

# The Effect of Customer Experience, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Loyalty on Brand Power and Willingness To Pay A Price Premium

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## Abstract

Products have a special value for customers and brand owners, and becoming a favorite is the aim of many brands. Therefore, this research used a causal quantitative design with a deductive approach to determine the influence of customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty on brand power and willingness to pay a price premium. The data were obtained from primary sources via a questionnaire, while the population and unit of analysis were determined using the non-probability sampling technique with the criteria of Apple product customers aged at least 17 years old in Indonesia. A total of 280 respondents were achieved from August to December 2021 using the purposive sampling technique. The data were analyzed using SPSS 26 software (factor analysis) and Lisrel 10.2 with SEM (Structural Equation Modeling). Subsequently, the results indicated a positive influence of customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty on brand power and willingness to pay a price premium. The research also suggested that maintaining and improving product quality, alongside continuous innovation, strengthened customer loyalty and brand power as well as increased their willingness to pay a price premium.

*Keywords:* Customer experience; customer satisfaction; customer loyalty; brand power; and willingness to pay a price premium

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## 1. Introduction

Few products out of the many iconic brands in the global market have succeeded in garnering a cult following among their customers. This is due to the failure of company strategies to offer memorable product experiences that can strengthen customer loyalty and engender a sense of belonging, strong emotional connection, special treatment, or fanatic behavior towards a brand (Chanda & Moharir, 2020). Yang et al. (2017) stated that customer experience measures a multidimensional concept, and several investigations have also shown that the influence of customer experience on brands is a crucial issue. A pleasant customer experience regarding a product/brand builds trust, commitment, satisfaction, and loyalty (Prentice & Loureiro, 2017). Belief and satisfaction with a brand and a company's promises create a degree of relationship with the product (Xie, Poon, & Zhang, 2017). According to the findings of the MBLM Company published in 2017 by (Don Reisinger, 2017) in fortune magazine (<https://fortune.com/2017/03/30/apple-intimate-brand/>), brands that have a strong emotional relationship with customers obtain greater profit (\$2.9 billion more) compared to brands with a weak emotional connection. Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018) found that customer experience, which is associated with brand strength, is underestimated by many company leaders. Customer experience is an important process/event due to its relationship with sensory responses, emotions, perceptions, thoughts, and intelligence, which involve the interaction of the five senses, first impressions, cognitions, conations, and memories. Hence, its significance between customers and a product, the implications for value creation, satisfaction, loyalty, attitudes, behavior, and relationships with a brand cannot be avoided (Ong, Lee, & Ramayah, 2018). Pei et al. (2020) also emphasized the importance of customer experience dimensions in the process of creating brand value and sustainable competitive advantage.

Customer experience was moderated by price and popularity, influences customer satisfaction (Wan et al., 2018). Iglesias, Marcovic, & Rialp (2018) found that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on affective commitment. Ong et al. (2018) also identified various dimensions of customer experience such as sensory sensation, affection,

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behavior, and intelligence, which affect customer loyalty, specifically their attitudes and behaviors. Research by Wiedmann et al. (2017) and Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018) showed that customer experience, satisfaction/perception of ratings, and strong loyalty influence brand strength. Prentice, Wang, & Loureiro (2019) confirmed that customer experience has significant direct and indirect effects on their loyalty. Akbari et al. (2019) concluded that corporate social responsibility is part of customer experience, satisfaction, trust, and value, which impacts brand loyalty and positioning. Brand satisfaction and customer loyalty were also observed to impact brand equity (Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2019). Research reported that consumer brand identification includes one of the indicators of the strength of the brand or customer relationship, which positively influences the willingness to pay higher prices (Torres, Augusto, & Wallace, 2018). Brand attributes also increase the willingness to pay a higher price for a product (Mainardes, Soares Junior, & Andrade, 2020).

A causal research model examining customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty, alongside brand power, was discussed in previous research on the Iranian hospitality industry (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018). Additionally, prior investigations have shown the influence/importance of customer experience on other factors, including customer satisfaction (Moreira, da Silva, & Moutinho, 2017; Rychalski & Hudson, 2017; Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Wan et al., 2018; Pei et al., 2020), brand power (Wiedmann et al., 2017 and Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018), and customer loyalty (Das et al., 2018; Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Ong et al., 2018; Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019; Prentice, Wang, & Loureiro, 2019). The influence of customer satisfaction on various factors has also been explored, such as brand power (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2019; Mainardes, Soares Junior, & Andrade, 2020), customer loyalty (Stathopoulou & Balabanis, 2016; Kamran-Disfani et al., 2017; Prentice & Loureiro, 2017; Rychalski & Hudson, 2017; Iglesias et al., 2018; Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Akbari et al., 2019), as well as the effect of customer loyalty on brand power (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018 and Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2019). However, the previous models haven't ever examined the correlation between these variables on the willingness to pay a price premium in the durable goods industry, which deals with technology & telecommunications products. Wan et al. (2018) suggested that exploring the correlation between customer experience and satisfaction is more suitable for durable products, as the measurement is more precise due to the long-term use. Therefore, this research aims to reconfirm the relationship between the variables mentioned above, develop a new model, and possibly provide managerial implications for brand owners.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Customer Experience

Customer experience is the subjective response of a customer to the functionality/quality and service of a product that can impact a company/brand (Lemke, Clark, & Wilson, 2011). According to Klaus & Maklan (2013), customer experience is a competitive marketing strategy, which entails offering better products and services. A company must extensively understand the customer experience concept, comprising product experience, interaction, reaction, and feeling/satisfaction level, as well as marketing aspects, which involve satisfaction, loyalty, and word of mouth. Customer experience is the main key to building customer behavior and attitudes as well as the company's long-term goals. Barnes, Mattsson, & Sorensen (2014) defined this phenomenon as a unified event/experience and process of customer evaluation of a product/brand. Various investigations also described it as a multidimensional concept that focuses on the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensory, and social dimensions of customers' responses to company/brand offerings throughout and after the buying process (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Generally, customer experience measures physical/product/service and emotional demand as well as the level of satisfaction with the previous product/service (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018). Bleier, Harmeling, & Palmatier (2019) highlighted subjective judgments and multidimensional concepts related to the psychological response of customers to products/brands. Furthermore, Pei et al. (2020) explained that customer experience is a manifestation of various positive and/or negative feelings, alongside short and long-term ratings of products/brands.

### 2.2. Customer Satisfaction

Many concepts of customer satisfaction exist in various literature, but the term can be summarized as a major goal of customers in achieving their needs, wants, and expectations (Ali, Amin, & Cobanoglu, 2016). Customer satisfaction is the assessment of product performance that matches or exceeds customers' expectations, strengthened by the accumulation of previous experience (Kulsum & Syah, 2017). It represents the emotional relationship between the seller and buyer that can increase the customer's purchase intention (Hung, Cheng, & Chiu, 2018). Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018) measured customer satisfaction through trust and service/satisfaction related to the value offered by a brand. Kataria & Saini (2019) also described this concept as a different affective reaction from the overall

experience of the product/brand and as a strong indicator of loyalty and subsequent relationships. Another research defined the phenomenon as a reflection of the overall comparison of product/brand performance against different customer expectations, which can impact customer loyalty (Elizar, Indrawati, & Syah, 2020).

### 2.3. *Customer Loyalty*

Xie & Heung (2012) interpreted customer loyalty as attitudes and behavior towards a brand. It is the strength and depth of the relationship, retention, and duration of using a company's product/brand (Kumar, Pozza, & Ganesh, 2013). Aktepe, Ersoz, & Toklu (2014), alongside Leong et al. (2015), postulated that customer loyalty is an indicator of the level of satisfaction with products/brands. It consists of behavioral and attitudinal dimensions that represent the actual behavior and intentions of customers and is one of a company's main strategies for enhancing its competitive advantage (Prentice & Loureiro, 2017). Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018) mentioned several indicators of customer loyalty, namely service quality, brand relationship with customers, and customer care. Furthermore, customer loyalty is a manifestation of the recognition that a brand will be repurchased when the product is wanted or needed again (Han et al., 2018; Hult et al., 2019). It is a reflection of the level of customer satisfaction (affective) with the product/brand (Karani, Syah, & Anindita, 2019). According to Harzaviona & Syah (2020), customer loyalty to brands can also be measured through purchase frequency and amount. This was reinforced by Shinta, Syah, & Negoro (2020), who described this concept as buying behavior and customer attitudes toward a product/brand.

### 2.4. *Brand Power or Strength*

Brand equity consists of two dimensions, namely brand strength and value. Brand strength refers to the brand associations formed by customers, while brand value is the resulting financial benefits (Srivastava & Shocker, 1991 in Strandvik & Heinonen, 2013). According to Strandvik & Heinonen (2013), brand strength is the response and psychological impact of a brand on different customers based on the periodic accumulation of experience and information on the product. The aim is to enhance attraction to the brand and increase buying activities, following customers' thoughts and perceptions about a product. Brand power has many benefits, categorized into two dimensions, namely increasing revenue and reducing costs (Keller, 2013). According to Buil et al. (2013), building brand strength can positively improve company performance through various responses, including customers' willingness to pay higher prices. Wang & Ding (2017) emphasized that customers respond differently to strong and weak products, and brand strength can increase awareness, reputation, recognition, and strong brand associations. Wang & Zhang (2018) revealed that many companies strive to increase their brand strength due to the extraordinary benefits, including enhanced emotional intimacy with customers, increased performance/profits, etc., which have been conveyed by experts. Additionally, Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018) described several indicators of brand strength, namely (i) attractiveness: a sense of belonging and emotional/psychological closeness of customers to the brand; (ii) challenge: brand names that influence behavior; (iii) popularity: because of a certain product category; and (iv) price: willingness to pay more for the product/service because the brand name offers added value. Therefore, brand strength and distinctive value result in more revenue (He & Calder, 2020).

### 2.5. *Willingness to Pay a Price Premium*

Buil et al. (2013) stated that the willingness to pay a higher price represents the range of prices customers are willing to pay for a brand, following an assessment of the benefits/functions and quality of the product category. The willingness to pay a higher price is an indicator of brand strength (Anselmsson, Bondesson, & Johansson, 2014). Park & Kim (2014) defined this concept as a manifestation of the customer's strong sense of belonging to the brand and inclination to pay a higher price for the preferred product/brand. In contrast, Augusto & Torres (2018) described the phenomenon as a manifestation of brand identification, which indicates a sense of familiarity with a brand and the willingness to pay more. Hence, the willingness to pay a higher price signifies that the customer can accept the price set by the manufacturer because of the brand's attributes (Mainardes, Soares Junior, & Andrade, 2020).

### 2.6. *The Correlation between Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction*

According to Khan & Fatma (2017), a positive customer experience is extraordinary and comprises multiple impressions, including satisfaction, loyalty, credibility, deep trust, and an optimistic attitude towards the brand. Moreira, da Silva, & Moutinho (2017) mentioned that customer experience is very useful in stimulating a positive response/satisfaction towards a brand, as it relates to customer interactions and reactions (Potdar, Joshi, Harish,

Baskerville, & Wongthongtham, 2018). This finding was strengthened by Haase, Weidmann, & Labenz (2018) and Wan et al. (2018), who supported the existence of a correlation between customer experience and satisfaction.

Experience has been found to affect customer loyalty (Moreira, da Silva, & Moutinho, 2017; Rychalski & Hudson, 2017; Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Wan et al., 2018; and Pei et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis was made based on the correlation between variables and previous empirical results:

H<sub>1</sub>: Customer experience positively influences customer satisfaction

### *2.7. The Correlation between Customer Satisfaction and Brand Power*

Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018) reported an association between services that represent pleasure, good quality, and low dissatisfaction with brand power. Belief and satisfaction in a brand or a producer's promises will create a relationship with the brand (Xie et al., 2017). This supports research by Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), Šerić & Gil-Saura (2019), and Mainardes et al. (2020), which show that customer satisfaction affects brand strength. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H<sub>2</sub>: Customer satisfaction positively influences brand power.

### *2.8. The Correlation between Customer Experience and Brand Power*

Customer experience consists of sensory, affection, behavior, and intelligence dimensions, which are correlated with the quality of the relationship with a brand (Xie et al., 2017). Building a pleasant customer experience is crucial to strengthening a brand's competitive position (Iglesias et al., 2018) and enhancing the knowledge and recognition of the brand, thereby building a psychological sense of belonging (Gong, 2018). Wiedmann et al. (2017) and Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018) proved that customer experience affects brand strength. Therefore, the following hypothesis was retested:

H<sub>3</sub>: Customer experience positively influences brand power.

### *2.9. The Correlation between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty*

Satisfaction is correlated with customer loyalty (Kamran-Disfani et al., 2017). This is congruent with research by Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), which reported a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and loyalty described in several investigations and the subsequent implications for increasing market share. Also, Keshavarz & Jamshidi (2018) argued that optimizing the quality of products and services offered to customers will create trust and satisfaction, which affect the intention to buy again. Generally, customer satisfaction with a product promotes a continuing commitment to a product/brand (Akbari et al., 2019).

Previous research by Stathopoulou & Balabanis (2016), Kamran-Disfani et al. (2017), Prentice & Loureiro (2017), Rychalski & Hudson (2017), Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), Iglesias et al. (2018), and Akbari et al. (2019) justified the influence of satisfaction on customer loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H<sub>4</sub>: Customer satisfaction positively influences customer loyalty.

### *2.10. The Correlation between Customer Experience and Customer Loyalty*

Customer experience has a close correlation with brand commitment/loyalty (Das et al., 2018). According to Haase et al. (2018), long-term memory of experiences will build customer perceptions (satisfaction) and behavior (purchase intentions, loyalty, and paying prices). A pleasant customer experience will create cognitive, affective, and positive

behavior/return intentions (Legendre, Cartier, & Warnick, 2019). This was supported by Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka (2019), who argued that a customer's positive experience with a brand will increase attachment.

Das et al. (2018), Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), Ong et al. (2018), Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka (2019), and Prentice, Wang, & Loureiro (2019) stated that experience influences customer loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H<sub>5</sub>: Customer experience positively influences customer loyalty.

### 2.11. The Correlation between Customer Loyalty and Brand Power

According to Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), strong loyalty will build a sense of belonging and psychological closeness/familiarity to a brand. This was consistent with the opinion of Das et al. (2018) that customer loyalty builds a sense of belonging and intimacy with a product. The correlation between these variables is evidenced by research, including Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), who asserted that customer loyalty has a significant positive influence on brand power, and Šerić & Gil-Saura (2019), who agreed that loyalty attitudes and behavior affect brand equity. Therefore, the following hypothesis was tested:

H<sub>6</sub>: Customer loyalty positively influences brand power.

### 2.12. The Correlation between Brand Power and Willingness to Pay a Price Premium

Horváth & van Birgelen (2015) reported that the willingness to pay higher prices increases when customers feel a strong relationship with a brand. This inclination intensifies with the provision of superior product benefits, maximum service, and strong customer relationships (Rodrigues & Martins, 2016). Bougenvile & Ruswanti (2017) affirmed that associations with brands are related to purchase intentions and the willingness to pay higher prices. Brand identification is an indicator of the strength of the brand or the customer relationship, which positively affects the willingness to pay higher prices (Torres, Augusto, & Wallace, 2018). Also, brand attributes can enhance the willingness willing to pay higher for a product (Mainardes, Soares Junior, & Andrade, 2020).

In the Portuguese banking industry, consumer brand identification indicates the strength of the brand or its relationship with the customer, which results in the willingness to pay higher prices (Torres et al., 2018). Mainardes et al. (2020) also concluded that the equity of well-known brands of commodity products in Brazil is positively related to the purchase intention and willingness to pay higher prices. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H<sub>7</sub>: Brand power positively influences willingness to pay a price premium.

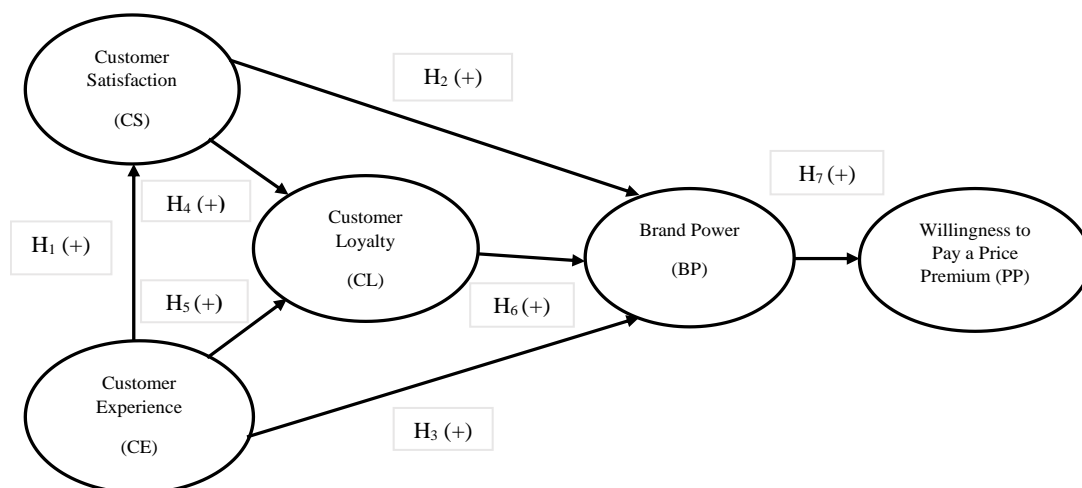


Figure 1. Research Paradigm Model

### 3. Research Method and Materials

This research employed a causal quantitative design with a deductive approach. Data were collected from primary sources using survey methods by distributing questionnaires directly or digitally through Google Forms. The measurement of the research variables comprised (i) 2 indicators of customer experience, namely emotional demand (assistance) and physical demand, with 2 statements each, (ii) 2 indicators of customer satisfaction, namely trust and service brand value, with 2 statements each, (iii) 3 indicators of customer loyalty, namely service quality, brand relationship, and customer care, with 2 statements each, (iv) 4 indicators of brand strength, namely affinity and with 3 statements each, alongside challenge and price, using 2 statements each (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018), and (v) 1 indicator of the willingness to pay a price premium, namely a price premium indicator, which consisted of 4 statements (Netemeyer et al., 2004). All statements were adjusted to the context of the research object. The 5 research variables with a total of 28 statements can be seen in appendix 2 (operationalizing variables). A Likert scale comprising 6 responses was used, where 1 = totally disagree, 2 = strongly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, and 6 = absolutely agree. A scale consisting of agreement and disagreement responses only was not used in order to avoid hesitant or neutral respondents.

The population and unit of analysis were determined via the non-probability sampling method with the criteria of Apple product customers aged at least 17 years old in Indonesia. According to Hair et al. (2014), the sampling technique can be set at a minimum of 5 times and a maximum of 10 from the number of statements on the questionnaire. Therefore, the 28 statements on the questionnaire were set 10 times to obtain 280 samples, which ensured that the data obtained were optimal enough to test and measure the hypotheses. The selection of respondents used the purposive sampling technique with the criteria of at least 17 years old, purchased and used Apple products at least 2 times, and bought at iBox and/or at Digimap (formerly Infinite). Other requirements were the exclusion of purchases from online marketplaces, ownership of an Apple ID, a minimum education of senior/vocational high school, and residence in Indonesia.

Microsoft Office Excel, SPSS 26, and LISREL 10.2 software were used to conduct the data testing and analysis. Furthermore, the validity and reliability of all statements on the questionnaire were tested using the SPSS software by analyzing the dimension reduction (factor analysis) of each variable. This involved observing the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) value, which measured the adequacy of the sampling and tested the accuracy of the factor analysis. The MSA (Measures of Sampling Adequacy in Anti-image Correlation) value was also used to calculate the adequacy of the factor analysis, commonalities (extraction), and matrix components. According to Hair et al. (2014), the values of the KMO, MSA, and commonalities must be  $> 0.50$ , with the existence of only one matrix component. This signifies the validity of the factor analysis, which must be supported by the results of the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha. This parameter must have a value  $> 0.60$  for the statement items on the questionnaire to be considered reliable. Any invalid statement item will not be used or tested for reliability, as the factor loading reference value must be  $> 0.50$ . Following the declaration of the statement items as valid and reliable (pre-test on 30 respondents), the questionnaires were distributed directly and digitally through Google forms. The total exceeded the number of target respondents needed (280) in order to anticipate questionnaires that were not filled out, returned, or answered, as well as incomplete or illegible responses. The distribution of questionnaires to obtain data was performed between August and December 2021.

After the questionnaires had been collected and filled out completely by 280 respondents that fulfilled the requirements, data tabulations were made using Microsoft Office Excel. This was followed by the dimension reduction analysis (factor analysis), consisting of the validity and reliability of the pre-test using SPSS. Then, Lisrel 10.2 was used to conduct the factor analysis (X-Model in the Standardized Solution). It ensured the validity of the statements/constructs of each research variable by seeking factor loading values  $> 0.50$  while declaring scores below this reference as invalid. The hypotheses were tested using SEM (Structural Equation Modeling), which involved observing the CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) results in the Basic Model - Standardized Solution to determine the coefficient of influence of each variable. The Path Analysis (Basic Model in the T-values) was also evaluated to measure the influence on each hypothesis using a reference value of  $> 1.96$ . According to Hair et al. (2014), the SEM results must exhibit several important indicators, including a Chi-Square value to degrees of freedom value of  $< 3$ , where a smaller value is more appropriate to the theoretical model with the respondent's data. Other indicators are T-values  $> 1.96$  for the covariance factor to have a significant influence, significant level  $< 0.05$ , RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) value between  $0.00 - 0.05$ , a smaller value of the Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) model compared to the ECVI for Saturated Model or a close range. Also, the ECVI for Independence Model value must be the larger or dominant

score, the ideal GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) value > 0.90, NFI (Normed Fit Index) > 0.90, CFI (Comparative Fit Index) > 0.90, and Critical N value > 200.

**4. Results**

A total of 280 respondents met the criteria to test the research hypotheses with the following characteristics

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

No.	Characteristics of Respondents	Total	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	187	67
	Female	93	33
2.	Age		
	17-30 years old	33	12
	31-40 years old	120	43
	41-50 years old	109	39
	> 50 years old	18	6
3.	Occupation		
	Senior high school student/Vocational high school student	3	1
	Student	22	8
	Government employees	5	2
	Private employees	154	55
	Entrepreneur/self-employed	59	21
	Housewives	37	13
4.	Education		
	Senior high school/Vocational high school	3	1
	Diploma	23	8
	Bachelor's degree	216	77
	Master's degree	36	13
	Doctor's degree	2	1
5.	Bought and used the product		
	iPhone	280	43
	iPad	98	15
	Apple watch	76	12
	Macbook	158	24
	iMac	39	6
6.	Monthly routine expenses (according to socioeconomic status category in Indonesia)		
	< IDR 3,000,000	3	1
	IDR 3,000,000 up to IDR 4,999,000	16	6
	IDR 5,000,000 up to IDR 7,000,000	73	26
	> IDR 7,000,000	188	67

Source: from the respondents' answers to the questionnaire

Hair et al. (2014) stated that the constructs of research data must be tested for validity and reliability, even though a pre-test may have been done previously. Also, the factor loading value must be > 0.50, construct reliability > 0.60, and variance extracted > 0.50. From the respondent's data tabulated using SPSS 26 software, all statements of the 28 constructs were valid and reliable. The SEM analysis using Lisrel 10.2 software showed that the observed variables had factor loading values > 0.50 and the T-values for all hypotheses were > 1.96. Meanwhile, the Goodness of Fit Statistics showed that the research data did not meet the indicators of good statistical values. The SEM output suggested modifying the indices to obtain better goodness of fit values. However, the criteria were not fulfilled after the modification, which led to the exemption of variables with factor loading values < 0.70. These variables included Customer Experience (CE) 1 and 2 statements as well as the willingness to pay a price premium (PP28), which had 1

statement of factor loading value < 0.70. Hayduk & Littvay (2012) stated that 1 or 2 indicators/statements are often sufficient to measure a research variable using SEM. Therefore, the customer experience was measured by 1 indicator, using 2 statement items. The calculation results of Construct Reliability (CR) and Variance Extracted (VE) from SEM output produced several values, namely (i) customer experience (CR = 0.89; VE = 0.80), (ii) customer satisfaction (CR = 0.95; VE = 0.82), (iii) customer loyalty (CR = 0.87; VE = 0.54), (iv) brand strength (CR = 0.93; VE = 0.57), and (v) the willingness to pay a price premium (CR = 0.82; VE = 0.60).

The value of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for each variable can be ascertained through the structural test output or by estimating the error value (100% - (error value \* 100 %)). The  $R^2$  value indicates the magnitude of influence of the exogenous variables on the endogenous parameters. According to the research paradigm model, other factors influence each endogenous variable (Hair et al., 2014). The SEM results on the structural equations produced 4 equations, namely (i)  $CS = 0.714*CE$ , Errorvar. = 0.490,  $R^2 = 0.510$ . The  $R^2$  value shows that 51% of the Customer Experience variable (CE) affected Customer Satisfaction (0.510 \* 100%), while the remaining 49% (100% - 51%) was influenced by other variables/factors. (ii)  $CL = 0.332*CS + 0.436*CE$ , Errorvar. = 0.493,  $R^2 = 0.507$ . The  $R^2$  score showed that the percentage effect of customer experience and satisfaction on the customer loyalty variable (CL) was 50.7% (0.507 \* 100 %), while the remaining 49.3% (100 % - 50.7%) was influenced by the other factors. (iii)  $BP = 0.156*CS + 0.489*CL + 0.190*CE$ , Errorvar. = 0.435,  $R^2 = 0.565$ . The  $R^2$  value indicated that the percentage contribution of customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty influenced the brand strength (BP) variable by 56.5% (0.565 \* 100 %) while the remaining 43.5% (100 % - 56.5%) was caused by other factors. (iv)  $PP = 0.968*BP$ , Errorvar. = 0.486,  $R^2 = 0.938$ . This showed that brand strength influenced the willingness to pay a price premium (PP) variable by 93.8% (0.938 \* 100 %) while the remaining 6.2% (100% - 93.8%) was due to other factors.

The SEM output results with 6 groups of the goodness of fit indices modified by Lisrel 10.2 indicated a good match between the theories and the research paradigm model of the respondents' data, as shown in Appendix 3.

The SEM test results were formulated as T-values to identify the influence of each hypothesis, as shown on figure 2. As shown on figure 3, the SEM test results in the basic model (standardized solution) were used to calculate Construct Reliability (CR), Variance Extracted (VE), and the coefficient of influence ( $\beta$ ) of each hypothesis.

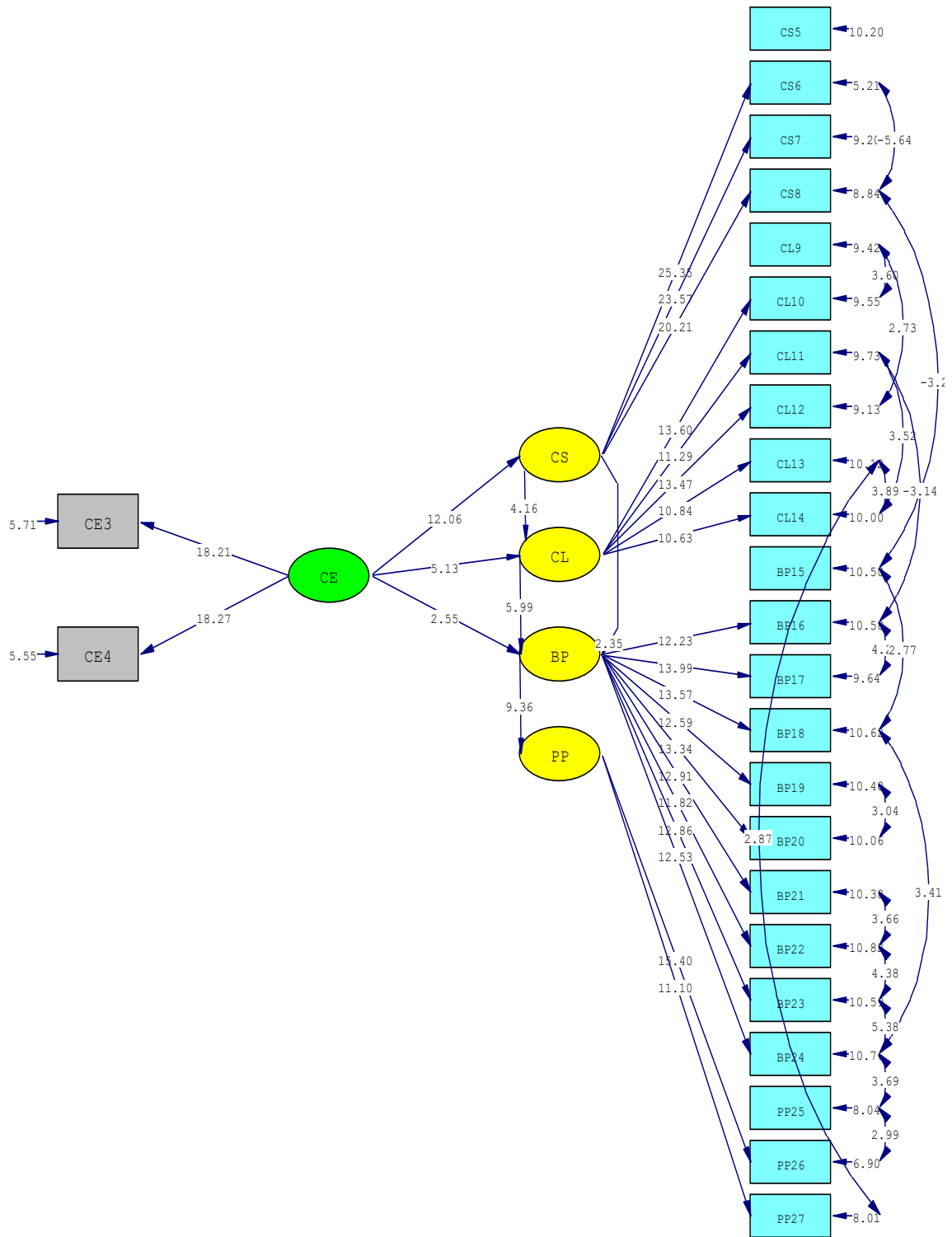
Sourced from Figure 2. The path diagram of the T-values of each hypothesis is expressed in the table 2.

**Table 2.** Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Hypothesis Statements	T - Values	Description
H <sub>1</sub>	Customer experience positively influences customer satisfaction	12.06	The data support the hypothesis
H <sub>2</sub>	Customer satisfaction positively influences brand power.	2.35	The data support the hypothesis
H <sub>3</sub>	Customer experience positively influences brand power.	2.55	The data support the hypothesis
H <sub>4</sub>	Customer satisfaction positively influences customer loyalty	4.16	The data support the hypothesis
H <sub>5</sub>	Customer experience positively influences customer loyalty.	5.13	The data support the hypothesis
H <sub>6</sub>	Customer loyalty positively influences brand power.	5.99	The data support the hypothesis
H <sub>7</sub>	Brand power positively influences willingness to pay a price premium.	9.36	The data support the hypothesis

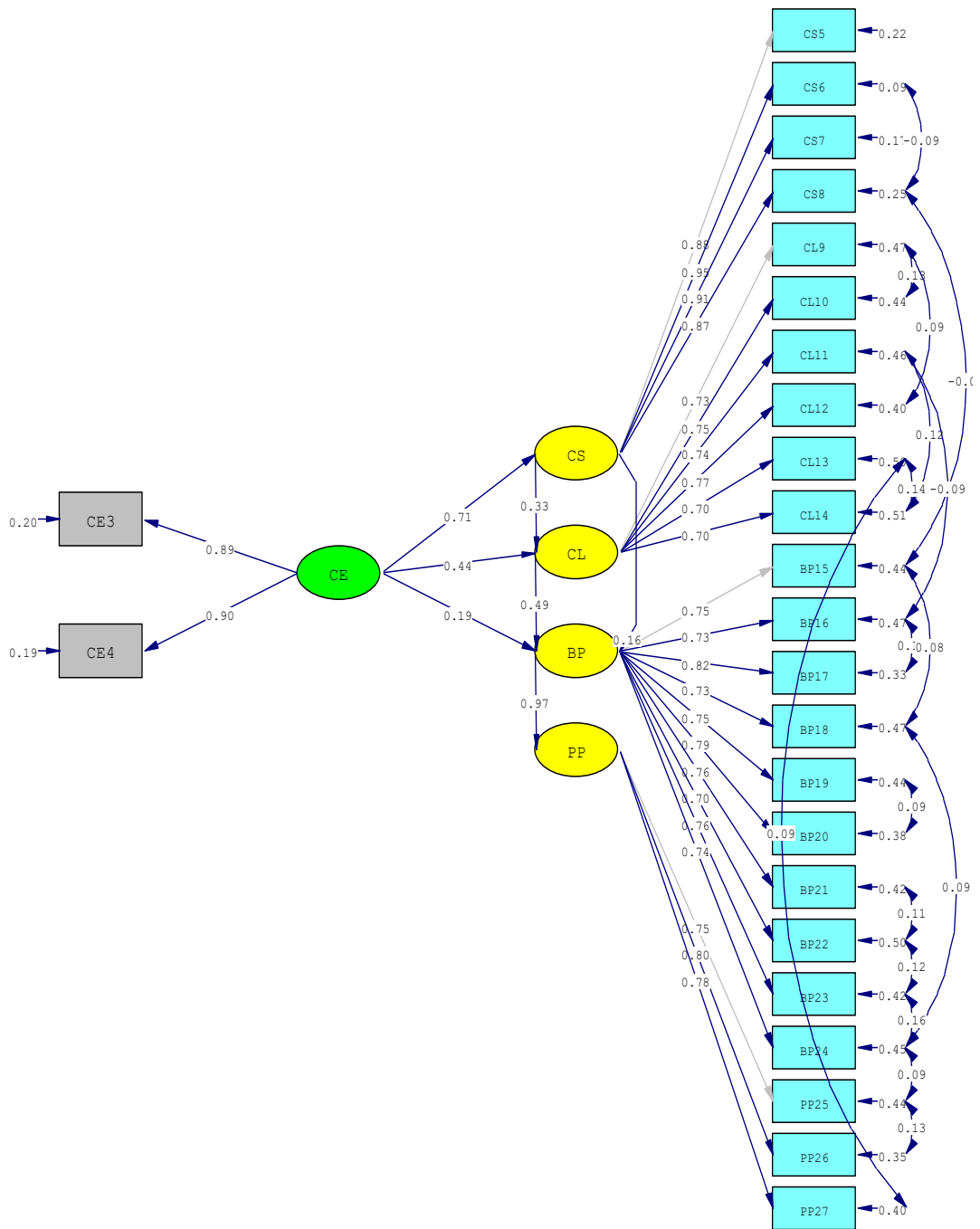
Source: **figure 2.** Path Diagram (Basic Model: T-Values)

Table 2 shows that the T-values of H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7 were > 1.96, indicating that all hypotheses were accepted or had a positive influence. Furthermore, the path diagram in Figure 3 signified that the brand strength variable had a coefficient of influence value of 0.97 towards the variable of willingness to pay a price premium. The coefficient of influence indicated that the magnitude of the influence was close to 1, showing that the research model developed exerted a very significant relationship/influence.



Chi - Square=368.11, df=249, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.041

**Figure 2.** Path Diagram (Basic Model: T-Values)



Chi - Square=368.11, df =249, P- value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.041

Figure 3. Path Diagram (Basic Model: Standardized Solution)

### 5. Discussion

The empirical results confirmed that customer experience influences satisfaction with Apple products in Indonesia. Customer experience can be evaluated using various characteristics, namely (i) high-quality Apple products, symbolized by product performance, strong body material, scratch-resistant, bright screen, product reliability/durability or long useful life, as well as a good model. (ii) innovative/various and useful/sophisticated features or specifications,

embodied by a high-quality camera, touch or face ID sensor, a wide range of applications, battery life, auto-update operating system, dust/water splash resistance, water resistance at a depth of 1-6 meters for 30 minutes and others. The respondents confirmed having pleasant experiences with Apple products and an inclination to continue using the brand. Every customer possessed the flagship product, the iPhone, and the majority used more than 1 product, namely iPhone and Macbook. These characteristics show that customers positively respond and increase their use of Apple products. A better/superior experience with Apple products will increase customer satisfaction with this brand in Indonesia. Generally, the accumulation of pleasant or positive experiences with a product/brand will impact customer satisfaction. This is congruent with the theory presented by Garg et al. (2012), who postulated that the provision of a pleasant experience to customers will enhance satisfaction, as well as maintain and expand competitive advantage in the long term. Khan, Garg, & Rahman (2015) explained that customer experience, symbolized by subjective responses to brands and supported by high-quality, innovative, and useful products affected satisfaction. These empirical results reconfirm previous research (Moreira et al., 2017; Rychalski & Hudson, 2017; Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Wan et al., 2018; and Pei et al., 2020).

Customer satisfaction influences the strength of the Apple brand in Indonesia. Satisfaction was promoted by the high quality, innovative, and useful features and products that met and exceeded customers' expectations. High levels of satisfaction with Apple products will positively impact brand awareness, associations, and strength. This supported research by Moreira et al. (2017), which confirmed the ability of product attributes that matched or exceeded expectations to provide a sense of satisfaction to customers, thereby stimulating a psychological response/emotional connection to a brand. Xie et al. (2017) also explained that the belief and satisfaction with products create a degree of relationship with the brand. This shows that the empirical results reaffirm previous studies (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2019; and Mainardes et al., 2020).

In addition, customer experience partially influenced Apple's strength in Indonesia. Customers were happy and continued to use the products, thereby expanding their purchases. They frequently waited for the latest offerings from Apple and felt privileged to own the products, signifying their fondness for the brand and highlighting its popularity as a prestigious global brand. The products are considered special, with many communities and fans, impressive new releases, and advanced features that attract and build a psychological sense of belonging. Consequently, offering high-quality, innovative, and useful features to meet needs, wants, satisfaction, and expectations to please customers for a long time will promote an emotional connection to a brand. Strandvik & Heinonen (2013) explained that the prolonged accumulation of experience and information about a product will create a relationship/feeling about the distinctiveness of a brand in the customers' minds. This means a pleasant customer experience with a product/service is very important to strengthen the attractiveness of a brand compared to competitors (Iglesias et al., 2018; Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018). The relationship between these variables is supported by the research of Wiedmann et al. (2017), and Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), which emphasized that customer experience influences brand strength.

Customer satisfaction stimulates customer loyalty towards Apple products in Indonesia due to their consistent high-quality, innovation, and useful features to simplify their daily and business activities, thereby promoting long-term loyalty to the brand. The consistency of the quality of Apple products will create consistent attitudes and behaviors. Higher levels of customer satisfaction with a product will build, create, and maintain/strengthen customer loyalty. According to Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), customer trust and loyalty are strong indicators of satisfaction levels related to the value offered by a brand. Kataria & Saini (2019) also determined that customer satisfaction will build strong relationships and loyalty to a product/brand in the long term. The research by Stathopoulou & Balabanis (2016), Kamran-Disfani et al. (2017), Prentice & Loureiro (2017), Rychalski & Hudson (2017), Nobar & Rostamzadeh (2018), Iglesias et al. (2018), and Akbari et al. (2019) corroborated the influence between these variables and affirmed that customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty.

This research also showed that customer experience impacts the loyalty of customers to Apple products in Indonesia. Apple offers various innovative products that match the needs and wants of its customers as well as provides useful services and attractive products to strengthen customer retention, duration, and loyalty. The accumulation of positive customer experiences with Apple products can build, retain, and increase customer loyalty. Haase et al. (2018) theorized that positive experiences in the long-term memory of consumers will impact loyalty. A pleasant experience will build a sense of attachment to the product or brand used (Legendre, Cartier, & Warnick, 2019). The relationship between these variables has been explored by various investigations (Das et al., 2018; Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Ong et al., 2018; Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019; and Prentice et al., 2019).

Furthermore, customer loyalty was shown to affect the strength of the Apple brand in Indonesia. Customers acknowledged responding positively to innovative, sophisticated, and special Apple products that provided useful and

attractive services. As a result, a strong psychological sense of commitment and belonging or preference for this brand is stimulated, leading to increased attraction and strengthened emotional association with the products. Therefore, stronger customer loyalty will increase the brand power of Apple. This is consistent with research by Xie & Heung (2012), which stated that strong customer loyalty will promote positive attitudes and behavior towards a brand. The investigation by Wang & Ding (2017), who reported a reciprocal relationship between loyalty and brand strength, also reinforced this finding. These empirical results are reconfirmed by previous research (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018; Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2019).

The development of the research paradigm model also proved that brand power influenced the willingness to pay a price premium for Apple products in Indonesia. Customers admitted their love for Apple products, which are popular, special, and impressive, and affirmed their inclination to pay more for Apple products than other brands despite a slight rise in prices. Most customers have monthly expenses of above IDR 7,000,000, which is the highest monthly expenditure indicator according to the Indonesian socioeconomic status. This signifies that Apple's customers in the country are in the upper-middle-income segment. The willingness to pay a price premium must be supported by a certain income level as well as the brand strength, which must be built progressively from the initial customer experience of the product. Brand strength developed through the accumulation of positive experiences will stimulate customers to pay a price premium for a product compared to other brands in similar product categories. This will lead to increased revenue through sales and customers' willingness to pay a higher price for a product than other competing brands (Keller, 2013). Park & Kim (2014) also described a correlation between brand strength and the willingness to pay more for a product. Customers will pay for a product because of the brand attributes (Mainardes et al., 2020). Therefore, brand strength influences and is correlated with the willingness to pay a higher price (Torres et al., 2018; Mainardes et al., 2020).

## 6. Conclusion

This research employed a causal quantitative design with a deductive approach to evaluate the relationship and influence of one variable on another. The object of research was a region or country to confirm theories and previous empirical results. It entailed developing a new research model to explore the influence of customer experience, satisfaction, as well as loyalty on brand strength and the willingness to pay a price premium in the technology & telecommunications industry, particularly Apple. Based on the correlation between the variables and the research paradigm model, alongside the analysis of respondent data, results, and discussions, several conclusions were drawn. First; customer experience has a positive influence on the satisfaction with Apple products in Indonesia. Happier customer experience is stimulated by high-quality (improved performance, reliability, durability, and good models), useful sophisticated products, and innovative features/specifications. Second; customer satisfaction positively influences Apple's power in Indonesia. Trust/satisfaction with the high-quality, useful products and innovative features/specifications will increase the brand's power. Third; customer experience has a positive impact on Apple's power in Indonesia. The accumulation of pleasant/positive customer experiences with Apple products will build, create, and enhance the brand's power. Fourth; customer satisfaction had a positive effect on the loyalty to Apple products in Indonesia. Increased satisfaction with Apple products can maintain and even strengthen customer loyalty. Fifth; customer experience has a positive influence on the loyalty to Apple products in Indonesia. Customer loyalty to Apple products increases with a positive experience. Sixth; customer loyalty had a positive influence on Apple's power in Indonesia. Enhanced loyalty to Apple products increases the brand's strength. Seventh; brand power positively impacts the willingness to pay a price premium for Apple products in Indonesia. The attractiveness of Apple's strength, popularity, and prestige stimulates customers to pay a price premium compared to other brand products.

This research had some scopes and limitations. (i) The scope of the correlation between variables was relatively simple, as only 5 variables were examined, and the research was performed in an emerging country. (ii) The limitation was the relatively small number of samples, which were unevenly distributed throughout Indonesia, and the sampling process conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. In further research, the model can be improved by incorporating a correlation between the variable of the willingness to pay a price premium and the purchasing decisions regarding brands in similar or different industries in advanced countries. Also, a variable discussing the relationship between customer loyalty and the willingness to pay a price premium, as well as moderating variables, can be included.

Based on the research results, several managerial implications sourced from respondents' answers were conveyed. Since the data supported the hypotheses and theoretical reconfirmation, suggestions were taken from the high-value factor loading. (i) Apple puts its customers first by proposing an impressive product experience according to the latest needs and progressively expands its range. (ii) The company maintains and improves its superior/innovative product quality

to strengthen customer loyalty. (iii) Maintain and increase the value of brand distinctiveness and be at the forefront of creating more sophisticated product features motivate customers to pay more for Apple products than competing brands.

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