Role of Brand Satisfaction towards Brand Loyalty of Smartphones in Karachi

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Abstract
The research intended to examine the effect of brand satisfaction towards brand loyalty with the mediating effect of brand attachment, brand love and brand trust of smartphones in Karachi. The study has collected 179 responses from the sample a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale and PLS-SEM methodology has been utilized have for data analysis using SmartPLS v4. Results showed that brand attachment has a negatively insignificant effect on brand loyalty. Brand love has a positively significant effect on brand loyalty. Brand satisfaction has a positively significant effect on brand attachment, brand love and brand trust. Lastly, brand trust has a positively significant effect on brand loyalty. Smartphone brands should prioritise continuous innovation, product differentiation, and customer-centric strategies to maintain and enhance brand satisfaction. Smartphone brands can cultivate a loyal customer base and gain a competitive edge by understanding and meeting customer needs, addressing concerns promptly, and building strong relationships.
Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Brand Love, Brand Satisfaction, Smartphone Industry, Pakistan.

Introduction

Overview

Brand satisfaction is essential for fostering smartphone brand loyalty. When customers are satisfied with a brand, they are more inclined to establish a strong emotional connection with it. which raises the possibility of repeat business and favourable word-of-mouth referrals(Revaldi et al., 2022).

Customers are more likely to be satisfied with a smartphone brand if they receive high-quality goods, first-rate support, and cutting-edge features(Savitri et al., 2022). Customers who are happy with their smartphone brand are more likely to have a feeling of trust and loyalty towards the brand, which results in repeat purchases and a readiness to spend more for the brand(Seduram et al., 2022).

The emotional attachment customers form with a brand is known as brand attachment. It refers to how a client identifies with a brand and feels personally invested in it(Rahman & Susila, 2022). Customers are more likely to have a solid attachment to a brand when they are happy with it, strengthening their loyalty and encouraging repeat purchases. Brand attachment and brand love are closely connected, and brand love is frequently fueled by satisfying brand experiences and high levels of brand pleasure(Revaldi et al., 2022).

Brand trust is a customer's level of trustworthiness regarding a company's ability to keep its promises and look out for their interests. A long-lasting relationship between a brand and its consumers is only possible when trust is established over time via dependable and consistent performance(Haudi et al., 2022). Customers happy with a brand are more likely to trust and stay loyal to it over time; therefore, brand satisfaction is essential to developing brand trust(Rahmat & Kurniawati, 2022).

Customers in Karachi have many alternatives when purchasing cell phones, and there is fierce rivalry among smartphone makers. In order to cultivate a devoted client base and propel corporate success, smartphone businesses must build and sustain high levels of brand satisfaction(Saleem et al., 2022). Additionally, customers dissatisfied with their smartphone brand in Karachi are more likely to switch to a rival brand than in other cities. To improve brand loyalty and lower customer turnover, smartphone manufacturers must create and sustain high satisfaction levels among consumers in Karachi(Haq et al., 2022).

Problem statement

Due to poor levels of brand satisfaction, particularly in Karachi, many smartphone firms need help to develop and retain brand loyalty among consumers despite the fierce competition in the smartphone industry(Iqbal, Hasan, et al., 2023). Smartphone brands' capacity to build a loyal client base and promote long-term commercial success is constrained by the low brand satisfaction of Karachi consumers, which results in high customer turnover and lower revenues(Saleem et al., 2022). In order to increase brand loyalty and customer retention, it is necessary to pinpoint the causes of Karachi consumers' poor brand satisfaction levels and establish methods to remedy them(Ahmed et al., 2023).

Customers in Karachi think that certain smartphone manufacturers need to keep up with the most recent technological developments. Brand satisfaction and loyalty are typically lower for companies that do not develop or offer novel features(Siraj & Zaman, 2022). Customers in Karachi are frequently price-conscious and open to switching brands if they can get a better bargain elsewhere. Brand satisfaction and loyalty are typically lower for companies that do not offer good value for the money(Sari et al., 2022). In Karachi, many smartphone companies offer a restricted product selection. Customers who want to buy a specific brand but need help locating it in stores may find this annoying, lowering their brand satisfaction and loyalty(Haq et al., 2023). Customers in Karachi frequently criticise smartphone manufacturers for their poor customer service. Customers

are less likely to be happy with the company when they receive poor customer service, which can decrease brand loyalty and increase customer turnover(Mohammed et al., 2022).

The need for studies explicitly to look at the link between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty for the smartphone market in Karachi may be one possible research gap in the current study. While there are many studies on brand loyalty and satisfaction in general(Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023; Mehta & Tariq, 2020; Setiawan & Patricia, 2022; Suartina et al., 2022; Zia et al., 2021), the Karachi smartphone market may have particular characteristics and difficulties that have not been thoroughly examined(Iqbal, Anwar, et al., 2023). The social and cultural background of Karachi, a varied city with a rich cultural legacy, may impact how consumers view and interact with smartphone businesses(Ahmed et al., 2023). Knowing how these factors affect brand loyalty and satisfaction in Karachi might be helpful information for smartphone manufacturers. Another potential research gap is the lack of studies analysing the effects of social media and digital marketing on brand satisfaction and loyalty for smartphones in Karachi. Understanding how these channels affect brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction may help smartphone businesses in Karachi(Haq et al., 2023).

Purpose Statement

The research intended to examine the effect of brand satisfaction towards brand loyalty with the mediating effect of brand attachment, brand love and brand trust of smartphones in Karachi.

Rationale and Scope

Research on brand satisfaction and brand loyalty of smartphones in Karachi is being done for several reasons. The biggest city in Pakistan is Karachi, an important economic centre with a developing middle class and a robust consumer market. Numerous brands compete for market share in Karachi's fiercely competitive smartphone market. Therefore, smartphone brands looking to succeed in Karachi and other comparable markets can benefit from understanding the factors influencing brand satisfaction and loyalty (Nizam et al., 2022). For smartphone brands, high levels of consumer turnover may be expensive in terms of lost sales and diminished market share. Developing and retaining brand loyalty is crucial for a firm to succeed over the long term and reduce customer turnover. Therefore, brands can develop strategies to lower customer turnover and retain customers by understanding the elements influencing brand loyalty and satisfaction. Understanding how social media and digital marketing impact brand loyalty and customer satisfaction has the potential to be highly insightful for smartphone businesses trying to engage with consumers and foster loyalty(Ahmed et al., 2023).

The research has considered the consumer-based brand equity model (CBBE), Sternberg's triangular theory of love and trust-transfer theory as the theoretical underpinnings of this study. The targeted population is the smartphone brand consumers studying at Karachi University, whereas 150 responses were collected from the respondents. The data were analysed through PLS-SEM using SmartPLS v4.

Structure of the Paper

The current study is divided into five different Sections. Section 1 has covered the study's relevant context, including discussing the variables and the problems that have forced the researcher to select the given topic. Section 2 includes the theoretical background and hypothesis development. Section 3 contains all the research approaches and strategies that the study has used to collect and analyse the gathered data. Section 4 will include

the research analysis and findings. Section 5 will conclude the study by giving the reader some critical managerial recommendations which will lead towards the suggestions given to future researchers.

Literature Review

Consumer-based brand equity model (CBBE)

The consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model is a framework that aids in comprehending and assessing a brand's strength and worth from the viewpoint of its target market (Palomba, 2022). It emphasises that consumer perception and experiences are extremely important in determining a brand's equity (Islam et al., 2023). Brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, and brand judgments/feelings/resonance are the four main parts of the CBBE model. Brand salience is the power of a brand to conjure up certain product categories in customers' imaginations (Ngo et al., 2022). Brand performance measures how effectively a brand satisfies consumer expectations and provides functional advantages (Iyer et al., 2021). Brand imagery pertains to the brand's intrinsic connotations and emotional and symbolic resonance with its target audience (Hartmann et al., 2021).

Brand judgements, sentiments, and resonance measure consumers' perceptions of a brand, including their fidelity, degree of connection to it, and propensity to interact with it. The CBBE model measures these dimensions and offers insights into how consumers view and value a brand, allowing businesses to make wise choices to increase brand equity through marketing initiatives, communication plans, and brand experiences (Pina & Dias, 2021; Tasci, 2021).

Sternberg's triangular theory of love

According to Sternberg's triangular theory of love, closeness, passion, and commitment are the three core elements of love (Thomas & Jain, 2022). This idea contends that the mix and balance of these elements determine the type and standard of a romantic connection. Intimacy is the term used to describe closeness, emotional connection, and strong ties between couples. It entails a sense of openness, trust, and sharing of one's opinions and life experiences (Eskola et al., 2022). Passion encompasses desire, excitement, and pleasure and represents the strong intimate and physical attraction between two people (Karandashev, 2021). Long-term relationship maintenance requires devotion, loyalty, and the determination to overcome obstacles. This is commitment (Fiiwe et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023).

Different varieties of love can be categorised depending on whether these elements are present or absent. For instance, perfect love, regarded as the best kind, includes a lot of closeness, desire, and dedication. Other types of love, such as infatuation, which lacks intimacy or commitment, or companionate love, which is passionate but lacks intimacy and commitment, highlight different ratios and intensities of these elements. Sternberg's theory emphasises the significance of balance and reciprocal growth of all three components for a happy and successful relationship and offers a framework for comprehending the complexity of love (Moon, 2021; Shum, 2021).

Trust-transfer theory

A psychological theory called trust-transfer theory describes how people move their trust from one situation or relationship to another (Handarkho, 2021). Based on their prior experiences and the generalisation of trust, this

theory holds that people frequently carry over their views and expectations for trust from one event to the next. People are more inclined to transfer their trust to comparable people, organisations, or situations in the future when they have favourable experiences and grow to trust one of them (Raza et al., 2023). This transfer happens because people use their prior trust experiences as a mental heuristic or shortcut when assessing and passing judgment on new circumstances. According to the trust-transfer hypothesis, a trust may be specific and generic (Raza et al., 2023). Specific trust is confidence in a particular thing.

In contrast, generalised trust is people's confidence in other people or organisations due to their overall experiences with trust. But trust can also be domain-specific, as the trust-transfer theory acknowledges. People could have confidence in someone in a particular situation or relationship, but they might not necessarily apply that to other aspects of their lives (Siegrist, 2021).

Development of the hypotheses

Brand satisfaction and brand attachment

Brand satisfaction and attachment are two significant concepts contributing to understanding customer interaction between customers and brands. The degree to which consumers' expectations and wants surrounding a brand are met is called brand satisfaction (Sima, 2021). It is based on the consumer's assessment of their total relationship with the brand, which includes their interactions, goods, and services (Pina & Dias, 2021). Customers who are pleased with a brand feel that it has met or exceeded their expectations, producing favourable feelings and attitudes towards it (Fang et al., 2021). Customers happy with the brand are more inclined to repurchase it, spread good word of mouth, and become loyal (Dandis & Al Haj Eid, 2022; Rahmatulloh & Melinda, 2021).

On the other hand, brand attachment refers to customers' stronger and more emotional bond with a company (Li et al., 2022; Shimul, 2022). Beyond mere contentment, it entails a feeling of attachment, love, and self-identification with the brand (Siddique & Rajput, 2022). Brand attachment arises when customers believe a brand represents their self-identity, beliefs, and objectives (Beeler et al., 2021). Consumers are more inclined to participate in brand-related behaviours due to this emotional connection, including seeking out brand-related information, participating in brand communities, and even adopting the brand into their self-concept. Brand success depends on both brand attachment and brand satisfaction. Together, they support the development of long-term client connections, brand advocacy, and loyalty. To improve consumer happiness, brand loyalty, and ultimately the success of their businesses, marketers work to understand and foster brand contentment and attachment (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2022). Hence the hypotheses can be found as follows:

H1.   Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on brand attachment.

Brand satisfaction and brand love

The relationships customers form with brands are intended to be explained by the brand satisfaction and love hypotheses. These ideas are crucial for comprehending customer behaviour and may greatly impact long-term success and brand loyalty (Shahid et al., 2022). However, brand love is a stronger emotional connection or affinity for a brand than simple contentment (Robertson et al., 2022). It is characterised by powerful positive feelings of passion, love, and connection (Le, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2022). According to the theory, when

customers fall in love with a brand, they form enduring relationships with it and are more likely to be loyal, advocate for it, and be prepared to pay more for it (Rahman et al., 2021; Thomas & Jain, 2022). Brands that reflect customers' self-identity, beliefs, and goals and arouse good feelings and experiences are frequently linked to brand love. Brand love and brand satisfaction both have a significant impact on customer behaviour and brand outcomes. Marketers may create strategies to improve consumer happiness, build brand love, and ultimately drive brand success by comprehending and using these concepts (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). Hence, the hypotheses can be found as follows:

H2.   Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on brand love.

Brand satisfaction and brand trust

The two concepts that seek to explain customers' attitudes and behaviours towards a certain brand are brand satisfaction and brand trust. These premises play a significant part in deciding brand loyalty and support because they shed light on how consumers view and interact with businesses. Consumers' level of pleasure with their exclusive use of a specific brand's goods or services is called brand satisfaction (Sima, 2021). It covers a range of factors, including brand reputation, price, and customer service. According to the premise, happy consumers are likelier to recommend the company to others, spread good word of mouth, and show enduring loyalty. Consumer expectations, opinions of brand performance, and the fit between their wants and the brand's offers all impact brand satisfaction. The confidence and reliance that people have on a brand, on the other hand, is referred to as brand trust (Heng Wei et al., 2023). It is the conviction that a brand will continuously meet customers' expectations and keep its promises (Pristanti et al., 2022). Brand trust is developed over time via positive interactions, constant provision of high-quality goods and services, and open and moral corporate conduct (Zhou et al., 2022). According to the idea, building trust encourages customers to become more loyal, open to trying new products from brands, and forgiving of occasional mistakes. Trust is crucial when customers depend on a brand to meet their demands and safeguard their interests in uncertainty or danger (Ha & Trinh, 2021). To establish solid and durable bonds with customers, brands must be trusted and enjoyed by them. They support enhanced brand equity, favourable brand perceptions, and consumer loyalty. Customers who trust and are happy with a brand are more inclined to pick it over rivals and spread the word about it to others, giving that brand a competitive edge. To increase brand happiness and trust, businesses should consistently produce high-quality goods and services, create outstanding customer experiences, and prioritise transparency and integrity (Meeprom & Chancharat, 2022). Hence, the hypotheses can be found as follows:

H3.   Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on brand trust.

Brand attachment and brand loyalty

In order to comprehend the psychological and behavioural connections that customers have with brands, two key theories in the study of consumer behaviour are brand attachment and brand loyalty. Brand attachment is the term used to describe the emotional connection that customers form with a certain brand (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). It is a strong, enduring bond that transcends simple brand preference (Whelan, 2021). Customers emotionally connected to a brand experience strong favourable sentiments towards it and see it as essential to their self-identity. The brand's capacity to satisfy the customer's requirements, values, and goals is

frequently the source of this emotional attachment (Lopes & Casais, 2022). Brand attachment is believed to result in favourable customer sentiments, improved brand trust, and a readiness to promote the brand (Sharif & Sidi Lemine, 2021).

On the other hand, brand loyalty describes a customer's devotion to a certain brand through time or recurrent purchasing behaviour(Zia et al., 2021). It is predicated on the consumer's belief that the brand regularly offers more value than its rivals. Several variables, such as consumer happiness, brand trust, perceived quality, and brand attachment, impact brand loyalty (Hwang et al., 2021). Increased client retention, good word-of-mouth, and resilience to competition pressures are all hypothesised benefits of brand loyalty. Brand attachment and loyalty are essential for businesses because they support enduring client relationships, brand equity, and long-term competitive advantage. Companies may improve client retention, boost brand advocacy, and fuel business development by cultivating brand attachment and loyalty (Babu & Vetrivel, 2023). Hence, the hypotheses can be found as follows:

H4.   The brand attachment has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Brand love and brand loyalty

Two related concepts, brand love and loyalty, concentrate on customers' emotional and behavioural ties with a certain brand. According to the brand love theory, customers may form strong emotional bonds with and fondness for a particular brand (Singh, 2021). It entails a strong, positive emotional connection and goes beyond rational decision-making. Consumers typically experience a feeling of enthusiasm, trust, and affinity with a brand when they adore it. This emotional connection might result in more involvement, advocacy, and desire to pay more for the brand's goods or services (Ahmadi & Ataei, 2022). The brand love hypothesis highlights the significance of emotional branding tactics in forging enduring connections with customers.

On the other hand, brand loyalty relates to customers' constant and recurrent purchasing behaviour towards a certain brand (Zia et al., 2021). It implies that consumers who are devoted to a brand actively pick it above rivals and have a strong preference for that brand. Numerous elements, including product quality, brand reputation, customer happiness, and perceived value, have impacted brand loyalty (Hwang et al., 2021).

Loyal consumers frequently display higher levels of brand endorsement, repurchase behaviour, and resistance to moving to compete for products (Pratt et al., 2022). Brand loyalty and brand love are related ideas. Brand love may result in brand loyalty because customers who feel attached to a brand are more inclined to make repeat purchases and stick with it. On the other hand, brand love may also result from brand loyalty since continued contentment and pleasant experiences with a brand can promote romantic connection (Shen et al., 2021). Hence, the hypotheses can be found as follows:

H5.   Brand love has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Brand trust and brand loyalty

Brand loyalty and brand trust are two crucial marketing ideas that greatly impact how consumers behave and what they want. The confidence and reliance that people have on a brand, on the other hand, is referred to as brand trust (Heng Wei et al., 2023). It is the conviction that a brand will continuously meet customers' expectations and keep its promises (Pristanti et al., 2022). Customers are more likely to make repeat purchases

and refer a brand to others when they have faith in it. On the other hand, brand loyalty describes a customer's devotion to a certain brand through time or recurrent purchasing behaviour(Zia et al., 2021). It is predicated on the consumer's belief that the brand regularly offers more value than its rivals (Rivaldo et al., 2022). Loyal consumers are more inclined to make repeat purchases, avoid moving to competitors, and even pay more for the brand they know and trust. Brand loyalty and brand trust are related. Because consumers are likelier to remain loyal to businesses they believe in, trust is the cornerstone of loyalty development (Alam et al., 2021). Contrarily, brand loyalty increases trust since devoted customers enjoy favourable brand experiences, increasing their faith in the company (Maduretno & Junaedi, 2022). Hence, the hypotheses can be found as follows:

H6.   Brand trust has a positive effect on brand loyalty.
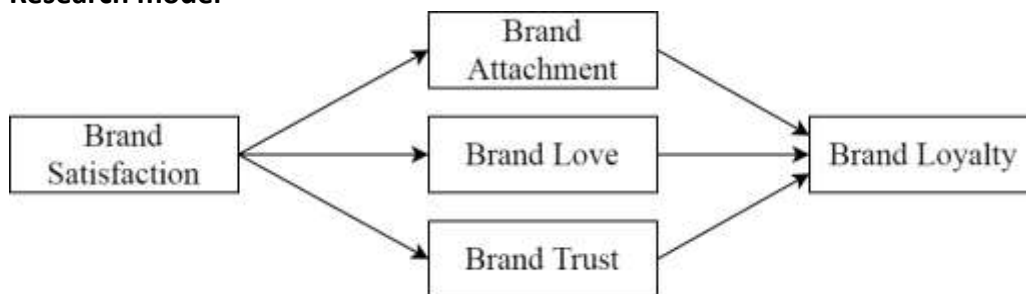
Research model

Figure 2.1: Research Framework

Methodology

Design

A positivistic philosophy and deductive approach have been employed in the current study. Positivist philosophy, grounded in objectivity and empirical observation principles, emphasises using quantitative data and systematic measurement in research. It seeks to discover general laws and causal relationships to explain and predict phenomena (Clark, 1998). Additionally, the deductive approach, closely related to positivism, begins with a theory or hypothesis and derives specific predictions from it. These hypotheses are then tested through the collection and analysis of empirical data to produce objective and repeatable results (Grinchenko & Shchapova, 2020). The positivistic philosophy underpins the research by emphasising the use of objective and empirical data to study the relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty (Bonache, 2021). A theoretical framework or existing theories regarding brand satisfaction and loyalty was the foundation for the deductive approach, which helped researchers formulate specific hypotheses to verify through data gathering and analysis. In order to confirm or disprove the suggested correlations, this method entails drawing precise predictions or expectations from the theories and evaluating them against empirical facts(Wardani & Kusuma, 2020).

Sample population

The study focuses on consumers who are studying at Karachi University. Karachi University has a vibrant student community comprising students from various academic backgrounds and disciplines. The university provides a

conducive environment for students to pursue their educational goals and engage in extracurricular activities (Ahmed et al., 2022). So the researcher focused their investigation on a particular demographic, namely Karachi University students. The study primarily targets university students in Karachi to understand better brand satisfaction's impact on influencing brand loyalty (Yaseen & Mazahir, 2019). This sample size provides information on the attitudes and actions of this particular consumer group and context-specific findings that may be used to guide marketing efforts directed toward local Karachi University students. Hence, the study's sample population is smartphone brand consumers studying at Karachi University.

Measures

Based on a five-point Likert scale, brand satisfaction has six measures adapted from Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021). Based on a five-Likert scale, brand attachment has five measures adapted from Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021). Similarly, brand love has six measures adapted from Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021) based on a five-Likert scale. Whereas Brand trust has a total of five measures, among them four measures adapted from Bae and Kim (2023) and one last measure adapted from Hokky and Bernarto (2021) and both the scale based on five Likert scales. Lastly, brand loyalty has a total of five measures, among them four measures adapted from Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021) and two measures adapted from Bae and Kim (2023) and both the scale based on a five Likert scale.

Data analysis

PLS-SEM has a statistical technique that makes it possible to analyse complicated interactions between variables. It can be especially helpful when the sample size seems small, or the data does not adhere to the presumptions of more conventional approaches, such as covariance-based SEM(Shiau et al., 2019). Furthermore, PLS-SEM using SmartPLS v4 is a considerably superior approach to CB-SEM since it uses Cronbach's alpha to deliver higher variance and consistency and superior mediation results(Hair Jr et al., 2021). PLS-SEM using SmartPLS v4 may predict complicated interactions or make predictions without putting many demands on the information or requiring relationships to be defined. In addition, PLS-SEM using SmartPLS v4 may execute component identification by building a customisable residue correlation structure, guarantee element determinacy by real multivariate regression results, and offer a precise estimation(Hidayat & Elizabeth Patras, 2022). PLS-SEM using SmartPLS v4 allowed them to assess the complex relationships between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty by examining the direct and indirect effects. This approach enabled the researchers to quantify the impact of brand satisfaction on brand loyalty(Hair & Alamer, 2022). Therefore, the study used PLS-SEM using SmartPLS v4 for data analysis.

Results and Discussions
Respondents' profile
Table 4.1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 4.1:

Respondents' Profile (n = 179)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	78	43.6
	Female	101	56.4
Age Group	21-25 years	28	15.6
	26-30 years	28	15.6
	31-35 years	22	12.3
	36-40 years	38	21.2
	41-45 years	40	22.3
	Above 45 years	23	12.8
Qualification	Undergraduate	46	25.7
	Graduate	36	20.1
	Postgraduate	48	26.8
	Others	49	27.4
Marital Status	Unmarried	93	52.0
	Married	86	48.0
Smartphone Brand	Apple	29	16.2
	Samsung	31	17.3
	Revo/Vivo	32	17.9
	OPPO	28	15.6
	Huawei	27	15.1
	Others	32	17.9

Measurement model
Construct reliability and validity
Construct reliability and validity are important aspects of psychometric assessment. Construct reliability ensures that the measurement of a construct is consistent and free from random error, allowing for accurate and dependable results. Construct validity ensures that the measurement accurately represents the intended construct and demonstrates meaningful relationships with other variables, ensuring the validity and usefulness of the assessment in capturing the construct of interest (Flake et al., 2022).

Table 4.2 shows the result of measurement model for construct and convergent validities using PLS algorithm.

Table 4.2:

Measurement Model

	Loadings	Prob.	Alpha	CR	AVE
BA3 <- BA	0.850	0.000	0.856	0.913	0.777
BA4 <- BA	0.914	0.000			
BA5 <- BA	0.879	0.000			
BL1 <- BL	0.666	0.000	0.799	0.858	0.549
BL2 <- BL	0.840	0.000			
BL3 <- BL	0.724	0.000			
BL4 <- BL	0.736	0.000			
BL6 <- BL	0.728	0.000			
BLY1 <- BLY	0.770	0.000	0.826	0.871	0.533
BLY2 <- BLY	0.818	0.000			
BLY3 <- BLY	0.729	0.000			
BLY4 <- BLY	0.693	0.000			
BLY5 <- BLY	0.773	0.000			
BLY6 <- BLY	0.572	0.000			
BS2 <- BS	0.870	0.000	0.811	0.871	0.630
BS3 <- BS	0.827	0.000			
BS4 <- BS	0.758	0.000			
BS5 <- BS	0.709	0.000			
BT2 <- BT	0.726	0.000	0.772	0.856	0.600
BT3 <- BT	0.659	0.000			
BT4 <- BT	0.837	0.000			
BT5 <- BT	0.859	0.000			

Hair et al. (2017, p. 104) suggested that indicators with loading between 0.40 and 0.70 should be retained based on their acceptable construct reliability and degree of convergence. In this line, Hair et al. (2011, p. 145) recommended that CR should be higher than 0.70 for substantial internal consistency of the construct and AVE should be higher than 0.50 for acceptable degree of convergence. Above table showed that all the indicators and constructs have met the aforementioned criteria and therefore, indicator reliability, construct reliability and convergence have been achieved.
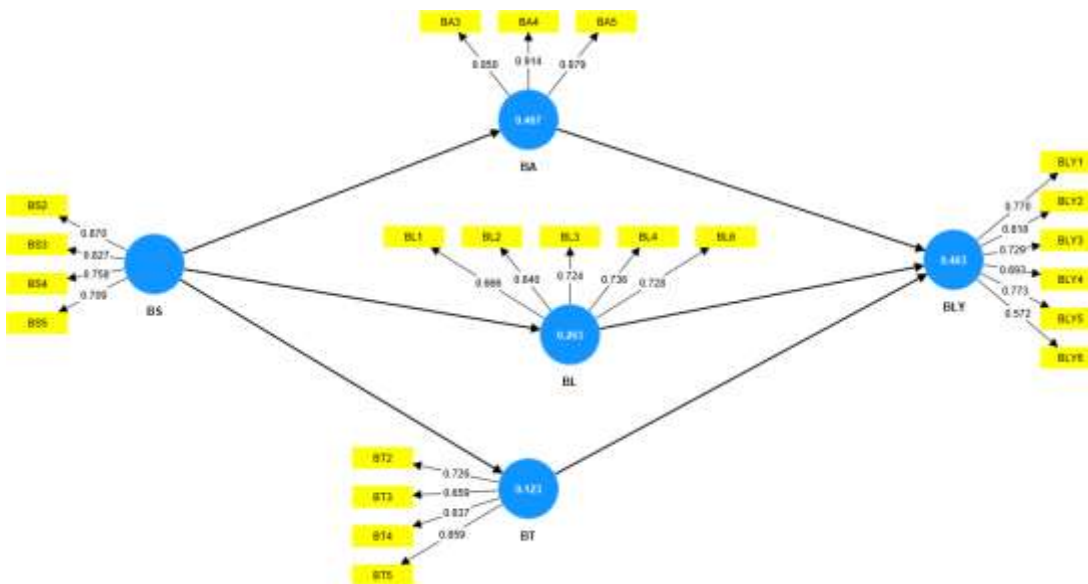
Figure 4.1: PLS Algorithm

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity is an idea in psychometric evaluation that examines if a measurement of one construct is different from measures of other constructs, proving that they are measuring distinct and exclusive concepts (Cheung et al., 2023). Discriminant validity helps ensure that different constructs are adequately differentiated from one another in measurement. It confirms that a measurement tool does not capture the same underlying construct with different indicators but distinct and separate constructs (Acar et al., 2022).

Table 4.3 shows the result of discriminant validity using FLC method using PLS algorithm.

Table 4.3:

Fornell-Larcker Criterion (FLC)

	BA	**BL**	**BLY**	**BS**	**BT**
BA	**0.882**				
BL	0.629	**0.741**			
BLY	0.488	0.548	**0.730**		
BS	0.683	0.513	0.180	**0.794**	
BT	0.657	0.575	0.645	0.351	**0.774**

Above table has showed that all the constructs have square root AVE coefficients (diagonally bold values) higher than their corresponding correlation with other constructs (Hair et al., 2014; Sarstedt et al., 2014). Therefore, discriminant validity using FLC method has been achieved.

Table 4.4 shows the result of Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio for discriminant validity assessment using PLS algorithm.

Table 4.4:

HTMT Ratio

	BA	BL	BLY	BS	BT
BA					
BL	0.714				
BLY	0.564	0.627			
BS	0.748	0.571	0.256		
BT	0.815	0.676	0.741	0.480	

Above table has shown that all constructs have HTMT ratio below the recommended cut-off value of 0.90 as the highest HTMT ratio of 0.815 was found between brand attachment and brand trust.

Predictive power

Predictive power describes a model's, test's, or measurement's capacity to precisely foresee or predict future outcomes or behaviours based on the data and information (Honkala et al., 2022).

Table 4.5:

Predictive power

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
BA	0.467	0.464
BL	0.263	0.259
BLY	0.463	0.454
BT	0.123	0.118

Falk and Miller (1992) suggested that R2 higher than 10 percent are acceptable for predictability of the endogenous construct while Hair et al. (2011, 2013) recommended R2 of the endogenous constructs higher than 25 percent have substantial predictability. Therefore, all the endogenous constructs have substantial predictability in the structural model.

Structural model

Path analysis

Path analysis is a statistical technique used to examine and quantify the relationships between variables in a causal model. It allows researchers to assess variables' direct and indirect effects on an outcome by estimating the magnitude and significance of the paths or connections between them (Fathurahman, 2022).

The outcomes of hypothesis testing utilizing PLS path modeling analysis, employing the PLS bootstrapping technique with 5000 subsamples and two-tailed estimations, are presented in Table 4.6. (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2011).

Table 4.6:

Hypothesis testing using PLS path modeling analysis

	Estimate	S. D.	t-Stats	Prob.	Decision
BA -> BLY	-0.005	0.097	0.049	0.961	Not supported
BL -> BLY	0.266	0.086	3.107	0.002	Supported
BS -> BA	0.683	0.029	23.967	0.000	Supported
BS -> BL	0.513	0.069	7.433	0.000	Supported
BS -> BT	0.351	0.097	3.609	0.000	Supported
BT -> BLY	0.495	0.093	5.347	0.000	Supported

Above table has shown that brand attachment (β = -0.005; p > 0.05) has a negatively insignificant effect on brand loyalty rejecting the hypothesis. Brand love (β = 0.266; p < 0.05) has a positively significant effect on brand loyalty accepting the hypothesis. Brand satisfaction has a positively significant effect on brand attachment (β = 0.683; p < 0.05), brand love (β = 0.513; p < 0.05) and brand trust (β = 0.351; p < 0.05) individually accepting all three hypotheses. Lastly, brand trust (β = 0.495; p < 0.05) has a positively significant effect on brand loyalty accepting the hypothesis.
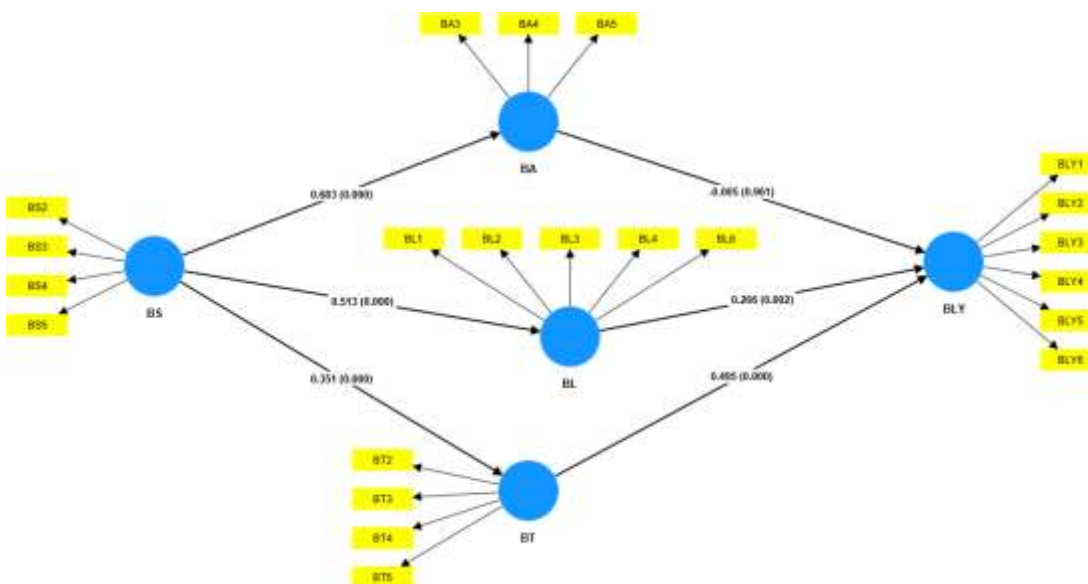

Figure 4.2: PLS Bootstrapping

Discussions

Shimul (2022) consistent this outcome and stated that when consumers see regular delivery of excellent quality, exceptional service, and satisfying their requirements and aspirations, they are more likely to be satisfied with a brand, which has a beneficial and major effect on brand attachment. Stronger brand attachment results from satisfied customers' emotional ties, trust, and commitment to the brand. However, Hemsley-Brown (2023) also hold the result and indicates that when elements like brand image, societal influences, or self-identity play a more substantial part in determining attachment, brand satisfaction may not impact brand attachment much. Although vital in these situations, contentment may not be the main element influencing brand loyalty since other important variables overshadow its importance.

Moreover, Pabla and Soch (2023) supported this result. They explained that customers' continuous positive encounters and emotional fulfilment with the company substantially impact brand satisfaction, influencing brand love. Customers who are satisfied with the brand have a strong emotional bond and grow to trust and rely on it. Strong bonds that fuel brand love are fostered when a brand continuously satisfies or exceeds the expectations of its customers, offers great goods or services, and arouses favourable feelings. Khoi and Le (2022) also bore the result. They demonstrated that brand satisfaction might not affect brand love when other elements, such as brand personality, self-expression, or social influences, are more important. In these situations, brand love might not be primarily motivated by customer satisfaction alone. Customers might enjoy the brand in general, but they might not necessarily grow close to it or fall deeply in love with it. Other psychological and societal factors may influence the development of brand love.

Additionally, Hao and Chon (2022) consistent this outcome and concluded that customers that repeatedly engage with a brand and receive excellent products, amazing service, and rewarding interactions are more likely to be satisfied with the brand, which has an advantageous effect on brand trust. Satisfied customers grow to trust and believe in the brand's ability to satisfy their demands. Over time, this ideal experience fosters trust, strengthening the relationship and boosting brand confidence. Customers who are satisfied with a brand are more likely to think of it as trustworthy, affecting their readiness to trust and promote it to others. Also, Khofifah (2022) concluded that when other elements like brand reputation, perceived transparency, or social influences are more important than brand satisfaction, brand satisfaction may not have much of a bearing on brand trust. Customers may sometimes be satisfied with a brand's goods or services, but due to outside influences, they may not always view the brand as trustworthy. For instance, unfavourable publicity, a lack of knowledge, or previous bad brand encounters can reduce the effect of satisfaction on trust. Customer happiness might not be enough to create considerable brand trust in these circumstances.

In addition, Özer et al. (2022) consistent this result and stated that when customers form a strong emotional connection, identification, and sense of belonging with the brand, brand attachment has a notable and beneficial effect on brand loyalty. Attached customers have a strong sense of kinship, trust, and loyalty, which increases the possibility of repeat business, good word of mouth, and brand promotion. Customers loyal to a brand are more likely to reject competing offers because of the emotional connection and perceived value of a brand attachment. They also actively seek out the brand's goods and services. However, Centeno and Mandagi

(2022) hold the result and explain that when other considerations, such as convenience, price, or situational factors, take a more substantial part in determining brand loyalty, the brand attachment may not have much impact. Customers may feel loyal to a brand in some situations. However, they may still switch to a competitor for reasons unrelated to loyalty, such as reduced costs, easier accessibility, or particular situational requirements. In these situations, brand loyalty may not be primarily driven by attachment; other factors may impact consumer behaviour more than attachment.

Furthermore, Eklund (2022) supported the result and concluded that when individuals share a strong emotional bond with the brand and feel adoration and passion for it, brand love greatly and considerably impacts brand loyalty. Customers passionate about a brand will go above and beyond to support it, show brand advocacy, and preserve a long-term relationship. The deep emotional link that comes with brand love fosters loyalty, trust, and preference for the company, which increases the possibility of repeat business, brand referrals, and resistance to rival products. Whereas Wong (2023) bore the result and stated that When other elements like convenience, cost, or product quality take a more major part in determining brand loyalty, brand love may have little impact. In certain cases, despite having a strong emotional attachment to a brand, consumers still choose alternatives because of external or practical causes. Brand love is a strong emotional motivator, yet brand loyalty may not be solely determined by it, and other factors may have more of an impact on consumer behaviour.

Consequently, Wongsansukcharoen (2022) supported this result and explained that when consumers view the brand as trustworthy, reputable, and reliable. Building long-term client connections and loyalty depends heavily on trust. Customers are more inclined to make further purchases, show loyalty, and spread the word about a business they trust. Stronger brand loyalty results from a sense of security, confidence, and decreased perceived risk fostered through trust. Customers have a strong sense of commitment and devotion to a brand because they trust it to deliver on its promises regularly. However, Akoglu and Özbek (2022) concluded that when other elements like pricing, ease of use, or product quality are more important. When competing brands offer lower costs or greater features, people may still choose them even when they trust the brand. Although trust is crucial for fostering loyalty, it could not be the only element influencing consumer behaviour. The impact of trust on brand loyalty may be negligible or outweighed by other factors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study aims to determine the role of brand satisfaction towards brand loyalty of smartphones among customers. The study used positivist and deductive approaches. The study's target population would be the Smartphone brand consumers studying at Karachi University, Pakistan. The study also used PLS-SEM using SmartPLS V4 to assess a complex modelling framework. The primary data for the current study can be gathered using a questionnaire as part of the survey method, enabling the researcher to gather much information quickly. Also, the Consumer-based brand equity model (CBBE), Sternberg's triangular theory of love, and Trust-transfer theory have been used for theoretical underpinning.

Moreover, brand satisfaction plays a significant role in shaping brand loyalty among customers in the smartphone industry. When customers are satisfied with a particular smartphone brand, they are more likely

to exhibit loyalty by making repeat purchases, recommending the brand to others, and developing a strong emotional connection with it. The relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty is mutually reinforcing, leading to long-term success for smartphone brands. In addition, brand satisfaction fosters trust, attachment, and a perception of value among customers. This trust and perceived value make customers less price-sensitive and more willing to pay a premium for the brand's products. However, smartphone brands should prioritise continuous innovation, product differentiation, and customer-centric strategies to maintain and enhance brand satisfaction. Smartphone brands can cultivate a loyal customer base and gain a competitive edge by understanding and meeting customer needs, addressing concerns promptly, and building strong relationships.

Practical recommendations

The finding of the study offer some helpful policy recommendations. The finding showed that brand satisfaction, attachment, love, and trust significantly affect brand loyalty to a smartphone among customers. Thus, many factors have been taken into account. Consequently, brand satisfaction is critical in influencing brand loyalty among smartphone customers. In today's highly competitive smartphone market, managers need to understand the significance of brand satisfaction and its impact on fostering long-term customer loyalty. So, managers should place a high priority on ongoing innovation and product differentiation to increase brand satisfaction. Introduce fresh features, technology, and designs to stay ahead of customer wants and industry trends. To understand how customers' demands and preferences are changing, do market research and collect consumer feedback. Managers may build a good brand experience that improves brand satisfaction and enhances loyalty by continually delivering creative and distinctive items.

Similarly, for brand satisfaction, user-centric design and functionality are crucial. When managers invest in building intuitive, user-friendly, and customised smartphones, the target audience's demands should be considered. Considering things like accessibility features, simplicity of use, and ergonomics. Use user feedback in design and development to ensure the smartphone meets consumers' needs and preferences. Therefore, managers may improve brand satisfaction and foster loyalty by prioritising user-centric design.

Moreover, consistently delivering a seamless customer experience across all touchpoints is crucial for brand satisfaction. Managers should ensure that every interaction, from the pre-and post-purchase stages, reflects the brand's values and commitment to customer satisfaction. Streamline the buying process, simplify product registration and warranty claims, and provide clear and comprehensive product information. Managers can reinforce brand satisfaction and loyalty by providing a consistent, hassle-free customer experience.

For brand satisfaction and long-term brand loyalty, trust-building is crucial. Managers should concentrate on providing customers with dependable, superior smartphones that meet or surpass their expectations. Employ reliable quality control procedures to guarantee that every product meets the highest requirements. To guarantee product quality consistency, invest in respected suppliers and producers. Managers may develop a loyal customer base by offering dependable, high-quality items that satisfy customers' smartphone needs.

Additionally, Customers are more likely to be satisfied and loyal to brands when emotionally attached to the brand. Managers should create a memorable brand narrative that appeals to their target market. Share the

brand's objectives, beliefs, and goals in a way that inspires and engages customers. To tell the brand story and create an emotional connection with consumers, use various marketing channels, including social media, video marketing, and content marketing. Managers may improve brand satisfaction and promote long-term loyalty by encouraging emotional ties.

In addition, it is essential to continually inquire about and respond to customer feedback to raise brand satisfaction. Managers must implement a reliable method for consumer feedback to learn from and get suggestions from smartphone users. Pay close attention to client input, spot opportunities for development, and make the required adjustments. Informing customers of the modifications made in response to their comments will demonstrate your appreciation for their input. Managers may increase brand happiness and loyalty by iteratively improving based on customer input. By implementing these managerial recommendations, smartphone companies may improve customer interactions, develop brand loyalty, and they can gain a competitive advantage in the dynamic smartphone industry.

Limitations and future research

Several limitations must be taken into account while interpreting the results. One limitation of the proposed study on smartphone brand satisfaction and loyalty is that it may use a small sample size or concentrate on a particular region or demographic. This could impact the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Future research should aim for larger and more diverse sample sizes to increase the representativeness of the findings. Additionally, research in this area often relies on self-administrated questions and surveys, subject to response biases and social desirability effects. Future studies could employ mixed-method approaches, including qualitative interviews or observational studies, to better understand the factors influencing brand satisfaction and loyalty.

Furthermore, brand satisfaction and loyalty frequently mutually influence one another in their connection. Long-term studies can address endogeneity and reverse causality by illuminating these variables' chronological sequence and causal linkages. In future research, conduct comparative studies between different smartphone brands to understand how brand satisfaction and loyalty vary and how brand strategies and marketing efforts contribute to these differences. Lastly, the smartphone market is dynamic and driven by various external factors, including market trends, competitive dynamics, and technology breakthroughs. To provide an improved understanding of the dynamics in the smartphone business, future research should consider these contextual aspects and their possible impact on brand satisfaction and loyalty.

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