

Building Lasting Connections: Cultivating Brand loyalty through Relationship and Commitment

Farah Noreen Arshad¹

¹ Scholar, Institute of Communication Studies, The University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Email: faraharshad057@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Because of the cutthroat rivalry that exists in the fashion sector, customers are faced with a bewildering selection of options, which makes it extremely difficult to win and keep their allegiance. Using the literature on relationship marketing as a jumping off point, this study investigates the dynamic link that exists between "brand trust," "customer satisfaction," "brand evaluation," "brand commitment," "brand relationship," and "brand loyalty" in the context of Pakistan's fashion sector. This study conducts an in-depth analysis of 460 answers from important fashion brand customers in the South Punjab province of Pakistan. The data utilised in this investigation was gathered by means of structured surveys that were carried out using the mall intercept methodology. The use of the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique allows for a comprehensive investigation into the ways in which the variables are related to one another on the basis of well-established theoretical premises. The conclusions of this research have important repercussions for marketing executives and brand managers, since they provide such individuals with useful techniques to strengthen client loyalty. These tactics place a strong emphasis on the management of online brand communities and make use of new technology to strengthen market orientation. They are widely regarded as being essential for the cultivation of "brand loyalty" in the fashion industry.



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Corresponding Author's Email: faraharshad057@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

It is difficult for marketers to cultivate "brand loyalty" in today's dynamic market since customers have a multitude of brand alternatives to choose from (Broniarczyk & Griffin, 2014; Camacho, De Jong, & Stremersch, 2014). This presents a challenge for marketers. According to recent research Das, Agarwal, Malhotra, and Varshneya (2019); Shukla, Banerjee, and Singh (2016), consumers have more leeway than ever before to switch brands and are less likely to feel obligated to remain faithful to a single one. According to Menidjel, Benhabib, and Bilgihan (2017), as a result of this, marketers are placing a greater emphasis on constructing and preserving robust connections with their clientele. They do this because they feel that investing in relationship marketing will result in favorable outcomes in an environment that is marked by intense competition. According to Kumar and Kaushik (2020), one of the most important assets for businesses in the current competitive landscape is their ability to successfully achieve "brand loyalty" via commitment.

According to Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010); de Jorge Moreno and Carrasco (2016), the global fashion sector has seen extraordinary expansion in the number of fast fashion firms over the course of the previous decade. According to Ilonen, Wren, Gabrielsson, and Salimäki (2011), the primary business strategy behind fast fashion firms is to provide the most recent fashion trends together with high-quality items that are reasonably priced. These brands adapt to the expectations of consumers in a quick and agile manner (Choi, 2014). Fast fashion has had a revolutionary impact on the textile and apparel industries all over the world Su and Chang (2017), and its market is rapidly expanding in developing nations such as Pakistan, India, and China (Phau & Leng, 2008). In these countries, consumers have the option of purchasing fast fashion brands that are either domestic or international.

The scholarly research on consumer behavior towards fast fashion firms is still scarce Kim, Chun, and Ko (2017), despite the fact that fast fashion has been the subject of a great deal of discussion in the fashion press. According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), the majority of currently available studies concentrate either on young college students or on older age groups. This leaves a study vacuum in regards to understanding branded fashion goods depending on age and gender in developing nations. In an effort to fill this void, the purpose of this research is to investigate customers' "brand loyalty" in connection to fast fashion brands, with "brand commitment", "trust", "satisfaction", and "brand relationship" serving as moderators. It is possible for brand managers and marketers to develop more successful marketing strategies by first gaining an understanding of the qualities of consumers and their devotion to disposable fashion.

In the context of fast-moving consumer clothing companies, this study explores and analyses a comprehensive customer loyalty model. According to Menidjel et al. (2017), the brands in question are distinguished by their high rate of product turnover and typically inexpensive pricing. As a result of the frequent frequency of their purchases, maintaining customer loyalty is essential. According to Blasi, Brigato, and Sedita (2020), those who have a need for constant change in their fashion consumption patterns and have a penchant for impulsive purchase behaviors are likely to be drawn to the phenomena of fast fashion goods.

Based on the research motivations and the anticipated contribution to the fast fashion sector, the following objectives for this study are intended to be achieved by its completion: The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which factors such as "brand trust," "brand satisfaction," and brand assessment might be regarded as potential predictors of "brand loyalty." The purpose of this research is to provide empirical support for the "brand commitment" paradigm, which believes that the relationship commitment between customers and a brand function as a mediator between several elements such as interdependence, brand satisfaction, trust, and appraisal, and their influence on "Brand loyalty." The purpose of this research is to investigate whether or not "brand relationship" acts as a moderator in the connection between "brand pleasure," "brand trust," and "brand evaluation" and "brand commitment."

This particular piece of writing is structured in the following manner: A review of the relevant previous research is carried out in Section 2, along with the development of the research project's assumptions. The research methodologies that were utilised in this study are outlined in Section 3 of the article, while Section 4 of the paper gives a full overview of the data analysis techniques that were utilised and highlights the findings that were obtained. At the end of the report, Section 5 presents a complete analysis of the managerial implications, discusses the limitations of the study, and makes recommendations for more research.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Brand Loyalty

A brand serves as a powerful tool for sellers when consumers come to regard it as their "preferred brand" (Veloutsou, 2015). Relationship marketing, on the other hand, delves into understanding the connection between consumers and their "Brand loyalty" Tsai, Huang, and Chiu (2012). Strandberg, Wahlberg, and Öhman (2015) eloquently defines

loyalty as a "deeply held commitment to consistently repurchase or patronize a preferred product or service in the future, despite external influences and marketing efforts that may attempt to sway them."

Both marketers and researchers agree that loyal customers actively promote a company's products and exhibit steadfast behaviors. As such, achieving customers' "Brand loyalty" is a pivotal objective for companies Kuenzel and Halliday (2010); Nikhashemi, Paim, Osman, and Sidin (2015), as it is mutually beneficial for both companies and their customers.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that acquiring a new customer is five times more costly than retaining existing ones (Berry, 1995). Companies stand to gain significant profits through loyal customers due to their willingness to make frequent purchases, experiment with new products or services, provide valuable feedback, and offer genuine recommendations to others (Dhurup, van Schalkwyk, & Tsautse, 2018; So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016). Hence, "Brand loyalty" becomes a crucial strategic advantage, enabling firms to nurture long-term relationships with consumers (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019; Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Soedarto, Kurniawan, & Sunarsono, 2019).

"Brand loyalty" encompasses systematic and regular purchasing behavior, specifically directed towards a particular brand Belaid and Temessek Behi (2011), even in the face of price changes or alterations in product features (Esmailpour & Abdolvand, 2016). It exemplifies a customer's unwavering dedication to a brand that goes beyond superficial influences.

2.2. Customer Satisfaction, Brand Commitment and Brand Loyalty

According to Eskafi, hossein hosseini, and Mohammadzadeh Yazd (2013); Wang and Wu (2012) "customer satisfaction" is a significant factor in determining "Brand loyalty", and it is dependent on the alignment of consumer requirements and expectations with what the brand offers (Eskafi et al., 2013; Wang & Wu, 2012). According to Hallencreutz and Parmler (2021), maintaining a high level of "customer satisfaction" results in a multitude of benefits for a business. Some of these benefits include improving the company's image, maintaining the company's present market share, encouraging an increase in customer loyalty, lowering the number of complaints received, and improving financial performance. According to several studies Bloemer and Odekerken-Schröder (2002); Fandos Roig, Garcia, and Moliner Tena (2009); Shabani Nashtae, Heidarzadeh Hanzaei, and Mansourian (2017), in order for customers to be satisfied with a product or service, they need to believe that it lives up to the expectations they had for it. Research done in the past Belaid and Temessek Behi (2011); Cronin Jr, Brady, and Hult (2000); Lai (2015); Rust and Zahorik (1993) provides more evidence that customer pleasure has an effect on "Brand loyalty". According to Keller (2013), consumer loyalty frequently results from customer happiness. This notion was supported by Lombart and Louis (2014), who demonstrated a cause-and-effect connection between "customer satisfaction" and loyalty (Song, Wang, & Han, 2019). Indisputable evidence suggests that a satisfied and loyal customer base not only underpins economic success but also ensures a durable edge over one's competitors (Chhabra, 2017).

In addition, fascinating findings from earlier research imply that contentment plays an essential role in the process of building a relationship between certain luxury companies and their customers (Shimul & Phau, 2018). According to Hallencreutz and Parmler (2021), it is thought that a high level of "customer satisfaction" not only strengthens the company's image but also protects its market share while simultaneously encouraging an increase in customer loyalty and reducing the number of complaints received. According to the findings of a study Asgarpour, Hamid, Sulaiman, and Asgari (2014), however, pleased consumers might not always be loyal customers and they might not always engage in good word-of-mouth advertising. This was found despite the fact that these customers were content with the product or service. As a result, marketers are moving beyond the concept of merely satisfying customers Phau and Leng (2008) and shifting their attention to developing a deep connection between customers and companies via commitment (Veloutsou, 2015).

As a result, the purpose of this research is not only to investigate the direct connection that exists between satisfied customers and "Brand loyalty", but also the indirect impacts that are brought about by "brand commitment".

H1: The contentment of customers has a positive correlation with their commitment to a certain brand.

H1a: The level of loyalty to a brand is directly proportional to the level of "customer satisfaction".

H1b: The happiness of customers has a beneficial impact, via "brand commitment", on the loyalty of consumers to a particular brand.

2.3. Brand Trust, Brand Commitment and Brand Loyalty

According to Lai (2015), trust may be defined as the creation of favorable views towards an individual or institution. These attitudes assist to minimize cognitive doubts and insecurities, which in turn makes it easier to build connections with customers that will persist for a long time. According to Hidayanti and Nuryakin (2018), trust in the world of brands is exemplified as an unwavering conviction in the ability of a brand to generate good outcomes, which is founded on the pledges made by the brand. In this context, how knowledgeable and trustworthy a firm is seen to be by its customers is of the utmost importance. Several studies have provided evidence of the major influence that trust has in predicting "Brand loyalty" (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Lee, Moon, Kim, & Mun, 2015). The development of "brand trust," which derives from prior interactions and engagements, is an essential step in the process of cultivating connections that will last over time. Scholars usually depict the development of "brand trust" as an individual's experience learning journey that develops gradually over time (Lee et al., 2015). This is a common interpretation of how scholars view the phenomenon. Previous study carried out by Hidayanti and Nuryakin (2018) on laptop brands and by Song et al. (2019) on branded coffee shops consistently indicates a remarkable association between trust and loyalty. This is a significant finding.

The influence of "brand commitment" on the link between trust and "brand loyalty" has been discovered. This is significant because trust plays a critical role in the process of promoting trade interactions that are beneficial to both parties (Lee et al., 2015). It has come to be widely acknowledged that the concept of commitment is an essential component in the field of services marketing (Chai, Malhotra, & Dash, 2015; Fullerton, 2003; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This is due to the fact that commitment facilitates and maintains relationships between organizations and their customers (Chai et al., 2015; Fullerton, 2003; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), establishing a solid connection between commitment and trust is one of the most important factors in determining how successful relationship marketing will be. According to Kemp and Bui (2011), the term "brand commitment" refers to the process through which customers establish economic, emotional, and psychological commitments to a particular brand. According to the results of Moreira and Silva (2015), there is a link between trust and commitment that is positive and mutually reinforcing. This relationship leads to the establishment of shared value and fosters a strong and unshakable commitment. Multiple scholars working in the field of marketing Kesharwani and Singh Bisht (2012); Lombart and Louis (2014); Menidjel et al. (2017), among others, have highlighted the value of trust. According to Gounaris (2005), trust plays a vital role in the cultivation of commitment. According to Houjeir and Brennan (2017), higher levels of trust are positively connected with rising levels of customer commitment. According to the empirical findings presented by Fandos Roig et al. (2009), the statement that "brand trust" has a positive influence on "brand commitment" is supported by the data.

The corpus of previous research has unequivocally shown a strong connection between "brand trust" and "brand loyalty" (Soedarto et al., 2019). As a consequence of this, there is a positive relationship that can be proven to exist between an increased degree of trust in a brand and a stronger inclination to maintain loyalty towards that brand over an extended length of time. An exhaustive analysis of the existing body of literature served as the basis for the formulation of the hypotheses that are presented in this investigation.

H2: Brand trust positively influences brand loyalty

H2a: Brand trust has a positive effect on brand commitment

H2b: Brand trust positively impacts brand loyalty through brand commitment

2.4. Brand Evaluation, Brand Commitment and Brand Loyalty

The utilisation of basic numerical indicators to measure “brand evaluation” is limited in its ability to capture the complex and varied judgements of brand value (Kim et al., 2017). When consumers evaluate brands, they undergo a multifaceted cognitive process that considers several features including both tangible and intangible clues connected with the brand as a product and as a persona (Gilbert & Hewlett, 2003; Puzakova, Kwak, & Rocereto, 2013; Swoboda, Pennemann, & Taube, 2012). The collective assessments mentioned above contribute to the formation of comprehensive “brand evaluations”, which play a crucial role in defining consumers' emotional reactions towards a brand. These reactions comprise many attitudes such as affinity, confidence, and attractiveness (Sirianni, Bitner, Brown, & Mandel, 2013). The perception and evaluation of a brand play a crucial role in predicting consumer purchases (Veloutsou, 2015). The evaluation of a brand is derived from the cognitive processes of consumers, which involve the utilisation of previous experiences and newly acquired information to make judgements about the brand (Bapat & Thanigan, 2016; Nurcahyo, 2016). It is crucial to acknowledge that the actions undertaken by a firm have the potential to either augment or diminish the perceived value of a brand among consumers (Puzakova et al., 2013). Various methodologies have been put forth by scholars to ascertain the worth of a brand (Calderon, Cervera, & Molla, 1997). However, the final determinant is in the attributes that consumers consider essential during their decision-making process (Nedungadi, 1990).

Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet (2011) conducted a significant study that provides support for the proposition that emotive commitment plays a mediating role in the relationship between brand value and loyalty. Consumers that demonstrate a high level of dedication often establish substantial connections with a brand, connecting with it in a deep and meaningful way, and regarding it as an essential component of their daily existence.

Based on a comprehensive review of the existing scholarly literature, it becomes apparent that the assessment of a brand's overall performance holds significant importance in fostering and maintaining “Brand loyalty”.

H3: Brand evaluation is positively associated with brand loyalty

H3a: Brand evaluation directly impacts brand commitment

H3b: Brand commitment serves as a mediating factor between brand evaluation and brand loyalty

2.5. Brand Commitment and Brand Loyalty

The notion of “brand commitment” is a multifaceted construct, incorporating diverse facets including economic, emotional, and psychological bonds that clients establish with a brand (Kemp & Bui, 2011). Hidayanti and Nuryakin (2018) claim that the act of adopting a brand is an intentional behaviour driven by a perceived congruence between the brand and an individual's own preferences and aspirations. Commitment plays a pivotal role in the domain of services marketing, serving as a crucial element in cultivating enduring relationships between firms and their customers (Chai et al., 2015; Fullerton, 2003; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). The aforementioned notion has garnered substantial attention within the realm of scholarly enquiry focused on the dynamics between enterprises and their clientele, as it encompasses the intrinsic essence of customer loyalty towards a specific brand (Tabrani, Amin, & Nizam, 2018). The complex interconnection between “brand commitment” and loyalty highlights the pivotal significance of commitment in fostering consumer loyalty towards a brand.

The existing body of literature emphasises the significant influence that “brand commitment” has on “Brand loyalty”. As individuals connect with a brand on multiple occasions, they gradually acquire a thorough comprehension of its design, quality, reputation, and excellence. This accumulation of knowledge and experience fosters a robust inclination to establish a long-lasting commitment to consistently patronize the brand

(Strandberg et al., 2015). As a result, this dedication cultivates a profound feeling of allegiance, prompting customers to exhibit a preference for and advocate for the brand's offerings in subsequent instances (Fatema, Azad, & Masum, 2015; Rahi, Yasin, & Alnaser, 2017; Sasmita & Suki, 2015). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) provide evidence in favor of the notion that "brand commitment" plays a pivotal role in fostering "Brand loyalty". Consistent with this proposition, the current investigation posits the subsequent hypothesis:

H4: Brand commitment is positively associated with brand loyalty.

2.6. Brand Relationship

The establishment of robust consumer-" brand relationship's is contingent upon the conviction that the brand possesses the ability to continually provide exemplary performance and fulfil the expectations of customers (Soedarto et al., 2019). Many firms make investments in relationship marketing, aiming to establish enduring and significant connections with their clients (Mende, Bolton, & Bitner, 2013). According to Shimul and Phau (2018), these types of relationships facilitate effective communication between sellers and buyers. Additionally, Fetscherin, Boulanger, Gonçalves Filho, and Quiroga Souki (2014) argue that they also allow customers to establish stronger connections with businesses. Interestingly, it has been observed that consumers can display enduring "Brand loyalty" not only because of the company's performance or perceived superiority, but rather as a result of the meaningful relationships they have established with the brand, which contribute to enhancing their overall quality of life (Pulh, Mencarelli, & Chaney, 2019).

The study conducted by Ajitha and Sivakumar (2019) provides empirical evidence supporting the fundamental components of a "brand relationship", including bidirectional communication and emotional reciprocity, which are relevant to a wide range of product and service brands. The extant body of research indicates that there is a positive relationship between customers' level of brand identification and the magnitude of advantages they receive from the brand. As a result, individuals demonstrate a greater propensity to allocate their social, financial, and temporal assets towards fostering and maintaining their affiliations with brands (Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010). According to Kumar and Kaushik (2020), the concept of "brand relationship" refers to the enduring dedication that consumers exhibit towards inanimate items that they purchase and utilise, hence playing a role in the establishment, marketing, and distribution of the brand.

The study conducted by Pourazad, Stocchi, and Pare (2019) examines the purchasing intentions of young consumers in Iran towards luxury brands. The research emphasizes the noteworthy correlation between the intention to acquire a luxury brand's extension and the mediating influence of emotional consumer-brand interactions. Nevertheless, this study does not establish the moderating influence of perceived fit in the connection between emotional consumer-" brand relationships and purchase intentions for a luxury brand's extension. This highlights the need for additional investigation that incorporates "brand relationship" as a moderator between "brand commitments Wang, Wu, Lin, and Chen (2017) and "Brand loyalty" (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). Drawing upon the research conducted by Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) as well as Albert and Merunka (2013); Broniarczyk and Griffin (2014) highlight the significance of consumers' self-identification with brands in influencing consumer-" brand relationships. This self-identification is instrumental in establishing trust in the brand Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) and cultivating a sense of commitment (Jahn, Gaus, & Kiessling, 2012).

H5: Brand relationship moderates the mediated relationship between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty through brand commitment

H5a: brand relationship moderates the mediated relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty through brand commitment

H5b: Bbrand relationship moderates the mediated relationship between brand evaluation and brand loyalty through brand commitment

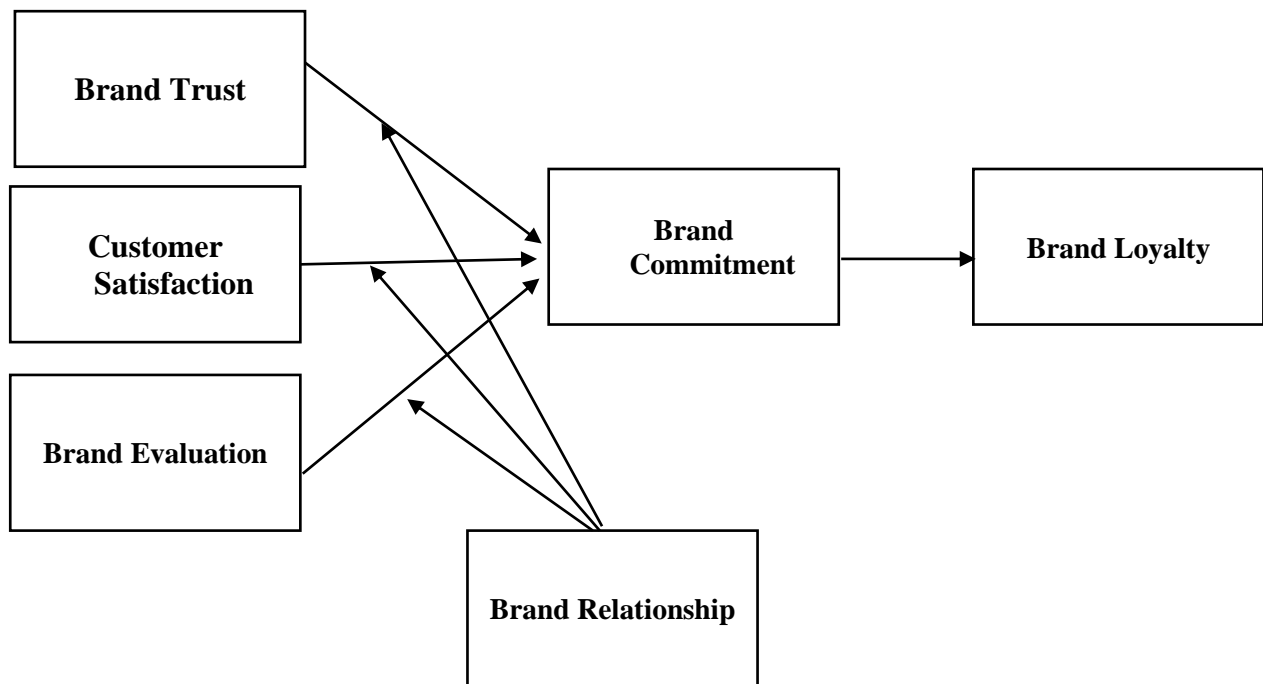


Figure 1: Conceptual model derived from literature

3. Methodology

Given that the primary objective of this study is to examine already established theoretical relationships and conduct rigorous theory testing, a quantitative methodology was chosen to rigorously test the hypotheses. The utilization of quantitative methods enables us to employ statistical analyses and derive empirical evidence to support our research objectives. In the forthcoming sections, comprehensive details regarding the relevant methods employed in this study are elucidated. These methodological intricacies shed light on the robustness of our approach and the validity of our findings.

3.1. Study Setting

The fashion clothing industry in Pakistan is a highly profitable venture, and numerous establishments are vying for their share of the market. With fierce competition among fashion firms, significant investments are made in promotions, employee training, and building enduring customer relationships. Given the intense rivalry among brands, "customer satisfaction" becomes a crucial factor in fostering loyalty and maintaining their trust and contentment through unwavering commitment. The fast-fashion sector, in particular, faces relentless competition, making it imperative not only to attract new customers but also to retain them over the long term and encourage repeat purchases of clothing items.

3.2. Participants and Procedure

The research focused on consumers of stitched fabric based fashion products in Southern Punjab province of Pakistan, specifically covering the areas of Bahawalpur, Multan, and Rahim Yar Khan. The targeted brands of interest were J. Junaid Jamshed, Bissino or Men's Eastern wear, Nishat Linen, Sana Safinaz, and Khaadi as these brands were popular among different types of consumers in Pakistan. To gather data for the study, the Convenience Sampling Method was employed. This non-probability sampling design involved collecting information from individuals who were most conveniently available to participate in the study (Wang & Wu, 2012). In convenience sampling, no inclusion criteria were established beforehand, and all subjects were invited to participate. The sample size was determined using Cronin Jr et al. (2000) sample size formula, which involved multiplying the number of items in the questionnaire by a factor of five, seven, or ten. In this study, the sample size was comes out to be 300 (30*10). Bearing in mind the

probability of non-response bias, a total of 1000 surveys were distributed resulting in 460 usable responses (46%).

This study utilized a self-administered mall intercept survey technique to gather data from consumers of the aforementioned brands. The questionnaire comprised structured questions and was personally administered to the participants. Consumers were encouraged to respond candidly, ensuring the reliability and validity of the data. Additionally, participants were reassured that all collected information would solely serve educational purposes and would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments and Analytical Procedure

The data gathering tool utilised in this study employed a self-administered mall intercept survey technique to acquire information from consumers of the designated brands. The survey comprised of a series of standardised questions that were presented in person to the participants. In order to enhance the reliability and validity of the data, users were asked to offer their responses in an unbiased manner. Furthermore, the participants were provided with the assurance that the gathered data would exclusively serve educational objectives and would be maintained in a highly secret manner.

The measurement of "brand trust" was conducted by assessing customers' trust in the specific brand's functionalities and their inclination to engage in purchases within the product category. The measurement scale employed in this study was derived from prior research conducted by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001); Morgan and Hunt (1994). Participants were asked to provide their replies using a five-point Likert scale.

The evaluation of brands was conducted by consumers who judged the brands based on a range of tangible and intangible clues associated with the brand's attributes as both a product and a persona. The measurement scale utilised in this study was derived from previous research conducted by Gilbert and Hewlett (2003); Pourazad et al. (2019); Swoboda et al. (2012). Participants were asked to provide their responses using a five-point Likert scale.

The measurement of "customer satisfaction" was conducted to ascertain its role as a determinant of "Brand loyalty" and repeat purchase behaviour. The measurement scale utilised in this study was derived from the work of (Shukla et al., 2016). Participants were asked to provide their responses using a five-point Likert scale.

The concept of "brand commitment" refers to the enduring purpose of consumers to maintain a favourable and enduring association with a particular brand. The measurement scale employed in this study was based on previous research conducted by Moorman et al. (1992) and (de Jorge Moreno & Carrasco, 2016). The respondents provided their ratings on a five-point Likert scale.

The evaluation of "brand relationship" was conducted by considering the emotional attachment of consumers and their inclination to participate in interactive contact with the brand. The measurement scale utilised in this study was derived from previous research conducted by Veloutsou (2015) and Morgan and Hunt (1994). Participants were asked to provide their replies using a five-point Likert scale.

"Brand loyalty" was assessed using a range of factors, including good word of mouth, customer happiness, and "brand trust". The measuring scale employed in this study was derived from the research conducted by Fullerton (2003). Participants were requested to provide their responses to the survey items using a five-point Likert scale.

The data coding and analysis process involved the utilisation of SPSS software, while the structural equation modelling technique was implemented through the examination of moment structure. This methodology facilitated the exploration of several interdependent associations among endogenous and exogenous variables. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to evaluate the reliability, validity, and descriptive statistics of the

constructs. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient exceeding 0.70 was regarded to indicate reliability, but a coefficient of 0.6 was considered acceptable, as stated by Peterson (1994).

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table I presents a comprehensive overview of the respondents' demographic profile in terms of gender, age, education, and income. Notably, approximately 77.5% of the participants identified as male, while more than 50% fell within the age bracket of under 42 years. Furthermore, an impressive 75% of the respondents reported a monthly income of less than rupee 55,000, which is equivalent to under US\$250.

A significant finding from the demographic analysis was that almost 90% of the participants held a university degree, indicating that the majority of the respondents were well-informed consumers. This high level of education among the sample suggests that they possessed the necessary knowledge and awareness to make informed decisions regarding fashion clothing products.

Table 1
Demographic statistics of respondents (N=460)

Variable	Category	Distribution	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	355	77.2
	Female	105	22.8
Age	18-24	180	39.1
	>24-36	182	39.6
	>36-42	74	16.1
	>42-Above	24	5.2
Income	>25000-35000	72	15.7
	>35000-45000	150	32.6
	>45000-55000	129	28.0
	>55000-Above	109	23.7
Education	Bachelors	98	21.3
	Masters	329	71.5
	Others	33	7.2

4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis, Constructs Reliability, and Validity

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) functions as a method of validation for constructs, with the objective of identifying relationships between items in order to ascertain if they exhibit loading on a shared latent component or distinct ones. Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010) posits that in order to indicate a successful fit, the correlations between items should exhibit significant loading on the same latent factor, while correlations should decrease on divergent latent factors. The identification of constructs in exploratory factor analysis (EFA) can be facilitated by employing the recommended cut-off values proposed by (Gilbert & Hewlett, 2003). These values are applied to three tables, namely the rotated matrix, structure matrix, and component correlation matrix.

The utilisation of the component correlation matrix is vital in determining the credibility of connections between disparate variables or dimensions within the established framework. Conversely, the rotated factor matrix provides useful insights into the distinct loading of individual items on the respective dimension or factor. The structural matrix serves as empirical support for the coherence of correlations between disparate components.

The eigenvalue rule, as presented by Kaiser (1960), posits that dimensions with eigenvalues smaller than one are deemed insignificant due to their little contribution to the overall variance within the framework. Therefore, during the process of factor testing, these dimensions are not included in the construct. In the present investigation, Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was employed as the factor rotation technique, in accordance with the suggestion of Fibiger et al. (1999), specifically in cases when the data exhibits a normal distribution.

The examination focuses on the difference in the loadings of items with a score exceeding 5. In addition, the research utilised the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity as means of assessing the sampling adequacy and competency in the context of commercial and business research. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values exceeding 0.6 are indicative of satisfactory sample adequacy, while the research's significance is assessed using Bartlett's test, where a p-value less than 0.05 confirms the rationale and validity of the gathered data.

The statistical measures of reliability and validity for the study constructs were also presented by EFA. In the realm of construct reliability and validity, it is imperative to priorities the maintenance of consistency and correctness in respondents' responses. The concept of reliability in the context of this study pertains to the degree of consistency exhibited by the data that has been collected. In order to evaluate the trustworthiness of the data, we utilised the "Cronbach Coefficient Alpha" measure, as suggested by Peterson (1994). A Cronbach coefficient alpha value that is equal to or exceeds 0.7 is deemed acceptable.

The results of the Cronbach coefficient alpha calculations for each construct are presented in Table II. The acquired values are as follows: "brand trust" (0.703), "customer satisfaction" (0.776), "brand evaluation" (0.757), "brand commitment" (0.850), "brand relationship" (0.808), and "Brand loyalty" (0.782). The results, all of which surpass 0.6, provide as evidence of the dependability and validity of the data, so suggesting that it can be utilised with confidence for subsequent analysis and interpretation. The high Cronbach coefficient alpha values signify that the measures used to assess each construct are consistent and reliable, minimizing the likelihood of errors or inconsistencies in the data. This reliability assures us that the responses collected are dependable and reflect the true underlying characteristics of each construct.

Consequently, the study's findings can be trusted to accurately represent the relationships and associations among the constructs under investigation, providing a strong foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions and implications for the research.

The validation process is crucial for ensuring the practical applicability of the study and the theory derived from it. In the context of the survey instrument, content and construct validity are important considerations. Construct validity, as emphasized by Hair, Gabriel, and Patel (2014), ensures that the items accurately represent the intended theoretical latent construct. With respect to content validity, the preceding section of this chapter has substantiated the lack of prevalent difficulties related to common variance. The subsequent emphasis is placed on the concepts of divergent and convergent validity, as suggested by Zhu (2000). Both coefficients have a significant impact on either confirming or challenging the construct validity. Divergent validity, also referred to as discriminant validity, assesses the degree to which each independent variable is distinct in its measurement of changes in the dependent variable. On the other hand, convergent validity evaluates the extent to which all factors collectively account for the variance or demonstrate a strong association with factors that represent an underlying construct (Hair et al., 2014).

The assessment of convergent validity involves the utilisation of the average variance extracted (AVE) technique, which examines the convergence of measurements. According to Hair Jr, Matthews, Matthews, and Sarstedt (2017), an AVE value beyond 0.5 indicates the existence of convergent validity. Additionally, for discriminant validity, the mean shared variance (MSV) should be lower than the AVE.

The assessment of model validity is conducted by examining the correlation values and standardized regression weights. The obtained findings demonstrate the convergent validity coefficients for each construct as follows: "brand commitment" (0.509), "brand trust" (0.590), Customer happiness (0.547), "brand evaluation" (0.584), and "Brand loyalty" (0.529). According to the studies conducted by Michael et al. (2004) and Bermin (2001), AVE values within the range of 0.3 to 0.4 are deemed acceptable, provided that they are lower than the MSV. Additionally, if the composite reliability exceeds 0.6, it can be concluded that convergent validity is still present, as suggested by Larcker (1981).

Table 2
EFA, Composite Reliability, and AVEs

Construct	Items	Standardized loading	AVE	α	CR
Brand trust	B. T1	0.655	0.590	0.703	0.712
	B. T2	0.654			
	B. T3	0.628			
	B. T4	0.491			
	B. T5	0.667			
Customer satisfaction	C.S1	0.775	0.547	0.776	0.692
	C.S2	0.540			
	C.S3	0.567			
	C.S4	0.563			
	C.S5	0.694			
Brand evaluation	B. E1	0.590	0.584	0.757	0.757
	B. E2	0.582			
	B. E3	0.656			
	B. E4	0.614			
	B. E5	0.618			
Brand commitment	B.C1	0.746	0.509	0.850	0.611
	B.C2	0.600			
	B.C3	0.416			
	B.C5	0.745			
Brand loyalty	B. L1	0.572	0.529	0.808	0.789
	B. L2	0.676			
	B. L3	0.684			
	B. L4	0.737			
	B. L5	0.566			
Kaiser –Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy			0.904		
Bartlett's Test			0.000		
Total Variance Explained			53.418%		

Notes: AVE = average variance explained; CR = composite reliability; α = Cronbach's alpha

Table 3
Intercorrelations, VIF and Discriminant Validity of the Constructs

Constructs	VIF	BC	BT	CS	BE	BL
BC	1.322	0.713				
BT	1.657	0.240	0.768			
CS	1.800	0.145	0.871	0.740		
BE	1.306	0.330	0.250	0.289	0.764	
BL	NA	0.231	0.219	0.252	0.257	0.727

Notes: ** correlations significant at $p < 0.01$; VIF, variance inflation factor; values on the diagonal are the square root of AVEs, other items are correlations between the construct.

4.3. Path Analysis – Direct Effects

Table IV presents the direct relationships between the endogenous variable of "Brand loyalty" and the exogenous variables of "brand trust", "customer satisfaction", and "brand evaluation". The results indicate that the independent variables exert a significant influence on the dependent variable, "Brand loyalty", with a level of significance (ρ) below 0.05. The results of the study demonstrate that there is a substantial relationship between "brand trust" (B.T) and "Brand loyalty" (BL), as indicated by a coefficient (β) of 0.302 ($\rho < 0.05$). In a similar manner, there is a significant association between "customer satisfaction" (C.S) and "Brand loyalty", as indicated by a coefficient (β) of 0.750 ($\rho < 0.05$). Moreover, the assessment of "brand evaluation" (B.E) significantly impacts "Brand loyalty", as evidenced by a coefficient (β) of 0.690 ($\rho < 0.05$).

The beta coefficients (β) offer insights into the magnitude and direction (positive or negative) of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. In relation to the correlation between "brand trust" and "Brand loyalty", the existence of a positive beta coefficient indicates a statistically significant and favourable association. The assertion is substantiated by the t-value surpassing 2, indicating a strong and positive association between "brand trust" and "Brand loyalty".

Likewise, there exist significant and favourable associations among "customer satisfaction", brand assessment, brand affiliation, and brand dedication in relation to "Brand loyalty". This is supported by t-values that above a threshold of 2. The results of this study

highlight the importance of these attributes in influencing a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty towards a brand.

Table 4
Model 1: Direct Effects of Structural Model

Hypothesis/Path	Path Coefficient	t-value	Sig.	Results
H1: Customer satisfaction → brand loyalty	0.750	27.778	0.000	Supported
H1a: Customer satisfaction → brand commitment	0.500	10.768	0.000	Supported
H2: Brand trust → brand loyalty	0.302	15.100	0.000	Supported
H2a: Brand trust → brand commitment	0.399	8.707	0.000	Supported
H3: Brand evaluation → brand loyalty	0.690	14.082	0.000	Supported
H3a: Brand evaluation → brand commitment	0.454	11.829	0.000	Supported
H4: Brand Commitment → brand loyalty	0.390	9.75	0.000	Supported

4.4. Path Analysis – Indirect and Conditional Indirect Effects

The indirect effects model examines the associations between endogenous and exogenous factors by means of a mediator. The analysis results are presented in Table V, which reveals substantial direct correlations between variables, both with and without a mediator. These findings demonstrate the presence of partial mediation among the variables. The table shown provides evidence of a noteworthy relationship between the exogenous variables, namely "brand trust", customer pleasure, and "brand evaluation", and the endogenous variable, "Brand loyalty". This relationship is mediated by the construct of "brand commitment".

According to the findings presented in Table V, the path analysis reveals a statistically significant association between "brand trust" and "Brand loyalty", mediated by "brand commitment" ($\rho < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.385$). Furthermore, it is worth noting that there is a considerable relationship between customer happiness and "Brand loyalty", namely through the mechanism of "brand commitment" ($\rho < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.110$). Furthermore, the relationship between brand appraisal and "Brand loyalty" through "brand commitment" is substantiated by a statistically significant value of ($\rho < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.026$).

However, according to Table VI, the analysis indicates that the presence of "brand relationship" as a moderating factor does not result in statistically significant relationships between "brand trust", "customer satisfaction", "brand evaluation", and "brand commitment".

Table 5
Model 2: Indirect Effects of Structural Model

Hypothesis	Predictor (X)	Mediator (M)	Dependent Variable (Y)	Indirect Effect t	Significance	LL95%CI	UL95%CI
H1b	Customer satisfaction	Brand commitment	Brand loyalty	0.110	0.000	0.048	0.135
H2b	Brand trust	Brand commitment	Brand loyalty	0.385	0.000	0.370	0.426
H3b	Brand evaluation	Brand commitment	Brand loyalty	0.026	0.000	0.016	0.030

Table 6
Direct, Indirect and Total Effects (A Moderated Mediation Model)

Hyp.	Predictor (X)	Mediator (M)	Dependent Variable (Y)	Direct Effect*	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Sig.	R ²
H5	CS*BR	Brand commitment	Brand loyalty	0.110 (0.105,0.157)	.0383 (0.024,0.055)	.1693	0.000	.213
H5a	BT*BR	Brand commitment	Brand loyalty	0.1632 (0.139,0.187)	.0315 (0.019,0.046)	.1947	0.000	.179
H5b	BE*BR	Brand commitment	Brand loyalty	0.1292 (0.105,0.153)	0.0003 (0.019,0.048)	.1624	0.000	.237

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The primary objective of this research project was to investigate the impact that exogenous elements, more specifically "brand trust", customer pleasure, and brand appraisal, had on the dependent variable of "Brand loyalty". This link was investigated further by looking at the function that "brand commitment" plays as a mediator, as well as the moderating influence that "brand relationship" has. According to the results of the research, there is a significant mediating influence that exists between "brand trust", "customer satisfaction", and brand appraisal in terms of "Brand loyalty" via the mechanism of "brand commitment". This conclusion is in line with the findings of Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer (2010), who also discovered a considerable association between "brand trust" and "Brand loyalty", which was mediated by "brand commitment". This discovery is in line with their findings. The findings of their investigation showed that these constructs can have both good direct impacts and negative indirect effects on one another. In line with the findings of earlier studies carried out by (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992) the current analysis offers new proof that substantiates the existence of substantial connections that are both direct and indirect between the variables that were the subject of the examination.

The research was based on a previously established theoretical framework that was developed from previous studies in the same sector. This framework highlighted the relevance of "brand commitment", brand satisfaction, and "brand trust" as crucial aspects in establishing customer-" brand relationships and sustaining "Brand loyalty". According to the findings of the study, a consumer's level of devotion to a brand is one of the most important factors in determining whether or not they will remain loyal to that brand. Satisfaction with a brand and confidence in that brand both play big parts in the process of retaining customers. These findings are consistent with earlier research that was carried out across a variety of sectors, with a particular focus on the Fabric industry, which was the core topic of analysis in this study. A sizeable empirical dataset was produced as a result of the unusually high number of responses that was received. This dataset may now be subjected to in-depth research and analysis.

Cronbach's Alpha scores, which were used in the evaluation of the data's dependability, came in higher than the minimum threshold of 0.7 points that was considered acceptable. According to Peterson (1994), this means that the data proved their validity and dependability. This was proven by the data. A positive association was discovered as a result of the correlation analysis, which lends evidence to the relevance of the factors in determining "Brand loyalty". This discovery is consistent with the results of earlier research that was carried out by Ha and Perks (2005); Horppu, Kuivalainen, Tarkiainen, and Ellonen (2008); Iglesias et al. (2011). The enquiry resulted in the acceptance of all hypotheses, which was supported by a positive beta value in the regression analysis. This provided additional support for the findings that were drawn from the study.

The findings of the descriptive statistics shed light on the relevance of the components that were investigated in terms of their role in promoting customer pleasure and developing loyalty, notably within the apparel sector, more specifically the garment industry. It is abundantly clear that the management of the textile industry should make these significant loyalty indicators a priority in order to ensure the continued satisfaction and retention of customers in the foreseeable future. The findings that have been presented so far make substantial contributions to both the theoretical and practical grasp of customer-brand interactions and loyalty in the textile industry.

This study makes a significant addition to the ongoing enquiry into the relationships between "Brand loyalty" and the recommended independent variables, notably "brand trust", customer pleasure, and brand appraisal. The research offered the idea of "brand commitment" as a mediator and provided insights into its function in partially mediating the relationships between (a) "brand trust" and "Brand loyalty", (b) "customer satisfaction" and "Brand loyalty", and (c) brand assessment and "Brand loyalty". This study fills a hole in the existing body of information and exposes previously unknown outcomes by including a complete framework with these different factors.

The literature review that was conducted during Chapters 2 and 3 provided a solid foundation upon which to understand the difficulties that are inherently associated with the

integrated paradigm that was being discussed. The purpose of the study was to offer a full knowledge of significant results that had not been investigated in any of the prior research that had been done. In order for the research team to accomplish this goal, they first formulated basic research questions and presented them in the introduction chapter. After that, they constructed a thorough conceptual framework and put it through rigour testing.

This study will investigate the linkages between “brand trust”, customer happiness, brand assessment, and “Brand loyalty”, with a particular emphasis on “brand commitment”. The overall goal of this research is to further our understanding of consumer-brand interactions and loyalty in the fabric business. The findings of this study suggest possible paths for additional enquiry in this sector. This affords firms operating in the textile industry the capacity to make educated judgements and build successful strategies for boosting customer loyalty and satisfaction. This study makes a substantial contribution by conducting a detailed analysis and confirming the suggested framework. As a result, it fills a knowledge vacuum and moves the area of research on customer-brand interactions forwards.

5.1. Academic Implications

The concept of “Brand loyalty” possesses substantial ramifications for organisations, rendering it a critical topic of focus. This study is notable for its distinctive methodology in examining “Brand loyalty”, as it examines innovative concepts, such as market orientation and social impact, as antecedents of consumer loyalty, with the mediating factor of “brand commitment”. Through the revelation of these novel connections, the investigation enhances the current body of scholarly work and imparts significant perspectives for forthcoming research endeavours aimed at comprehending intricate interconnections within the field.

The scholarly ramifications of the study extend beyond the mere examination of novel linkages. By introducing “brand relationship” as a moderator, it opens the door to building new theoretical models and advancing knowledge in the field. Drawing on the Self Congruous Theory, the study delves into the psychological contract processes and sheds light on the dynamics of social relationships with current and loyal customers. This understanding can help organizations better engage with their customers and foster “Brand loyalty”.

Given the growing garment industry in Pakistan, understanding the factors behind customer disloyalty becomes crucial for organizations. This study addresses this need and supplements the existing literature by presenting a new scale that addresses “Brand loyalty” from the perspective of loyalty in Bahawalpur, Multan, and Rahim Yar Khan. The study fills a gap by emphasizing the neglected concepts of “brand trust”, “customer satisfaction”, and “brand evaluation” and their relation to “Brand loyalty”.

Furthermore, the study contributes to a new and straightforward theoretical framework that has not been extensively explored, particularly in this specific industry context. Future studies can build upon this framework, even considering more complex arrangements of the constructs. By introducing the mediating effect of “brand commitment” and understanding the interplay between “brand trust”, “customer satisfaction”, and “brand evaluation”, this study offers a fresh perspective on studying “Brand loyalty”.

In conclusion, this study's academic contributions lie not only in uncovering new relationships and filling gaps in the literature but also in providing a solid foundation for future research and enhancing our understanding of “Brand loyalty” in the context of the garment industry in Pakistan.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The present study offers valuable insights and practical guidelines for managerial implications, drawing from the Self Congruous Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, which emphasize the reciprocal relationship between customers and shopkeepers.

Firstly, marketing executives and brand managers seeking to enhance customer loyalty should recognize the significance of effectively managing an online brand community. The study's findings provide effective strategies to foster "Brand loyalty" behaviors, especially for brands aiming to broaden their appeal among customers in Pakistan.

Additionally, the research underscores the importance of utilizing new technology to improve market orientation. This involves not only acquiring knowledge about competitors but also disseminating relevant information throughout the organization. By effectively employing marketing intelligence, product quality can be enhanced, resulting in increased "customer satisfaction" and loyalty.

Moreover, the study highlights the need for management to prioritize "brand trust", "customer satisfaction", and "brand evaluation", as these factors significantly contribute to higher "Brand loyalty". The clothing sector, in particular, should closely observe these predictors that influence customer loyalty.

In conclusion, the managerial implications derived from this research offer valuable guidance to marketing executives and brand managers in formulating effective strategies for enhancing customer loyalty and building stronger brand-customer relationships. By implementing the insights gained from this study, organizations in the clothing sector and beyond can better address customer needs, improve "Brand loyalty", and achieve sustainable growth in the competitive market landscape.

5.3. Restrictions and Prospective Studies

Despite the carefully conducted and well-planned nature of the present research, there are still areas that warrant further exploration and application of advanced research tools. As a result, this study offers several recommendations for future research. Firstly, the current model can be enhanced by incorporating or modifying certain constructs and introducing more complexity to the proposed framework, resulting in a more comprehensive and robust model. Furthermore, in order to increase the applicability of the results, it would be beneficial to carry out a comparable investigation utilising data from various sample groups or heterogeneous populations, potentially even on an international scale. Incorporating other testing methodologies, such as random sampling, might enhance the validity of the hypotheses generated from the research.

Additionally, it is recommended that future research endeavors explore the use of different sampling methodologies, such as probability sampling, in order to enhance the overall applicability and generalizability of the research outcomes. Moreover, although the existing research primarily concentrates on the apparel industry, its applicability can be expanded to include other service-oriented establishments, hence widening its practical ramifications. Furthermore, it is possible to integrate novel constructs such as "brand relationship" into the existing model in order to assess their influence on "Brand loyalty". Through the manipulation of constructs, a heightened level of comprehension of the interconnections among variables can be attained.

In conclusion, the current study utilised a cross-sectional data collection strategy. Future study could potentially derive advantages from employing a longitudinal methodology, as it would facilitate the monitoring of temporal variations in organizational product preferences and loyalty. In summary, the current work provides significant contributions to the field, while also highlighting opportunities for further enhancement and extension. By acknowledging and exploring these constraints and pursuing avenues for further investigation, scholars and practitioners can enhance their comprehension of "Brand loyalty" and contribute to the advancement of the current body of literature in this domain.

Authors Contribution

Farah Noreen Arshad: Contributed to the conceptualization, data sorting, editing, reference and library management, analysis and write up of the paper

Interest of Conflict

The authors of this study report no conflicts of interest.

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