

The Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty: Mediating Role of Brand Attachment: An Empirical Study on Apparel Industry

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ABSTRACT: A positive and satisfying brand experience plays a key role in creating emotional attachment between the customer and the brand, which increases customer loyalty with that particular brand. This research was conducted to investigate the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty with mediating role of brand attachment. Quantitative approach was used for this study. Data were collected through survey questionnaire. Data were collected from 204 respondents of apparel brands users in Pakistan. Findings of this research shows that there is significant relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. Results also indicate that brand attachment plays a mediating role between the relationship of brand experience and brand loyalty. For marketers and managers, this framework will encourage the managers to develop that kind of products and services which makes consumption experience positive and satisfying. By providing satisfying brand experience managers will be able to emotionally attach customers with their brands which leads customer towards brand loyalty.

KEYWORDS: Brand Experience, Brand Attachment, Brand Loyalty, Customers, Pakistan

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Introduction

In modern era, biggest challenge in marketing strategy is to create a value for customers and managing the views of customers about brand's product or services (Kandampully et al., 2015). Specifically, in the fashion industries where many products competing in the same range of products the survival becomes difficult for brands (Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2013). With the increase importance of customer experience, the basic objective for brands is to design those products which create and develop memorable experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Meaningful brand name not only effect the customer's preferences but also include insubstantial standards which may shows the differences among product to its rivals and as well augment the height of satisfaction of customers which is constantly lead towards the greater loyalty of customers (Ding & Tseng, 2015). According to previous studies on customer experiences, it shows the importance of converting brand benefits in to meaningful brand experience (Barnes et al., 2014; Dagger & David, 2012; Oliver, 2010; Schmitt, 2009; Vlachos & Tsamakos, 2011).

Kandampully et al. (2015) investigates that in marketing strategy, the concept of customer loyalty has a great importance and also in competitive advantage customer loyalty demonstrated as an important source for brands. The major construct in this research paper is brand loyalty, Reichheld (1996) investigates that loyal customers are those who perceive some unique value in the brand that no substitutes can provide and possibly will be agreeable to compensate more prices for specific brand. Assael (1998), found that when the brand repeatedly purchases by the loyal customer, regardless of situational restrictions- brand loyalty leads to the greater market share. Shukla and Purani (2012) investigates that customers who like branded clothing tend to spend more on clothing and also customers who are more aware to fashion trends are more conscious and involved in fashion. Customers' attachment in fashion has positive relationship with the self-concept. Through consumer socialization process, young generation aware to the related information relevant to the clothing brands (Chang, 2008). Brand experiences of customers must be positive that will affect the emotions of the customers and their attachment with the brands which leads towards the loyalty of customers with specific brand and customers would be ready to pay premium price for that brand by loyalty. Positive and memorable experience of customer with particular brand will provide emotional attachment values to the customers (Brun et al., 2008). Therefore, the key factor for success in the apparel and fashion industry is engaged with the customer at the emotional level. In an effort to cultivate long lasting loyalty in the apparel brands are gently moved to focusing on corporate branding from the "building social status" to "customer emotional attachment" with brand (Cailleux et al., 2009).

Problem Statement

This study investigates the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is to get positive response from the customers that can be enhanced by the better understanding of the attachment and loyalty nature. This positive response by the customer will lead attachment and loyalty to the strong relationship between customer and brand. This study describes a vital prospect of the brand experience and brand loyalty with brands. Producers, manufacturers and marketers can gain much information to capture customers in strong and long lasting brand relationship. For the marketing managers, this study will be very authentic and helpful and also provide good solutions to their problems they are facing today like, how to compete their competitors and keep them out to the competition and also how to increase their share into the target market.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty
2. To explore the relationship between brand experience and brand attachment
3. To examine the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty

Hypothesis of the Study

1. **H₁**: There is a relationship between Brand Experience and Brand loyalty.
2. **H₂**: There is a relationship between Brand Experience and Brand attachment.

3. **H₃**: There is a relationship between brand Attachment and Brand Loyalty.
4. **H₄**: Brand attachment mediates the relationship between Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty.

Literature Review

Brand Experience

When customers use the products of any brand, talk about that specific product and brand, explore and analyze information in respect with that brand than brand experience comes into existence (Ambler, 2002). Brand experience is not only the outcome of usage of brand's products, but it may also be happened through direct and indirect connection with the brand. Brand experience might be both amazing and unexpected (Beckman, 2013). Comprehension the theory of brand experience that has exceptional importance for managing the concept of brand trust and brand loyalty (Brakus, 2009). Brand experience might be positive and negative; that can be short term as well as long term (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). In order to develop the trust in customers towards the brand, then customers must have positive and satisfied experience with the brand. This satisfaction and positive experiences minimize the risks of benefits that promised by the customer with the brand (De Chernatony, 2010). For removing negative evaluation of customers for a brand the brand experience should be positive that is helpful in making positive brand image. Effective brand marketing, advertising, packaging and labeling may activate the brand experience in positive emotional inspiration (Brakus, 2009).

Brand Attachment

Brand attachment defines as the power and strength of intellectual, valuable and effective bond/ relationship with the particular brand (Park et al., 2006). Brand attachment is one of the six dimensions that is relate to consumer- brand relationship (Fournier, 1998). A well-built attachment will help to customers' refusal concept to transform in acceptance and the capability of a brand to resist bad performance (Keller, 2009). Brand attachment is an element of the relationship/ commitment between a brand and customers that leads to self-activating retrieval of thoughts, perception, impression, emotion and feelings about the brand (Park et al., 2006). However, research has analyzed the interpersonal circumstances in attachment, marketing research mentions that customers can also build attachments to bazaar institutes, containing product brands (Keller, 2009), personalities (Thomson, 2005) and special goods (Kleine and Baker 2004). Merrilees (2016) defines brand attachment as the supremacy of affiliation connecting with the brand. Chaplin and John (2005) investigates that brand self-connection is the concept of brand attachment that evolves bonding with the brand as the part of the self and conclude the dimensions cognitive and emotional connection between the brand and the self in brand attachment. Customers create a logic of oneness with the brand and develop emotional links that relate the brand with the self in after classifying the brand as part of the self. Furthermore, researcher conclude that if customers have strong bond and attachment with a brand then attitude of customers toward the brand will be positive and strong (Drichoutis et al., 2007). Self- expansion theory in the marketing literature, defines the strength of creating a bond among brand and an individual in brand attachment. This bond includes the judgment and mind-set about brand and the self and becomes a model through rich and available network memory. Customers build stable and continues connection with the brand and act toward a brand as a complementary while in the process of creating brand attachment.

Brand Loyalty

The main objective of marketers is not only that to satisfy their customer but also to create, enhance, develop and maintain relationship with their existing customers (Elbedweihy et al., 2016). The most important asset for a brand is brand loyalty, which is the central to marketing scholarship (Kandampully et al., 2015). Keller (2009) indicates that for making a strong brand position in customers, brand loyalty is an important ingredient for it. Thus, numerous companies are extremely desire for making a loyalty behavior in customers thoroughly and well- supported (Tali & Nautiyal, 2022). In a phase of exceeding social consumerism, where brand performance takes as the public inspection, consumers' perceptions of brands have a main function in making decision of customers and long lasting brand loyalty (Brunk, 2012). Researcher hypothetically demonstrate that giving customer revitalizing, exceptional brand experience and construct affirmative brand image in customers mind, both constructs may cause the long lasting brand loyalty and commitment in customers (Francisco et al., 2014). While companies are willing to achieve greater number of loyalties from their customers, they are competent to earn return on investment, receiving greater market share, obtaining positive word of mouth and also increasing bargaining strength from various channels of distributors and suppliers (Usman & Nawaz, 2011). Brand loyalty is a significant tool for measuring the performance of firm, mostly in emerging markets because they are operating in locally responsive markets (Sheth, 2011). Marketing theories proposed that, for firm's competitiveness, brand loyalty and effectual business affiliation is the major support in appearing markets (Casidy, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Methodology

Population for this research is the customers of apparel industry in Pakistan. The target population involves all urban males and females customers living in metropolitan cities of Pakistan. To measure the population size of this research, data were collected from different brand's sales managers and store managers about the one season sales. Sample of this study is taken from different cities of Pakistan. Sample size is 204. Quantitative approach was used for this study. The technique of Mall- intercept, Mohan et al., (2013) was applied in this study to spot respondents for collection of data. The self- administrated survey questionnaire was designed for data collection by using convenient sampling technique. In this research, brand experience was used as an independent variable and in the present research brand loyalty used as dependent variable. As mediating variable, the brand attachment was used. The 22 items were adopted as an instrument to measure these variables. Brakus et al., (2009) nine-item scale was used for measure brand experience. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) 6 item scale was used for measure brand loyalty. Brand attachment was

measured with 7 item scale which was adopted from Park et al., (2010). Brand experience, brand loyalty and brand attachment all variables have been measured on 5- point Likert Scale ranging (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree).

Results

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach Alpha is calculated for all variables to regulate the consistency and stability. According to Nunnally (1994), if the Cronbach alpha is about 0.7 or privilege then a variable must have the constant sign. Table-1 shows that Cronbach’s alpha of brand experience is 0.700, Cronbach’s alpha of brand loyalty is 0.704 and Cronbach’s alpha of brand attachment is 0.739.

Table 1

Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha
Brand Experience	0.700
Brand Loyalty	0.704
Brand Attachment	0.739

Descriptive Analysis

Table-2 indicates mean value for brand experience that is 3.15 along with standard deviation 0.55 which shows that leading segment of respondents consider in the descriptiveness by the brand experience attributes applied in this research. The next variable brand loyalty which is about 3.55 with 0.66 standard deviation these results show that most of the respondents are fully committed with their preferred brand. The value of mean and standard deviation for brand attachment is 3.27 and 0.68 respectively which means that there are good and positive remarks of the respondents about the brand.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Brand Experience	220	3.15	0.55
Brand Loyalty	220	3.55	0.66
Brand Attachment	220	3.27	0.68

Correlation Analysis

Table-3 shows the correlation results among variables. There is a positive connection among two variables which are brand experience and brand loyalty because the value of $r = .435$ and the value $p < 0.01$ which indicates that strong relationship between these variables, this value explain that brand experience and brand loyalty are highly significant. So, this relationship shows that the hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. The figure of $r = .330$ indicate that there is determined association among brand experience and brand attachment whereas the value of $p < 0.01$ that also demonstrate brand experience and brand attachment have a considerable

relationship and this relationship support H₂. The results of brand loyalty and brand attachment also support H₃ which describes the positive significant correlation of these variables brand loyalty and brand attachment as specify by the value of $p < 0.01$ and $r = .662$.

Table 3

Correlation Analysis

S. No.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1	Brand Experience	3.15	0.55	1		
2	Brand Loyalty	3.55	0.66	.435**	1	
3	Brand Attachment	3.27	0.68	.330*	.662**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis

Simple Linear Regression

Table-4 shows the results of simple linear regression. In relationship between Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty, the value of R^2 is extract as 18.6% this value indicates that brand experience conducts 18.6% change in the brand loyalty. R^2 value is significant at $p < 0.05$. The value of beta which is also known as regression coefficient which is ($b = 0.431$ $p < 0.00$) the conclusion shows that one component changed in variable brand experience can affect the change of other variable which brings 0.431 components in brand loyalty. In the relationship between Brand Experience and Brand Attachment, the value of R^2 is extract as 20.9% this value indicates that brand experience conducts 20.9% change in brand attachment. R^2 value is considerable at $p < 0.05$. The value of beta which is also known as regression coefficient which is ($b = 0.457$ $p < 0.00$) the conclusion shows that one component changed in variable brand experience can affect the change which brings 0.457 components in brand attachment. In the relationship between Brand Loyalty and Brand Attachment, the value of R^2 is extract as 46.4%, this value indicates that brand attachment conducts 46.6% change in brand loyalty. R^2 value is significant at $p < 0.05$. The value of beta which is ($b = 0.681$ $p < 0.00$) the conclusion shows that one component changed in variable brand attachment can affect the change which brings 0.681 components in brand loyalty. These regression outcomes show the significant impact of brand experience and brand attachment resting on the brand loyalty.

Table 4

Simple Linear Regression

Predictors	Brand Loyalty		Brand Attachment	
	R^2	β	R^2	β
Brand Experience	1.86***	.431***	.209***	.457***
Brand Attachment	.464***	.681***		

***Alpha value is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ so results are significant

Mediation Analysis

Table-5 shows the result of mediation analysis. The mediation was investigated when all three conditions of mediation are fulfilled of Baron and Kenny (1986) approach. According to this approach two requirements are applied on mediation, which are R^2 conversion figure should be near to the zero and it must be insignificant. Outcomes shows that β value from .431 is lower to .151 and R^2 change value is less than to 0.18 and it is nearest to the zero, so initial situation of mediation is done. There is significant value of R^2 change as ($\beta = .151$ and $P = .000$) so, next situation of mediation was not done which indicates that there is partial mediation. Therefore, H_4 is accepted partially which describe that brand attachment mediates between brand experience and brand loyalty.

Table 5

Mediation Analysis

Predictors	β	Brand Loyalty		
		R^2	R^2 Change	P
Special Effects Brand Experience Mediation-1	.431	.186		.000
Step 1: Brand Attachment	.681	.464		.000
Step 2: Brand Experience	.151	.473	0.18	.000

Discussion

The brand experience mostly obliged customers' brand attachment. The construct brand attachment also is the major instrument to create customers' loyalty towards brand. This study as well concludes that brand attachment has the mediating consequence on brand experience and brand loyalty relationship. Brand experience is the major force of brand attachment which hardly be found in previous marketing literature, however on the relationship among brand experience and emotional reaction some literature might have discussed on it (Ding & Tseng, 2015). This research also search that brand experience played a vital role in shaping attachment of customers toward brands (Laroche et al., 2012). From previous study, this literature thus departs, the construct brand experience proposes in a more detailed dimension, the experience in driving customers' attachment with brand. In this literature, the finding is brand attachment is the important force of brand loyalty. On brand attachment, this literature consequently proposes an important insight, defined as emotional attachment which is directly drives the loyalty like purchasing. According to Ha and Perks (2005) brand attachment is the main antecedents in forming customers' loyalty.

Limitations and Future Research

This research work has several limitations along with some future research directions. Our work consists of relationship of brand experience and brand loyalty through brand attachment. One of the key limitations is the generalizability of the data and results because convenience sampling was used in this research which limits the potential of generalizability of the findings. So, in future research work other sampling techniques can be used to make it more generalized. This research was conducted on apparel industry and due to these other industries were eliminated. So, in future research other industries like shoes, cosmetics, skin care and

automobile etc can be used. The focus of this study was effect of brand experience on the brand loyalty with brand attachment as mediator consequently, different constructs like price and gender as a mediators or moderator can also be used in further study because these relationship can be effected by price conscious customers and also gender difference can make some effect on these relationships because males and females have separate consumption behavior and pattern to affiliate with any particular brand.

Managerial Implications

The framework which presents in this study will be helpful to the marketing managers and the outcomes of this study can be used in marketing strategy to create attachment with customers. The marketing managers of any organization try to hold some specific products in their marketing strategy and portfolio which are accountable for making attachment with customers and make strong relationship. Those products which can make strong relationship between brand and customer are more loyalty predictors than brand experience because organizations want to bound customers emotionally attached with them and encourage customers to be in two different approaches of communication with the brand and as well brand managers. The conclusion of this framework as strong loyalty, sales, profits and reiterate purchase. To increase brand loyalty marketing managers should be very careful while making marketing programs aimed at growing user- buyer attachment of a product. The outcome of this study indicates that not only brand attachment can lead to the loyalty level of customers there must be some emotions included because when emotions developed by an individual, this emotion will create the product exclusive, and the thoughts of irreplaceability are developed.

Conclusion

In this study, there are three direct hypotheses which are confirmed positively as predicted and this literature got good support for expected hypothesis. One hypothesis was developed predicting mediating of brand attachment and this hypothesis demonstrate partial mediation. The initial hypothesis projected a connection involving brand experience and brand loyalty and outcomes indicates that positive relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. In following hypothesis which present to their outcome surely a positive association among brand experience and brand attachment, so it becomes confirmed that the outcome of association among brand experience and brand loyalty are positive. In third hypothesis, the association among brand attachment and brand loyalty was proposed there is a positive momentous outcome of study confirmed among these variables. Thus, this research conclude that positive brand experience plays a vital role to attach the customers with that particular brand and this attachment lead towards brand loyalty of the customer.

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