Investigating the Impact of Brand Attributes on Customer Loyalty: A Case Study of the Soft Drink Industry in Pakistan

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Abstract

This research project aims to understand the impact of brand attributes on customer loyalty, focusing on brand commitment, trust, and attachment. The sample includes 200 consumers in Karachi city who consume soft drinks. The study uses a non-probabilistic sampling method and a quantitative research method based on a deductive approach. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data, with closed-ended questions and a 5-point Likert scale. The data was collected through primary survey methods, with close-ended questions for easy codeability. The data was then converted into tabular form using Microsoft Excel and imported into IBM SPSS 24 for statistical tests. Secondary data was collected from various online sources, including researcher papers, journal articles, and academic papers. The findings indicate that brand trust, commitment, attachment, and personality significantly influence customer loyalty.

Keywords: *brand personality, brand attachment, brand loyalty, brand trust, brand commitment, consumer loyalty*

Introduction

Brands evolved from a sign to create value in customers' minds, with advertising serving as a major function. It informs, attracts, raises awareness, educates, and creates demands for products (Hwang, Choe, Kim, & Kim, 2021). Advertisement presents the product as unique and if it satisfies the needs of the customer it helps the brands in retaining their customers. In search of the best available goods and services the customer buying behavior is affected by the advertisement of the product which creates either a positive or negative impact in the minds of customers. Before buying and using the product customers have certain expectation from the product just because of the brand association and image.

Brands are now considered strategic assets by companies, with brand appraisal becoming a growing business. Trademarks leverage company value and serve as collateral for credit. (Ashraf, Ilyas, Imtiaz, & Ahmad, 2018). Brand valuation remains a challenge, but the strategic importance of brand value makes it reasonable to know its worth, especially when strong and leaders produce high profitability. Investing in brands is convenient, but balancing brand value is crucial.

Branding gained popularity in the late 19th century, with Procter & Gamble focusing on brand management. Today, brands are designed through business systems, from raw materials selection to customer service, encompassing more than just the product. (Akhtar, Ahmed, Jafar, Rizwan, & Nawaz, 2016).

In our days, the strategic importance of brands requires an investment in branding, since, through it, many things can be achieved at the same time, including positioning, maintenance, recall and recognition. Branding involves considering the interaction between brand (what customers buy) and value (what sellers sell), distinguishing the perspective of the seller and that of the buyer (especially), and focusing on the relationship of both with the brand (Almaqousi, Samikon, Cavaliere, & Nordin, 2021).

Branding is crucial for consumer goods companies to differentiate themselves and create highly regarded products and services. Expert branding enhances the development and maintenance of distinctive attributes and values, making them legally protected and attractive to consumers. (Alenazi, & Alanazi, 2021).

Consumers compare promises of companies with their performance, and if they fulfill them, they will speak positively about the organization or its products. Waiting times also impact satisfaction. Retaining loyal customers increases the chances of repeat purchases, 45%, and

54%, respectively. Retaining customers is cheaper than acquiring new ones, as it doesn't require expensive marketing efforts. Recurring customers have a 60%-70% chance of conversion, higher than the average conversion ratio of 1-13%. Loyal customers also write positive reviews, pass information on friends and family, and return to the store to buy more products and experiences. (Ashraf, Ilyas, Imtiaz, & Ahmad, 2018).

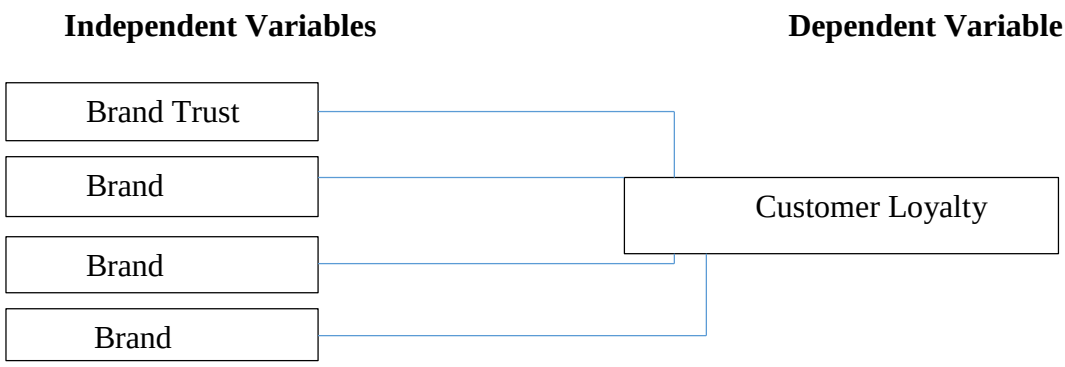
Loyalty strategies are crucial for businesses to build a loyal customer base. Without them, businesses can accumulate satisfied customers without ensuring their return. A satisfied customer is a battle won, not a permanent victory. The long-term goal is customer loyalty, resulting in lifetime spending, recommendations, and long-term customer retention. Brands significantly impact customer buying behavior, as they are individuals who purchase goods and services. (Jarquin, Ladeira, Mello, Amorim, & Larocca, 2019).

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the impact of Brand Personality on Customer loyalty.
- To examine the impact of Brand Trust on Customer loyalty.
- To examine the impact of Brand Commitment on Customer loyalty.
- To examine the impact of Brand Attachment on Customer loyalty.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Hypotheses of the Study

H1: Brand Personality has a significant and positive association with Customer Loyalty.

H2: Brand Trust has a significant and positive association with Customer Loyalty.

H3: Brand Commitment has a significant and positive association with Customer Loyalty.

H4: Brand Attachment has a significant and positive association with Customer Loyalty.

Review of Literature

Brand Trust

Brand trust is considered as an essential variable in several research projects. According to Hoffmann, & Bronnmann (2019) "Brand trust is the average consumer's willingness to rely on a brand's ability to perform its stated function. It is essential for a company's success and is developed through consistent, decency, and safety beliefs. Establishing a bond of trust between a brand and its customer is crucial for commercial action, and some iconic brands have been working on this for decades. Transparency is crucial for customer trust, both in terms of products and services, and the organization of the company. Consumers place great importance on the availability and traceability of information.

To convince a customer, it is important to provide the right information and provide the right signals. A study by Edelman identifies seven dimensions of the relationship between brands and their consumers, of which here are the three main ones, including embody an authentic and unique identity; present a distinctive sign; convey a memorable and compelling story, beyond quality or price, the customer experience is now an important lever (Phong, Nga, Hanh, & Minh, 2020).

Trust is crucial for service and product success, especially in digitalization. Customer reviews enable comparisons, making competition tougher. 8 out of 10 consumers trust responsible brands, and digital trust depends on sociability. High user numbers, consistent reviews, and discussions increase customer trust. (Erlangga, & Erlangga, 2021).

Brand Personality

Defining brand personality is crucial for creating an impactful identity, as it evokes human emotions and human character traits. This personifies the brand as a real entity, allowing it to connect with core customers and create a strong connection. However, creating a brand identity can be challenging for companies lacking sensitivity and a global vision." (Mehta, & Tariq, 2020).

Brand personality is the essence of a brand, encompassing its human characteristics and communication with its audience. A fun, playful, dynamic, and sparkling brand identity

should not be translated by a minimalist design, as it does not coherently convey the brand's personality. The brand identity is a graphic translation of visible elements, such as the logo, color palette, shapes, patterns, typography, tone, and photography style, which represent the brand effectively.(Ali, 2019).

Emotions significantly impact purchasing and investment decisions. Companies recognize that consumers are guided by emotions, perceptions, and the ability to identify with a brand or social membership. Carl Jung's theory on archetypes, categorized into 12 personality types, helps marketers segment and target ideal clients. Determining the deep why of a brand helps define a coherent personality based on deep needs and aspirations, giving meaning to the brand and its image. (Hayati, Suroso, Suliyanto, & Kaukab, 2020).

Brand Commitment

Commitment can be viewed as "an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship" with the brand. Intense business competition requires companies to work harder to retain customers not only to exist but also to become the market leader. Today successful companies whether large or small, domestic or global share a strong customer focus and heavy commitment of brand. At the heart of customer-brand relationship is customer Commitment (Zhang, Kim, & Goodsir, 2019). It is an anglicism used in marketing to refer to the involvement of users with a brand. It is the brand commitment that a company achieves when it interacts through various techniques with its potential customers. In most cases, when referring to engagement, we are talking about Social media and the brand commitment that is achieved with a user (Singla, & Gupta, 2019).

Firms today focus on retaining customers, building a community of loyal customers, and building a positive brand image. Their objectives include fostering emotional bonds and connecting with users, promoting deeper connections and engagement. To achieve loyalty, brands must tell stories, engage users as active protagonists, and share experiences that encourage participation. Active listening is crucial in understanding user opinions and needs, enabling companies to provide interesting content and reach customers directly and personalized. (Cuong, & Khoi, 2019).

Transitioning from low participation to high commitment requires perseverance and work. Maintaining mutual correspondence between the brand and users is crucial for achieving satisfaction and loyalty. Establishing emotional and direct links with users can lead to followers and loyal defenders. Building a strong brand requires ethereal user engagement, as

prestigious brands consistently maintain top consumer minds by building trust and fostering strong relationships. (Sudari, Tarofder, Khatibi, & Tham, 2019).

To increase user preference, establish a stable, long-lasting relationship by providing differential value, interacting, or offering special treatment. Listen, observe, and focus on customer engagement rather than sales volume. Brand engagement is emotional commitment, and companies must stand out by nurturing this relationship. Emotional acquisition increases, and repeat purchases are more likely when brand-consumer interactions are surrounded by affection, commitment, and empathy. (Cheung, Pires, & Rosenberger, 2019).

This reveals a very important point to keep in mind: only people make the marks. Our company can create products and launch them on the market, but those who will really give them a long life are the people, since they will create emotional connections and powerful bonds that will spread among their relatives or colleagues. It is important then, to cultivate those emotional connections and take care of that commitment as it happens in any human relationship. The engagement of the brand needs exactly the same ingredients as a friendly or married relationship to have a good flavor and great aroma. Demand for solid links based on relevant and timely content that are possible to publish and promote if company knows how to listen and observe what the public needs and likes to consume. Therefore, the strategy should focus on finding that interaction and getting people to bond emotionally with our content and what the firm offers through it (Arslan, 2020).

Content Marketing, initially a search engine positioning tool, has evolved to attract and retain audiences by offering high-quality content. By integrating blogs with social networks, two-way channels are created, fostering brand-client interaction and trust. Digital users want their voices heard and participate in content creation, allowing them to contribute opinions and contribute to the brand-user experience. This closeness to the brand-user experience increases engagement to extreme values. (Moretta Tartaglione, Cavacece, Russo, & Granata, 2019).

Brand Attachment

Unfortunately, the factors that trigger durable relationship of customers with the brand are not much known. In this study it is attempted to highlight these aspects through the use of hypothetical concept of "brand attachment". Below, we have defined the brand attachment concept and differentiated it from the other (Sop, & Kozak, 2019). Moreover, this literature highlights the importance of strong brand attachments and the factors that contribute to their development. Brand success relies on customer relations, which can be achieved through

rewards, discounts, and feedback. Marketing practices play a crucial role in informing customers about product features and fostering strong relationships.

Research Methodology

The study focused on respondents who consume soft drinks and reside in Karachi city. Geographical distribution targets respondents based on their location, allowing researchers to understand how climates, landscapes, and cityscapes affect preferences. Demographic data, including income, sex, origin, education, and family situation, is crucial for targeting potential respondents. The sample was included both male and female respondents, with varying ages, educational backgrounds, and monthly incomes.

Population, Sample and Sampling technique

The population refers to the subjects, units, or objects involved in a survey. It can be a group of people, organizations, or material objects. In this study, the population includes male and female individuals who use soft drinks. Sampling is the process of selecting a specific part of the population to study its characteristics for drawing conclusions applicable to the whole population. Types of sampling include representative and random sampling. The current study uses convenience sampling with a sample size of 200 consumers.

Research Design

The researcher utilized a quantitative research method, based on a deductive approach, to demonstrate or prove facts while quantifying underlying phenomena. This study was conducted through surveys, interviews, or questionnaires, and the findings were presented in figures. Software reports the findings in the form of statistical graphs and tables, providing a platform for testing hypotheses and theories. Quantitative research is suitable for studies where the theoretical framework is well-known and offers multiple frameworks for comparison.

The researcher followed an explanatory research method, which uses reasoning and connections to describe cause and effect-based relationships, evaluating the factors behind an event. This method helps identify pain points and solve specific issues, allowing the researcher to define and supplement the topic through in-depth cause and effect analysis

Description of Instruments

In this research project, structured questionnaires are used for collecting the data. Close-ended questions are used in the questionnaires having a 5-point Likert scale. Questions about all the dependent and independent variables are included in the questionnaire. While conducting the survey, all questionnaires were administered personally. The questionnaire was prepared inspired from the study conducted by Indarto, Suroso, Sudaryanto, & Qomariah, (2018) to determine the effect of product image and product attributes on customer satisfaction and loyalty. This study has been a source of information due to its relevancy with the current topic.

Procedure of the study and Data collection

The data collection is a process of collection of useful information in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. It sounds simple process while looking at definition, but in actual it can be stressful and tiring task. While it is unimportant for informed decision-making process if it is done in poor manner. Firstly, the selection of category is important. The author must identify the data type whether it is primary or secondary in nature. This study used both data type i.e. primary as well as secondary. Primary data is data collected from firsthand sources by the person who needs it and for the reason it is needed. This differs from Secondary Data which is data collected by someone else for another purpose and used by another person for another purpose. The main differences between these two methods are the different ways of collecting them and the sources (who collects the data).

The data collected in this study is primary data and is collected by conducting a survey through questionnaires. The questionnaires included close ended questions so that the responses from the sample can be coded easily. Microsoft Excel sheet is used to convert the entire question into tabular form and thus the data is imported to “IBM SPSS 24” version for running statistical tests. The tests performed on the dataset included reliability analysis, correlation, and regression tests. However, secondary data was collected from online sources, including researcher papers, journal articles, academic papers etc.

Data Analysis and Results of the Study

Reliability Analysis

Table1

Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Trust	0.771
Brand Commitment	0.853
Brand Attachment	0.877
Brand Personality	0.675
Consumer Loyalty	0.940
All Variables	0.809

According to the above table, the Cronbach Alpha of Brand Trust is 0.771, Brand Commitment is 0.853, Brand Attachment is 0.877, Brand Personality is 0.675, and Consumer Loyalty is 0.940. The Cronbach's Alpha values of all variables are greater than 0.05 which shows the reliability of instrument.

Pearson's Correlation

Table 1
Correlation

		Brand Trust	Brand Commitment	Brand Attachment	Brand Personality	Productivity of Virtual Workers
Brand Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.720**	.617**	.592**	.636**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330
Brand Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.720**	1	.740**	.418**	.746**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330
Brand Attachment	Pearson Correlation	.617**	.740**	1	.256**	.797**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330
Brand Personality	Pearson Correlation	.592**	.418**	.256**	1	.694**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330
Consumer Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.636**	.746**	.797**	.694**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	330	330	330	330	330

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

The correlation matrix above includes the sig 2 value that shows whether a relation exist among the variables. Pearson Correlations indicates the strength of the relationship among the variables.

Brand Trust has a correlation coefficient of 63.6 percent with Consumer Loyalty at a p-value of 0.00 which indicates a statistically significant and positive association between Brand Trust and Consumer Loyalty.

Brand Commitment has a Correlation Coefficient of 74.6 percent with Consumer Loyalty at a p-value of 0.00 which indicates a statistically significant and positive association between Brand Commitment and Consumer Loyalty.

Brand Attachment has a Correlation Coefficient of 79.7 percent with Consumer Loyalty at a p-value of 0.00 which indicates a statistically significant and positive association between Brand Attachment and Consumer Loyalty.

Brand Personality has a Correlation Coefficient of 69.4 percent with Consumer loyalty at a p-value of 0.00 which indicates a statistically significant and positive association between Brand Personality and Consumer Loyalty.

Regression Analysis: Model Summary

Table 3

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.748[a]	.560	.552	.50856

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Trust, Brand Commitment, Brand Attachment, Brand Personality

According to the above Model Summary R value of .748 shows a strong correlation between the independent variables and dependent variable. R Square value of .560 shows 56 percent changes in Consumer Loyalty is described by changes in predictors.

Regression Analysis ANOVA

Table 2

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	129.038	7	18.434	71.276	.000[b]
	Residual	101.383	392	.259		
	Total	230.421	399			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Trust, Brand Commitment, Brand Attachment, Brand Personality

The above ANOVA Table shows a high F-value of 71.276 with a p-value of 0.00. The F-value is greater than 4 and p-value is less than 0.05 which means that the analysis is statistically significant.

Regression Analysis: Coefficients

Table 3

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.442	.340		1.302	.194
Brand Trust	-.980	.057	-.834	-17.210	.000
Brand Commitment	-.148	.049	-.125	-3.056	.002
Brand Attachment	-.215	.060	-.178	-3.580	.000
Brand Personality	-.438	.080	-.272	-5.465	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Switching Behavior

Brand Trust has a beta value of -.980, with a t-value of -17.210 and p-value of 0.000. Brand Commitment has a beta value of -.148 with a t-value of -3.056 and p-value of 0.002. Brand Attachment has a beta value of -.215 with a t-value of -3.580 and p-value of 0.000. Brand Personality has a beta value of -.699 with a t-value of -8.058 and p-value of 0.000. The t-

value of all variables is greater than 2 and p-values are less than 0.05 which indicates that these variables significantly affect the Consumer Loyalty.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Co-efficient	t-value	p-value	Accept/ Reject
H_1	Brand Trust_ Consumer Loyalty	.980	17.210	.000	Accepted
H_2	Brand Commitment_ Consumer Loyalty	.148	-3.056	.002	Accepted
H_3	Brand Attachment_ Consumer Loyalty	.215	-3.580	.000	Accepted
H_4	Brand Personality_ Consumer Loyalty	.699	-8.058	.000	Accepted

According to the hypothesis table, all of the hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7) have been accepted.

Discussion and Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

This research project aims to understand the impact of brand attributes on customer loyalty in the soft drink industry in Pakistan. The study includes 200 respondents, both male and female, of varying ages, educational backgrounds, and monthly incomes. The study uses a non-probabilistic sampling method and a quantitative research method based on a deductive approach. Structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions were used, and the data was collected through a survey. The questionnaires were converted into tabular form using Microsoft Excel and imported into IBM SPSS 24 for statistical tests.Secondary data was collected from online sources, including researcher papers, journal articles, and academic papers. The findings support all hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7).

Discussion

Brand loyalty is the ability of a company to achieve repeat purchases of a product or service due to its value and emotional added value. This loyalty is based on the trust that the company brings to its customers and how they are connected to the business or brand.

Consumers are increasingly demanding, and authenticity is becoming increasingly important in brand loyalty. A study analyzing the effects of brand attributes on customer loyalty found that brand trust has a significant association with customer loyalty. Trust is the foundation of the customer relationship throughout the sales process, and organizations must focus on retaining customers and building a positive brand image.

Brand commitment is another variable that significantly influences customer loyalty, as it is at the heart of the customer-brand relationship. Brand attachment also plays a significant role in customer loyalty, as marketing practices play a major role in informing customers about product features and creating strong relationships with the brand. Brand personality is another variable that positively influences customer loyalty, as it allows the brand to be unique with its vision, values, and desires. By focusing on customer loyalty, organizations become more concerned with efficient resource use and environmentally conscious processes.

Conclusion

Brand loyalty is the result of many variables, some of which can be controlled and some of which cannot. In order to understand which variables have a positive effect on the degree of customer loyalty, companies must analyze and evaluate the various points of contact between customers and brands. This is done using brand experience management, i.e. the conscious influence of the brand experience by measuring, evaluating and taking action to couple brands with positive emotions and perceptions. The major variables which affect customer loyalty is brand trust, brand attachment, brand commitment and brand personality.

Findings

The researcher conducted descriptive analysis to summarize demographic variables and conduct correlation and regression analysis to determine the relationship between variables and the instrument's reliability and validity. The Cronbach's Alpha values for Brand Trust, Commitment, Attachment, Personality, and Consumer Loyalty were greater than 0.05, indicating the instrument's reliability. Pearson Correlations showed a strong correlation between Brand Trust and Consumer Loyalty, with a p-value of 0.00. Brand Commitment had a p-value of 74.6%, while Brand Attachment had a p-value of 79.7%. Brand Personality had a p-value of 69.4%, indicating a significant and positive association between Brand Trust and Consumer Loyalty.

The ANOVA Table showed a high F-value of 71.276, indicating statistical significance. The beta values of Brand Trust, Commitment, Attachment, and Personality were all greater than 2 and less than 0.05, indicating that these variables significantly affect Consumer Loyalty. All hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7) were accepted.**Recommendations**

According to the result of the study the following recommendations have been made:

- The soft drink organizations should create a great brand experience for building a brand trust.
- Consumers should feel comfortable and valued when they come into contact with a brand, whether in advertising, during a direct visit to a store or when using of a brand. One thing is certain though: a positive brand experience is more likely to lead to customer loyalty than a negative brand experience as well as increase brand trust.
- An exceptional, impressive, emotional and eye-catching brand experience, as this in turn creates a high level of identification with the brand and, therefore, increased brand attachment.
- To create sustainable brand commitment, it is essential for brands to create a customer appeal on an emotional level. Successful organizations have used these values in their loyalty programs, including, respect, compassion, nostalgia and corporate social responsibility.
- For better brand personality the companies should hire brand ambassadors. Brand Ambassadors are consumers who promote their brands in public because they like the company's brands and have a high level of identification with the brand and feel very loyal to the company. Brand Ambassadors show a high level of brand loyalty and promote the brands on social media and forums and are often part of the company's own brand community

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