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Analysis of Emotional Attachment and Prestige on Willingness to Pay A Premium Price For K-Pop Merchandise

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Abstract

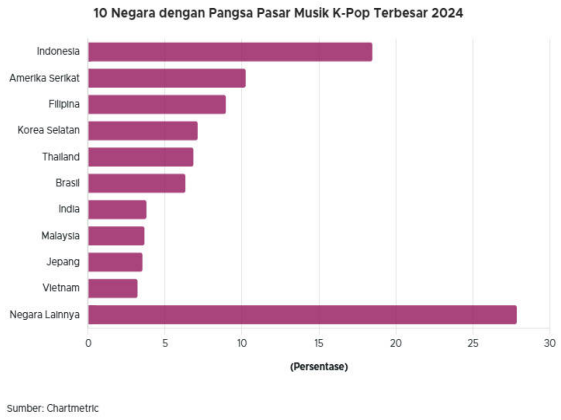
The Korean Wave phenomenon has altered global consumer behavior, particularly among fans of Korean music, or K-pop. One form of rising consumer behavior is the purchase of official K-pop merchandise at premium prices. This study aims to analyze the influence of emotional attachment and prestige on the willingness to pay premium prices for K-pop merchandise. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression via SPSS software. The results indicate that emotional attachment has a positive and significant effect on the willingness to pay premium prices; similarly, prestige has a positive and significant effect on the willingness to pay premium prices. Collectively, the two independent variables contribute 57% to the dependent variable.

Keywords: *Emotional Attachment, Prestige, Willingness to Pay a Premium, K-Pop Merchandise, Consumer Behavior.*

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1. Introduction

Globalization and the development of information technology have accelerated the spread of popular culture across countries, including South Korean popular culture, known as the Korean Wave (Hallyu). One of the cultural forms that has developed rapidly is K-Pop music, supported by various digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and streaming services. This development has made K-Pop a global phenomenon with a large fan community, including in Indonesia. The immense popularity of groups such as BTS, BLACKPINK, SEVENTEEN, Stray Kids, TWICE, NCT, EXO, aespa, NewJeans, ENHYPEN, and IVE demonstrates that the K-Pop industry has transformed into a global entertainment industry capable of fostering fan loyalty worldwide. According to Chartmetric data reported by GoodStats (2025), Indonesia ranked first among countries with the largest K-Pop market share globally in 2024, accounting for 18.4%. This strong enthusiasm has not only increased digital music consumption but also generated substantial demand for various official merchandise products, including physical albums accompanied by photobooks, photocards, posters, stickers, and exclusive inclusions, as well as official lightsticks that serve as symbols of fan identity during concerts. In addition, fans tend to purchase special-edition photocards, clothing, accessories, keychains, season's greetings, and collaboration products or limited-edition items featuring exclusive designs, scarcity, and collectible value. These merchandise products are generally marketed at relatively high prices and are often produced in limited quantities, thereby increasing their appeal and fans' desire to own them.



Source: GoodStats (2025), processed from Chartmetric 2024 data.

The high level of interest in official products indicates that fans' purchasing decisions are determined not only by the practical benefits of a product but also

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by its emotional and symbolic value. Many fans are willing to place pre-orders, pay international shipping fees, and spend substantial amounts of money to obtain official merchandise from their favorite idols. In marketing research, this phenomenon is referred to as willingness to pay a premium, which describes consumers' tendency to pay a higher price because they perceive a product as having greater value than alternative options (Netemeyer et al., 2004). According to Kotler and Keller (2016), consumer purchasing behavior is influenced by four main categories of factors: cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Cultural factors relate to values and subcultures, including K-Pop fan communities; social factors involve the influence of family and reference groups; personal factors include age, occupation, economic status, and lifestyle; while psychological factors encompass motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions that influence individual purchasing decisions. In the context of K-Pop merchandise, these four factors interact with one another. However, psychological factors are considered particularly influential because they are closely associated with fans' emotional attachment and the symbolic meanings they attribute to products.

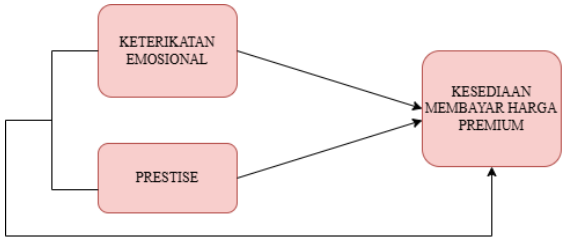
One important psychological factor is emotional attachment, defined as a strong affective bond between an individual and an object that generates feelings of closeness, ownership, and loyalty (Thomson et al., 2005). In the K-Pop industry, this attachment develops through interactions between idols and fans via social media, concerts, and various forms of digital content. In addition, prestige is another factor influencing willingness to pay a premium. According to Vigneron and Johnson (2004), prestige is associated with the symbolic value of a product, which can enhance the owner's self-image, social status, and sense of pride. Therefore, official K-Pop merchandise serves not merely as a collectible item but also as a symbol of identity and exclusivity that encourages fans to pay higher prices.

Previous studies have demonstrated that emotional attachment and prestige are important factors influencing consumers' willingness to pay a premium. Thomson et al. (2005) and Park et al. (2010) explain that emotional attachment can foster loyalty and commitment, as well as encourage sustained purchasing behavior. Meanwhile, Osorio et al. (2023), Santos and Schlesinger (2021), and Efendi and Farida (2021) found that emotional attachment positively influences willingness to pay a premium. On the other hand, Vigneron and Johnson (2004) argue that prestige is associated with the symbolic value, exclusivity, and social status of a product. This perspective is further supported by studies conducted by Ul Zia and Sohail (2016), Malarvizhi et al. (2022), Hidayati and Harahap (2024), Nurjanah and Ikhsan (2022), Singh et al. (2024), and Trus Hayu and Fitriyah (2025), which found that prestige, exclusivity, and symbolic value encourage consumers, particularly K-Pop fans, to pay higher prices for official merchandise. Nevertheless, research examining the simultaneous effects of emotional attachment and prestige on willingness to pay a premium for K-Pop merchandise in Indonesia remains relatively limited. Therefore, this study is expected to address this research gap while contributing to the development of consumer behavior and marketing management literature.

Based on this discussion, this study aims to analyze the effects of emotional attachment and prestige on willingness to pay a premium for K-Pop merchandise. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of consumer behavior research and provide practical implications for stakeholders in the K-Pop industry in designing marketing strategies based on emotional relationships and the symbolic value of products.

2. Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach using an explanatory research design to analyze the effects of emotional attachment and prestige on willingness to pay a premium price for K-Pop merchandise. The study population comprises K-Pop fans in Indonesia aged 17–30 years who have purchased K-Pop merchandise through social media or online shops and reside in Indonesia. Since the exact population size is unknown, it is treated as an infinite population. Therefore, the minimum sample size is determined using the Lemeshow formula, with a 95% confidence level, a proportion (p) of 0.5, and a margin of error of approximately 5.8%, resulting in a minimum sample of 286 respondents. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling, while data are collected through questionnaires using a Likert scale. The data are analyzed using SPSS, including validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression analysis, t-tests, an F-test, and the coefficient of determination (R^2), using the regression model $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$, where Y represents willingness to pay a premium price, X_1 represents emotional attachment, and X_2 represents prestige (Sugiyono, 2022). Based on the conceptual relationships among the variables, the research framework can be illustrated in a model showing that both independent variables have direct effects on the dependent variable, both partially and simultaneously, as presented in the following figure.



Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (People)	Percentage (%)
K-Pop Fans	Yes	276	96.5%
	No	10	3.5%
Have Purchased K-Pop Merchandise	Yes	280	97.9%
	No	6	2.1%
Gender	Male	73	25.5%
	Female	215	75.2%
Age	17–20 years	118	41.3%
	21–25 years	141	49.3%
	26–30 years	32	11.2%
Domicile	Medan City	184	64.3%
	Bandung	41	14.3%
	Jakarta	61	21.3%
Total Respondents		286	100%

3.2 Validity Test

validity test aims to determine the ability of the instrument to measure the research variables. Based on the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value, an item is considered valid if its correlation value exceeds 0.30 (Ghozali, 2021). The test results indicate that all items measuring emotional attachment, prestige, and willingness to pay a premium price have values above 0.30 and are therefore considered valid.

Table 3.2. Validity Test Results

Variable	Item	Calculated r	Criterion	Description
Emotional Attachment	X1.1	0.621	> 0.30	Valid
Emotional Attachment	X1.2	0.676	> 0.30	Valid
Emotional Attachment	X1.3	0.559	> 0.30	Valid
Emotional Attachment	X1.4	0.462	> 0.30	Valid
Emotional Attachment	X1.5	0.511	> 0.30	Valid
Emotional Attachment	X1.6	0.543	> 0.30	Valid
Prestige	X2.1	0.542	> 0.30	Valid
Prestige	X2.2	0.605	> 0.30	Valid
Prestige	X2.3	0.249	> 0.30	Valid
Prestige	X2.4	0.338	> 0.30	Valid
Prestige	X2.5	0.428	> 0.30	Valid
Prestige	X2.6	0.448	> 0.30	Valid
Willingness to Pay a Premium Price	Y1	0.618	> 0.30	Valid
Willingness to Pay a Premium Price	Y2	0.652	> 0.30	Valid
Willingness to Pay a Premium Price	Y3	0.487	> 0.30	Valid
Willingness to Pay a Premium Price	Y4	0.387	> 0.30	Valid
Willingness to Pay a Premium Price	Y5	0.631	> 0.30	Valid
Willingness to Pay a Premium Price	Y6	0.597	> 0.30	Valid

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on Table 3.2, all statement items for the emotional attachment variable have calculated r values ranging from 0.462 to 0.676. For the prestige variable, the calculated r values range from 0.249 to 0.605, while those for willingness to pay a premium price range from 0.387 to 0.652. All these values are reported as exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.30; therefore, all statement items are considered valid. Accordingly, the research instrument is considered capable of accurately measuring the constructs under investigation and can be used for further analysis (Ghozali, 2021).

3.3 Reliability Test

The reliability test aims to measure the consistency of the research instrument. The test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, with an instrument considered reliable if its Cronbach's Alpha value exceeds 0.70 (Ghozali, 2021). A higher value indicates a greater level of instrument consistency.

Table 3.3 Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Criterion	Description
Emotional Attachment (X1)	0.808	> 0.70	Reliable
Prestige (X2)	0.714	> 0.70	Reliable
Willingness to Pay a Premium Price (Y)	0.860	> 0.70	Reliable

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on Table 3.3, the emotional attachment variable has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.808, the prestige variable has a value of 0.714, and the willingness to pay a premium price variable has a value of 0.860. All Cronbach's Alpha values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.70; therefore, all variables in this study are considered reliable. These results indicate that the research instrument has a satisfactory level of consistency and is suitable for further analysis.

3.4 Classical Assumption Tests

Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, classical assumption tests were performed to ensure that the regression model was appropriate for use. These tests included normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. According to Ghozali (2021), a regression model that satisfies the classical assumptions can produce accurate and unbiased analyses when examining the effects of independent variables on a dependent variable.

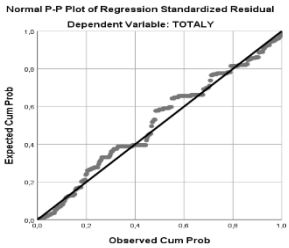
3.5 Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the research data were normally distributed. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov method was used for this test.

Table 3.5. Normality Test Results

Statistic	Unstandardized Residual
N	286
Mean	0.0000000
Standard Deviation	1.76380401
Most Extreme Differences – Absolute	0.109
Most Extreme Differences – Positive	0.062
Most Extreme Differences – Negative	-0.109
Test Statistic	0.109
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.162

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.



Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on Table 3.5, the significance value is 0.162, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research data are normally distributed and satisfy the normality assumption.

3.6 Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test aims to determine whether a high correlation exists between independent variables in the regression model. The test was conducted by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values.

Table 3.6. Multicollinearity Test Results

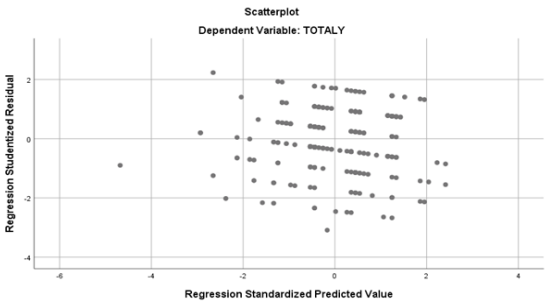
Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Description
Emotional Attachment (X1)	0.982	1.018	No multicollinearity
Prestige (X2)	0.982	1.018	No multicollinearity

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on Table 3.6, all variables have Tolerance values greater than 0.10 and VIF values below 10. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model does not exhibit multicollinearity.

3.7 Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test was conducted to determine whether unequal residual variances existed in the regression model. This study employed the scatterplot method. The test results show that the points are randomly distributed above and below zero on the Y-axis (Regression Studentized Residual) and do not form any particular pattern. Therefore, it can be concluded that heteroscedasticity is not present, meaning that the regression model satisfies the homoscedasticity assumption and is suitable for multiple linear regression analysis.



Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

3.8 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the effects of emotional attachment (X1) and prestige (X2) on willingness to pay a premium price (Y) for K-Pop merchandise. According to Ghozali (2021), this analysis is used to examine the effects of two or more independent variables on a single dependent variable simultaneously.

Table 3.8. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	22.098	2.634	—	8.943	0.000
Emotional Attachment (X1)	-0.155	0.056	-0.061	-2.764	0.006
Prestige (X2)	0.301	0.070	0.222	19.185	0.000

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on the regression analysis, the following equation was obtained:

$$Y = 22.098 + 0.155X1 + 0.301X2 + e.$$

The equation indicates that emotional attachment and prestige have regression coefficients that are interpreted in the original analysis as positive. This means that the higher the emotional attachment and prestige perceived by fans, the greater their willingness to pay a premium price for K-Pop merchandise.

3.9 Hypothesis Testing (t-Test)

The t-test was conducted to determine the partial effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. The test used a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). According to Ghozali (2021), a variable is considered to have a statistically significant effect if its significance value is below 0.05.

Table 3.9 Partial Test Results (t-Test)

Variable	Calculated t	Critical t	Sig.	Decision
Emotional Attachment (X1)	2.764	1.968	0.006	H1 Accepted
Prestige (X2)	19.185	1.968	0.000	H2 Accepted

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on Table 3.9, the emotional attachment variable has a calculated t-value of -2.764, with a significance value of 0.006, which is below 0.05. The absolute calculated t-value (2.764) is greater than the critical t-value (1.968), indicating that emotional attachment has a statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price. Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

Furthermore, the prestige variable has a calculated t-value of 19.185, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.968, with a significance value of 0.000, which is below 0.05. These results indicate that prestige has a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price. Therefore, the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted.

3.10 Simultaneous Test (F-Test)

The F-test was used to determine the simultaneous effects of emotional attachment and prestige on willingness to pay a premium price. The test was conducted by comparing the calculated F-value with the critical F-value at a significance level of 5%. If the significance value is below 0.05 or the calculated F-value exceeds the critical F-value, the independent variables are considered to have a joint effect on the dependent variable.

The critical F-value was determined using the formula F(k; n-k), where the number of independent variables (k) is 2 and the number of respondents (n) is 286, yielding F(2; 284). Based on the F-distribution table at $\alpha = 0.05$, the critical F-value is 3.02. This value was used as a basis for comparison with the calculated F-value to determine whether emotional attachment and prestige simultaneously affect willingness to pay a premium price.

Table 3.10. F-Test Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	357.434	2	178.717	187.570	0.000
Residual	269.643	283	0.953	—	—
Total	627.077	285	—	—	—

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on Table 3.10, the calculated F-value is 187.570, which is greater than the critical F-value of 3.02, with a significance value reported as 0.005, which is below 0.05. These results indicate that emotional attachment and prestige simultaneously have a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price for K-Pop merchandise. Therefore, the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted.

3.11 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination is used to determine the extent to which the independent variables explain variations in the dependent variable. A higher coefficient of determination indicates a greater ability of the model to explain the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2021).

Table 3.11. Coefficient of Determination Results (R^2)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.755	0.570	0.567	0.976

Source: Primary Data, Processed, 2026.

Based on Table 3.11, the R Square (R^2) value is 0.570, or 57%. These results indicate that emotional attachment and prestige jointly explain 57% of the variation in willingness to pay a premium price, while the remaining 43% is explained by other variables not examined in this study, such as fan loyalty, product quality, brand image, fandom community influence, and other psychological factors.

Based on the results above, all research hypotheses are reported as accepted:

1. H1: Emotional attachment has a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price — Accepted.
2. H2: Prestige has a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price — Accepted.
3. H3: Emotional attachment and prestige simultaneously have a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price — Accepted.

DISCUSSION

1. The Effect of Emotional Attachment on Willingness to Pay a Premium Price for K-Pop Merchandise

The research results indicate that emotional attachment has a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price for K-Pop merchandise. This finding suggests that the stronger the emotional bond between fans and their favorite K-Pop idols or groups, the greater their willingness to purchase official merchandise even when it is offered at a higher price. In the K-Pop industry, such emotional relationships develop through continuous interactions, including social media engagement, concerts, live broadcasts, and exclusive content that create psychological closeness between fans and idols. Consequently, official merchandise is no longer perceived merely as a product with functional value but also as a representation of emotional closeness, loyalty, and support for idols.

This finding is consistent with the Emotional Attachment theory proposed by Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005), which explains that emotional attachment is an affective bond that can strengthen consumer commitment and loyalty toward an object. When consumers have developed a strong emotional relationship, their purchasing decisions are no longer based solely on price considerations but also on the emotional value derived from owning the product. This finding is also consistent with Park et al. (2010), who stated that emotional attachment can strengthen consumer loyalty toward a brand, as well as the study by Santos and Schlesinger (2021), which demonstrated that consumers with high emotional attachment tend to have a greater willingness to pay premium prices because their price sensitivity decreases. Thus, this study strengthens empirical evidence that emotional attachment is an important determinant in increasing K-Pop fans' willingness to pay premium prices for official merchandise.

2. The Effect of Prestige on Willingness to Pay a Premium Price for K-Pop Merchandise

The research results also indicate that prestige has a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price for K-Pop merchandise. This suggests that perceptions of exclusivity, pride, and status associated with merchandise can encourage fans to spend more. Products such as limited-edition albums, rare photocards, and official lightsticks are perceived not only as collectibles but also as symbols of self-identity and loyalty within the fan community.

This finding is consistent with the Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behavior theory proposed by Vigneron and Johnson (2004), which explains that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for products with prestige value because such products can enhance self-image, social status, and pride. Furthermore, the concept of symbolic consumption proposed by Belk (1988) explains that products are often purchased not only for their functional benefits but also for the symbolic meanings attached to them. In the K-Pop phenomenon, official merchandise serves as a medium through which fans express their identities and demonstrate their closeness to idols and fandom communities. This study also supports the findings of Malarvizhi et al. (2022), who stated that prestige value and product exclusivity have a positive effect on willingness to pay premium prices. Therefore, prestige is one of the factors that strengthens consumers' decisions to purchase official merchandise despite its relatively high price.

3. The Effects of Emotional Attachment and Prestige on Willingness to Pay a Premium Price for K-Pop Merchandise

Simultaneously, this study demonstrates that emotional attachment and prestige have a positive and statistically significant effect on willingness to pay a premium price for K-Pop merchandise. This finding indicates that merchandise purchasing decisions are not

influenced by a single factor but rather result from a combination of fans' emotional relationships with idols and the symbolic value of the products. Emotional attachment encourages fans to purchase merchandise as a form of support and closeness to their idols, while prestige reinforces these decisions through perceptions of exclusivity, pride, and the status associated with owning official merchandise.

This finding is consistent with the view of Kotler and Keller (2016), who stated that modern consumer behavior is influenced by rational, emotional, and symbolic factors in the decision-making process. In the K-Pop industry, official merchandise has value beyond its functional purpose because it represents fans' identities, loyalty, and emotional attachment to their idols. Therefore, when emotional attachment and prestige are present simultaneously, they reinforce each other in increasing fans' willingness to pay premium prices. This finding also strengthens previous research indicating that the combination of emotional factors and symbolic value is a major determinant of premium purchasing behavior for products associated with high emotional involvement. These findings imply that K-Pop merchandise marketing strategies will be more effective if they can build emotional relationships with fans while maintaining product exclusivity and prestige image, thereby ensuring that consumers accept the premium value offered.

4. Conclusions

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that emotional attachment and prestige have positive and significant effects, both partially and simultaneously, on willingness to pay a premium price for K-Pop merchandise. The stronger fans' emotional attachment to their idols and their perceptions of merchandise prestige, the greater their willingness to pay premium prices. These findings indicate that purchasing decisions for K-Pop merchandise are influenced not only by functional aspects but also by emotional and symbolic factors, thereby enriching the literature on willingness to pay a premium in consumer behavior (Thomson et al., 2005; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

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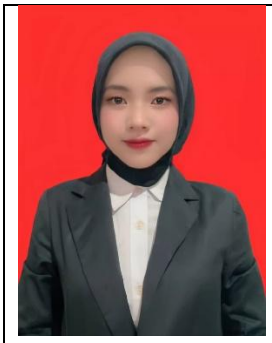
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