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DOES BRAND AUTHENTICITY BRIDGES THE EFFECT OF EXPERIENCE, VALUE, AND ENGAGEMENT ON BRAND LOVE: A CASE OF FRAGRANCE INDUSTRY OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Objective

The current study investigates the impact of brand experience, consumer perceived value, and customer engagement on brand love with the mediating effect of brand authenticity in the Pakistani context.

Methods

The quantitative data has been gathered by applying convenience sampling using a questionnaire instrument from the fragrance consumers of Karachi, Pakistan. The sample size has been based on 217 sample responses. Data analysis has been conducted by using PLS-SEM through Smart PLS 3.2.9.

Findings

The findings have shown that brand authenticity positively affects brand love, while experience and customer engagement have positively affected brand love with the mediating role of brand authenticity. However, consumer perceived value has no effect on brand love with the mediating role of brand authenticity.

Implications

Managers can provide personalized services for affective and behavioral brand experiences. This tactics can help multinational brands become more authentic, and businesses can get good input from customers, which adds to brand love. Similarly, managers can also develop brand recognition campaigns to promote a deeper and more long-term partnership between their products and their consumers, encouraging them to connect with them.

INTRODUCTION

Brands have increasingly influenced consumers' lives. Consumers perceive brands as relationship partners, according to studies(Bairrada et al., 2018).Brand love is a relatively new research subject. Consumers consider loved objects to be a part of themselves and the universe in which they exist, with loved objects having a vital role in forming their world (Huang, 2017).Moreover, according to Manthiou et al. (2018), brand love is described as a long-term relationship between customers and products. According to a previous study, brand love is described as consumers' affective attachment to a brand, which motivates them to display constant loyalty or persistent actions toward it or a willingness to pay a premium for the brand. Furthermore, it is considered that during economic downturns, brand love requires the most attention(Zhang et al., 2020).

Similarly, since Brakus et al. (2009) introduced the brand experience scale, the brand experience has gotten much attention in the branding world. The brand experience is a crucial marketing technique that has gained strategic importance in modern brand management.

Marketers are now addressing obstacles and designing plans to provide customers with everlasting experiences at each touch-point(Safeer et al., 2020).Previously, in Europe, various concepts such as brand loyalty, consumer engagement, good word of mouth, and customer loyalty were used to calculate the construct of brand experience and brand love(Ferreira et al., 2019; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). In Asia, effective engagement, brand loyalty, and behavioral intentions were used to assess brand experience and brand love(Gumparathi & Patra, 2020).As a result, it demonstrates that researchers are encouraged and inspired to investigate the various dimensions of brand experience and brand love(Safeer et al., 2020).

Additionally, humans have been searching for authenticity for hundreds of years. Despite a century of interest in this human need, marketing experts have only recently been interested in the idea of authenticity due to increasing customer demand for authenticity in purchased goods and services(Fritz et al., 2017). Furthermore, Brand authenticity is described as "the degree to which a brand is considered original and genuine, meaning it is exclusive and not derivative, and true to what it claims to be." The literature has consistently proposed that there is a connection between brand authenticity and brand love. The generation of brand love is "the core feature of branding and growing value as a provider of continuity and credibility in a constantly evolving world," according to a brand's relationship function(Mody & Hanks, 2020).

Besides, the growing demand among consumers for authentic brand experiences shows the value of brand authenticity in brand loyalty growth. As a result, authenticity has become an important subject that has attracted many academics (Rodrigues, 2018). Despite the importance of brand experience and authenticity in cultivating brand love, there is a paucity of research on the topic (Das et al., 2019; Keiningham et al., 2019). Also, few studies exist in the Asian context, although Asian markets are an emerging and hotly debated subject (Safeer et al., 2020). Furthermore, in Asia, consumer experiences are becoming increasingly crucial for future business growth (Tivasuradej & Pham, 2019). Therefore, the current study investigates the impact of brand experience, consumer perceived value, and customer engagement on brand love with the mediating effect of brand authenticity in the Pakistani context.

The introduction is included in the 1st section of the research. The literature review comprised the 2nd section, wherein the 3rd section deals with the methodology and 4th section provides the results and findings of the study. 5th section comprises discussions on the results/findings, and the 6th section of the paper provides implications and future research directions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section deals with the theoretical linkage between variables and hypothesizing the relationship between variables based on the model framework.

Relationship between brand authenticity and brand love

Brand authenticity has a major effect on brand love, according to Govarchin (2019). According to the results, buyers trust that a brand's actions and attributes are real, and that the brand delivers on its promises to meet the needs of its customers; as a result, they become faithful to and enjoy the brand. Similarly, Mody and Hanks (2020) refer to authenticity as a core component of the brand experience that leads to brand love and, as a result, brand evangelism. Moreover, Positive interpersonal relationships with brands and brand love can be achieved “by endowing the brand with a sense of authenticity from its roots and tradition, the vision of its owners, and its corporate culture, so that the brand consumer feels a sense of kinship toward it” (Safeer et al., 2020). Also, Brand authenticity refers to a brand's origins, genuineness, honesty, and originality, and can be measured in terms of consistency (in terms of its relation to the past), originality (genuineness), durability (believability and trustworthiness), and symbolism (in terms of its meaning) (self-identification) (Deepak & Kim, 2018). Likewise, authenticity can elicit optimistic emotions in consumers, such as brand love which can be explained by feeling-as-information logic, which states that the importance of feelings grows in proportion to their perceived relevance to the choice (Liu et al., 2020). Based on previous research, we believe that a high degree of brand authenticity would contribute to a high level of brand love among customers. As a result, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Brand authenticity has a significant impact on brand love.

Relationship between brand experience, brand authenticity and brand love

In order for a brand to be authentic, it must preserve its distinct and trustworthy appearance, as well as have clear quality assurance. It maintains its promises to earn the trust of clients, thus increasing their value and inducing optimistic emotions (Jian et al., 2019). Also, Safeer et al. (2020) discovered that authenticity was one of the most important aspects of the brand experience that influenced consumer emotions positively. As a result, favorable brand experiences and brand authenticity inspire customers to become emotionally addicted to and fall in love with a brand. Likewise, according to Manthiou et al. (2018), improved brand performance contributes to favorable customer brand experiences, which boosts the brand's authenticity. Furthermore, meaningful continuity in brand experience dimensions builds brand authenticity, as brand authenticity is an integral outcome of brand experience that propels the brand to prosperity and long-term development (TRAN et al., 2020). Additionally, when a brand's product commitment, legacy, and sincere brand action are reflected in its characteristics, customers believe the brand performs on its promises and is seen as authentic. As a consequence, the customer is responsible for the favorable effects of brand experiences (del Barrio-Garcia & Prados-Peña, 2019). Thus, positive brand experiences result in genuine brand attributes and consistent brand behavior. Hence, we proposed:

H2a: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand authenticity.

H2b: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand love with the mediation of brand authenticity.

Relationship between consumers perceived value, brand authenticity and brand love

Perceived value (PV) has been described as a major contributor to BL in brand marketing research that have studied the antecedents of BL (Junaid & Hussain, 2016). Companies that contribute goods of outstanding value can have an edge over their rivals, according to the value development framework. Customers who believe in the brand's value are most likely to show brand love and buy items (Jung & Jin, 2016). Moreover, according to Hicks et al. (2020), a customer will feel love after having an encounter with a specific brand. To make a customer fall in love with a company, the brand's features and products must be of high value to the consumer. Consumers who rate organizations as authentic would give them higher consumer value scores, according to Hernandez-Fernandez and Lewis (2019). Based on the following, it can be concluded that true brand-customer relationships, or at least the perception of, help in the enhancement of customer value experiences. Thus we hypothesize:

H3a: Consumer perceived value has a positive effect on brand authenticity.

H3b: Consumer perceived value has a positive effect on brand love with the mediation of brand authenticity.

Relationship between customer engagement, brand authenticity and brand love

Consumers form a deep emotional relationship with a company, which leads to CBE. The role of customers is strengthened by CBE because they are active in the value co-creation process. Furthermore, CBE turns the customer into a brand fan as a result of the close relationships formed, which may contribute to him or her actively supporting the brand and its products (Grassi, 2020). Also, customers would be cognitively involved in the revealed knowledge about the brand and therefore build intimacy with it because they are cognitively engaged in the sense that they are present and centered on the brand and its associated qualities (Rosado-Pinto et al., 2020). Similarly, Brand love is a result of brand engagement, according to Seo et al. (2017). Additionally, a high level of engagement suggests a stronger interpersonal bond, which allows consumers to build and retain a relationship (Verma, 2021). Hence, we proposed the more engage the customers the more they will perceive the brand authentic and therefore it will eventually increases their brand love. Therefore, we stated:

H4a: Customer engagement has a positive effect on brand authenticity.

H4b: Customer engagement has a positive effect on brand love with the mediation of brand authenticity.

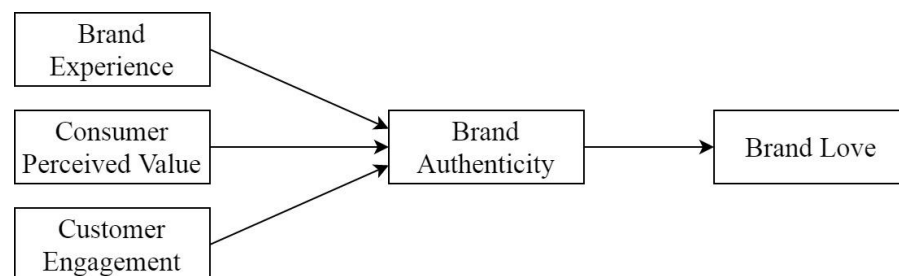


Figure 1: Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Design

The current research has aimed to target the fragrance products consumers in the context of Karachi, Pakistan. The sample size estimation of this research has been conducted using a formula of $N/5$ items given by Bentler and Chou (1987), in which N is the number of items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 41 items, and therefore this research has to gather at least 205 sample responses. Hence, this research has aimed to gather 217 samples from the target population; however, table 3.1 provides respondents' profile. Besides, convenience sampling has effectively helped the researcher

for data collection as it is relatively easy and efficient for gathering the data. Besides, convenience sampling provided effective and valuable data from relatively close people (Emerson, 2015). The convenience sampling also helped the researcher select those people that met the certain criteria that include geographical proximity and willingness to participate. The use of convenience sampling in this research allowed the researcher to gather the data in a cost and time-efficient way (Etikan et al., 2016).

Table 3.1: Respondents' Profile (n = 217)

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender | Male | 172 | 79.3 |
| | Female | 45 | 20.7 |
| Age Group | 18 years to 23 years | 131 | 60.4 |
| | 24 years to 30 years | 86 | 39.6 |
| Academic Qualification | Undergraduate | 172 | 79.3 |
| | Graduate | 2 | 0.9 |
| | Post-Graduate | 43 | 19.8 |
| Frequency of Shopping | Rarely | 30 | 13.8 |
| | Less than one time per month | 42 | 19.4 |
| | One/two times a month | 36 | 16.6 |
| | Multiple times in a month | 32 | 14.7 |
| | One/two times a week | 44 | 20.3 |
| | Multiple times in a week | 33 | 15.2 |
| Preferred Method of Shopping | Personally | 110 | 50.7 |
| | Online/E-Commerce | 107 | 49.3 |
| Preferred Fragrance Brand | J'adore | 25 | 11.5 |
| | Dolce & Gabbana | 31 | 14.3 |
| | Chanel Allur  | 27 | 12.4 |
| | GUCCI Pour Homme | 31 | 14.3 |
| | Pleasures Estee Lauder | 18 | 8.3 |
| | Armani | 24 | 11.1 |
| | Dunhill Desire | 29 | 13.4 |
| | Hugo Boss | 32 | 14.7 |

Data Collection

The data for the hypotheses testing process of this research has been gathered by applying a survey method using a self-administered questionnaire. The survey method helped the researcher in gathering an adequate dataset within efficient time. Besides, it appropriately targeted the respondent's attitude, behavior, and experience regarding the research objective (Groves et al., 2011). The survey method has been a helpful factor used in other marketing research to gather the data quickly. Besides, the questionnaire instrument has been used in the survey method as it gave the respondents different options for answering the questions (Ballinger & Davey, 1998). Similarly, the questionnaire has been developed based on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The instrument helped the researcher in increasing the significance of the results (Baker, 2003).

RESULTS

This section of the paper discusses the results and findings based on the PLS-SEM analysis using Smart PLS version 3.2.9. In this section, the study has estimated measurement model and structural model for data analysis, while the last segment of this section compares and contrasts its findings with the previous literature for an argumentative discussion on the results. The PLS-SEM analysis technique comprises two models: measurement and structural model that focuses on examining complex relationships (Hair et al., 2016). This technique helped the researcher identify the validity and reliability and the results based on hypotheses testing (Hair et al., 2011).

Measurement model

Hair et al. (2014) Explained that the measurement (outer) model is used to estimate the theoretical relationship between indicators and latent constructs statistically. In this regard, Hair et al. (2011) recommended that indicator reliability should be higher than 0.70, alpha should be higher than 0.70, composite reliability (CR) should be higher than 0.80, and AVE should be higher than 0.50 for adequate estimation of the measurement (outer) model. The following table 4.1 shows the results of outer model estimation using the PLS algorithm.

Table 4.1: Measurement model and instrumentation

| Constructs/Indicators | | Loading | Source(s) |
|--|---|---------|--------------------------|
| Consumer Perceived Value (Alpha = 0.932; CR = 0.957; AVE = 0.880) | | | |
| CPV1 | This brand is well made | Drop | (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) |
| CPV2 | This brand has acceptance quality standards | 0.985 | |
| CPV3 | This brand has a good workmanship | 0.873 | |
| CPV4 | This brand would last a long time | 0.952 | |
| CPV5 | This brand would perform consistently | Drop | |

| Customer Engagement (Alpha = 0.972; CR = 0.981; AVE = 0.946) | | | |
|---|---|-------|-----------------------|
| CE1 | I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others of this brand | Drop | (Li et al., 2020) |
| CE2 | In general, I like to get involved in the discussions related to this brand | 0.981 | |
| CE3 | In my interaction with this brand, I am immersed | 0.963 | |
| CE4 | Anything related to this brand grabs my attention | 0.974 | |
| CE5 | I am passionate about this brand | Drop | |
| CE6 | I feel excited about this brand | Drop | |
| Brand Experience (Alpha = 0.952; CR = 0.964; AVE = 0.818) | | | |
| BE1 | In my opinion, this brand strongly impacts my senses | 0.929 | (Safeer et al., 2020) |
| BE2 | According to my sensory perceptions, this brand is exciting | 0.686 | |
| BE3 | This brand persuades my sentiments and feelings | 0.969 | |
| BE4 | This brand appeals emotionally | 0.991 | |
| BE5 | While using, this brand engaged me in physical actions and behavioral modes | 0.877 | |
| BE6 | The outcome of this brand is physical experiences | 0.941 | |
| BE7 | While facing, this brand involves me in much thinking | Drop | |
| BE8 | This brand arouses my curiosity and solves problems | Drop | |
| Brand Love (Alpha = 0.891; CR = 0.895; AVE = 0.682) | | | |
| LOV1 | This is a superb brand | 0.749 | (Safeer et al., 2020) |
| LOV2 | This brand helps me in creating good feelings | Drop | |
| LOV3 | This brand is fantastic | 0.764 | |
| LOV4 | This brand helps to make me happy | 0.904 | |
| LOV5 | I am passionate to get this brand | Drop | |
| LOV6 | I have an excellent attachment to this brand | 0.876 | |
| Brand Authenticity/Continuity (Alpha = 0.905; CR = 0.955; AVE = 0.913) | | | |
| BAC1 | I think the brand is consistent over time | 0.952 | (Fritz et al., 2017) |
| BAC2 | I think the brand stays true to itself | 0.960 | |
| BAC3 | The brand offers continuity | Drop | |
| BAC4 | The brand has a clear concept that it pursues | Drop | |
| Brand Authenticity/Originality (Alpha = 0.871; CR = 0.918; AVE = 0.790) | | | |
| BAO1 | The brand is different from all other brands | 0.934 | (Fritz et al., 2017) |

| | | | |
|--|--|-------|----------------------|
| BAO2 | The brand stands out from other brands | 0.849 | |
| BAO3 | I think the brand is unique | 0.881 | |
| BAO4 | The brand clearly distinguishes itself from other brands | Drop | |
| Brand Authenticity/Reliability (Alpha = 0.831; CR = 0.919; AVE = 0.851) | | | |
| BAR1 | My experience of the brand has shown me that it keeps its promises | Drop | (Fritz et al., 2017) |
| BAR2 | The brand delivers what it promises | Drop | |
| BAR3 | The brand's promises are credible | 0.890 | |
| BAR4 | The brand makes reliable promises | 0.953 | |
| Brand Authenticity/Naturalness (Alpha = 0.767; CR = 0.892; AVE = 0.805) | | | |
| BAN1 | The brand does not seem artificial | 0.941 | (Fritz et al., 2017) |
| BAN2 | The brand makes a genuine impression | Drop | |
| BAN3 | The brand gives the impression of being natural | Drop | |
| BAN4 | The brand gives the impression of being original | 0.851 | |

Source: Author's Estimation

It has been manifested in table 4.1 that all indicators have higher reliability than the recommended threshold, while latent constructs have substantial reliability based on Cronbach (1951) alpha and composite reliability. Moreover, the latent constructs have also achieved a considerable degree of convergence between indicators based on AVE estimation. Hence, the measurement model shows that the theoretical relationship between indicators and latent constructs has been manifested statistically.

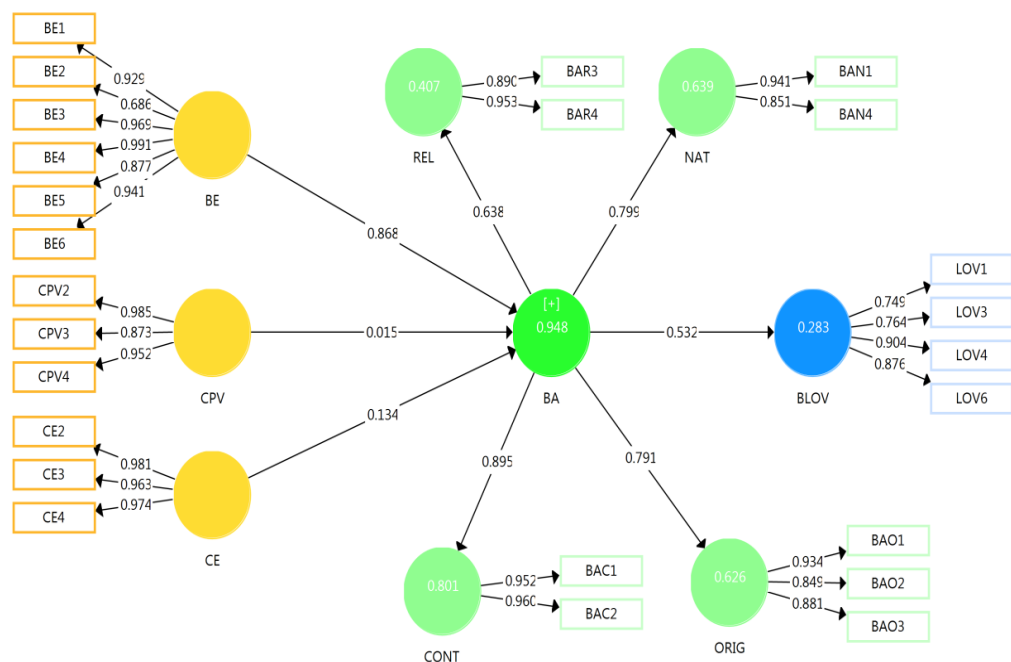


Figure 2: PLS Algorithm

Table 4.2: Discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker (1981) Criterion

| | BE | BLOV | CE | CONT | CPV | NAT | ORIG | REL |
|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| BE | 0.904 | | | | | | | |
| BLOV | 0.348 | 0.826 | | | | | | |
| CE | 0.662 | 0.368 | 0.973 | | | | | |
| CONT | 0.890 | 0.267 | 0.899 | 0.956 | | | | |
| CPV | 0.716 | 0.451 | 0.721 | 0.778 | 0.938 | | | |
| NAT | 0.724 | 0.792 | 0.435 | 0.560 | 0.790 | 0.897 | | |
| ORIG | 0.801 | 0.117 | 0.759 | 0.865 | 0.371 | 0.272 | 0.889 | |
| REL | 0.596 | 0.626 | - 0.023 | 0.243 | 0.346 | 0.817 | 0.171 | 0.922 |

Source: Author's Estimation

BE = Brand Experience; BLOV = Brand Love; CE = Customer Engagement; CONT = Continuity; CPV = Consumer Perceived Value; NAT = Naturalness; ORIG = Originality; REL = Reliability

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square-rooted coefficients of AVE, as mentioned in the bold diagonal values, should be higher than the correlation coefficients of other constructs to achieved considerable discrimination between constructs (Hair et al., 2016). Herein, table 4.2 shows that theoretically-unrelated constructs have been statistically different as well, and therein, discriminant validity using FLC has been achieved.

Structural model

The structural model (also known as the inner model) was used to evaluate the hypothesized relationship results between latent constructs based on PLS bootstrapping technique (Sarstedt et al., 2014). The evaluation of the model's quality, contrasting to goodness-of-fit in the CB-SEM estimation, is based on the predictive power and relevance of the endogenous constructs (Rigdon, 2014). Table 4.3 shows a comprehensive outlook of the structural (inner) model covering path modeling based on direct-effect analysis and specific indirect-effect analysis for hypothesis-testing (Hair et al., 2014), predictive power using a coefficient of determination (R^2), and cross-redundancy relevance (Q^2).

Table 4.3: Hypothesis-Testing using PLS-SEM

| Endogenous Constructs | Brand Authenticity | Brand Love |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Direct-effect analysis | | |
| Brand Authenticity | | 0.532 (14.015)*** |
| Brand Experience | 0.868 (58.870)*** | |

| | | |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Consumer Perceived Value | 0.015 (0.396) | |
| Customer Engagement | 0.134 (4.351) ^{***} | |
| Specific indirect-effect analysis | | |
| Brand Experience | | 0.462 (15.190) ^{***} |
| Consumer Perceived Value | | 0.008(0.358) |
| Customer Engagement | | 0.071 (4.224) ^{***} |
| Predictive power and relevance | | |
| R-Square | 0.948 | 0.283 |
| Adjusted R-Square | 0.947 | 0.280 |
| Q-Square | 0.479 | 0.101 |

Source: Author's Estimation

Note: *** denotes that $p < 0.001$; values in parenthesis are t-Statistics while non-parenthesis values are standardized regression weights (beta coefficients). PLS bootstrapping at 5000 subsamples and a two-tailed test has been used for structural model estimations. Q^2 is estimated using PLS-blindfolding at six omissions while R^2 , and Adjusted R^2 , are estimated using PLS-algorithm.

Based on the hypothesis-testing findings, hypothesis-1 ($\beta = 0.532, p < 0.001$) has been accepted at 1 percent statistical significance, postulating that increase in the brand authenticity of fragrance brands in Pakistan leads to improve its brand love. In addition to this, hypothesis-2a ($\beta = 0.868, p < 0.001$) and hypothesis-2b ($\beta = 0.0462, p < 0.001$) have also been accepted at 1 percent statistical significance proposing that brand authenticity significantly mediates the positive effect of brand experience on brand. On the contrary, hypothesis-3a ($\beta = 0.015, p > 0.05$) and hypothesis-3b ($\beta = 0.008, p > 0.05$) have been rejected at 5 percent statistical significance positing no effect of consumer perceived value on brand authenticity and brand love. Last of all, hypothesis-4a ($\beta =, p < 0.001$) and hypothesis-4b ($\beta =, p < 0.001$) have been accepted at 1 percent statistical significance, manifesting that brand authenticity significantly mediates the effect of customer engagement on brand love in the fragrance industry of Pakistan.

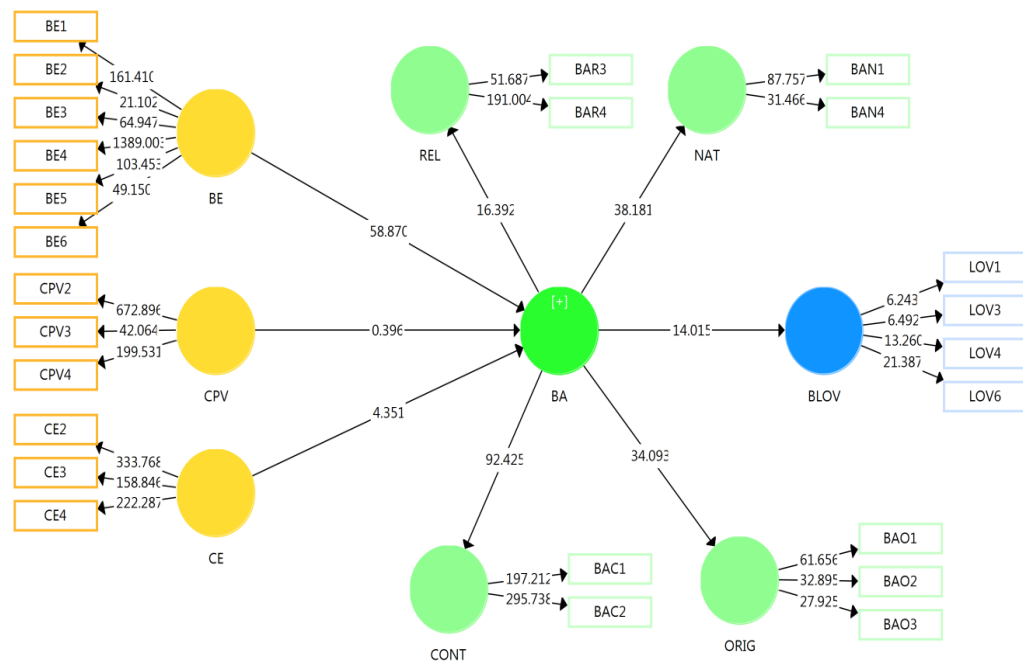


Figure 3: PLS Bootstrapping

DISCUSSIONS

The idea of brand authenticity (BA) refers to the consumer's perspective that their brand is faithful and true to their values and is highly responsible for fulfilling their services (Wymer & Akbar, 2017). The current research has identified a positive effect between brand authenticity and brand love (BL).

This result has been supported by various researches as mentioned in Safeer et al. (2020) that an increase in brand authenticity also increases the brand love in the customers. Similarly, Mody and Hanks (2020) examined research on Airbnb customers and identified that when their brand was being honest and provided valuable services, then it enhanced their brand love. Besides, Manthiou et al. (2018) highlighted the same results in luxury hotels: brand authenticity has been a vital factor in developing their brand love. According to Rosado-Pinto et al. (2020), brand authenticity in the brand-customer relationship is necessary because it can help the customer understand and be loyal to their brand through brand love. Also, Rodrigues et al. (2018) conducted research on these variables, identified a significant relationship, and stated that it is necessary for better performance.

Moreover, brand experience (BE) comprises such feelings that a customer feels regarding a specific product through different marketing strategies (Morrison & Crane, 2007). The current research has found that brand experience has a positive effect on brand authenticity. Various researches have examined this relationship and identified a significant result as well. For instance, Gilmore and Pine (2007) identified that compelling performances could help develop a good brand experience that eventually leads to enhanced brand authenticity. A positive brand experience depends on different aspects that include consumer's perspectives and the degree to which the products have fulfilled their desires (Chen et al., 2014).

According to Robbins et al. (2009), brand authenticity has been identified due to positive experience that can also lead to the brand's effective growth. Besides, Safeer et al. (2020) conducted research and identified a positive relationship between these two factors stating that brand experience is an essential factor in developing positive brand authenticity.

However, this research has also identified that brand experience positively affects brand love with the mediation of brand authenticity. This result has been supported by Safeer et al. (2020) that brand authenticity mediates the relationship between BE and BL. Similarly, () examined research in which it identified that brand experience could proper significantly towards brand love in BA because it helps in having a trust factor between brand-customer relationship. The present scenario has identified that consumers are highly looking for holistic experiences in using their products to fulfill their emotional offerings (Brakus et al., 2009). According to Joshi and Garg (2021), when consumers get such experiences in their products, they tend to increase their brand love with compelling authenticity. Besides, Gunawan and Siemon (2020) stated in their research that when consumers were faced with positive BA in engaging with positive experiences, it eventually enhanced their brand love.

Additionally, the consumer's perceived value (CPV) consists of the consumer's perspective towards the products that whether it has the essentials to fulfill their desires and needs (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002). The current research has identified that CPV has an insignificant positive effect on brand authenticity. Various researches have supported this result, but CPV has been identified as one of the vital factors that can increase brand authenticity (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Although the presence of CPV creates an emotional factor during a product's consumption and value itself can explain the consumer choice in a better way. However, Hernandez-Fernandez and Lewis (2019) identified that CPV did not increase the BA because consumers were not provided with a clear understanding and motivation in the products that can fulfill their desires and needs. Similarly, it has been identified that CPV cannot increase brand authenticity as when there are no proper services provided to the consumers, it cannot help develop their BA (Q. Chen et al., 2020).

However, this research has also identified that CPV has a positive but insignificant effect on brand love with the mediation of brand authenticity. The result supported by Oh et al. (2019) that when the consumers were engaged with BA in the relationship mentioned above, it did not help develop a significant brand love. The insignificant mediation result has been identified because when there is no authenticity present in the brand-customer relationship, it cannot help increase brand love (Rosado-Pinto et al., 2020). Similarly, Gumparthi and Patra (2020) researched state an insignificant mediating effect of BA between BE and BL.

Furthermore, customer engagement (CE) refers to the commitment and loyalty to their brand by showing emotional and high purchasing decisions (Cheung et

al., 2011). The current research has identified a positive effect between CE and BA. The current result has been identified in various researches conducted in different industries. Like, Eigenraam et al. (2021) identified that an increase in positive CE could enhance their brand love through proper commitment and loyalty to their brand. Similarly, when the consumer was engaged in high-quality experiences, it helped create a proper CE that eventually increased their BA (R. Chen et al., 2020). Also, CE helped the consumers overview the marketing processes and their products regarding fulfilling their needs and desires that created a significant effect on brand authenticity (Rosado-Pinto et al., 2020).

However, this research has also identified a positive effect of customer engagement on brand love with brand authenticity mediation. Rodrigues and Borges (2020) supported the engagement-love relationship was found significantly improved in BA. According to Nawaz et al. (2020), when customers were getting engaged with their brand, it eventually created BL because there was a high BA between the brand-customer relationship. Besides, Govarchin (2019) conducted research to identify a positive mediating effect of BA between CE and BL.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications

This study proposes a set of management guidelines for multinational marketers and brand managers to follow to grow brand-loyal customers in markets. Firstly, our findings revealed that brand authenticity had a significant impact on brand love. Companies want to cultivate brand-loyal customers to develop and execute successful positioning campaigns that attract specific customers, as brand authenticity is a critical positioning tool.

Moreover, the mediating function of brand authenticity was shown in this research, and it has a significant impact on the relationships between multidimensional brand experiences and brand love. Companies are encouraged to use experiential marketing to establish and preserve brand authenticity by introducing different customer relationship techniques for cultivating brand-loving consumers. Alternatively, marketers can place their products through sensory and intellectual marketing strategies, depending on brand authenticity to attract customers cognitively. These tactics can be implemented using social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to boost customer expectations and increase customer equity.

Furthermore, managers can provide personalized services for affective and behavioral brand experiences. These tactics can help multinational brands become more authentic, and businesses can get good input from customers, which adds to brand love. Similarly, managers can also develop brand recognition campaigns to promote a deeper and more long-term partnership between their products and their consumers, encouraging them to connect with them.

Likewise, to build an emotional brand relationship, brand managers must be experts at incorporating marketing messaging, enriching brand connotations, performing successful internal marketing, enhancing employee service attitudes, increasing brand satisfaction through service-led reasoning, and creating continuous competitive advantages. Besides, if brand operators can get consumers to feel excited about the brand, they can become brand supporters and positively promote the brand to others, resulting in public praise. Higher brand lovers mean more brand loyalists, giving the company a significant competitive edge.

Additionally, companies should also foster brand loyalty by improving customers' perceptions of the brand's value. It can be achieved by increasing the ratio of functional and symbolic rewards to perceived costs of the deal, whether monetary, psychological, or other. Apart from enhancing their brands' quality, brand managers should think about introducing unexpected offerings to the market, such as creating products and services that provide new brand experiences. Furthermore, managers must consciously craft their commitments to clients in order to be able to follow up with them in a systematic manner, thus strengthening their brands' reputation.

Future research directions

Firstly, brand authenticity in mediating the relationship between brand experience and brand love was discussed in this research. In this study, no moderator was used; therefore, future research may apply a moderator, such as consumer involvement, to this model. Secondly, this study used convenience sampling to collect data, and potential researchers could collect data on a wide scale in Asian countries to generalize the findings. Thirdly, a future study will attempt to increase the response rate to lend more credibility to the findings. The framework can also be tested in other industries and geographical regions.

Similarly, the present research is a cross-sectional investigation. As a result, prospective studies should examine the existing findings in longitudinal designs, which could be more appropriate than cross-sectional designs. Besides, since the famous five-point Likert scale has generally been used for data collection, potential studies should use the seven-point scale. Finally, since the current study's sample size is limited, prospective researchers will test the reliability and validity of the findings with larger sample size.

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