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The Role of Brand Trust and Brand Love in Mediating the Relationship between Brand Experience, Brand Associations, Brand Quality, and Consumer Loyalty in Online Shopping

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## Abstract

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Keywords: Brand experience; brand associations; brand quality; loyalty intention; repurchase intention; brand trust; brand love This study investigates the impact of brand experience, brand associations, and brand quality on loyalty intention and repurchase intention among online consumers, with brand trust and brand love serving as mediating variables. A survey was administered to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at five public universities in Northern India. The findings reveal that while brand experience, brand associations, and brand quality do not significantly influence loyalty intention, they exert a positive effect on repurchase intention. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that brand satisfaction influences affective commitment, whereas brand trust affects both affective and continuance commitment. Affective commitment is found to positively influence repurchase intention and loyalty, while continuance commitment does not exhibit a significant effect on these outcomes.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's intensely competitive firms marketplace, increasingly recognize the necessity of providing superior customer experiences across multiple channels, often at lower costs and through innovative product offerings. Despite the importance of such practices, relatively few empirical studies have comprehensively examined brand experience, particularly in the context of digital commerce. Prior research established that customer experience is critical determinant of brand performance in several product categories, including smartphones (Grewal et al., 2013; Morganosky & Cude, 2000; Otnes et al., 2012; Puccinelli et al., 2013; Srivastava & Kaul, 2014; Verhoef et al., 2013).

Brand experience conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing consumers' sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral responses to brand-related stimuli such as design, packaging, communications. and environment (Brakus et al., 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2015). Traditional marketing perspectives have been criticized for their excessive reliance on rational and utilitarian aspects of decision-making, while neglecting the emotional and experiential dimensions that significantly shape consumer choices (Schmitt, 1999; 2013). Experiential marketing, therefore, emphasizes the creation of sensory-emotional connections between brands consumers across multiple touchpoints (Khan et al., 2015).

This paradigm shift underscores the transition from a focus on functional benefits toward brand experiences as a driver of customer acquisition and retention (Barnes et al., 2014; Dagger & David, 2012; Oliver, 2015; Olsen et al., 2013; Schmitt, 2013, 2013; Vlachos & Tsamakos, 2011). Within this framework, customer loyalty emerges as a vital source of sustainable competitive advantage (Auh et al., 2012; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Johnson et al., 2013; Kandampully et al., 2015).

However, extant studies often treat brand experience and brand monolithic loyalty as constructs, overlooking their multidimensional nature (Brakus et al., 2013; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Olsen et al., 2013; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Such an approach risks neglecting the distinct vet interrelated components of these constructs. This study addresses this gap by examining specific dimensions namely, sensory, intellectual, behavioral facets of brand experience, as well as attitudinal and behavioral components of brand loyalty.

To extend current understanding, this research develops and tests a conceptual model in which brand experience influences consumer loyalty intentions (attitudinal and behavioral) through the mediating effects of brand love and brand trust. Specifically, this study explores three research questions:

- How do different dimensions of brand experience (sensory, intellectual, behavioral) affect loyalty intentions?
- 2. Do brand love and brand trust mediate the relationship between brand experience and loyalty intentions?

Does brand identification moderate the relationships proposed in the model?

Customer loyalty can manifest affectively, where consumers develop strong emotional attachment to the brand and resist switching, or through continuance loyalty, which characterized by weak commitment and susceptibility to alternative offers. For firms, cultivating affective loyalty is essential, as it reflects a deeper emotional bond with the brand. While satisfaction customer is considered a prerequisite for loyalty (Ballantyne et al., 2013), satisfaction alone is insufficient. Other factors such as brand trust, brand image, perceived quality, and brand equity play a critical role in shaping long-term loyalty.

Against this background, the present study investigates the influence of brand experience, brand associations, and brand quality on loyalty and repurchase intentions, emphasizing the mediating roles of brand love and brand trust. Data were collected from students at five public universities in Northern India, thereby providing insights into online shopping behaviors in an emerging market context.

## THEORICAL FRAMEWORK

The of rapid evolution technology and intensifying competition across industries have compelled firms to enhance their strategic focus on acquiring retaining customers. In such environment, cultivating customer loyalty is widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of long-term business sustainability. Firms with a loyal customer base not only secure recurring revenues through repeat purchases but also strengthen their market position by limiting customer attrition. Consequently, a vast body of literature has sought to identify and evaluate the antecedents of brand loyalty.

Early research, such as that of Cronin and Taylor (1992), established that consumer satisfaction following consumption experiences initial significantly shapes repurchase decisions. Satisfaction functions as a pivotal mechanism that guides repeat behaviors, purchasing thereby reinforcing loyalty. Similarly, Loudon and Bitta (1993) argue that loyalty is largely driven by the extent to which a brand consistently fulfills customer needs. Oliver (2015)further substantiated this view by demonstrating a strong positive association between satisfaction and loyalty: satisfied consumers not only exhibit repeat purchase behavior but also engage in positive word-of-mouth communication. Conversely, dissatisfaction tends to increase the probability of switching and negative advocacy.

Later studies, such as those by Simsek and Noyan (2013), expanded this framework by introducing additional variables such as trust, perceived value, quality, expectations, and brand image. Their findings reveal that satisfaction, trust, and perceived quality are key predictors of loyalty, while brand image and expectations exert significant effects on both trust and perceived value. Taken together, these insights indicate that while satisfaction is indispensable, it is not sufficient on its own to ensure enduring loyalty. Bowen and Shoemaker (2012) highlight that not every satisfied customer becomes loyal, suggesting the necessity of examining other influential constructs.

Recent studies have broadened this line of inquiry by incorporating brand value, brand equity, perceived quality, switching costs, and brand trust into models of loyalty formation (Sandvik & Duhan, 1996). Despite these advances, comprehensive examinations of how these variables interact within a unified framework remain relatively scarce. Building on this gap, the present study explores the effects of brand value, brand equity, brand quality, satisfaction, trust, and dual forms of (affective commitment continuance) on both brand loyalty and repurchase intentions. The following subsections discuss each construct in greater detail.

## PERCEIVED BRAND VALUE

Perceived value represents consumers' overall assessment of the trade-off between what they give and what they receive in an exchange. It reflects the comparative evaluation of a product's price, quality, and associated benefits (Hellier et al., 2015). A fundamental premise is that consumers expect to receive value that exceeds or at least equals the monetary and nonmonetary costs they incur. When this expectation is met, perceived value enhances satisfaction and subsequently fosters lovalty.

Cronin et al. (2000)demonstrated a significant positive relationship between perceived value and customer satisfaction, suggesting that higher perceived value leads to higher satisfaction. Moreover. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)established that perceived value also reinforces trust in the brand, as consumers tend to regard brands that deliver superior value as more reliable and credible.

Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

**H1**: Perceived value positively influences brand satisfaction.

**H2**: Perceived value positively influences brand trust.

## **PERCEIVED BRAND EQUITY**

Brand equity encapsulates the added value a consumer ascribes to a brand, beyond its functional utility. It comprises the knowledge, associations, and emotions that consumers connect with the brand (Keller, 2015). High brand equity not only differentiates products in competitive markets but also enhances consumers' perceptions of quality, trustworthiness, and satisfaction.

Szymanski and Hernard (2001) found that brand equity significantly affects satisfaction, reinforcing the view that satisfaction is a consequence of strong brand equity. Similarly, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) argued that brand equity and trust are closely linked, as equity fosters credibility and emotional attachment, thereby strengthening trust.

Thus, the following hypotheses are derived:

**H3**: Perceived brand equity positively influences brand satisfaction.

**H4**: Perceived brand equity positively influences brand trust.

## PERCEIVED BRAND QUALITY

Perceived quality refers to consumers' judgment about the overall excellence or superiority of a brand (Zeithaml, 1988). Unlike objective quality, which is based on measurable standards, perceived quality is inherently subjective, shaped by individual expectations, prior

experiences, and comparative evaluations.

Research has consistently confirmed that perceived quality is a key antecedent of satisfaction and trust. Olsen (2002) and Darsono & Junaedi (2013) reported that perceived quality strongly predicts satisfaction, consumers who perceive high quality are more likely to report positive consumption experiences. Similarly, Corritore et al. (2015) established that perceived quality fosters trust, since consumers interpret quality as a signal of reliability and consistency.

Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H5**: Perceived brand quality positively influences brand satisfaction.

**H6**: Perceived brand quality positively influences brand trust.

## SATISFACTION AND TRUST

Satisfaction represents a favorable emotional state resulting from the evaluation of consumption experiences (Kasmer, 2013). It is widely acknowledged as a critical antecedent to both loyalty and repurchase intentions. Satisfied consumers are more likely to exhibit repeat purchasing behavior and to advocate positively on behalf of the brand.

Trust, on the other hand, refers to consumers' confidence in a brand's reliability, honesty, and ability to meet expectations (Moorman et al., 1992). Brand trust functions as a psychological contract between the consumer and the brand, reducing perceived risk and fostering long-term relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Suh and Han (2015) highlight that trust encompasses dimensions such as competence, benevolence, and integrity.

The literature demonstrates a complex interplay between satisfaction and trust. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) argue that trust precedes while satisfaction, Berry (2000)emphasizes that trust reinforces satisfaction by reducing uncertainty. Conversely, Geyskens et al. (1999) and Yoon (2002) found that satisfaction can act as a precursor to trust. These findings suggest а reciprocal relationship the between two constructs.

Therefore, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H7: Brand satisfaction is positively associated with brand trust.

## AFFECTIVE AND CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT

Commitment is defined as an enduring psychological attachment to a brand, reflecting a consumer's willingness to maintain a long-term relationship (Suh & Han, 2015). It can be classified into two dimensions: affective commitment and continuance commitment.

Affective commitment is rooted emotional attachment and in identification with the brand. Consumers with high affective commitment perceive the brand as congruent with their values and identity, resulting in strong loyalty (Pring, 2012; McAlexander et al., 2002). Prior research, such as Verhoef (2015), confirms that affective commitment directly influences repurchase intentions, with antecedents including satisfaction, equity, and perceived value.

Continuance commitment, in contrast, reflects a weaker attachment based on perceived switching costs and

lack of alternatives (Fullerton, 2015). While continuance commitment may prevent customers from defecting in the short term, it does not foster advocacy or strong emotional loyalty. Indeed, Harrison-Walker (2002) found that continuance commitment often destabilizes consumer behavior, in contrast to affective commitment, which encourages active advocacy and support.

Building on this dual conceptualization, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H8**: Brand satisfaction positively influences affective commitment.

**H9**: Brand satisfaction positively influences continuance commitment.

**H10**: Brand trust positively influences affective commitment.

**H11**: Brand trust positively influences continuance commitment.

## LOYALTY AND REPURCHASE INTENTIONS

Brand loyalty is commonly defined as the consistent preference for a specific brand over alternatives within the same product category, leading to repeated purchasing behavior (Aaker, 2004). Loyal customers not only purchase repeatedly but also develop a

strong attitudinal attachment to the brand (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996).

Repurchase intention, while related to loyalty, is conceptually distinct. It represents the behavioral intention to buy the brand again in the future, which may stem from satisfaction, perceived value, or lack of alternatives. Unlike loyalty, which entails emotional attachment, repurchase intention may occur for pragmatic reasons such as lower price or convenience (Oliver, 1997).

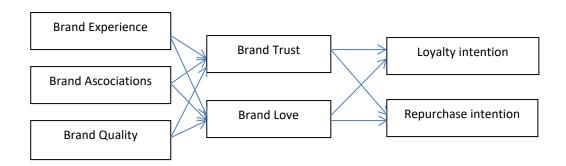
Given these distinctions, this study formulates the following hypotheses:

H12: Affective commitment positively influences repurchase intention.

H13: Affective commitment positively influences advocacy intention. H14: Continuance commitment positively influences repurchase intention.

H15: Continuance commitment positively influences advocacy intention.

The proposed research model is presented in **Figure 1**, summarizing the hypothesized relationships among constructs.



## RESEARCH DESIGN METHOD

This study was conducted among undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at stateowned universities in the Northern India region. The sampling technique employed was convenience sampling, chosen due to its accessibility and practicality in obtaining responses from a relatively homogeneous group of participants. Data collection was performed using а structured questionnaire distributed to 300 students, of which 290 were deemed valid for further analysis after screening for completeness and accuracy.

The primary objective of the study was to examine the influence of value, trust, and brand commitment on loyalty and repurchase intentions. For this purpose, three leading Android-based mobile phone brands—Samsung, Oppo, and Xiaomi were selected as focal cases, given their dominance and strong presence in the Northern Indian smartphone market. Specifically, the research sought to determine how the aforementioned constructs collectively shape loyalty outcomes and behavioral repurchase tendencies among student consumers.

The data were gathered through a face-to-face survey conducted in February 2020. The questionnaire was structured into three main sections. The section contained auestions designed to identify the respondent's current mobile phone brand. The section comprised items second intended to measure key constructs influencing repurchase intentions and brand loyalty, such as perceived value, equity, quality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment. The third section included questions capturing respondents' demographic profiles, such as gender, age, and educational level.

The measurement scales were adapted from validated instruments in prior literature. Perceived value was measured using items developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001), while brand equity measures were adapted from Simonin and Ruth (2012). Perceived quality was based on Aaker (2004). Brand trust was measured with scales from Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2013).Satisfaction measured using Oliver's (1999)framework. Affective and continuance commitment were adapted from Allen and Meyer (2010) and Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Repurchase intentions and brand loyalty were measured using items adapted from Putrevu and Lord (1994) and Zeithaml (1996).

All variables were assessed using a five-point Likert-type scale, with anchors ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree" or "very low") to 5 ("strongly agree" or "very high"). Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To test the research hypotheses, both multiple regression analyses and correlation analyses were employed, enabling examination of causal effects and intervariable relationships, respectively.

# DATA ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESES TEST RESULTS DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The demographic analysis revealed that 56.9% of the respondents were male, while 43.1% were female. In terms of educational attainment, 70.3% were undergraduate students, 14.1% had completed a master's degree, and

15.6% had obtained doctoral-level education. Regarding age distribution, 15.6% of respondents were younger than 20 years old, 46.2% were between 21 and 24 years old, 26.4% fell within the 25 to 28 age group, and 11.8% were above 28 years of age. This distribution suggests that the sample adequately represents the young adult consumer segment targeted by the selected smartphone brands.

#### **TESTING THE RESEARCH MODEL**

To evaluate the hypothesized relationships, correlation and multiple regression analyses were performed. The structural tests were conducted in sequential stages to capture the hierarchical nature of relationships among equity, value, quality, satisfaction, trust, commitment, repurchase intentions, and loyalty.

In the first stage, the effects of perceived equity, value, and quality on satisfaction were examined. The results indicated that the model yielded an explanatory power of  $R^2 = 0.427$ . However, the ANOVA test revealed that the model was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Consequently, the following hypotheses were rejected:

**H1**: Perceived value significantly influences satisfaction.

**H3**: Perceived equity significantly influences satisfaction.

**H5**: Perceived quality significantly influences satisfaction.

In the second stage, the influence of perceived equity, value, and quality on trust was tested. The regression results indicated R<sup>2</sup> = 0.279, and the ANOVA confirmed significance at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the following hypotheses were supported:

**H2**: Perceived value significantly influences trust.

**H4**: Perceived equity significantly influences trust.

**H6**: Perceived quality significantly influences trust.

In the third stage, the model tested the impact of trust and satisfaction on affective commitment. Results showed  $R^2 = 0.279$ , with significant effects confirmed by the ANOVA test. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were accepted:

**H8**: Satisfaction significantly influences affective commitment.

**H10**: Trust significantly influences affective commitment.

In the fourth stage, the impact of trust and satisfaction on continuance commitment was assessed. The explanatory power of the model was  $R^2 = 0.084$ . The findings revealed that trust exerted a significant influence on continuance commitment, while satisfaction did not (p = 0.528). Thus:

**H9**: Satisfaction significantly influences continuance commitment (rejected).

**H11**: Trust significantly influences continuance commitment (accepted).

In the fifth stage, the role of affective and continuance commitment on repurchase intention was examined. The regression yielded  $R^2 = 0.215$ . Results indicated that affective commitment had a significant effect on repurchase intention, while continuance commitment did not (p = 0.576). Therefore:

**H12**: Affective commitment significantly influences repurchase intention (accepted).

**H14**: Continuance commitment significantly influences repurchase intention (rejected).

In the sixth stage, the influence of affective and continuance commitment on loyalty was analyzed. The model revealed  $R^2 = 0.143$ . Results showed that affective commitment significantly influenced loyalty, while continuance commitment (p = 0.278) did not. Consequently:

**H13**: Affective commitment significantly influences loyalty (accepted).

**H15**: Continuance commitment significantly influences loyalty (rejected).

Finally, a correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship between satisfaction and trust. Results indicated a significant positive association between the two constructs (r = 0.538, p < 0.01). Accordingly:

**H7**: There is a positive relationship between satisfaction and trust (accepted).

## CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine the determinants of repurchase intentions and customer loyalty, with particular emphasis on the roles of perceived brand equity, value, satisfaction, quality, trust, commitment. The findings reveal that perceived brand equity, value, and quality significantly influence consumer trust in a brand; however, these variables were not found to exert a effect significant on consumer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated a positive relationship between brand trust and satisfaction, suggesting that trust enhances the

consumer's overall sense of satisfaction. When evaluating the effects of trust and satisfaction on consumer commitment, it was concluded that trust plays a pivotal role in fostering both affective and continuance commitment, whereas satisfaction exerts a significant influence only on affective commitment. These outcomes align with prior literature, which emphasizes that satisfaction alone does not guarantee commitment and that a satisfied consumer is not necessarily a loyal one (Bowen & Shoemaker, 2012).

The results further indicate that affective commitment significantly influences both repurchase intentions loyalty, whereas continuance commitment does not demonstrate a meaningful effect on these outcomes. This distinction reinforces the theoretical understanding that continuance commitment represents a weaker form of attachment compared to affective commitment. Consumers exhibiting continuance commitment are often motivated by the absence of alternatives or by cost advantages, conditions that do not necessarily translate into genuine loyalty consistent repurchase behavior. By contrast, affective commitment reflects a deeper emotional bond with the brand, thereby reducing the likelihood of brand switching (Fullerton, 2015).

In sum, the findings underscore the importance of trust and affective commitment as critical antecedents of consumer loyalty. Satisfaction and continuance commitment, while relevant, appear insufficient to sustain long-term loyalty on their own. For businesses, this implies that strategies focused solely on transactional satisfaction or cost-based retention are

inadequate. Instead, organizations should prioritize building trust and cultivating affective commitment, thereby creating enduring emotional connections with consumers. Successful brands are those that consistently engage with the consumer's world, offering compelling reasons beyond functional utility to encourage repeated purchases. By fostering trust and emotional attachment, firms can move closer to achieving authentic, long-term loyalty.

#### LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the effects of brand equity, perceived value, quality, satisfaction, trust, affective and commitment. continuance commitment on repurchase intention and loyalty within the context of Android-based smartphone brands. Specifically, it tested the mediating roles of trust and satisfaction on different forms of commitment, and the subsequent influence of these commitments on behavioral outcomes.

The research was conducted among undergraduate postgraduate students at state-owned universities in the Northern India region. Consequently, the findings primarily reflect the perspectives of younger and more educated consumer groups. The results demonstrate that brand trust and affective commitment the strongest predictors loyalty, repurchase intention and commitment whereas continuance exerts little influence.

Although the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the exclusive focus on student populations restricts the generalizability of the results to broader

demographic groups. Consumer attitudes toward loyalty and repurchase may vary across age cohorts, income levels, and professional backgrounds. Second, the research was limited to phone brands. mobile Lovalty determinants may differ across product particularly categories, between durable goods, fast-moving consumer goods, and services.

Future studies should therefore explore the antecedents of trust and affective commitment in greater depth, as these constructs emerged as critical drivers of loyalty. Expanding the research to diverse product categories and service sectors would also enrich of understanding the varying mechanisms that underlie consumer loyalty. Moreover, comparative studies between youth and adult consumers, or across cultural contexts, would further illuminate the dynamics of brand loyalty. Such extensions would not only strengthen the theoretical contributions of loyalty research but also provide actionable insights for practitioners seeking to design more effective lovalty strategies across heterogeneous markets.

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