

Marketing Mix Mediation: Lifestyle and Fashion Product Loyalty among Thai Gay Consumers

Phornphot Julsawat¹

¹Thepsatri Rejabhat University Council, Thailand

(Received: January 29, 2026; Revised: July 22, 2026; Accepted: August 5, 2026)

Abstract

Purpose – This study examines determinants of fashion product loyalty among Thai gay consumers within the pink economy, focusing on the relationships among lifestyle, buying behaviors, marketing mix evaluations, and loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach – Survey data from 229 Thai gay consumers were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The measurement model was assessed via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural paths were estimated using maximum likelihood.

Findings – The results support a full mediation mechanism, lifestyle and buying behaviors do not directly influence loyalty. Lifestyle positively influences buying behaviors ($\beta = .806$, $p < .001$), which in turn predicts marketing mix evaluations ($\beta = .859$, $p < .001$), leading to loyalty ($\beta = .680$, $p < .001$). The direct effects of lifestyle and buying behaviors on loyalty are not significant.

Practical implications – Symbolic “rainbow-washing” is insufficient; brands should strengthen tangible marketing mix execution (product, price, place, and promotion) in ways that align with the segment’s behavioral patterns.

Social implications – The study highlights the limitations of performative LGBTQ+ marketing and underscores the importance of substantive inclusion.

Originality/value – The study provides empirical evidence from an emerging Asian market and suggests that marketing mix evaluations fully mediate the relationship between lifestyle and loyalty in this context.

Keywords: 1) Thai gay consumers 2) Fashion product loyalty 3) Marketing mix 4) Mediation analysis 5) Pink economy

¹ Lecturer; E-mail: phornphot.j@icloud.com



Introduction

Prior research has established several foundational relationships relevant to this study, yet critical gaps remain. First, while Self-Congruity Theory predicts that lifestyle congruence drives brand loyalty (Sirgy, 1982, pp. 288-292; Kressmann, et al., 2006, pp. 956-960), empirical evidence concerning these relationships among gay consumers remains limited, leaving it unclear whether the same direct pathway operates within identity-sensitive minority segments, for whom brand meaning carries distinct social and psychological weight (Oakenfull, 2013, pp. 83-86; Kates, 2002, pp. 384-386). Second, the marketing mix has been widely studied as an antecedent of loyalty in fashion and retail contexts (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996, pp. 31-34; Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2000, p. 197); however, its role as a sequential mediator transmitting the influence of psychographic variables through behavioral processes before reaching loyalty has received little empirical attention. Most prior studies treat the marketing mix as either a direct driver or a moderator, not as an intermediate mechanism within a causal chain. Third, research on gay consumer behavior has grown substantially in Western markets (Gudelunas, 2011, pp. 53-57; Montecchi, et al., 2024, pp. 23-27), yet empirical studies grounded in Southeast Asian cultural contexts, where LGBTQ+ identity expression is shaped by distinct social norms and consumption environments, remain scarce (Badgett, et al., 2019, pp. 2-4). Thailand presents a particularly underexplored case: despite being widely regarded as relatively LGBTQ+ inclusive by regional standards, systematic

empirical evidence on the determinants of fashion loyalty among Thai gay consumers is virtually absent from the academic literature. Fourth, existing studies on gay consumer behavior tend to focus on brand attitudes and general purchase intentions (Gudelunas, 2011, pp. 53-57; Oakenfull, 2013, pp. 83-86) rather than on the process by which psychographic profiles translate into sustained product loyalty through sequential behavioral and evaluative mechanisms. No published study has yet examined how lifestyle profiles among Thai gay consumers are transmitted through buying behaviors and marketing mix evaluations to produce fashion product loyalty within a single integrated structural model.

Taken together, these gaps reveal a substantive blind spot in the literature: whether and how lifestyle drives loyalty in gay consumer markets depends on intermediate behavioral and evaluative processes that have not yet been empirically mapped, particularly in non-Western contexts. The present study directly addresses this gap by testing a sequential mediation model grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) paradigm (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974, pp. 283-285), in which lifestyle (Stimulus) activates buying behaviors and marketing mix evaluations (Organism) before producing fashion product loyalty (Response) among Thai gay consumers. In doing so, it contributes both a theoretical extension by qualifying the conditions under which Self-Congruity Theory applies in minority consumer markets and empirical evidence from an emerging Asian market that remains underrepresented in the global literature on

LGBTQ+ consumption. Accordingly, this study addresses three research questions: (1) Do lifestyle and buying behaviors exert direct effects on fashion product loyalty among Thai gay consumers? (2) Does marketing mix evaluation serve as a sequential mediator in the relationship between lifestyle and loyalty? (3) Does the full sequential mediation model (Lifestyle → Buying Behaviors → Marketing Mix → Loyalty) fit the empirical data and provide formal statistical support for a full mediation interpretation?

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Loyalty in fashion consumption

Loyalty is classically defined as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). In the fast-paced fashion industry, achieving such loyalty is notoriously difficult due to the "variety-seeking" nature of consumers and the ephemeral nature of trends. However, for gay consumers, loyalty extends beyond mere habit; it encompasses an emotional attachment to brands that reflect their self-identity. This is particularly salient among LGBTQ+ consumers. Research suggests that gay consumers often exhibit higher levels of brand loyalty compared to heterosexual counterparts, provided that the brand authentically aligns with their values and supports their community (Oak-enfull, 2013, pp. 83-86; Gudelunas, 2011, pp. 61-64). Thus, in this context, loyalty is not just a repurchase behavior but a form of identity validation.

Lifestyle and buying behaviors

Lifestyle, commonly operationalized through Activities, Interests, and Opinions (AIO), reflects consumers' patterns of living and can shape how they search for information, compare alternatives, and assign symbolic meaning to products. In the fashion context, Abd Jabar and Mohd Noor (2024, pp. 923-924) found that self-narrative and symbolic meaning were important drivers among specialty-fashion brand lovers, beyond purely functional considerations such as price. Moreover, self-image congruence can influence consumer responses and brand loyalty through functional congruence and related evaluative mechanisms (Kressmann, et al., 2006, pp. 956-960). Building on this reasoning, the present study examines whether lifestyle influences buying behaviors among Thai gay consumers. Consequently, it is posited that:

H1: Lifestyle has a significant positive influence on buying behaviors.

Buying behaviors and marketing mix evaluations

Consumer buying behavior in the fashion context extends beyond the mere act of purchase; it encompasses the complex information processing and decision-making patterns that precede acquisition. Contemporary market analysis indicates a dichotomy in purchasing approaches: approximately 48% of consumers engage in deliberate, research-driven decision-making, while 41% exhibit impulse-driven tendencies (Business of Fashion and McKinsey and Company, 2024, pp. 54-56). Furthermore, the consumer journey has become increasingly "phygital," with 63% utilizing



mobile platforms for discovery, yet 43% finalizing purchases in physical channels to scrutinize product quality.

Theoretically, these buying behaviors function as cognitive antecedents to marketing mix evaluations. Consumers who exhibit high-involvement buying behaviors (e.g., extensive information search and comparison) tend to evaluate the marketing mix—product quality, pricing fairness, channel convenience, and promotional relevance more critically. This is particularly pertinent to the gay consumer segment, often characterized as "discerning shoppers" or "early adopters" in the fashion domain. Their buying behavior involves active engagement with brand narratives; thus, they do not merely passively receive marketing stimuli but actively filter them to assess whether a brand's product fits their aesthetic standards and whether its promotion genuinely reflects their identity or merely exploits it. Consequently, active buying behaviors lead to a more rigorous and clearly defined evaluation of the marketing mix elements.

H2: Buying behaviors positively influence marketing mix evaluations.

Marketing mix and loyalty

The marketing mix (4Ps) product, price, place, and promotion remains the fundamental framework influencing consumer response. While traditional theories posit these elements as functional tools, in the fashion industry, they function as critical antecedents of customer loyalty by fostering emotional connections and brand resonance (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996, pp. 31-34). For niche demographics like the LGBTQ+ community, the

marketing mix transcends functional utility; it acts as a symbolic signal of the brand's values and inclusivity.

Scholars suggest that for gay consumers, Promotion is not merely about awareness but about visibility and representation; advertisements that authentically depict diverse lifestyles signal a "gay-friendly" environment, which significantly enhances brand attitudes (Oakenfull, 2013, pp. 83-86). Similarly, Product attributes (e.g., style, gender-neutral options) and Place (e.g., welcoming retail atmospheres) contribute to a sense of belonging. When consumers perceive the marketing mix as favorable and congruent with their self-identity, it reduces the perceived risk of discrimination and fosters trust. Consequently, positive evaluations of these marketing tactics directly translate into psychological commitment and behavioral loyalty. Based on this rationale, it is hypothesized that

H3: Marketing mix evaluations positively influence loyalty.

Direct effects of lifestyle and buying behaviors on loyalty

Relationship between Lifestyle and Loyalty Theoretically, lifestyle is posited to have a direct influence on brand loyalty through the lens of Self-Congruity Theory. This theory suggests that consumers prefer brands that reflect their actual or ideal self-concept. When a consumer perceives a match between their lifestyle (AIO: Activities, Interests, Opinions) and a brand's image, it engenders an emotional attachment that fosters loyalty without necessarily requiring rational evaluation of the marketing mix (Sirgy, 1982, pp.

288-292; Kressmann, et al., 2006, pp. 956-960). Previous studies in fashion marketing have confirmed that lifestyle congruity directly reduces brand switching intentions.

Relationship between Buying Behaviors and Loyalty Similarly, buying behaviors specifically habitual purchasing patterns are often linked directly to loyalty. According to the theory of habit formation, repeated behaviors (such as consistently shopping at specific channels or following specific decision routines) create psychological inertia. This inertia reduces the cognitive effort required for decision-making, leading consumers to stick with familiar brands to minimize search costs and perceived risks (Seetharaman, 2004, pp. 564-566). Thus, in general contexts, established buying behaviors are expected to directly reinforce loyalty.

Contextual Nuance (The Gap) However, while these direct relationships are well-documented in general consumer research, they may operate differently for Thai gay consumers. Given the complexity of their social identity and the need for validation, mere lifestyle alignment or habit may not be sufficient to sustain loyalty if the brand does not provide tangible evidence of inclusivity (via the Marketing Mix). Nevertheless, following traditional theoretical frameworks, the baseline hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H4: Lifestyle positively influences loyalty.

H5: Buying behaviors positively influence loyalty.

Conceptual model

The conceptual model is grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R)

paradigm (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974, pp. 283-285). Lifestyle is positioned as the Stimulus because it represents the psychographic profile that initiates fashion-related consumption motives. Buying behaviors and marketing mix evaluations are positioned sequentially within the Organism stage because they capture internal decision-making and evaluative processes before the loyalty response occurs. Fashion product loyalty is specified as the Response because it reflects the attitudinal and behavioral outcome of these processes.

The model also retains direct paths from Lifestyle and Buying Behaviors to Loyalty to test whether self-congruity and habitual decision orientations exert effects beyond the sequential mediation mechanism. All hypothesized paths are shown in Figure 1; different line styles are used only to distinguish sequential mediation paths from direct-effect tests.

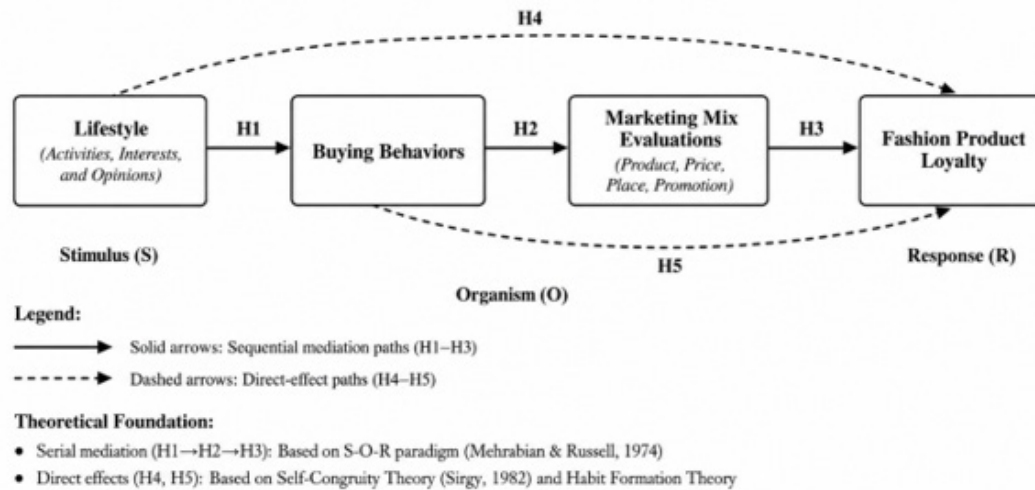


Figure 1 Conceptual model. Solid arrows indicate the hypothesized sequential mediation paths (H1–H3) grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) paradigm, whereas dashed arrows indicate direct-effect tests (H4–H5) grounded in Self-Congruity Theory and Habit Formation Theory.

Methods

Study design and procedure

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms and distributed through relevant online networks and peer referrals during February-May 2025. Before accessing the questionnaire, respondents received information about the study objectives, voluntary participation, anonymity, and their right to withdraw. Screening questions were used to identify respondents who self-identified as gay men and had purchased fashion products within the preceding six months. Initially, 454 responses were obtained; after screening, 229 valid responses from gay consumers were retained for SEM analysis. The final structural model comprised 11 observed variables: three indicators for Lifestyle, three for Buying Behaviors, four composite dimension scores for Marketing Mix, and one parceled

composite for Loyalty. Following the guideline that SEM requires 10 to 20 observations per observed variable (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 633), the minimum required sample size was 110 (10 × 11) and the recommended optimal threshold was 220 (20 × 11). The obtained sample of $n = 229$ exceeds the optimal threshold, confirming adequate statistical power for the SEM analysis.

Participants and sampling

Given the specific characteristics of the target population, a non-probability sampling strategy combining purposive and snowball techniques was adopted. This dual approach is widely recognized as appropriate and effective for accessing populations that are difficult to reach through conventional probability methods, including sexual minority subcultures (Browne, 2005, pp. 47-50). Snowball sampling is particularly suited to gay consumer research, as community trust and peer referrals facilitate access to respondents who may be reluctant

to self-identify in broader survey contexts.

Eligibility was defined by two criteria: (1) self-identification as a gay man, and (2) active engagement in fashion product consumption, defined as having purchased at least one fashion item within the preceding six months. No generational age restriction was imposed, as the study's primary aim is to examine the structural relationships among lifestyle, buying behaviors, marketing mix evaluations, and loyalty among Thai gay consumers broadly,

rather than to characterize a specific birth cohort. The resulting sample spans respondents aged 20-35 years, reflecting the economically active population segment most engaged in fashion consumption in the Thai urban market. Respondents identifying as bisexual or other sexual orientations were excluded to maintain construct homogeneity for the SEM analysis, yielding a final valid sample of 229 participants. Sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample characteristics of the gay subsample (n = 229)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age (years)	20-23	31	13.5
	24-27	55	24.0
	28-31	43	18.8
	32-35	100	43.7
Education	Below bachelor's degree	33	14.4
	Bachelor's degree	151	65.9
	Master's degree	38	16.6
	Above master's degree	7	3.1
Monthly income (THB)	< 20,000	93	40.6
	20,001-30,000	62	27.1
	30,001-40,000	27	11.8
	40,001-50,000	18	7.9
	> 50,000	29	12.7
Occupation	Student	23	10.0
	Government/state enterprise	45	19.7
	Private sector employee	105	45.9
	Self-employed/business owner	46	20.1
	Other	10	4.4



Measures

All constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Measurement items were adapted from established scales and refined for the Thai fashion consumption context. Full Thai item wording, English translations, and scale sources are provided in Supplementary File 1.

Lifestyle was operationalized as a multidimensional lifestyle profile based on the AIO framework. After EFA purification, three indicators were retained: opinion leadership (Life_Style1), sports activity (Life_Style2), and travel interest (Life_Style5). Because these indicators reflect different AIO facets rather than a homogeneous reflective scale, the construct is interpreted cautiously as a lifestyle profile index.

Buying Behaviors were measured using three indicators capturing rational/procedural buying (BB_1), comparison-oriented buying (BB_4), and deliberate decision-making (BB_6). Marketing Mix Evaluations were measured using product (MKM1), price (MKM2), place/distribution (MKM3), and sales promotion (MKM5). The advertising dimension (MKM4) was excluded from the final model due to low factor loading in the gay consumer subsample.

Fashion Product Loyalty was originally assessed using eight items (Loy1-Loy8) covering repurchase intention, recommendation, brand commitment, identity enhancement, satisfaction, and quality confidence. Because these items demonstrated high internal consistency, they were averaged into a composite indicator for the SEM path diagram using an

item-parceling approach to maintain parsimony and a stable parameter-to-sample-size ratio (Little, et al., 2002, pp. 79-82; Bandalos, 2002, pp. 152-156).

Reliability and validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, standardized factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and HTMT ratios. MarketingMix and Loyalty met recommended thresholds. BuyingBehavior showed acceptable CR with marginal AVE. The Lifestyle profile showed below-threshold alpha, CR, and AVE, and is therefore treated as a measurement limitation rather than a fully homogeneous reflective construct.

In the final measurement model, several cross-construct error covariances were specified based on modification indices exceeding 10.0 and substantive theoretical rationale, following the guidelines of Anderson and Gerbing (1988, pp. 411-419). These specifications were made parsimoniously to address residual covariance attributable to common method variance in a single-source self-report design (Podsakoff, et al., 2003, pp. 887-891).

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for descriptive analysis and AMOS for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The analysis followed the two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988, p. 411).

1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability: First, frequency and percentage distributions were calculated to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was utilized to assess the internal

consistency of the measurement scales.

2. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM):

The structural model was tested using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method.

Measurement Model Assessment: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was first performed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the latent constructs. Measurement quality was assessed based on standardized factor loadings, which should exceed 0.50.

Structural Model Assessment: The hypothesized relationships were tested by examining the standardized path coefficients (β), critical ratios (C.R.), and significance levels (p-values). The explanatory power of

the model was evaluated using the squared multiple correlations (R^2) for the endogenous constructs.

Model Fit Criteria: The overall goodness-of-fit was evaluated using multiple indices.

An acceptable model fit was defined based on the following criteria: a Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) < 3.0; Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), and Normed Fit Index (NFI) > 0.90; and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999, pp. 26-27; Hair, et al., 2019, p. 637).

Table 2 Reliability, CR, and AVE by Construct

Construct	α	CR	AVE	$\sqrt{AVE}$	Status
Lifestyle	0.434	0.651	0.387	0.622	CR & AVE below threshold*
BuyingBehavior	0.743	0.729	0.474	0.688	CR acceptable; AVE marginally below threshold**
MarketingMix	0.833	0.840	0.568	0.754	All criteria met
Loyalty	0.936	0.925	0.606	0.779	All criteria met

* Lifestyle uses three AIO indicators spanning different psychographic dimensions (Opinion, Activity, Interest), representing a multidimensional construct profile. CR = 0.651 is marginally below the 0.70 threshold; all factor loadings are statistically significant ($p < .001$).

** BuyingBehavior AVE = 0.474, marginally below the 0.50 threshold. CR = 0.729 exceeds the minimum acceptable level.

Although conventional guidelines recommend Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values of .70 or higher and AVE values of .50 or higher, these criteria should be interpreted in relation to construct dimensionality, research context, and the purpose of the measurement model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981, p. 46; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994, p. 265; Hair, et al., 2019, p. 676). For constructs represented by multidimensional profile indicators, internal consistency coefficients may be lower because the indicators capture conceptually distinct facets rather than interchangeable manifesta-

tions of a single latent trait (Bollen and Lennox, 1991, pp. 306-308; Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001, pp. 270-272; Jarvis, MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2003, pp. 202-205; MacKenzie, et al., 2011, pp. 303-306). Accordingly, the Lifestyle construct in this study is interpreted as a psychographic profile index based on the AIO framework rather than as a fully homogeneous reflective scale.

For BuyingBehavior, the AVE value of .474 was slightly below the recommended threshold of .50, whereas the CR value of .729 exceeded the recommended threshold of



.70, and all standardized factor loadings were statistically significant. Conventional guidelines recommend an AVE of at least .50 and a composite reliability of at least .70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981, p. 46; Hair, et al., 2019, p. 676). Because the AVE criterion was not fully

met, the convergent validity of BuyingBehavior should be regarded as marginal. The construct was retained because of its theoretical relevance; however, this limitation is reported transparently, and the corresponding results are interpreted cautiously.

Table 2a Standardized factor loadings from CFA

Construct	Indicator	Standardized loading	Interpretation
Lifestyle profile	Life_Style1	0.77	Retained
Lifestyle profile	Life_Style2	0.54	Retained; below ideal threshold
Lifestyle profile	Life_Style5	0.56	Retained; below ideal threshold
BuyingBehavior	BB_1	0.68	Retained
BuyingBehavior	BB_4	0.77	Retained
BuyingBehavior	BB_6	0.60	Retained
MarketingMix	MKM1	0.70	Retained
MarketingMix	MKM2	0.71	Retained
MarketingMix	MKM3	0.82	Retained
MarketingMix	MKM5	0.78	Retained
Loyalty	Composite score	-	Single composite indicator

Note: Values are standardized CFA loadings from the final SEM diagram. The Loyalty construct was represented by a single composite indicator after item parceling; therefore, no item-level loading is reported in the main model.

Table 3 Discriminant Validity — HTMT Ratios

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Lifestyle	-	-	-	-
2. Buying Behavior	0.644	-	-	-
3. Marketing Mix	0.876*	0.616	-	-
4. Loyalty	0.755	0.377	0.777	-

HTMT < 0.90 indicates adequate discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015, pp. 121-122). Values below diagonal.

* Lifestyle ↔ MarketingMix: HTMT = 0.876 < 0.90 threshold, indicating acceptable discriminant validity at the liberal criterion. This pair may benefit from further theoretical justification given the conceptual overlap.

Ethics statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human participants and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained electronically, and the survey was anonymous;

no personally identifiable information or IP addresses were recorded. Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board of the authors' affiliated university. Approval details are anonymized for blind review.

Results

Model fit

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis demonstrated an excellent fit to the empirical data. As shown in Table 4, all fit indices met and exceeded the recommended thresholds established by Hu and Bentler

(1999, pp. 26-27). Specifically, the Chi-square/df ratio was 1.307 (< 3.0), and the p-value was non-significant (.068), indicating that the model fits the data well. Furthermore, the baseline comparison indices (CFI = .993, NFI = .971) were well above the 0.90 cutoff, and the RMSEA was .027, indicating high precision.

Table 4 Model fit indices (Gay-only)

Index	Value	Criteria for Good Fit	Result
χ^2/df	1.307	< 3.00	Passed
p-value	.068	$> .05$	Passed
RMSEA	.027	$< .08$	Passed
CFI	.993	$> .90$	Passed
GFI	.971	$> .90$	Passed
NFI	.971	$> .90$	Passed

Structural relationships and hypothesis testing

Descriptive statistics and inter-construct correlations for all latent variables are presented in Tables 5 and 6, respectively. Mean scores for all constructs ranged from 3.31 to 3.67 on a 5-point scale, indicating moderate-to-high levels of lifestyle engagement,

buying behavior deliberateness, marketing mix evaluation, and fashion product loyalty among the gay consumer sample. Inter-construct correlations ranged from 0.422 (Lifestyle–BuyingBehavior) to 0.691 (MarketingMix–Loyalty), with no pair exceeding 0.80, thereby providing preliminary evidence that the constructs are empirically distinct.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics of Latent Variables (Gay group, n = 229)

Construct	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1. Lifestyle	3.307	0.740	1.333	5.000
2. BuyingBehavior	3.667	0.803	1.000	5.000
3. MarketingMix	3.515	0.640	1.000	5.000
4. Loyalty	3.502	0.817	1.000	5.000

Note: All constructs measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Scores represent construct composite means. SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 6 Correlation Matrix of Latent Variables (Gay group, n = 229)

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Lifestyle	1.000	-	-	-
2. BuyingBehavior	0.422	1.000	-	-



Construct	1	2	3	4
3. MarketingMix	0.524	0.560	1.000	-
4. Loyalty	0.480	0.424	0.691	1.000

Note: Values below the diagonal are Pearson correlations between composite scores of latent variables. All correlations are statistically significant at $p < .001$. MarketingMix and Loyalty show the highest inter-construct correlation ($r = 0.691$), consistent with the hypothesized structural path H3.

The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 7. The analysis revealed that the proposed causal chain (Lifestyle→Buying Behaviors→Marketing Mix→Loyalty) is statistically significant, while the direct effects on loyalty are not. Specifically, the following results were obtained:

H1 and H2 (Supported): Lifestyle positively and significantly influenced Buying Behaviors ($\beta = .806, p < .001$), which in turn strongly predicted Marketing Mix Evaluations ($\beta = .859, p < .001$).

H3 (Supported): Marketing Mix Eval-

uations exerted a strong positive effect on Loyalty ($\beta = .680, p < .001$).

H4 and H5 (Not Supported - Full Mediation): Interestingly, the direct paths from Lifestyle to Loyalty ($\beta = .161, p > .05$) and from Buying Behaviors to Loyalty ($\beta = -.046, p > .05$) were not statistically significant.

This pattern suggests a full mediation effect, implying that lifestyle and buying habits alone do not drive loyalty among gay consumers; they must be translated into favorable perceptions of the marketing mix (4Ps) to generate loyalty.

Table 7 Structural paths and hypothesis testing (Gay-only).

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p	Std. beta	Result
H1	LifeStyle -> BuyingBehaviors	0.805	0.187	4.307	***	0.806	Supported
H2	BuyingBehaviors -> MarketingMix	1.116	0.119	9.417	***	0.859	Supported
H3	MarketingMix -> Loyalty	0.795	0.199	3.999	***	0.680	Supported
H4	LifeStyle -> Loyalty	0.244	0.247	0.988	.323	0.161	Not supported
H5	BuyingBehaviors -> Loyalty	-0.071	0.399	-0.177	.860	-0.046	Not supported

Note: *** $p < .001$

To formally confirm the mediation pattern identified in the SEM results, bootstrapping was performed in AMOS with 5,000 resamples following the logic of Preacher and Hayes (2008, p. 889). Bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals were computed for the indirect paths leading to Loyalty. As shown in Table 8, the sequential indirect effect of Lifestyle on Loy-

alty through BuyingBehavior and MarketingMix was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.074$, 95% CI [0.031, 0.131]), while the direct effects of Lifestyle and BuyingBehavior on Loyalty remained non-significant. These results provide formal support for the full sequential mediation interpretation.

Table 8 Bootstrap Mediation Analysis (B = 5,000)

Indirect/Direct Effect Path	beta	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	Result
LS -> BB -> MKM -> LOY				
(full sequential indirect effect)	0.074	0.031	0.131	Significant
BB -> MKM -> LOY				
(indirect effect)	0.202	0.107	0.315	Significant
Direct: LS -> LOY (H4)	0.161	-	-	Not significant
Direct: BB -> LOY (H5)	-0.046	-	-	Not significant

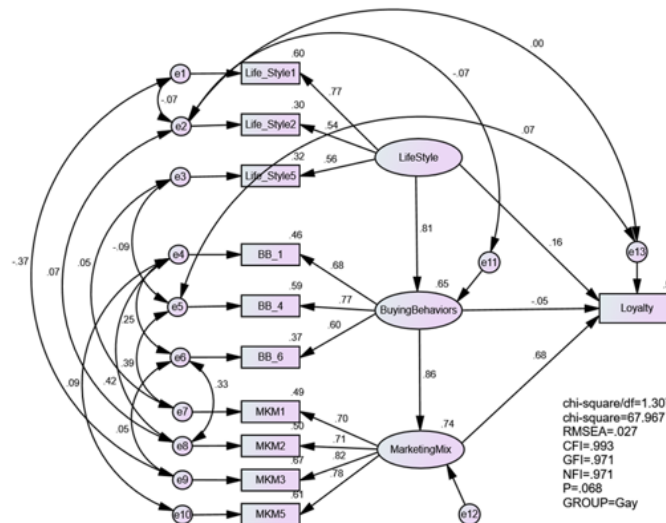
Bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals. Indirect effect is significant if CI excludes zero.

Method: AMOS bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples; bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals.

LS = Lifestyle; BB = BuyingBehavior; MKM = MarketingMix; LOY = Loyalty. LL = lower limit;

UL = upper limit.

Note: The sequential indirect effect ($\beta = 0.074$, 95% CI [0.031, 0.131]) supports full mediation because both direct paths to Loyalty remained non-significant in the structural model.


Figure 2 Final structural equation model for Thai gay consumers

Note: Model fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 1.307$; $\chi^2 = 67.967$; RMSEA = .027; CFI = .993; GFI = .971; NFI = .971; $p = .068$.

Explained variance (R^2): Buying Behaviors = .65; Marketing Mix = .74; Loyalty = .57.

Discussion

This study examined the determinants of fashion product loyalty among Thai gay consumers through a sequential mediation model grounded in the S-O-R paradigm. The SEM results yielded three principal findings that are discussed below in terms of what was found, how the mediation mechanism operates, and the theoretical role of buying behaviors in the causal chain.

5.1 The Direct Role of Marketing

Mix in Driving Loyalty

The structural results indicate that Marketing Mix Evaluations were the only construct exerting a statistically significant direct effect on fashion product loyalty ($\beta = .680$, $p < .001$), while the direct paths from Lifestyle (H4) and Buying Behaviors (H5) to Loyalty were non-significant. This finding suggests that for Thai gay consumers, psychographic alignment



with a brand however strong does not independently sustain loyalty unless it is accompanied by a favorably evaluated marketing mix.

This result is consistent with Service Quality Theory (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996, pp. 31-34), which posits that perceived value derived from tangible product and service attributes is a primary driver of behavioral commitment. In the context of the Pink Economy, the four retained Marketing Mix dimensions Product, Price, Place, and Sales Promotion appear to function not merely as transactional mechanisms but as operational signals through which brands communicate genuine inclusivity. A brand's product quality, pricing fairness, channel accessibility, and promotional authenticity collectively constitute the evaluative standard against which Thai gay consumers determine whether sustained loyalty is warranted.

A theoretically noteworthy measurement finding is that the Advertising dimension (MKM4) was excluded from the final Marketing Mix construct due to low factor loading. Rather than treating this only as a technical result, the finding suggests that Thai gay consumers may evaluate fashion brands more through concrete product value, pricing fairness, channel accessibility, and service experience than through advertising claims. This pattern is consistent with research suggesting that minority consumers may approach LGBTQ+ brand communications with skepticism when representation appears performative rather than substantively inclusive (Oakenfull, 2013, pp. 83-86; Montecchi, et al., 2024, pp. 23-27).

5.2 The Full Mediation Effect of

Marketing Mix

The most substantive theoretical contribution of this study lies in the confirmation of a full sequential mediation effect (Bootstrap $\beta = 0.074$, 95% CI [0.031, 0.131]). The influence of Lifestyle on Loyalty is entirely indirect, transmitted sequentially through Buying Behaviors and then through Marketing Mix Evaluations. Neither Lifestyle nor Buying Behaviors exerts a significant direct effect on Loyalty when Marketing Mix Evaluations are present in the model.

This finding offers a meaningful qualification to Self-Congruity Theory (Sirgy, 1982, pp. 288-292), which traditionally predicts that congruence between a consumer's lifestyle and a brand's image should directly generate loyalty. The present results suggest that among Thai gay consumers, this process is more hierarchical than the theory's direct-effect formulation implies. Lifestyle operates as an initiating stimulus that activates specific buying orientations; however, whether those orientations ultimately translate into loyalty depends entirely on how favorably the consumer evaluates the brand's concrete marketing mix offerings. The mediation chain thus reveals that identity-level resonance is a necessary but insufficient condition for loyalty, it sets the psychological direction of the consumer; the destination is determined by the marketing mix evaluation.

This pattern diverges from findings in mainstream fashion consumer research, where direct lifestyle-to-loyalty effects have been more consistently reported (Kressmann, et al., 2006, pp. 959-962). The divergence may reflect the heightened evaluative standards character-

istic of gay consumers, who have been documented as particularly attentive to whether a brand's operational behavior genuinely reflects its stated values (Gudelunas, 2011, pp. 61-64; Montecchi, et al., 2024, pp. 23-27). Brands that project lifestyle alignment without substantive follow-through in their marketing mix may therefore find that initial consumer engagement does not convert to durable loyalty in this segment a dynamic that prior qualitative research has associated with the broader phenomenon of performative brand inclusivity (Wait, 2025, p. 1).

5.3 Buying Behaviors as a Cognitive Filter

The strong sequential path from Lifestyle β Buying Behaviors ($\beta = .806$) $\rightarrow$ Marketing Mix Evaluations ($\beta = .859$) highlights the critical mediating role of decision-making orientations within the causal chain. Buying Behaviors in this model represent not overt purchase acts but internal cognitive orientations — specifically, the degree to which a consumer approaches fashion acquisition through rational deliberation, style-conscious evaluation, or self-expressive criteria.

The finding that buying behaviors fully mediate the relationship between lifestyle and marketing mix evaluations is consistent with S-O-R theory's conceptualization of the Organism stage as an active processing layer rather than a passive conduit (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974, pp. 283-285; Jacoby, 2002, pp. 51-53). Thai gay consumers in this sample appear to engage in proactive and investigative purchasing processes, actively filtering brand signals through internalized evaluative crite-

ria before forming marketing mix judgments. This behavioral profile aligns with prior characterizations of gay consumers as discerning, information-seeking shoppers who apply identity-congruent standards to brand evaluation (Oakenfull, 2013, pp. 83-86).

These findings suggest that lifestyle and buying behaviors primarily operate through indirect pathways in this consumer segment. Marketing strategies that seek to build loyalty among Thai gay consumers may therefore achieve greater effectiveness by focusing on substantive improvements to product value, pricing transparency, channel inclusivity, and promotional authenticity rather than relying on lifestyle congruence alone as a retention mechanism. Future research might examine whether these mediation patterns hold across other LGBTQ+ subgroups or in fashion markets with different levels of social acceptance of sexual minority identity.

Managerial implications

The findings suggest that fashion retailers targeting Thai gay consumers should move beyond symbolic visibility toward tangible marketing mix execution. LGBTQ+-friendly imagery or Pride-related communication may create awareness, but loyalty is more likely to emerge when product quality, pricing fairness, channel accessibility, staff behavior, and sales promotion are experienced as credible and inclusive.

Managers should therefore design an integrated physical-digital journey that provides detailed product information online, inclusive service offline, and promotions that validate rather than stereotype gay consumers.



In practical terms, the marketing mix should function as evidence of substantive inclusion, not merely as a communication device.

Limitations and future research

The study's cross-sectional design limits its causal inference, and the use of snowball sampling may overrepresent socially visible and digitally active members of the gay community. A further limitation concerns the multidimensional operationalization of Lifestyle as an AIO-based profile index spanning three distinct psychographic facets. Although this approach is theoretically appropriate for capturing heterogeneous lifestyle characteristics, it resulted in below-threshold reliability and convergent validity statistics, particularly Cronbach's alpha and AVE. Therefore, the Lifestyle construct should be interpreted cautiously as a psychographic profile index rather than as a fully homogeneous reflective scale. Future studies should further refine and validate this construct using larger samples, more homogeneous item specifications, higher-order factor modeling, or alternative composite/formative measurement approaches. Future research could also extend the present model by examining whether the mediation pattern holds across other LGBTQ+ subgroups, comparing findings across markets with varying levels of LGBTQ+ social acceptance, or incorporating longitudinal designs to track how marketing mix evaluations shape loyalty trajectories over time.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the structural determinants of fashion product loyalty among Thai gay consumers, with par-

ticular focus on the sequential mediating roles of buying behaviors and marketing mix evaluations in the relationship between lifestyle and loyalty. Using SEM with bootstrap mediation analysis, the findings confirm a full sequential mediation model in which lifestyle exerts its influence on loyalty entirely through these two intermediate mechanisms, with no significant direct effects remaining once the mediators are included in the model.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three contributions. First, it qualifies Self-Congruity Theory by showing that lifestyle alignment does not directly generate loyalty among Thai gay consumers; instead, its influence is transmitted through buying behaviors and marketing mix evaluations. Second, it extends S-O-R applications by positioning buying behaviors and marketing mix evaluations as sequential Organism-stage mechanisms. Third, it adds empirical evidence to Pink Economy research in an underexamined Southeast Asian context and highlights the limited salience of advertising relative to product, price, place, and sales promotion in this sample.

Declarations

Funding: The author declares that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.

Competing interests: The author has no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

Ethics approval: Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board of the authors' affiliated university; details are anonymized for blind review.

Consent to participate: Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

Availability of data and materials: The dataset is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Author contribution: The author is solely responsible for study conception and design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and manuscript preparation.

Bibliography

- Abd Jabar, F. and Mohd Noor, M. N. (2024). A conceptual framework for enhancing brand resonance of specialty fashion brands. **Journal of Emerging Economies and Islamic Research**, 12(1), 824.
- Anderson, J. C. and Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. **Psychological Bulletin**, 103(3), 411–423.
- Badgett, M. V. L., Waaldijk, K., van der Meide, Y. and van den Berghe, W. (2019). The relationship between LGBT inclusion and economic development: Macro-level evidence. **World Development**, 120, 1–14.
- Bandalos, D. L. (2002). The effects of item parceling on goodness-of-fit and parameter estimate bias in structural equation modeling. **Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal**, 9(1), 78–102.
- Bollen, K. and Lennox, R. (1991). Conventional wisdom on measurement: A structural equation perspective. **Psychological Bulletin**, 110(2), 305–314.
- Browne, K. (2005). Snowball sampling: Using social networks to research non-heterosexual women. **International Journal of Social Research Methodology**, 8(1), 47–60.
- Business of Fashion and McKinsey and Company. (2024). **The state of fashion 2025**. Retrieved July 22, 2026, from <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/industries/retail/our%20insights/state%20of%20fashion/2025/the-state-of-fashion-2025-v2.pdf>
- Diamantopoulos, A. and Winklhofer, H. M. (2001). Index construction with formative indicators: An alternative to scale development. **Journal of Marketing Research**, 38(2), 269–277.
- Fornell, C. and Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. **Journal of Marketing Research**, 18(1), 39–50.
- Gudelunas, D. (2011). Consumer myths and the gay men and women who believe them: A qualitative look at movements and markets. **Psychology & Marketing**, 28(1), 53–68.
- Hair, J. F., Jr., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J. and Anderson, R. E. (2019). **Multivariate data analysis** (8th ed.). Andover: Cengage Learning EMEA.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M. and Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. **Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science**, 43, 115–135.



- Hu, L.-T. and Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. **Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal**, 6(1), 1–55.
- Jacoby, J. (2002). Stimulus-organism-response reconsidered: An evolutionary step in modeling (consumer) behavior. **Journal of Consumer Psychology**, 12(1), 51–57.
- Jarvis, C. B., MacKenzie, S. B. and Podsakoff, P. M. (2003). A critical review of construct indicators and measurement model misspecification in marketing and consumer research. **Journal of Consumer Research**, 30(2), 199–218.
- Kates, S. M. (2002). The protean quality of subcultural consumption: An ethnographic account of gay consumers. **Journal of Consumer Research**, 29(3), 383–399.
- Kressmann, F., Sirgy, M. J., Herrmann, A., Huber, F., Huber, S. and Lee, D. J. (2006). Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. **Journal of Business Research**, 59(9), 955–964.
- Little, T. D., Cunningham, W. A., Shahar, G. and Widaman, K. F. (2002). To parcel or not to parcel: Exploring the question, weighing the merits. **Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal**, 9(2), 151–173.
- MacKenzie, S. B., Podsakoff, P. M. and Podsakoff, N. P. (2011). Construct measurement and validation procedures in MIS and behavioral research: Integrating new and existing techniques. **MIS Quarterly**, 35(2), 293–334.
- Mehrabian, A. and Russell, J. A. (1974). The basic emotional impact of environments. **Perceptual and Motor Skills**, 38(1), 283–289.
- Montecchi, M., Micheli, M. R., Campana, M. and Schau, H. J. (2024). From crisis to advocacy: Tracing the emergence and evolution of the LGBTQIA+ consumer market. **Journal of Public Policy & Marketing**, 43(1), 23–42.
- Nunnally, J. C. and Bernstein, I. H. (1994). **Psychometric theory** (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Oakenfull, G. K. (2013). What matters: Factors influencing gay consumers' evaluations of "gay-friendly" corporate activities. **Journal of Public Policy & Marketing**, 32(1), 79–89.
- Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty?. **Journal of Marketing**, 63(4), 33–44.
- Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Lee, J.-Y., and Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. **Journal of Applied Psychology**, 88(5), 879–903.
- Preacher, K. J. and Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. **Behavior Research Methods**, 40(3), 879–891.
- Seetharaman, P. B. (2004). Modeling multiple sources of state dependence in random utility models: A distributed lag approach. **Marketing Science**, 23(4), 501–524.



- Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. **Journal of Consumer Research**, 9(3), 287–300.
- Wait, M. (2025). Exploring LGBTQ+ marketing authenticity: A qualitative entity-referent correspondence study. **Acta Commercii**, 25(1), a1440.
- Yoo, B., Donthu, N. and Lee, S. (2000). An examination of selected marketing mix elements and brand equity. **Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science**, 28(2), 195–211.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L. and Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. **Journal of Marketing**, 60(2), 31–46.