block VIF	1.001	acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	
average full collinearity VIF	1.253	acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	
Tenenhaus GoF	.344	small ≥ 0.1 , med ≥ 0.25 , large ≥ 0.36	
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	accepted if the value ≥ 0.9 , ideally =1	

The model was evaluated using model fit and quality indices as in table (4). An (APC) of 0.333 ($p < .001$), referring to significance as the threshold is ($p < .05$), indicating that the overall structural paths in the presented model are statistically significant. The ARS and AARS were 0.181 and 0.178 respectively (both with p -values $< .001$), meaning that the model comprises a reasonable proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs. Further on to assess multicollinearity, the Average Block (VIF) resulted in 1.001, and the Average Full Collinearity VIF equals 1.253, under the optimal of 3.3. So, these results support the stability of the path coefficients.

The Tenenhaus GoF index is 0.344, which approaches the large fit criterion (≥ 0.36). This indicates an acceptable overall model fit. The (RSCR) was 1.000, above the ideal benchmark (≥ 0.90), indicating that all R-squared values contribute positively to the model. To summarize table (3)'s results, the model represents an acceptable level of fit and quality, as the indices meet or exceed the recommended values.

Based on the results of the structural model analysis (table 5), the direct relationships among variables resulted in:

H1: There is a statistically significant relation between brand love and brand addiction. The findings confirm H1, which examined the direct relationship among brand love and brand addiction. The results of ($\beta = 0.452$, ρ -value < 0.001) and large effect size of (0.205) demonstrate a statistically significant and strong positive effect. This indicates that brand love is a significant predictor of brand addiction.

Table 5: Hypothesis

H	Independent	Dependent	Path coefficient	P-value	Effect size	results
H1	Brand love	Regret	-0.228	<0.001	0.054	Accept
H2	Brand addiction	Regret	0.319	<0.001	0.104	Accept
H3	Brand love	Brand Addiction	0.452	<0.001	0.205	Accept

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between brand love and post purchase regret. H2 is also supported. The path coefficient is ($\beta = -0.228$, p -value < 0.001) and an effect size of (0.054) and so exceeds the minimum requirements of the threshold ($p < 0.05$) to be statistically significant. The result indicated a significant negative effect of brand love on consumer regret at a 0.001 clarifying that higher brand love is associated with lower levels in consumer regret.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between brand addiction and post purchase regret. H3 is accepted. The result shows a positive path coefficient ($\beta = 0.319$, and p -value < 0.001) and an effect size (0.104), indicating a positive statistically significant relationship at a 0.001 significance level. The result signifies that brand addiction increases consumer regret.

Table 6: hypothesis indirect relationship

	Exogenous construct	Mediator	Endogenous construct	Indirect path	p -value	Total path	p -value	result
H4	Brand Love	Brand addiction	Regret	0.144	<0.001	-0.084	0.047	Partial mediation

H4: Brand addiction mediates the relationship between brand love and post purchase regret. H4 is accepted. As seen in table (6) the total effect of Brand Love on Regret is statistically significant at values ($\beta = -0.084$, $p = 0.047$), while there is an indirect effect via brand addiction ($\beta = 0.144$, $p < 0.001$), indicating the partial mediation with brand love decreasing regret directly (as mentioned in the results of H1) and increasing regret indirectly in the presence of brand addiction.

Table 7: Female versus male

Path	Path Coeff. female	Path Coeff. male	Difference	Standard. Error	t-value	p-value	results
BrLove → BrAdd	0.606	0.473	0.133	0.091	1.459	0.145	Not Sig.
BrLove → Regret	-0.350	-0.291	0.059	0.095	0.618	0.536	Not Sig.
BrAdd → Regret	0.458	0.369	0.089	0.094	0.954	0.340	Not Sig.

H5: There is a statistically significant difference among females and males in the relationship between brand love on post-purchase regret mediated by brand addiction. H5 was rejected. The statistical analysis compared path coefficients between females (Group 1) and males (Group 2) participants. The results revealed none statistically significant discrepancy between the groups based on two-tailed p-values. As presented in table (7) the difference in the path for the relation between brand love to brand addiction was 0.133 ($p = 0.145$), from brand love to regret was 0.059 ($p = 0.536$), and from brand addiction to regret was 0.089 ($p = 0.340$). These findings indicate that the relations among the constructs are consistent across male and female (gender) groups according to this sample, suggesting that male and female consumers perceive and respond to brand love, brand addiction, and regret in a similar manner.

Conclusion and discussion

The study aimed to ascertain the relationship among three variables: brand love, brand addiction and post-purchase regret. Outcomes refer to a positive influence of brand love on brand addiction, which is consistent with (Vakili et al., 2024) who noted that brand love precedes brand addiction meaning that consumers relationship with brands may progress till it reaches a state of addiction. It also confirms the previous studies of (Ghorbanzadeh, 2024) in the luxury fashion that consumers' love of brand in long terms leads to greater attachment and evolving into bonds that potentially lead to brand addiction. The finding is consistent with evidence that indicates that the intensity of brand love might vary among societies. For examples in collectivistic cultures emotional attachment to brands embodies social significance, contrarily in individualistic settings, brand love is more related to self expression (Albert & Merunka, 2013). These differences imply that these contextual differences imply that transitioning from brand love to addiction may be influenced by cultural norms not only personal emotions.

Brand love has a significant inverse effect on post-purchase regret, meaning that at the level of love the consequences are positive outcomes for the sake of the consumers as post-purchase regret decreases with more brand love. As mentioned before the gap in studies finding a direct relationship between brand love and post-purchase regret, but there are studies relating brand attachment to other positive observations such as brand love leading to positive WoM, advocacy and loyalty across brands (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Na et al., 2023), and more likable to forgive brands in the case of regression (Aureliano-Silva et al., 2022) or even intend render an extra price (Santos & Schlesinger, 2021). So, the interpretation is supported that when brand love is within reasonable emotional boundaries, it serves as a hinge against regret. Still, the strength of effect could differ across cultures.

The relationship between brand addiction and post-purchase regret was found to be significant, as the more addicted someone is to a brand, the more presumably they are to regret purchases. These results are supported by earlier research that indicates that brand addiction is often rooted in emotional attachment and associated with compulsive purchase patterns (Mrad & Cui, 2020). These compulsive and impulsive purchase patterns are antecedents of post-purchase regret (Grigsby et al., 2021) that also suggests that addictive behaviour could harm consumer well-being although their loyalty (Junaid et al., 2022). In contrast to Davvetas & Diamantopoulos (2017) who argued that stronger brand identity buffers negative consequences.

The relationship between brand love and post-purchase regret when mediated by brand addiction showed partial mediation. It shows that while brand love may minimize post-purchase regret under normal circumstances, when it becomes addictive it could increase the post-purchase regret. This finding is consistent with Junaid et al. (2022)'s claim that states that brand love and addiction are interconnected variables, influencing consumers' negative behaviour in distinct ways. Brand addiction significantly influenced brand love, which in turn suppressed three undesirable behaviors associated with it. It conflicts with Le et al. (2025) who claimed that both brand love and addiction had similar outcomes whether positive or negative such as supporting the brand after a scandal or material possessions. In light of these considerations, the results show a two dimensioned pathway wherein brand love could both protect against and intensify regret, according to whether it appears as a healthy emotional attachment to the brand or it has evolved in addictive patterns.

Understanding post-purchase regret is crucial for developing effective customer retention and satisfaction strategies. Recent studies show that post-purchase regret significantly impacts customer loyalty and can lead to negative WoM, return behaviors, and a decrease in brand loyalty. Consequently, businesses are increasingly adopting strategies to minimize regret, such as offering lenient return policies and enhanced post-purchase support. For example, Dankwah et al. (2024)'s work suggests that post-purchase regret could be mitigated through better consumer education on product features and comparisons, as well as transparent communication regarding product quality and use cases.

As for analyzing consumers' gender difference in the relationship between brand love, brand

addiction, and post-purchase regret wasn't proven as no statistically significant differences were seen in this research, conflicting with previous studies as (Le, 2023) who stated that brand love exerts a more noticeable influence on brand addiction for males compared to females. In other related research Imam (2013) stated that female easier felt regret after purchasing impulsively. In fact, different cultures have different ways of expressing emotions based on gender, which could explain the inconsistent results. Therefore, gender-based differences may not be the same world-wide but rather shaped by cultural expectations.

Practical implications

The results of the study offer numerous declarations for marketing managers and experts in the domain. As the results highlight that brand love serves as a shield against regret by reducing it, we suggest that cultivating emotional bonds with the brand is vital to generate satisfied post-purchase customers. This could be achieved by developing strategies that lead to consumer-brand identification through storytelling, community building whether online or offline and enhance shared values to help consumers better rationalize their purchases and so reduce post-purchase regret.

Meanwhile the partial mediation effect detected through brand addiction makes the subject more complex. Although brand love enhances the relationship towards brands, it includes addictive nature that might lead to higher regret. This leads to the importance of balancing the marketing strategies, where it is essential to encourage loyalty and attachment but without pushing the consumers too much towards excessive consumption. And so, tactics such as limited additions, or flash sales should be implemented cautiously, as these mainly lead to excessive purchase behavior and increased post-purchase regret or in the fear that brand addiction might lead to negative outcomes. Accordingly, brand communication should focus on providing value as to maintain a healthy relationship with the customers.

Additionally, to lessen the emotional strain of post-purchase remorse, customers might think about returning the item (Chen et al., 2020). So, companies should focus on customer relationship strategies, supporting after sales reassurance such as providing flexible return policies to mitigate post-purchase regret in the case of higher levels of brand addiction. Nowadays customer well-being is an important issue to be taken into consideration.

Given these points, the study suggests that while brand love is proven to be a valuable driver of loyalty, uncontrolled brand addiction may obstruct these benefits. Successful organizations tend to prioritize consumers' well-being, while attaining brand growth, and build life-time relationships and avoiding risks associated with consumer regret.

Limitations and directions for future research

Notwithstanding the merits of the research, the limitations must be addressed.

Firstly, there are constraints concerning the sample as it was limited to the millennials in Egypt. Also depending on questionnaires alone might lead to recall bias. That might constrain the ability to generalize the findings. Thus, future research could adopt mixed approaches by merging qualitative

techniques as focus groups with the quantitative techniques to further explore the respondent's depth of emotional attachment.

Secondly the study was applied on mobile brands, so consumer behavior may differ across product categories. Applying the research in other types of products could include comparing between hedonic and utilitarian goods or comparing between goods and services. Also replicating the framework in different industries such as fast-moving consumer goods, digital services or luxury goods, could be fruitful to more clearly assess the differences in consumer brand relationships.

Thirdly, as aforementioned the data was collected during a certain time period, consumers' behavior tends to shift due to factors such as technological advance, change in culture or economic changes. These limitations provide promising directions for future research. Employing larger and more diverse samples, among different cultures or include a wider demographic context, i.e., by employing cross generational samples to test the same relations among age groups (for example: comparing GenZ to GenX). Meta analysis in the context could provide interesting results.

Fourth: It would also be beneficial to extend the framework and include other outcomes, and investigate various mediators or moderators based on other than regret theory. As this research only targeted one negative outcome (post-purchase regret) other behavioural outcomes such as revenge, negative WoM and brand switching intentions could be investigated.

To sum up, although our study provides meaningful insights in advancing the areas of brand love and addiction in the relation with post-purchase regret, addressing the previous mentioned limitations could aid in theoretical development in the field of consumer behaviour.

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توسيط إدمان العلامة التجارية في العلاقة بين حب العلامة التجارية والندم ما بعد

الشراء: بالتطبيق على مستخدمي الهواتف المحمولة

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المخلص: تهتم الأبحاث الأكاديمية في مجال العلامات التجارية دراسة العلاقة بين المستهلكين وارتباطهم بالعلامات التجارية. تدرس الأدبيات في هذا المجال درجة تعلق المستهلكين بالعلامة التجارية، والتي يُنظر إليها على أنها حب للعلامة التجارية، والتي قد تصل إلى درجة الإدمان، إلى جانب نتائج كل من حب العلامة التجارية والإدمان عليها سواءً أكانت سلبية أم إيجابية. وعلى الرغم من أن الدراسات المتعلقة بالنتائج السلبية لا تزال محدودة، فإن البحث الحالي يُركز على إحدى هذه النواتج، وهي الندم بعد الشراء. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبانة إلكترونية تشمل عينة من 393 مستخدماً للهواتف المحمولة، وتم تحليل فرضيات الدراسة باستخدام برنامج WarpPls 8 من خلال PLS-SEM. تم قبول فرضيات الدراسة المتعلقة بالعلاقة بين حب العلامة التجارية والإدمان والندم ما بعد الشراء، كما ثبتت الدراسة أن إدمان العلامة التجارية يتوسط جزئياً العلاقة بين حب العلامة التجارية والندم ما بعد الشراء. وتم رفض الفرض الخاص بوجود فروق معنوية بين الجنسين في العلاقات بين المتغيرات التي تم دراستها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العلامة التجارية، إدمان العلامة التجارية، الندم بعد الشراء.