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THE STUDY IMPACT OF BRAND LOVE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY: MEDIATING ROLE OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

Customer loyalty is the most important aspect of marketing which is dependent on Brand loyalty. The current research aims to analyze the impact of brand love on customer loyalty, with customer engagement as a mediator. For this purpose, a sample of 500 customers (N=500) was collected from various apparel brands consumers using cluster sampling. Data was collected by a self-administered and structured questionnaire that was adopted and modified according to authors' need. Linear regression analysis was used to infer results. Results indicated that Customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between brand love and customer loyalty ($\beta = .550$, $\beta = .199$ respectively, $p < .000$). The results suggest people are enthusiastic about apparel brand that exceed their expectations and match their self-identity. The research includes recommendation and limitation that provide useful implications for marketing managers and future researchers.

Keywords

Marketing, Customer loyalty, Brand love, Brand image and Customer engagement.



1. Introduction

Customer loyalty (CL) is the most crucial challenge facing the apparel companies today. Marketers find it extremely important to gain regarding re-purchase or re-disparage favored item/benefits reliably in the future" (Oliver, 1999, P, 34). Brand love (BL) is characterized by the level of enthusiastic passionate connection a fulfilled shopper has for a specific exchange name. Predictable with the writing on the adoration model (Ahuvia, 2005), BL incorporates enthusiasm for the brand, connection to the brand, positive assessment of the brand, positive feelings in light of the brand, and announcements of affection for the brand. However, we perceive that purchasers have a tendency to talk freely when utilizing the word cherish in reference to business items. All things considered, many occurrences of BL won't be completely practically equivalent to the more grounded types of relational love (Ahuvia, 1993, 2005b; Oliver, 1999; Shimp and Anger, 1988). Customer engagement (CE) has turned into a conspicuous build in late customer administration writing. Having the capacity to emphatically influence purchaser conduct (Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010) and brand execution (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, and Ilic, 2011), CE has gotten significant consideration from academicians and in addition showcasing professionals (Dessart, Veloutsou, and Thomas, 2015; Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, and Morgan, 2014). This study wants to investigate the relationship between BL and the mediating

their CL in order to sustain their growth in the market. Massive amount of efforts are put together to indulge customers into BL. CL is characterized as "a profoundly held sense of duty effect of CE on CL. Organizations are making immense ventures to grasp CE. CE has turned into a focal idea in customer– brand relation. The experimental examination of CE is canvassed in past writing, yet none of the investigations so far have experimentally inspected the relationship between BL all the while as to CE in the design attire setting. This study research CE with regards to form attire. It looks at the impact of BL on CE. In the previous couple of years, researchers have placed exertion into researching the area of CE, however the experimental examination of this developing build remains indistinct to date and there is a need to observationally examine the relationship between CE, and BL. This research is a reaction to such calls for more experimental examination of CE with various brands and love for brand leading to CL.

1.1 Significance of Study

CL is the most important aspect every marketer should look forward to. The study is significant as it researched about BL and BI which leads to CL and CE for specific brand. BL and BI are two main key components which make a CL in specific brand. This study will research the impact of BL and BI on customer loyalty: mediating role of CE. And then how CL moves to CE for specific brand. This research will target

Apparel brands users, like Elan, Ideas by Gul Ahmed, Alkaram, Sapphire, Khaadi and Nishat. This study will help these brands to create value for their customer and to build good BI so they love brand and get engage and further become a loyal customer. Organizations and marketers will be beneficial to study the buying behavior of customers who are loyal to brands and engage them. There has been no critical work done on this division which alludes to the above variables and doing this exploration will be a commitment in the examination of Pakistan.

1.2 Research Questions

H₁: Brand Love has significant relation with Customer Loyalty

H₂: Brand Love has significant relation with Customer Engagement

H₃: Customer Engagement has significant relation with Customer Loyalty

H₄: Customer Engagement mediates the relationship between Brand Love and Customer Loyalty

1.3 Literature Review

Retaining existing customer as opposed to securing new clients is naturally seen as a financially savvy approach (Anderson & Mittal, 2000). The positive advantages of CL for firms are very much reported (Reichheld, 1993). CL is characterized as "a profoundly held responsibility regarding re-purchase or re-disparage favored item/benefits reliably in the future" (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). Organizations reliably look for and start different exercises to fabricate client devotion. An immediate advantage is that reliable clients

should go about as brand advocates, welcoming relatives, companions and other (potential) clients to the brand/association (Shoemaker and Lewis, 1999). Also, a reliably positive relationship has been appeared between client dependability and hierarchical execution (Pihl, 2013; Reichheld, 1993).

In the current writing, BL has been viewed as an imperative build influencing customer BL (Fournier, 1998; Ismail and Spinelli, 2012; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). Gotten from the idea of relational love in brain science (Carrol and Ahuvia, 2006; Shimp and Madden, 1988), the idea of BL has picked up academic consideration in the field of advertising (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi, 2012; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Learns about brand love have demonstrated this develop to impact different promoting factors (Carrol and Ahuvia, 2006). Rubin (1973) characterizes sentimental love as "an attitude held by a man toward a specific other individual, including inclinations to think, feel, and carry on in certain routes toward that other individual" (Rubin, 1973, p. 256). Carroll also, Ahuvia (2006) characterize BL as the "level of enthusiastic passionate connection a fulfilled client has for a specific exchange name" (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006, p. 81). In her investigation of BL, Fournier (1998) found the idea of adoration was significant for all brand relationships. Customer loves brands due to the rationale of 'mental self view' (Albert, Merunka, and Vallette-Florence, 2008). Ahuvia (2005) found that articles requesting an impressive speculation of

time and vitality are adored by buyers. As design attire brands convey one's identity and picture (Khare, 2014), buyers are in this way more inclined to contribute due time and vitality to pick the correct attire mark. Research depicts a positive connection between mark love and verbal – a statement of CE (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Research additionally outlines BL as a basic driver of engagement (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010).

CE has as of late advanced as an idea in the promoting writing (Brodie et al., 2011). A plenty of terms have been utilized to express engagement from a marketing point of view, for example, CE (Bolton, 2011; Brodie et al., 2013) Hence, connection and response progress toward becoming musts for CE. Following Brodie et al. Analysts are progressively starting to examine

the immediate effect of different relational builds on reliability (Chae, Ko, and Han, 2015; Dwivedi, 2015; Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström, 2012). This relationship procedure, because of its iterative nature, suggests that some social builds, as results of CE, may likewise act as CE precursors. In addition, particular CE forms might be watched for both existing and new customers, notwithstanding CE models for making and keeping up unwaveringness for existing clients (Bowden, 2009). The writing demonstrates that CE drives client unwaveringness (see Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Vivek et al., 2012). (2011), the present investigation is centered on the current customer point of view of CE.

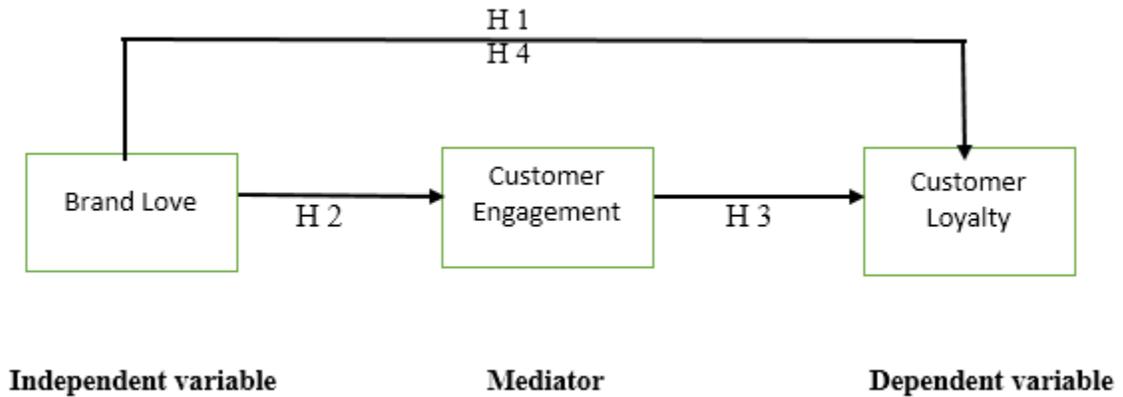


Figure 1: Theoretical frame work

2. Materials and Method

2.1 Research design and Sampling

A sample of 500 customers (N=500) from Lahore Pakistan was collected from various apparel brands that were selected using cluster sampling.

Clusters of customer was made on geographical basis, and randomly four clusters were picked out which include the Gulberg, Defense, Model town, and Johar town.

Data was collected by a self-administered structured questionnaire that comprised of items from various scale that were adopted and modified according to author's need. The questionnaire was in simple English, which was easily understandable to the respondents. First part of the questionnaire aimed for demographic information while the second part was aimed at collecting their responses on target variables. Customers were intercepted at various shopping malls in Lahore from the mentioned clusters. 73% of the respondents were males while 23% were females. On average majority, 43.8% of the

respondents fall in the age group of 30-34 years old. The statistical tool that will be used for data analysis is SPSS 18.00 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). First part of the questionnaire aimed for demographic information while the second part was aimed at collecting their responses on target variables.

2.2 Measures

There are 8 items for brand love and 5 items for brand image. While customer loyalty has 5 items and customer engagement has 7 items. All the tools/scales were adopted from previous research study. BL tool was taken through the scale Carrol and Ahuvia (2006). The tools of CE were taken from Vivek et al. (2014). The measures of CL were drawn from suggestions in Keller (2013).

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Number of Items
Customer Loyalty	.852	5
Brand Love	.928	8
Customer Engagement	.897	7

2.3 Reliability of the measures

Data was tested from internal reliability and therefore the Cronbach alpha values of all the variables were between 0.7-1. The cronbcah for BL .928 is, customer engagement is.897 and CL is .852. Also. Regression assumptions were tested. Errors are normally distributed as depicted by the histogram and P P-Plot. Also the scatter plot shows no trend in the data therefore it concludes there is homoscedasticity.

3. Results

To check the reliability of the item scale Cronbach's alpha test was applied. Cronbach alpha values ranged between 0.7-09 for all items indication the scales to be reliable (Table 2).

Ranges, standard deviation and means is a part of descriptive analysis. Following table shows that CL has a mean of 2.5020 with a standard deviation of 1.26285. BL has a mean of 2.3388 with a standard deviation of .71632. And lastly,

CE has a mean of 2.4303 with a standard deviation of .70781.

BL has a significantly strong relationship with CE (.971, $p\text{-value} < \alpha$) and has a significantly moderate relationship with CL (.572, $p\text{-value} < \alpha$).

CL shows a significantly moderate relationship with CE (.554, $p\text{-value} < \alpha$).

Sobel test is also used to test the mediation of both the model by Baron and Kenny (1986). Impact of BL on mediator CE is tested followed by the impact of mediator CE on dependent variable that is CL. β a 0.550 and standard error value 0.050, whereas β b .199 and standard error value .057, which concludes P-value is < 0.005 , which leads to partial mediation.

4. Discussion

The current study concludes that CE mediates the relationship between BL and CL. Day and Edwards (2006) highlighted the importance of CE in their book, by explaining how for the modern-era brands', marketing that is focused on the consumers to gauge their attention should not be just a practice but should be celebrated and worn as a medal of high honor. A common phrase that we come across in media frequently "Getting close to the customers" is the ultimate way to get advantage in a competitive market. Keeping this in mind, it seems that once the customer feels listened to, and engaged, they are more likely to become more loyal towards that particular brand.

Role of CE is crucial for brand love and brand loyalty. Its importance is not only highlighted by the current study but the Chairperson of Unilever,

Niall Fitzgerald highlights this agenda with more emotion "We must strive for consumer intimacy. Our great strength lies in knowing what the consumer wants" (Understanding people to build brands, 2003). It is only after understanding what consumer wants is that they can be engaged to full extent.

The way customers look at brands, play a key role in developing CE and ultimately their loyalty. The British Institution of Business and Marketing (2003) suggested finding innovative ways of learning to listen closely to your customers as the number one way of reviving brand image for an effective business. In line with this theme, it can be deduced that understanding what customers want, and then shaping your brand accordingly can lead to higher CE and increase in their loyalty. Therefore it's crucial that brands and marketers work and keep enhancing their brand image.

Along with the reputation, they need to develop a connection with the customers, especially emotional connection such as BL to strengthen their loyalty. (Gracia, Bakker, and Grau, 2011). Maagids, Zorfas and Leemon (2015) suggest moving beyond customer satisfaction and to focus on connecting with customers on a more personal, emotional level to optimize the customer value.

Well-known apparel brands such as Nishat, Khaadi, Gul ahmed, and Sapphire develop multi-dimensional brand associations that customer can easily remember and they stay in their memory (Arifeen, 2017). These apparel brands are very

closely related to their self-concept. Customers look at brands that help them fulfill their self-identity and self-esteem (Levy 1959; Sirgy 1982). Only those brands that are able to give them pleasure and satisfaction are the ones that can be successful. Those brands cater to customers psychological and emotional needs as well. They engage with their customers, and build a relationship and a sense of attachment with their customers to retain them in long run. There is fierce competition and to gain a competitive edge it is very important that apparel brands are emotionally attached to their customers (Moncanu, 2013).

BL has a strong significant relationship with CE (.971), and a significantly moderate relationship with CL (.572). CE plays a mediating role to impact the relationship between BL and CL. And similar research is supported in other research as well (Carrol and Ahuvia, 2006). The intensity of passionate emotional attachment increases the CL towards the brand, as it is this emotional attachment that keep customers engaged towards an apparel brand (Maagids, Zorfas & Leemon,

2015). It is because customers have this passion for these apparel brands, they have a positive overall evaluation for the brand that keeps them attached to the brands (Islam & Rehman, 2016). It plays a part in developing customer identity that customers seek for.

BL is a signal to customers post consumption behavior. Though the emotional attachment they develop with the brands may not be perfectly analogous to the way consumers have feelings for their loved ones, or people. But deriving at conclusion, it can be stated that the feelings and emotional attachment for brands can be more intense than just simply liking the brand. The more a brand is self-expressive, the more customers are into the brand, which triggers their emotional response and develops a sense of belonging with the brand. This study provides an insight to a rarely used construct such as BL in developing CL. The impact of BL can further be investigated on brands profit, shares and sales. Brand hate is another distinct construct that can be used for future research.

Table 2: Demographic profile of Participants

Age	20-24 years old	8.6
	25-29 years old	28.2
	30-34 years old	43.8
	35 & above	19.4
Gender	Male	26.2
	Female	73.8

Employment status	Student	18.6
	employed	26.0
	unemployed	45.0
	Others	10.4
Income	50,000-99,000	23.2
	100000-150000	38.0
	150,000 & above	38.8
Brands you like	Khaadi	13.6
	Sapphire	18.8
	Nishat	15.2
	Ideas by GulAhmed	13.2
	Alkaram	8.0
	Others	31.2

Table 3: Results

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
R	.572	.971	.554	.572
R²	.327	.944	.307	.327
P-value	.000	.000	.000	.000
F statistics	241.681	8328.460	220.844	120.607
β₁ Brand love	.922	.983	-	.550
β₂ Customer engagement	-	-	.989	.199
	Test Statistics	Std. Error	p-value	
Sobel test	3.32764707	0.03289111	0	

One unit in BL will change .922 units in CL. Also, the significance value is less than 0.05 alpha, there the relationship is significant between BL and CL. H₁ is accepted that BL (β =.922, .000<α) has a significant impact on CL. R shows that there is a moderate relationship between the variables, i.e 57.2%. R² of 32.7% signifies that by independent variable, 32.7% in brought in dependent variable. F statistics is

significant as the significance value is less than alpha, therefore model is said to be good fitted.

One unit in BL will be changing .983 units in mediator CE. Also, as the significance value is less than alpha .05, therefore the relationship between both the variables is significant. H₂ is also accepted, BL (β =.983, .000<α) has a significant impact on CE. R shows that there is a strong relationship between the variables, i.e 97.1%. R² of 94.4% signifies that by independent

variable, 94.4% in brought in dependent variable. F statistics is significant as the significance value is less than alpha, therefore model is said to be good fitted

H₃ is also significant, CE ($\beta = .989$, $.000 < \alpha$) has a significant impact on CL. One unit in CL will be changing .989 units in CE. Also, as the significance value is less than alpha .05, therefore the relationship between both the variables is significant. R shows that there is a moderate relationship between the variables, i.e 55.4%. R² of 30.7% signifies that by independent variable, 30.7% in brought in dependent variable. F statistics is significant as the significance value is less than alpha, therefore model is said to be good fitted.

Mediation shows that CE ($\beta = .199$, $.000 < \alpha$) partially mediates the relationship between BL ($\beta = .550$, $.000 < \alpha$) and CL. Therefore H₄ is also supported. One unit in BL will be changing .492 units in CE. A change of one unit in CL will being change of .335 units in CE. Also, as the significance value for the independent variable and mediator is less than alpha .05, therefore there is partial mediation R shows that there is a moderate relationship between the variables, i.e 57.2%. R² of 32.7% signifies that by independent variable, 32.7% in brought in dependent variable. F statistics is significant as the significance value is less than alpha, therefore model is said to be good fitted.

5. Conclusion

The foundation of this research is to understand the impact of BL for developing a sense of

loyalty in customers, by making them highly engaged with the apparel brands. A reliable scale is used to test the respondent's response, and thus the results clearly show the mediation in both the models. The results how that BL has a positive impact on CL, and there is a partial mediation in the presence of CE as mediator. The results show that the impact of BL is positive on CL and is partially mediated by CE. Future research can be on the elements that help build BL, such as the impact of BL on brands profits and sales.

6. Recommendations

- Future research can be carried out for different product category or the impact of advertisement on CE and CL can be tested. Also, what enhances customer BL and BI can be tested.
- As a mediator, advertisement can also be tested. So that accordingly strategies can be designed for new entrants in the market.
- Different cultures can be tested for their engagement and loyalty towards the apparel brands. Results may differ from culture to culture and therefore, multinational companies can customize the strategies according to the different cultures they serve in.
- Future research can test whether these components link meaningfully? Or there might be other dimensions that play a very vital role in enhancing CE and CL.
- Brand hate is a distinctive variable that can be used for future research.

7. Limitations

- Results are only applicable on luxury apparel category brands of lawn, therefore the results cannot be generalized for other apparels of other categories.
- Similarly the results cannot be generalized for all the consumers for their preferences in other cities of Pakistan.
- Interviews could have provided a different and in-depth understanding of the impact of BL on CE and CL.

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