
Brand Characteristics, Materialism, and Brand Addiction: Psychological Impacts on Indonesian K-Pop Fans

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Abstract:

The rising popularity of K-Pop culture has influenced consumer behavior in Indonesia, leading to the phenomenon of brand addiction, an extreme emotional attachment to brands. While prior research has explored the origins of addiction to physical goods, research on brand addiction in the entertainment industry, particularly within Asia's collectivist context, remain limited. This study examines the influence of brand characteristics (hedonism, self-expressiveness, innovativeness, authenticity) and materialism orientation on brand addiction, along with its psychological effects (brand exclusiveness, trash-talking, compulsive buying behavior, irritability) among K-Pop fans in Indonesia, using Social Identity Theory (SIT). A cross-sectional survey of 192 respondents was conducted from February to March 2025, with data analyzed via PLS-SEM. Results indicate that brand self-expressiveness, brand innovativeness, and materialism significantly and positively affect brand addiction, while brand hedonism and authenticity show no significant impact. Furthermore, brand addiction positively and significantly influences brand exclusiveness, trash talking, compulsive buying behavior, and irritability. Theoretically, these findings reinforce SIT's relevance and highlight the need for a brand addiction model in entertainment contexts like K-Pop. Practically, K-Pop agencies and local entertainment businesses should prioritize self-expressiveness and materialism through identity narratives and exclusive merchandise, while implementing strategies like purchase limits and transparent communication to mitigate negative effects like trash talking without dampening fandom enthusiasm.

Keywords: *Brand Characteristics, Materialism, Brand Addiction, Psychological Outcomes.*

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1. Introduction

Driven by rapid digital advancements, South Korea's Hallyu (Korean Wave), of which K-Pop is a key component, has become a dominant force. Its influence extends beyond music, reshaping fashion trends, beauty standards, lifestyle choices, and consumption patterns across international markets, including Indonesia, which ranked third globally in 2023 with 7.48 billion K-Pop streams, increasing 55.8% from the

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year before (Chan, 2023). K-Pop is also Indonesia's third most popular music genre, with one-third of female consumers expressing their preference for Korean artists (Jakpat, 2024).

Aside from its influence, K-Pop is also a critical pillar for South Korea's economy, bringing in \$893 million in foreign revenue in 2023 alone, a 34.3% increase from the previous year (Ga-Young, 2024). This sector also shown amazing resiliency, as seen by its consistent five-year growth in Table 1, rising from 136.201 million in 2020 to \$291.837 million by 2024 (Park, 2023; Stassen, 2025). This growth generates transnational opportunities, where brands leverage collaborations with K-Pop artists to amplify market awareness of their brand, while artists gain localized fan engagement and regional market penetration, collectively reinforcing K-Pop's commercial viability.

Table 1. K-Pop Music Export Trend

| Year | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Exports (In Million \$) | 136.201 | 220.850 | 233.113 | 290.231 | 291.837 |

Sources: (Park, 2023; Stassen, 2025)

However, it should be pointed out that K-Pop fans commitment to a brand may frequently evolve into brand addiction which manifest through compulsive consumption behaviors like buying albums in bulk to meet their idols or coordinating marathon streaming sessions to influence music charts.. In forming brand addiction, brand characteristics such as brand self-expressiveness, innovativeness, and authenticity as critical antecedents. Within K-Pop's context, these characteristics materialize through audiovisual aesthetics, musical innovation, and parasocial interactions via social media, fostering profound emotional bonds. Materialism further intensifies this dynamic, as fans perceive merchandise ownership as both social capital and emotional fulfillment, often triggering financially detrimental practices. Psychologically, this addiction correlates with negative outcomes such as brand exclusiveness (rejecting alternatives), trash-talking rival fandoms or brands, compulsive buying behavior, and irritability that compromise individual well-being. While the issue of brand addiction is gaining greater coverage from academics, there are still substantial knowledge gaps which require to be addressed. Existing studies focus mostly on brand addiction in Western, individualistic contexts and physical product categories such as luxury goods, not much on the entertainment sector and collectivist Asian societies such as Indonesia. Previous research also shows mixed results regarding the effect of certain brand characteristics on brand addiction which further complicate theoretical clarity. Francioni et al. (2021) found brand hedonism has no significant effect on brand addiction, whereas other studies report opposing results (Pourazad et al., 2024; Siddique & Rajput, 2022). Additionally, psychological consequences like brand-driven irritability and exclusiveness remain underexplored, creating knowledge gaps regarding the phenomenon's sociocultural dimensions.

To address these limitations, this study adapts Francioni et al. (2021) brand addiction framework through the lens of Social Identity Theory and incorporating materialism

and trash talking as new variables that represent the distinctive cultural dynamics of K-Pop. The study aspires to look into the correlations between brand addiction and its psychological outcomes as well as the expected connections between brand characteristics and materialism.

This study contributes in three key ways. First, it extends brand addiction research into the understudied context of entertainment industries within collectivist cultures, specifically examining K-Pop fandom in Indonesia. Second, it enhances theoretical understanding by integrating materialism and trash talking into the brand addiction framework through Social Identity Theory. Third, it provides practical insights for industry stakeholders to manage fan engagement while mitigating negative behavioural outcomes. By investigating these relationships, the research offers a more comprehensive understanding of how brand characteristics and materialism drive addiction and its psychological consequences in the unique context of K-Pop culture.

2. Theoretical Foundations

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is defined as that a part of an individual's self-concept which comes from the knowledge of his membership of social groups as well as the value and emotional significance attached to the membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT is crucial for understanding consumer behavior in marketing, where brand identification is often driven by the desire to signal group belonging (Bai et al., 2021). Its relevance extends to K-Pop fandoms, where shared interests foster strong community identification that influences psychological well-being and inter-group dynamics (D. A. Laffan et al., 2023; Derek A Laffan, 2020; Stets & Burke, 2000). Given its capacity to connect internal psychological processes with observable consumer outcomes this theory is deemed suitable as the foundational theory.

Brand Addiction

Brand addiction is defined as a compulsive psychological attachment to a brand characterized by loss of decision-making autonomy, exclusivity, and an uncontrollable desire to consume brand-related products or experiences (Francioni et al., 2021). It often begins with brand love which develops into a pathological relationship (Cui et al., 2018; Elhajjar et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2022; Le, 2020; P. Rodrigues et al., 2024; Suprawan et al., 2024). Aside from love for the brand, brand addiction can also be caused by the brand's characteristics such as brand self-expressiveness, innovativeness, and authenticity (Francioni et al., 2021).

Brand Hedonism and Brand Addiction

Brand hedonism describes a consumer propensity to seek pleasure, where emotional, experiential, and symbolic gratifications take precedence over mere functional utility (Daniele Scarpi, 2020). By delivering these hedonic benefits, brands forge stronger emotional bonds with customers that can develop into brand addiction (Siddique & Rajput, 2022). In luxury brands, such benefits positively influence brand prestige and symbolism, which in turn spur higher purchase intentions, positive word-of-mouth,

and loyalty to the brand (Pourazad et al., 2024). In light of this reasoning, the following theory is put forth:

H1: Brand hedonism positively influences brand addiction among K-Pop fans

Brand Self Expressiveness and Brand Addiction

Self-expressive brands can be defined as brands that consumers believe can improve their social image and represent their internal identity. The more a brand enables consumers to express themselves, the stronger the addictive bond they form with it as they use the brand to project both their inner self and social self (Mrad et al., 2020). Moreover, this relationship is mediated by harmonious and obsessive passion which act as catalysts that deepen consumer's relationships to the brands (Bai et al., 2021). In light of this reasoning, the following theory is put forth:

H2: Brand self-expressiveness positively influences brand addiction among K-Pop fans

Brand Innovativeness and Brand Addiction

Brand innovativeness is defined consumer's perception a brand ability to provide new and useful solutions to their needs, it also acts as a signal that increases their perception of a brand's quality (Pappu & Quester, 2016). Previous study suggests a positive link between brand innovativeness and the development of addictive brand relationships, as innovation capture attention, satisfy curiosity, and reinforce the belief that the brand can continually meet evolving consumer needs (Francioni et al., 2021). Despite these insights, the specific role of brand innovativeness in driving addiction within entertainment industries especially K-Pop remains underexplored. To address this gap, the following theory is put forth:

H3: Brand innovativeness positively influences brand addiction among K-Pop fans

Brand Authenticity and Brand Addiction

Brand authenticity is described as a genuine brand with a distinct style that values transparency and honesty with customers and will survive changing times and trends (Campagna et al., 2023). Previous studies have shown that brand authenticity has a positive and significant impact on the formation of an addictive relationship between the brand and consumers (Francioni et al., 2021). This finding aligns with C. Rodrigues et al. (2024), who affirm that perceived brand authenticity (PBA) serves as a key mediator in forming intense emotional bonds derived from brand experience, especially when consumers have a history of positive experiences with brands. In light of this reasoning, the following theory is put forth:

H4: Brand authenticity has a positive effect on brand addiction among K-Pop fans

Materialism and Brand Addiction

Materialism is defined as the importance individuals place on acquiring possessions to satisfy needs or desires, and the types of behavior they engage in to achieve the desired outcomes. Research indicates that demographics like gender and age influence materialistic tendencies, while compulsive buying, a crucial component of brand addiction is also closely linked to this construct (Antiniene et al., 2021). Existing literatures proved that materialism mediates and increases addictive behavior towards

brands through social comparison, as highly materialistic consumer will frequently use branded products as status and achievement markers for social acceptance, which is particularly noticeable with luxury brands where conveying wealth and status is a key motivator of brand addiction (Le, 2020; Mrad et al., 2020). In light of this reasoning, the following theory is put forth:

H5: Materialism has a positive effect on brand addiction among K-Pop fans

Brand Addiction and Brand Exclusiveness

Brand exclusiveness is a phenomenon that occurs when customers become very loyal to one particular brand, often ignoring all other alternatives. There is a significant correlation between brand addiction and brand exclusiveness in consumers, where emotional and compulsive attachment to certain brands can encourage exclusive behavior, such as ignoring alternative brands, paying premium prices, and reacting negatively to criticism or changes to favorite brands (Cui et al., 2018; Francioni et al., 2021). Despite these insights, the relationship between brand addiction and brand exclusiveness within entertainment industries especially K-Pop remains underexplored. To address this gap, the following theory is put forth:

H6: Brand addiction has a positive effect on brand exclusiveness among K-Pop fans

Brand Addiction and Trash Talking

Trash talking refers to strategic, boastful remarks about oneself or derogatory comments aimed at an opponent, delivered by a competitor, most often immediately before or during a contest to gain a psychological edge (Yip et al., 2018). Brand addiction which is characterized by extreme emotional attachment, can trigger unfriendly behaviors like trash talking as consumers with intense bond with a brand often denigrate competing brands to defend their own self-identity as well as the brand (Japutra et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2022; Manggarani et al., 2021). In light of this reasoning, the following theory is put forth:

H7: Brand addiction has a positive effect on trash talking among K-Pop fans

Brand Addiction and Compulsive Buying Behaviour

Brand addiction can negatively affect consumers by encouraging them to adopt compulsive buying behavior towards the brand (Francioni et al., 2021; Mrad & Cui, 2020; Suprawan et al., 2024). When consumers develop an addiction to a brand they love, they will develop dependence, obsession, and adherence to it. This results in a lack of control that encourages them to overbuy and leads to overspending or compulsive buying behavior (Junaid et al., 2022; Lee & Workman, 2015). In light of this reasoning, the following theory is put forth:

H8: Brand addiction has a positive effect on compulsive buying behaviour among K-Pop fans

Brand Addiction and Irritability

Irritability can be described as a state of partial physiological agitation in which one becomes increasingly sensitive to sensory inputs and more prone to respond with anger and/or aggression to typically less vexing stimuli (Toohey & DiGiuseppe, 2017). There is a strong connection between brand addiction and irritability in

consumers, with brand addiction leading to feelings of irritability, anxiety, and frustration among individuals (Francioni et al., 2021; Junaid et al., 2022). While existing research has established the link between brand addiction and irritability, there is still a lack of direct studies on this specific relationship, particularly in relation to brands in the entertainment industry like K-Pop. To address this gap, the following theory is put forth:

H9: Brand addiction has a positive effect on irritability among K-Pop fan

Conceptual Framework

From all nine hypothesis that have been written, a conceptual framework can be made. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study.

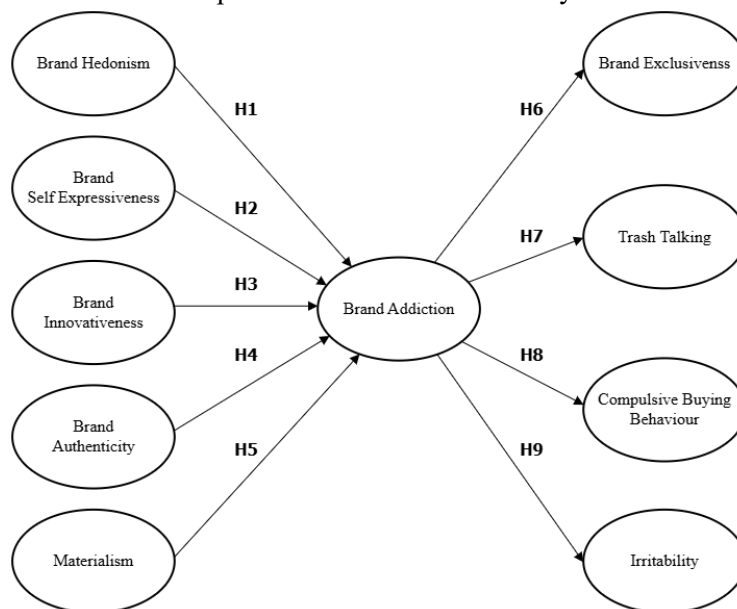


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

Research Design, Population, and Sample

A quantitative, hypothesis-testing method of analysis was utilized in this study to investigate the brand addiction phenomenon among Indonesian K-Pop fans. The study's choice of population was all of Indonesian K-Pop fans. Using a cross-sectional methodology, the study gathered data at one point in time from a purposive sample of individuals who met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria required respondents to be at least 18 years old and reside in Indonesia. The minimum required sample size was determined through power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.7 software, yielding a threshold of 166 respondents. Data was collected between February and March 2025 via online survey, yielding a total of 192 respondents which exceed the required minimum sample size calculated.

Variable and Operationalization

Measurement items for each of these variables were adapted from established scales in prior literature (Francioni et al., 2021; Le, 2020; Pappu & Quester, 2016; Schallehn et al., 2014; Suprawan et al., 2024) and were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (Koo & Yang, 2025)

Data Analysis Technique

SmartPLS 4 software was used to analyze the data using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique. This technique was chosen for its ability to process data that does not have to be normally distributed, complex research models with many constructs and indicators, and its focus on predicting the dependent variable (Hair Jr. et al., 2021).

There were two major phases to the analysis. Starting out, the measurement model (outer model) was assessed for reliability and validity using outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Then, the structural model (inner model) was assessed for research hypotheses testing using a bootstrapping procedure to determine the significance of path coefficients, assessing the model's predictive power through the coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect size (f^2), while checking for multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Hair Jr. et al., 2021). Furthermore, to further develop and acquire more profound understanding of the outcomes of the PLS-SEM study, Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) was employed. The mapping results will help in identifying constructs that have high importance but perform inadequately as a priority for improvement (Hauff et al., 2024; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016; Sarstedt et al., 2022).

4. Empirical Findings/Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

From February to March 2025, researcher was collecting data from respondents by distributing online survey which consist of three sections, the screening section to ensure that respondents met the study's inclusion criteria, the demographic section to gather respondent's demographic information, and the variable question section which aims to collect data related to each research indicator.

From the demographic data collected, it was found that the majority of respondents are female (81.3%) and fall between the ages of 18 - 27 years (75.5%). In terms of domicile, most reside in the Jabodetabek area (76.6%), while the remainder reside outside Jabodetabek area (23.4%). The highest concentration of respondents came from Jakarta (34.9%), Bogor (14.6%), then Tangerang (12.5%). Regarding occupation, the majority of respondents are students (62.5%), followed by private sector employees (20.8%) and civil servants (7.3%). As for their latest education, most respondents hold a Bachelor's degree (54.2%), while some are still undergraduate (40.6%). Finally, the most common monthly expenditure range for respondents is in

the range of Rp 1,000,000 - Rp 2,999,999 (38%), followed by Rp 3,000,000 – Rp 4,999,999 (24%).

In addition to general demographic information, data was also collected on the characteristics and involvement of K-Pop fans within the fandom. This data includes how long respondents have been K-Pop fans, their daily duration of engaging in K-Pop group/artist activities, and how they express their support and loyalty. It was found that a considerable fraction of respondents have been K-Pop fans for over 5 years (36.5%), closely followed by those who have been fans for 1-3 years (33.3%). Majority of them spend 1-3 hours (59.4%) following K-Pop group/artist activities, with smaller percentages spending less than an hour (17.2%) or 3-5 hours (16.1%) daily. Finally, among the 192 respondents, it was found that their primary activities related to their favourite K-Pop group/artist include listening to or streaming music (85.9%), consuming digital content (58.3%), and interacting within fan communities (32.8%).

Measurement Model Assessment

Initial assessment of the measurement model shows that each indicator in the model is not yet reliable and valid. Thus, it is necessary to eliminate several indicators in the variable starting from those with lowest outer loading value and then reassess the measurement model before the analysis can proceed to the inner model analysis stage. The steps taken regarding the elimination of indicators in the model can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. List of Eliminated Indicators

| Steps | Indicators | Reason of Elimination |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|
| First Elimination | BA6, BI3 | Outer Loading < 0.400 |
| Second Elimination | BA2, BA9, BH5, BS7, BS8, BI7, BI2, BAU5, BAU6, BAU1, BE1, BE2 | AVE < 0.500 |
| Third Elimination | BA7, M1 | HTMT > 0.900 |

Sources: Smart PLS (2025)

Following the removal of every indicator listed in Table 2, the measurement model is recalibrated using the refined set of indicators remaining. To establish reliability and validity of these indicators, each indicator's outer loading must exceed 0.400 (ideally >0.708) for indicator reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to be between 0.700 and 0.950 for construct reliability, AVE for each variables reaches at least 0.500 for convergent validity, and HTMT ratio between any variables remains below 0.900 for discriminant validity to be confirmed. The results of the validity and reliability test with outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted as parameters are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Testing Results

| Item and Constructs | Outer Loading |
|--|----------------------|
| Brand Addiction (CA = 0.850, CR = 0.887, AVE= 0.531) | |
| I try very hard to get merchandise from my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.788 |
| I think about my favorite K-pop group/idol frequently | 0.656 |
| I tend to give up some life activities and duties to focus on my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.663 |
| I allocate a certain part of my monthly income/ budget to buy things related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group such as merchandise, albums, or concert tickets | 0.791 |
| I feel impatient while waiting for new products from my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.577 |
| I often plan when and what I will buy next from my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.789 |
| I would invest some of my money to support my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.802 |
| Brand Hedonism (CA = 0.718, CR = 0.864, AVE= 0.531) | |
| I feel comfortable supporting my favorite K-Pop group or artist | 0.592 |
| I find that supporting my favorite K-Pop idol/group brings me happiness and satisfaction | 0.708 |
| I find following my favorite K-Pop idol/group to be a fun and fulfilling experience | 0.802 |
| Being a fan of my favorite K-Pop idol/group feels like a sensory experience and makes me feel alive | 0.792 |
| Brand Self-Expressiveness (CA = 0.813, CR = 0.864, AVE= 0.516) | |
| Supporting my favorite K-Pop idol/group shows who I am as a person | 0.723 |
| Being a fan of my favorite K-Pop idol/group lets me expresses my personality | 0.684 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group is an extension of my identity | 0.634 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group reflects my true self | 0.781 |
| Being a fan contributes to my self-image | 0.798 |
| Being a fan gives me a place in community | 0.676 |
| Brand Innovativeness (CA = 0.754, CR = 0.836, AVE= 0.505) | |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group frequently releases fresh and unique content in the industry | 0.743 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group constantly bringing out new performance that incorporate new technology | 0.701 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group is always the first to introduce new merchandise to the market compared to another idol/group | 0.694 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group is always the first to introduce new concept to the market compared to another idol/group | 0.659 |
| My favorite K-pop idol/group performance often pioneer industry standards and trends | 0.753 |
| Brand Authenticity (CA = 0.804, CR = 0.859, AVE= 0.505) | |

| Item and Constructs | Outer Loading |
|--|---------------|
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group always acts in a way that matches their image and values | 0.751 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group's words and actions always align | 0.698 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group has always been reliable and trustworthy in fulfilling their promises | 0.608 |
| The way my favorite K-Pop idol/group fulfills their promises makes them stand out | 0.774 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group has a unique way of fulfilling their promises | 0.742 |
| My favorite K-Pop idol/group has a distinct way of fulfilling their promises | 0.676 |
| Materialism (CA = 0.799, CR = 0.863, AVE= 0.562) | - |
| The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life | 0.564 |
| I like having exclusive merchandise from my favorite K-Pop idol/group to impress people | 0.818 |
| I like to own expensive things | 0.786 |
| My life would feel better if I could own everything related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.848 |
| I sometimes feel bothered that I can't afford to buy all the items related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.698 |
| Brand Exclusiveness (CA = 0.768, CR = 0.843, AVE= 0.518) | - |
| I am unwilling to switch to another idol/group, even if they offer better or cheaper options | 0.688 |
| I get angry if others talk negatively about my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.724 |
| I am willing to pay more to get items related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.768 |
| I immediately recognize any changes such as new content or merchandise from my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.697 |
| I will freak out when small changes are done by my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.719 |
| Trash Talking (CA = 0.911, CR = 0.944, AVE= 0.849) | - |
| I talk negatively about other idols/groups that compete with my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.896 |
| I talk about how inferior other idols/groups are compared to my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.923 |
| I say negative things about other idols/groups to other people | 0.945 |
| Compulsive Buying Behaviour (CA = 0.895, CR = 0.920, AVE= 0.658) | |
| I feel compelled to buy items related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group, even when I don't have time | 0.821 |
| I feel compelled to buy items related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group, even when I don't have money | 0.863 |

| Item and Constructs | Outer Loading |
|---|---------------|
| I often shop compulsively to buy products related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.857 |
| I often shop compulsively to pay for contents related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.838 |
| I feel an adrenaline rush when I go to buy new items from my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.739 |
| I buy things related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group even when I don't necessarily need them | 0.741 |
| Irritability (CA = 0.879, CR = 0.908, AVE= 0.623) | |
| I feel anxious when I can't participate in activities related to my favorite K-Pop group/idol | 0.825 |
| I feel sad when my favorite K-pop group/idol does not release a new product | 0.804 |
| I feel sad when my favorite K-pop group/idol does not release a new content | 0.724 |
| I become anxious and stressed when I can't access new content from my favorite K-Pop group/idol | 0.825 |
| I feel frustrated when my favorite K-pop group/idol doesn't release new content | 0.741 |
| I feel a strong urge to own or experience everything related to my favorite K-Pop idol/group | 0.811 |

Sources: Smart PLS (2025)

Based on the information displayed in Table 3, each indicator within the measurement model demonstrates outer loading value that span from 0.564 to 0.945, which is above the recommended threshold. Furthermore, each variable exhibit strong construct reliability which is substantiated by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability of at least 0.700. Convergent validity was also proven by their AVE value which is exceeding 0.500. Complementing these findings, discriminant validity of the model was also being assessed by utilizing HTMT ratio as parameter with results displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Testing Results

| Variable | BA | BAU | BE | BH | BI | BS | CB | I | M | T |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| BA | | | | | | | | | | |
| BAU | 0.510 | | | | | | | | | |
| BE | 0.900 | 0.519 | | | | | | | | |
| BH | 0.442 | 0.771 | 0.383 | | | | | | | |
| BI | 0.684 | 0.852 | 0.712 | 0.633 | | | | | | |
| BS | 0.788 | 0.705 | 0.787 | 0.740 | 0.683 | | | | | |
| CB | 0.810 | 0.257 | 0.820 | 0.174 | 0.438 | 0.520 | | | | |
| I | 0.716 | 0.336 | 0.817 | 0.264 | 0.541 | 0.563 | 0.818 | | | |
| M | 0.754 | 0.475 | 0.898 | 0.292 | 0.613 | 0.683 | 0.829 | 0.773 | | |
| T | 0.561 | 0.139 | 0.707 | 0.235 | 0.270 | 0.365 | 0.741 | 0.698 | 0.664 | |

Sources: Smart PLS (2025)

Based on the information displayed in Table 4, HTMT ratio of each variable in the model is below or at the threshold limit of 0.900 which mean each indicator has been well discriminated and the variables can be distinguished clearly and accurately. Based on all conducted tests, it can be concluded that each indicator in the study is reliable and valid to measure their associated variables specifically, which makes the current model feasible to proceed to the next stage of analysis, the structural model test. The structural model is visualized in Figure 2.

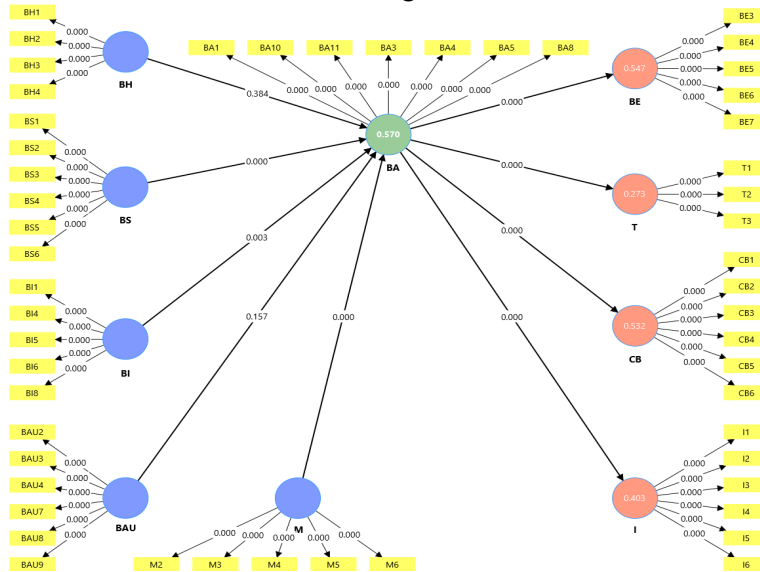


Figure 2. Structural Model

Sources: Smart PLS (2025)

Structural Model Assessment

This assessment commences by testing the collinearity between the variables in the model using VIF as parameter. In this model, every indicator had VIF values below 3 with the exception of I5 and I6, which have values between 3 and 5. These indicate that indicators in the model does not show significant multicollinearity and can be continued to the next phase, which is testing the coefficient of determination (R^2).

The R^2 value obtained in this study can be categorized into three. A score of 0.25 is classified as weak, 0.50 as moderate, and 0.75 as substantial. R^2 testing results for each variable in the research model are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. R^2 Testing Results

| Variable | R-square | Result |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Brand Addition | 0.570 | Moderate |
| Brand Exclusivity | 0.547 | Moderate |
| Compulsive Buying Behaviour | 0.532 | Moderate |
| Irritability | 0.403 | Weak |
| Trash Talking | 0.273 | Weak |

Sources: Smart PLS (2025)

Based on the information displayed in Table 5, brand addition, brand exclusivity, and compulsive buying behaviour fall into moderate category. Conversely, irritability and trash talking are categorized as weak. These R^2 value itself indicate the percentage

of variation in each dependent variable explained by the independent variables in the model, with the remaining percentage attributed to external factors.

Hypothesis Testing. A hypothesis can be considered supported if the path coefficient is positive or greater than 0 (in the direction of the proposed hypothesis) and both the T-value and p-value are significant ($T > 1.645$; $p < 0.05$). The hypothesis testing results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

| Hypothesis | Path | Path Coefficient | T Values | p Values | Result |
|------------|---|------------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| H1 | Brand Hedonism → Brand Addiction | -0,022 | 0,295 | 0,384 | Not Supported |
| H2 | Brand Self-Expressiveness → Brand Addiction | 0,420 | 5,033 | 0,000 | Supported |
| H3 | Brand Innovativeness → Brand Addiction | 0,226 | 2,757 | 0,003 | Supported |
| H4 | Brand Authenticity → Brand Addiction | -0,091 | 1,007 | 0,157 | Not Supported |
| H5 | Materialism → Brand Addiction | 0,334 | 4,317 | 0,000 | Supported |
| H6 | Brand Addiction → Brand Exclusiveness | 0,739 | 23,017 | 0,000 | Supported |
| H7 | Brand Addiction → Trash Talking | 0,522 | 10,693 | 0,000 | Supported |
| H8 | Brand Addiction → Compulsive Buying Behaviour | 0,73 | 17,7 | 0,000 | Supported |
| H9 | Brand Addiction → Irritability | 0,635 | 13,516 | 0,000 | Supported |

Sources: Smart PLS (2025)

Based on the results of hypothesis testing presented in Table 6, seven out of nine proposed hypotheses were supported, while two were not. The path analysis revealed that brand hedonism had no significant effect on brand addiction ($\beta = -0.022$; $T = 0.295$; $p = 0.384$), and brand authenticity also showed an insignificant relationship ($\beta = -0.091$; $T = 1.007$; $p = 0.157$). In contrast, brand self-expressiveness demonstrated a strong and significant positive influence on brand addiction ($\beta = 0.420$; $T = 5.033$; $p < 0.001$), as did brand innovativeness ($\beta = 0.226$; $T = 2.757$; $p = 0.003$) and materialism ($\beta = 0.334$; $T = 4.317$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, brand addiction exhibited significant positive effects on all of its proposed psychological outcomes, including brand exclusiveness ($\beta = 0.739$; $T = 23.017$; $p < 0.001$), trash talking ($\beta = 0.522$; $T = 10.693$; $p < 0.001$), compulsive buying behavior ($\beta = 0.730$; $T = 17.700$; $p < 0.001$), and irritability ($\beta = 0.635$; $T = 13.516$; $p < 0.001$). These findings statistically confirm that brand self-expressiveness, innovativeness, and materialism are significant predictors of brand addiction, and that higher levels of brand addiction lead to stronger

expressions of exclusiveness, negative competitive behavior, compulsive purchasing tendencies, and emotional instability among Indonesian K-Pop fans.

IPMA

IPMA analysis will be conducted with one target construct, which is brand addiction. A more comprehensive analysis at the indicator level will also be carried out it given its central mediating role within the model, being influenced by all five independent variables while simultaneously influencing all of the dependent variable, a detailed indicator-level analysis for this construct is deemed most effective in directing managerial action. IPMA output in form of map for brand addiction in construct and indicator level are displayed in Figure 3.

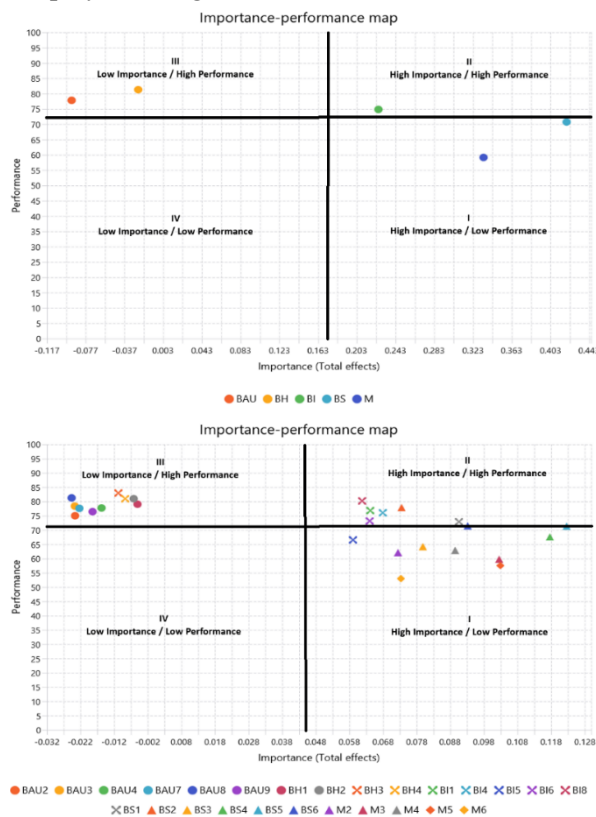


Figure 3. IPMA Map for Brand Addiction

5. Discussion

The results of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of how brand-related characteristics and materialism shape addictive consumer behavior and its psychological outcomes among Indonesian K-Pop fans. Out of nine hypotheses tested, seven were supported, indicating that brand self-expressiveness, brand innovativeness, and materialism play significant roles in driving brand addiction, while brand hedonism and brand authenticity do not show a meaningful influence.

The insignificance of brand hedonism toward brand addiction suggests that pleasure-seeking motives are insufficient to sustain long-term emotional attachment to a brand. Although previous studies have shown a positive relationship between hedonism and addiction (Pourazad et al., 2024; Siddique & Rajput, 2022), this finding aligns with Francioni et al. (2021), who argue that hedonic values lose relevance once consumers enter the addiction stage, as deeper psychological motives—such as identity reinforcement—take precedence. This may also relate to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, who are mostly young adults with limited disposable income, making them less likely to engage in consumption purely for pleasure.

The significant positive relationship between brand self-expressiveness and brand addiction supports earlier research (Bai et al., 2021; Mrad et al., 2020), emphasizing that brands which allow consumers to express their identities foster stronger emotional bonds. In the K-Pop context, idols and fandoms function as identity symbols that help fans articulate who they are within social groups. When brands (idol groups) facilitate self-expression, fans integrate them into their self-concept, producing emotional dependency and addictive behavior to maintain that identity.

Similarly, brand innovativeness significantly influences brand addiction, consistent with previous findings that innovative brands enhance perceived quality and emotional attachment (Francioni et al., 2021; Pappu & Quester, 2016). In K-Pop culture, this innovativeness is reflected in creative content, aesthetic evolution, and interactive digital experiences that keep fans emotionally engaged and continually seeking novelty.

Brand authenticity, on the other hand, does not significantly affect brand addiction, which contradicts prior evidence suggesting a positive correlation between the two (Francioni et al., 2021). This may be attributed to the entertainment industry's nature, where authenticity is often overshadowed by image management and marketing strategies. In K-Pop, idols' personas are meticulously curated, which can weaken the importance of perceived authenticity, as fans prioritize emotional connection and aspirational identification over genuine representation.

Materialism demonstrates a strong and significant influence on brand addiction, supporting the view that materialistic values heighten attachment to brands through social comparison and the pursuit of status (Le, 2020; Mrad et al., 2020). This effect aligns with findings that young, lower-income females tend to exhibit higher materialistic tendencies (Antiniene et al., 2021), which, in the context of K-Pop, manifest as a desire to collect all merchandise and albums for both social validation and personal satisfaction. This reinforces the symbolic role of consumption as a status marker and emotional regulator.

The outcomes of brand addiction also provide insight into the psychological effects of such attachment. The positive relationship between brand addiction and brand exclusiveness aligns with Francioni et al. (2021) and reflects Social Identity Theory,

which posits that stronger identification with a brand increases resistance to negative information. Addicted fans tend to perceive their favorite idol or group as superior and are less tolerant of criticism.

The significant association between brand addiction and trash talking supports prior findings (Japutra et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2022; Manggarani et al., 2021), demonstrating that defensive and hostile communication toward rival fandoms can function as an identity protection mechanism. This illustrates how fan rivalry becomes an extension of self-defense for those who define part of their identity through brand affiliation.

Furthermore, the link between brand addiction and compulsive buying behavior reaffirms previous research (Francioni et al., 2021; Junaid et al., 2022; Lee & Workman, 2015; Mrad et al., 2020; Suprawan et al., 2024), highlighting that emotional dependence on a brand can lead to repetitive, uncontrolled purchasing driven by psychological gratification rather than necessity.

Finally, the positive relationship between brand addiction and irritability is consistent with Francioni et al. (2021) and Junaid et al. (2022), indicating that psychological strain and emotional volatility can emerge when individuals are overly attached to a brand. This may be reinforced by gender-related tendencies, as women are generally found to experience irritability for longer durations than men (Toohey, 2020).

Overall, these findings reinforce that brand addiction among Indonesian K-Pop fans is primarily driven by identity-related motivations, innovation appeal, and materialistic desires rather than by hedonism or authenticity. The addictive attachment subsequently produces complex behavioral and emotional consequences—ranging from exclusiveness and defensive communication to compulsive consumption and emotional instability—demonstrating how modern fan culture transforms brand relationships into deep psychological engagements.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that among the four brand characteristics examined, only self-expressiveness and innovativeness significantly drive brand addiction among Indonesian K-Pop fans, while hedonism and authenticity show no meaningful effect. In addition, materialism emerges as a strong antecedent that heightens addiction to K-Pop brands. In turn, greater brand addiction translates into more pronounced exclusiveness, increased trash-talking of rival fandoms, elevated compulsive buying behavior, and higher irritability when fans are prevented from engaging with their favorite artists.

By confirming the pivotal role of self-expressiveness in fostering brand addiction, this research reinforces Social Identity Theory's premise that individuals seek brands that mirror and validate their group identity. It further extends extant brand addiction models by integrating materialism and trash talking as both antecedent and outcome

variables, revealing that in Indonesia's collectivist context, identity-expressive and materialistic drivers outweigh hedonistic or authenticity concerns. Moreover, the finding that authenticity and hedonism lack influence in this entertainment domain highlights the need for brand addiction theory to be more sensitive to cultural, industrial, and product-type boundaries.

Practitioners aiming to cultivate healthy yet enthusiastic K-Pop fan engagement should prioritize strategies that enhance self-expressiveness and leverage materialistic motivations. For instance, crafting narrative content and lyrics that resonate personally with fans and encouraging user-generated expressions such as fan art or reaction videos can deepen identity alignment. Similarly, releasing limited-edition merchandise and collaborative branded products can create a sense of exclusivity that taps into fans' materialistic drives. Conversely, managers can reduce investments in purely hedonic experiences or authenticity cues, as these factors do not significantly affect brand addiction in K-Pop fans. Finally, to moderate negative outcomes of brand addiction, brands should facilitate joint projects with other artists, enforce clear community guidelines, and also maintain transparent communication about idol groups' or artists' schedules and release content consistently on official platforms.

Given this study's cross-sectional, self-report design, future work should adopt longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches to capture the temporal evolution of addiction and mitigate social desirability bias. Expanding samples beyond predominantly young, urban, female fans will improve generalizability, and comparative studies with Western fandoms or local artists can test model robustness across cultures. Finally, examining platform engagement as a mediator or cultural values (e.g., individualism–collectivism) as moderators will shed further light on the processes underpinning brand addiction.

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