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Exploring the Impact of Brand Experience and Brand Trust on Brand Loyalty

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Abstract

This research investigates the influence of Brand Experience (BE) and Brand Trust (BT) on Brand Loyalty (BL). The study employs a purposive sampling method to gather responses through a questionnaire distributed among 104 customers. The results indicate a noteworthy positive correlation between BE and BL, emphasizing the significance of customer perceptions in fostering loyalty. Furthermore, the study unveils an additional positive correlation between BT and BL, reinforcing the importance of establishing a trustworthy brand image. By leveraging these insights, managers can derive practical guidelines for enhancing BL through the improvement of brand experiences ad trust. The study provides valuable implications for both theoretical understanding and managerial practices. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the intricate dynamics between BE, BT, and BL. In addition, the findings offer practical recommendations for managers to cultivate and maintain BL.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Customer perceptions, Customer loyalty, Brand image

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of modern business, companies recognize that customer loyalty stands as a formidable catalyst for success in sales and marketing. The ability to attract and retain consumers to specific brands plays a pivotal role in determining the prosperity of a firm. As elucidated by Serafin and Horton (1994), every point of customer loyalty translates into a substantial \$100 million in profits for the company, underscoring the economic significance of cultivating and maintaining brand loyalty. Noteworthy enterprises such as Del Monte, Harley Davidson, and General Motors have strategically invested considerable resources to foster brand loyalty, as evidenced by the studies of Monzo (1994) and Lefeon (1993).

Achieving a high level of brand loyalty endows companies with a competitive advantage, as loyal consumers contribute to cost reduction in marketing efforts. Research by Rosenberg and Czepiel (1983) highlights that attracting a new customer incurs costs approximately six times higher than retaining an existing one. Furthermore, brand-loyal consumers demonstrate a willingness to pay premium prices and exhibit lower price sensitivity, as affirmed by studies from Ishnamurthi and Raj (1991) and Reichheld and Sasser (1990). Aaker (1991) adds that brand loyalty not only diminishes marketing costs but also provides the firm with trade leverage and a strategic timeframe to respond to competitive moves. In essence, loyalty to a firm's brands represents a strategic asset, identified as a significant source of the brands' equity.

The concept of a brand, as defined by the American Marketing Association, encapsulates a multifaceted identity comprising a name, term, sign, symbol, or combination aimed at identifying the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers (Keller et al., 2012). Beyond mere functional attributes, a brand is a collection of practical advantages offered to clients, extending into the realms of design, identity, packaging, communication, and the overall product environment (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zaarantonello, 2009).

Extensive attention is given to brand loyalty in marketing literature since Copeland's pioneering work over seven decades ago (Copeland, 1923). Successful utilization of brand loyalty by companies is identified as a pathway to increased profits, as emphasized by Oliver (2010). However, achieving high brand loyalty requires a nuanced understanding, and various studies, such as those conducted by Bandyopadhyway & Martell (2007), Brunner et al. (2008), Dick & Basu (1994), and Gounaris & Stathakopoulos (2004), have examined it from two perspectives: Behavioral loyalty and Attitude loyalty.

In the face of escalating market competition, maintaining market share and profitability becomes a challenge for many organizations. Brand loyalty emerges as a prerequisite for profitability and competitiveness in the marketing realm, as highlighted by Kim (2017) and Aaker (1997). This necessitates efforts by companies to make their brands not only attractive but also instil interest and loyalty among customers. The study aims to delve into the structural relationship among Brand Experience (BE), Brand Trust (BT), and Brand Loyalty (BL), recognizing these variables' role in shaping consumer behaviour.

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The subsequent sections of this research paper will unfold as follows: Part two will encompass a comprehensive review of literature, theoretical frameworks, and research hypotheses. Part three will focus on the research methodology employed, while part four will delve into data analysis and interpretations. The study will conclude by summarizing findings, offering recommendations, acknowledging study limitations, and suggesting avenues for further research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Consumer loyalty hinges on the brand experience, where interactions with a brand play a pivotal role in establishing trust, i.e. a key factor significantly influencing loyalty. Beyond loyalty, brand experiences foster emotional connections, marked by attraction and positive influence. This emotional connection, emerging from satisfaction, forms the basis for evaluating the initial brand consumption during the first purchase. A positive experience leads to trust and sustained consumption. Brands meeting consumer expectations establish trust, increasing the likelihood of customer loyalty.

2.1 Brand Experience

Brand Experience (BE), as a concept, is defined as the visual, auditory, tactile, gustative, and olfactory stimulations, along with feelings, emotions, cognitive processes, and physical actions induced by the brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). Alloza (2008) describing BE as the consumer's perception at every contact point, including advertising, personal interactions, and the quality of treatment received. The evolution of branding literature over the past decade highlights the crucial role of creating unique consumer experiences in developing stronger brands (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Morrison & Crane, 2007). BE, initially introduced by Brakus et al. (2009), has emerged as a pivotal construct in the branding literature, influencing the consumer-brand relationship (Chang & Chieng, 2006; Schembri, 2009).

BL, crucial for long-term profitability, is significantly influenced by BE, BE, and brand commitment (Maxarenhas O.A. et al., 2006). Past research emphasizes the impact of affective and behavioural aspects on brand relationships, exploring the relationship between brand experience, trust, commitment, and loyalty. In conclusion, BE is a multifaceted concept that plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer behaviour and predicting BL. Based on the existing literature, we formulate the hypothesis:

H1: Brand Experience positively correlates and predicts Brand Loyalty.

2.2 Brand Trust

Brand Trust (BT) functions as a risk reduction mechanism (Amine, 1998; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Trust, explored across various disciplines, is a crucial factor in sustaining buyer-seller relationships (Andaleeb, 1992; Dwyer et al., 1987; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). BL, where consumers consistently choose a company's products despite alternatives, is deeply rooted in BT. Martin et al. (2005) emphasize that Brand Trust is a paramount asset for a company's strategic success. The emergence of BT is intricately linked to prior interactions, playing a crucial role in mitigating perceived risks associated with brand-related behaviour (Rempel et al., 1985; Reichheld, 2003).

Conceptualized as a determinant of BL, distinct from brand affect, BT involves a thoughtful, cognitive process shaped by consumer experiences (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). This multi-dimensional construct includes cognitive and affective dimensions, encompassing expectations of reliability and emotional assessments related to brand integrity and benevolence (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; Becerra and Korgaonkar, 2011). The existing literature review explores the complex relationship between consumers and brands, highlighting the pivotal role of BT in BL, reducing perceived risks, and enhancing the overall brand-consumer relationship. Based on the literature, we formulate the hypothesis:

H2: Brand Trust positively correlates and predicts Brand Loyalty.

2.3 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty encompasses repeat purchase behaviour, brand sensitivity, and deep commitment. Odin et al. (2001) define it as repeat purchase behaviour and brand sensitivity, while Oliver (1997) emphasizes a profound commitment to consistently repurchase a preferred product or service. Additionally, Arnould et al. (2004) view BL as a deep commitment to repurchase a brand in the future.

Developing BL involves engaging consumers and fostering increased loyalty through growing consumer involvement. According to Reichfeld (1996), customer satisfaction positively influences BL, leading to reduced marketing costs and the attraction of new customers. Morgan and Hunt (1994; Fullerton, 2003) define BL as consistent purchasing and long-term use, encompassing both behavioural and attitudinal categories. Aaker (1991) links brand equity to loyalty, emphasizing its core role in a brand's overall value. Brand loyalty is manifested through repeat purchase behaviour, which can be evaluated through self-reported actions, characterizing a commitment to a specific brand within a product class.

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3. RESERCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this study aims to thoroughly investigate the intricate relationship between BE and BT in influencing BL among automobile customers in Kerala. The primary objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of BE and BT on BL within the context of car customers in Kerala. To achieve this goal, a descriptive research design is adopted, placing a strong emphasis on the precise measurement of the constructs (BE, BT, and BL). Established scales from previous studies by Sahin et al. (2012) and Hempel (2018) are utilized to ensure the reliability of the measurement.

The sample for the study consists of 104 automobile customers in Kerala, selected through purposive sampling – a non-probability technique. This method is chosen to ensure the inclusion of individuals with specific characteristics that are deemed relevant to the research objectives. Questionnaire items are carefully adapted from studies by Li and Petrick (2014) for BL, and Sahin et al. (2012) for both BT and BE. Data collection is facilitated through a self-administered questionnaire distributed among participants, with the use of purposive sampling to streamline the process and enhance efficiency.

The collected data undergoes a rigorous statistical analysis using SPSS, enabling the computation of mean, binomial correlation, binomial regression, and ANOVA. This comprehensive approach is crucial in gaining a nuanced understanding of the collected data. The study is conducted over the period from October to November 2023, with data collection occurring during this time frame to ensure the relevance and contemporaneity of the findings. The research framework explores three key constructs: BL, BT, and BE, with BL and BT treated as independent variables hypothesized to have significant relationships with the dependent variable, BL. In summary, this study aspires to contribute valuable insights into the relationships between BE, BT, and BL among automobile customers in Kerala, bolstered by the use of established scales and a meticulous statistical analysis that enhances the reliability and validity of the findings.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic Profile

As shown in Table 1, among the respondents, 62.5% identified as male, 36.5% as female, and 1% as others. In terms of age distribution, 56.7% were 25 years and below, 37.5% fell within the 25 to 39 years age range, while 2.9% each belonged to the 40 to 54 years and 55 years and above categories. Educational backgrounds varied, with 7.7% having completed Higher Secondary School and below, 45.2% holding Bachelor degrees or diplomas, and 47.1% possessing Master's degrees or higher qualifications. Regarding occupation, the majority (58.7%) were employed in the private sector, followed by self-employed individuals at 26.9%, while 6.7% and 7.7% were government employees and involved in business, respectively. Examining income levels, 55.8% reported an annual income of less than 2 lakhs, 7.7% fell within the 2 to 4 lakhs bracket, 26% earned between 4 to 6 lakhs, and 10.6% had an annual income of 6 lakhs and above. This comprehensive breakdown offers insights into the demographic composition of the surveyed population across various socio-economic factors.

Table No 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	62.5%
	Female	38	36.5%
	Others	1	1.0%
Age	Below 25 Yrs	59	56.7%
	25 Yrs to 39 Yrs	39	37.5%
	40 Yrs to 54 Yrs	3	2.9%
	55 Yrs & Above	3	2.9%
Education	HSS & Below	8	7.7%
	Bachelor Degree / Diploma	47	45.2%
	Master Degree or Above	49	47.1%
Occupation	Self-employed	28	26.9%
	Govt Employee	7	6.7%
	Business	8	7.7%
	Private Sector	61	58.7%
Income	Less than 2 Lakh p.a.	58	55.8%
	2 Lakhs to 4 Lakhs p.a.	8	7.7%
	4 Lakhs to 6 Lakhs p.a.	27	26.0%
	6 Lakhs & Above p.a	11	10.6%

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4.2 Descriptive Statistics

In the data analysis, respondents evaluated the brand using a Likert scale (1-5). The brand's sensory impact averaged 3.59, indicating a moderate positive response. Positive emotions (3.74) and satisfaction with brand choices (3.74) were reported. Notably, the overall brand quality received a relatively higher score of 3.84. Trustworthiness aspects, including reliability (3.75), lack of disappointment (3.62), and willingness to rely on the brand in the future (3.63), demonstrated favorable perceptions. Attributes like confidence in brand performance (3.73) and satisfaction with value for money (3.68) were highlighted. Respondents expressed a preference for the brand as their first choice for future car purchases (3.52). These findings provide insights into the positive overall evaluation of the brand, emphasizing strengths in sensory impact, trustworthiness, and specific brand attributes. The results contribute to a nuanced understanding of consumer perceptions and preferences in the automotive market.

Table No 2: Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items

Codes	Measurement Items	Average
BE1	This brand makes strong impression on my senses.	3.59
BE2	I feel good when I use this brand.	3.74
BE3	I am satisfied with my decisions to use this brand.	3.74
BE4	I would select this brand next time if I have to buy passenger car.	3.65
BE5	This brand is exactly what I need.	3.61
BE6	I am pleased with the service I get from this brand.	3.63
BE7	The overall quality of the brand is excellent.	3.84
BT1	This brand is trustworthy.	3.72
BT2	The promise made by the brand is reliable	3.75
BT3	This brand never disappoints me.	3.62
BT4	I am willing to rely on this brand in the future.	3.63
BT5	I trust this brand completely.	3.63
BT6	I am confident in the brand's ability to perform well.	3.73
BL1	This brand will be my first choice in the future when buying a passenger car.	3.52
BL2	I feel confident in Tata Motors.	3.76
BL3	Tata Motors would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns	3.64
BL4	Tata Motors guarantees satisfaction.	3.64
BL5	I get good value for my money from this brand.	3.68
BL6	This brand's staff efficiently deals with customer complaints.	3.72
BL7	I believe Tata Motors provides more benefits than other brands in its category.	3.81
BL8	Overall, I would say the quality of my interaction with this brand's employees is excellent.	3.68

4.3 Reliability

Table 0 presents information on three constructs: BE, BT, and BL. For BE, there are 7 items, and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.909, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items measuring this construct. BT consists of 6 items with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.941, suggesting strong reliability in assessing trust-related aspects within the brand. In the case of BL, there are 8 items, and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.937, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items measuring BL. Overall, the provided Cronbach's Alpha values, ranging from 0.909 to 0.941, suggest that the items within each construct are reliable in consistently measuring the intended aspects of BL, BT, and BL. Researchers generally consider Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 as acceptable, indicating robust reliability for the constructs in question.

Table No 3: Reliability Analysis

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Experience	7	.909
Brand Trust	6	.941
Brand Loyalty	8	.937

4.4 Correlation

The correlation analysis aimed to assess the relationships among BE, BT, and BL. The results revealed significant correlations among the three variables. The correlation coefficient between BE and BL was found to be .786, indicating a strong positive correlation. Similarly, the correlation coefficient between BT and BL was .902, suggesting a robust positive correlation. Additionally, the correlation coefficient between BE and BT was .812, signifying a strong positive relationship.

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These correlations were found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). The objective of the correlation analysis was to determine the significant relationship between BE and BT on BL. The null hypothesis (H0) posited that there is no significant relationship, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) suggested a significant relationship. Given the observed strong positive correlations, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis, concluding that both BE and BT have a significant positive relationship with BL.

Table No 4: Correlation Coefficients among Constructs

	Brand Trust	Brand Loyalty
Brand Experience	.812	.786
Brand Trust		.902

Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).

The data indicates no significant differences in BE, BT, and BL among both male and female individuals. Additionally, the study suggests that there are no notable variations in these brand-related factors across different income groups and age groups. The research concludes that gender, income, and age do not appear to significantly impact BE, BT, or BL.

4.5 Multiple Regression

The multiple regression analysis reveals a robust model, as indicated by an R square of 82.2%, with BE and BT serving as significant predictors for BL. The higher levels of BE and BT are associated with increased BL, collectively explaining 82.2% of the variance. The coefficient interpretation confirms that both BE and BT exert statistically significant positive effects on BL. Moving on to hypothesis testing, the results support the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) for BE, indicating a significant positive impact on BE, explaining 15.8% of the variation. Similarly, for BT, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (H2) is accepted, with a significant positive impact of 77.4%, highlighting its substantial contribution to BL. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of both BE and BT in influencing BL.

5. FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary: The survey measured BE, BT, and BL, indicating positive perceptions across these constructs. Reliability analysis showed high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha: 0.909 to 0.941). Demographic profiling revealed respondent characteristics across gender, age, education, occupation, and income. Correlation analysis established strong positive relationships between BE, BT, and BL. The study found no significant differences across gender, income, and age groups. Multiple regression analysis identified a robust model (R square: 82.2%), confirming significant positive impacts of BE and BT on BL. Findings support rejection of null hypotheses, emphasizing the importance of both constructs in influencing BL.

Recommendations: In light of these research findings, the study offers a set of strategic recommendations aimed at further solidifying the brand's position and cultivating positive consumer perceptions. To sustain and strengthen the positive and impactful brand image revealed in the study, it is crucial for the brand to maintain a consistent and strong brand impression. This involves an ongoing commitment to overall brand quality, which is fundamental for sustaining and enhancing the brand's image over time. To enhance trustworthiness, transparent communication, reliable promises, and consistent delivery on commitments should be emphasized. These strategies collectively contribute to building stronger trust among consumers, reinforcing the overall brand image. To foster brand loyalty, the study recommends positioning the brand as the first choice for future purchases and consistently providing perceived benefits that outshine competitors.

Capitalizing on the observed positive correlation between BE, BT, and BL, integrated marketing campaigns should highlight both brand image and trustworthiness to create a synergistic effect, reinforcing brand loyalty. Incorporating sustainability initiatives into brand practices is recommended to align with growing consumer awareness and appreciation for environmentally conscious brands. Ensuring internal brand consistency by aligning employees with brand values through training programs is crucial for maintaining external brand consistency. These recommendations collectively form an adaptive approach, allowing the brand to stay aligned with dynamic market trends and ensuring a continued positive perception among consumers.

Managerial Implications: The study hold significant managerial implications for practitioners in the automotive industry. The positive perceptions across BE, BT, and BL underscore the importance of cultivating a favourable brand image and maintaining trust to enhance customer loyalty. Managers should focus on creating strong brand impressions, ensuring reliable brand promises, and delivering excellent overall brand quality. The high internal consistency of the constructs indicates the reliability of the measurement tools, providing managers with confidence in assessing and monitoring

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customer perceptions. Overall, strategic efforts directed towards enhancing brand experience and trust are crucial for fostering brand loyalty and long-term customer relationships.

Theoretical Implications: The study contribute to the understanding of the relationships between BE, BT, and BL. The significant positive correlations between BE and BL, BT and BL, as well as BE and BT, further validate the interconnectedness of these constructs. The rejection of the null hypothesis in the correlation and multiple regression analyses underscores the significant positive impact of both BE and BT on BL. This aligns with existing literature but adds empirical support specific to the automotive context. The research refutes the notion that demographic factors significantly influence BL, BT, or BE, emphasizing the universal nature of these constructs across gender, income, and age groups. Overall, these theoretical insights contribute to the broader field of consumer behaviour and brand management, providing a foundation for future research and theoretical development.

6. CONCLUSION

Limitations of the Study: The study has several limitations that need consideration. First, there is a potential limitation related to respondent engagement, as some participants may not have taken the questionnaire seriously, potentially impacting the reliability of the data. Another limitation is inherent in the cross-sectional research design employed, which limits the ability to establish causation or track changes over time. Additionally, respondents' hesitation in answering certain questions poses a potential source of bias, especially when addressing sensitive or confidential topics. These limitations highlight the need for caution in interpreting the results and suggest areas for improvement in future research endeavours.

Scope of Further Research: Researchers aiming to advance the field of brand-related factors and customer perceptions have promising avenues for exploration. Firstly, future studies can involve the manipulation of variables associated with building brand loyalty, allowing for a nuanced exploration of each variable's distinct exposures and their influence on customer loyalty development. To deepen the study's insights, researchers can incorporate different variables, measurements, and dimensions based on a comprehensive review and integration of existing literature, fostering a more holistic and nuanced approach. Shifting from a purely descriptive design to experimental analysis in future research would facilitate a more rigorous examination of causal relationships, providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play. Moreover, researchers are encouraged to apply the model developed in this study to other industries to verify its results and assess its adaptability. This cross-industry application ensures a broader and more practical impact, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of brand-related factors across diverse contexts.

Conclusion: This research study delves into the dynamics of BE, BT, and BL within the broader context of brand management. It highlights the critical role of BL in maintaining brand recall and preventing customer defection amidst market challenges. Through rigorous statistical analyses, the study affirms the pivotal significance of both BE and BT in influencing overall BL, emphasizing that a robust BL serves as the cornerstone for enduring customer connections and resistance to switching. The primary contribution of this study lies in advancing the understanding of the intricate interplay between BE and BT, thus contributing to the evolving theory on BL. The strategic implications extend beyond these constructs, advocating for a comprehensive, customer-centric approach in brand management. Businesses are encouraged to prioritize recruitment, training, and internal communication policies to foster positive customer experiences and trust, ultimately leading to heightened customer satisfaction.

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