



Exploring the role of brand love in mediating community behavior's impact on tourist loyalty: an empirical study of Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between brand love, community behavior, and tourist loyalty at the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination, focusing on local tourists. Using purposive sampling, 125 participants were surveyed across various areas of the destination. The study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation to evaluate the proposed model. The results indicate that brand love significantly mediates the effect of community behavior on tourist loyalty. These findings provide valuable insights for destination managers, suggesting that fostering emotional connections between tourists and the destination brand can enhance tourist loyalty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has emerged as a strategic alternative pursued by the Indonesian government to address global economic challenges, particularly in response to export tariff policies imposed by other countries (Sanjaya et al., 2023). By focusing on the development of this sector, Indonesia seeks to reduce its reliance on commodity exports and shift its focus towards the services sector (Nasib, Syaifuddin, et al., 2023). Tourism plays a crucial role in attracting international tourists, directly contributing to increased national income and foreign exchange earnings (Nasib, Julitawaty, et al., 2023). Furthermore, the sector drives the growth of related industries such as transportation, accommodation, and the creative economy, which has a cascading positive impact on the national economy (Fathoni et al., 2025). Beyond being a source of foreign exchange, tourism also contributes to job creation, the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and regional income enhancement. The Indonesian government continues to prioritize strengthening this sector as a key strategy to mitigate global uncertainties, including export fluctuations and challenges in international trade (Alimin et al., 2025).

Puncak 2000 Siosar, located in Karo Regency, North Sumatra, is a natural tourist destination known for its stunning mountain views, cool climate, and refreshing green landscapes. Despite its significant potential, the destination has not been able to optimally attract tourist loyalty. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (BPS, 2022), accommodation

occupancy rates in Karo Regency dropped significantly from 32.27% in 2019 to 19.36% in 2020, and have not shown significant recovery trends up to 2023. In addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this decline is also attributed to internal factors such as unclear entrance fees, high food prices, expensive photo spots, and an overall tourist experience that has been rated as unsatisfactory. As a key indicator of regional tourism performance, the hotel occupancy rate reflects the intensity and consistency of tourist visits to a destination (Liu et al., 2022). A high occupancy rate signifies the destination's attractiveness, the quality of services, and tourist loyalty, which encourages extended stays and repeat visits (Winata, 2024). In contrast, a low occupancy rate may indicate various issues, such as insufficient promotion, low-quality tourist experiences, or a lack of emotional attachment between tourists and the destination.

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for 2024, the average length of stay for guests in hotels and other accommodations across various regencies/cities in North Sumatra from 2019 to 2023 is presented. This data illustrates the average duration tourists spend during their visits, serving as an indicator of the attractiveness and comfort of a tourist destination. Specifically, in Karo Regency, the data reveals an unstable fluctuation, with a decline in 2022 and a slight increase in 2023. This trend underscores the necessity for enhancing the quality of the tourist experience to encourage longer stays.

According to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the national tourism sector showed a positive recovery trend in 2023, with domestic tourist visits reaching 734 million trips and international tourist arrivals totaling 11.68 million visits. Unfortunately, this growth has not been uniformly distributed across all destinations, including Puncak 2000 Siosar. This indicates that destination promotion and development cannot solely rely on physical potential or attractions; it is also crucial to establish a deep emotional connection between the destination and tourists, a concept known as brand love.

Brand love reflects a strong emotional bond between tourists and a destination, which encourages repeat visits, positive reviews, and recommendations to others (Zhang et al., 2024). Brand love plays a crucial role in shaping tourist loyalty, particularly when a destination is positioned as a brand with emotional value (Harjadi et al., 2023). Tourists who experience satisfaction, have positive memories, and feel emotionally connected to a destination are more likely to develop a sense of affection for that place (Rini et al., 2024). This emotional connection encourages tourists to remain loyal, even when faced with service shortcomings or competing destination options (Amani, 2024). Brand love also increases the likelihood of tourists returning to the destination and recommending it to others (Hall et al., 2024). Furthermore, brand love fosters long-term loyalty, which contributes to the stability and growth of the tourism sector (Maulida & Rasyidah, 2024). Providing enjoyable experiences, strengthening emotional value, and delivering consistent and high-quality services are key factors in cultivating loyalty through brand love in the tourism industry (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2023).

One of the key factors to consider in efforts to enhance tourist loyalty is community behavior (Xie et al., 2024). Community behavior refers to the attitudes, interactions, and active participation of local communities in creating satisfying experiences for tourists (Sekolastika et al., 2023). The relationship established between tourists and the local community can influence how the destination is perceived. When local residents exhibit friendliness, openness, and actively contribute to preserving culture and the environment, it can enhance tourists' sense of safety and comfort, as well as strengthen their emotional connection with the destination (D. Sihombing, 2023).

The relationship between community behavior, brand love, and tourist loyalty has been explored in various destinations globally. For example, in research conducted by (Dai et al., 2025) on tourist destinations in China, it was found that community engagement significantly influenced tourists' emotional attachment to the destination, which in turn positively affected loyalty. Similarly, studies in European tourist cities (Han et al., 2025) have shown that local communities that actively engage in sustainable tourism practices help to create stronger emotional bonds with visitors. These findings are echoed in a study by (Orden-Mejía et al., 2025), which revealed that brand love significantly mediated the impact of community behavior on loyalty in Indonesian destinations such as Bali and Yogyakarta. However, despite these studies, the specific dynamics at

destinations like Puncak 2000 Siosar, particularly in rural and less developed regions, remain underexplored.

Currently, the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination faces several challenges that affect its attractiveness and tourist loyalty. The low level of tourist loyalty indicates a need to enhance deeper and more memorable experiences. Additionally, the lack of tourism experiences that connect with the emotional aspects of visitors is a key factor that needs attention. Promotional strategies, which are still limited in highlighting unique and authentic experiences, also pose a challenge in capturing tourists' attention. Furthermore, the involvement of the local community in building an image of the destination as welcoming and authentic needs to be strengthened in order to establish a closer connection between tourists and the local community.

This study addresses the research gap concerning the role of brand love in mediating the relationship between community behavior and tourist loyalty, particularly at the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination. While numerous studies have examined factors influencing tourist loyalty, the impact of emotional attachment to destination brands through interactions with the local community remains underexplored. This research is crucial for understanding how brand love and local community behavior can strengthen tourist loyalty, especially in emerging destinations. The findings of this study are expected to provide new insights for destination managers in designing experience-based marketing strategies that involve the local community, as well as contribute to the development of tourist loyalty theory.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach

This study adopts a quantitative approach designed to test the relationships between three key variables: Brand Love, Tourist Loyalty, and Community Behavior. The data collection process involves the use of a survey method, with a closed-ended questionnaire based on a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions and attitudes. The questionnaire is distributed in person at the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination and online, enabling broader participant coverage from various demographic backgrounds. This dual approach to data collection ensures that the responses reflect the diversity of tourists visiting the destination. Anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents are strictly maintained throughout the process to minimize bias and enhance data integrity.

Population and Sample

The population of this study includes all tourists who have visited the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination in Karo Regency. The purposive sampling technique is used to select participants who have visited the destination at least once in the past two years. This criterion ensures that respondents have relevant experience of the destination. A sample size of 125 respondents is selected, meeting the minimum requirement for structural model-based statistical analysis and ensuring sufficient power for SEM-PLS analysis.

Instruments and Variable Measurement

The survey instrument was designed to measure the following three key constructs:

1. Brand Love: This variable reflects tourists' emotional attachment and affection toward the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination.
2. Tourist Loyalty: This variable captures the likelihood of tourists returning to the destination and recommending it to others.
3. Community Behavior: This variable measures the involvement of the local community in creating a welcoming atmosphere and engaging in sustainable tourism practices.

The questionnaire consists of X number of items with each construct being operationalized using well-established scales from the literature. The theoretical references for developing these scales include (Enes et al., 2024) for Brand Love, (Nasib & Salqaura, 2025) for Tourist Loyalty, and (Xie et al., 2024) for Community Behavior. These validated scales ensure that the constructs are measured consistently with prior research, enhancing the instrument's reliability.

To assess the validity and reliability of the instrument, the following tests will be conducted:

1. Construct Validity:

- a. Convergent validity will be tested using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where values above 0.50 indicate acceptable convergent validity.
 - b. Discriminant validity will be assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which ensures that each construct is distinct and independent from the others.
2. Reliability:
- a. Cronbach's Alpha will be used to assess internal consistency, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable for reliable measurement.
 - b. Composite Reliability (CR) will be calculated to further ensure the reliability of the scales. A CR value above 0.70 indicates a good level of reliability.

Data Analysis Technique

The data will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software. SEM-PLS is ideal for testing complex relationships between latent variables like Brand Love, Tourist Loyalty, and Community Behavior, especially in non-normally distributed data, which is typical in social science research.

The analysis will be structured around the following components:

1. Construct Validity:
 - a. Convergent Validity: Evaluated via factor loadings and AVE values. Factor loadings greater than 0.70 are considered good indicators, and AVE values above 0.50 demonstrate acceptable convergent validity.
 - b. Discriminant Validity: Assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. This will confirm that each construct (Brand Love, Tourist Loyalty, and Community Behavior) is distinct from the others.
2. Reliability

Both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) will be examined to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales.
3. Bootstrapping Procedure

Bootstrapping will be employed to test the statistical significance of the path coefficients, assessing whether the relationships in the model are robust and reliable.
4. Path Coefficients

The strength and direction of relationships between Brand Love, Tourist Loyalty, and Community Behavior will be assessed through path coefficients. These coefficients will highlight both direct and indirect effects, helping to understand how these constructs interact.
5. Model Fit

The goodness of fit of the SEM-PLS model will be evaluated using SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) and R-squared (R^2) values. A value of SRMR less than 0.08 is considered a good fit, indicating that the model is a satisfactory representation of the data. The R^2 value will measure the explanatory power of the model, indicating the proportion of variance in Tourist Loyalty explained by Brand Love and Community Behavior.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Variable	Scale	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	63	50.40%
	Female	62	49.60%
Age	20 – 25 Year	58	46.40%
	26 – 30 Year	37	29.60%
	31 – 35 Year	16	12.80%

	36 – 40 Year	14	11.20%
Total Respondents		125	100%

Based on the demographic data, this study involved a total of 125 respondents, consisting of 63 men (50.4%) and 62 women (49.6%). Although the number of men is slightly higher than that of women, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, reflecting almost equal participation of both genders in this study. In terms of age, the majority of respondents are within the productive age range, with 58 respondents (46.4%) aged 20–25 years and 37 respondents (29.6%) aged 26–30 years. This indicates that Puncak 2000 Siosar primarily attracts younger tourists, who tend to be more active in accessing information and engaging in digitally-based tourism activities. The age groups of 31–35 years and 36–40 years comprise 16 respondents (12.8%) and 14 respondents (11.2%), respectively. Although the number of respondents in these age groups is smaller, they still show interest in this tourism destination, which suggests that Puncak 2000 Siosar has a diverse appeal across different age groups.

Data Processing Results

This study presents statistical tests for the development of path analysis constructs. The external model measurements include specific criteria for statistical analysis in PLS-SEM. Validity and reliability assessments must ensure that the data demonstrates adequate factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 2 displays the evaluations of convergent validity based on factor loadings and AVE values. These tests will facilitate the statistical analysis in the subsequent presentations.

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Variabel	Kode	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Brand Love	BV1	0.838	0.882	0.908	0.585
	BV2	0.768			
	BV3	0.748			
	BV4	0.761			
	BV5	0.778			
	BV6	0.708			
	BV7	0.746			
Tourist loyalty	TL1	0.796	0.892	0.917	0.649
	TL2	0.805			
	TL3	0.815			
	TL4	0.84			
	TL5	0.802			
	TL6	0.774			
Community Behavior	CB1	0.838	0.921	0.936	0.646
	CB2	0.835			
	CB3	0.837			
	CB4	0.857			
	CB5	0.796			
	CB6	0.772			
	CB7	0.778			
	CB8	0.708			

Table 2 shows that all indicators exceed the required thresholds, confirming that the criteria for this study have been met. The composite reliability values for all the identified variables are deemed reliable, as they exceed 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire provides stable and consistent measurement outcomes. Furthermore, the variables listed earlier are considered reliable since Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.6, demonstrating that the questionnaire yields consistent measurement results. The final phase of the research evaluation involves hypothesis testing using the constant

bootstrapping method and chi-square ($n = 125$). Data collection is carried out through a questionnaire distributed to all research participants (refer to Table 3 for the measurement scale used).

Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

The data processing results using the SmartPLS version 3.0 software produced R-Square (R^2) values for each endogenous variable. These values are presented in Table 8 below:

Variabel Endogen	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Brand Love (Z)	0,536	0,531
Tourist Loyalty (Y)	0,492	0,487

The brand love variable has a R^2 value of 0.536, which means that community behavior as the independent variable can explain 53.6% of the changes in brand love. This means that tourists are more likely to acquire brand love for a place if the people there are nice to them. The R^2 value of 0.492 for tourist loyalty shows that the combined effect of community conduct and brand love can explain 49.2% of the change in tourist loyalty. These results suggest that tourist loyalty is affected not just by favorable social encounters but also by the emotional bond that comes from loving a brand that is associated with the place.

Predictive Relevance (Q2)

The Q^2 value is like the coefficient of determination (R^2) in that it helps you figure out how good a model is. If the Q^2 number is larger than 0, it means that the model can anticipate things. On the other hand, a Q^2 score less than 0 means that the model is not very good at making predictions. To put it another way, the model can predict observed data better when the Q^2 values are higher. You can use the following criteria to understand the evaluation of Q^2 values:

Variabel Endogen	Q^2 (Predictive Relevance)
Brand Love (Z)	0.317
Tourist Loyalty (Y)	0.361

The Q^2 value of 0.361 for the tourist loyalty variable shows that it has a good capacity to predict, while the Q^2 value of 0.317 for brand love shows that it has a moderate to strong ability to predict. These results show that the study model that was created can not only explain endogenous variables (via R^2), but it can also accurately anticipate actual responses, which means it has strong predictive validity.

Hypothesis Test Results

Path	Original Sample (O)	Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
Community Behavior (X) -> Brand Love (Z)	0.231	5.75	0.005	Significant
Community Behavior (X) -> Tourist loyalty (Y)	0.379	5.953	0.000	Significant
Brand Love (Z) -> Tourist loyalty (Y)	0.299	3.583	0.000	Significant
Community Behavior (X) -> Brand Love (Z) -> Tourist loyalty (Y)	0.175	2.167	0.031	Significant

The Effect of Community Behavior on Brand Love

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that community behavior has a positive influence on brand love at the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination. These findings are inconsistent with those of previous research (Hato, 2025), which stated that community behavior does not significantly

affect brand love. While brand communities can enhance loyalty, they may also trigger negative behaviors such as "trash talk" about competing brands, suggesting that communities do not always contribute positively to brand love (Liao et al., 2023). Brand activism can influence consumer brand evaluations, but its impact depends on brand relationship norms and the brand's response to social issues, indicating that external factors also play a role in shaping brand love. Furthermore, parasocial interactions with influencers on social media can influence brand attitudes, although this effect is stronger among younger generations and is more influenced by emotional closeness than by involvement in brand communities (Njonge, 2023).

However, a study by (Sakti et al., 2024) asserts that community behavior has a significant impact on brand love at tourism destinations. Pleasant brand experiences and identification with the destination brand can strengthen brand love, ultimately encouraging revisit intentions and word-of-mouth promotional behavior (Tang et al., 2023). Engagement in a destination brand community can deepen tourists' emotional connection with the destination brand, enhance brand love, and foster positive behaviors, such as sharing experiences online (Ghorbanzadeh, 2024). Destination brand experiences and brand authenticity can further strengthen tourists' engagement with the brand, subsequently increasing brand love and promoting positive behaviors among tourists (Amani, 2024). Destination brand love plays a crucial role in enhancing tourists' revisit intentions, with emotional engagement serving as a significant mediator (Alimin et al., 2025). Brand love also fosters word-of-mouth promotion and revisit intentions, highlighting the importance of community involvement in building brand love (Nasib & Salqaura, 2025). Moreover, destination brand experiences and the quality of brand relationships can influence tourists' citizenship behaviors, with the quality of the brand relationship acting as a key mediator (N. S. Sihombing et al., 2025). Commitment to brand communities can mediate the relationship between brand trust and brand love, although this influence is also affected by cultural and local contextual factors (Putra et al., 2025).

These results back with the relational theory of brand love, which says that people don't just love a brand because of its products; they also love it because of the social experiences and interactions they have with other people in the brand setting. This agrees with what (Lambert, 2024), found, which says that interactions between tourists and local people are very important for building brand love in community-based tourism destinations. Also, the fact that community behavior has a big effect on brand love shows how important social identity theory is. It connects tourists with the host community, which makes them feel like they belong to a group. This, in turn, makes them feel like they own the destination brand and are emotionally committed to it (Falahati et al., 2025).

The findings of the study, which indicate that community behavior has a positive impact on brand love, suggest that the managers of the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination should involve the local community more actively in destination management. Local community engagement in welcoming tourists, as well as in preserving culture and the environment, is essential. Training programs for the local community can enhance their role in creating more emotionally engaging tourism experiences for visitors. Furthermore, improving communication between the destination and tourists, along with designing loyalty programs that involve the community, can strengthen brand love. Destination marketing can also leverage the role of the local community as tourism ambassadors to share authentic experiences with tourists. In this way, the destination can foster a deeper emotional connection with tourists, enhance brand love, and encourage loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion.

The Effect of Community Behavior on Tourist loyalty

Based on the data analysis, the findings indicate that community behavior impacts tourist loyalty at the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination. According to social identity theory, these results support the idea that being a part of a certain social group will make people more emotionally and psychologically attached to that group. When it comes to tourism, good connections between tourists and local residents can make people feel more connected to a place (L. Wang et al., 2024). Also, these results are in line with consumer-brand connection theory and brand love theory, which say that people's emotional and social experiences affect how they think about social entities and how they plan to act. According to (Ozuem et al., 2024), community behavior is not just a set of

social activities but also something that can lead to deep emotional experiences that make people more devoted to the destination.

These results are inconsistent with the study by (Dai et al., 2025) which stated that community behavior does not significantly affect tourist loyalty. Homestay-based community experiences influence tourist loyalty through the emotions they evoke, rather than directly through community behavior itself (Meijing & Yu, 2022). Tourist engagement plays a role in influencing loyalty, but this influence is more through functional and emotional values, rather than social value. Effective communication during events can enhance tourist loyalty, although its impact is indirect through community behavior (Habiba & Bardai, 2024). Loyalty formed within online communities is not always directly related to tourist loyalty toward the destination (Fronzetti Colladon et al., 2019). The unique local characteristics of homestays can moderate the relationship between emotions and tourist loyalty, indicating that factors other than community behavior also play a significant role (Jimenez-garcía et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the findings of this study support the research by (Zhu et al., 2025), which asserts that community behavior has a significant impact on tourist loyalty. Homestay-based community experiences can influence tourist loyalty through the emotions they evoke, rather than directly through community behavior itself (Li et al., 2024). Tourist engagement within the community can enhance positive emotions, which in turn strengthen tourists' attachment to the destination (Nusair et al., 2024). This indicates that tourist loyalty is more influenced by the emotions arising from interactions between tourists and the community, rather than merely involvement in the community's behavior (Suhartanto et al., 2024). Additionally, commitment to brand communities serves as a mediator between brand trust and brand love (Luekveerawattana, 2024).

Based on the findings that community behavior influences tourist loyalty, the management of the Puncak 2000 Siosar destination should focus on empowering the local community. Training programs aimed at enhancing the community's skills in tourism management and local cultural promotion are crucial for strengthening tourists' role in supporting the destination. Additionally, creating authentic tourism experiences by involving the local community can deepen tourists' emotional connection. Effective communication between tourists and the local community will also boost loyalty. Marketing that actively involves the local community can help attract new tourists and reinforce loyalty. Loyalty programs that engage the local community will further strengthen the bond between tourists and the destination.

The influence of Brand Love on Tourist loyalty

The hypothesis testing results indicate that brand love has a significant impact on the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination. According to the consumer-brand relationship hypothesis (Fournier, 1998), emotional attachment between consumers and brands leads to long-term relationships and loyal behavior. Brand love is a strong emotional connection that includes love, passion, and a devotion to the destination. Tourists' emotional values, such happiness and inner peace, also play a big role in their devotion. Also, when travelers' self-image matches the image of the location, it makes emotional identification stronger. So, loyalty isn't just based on logical fulfillment; it's also based on emotional experiences and a strong sense of belonging to the destination (Razmus, 2025).

These findings are inconsistent with previous research, which suggested that brand love does not significantly affect tourist loyalty (Nasrul et al., 2023). Brand experience and the happiness felt by tourists have a greater influence on shaping tourist loyalty than brand love itself [39]. Although brand love can contribute to enhancing loyalty, factors such as positive experiences and tourist satisfaction during visits have a more significant impact. Tourists who experience enjoyable and fulfilling visits are more likely to develop higher loyalty to the destination, even without a strong emotional attachment to the destination brand. The happiness experienced by tourists during their visit also plays a crucial role in fostering sustained loyalty (Luekveerawattana, 2024).

However, this study supports the findings of previous research (Zhang & Xu, 2025)(Zhang et al., 2024)(Hanaysha, 2024), which states that brand love has a strong impact on tourist loyalty, demonstrating that the emotional connection formed with a destination brand can enhance tourists' desire to revisit the destination. Tourists who feel connected to the destination brand are more likely

to choose it in the future and encourage others to visit as well (Choi et al., 2025). Positive experiences and identification with the destination brand strengthen this relationship, thereby enhancing tourist loyalty (Hall et al., 2025). Factors such as the quality of the experience, brand image, and brand authenticity also reinforce brand love, making tourists feel more connected and satisfied (Kim et al., 2024).

Based on the findings indicating that brand love significantly influences tourist loyalty at Puncak 2000 Siosar, destination managers should focus on strengthening the emotional connection between tourists and the destination. This can be achieved by creating authentic and memorable tourism experiences that deepen tourists' relationship with the destination brand. Destination marketing should emphasize emotional aspects and authenticity, showcasing the uniqueness of the destination's natural beauty and culture. Additionally, building a loyal tourist community through interactions between tourists and local residents, as well as implementing loyalty programs that reward returning visitors, will further strengthen brand love. Leveraging social media to share positive testimonials can also enhance brand image. These steps will strengthen tourist loyalty, build long-term relationships, and enhance the brand image of Puncak 2000 Siosar.

The Effect of Community Behavior on Tourist loyalty Through Brand Love

Based on hypothesis testing, the results show that brand love significantly mediates the relationship between community behavior and tourist loyalty at the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination. According to consumer–brand connection theory and social identity theory, having good social interactions with people in the area makes people feel powerful emotions, which makes them love the brand even more. This brand love develops an emotional bridge that makes tourists more loyal. In this case, community activities like being kind, participating in local culture, and supporting sustainability don't directly affect loyalty; instead, they do so through emotional attachment (Madadi et al., 2024)

These findings are inconsistent with previous research, which suggested that community behavior does not significantly affect tourist loyalty through brand love (Hermawan et al., 2024). While community experiences and perceived community benefits can enhance brand loyalty, brand engagement does not significantly mediate this relationship (Lee & Hsieh, 2022). Although brand love influences brand community commitment, its impact on customer citizenship behavior (CCB) is not significant without brand community commitment as a mediator (Morando & Platania, 2022). This study highlights the importance of brand community commitment in linking brand trust and brand love with customer citizenship behavior (CCB) (Alizadeh et al., 2022). Without brand community commitment, the influence of brand love on CCB will not be significant (Tran et al., 2023). Despite brand love influencing brand community commitment, its impact on CCB remains insignificant without the mediation of brand community commitment (Aljumah et al., 2022).

The findings of this study support previous research (Harjadi et al., 2023)(Paruthi et al., 2023), which indicates that community behavior significantly influences tourist loyalty. Active involvement of the local community in the tourism destination is crucial in creating deep emotional experiences for tourists (H. Wang et al., 2022). Tourists who connect with the local community through social interactions or participation in local activities feel more appreciated and develop a strong emotional bond with the destination (Ahuvia et al., 2022). Positive community behaviors, such as hospitality, support for the sustainability of the destination, and the promotion of local culture, enrich the tourist experience, increase satisfaction, and deepen emotional connections (Wong, 2023).

Based on the findings that brand love significantly mediates the relationship between community behavior and tourist loyalty at the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism destination, destination managers should focus on several key strategies. Strengthening local community engagement by involving tourists more actively in tourism activities will create a more emotional experience for tourists, ultimately leading to stronger brand love. Furthermore, destination marketing should focus on emotional aspects, highlighting the authenticity of local culture and hospitality, which can deepen tourists' connections with the destination brand. Additionally, creating authentic and memorable tourism experiences will further strengthen tourist loyalty. Destination managers should also implement loyalty programs that prioritize emotional connections, as well as improve communication

between the management and tourists to build trust and strengthen brand love, ultimately enhancing tourist loyalty to the destination.

4. CONCLUSION

This study looks at how brand love, community conduct, and tourist loyalty are connected in the Puncak 2000 Siosar tourism area. The results show that brand love has a big impact on how community behavior affects tourist loyalty. This shows how important emotional connection is in shaping tourist behavior outcomes. In theory, this study adds to the ideas of brand love and tourist loyalty by showing how emotionally driven relationships, which are made easier by community involvement, make people more loyal to a destination. This is especially true in rural and local tourism settings, which are still underrepresented in the literature. This study has some methodological problems, even though it offers some good ideas. Using a purposive sampling method and only looking at numbers may lead to selection bias and miss the deeper emotional and sensory aspects of visitor activity. Thinking about this, future research should use a mixed-method approach to combine emotional depth and behavioral breadth. To build brand love, destination managers should provide local communities the power to create value and make experiences that are real and emotionally resonant. Some strategic suggestions are to create loyalty programs that are focused on emotions, encourage real relationships with locals, and use social media to convey stories that will make tourists feel more connected to the place they are visiting.

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