

Brand Experience and Mediating Roles of Brand Love, Brand Prestige and Brand Trust

Syed Hasnain Alam Kazmi¹
Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and
Technology, Karachi, Pakistan

Muhammad Khaliq
Mirpur University of Science and Technology,
Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

Abstract

The study has examined females' attitude and behavior towards cosmetic beauty products. Based on the theory of super additive effects, social identity theory and triangulation theory of love, we have developed a new model that has six direct relationships and three mediating relationships. The questionnaire was adapted from the literature. It has 5 latent variables and 35 indicator variables based on the five point Likert scale. The data was collected from females of Karachi. The sample size for the study was 387 and the response rate was 95%. The results suggest that consumers positive experience with a brand promotes brand love, brand prestige and brand trust. The antecedents of brand love, brand prestige and brand trust also promote brand loyalty. In addition, brand love, brand prestige and brand trust have mediating effects on brand loyalty. This study was restricted to Karachi. Although Karachi is a metropolitan city, consumer attitude and behavior might be different in other cities of Pakistan.

Keywords: *Theory of super-additive effects, social identity theory, theory of love, brand love, brand prestige, brand trust, brand loyalty.*

Introduction

This study has specifically focused on females of Karachi who purchase beauty products regularly. Karachi is a metropolitan city which offers both local and foreign brands of beauty products (Yu & Fang, 2009). In view of this market situation, it has become extremely difficult for brands of beauty products to create a differentiation and develop a sustainable relationship with consumers. Consumers perception about brand prestige, brand trust and

¹Corresponding Author: Syed Hasnain Alam; Email: hasnainalam@gmail.com

brand love are important ingredients of branding as they stimulate brand loyalty, especially in beauty products (Sung & Tinkham, 2005; Huber et al., 2015).

The pleasant experience of a customer has a profound effect on brand loyalty, brand love and repurchase intentions (Simões, Dibb, & Fisk, 2005; Morrison & Crane, 2007). Thus, we have developed a new model by triangulating the theory of super-additive effects, social identity theory and the theory of love. The variables used in the model have been derived from the three theories. The newly developed model has six direct relationships and three indirect (mediating) relationships. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Initially, the three theories that underpin the conceptual model are discussed. Subsequently, the hypothesis have been formulated on the basis of the earlier literature followed by the methodology. Thereafter, the results, discussion and conclusion are presented.

Literature Review

The conceptual framework for the study has been developed by extending the theory of super additive effects, social identity theory and triangular theory of love. According to the theory of super additive effects brands and other stimulus have an association with human senses (Lwin, Morrin, & Krishna, 2010). If the effect of brand on human senses is pleasant, consumers will have a good experience and vice versa. The connection of brand identification and brand prestige has stemmed from the social identity theory which assumes that individuals have a tendency to associate themselves with an inspired social group as they believe such affiliation will improve their self-image and social status in society (Abrams & Hogg, 2004). It has been documented that brand prestige is a significant component that effects consumer perception and brand relationship (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Prince & Davies, 2009; Baek et al., 2010).

Many past studies have used the triangular theory of love for developing their conceptual frameworks (Sternberg, 1986). The theory assumes that the three elements of brand love are commitment, passion and closeness. These three components stimulate positive emotions, intimacy and affective feeling towards a brand.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was developed using the abovementioned theories which consists of five variables and nine relationships (i.e. six direct and three indirect relationships). The literature support for the proposed hypotheses are discussed in the following sections.

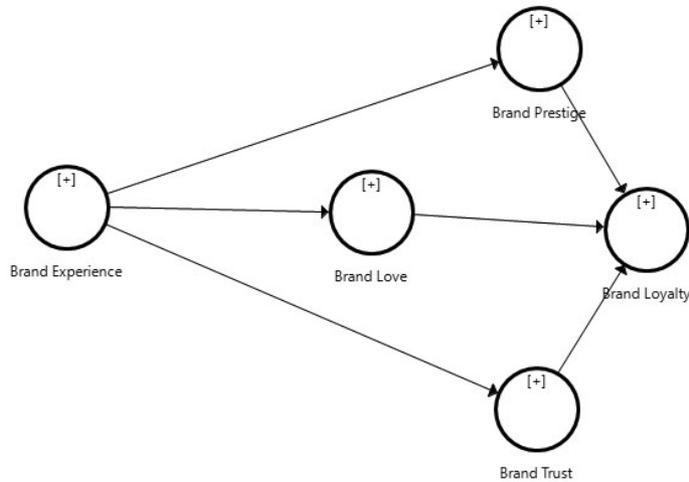


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Hypothesis Development

Brand Experience and Brand Love

When consumers purchase a branded product, they have certain expectations from it. If the delivered value is beyond their expectation, consumers will have a pleasant experience using the brand. Moreover, emotions and connections with the brand contribute in enhancing consumer brand experience (Fullerton, 2005; Khan & Rahman, 2015). Consumers' long term emotional attachment with a brand is referred to as brand love. Brand love is also referred as the degree of emotional attachment a satisfied customer has for a particular brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Moreover, self-inclusion theory assumes that individuals expect affection from others, therefore, they develop social relationships with peers and friends (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008; Aron & Aron, 1986).

Thus, when consumers develop a sustainable and emotional attachment with a brand it is assumed that they are in love with it. Similarly, Albert, Merunka and Valette-Florence (2008) also stress that the brand love relationship between consumers and a brand is enduring. Due to this relationship consumers have a positive attitude towards the brand. Similarly, Khan and Rahman (2015) and Leventhal, Wallace, Buil, and Chernatony (2014) suggest that consumers that are satisfied with the value proposition of a brand develop a strong emotional attachment with it. Consequently, such consumers have a higher inclination to pay premium prices as compared to others. In addition, consumers are not price sensitive to the brand they love and may not be attracted to other brands. Moreover, it has been found that consumers feel distress if they are not able to purchase the brand they love (Arora, 2012).

Many qualitative studies have documented that consumers' emotional and cognitive behavioral experience towards a brand stimulates brand love and enhances its image and loyalty (Leventhal, Wallace, Buil, & Chernatony, 2014). Moreover, it has been argued that consumers' pleasant experience with the brand stimulates positive emotional feelings and enhances their satisfaction level (Roy, Eshghi, & Sarkar, 2013). Moreover, Sathish and Venkatesakumar (2011) reiterate that consumers' emotional outcomes such as happiness, intimacy and affective feelings towards a brand are the antecedents to brand love.

H1: Brand experience and brand love are positively associated.

Brand Experience and Brand Prestige

Branded products that are used by the upper strata of the society are considered to be prestigious. Prestigious brands have quality features and are highly priced (Odin, Odin, & Valette-Florence, 2001). Padgett and Allen (1997) suggest that consumers place those brands in prestige category that have unique and exceptional features which stimulate emotional feelings. Consumers' purchase prestigious brands based on their favorable past experience and the recommendation of others (Musso & Druica, 2014).

Many consumers purchase products because of their hedonic and social value. The cosmetics market segment has become highly competitive and most product categories have similar functional attributes. Therefore, many cosmetics brands position themselves as a prestigious brand. This strategy helps in creating brand differentiation (Lindstrom, 2005). Moreover, many consumers prefer prestigious brands that portray an elite impression (Moorman et al., 1992). It has been found that many brands allow consumers to experience their products before buying. This brand activation exercise helps in developing a positive attitudes towards the branded product (Van-der-Westhuizen, 2018). It has also been found that prestigious brands stimulate a positive feeling in consumers which encourages them to keep purchasing the same branded product.

H2: Brand experience and brand prestige are positively associated.

Brand Experience and Brand Trust

When consumers purchase a branded product, they have various expectations from it (Laroche et al., 2012). Consumers trust those brands that meet their expectations (Karjaluo, Munnukka & Kiuru, 2016). The three major antecedents to brand trust are brand characteristics (Loureiro, Gorgus & Kaufmann, 2017), company characteristics (Jain & Bagdare, 2011) and consumer-brand characteristics. All the three components of brand experience individually and collectively affect brand trust. Hwang, Han, and Choo (2015) stress that experience-trust relationship is important in both service and non-service

industry. Past research has documented that consumers' pleasant experience stimulates a sustainable relationship and trust with the brand (Kahneman, 2011). Similarly, it has also been found that consumers who have a bad experience with a brand, will neither trust nor repurchase it. Consumers may also share their negative experiences about such brands (Heinrich, Bauer, & Mühl, 2008)

Consumers trust in a brand also depends on brand attributes and consumers' personality traits. Furthermore, a firm's involvement in corporate social responsibility also enhances brand image (Fetscherin, 2014). Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) suggest that consumers trust those brands which have provided a pleasant experience in the past. Thus, consumers may develop a sustainable relationship with the brand. Similar findings were reported by Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel (2002) and Heinrich, Bauer, and Mühl (2008). Based on the above discussion, we develop the following hypothesis:

H3: Brand experience and brand trust are positively associated.

Brand Love and Brand Loyalty

Consumers explicitly and implicitly purchase the brands they love. Subsequently, this behavior stimulates brand loyalty (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Brand love is a psychological construct comprising of excitement, infatuation and obsession with a brand (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008). Fetscherin (2014) stresses that many consumers idealize certain brands which helps in developing a sustainable relationship with it. Moreover, it has also been found that brand love encourages consumers to delay their purchases when the branded product is not available (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007). Moreover, Drennan et al. (2015) found that brand interaction is significantly associated with brand love.

Many researchers argue that the concept of consumer-brand relationship has emerged from brand love. However, several studies have found inconsistent results on the antecedents and consequences of brand love (Choi, Ok, & Hyun, 2017; Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002). In this context, hedonic benefit stimulates brand love while brand loyalty and aggregate value proposition promotes consumer-brand relationship (Guzman & Iglesias, 2012).

H4: Brand love and brand loyalty are positively associated.

Brand Prestige and Brand Loyalty

Prestigious brands and non-prestigious brands have different value propositions and target markets (O'Cass & Frost, 2002). Consumers' motive for purchasing prestigious brands is to improve their social standing and associate themselves with the higher income strata.

Similarly, Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) suggest that when consumers buy prestigious brands they are perceived to belong to the elite class of society. Bennett and Rundle-Thiele (2004) argue that prestigious brands charge premium prices from their loyal clientele. Similarly, Wong and Zhou (2005) found that perceived brand prestige has a significant association with purchase intentions and customer loyalty. Moreover, brand prestige encourages positive buying behavior among consumers (O'cass, & Frost, 2002).

Theng, Grant-Parsons and Yap (2013) argue that consumers have a perception that prestigious brands are distinctive, possess high quality and consumed by elite class. All these factors collectively motivate consumers to develop a long term commitment with the brand through repeated purchases. Hwang and Han (2014) and Loureiro and Araújo (2014) found that brand prestige-brand loyalty relationship is stable so that consumers are willing to pay premium price for the branded products.

H5: Brand prestige and brand loyalty are positively associated.

Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty

Brand trust is inclusive of all those aspects that enhance consumer perception towards a brand (Leventhal, Wallace, Buil, & Chernatony, 2014). Past studies have documented that a sustainable buyer and seller relationship significantly depends on brand trust (Wong & Zhou, 2005). Thus, trust is defined as consumer confidence in the brand to deliver value in line with expectations (Agustin & Singh, 2005). Thus, brand trust reflects the credibility of the branded product and motivates consumers to make regular purchases (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Moreover, it has also been argued that consumers develop a sustainable relationship with the brand that delivers higher than expected value (Agustin & Singh, 2005). Urban, Sultan and Qualls (2000) argue that trust not only build consumer-brand relationship, but it also stimulates brand loyalty. Therefore, consumers develop an affinity with branded products that offer a pleasant and memorable experience (Bairrada, Coelho, & Coelho, 2018). Thus, firms tend to allocate ample resources for uplifting brand trust and brand loyalty among consumers. Based on the above discussion, we have formulated the following hypothesis:

H6: Brand trust and brand loyalty are positively associated.

Brand Experience, Brand Love and Brand Loyalty

After purchasing a product, consumers may either be satisfied or dissatisfied (Khan & Rahman, 2015). Satisfied consumer develop strong emotional attachment with the brand which subsequently leads to brand infatuation and brand love (Leventhal, Wallace, Buil, & Chernatony, 2014). Beckman, Kumar and Kim (2013) argue that brand love leads to brand

loyalty. Therefore, it is argued that brand experience leads to brand love which ultimately influences brand loyalty (Rodrigues, 2018). Hence, we develop the following the hypothesis:

H7: Brand love mediates the association between brand experience and brand loyalty.

Brand Experience, Brand Prestige and Brand Loyalty

Consumer experience is highly influenced by the prestige of the brand especially in the case of branded cosmetics products (Yu & Fang, 2009; Whang et al., 2004). Moreover, some consumers purchase branded products solely for their perceived social value (Triantafyllidou & Siomkos, 2014). It has also be found that consumers purchase prestigious brands to influence their peers and demonstrate that they belong to the elite class of society (Tam, Wood & Ji, 2009). Sung and Tinkham (2005) found that consumers' prefer prestigious brands to show-off their social status and associate themselves with individuals from the higher income strata. This dependency on branded products for aesthetic purposes indirectly influences consumers towards brand loyalty (Roy, Khandeparkar, & Motiani, 2016). Therefore, it is argued that brand experience leads to brand prestige and ultimately brand loyalty. Based on the above discussion, we have formulated the following hypothesis:

H8: Brand prestige mediates the association between brand experience and brand loyalty.

Brand Experience, Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty

Silva and Alwi (2006) found that consumer pleasant experience with a brand improves the brand image and brand trust. Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel (2002) and Heinrich, Bauer, and Mühl (2008) argue that consumers will not search for substitute products when they are satisfied with a brand. Urban, Sultan and Qualls (2000) argue that brand trust leads to strong relationship with the customers and brand loyalty. Prior research indicates that consumers are developed a greater loyalty with products that are environmentally friendly and socially acceptable (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002). Therefore, it is argued that brand trust enhances consumer experience which leads to brand loyalty. Thus, we have developed the following hypothesis:

H9: Brand trust mediates the association between brand experience and brand loyalty.

Methodology

Population and Sample Size

The scope of the research was limited to females using cosmetics products. The sample size for the study was 387 and the data was collected from cosmetics stores of leading malls in Karachi. Five surveyors were recruited to collect the data. The surveyors collected the

data from the leading shopping malls of Clifton, Saddar, North Nazimabad, Gulshan and Defence. Prior to actual survey a brief orientation session was held for the surveyors who were briefed about the purpose and objective of the study.

Profile of the Respondents

All the respondents were females as the study was focused towards females who purchased cosmetics products. The respondents include 10% females in the range of 18-22 years; 56% females in the range of 23-28 years; 22% females in the range of 29-35 years; 10% females in the range of 36-45 years and 2% females in the range of 46-50 years. In terms of income 47% of the respondents were in the income group of Rs.51,000-75,000; 20% of the respondents were in the income group of Rs.76,000-100,000 and the remaining 15% were in the income group of greater than 100,000. The respondents include 25% with matriculate education; 30% with intermediate education; 35% with bachelor degrees and the remaining 10% had master degrees.

Measurement Scales

The survey questionnaire has two sections. Section one has demographic-related questions and section two has questions on 5 constructs and 35 indicator variables adapted from the literature. The items were measured on the five point Likert-scale where 1 represents highly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree. A summary of the measurement scales are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Measurement Scales

Constructs	Source	Number of Items	Reliability coefficients in previous studies
Brand Experience	Haase & Wiedmann (2018)	7	.75 to .87
Brand Prestige	Baek et al., (2010)	5	.79 to .89
Brand Love	Carroll & Ahuvia (2006)	5	.77 to .86
Brand Trust	Smith & DeCoster (2000)	6	.78 to .86
Brand Loyalty	Chiou & Droge (2006)	9	.81 to .88

Results

Descriptive Analysis

The results of descriptive analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Experience	0.823	3.98	1.12	1.32	-0.83
Brand Love	0.859	4.66	1.36	-0.82	-0.57
Brand Loyalty	0.701	4.77	1.97	-0.94	-0.91
Brand Prestige	0.811	4.32	1.31	2.13	-1.64
Brand Trust	0.804	4.01	1.26	-0.58	0.91

The results show that the highest Cronbach's alpha value is for brand love (Mean= 4.66, SD=1.36, α =.859), and the lowest is for brand loyalty (Mean= 4.77, SD=1.97, α =.701). As all the Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.70, therefore, it is inferred that the constructs used in the study have acceptable internal consistency. The skewness values ranged from -0.58 to 0.58. Moreover, the kurtosis values ranged from -1.64 to -0.57. As all the skewness and kurtosis values is between ± 3.5 , therefore it is inferred that the constructs are consistent with the requirements of univariate normality (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

Convergent Validity

The analysis was performed to ascertain whether the indicator variables have adequate convergent validity. The summary of the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Convergent Validity

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Comp. Reliability	AVE
Brand Experience	3.98	1.12	0.875	0.602
Brand Love	4.66	1.36	0.903	0.701
Brand Loyalty	4.77	1.97	0.739	0.603
Brand Prestige	4.32	1.31	0.871	0.611
Brand Trust	4.01	1.26	0.864	0.604

The results show that all composite reliability values are at least 0.70; and the values of AVE are at least 0.60 which confirms that the respective indicator variables have adequately convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity

Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria was used to examine the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the constructs. The discriminant validity results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	BE	BL	BLY	BP	BT
Brand Experience	0.765				
Brand Love	0.544	0.799			
Brand Loyalty	0.528	0.621	0.688		
Brand Prestige	0.505	0.634	0.604	0.832	
Brand Trust	0.618	0.613	0.679	0.687	0.806

The results show that the square of each pair of correlation is lesser than the square of the variance explained. These results confirms that all the constructs are unique and distinct.

SEM Results

Smart PLS was used for empirical estimation of the model. The results are present in Table 5 while the measurement and structural model are presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3 respectively.

Table 5: Summary of SEM Results

	Beta	T Stat.	P Values	Results
Hypothesis				
Brand Exp -> Brand Love (H1)	0.749	32.178	0	Accepted
Brand Exp -> Brand Prest (H2)	0.754	32.689	0	Accepted
Brand Exp -> Brand Trust (H3)	0.758	29.762	0	Accepted
Brand Love -> Brand Loyalty (H4)	0.2	3.349	0	Accepted
Brand Prest -> Brand Loyalty (H5)	0.315	4.06	0	Accepted
Brand Trust -> Brand Loyalty (H6)	0.309	4.683	0	Accepted
Br. Exp -> Br. Love -> Br. Loyalty (H7)	0.15	3.346	0	Accepted
Br. Exp -> Br.Prest -> Br. Loyalty (H8)	0.238	3.901	0	Accepted
Br. Exp -> Br. Trust -> Br.Loyalty (H9)	0.234	4.874	0	Accepted

The results show that all the six direct hypothesis and three indirect hypotheses were accepted.

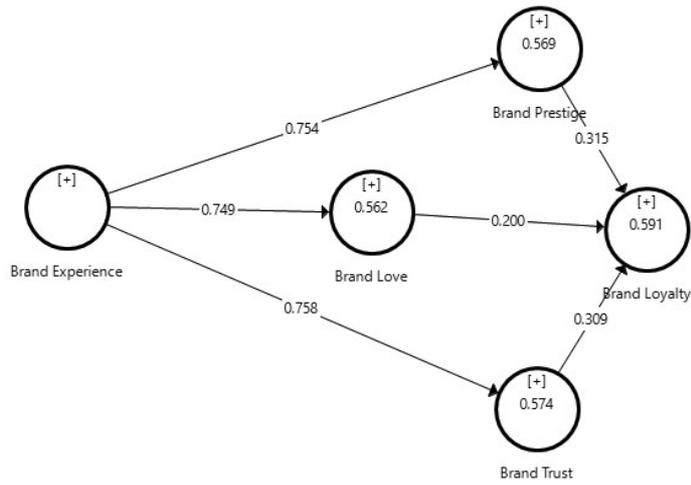


Figure 2: Measurement Model

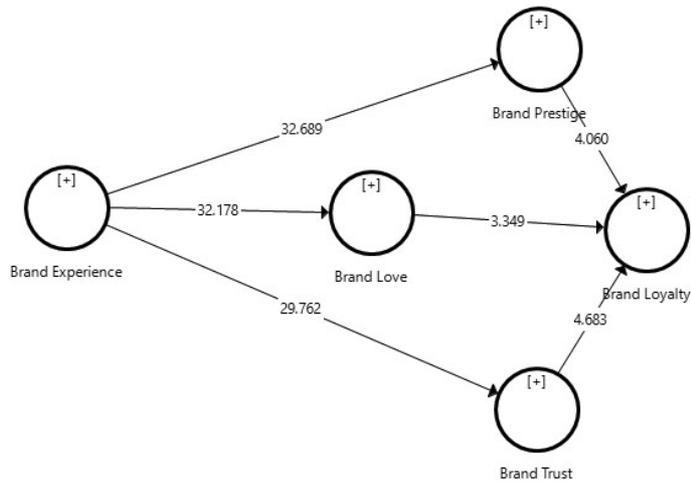


Figure 3: Structural Model

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

We have proposed six direct hypotheses and three indirect hypotheses. The results and their relevance with earlier studies are discussed below.

Our results suggest that females with a pleasant experience develop love for the brand. Many studies have documented that consumers emotional and cognitive behavioral experience towards a brand stimulates brand love and enhances its image and loyalty (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008). Similarly, Roy, Eshghi and Sarkar (2013) argue that consumers' pleasant experience with the brand they love stimulates positive emotional feelings and increases their satisfaction. We also find that brand experience and brand prestige are highly associated. Langner, Schmidt, and Fischer (2015) suggest that consumers place those brands in a prestigious category that have unique and exceptional features which stimulate emotional feelings (Lastovicka & Sirianni, 2011). Consumers' motivation to purchase prestigious brands are usually a result of their own experiences and positive word of mouth communication by others (Matthies, 1997; Friese et al., 2006; Lee, & Kang, 2012). Our results also imply that females who had a pleasant experience with cosmetics brands will have more trust on such brands. Loureiro, Gorgus and Kaufmann (2017) suggest that consumers place those brands in a prestigious category that have unique and exceptional features that stimulate emotional feelings (Laroche et al., 2012). In addition, females who buy branded cosmetics products have brand loyalty. Moreover, Jain and Bagdare (2011) and Steenkamp, Batra, and Alden (2003) found that brands interact with all consumers. This brand interaction is significantly higher when consumers are obsessed with the brand. The results also indicate that females who buy prestigious cosmetics brands have loyalty with it. Theng, Grant-Parsons and Yap (2013) argue that consumers have a perception that prestigious brands are distinctive, possess high quality and consumed by elite class. All these factors collectively motivate consumers to develop a long term commitment with the brand through repeated purchases. Hwang and Han (2014) and Loureiro and Araújo (2014) found that brand prestige-brand loyalty relationship is stable so that consumers are willing to pay premium price for the branded products.

Females that trust a cosmetics brand are more loyal to it. Thus, brand trust reflects the credibility of the branded product and motivates consumers to make regular purchases (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Moreover, it has also been argued that consumers develop a sustainable relationship with the brand that delivers higher than expected value (Agustin & Singh, 2005). We also found that brand love and brand experience mediate brand experience and brand loyalty. The past literature suggests that brand experience stimulates brand love

(Karjaluoto, Munnukka, & Kiuru, 2016) and brand love stimulates brand loyalty (Loureiro, Gorgus, & Kaufmann, 2017). In addition, brand prestige mediates brand experience and brand loyalty. Finally, we find that brand trust mediates brand experience and brand loyalty. The past studies suggest that brand experience directly and through brand trust effect brand loyalty (Dubois & Czellar, 2002; Fetscherin, 2014).

Conclusion

The cosmetics industry in Pakistan is growing rapidly and becoming highly competitive making it difficult to sustain a competitive edge. Thus, with three theories (i.e. the theory of super additive effects, social identity theory and triangulation theory of love), we developed a new model for understanding female attitude and behavior towards cosmetics brands. We found that brand experience has a positive association with brand love, brand prestige and brand trust. Brand love, brand prestige and brand trust also have a positive association with brand loyalty. In addition, brand love, brand prestige and brand trust have mediating effects on brand loyalty. This study was restricted to Karachi. Although Karachi is a metropolitan city, consumer attitude and behavior might be different in other cities of Pakistan. Therefore, future studies could be extended in other cities of Pakistan while adopting a different research design.

Annexure 1

Constructs and Items in the Questionnaire

Brand Experience

The brand impresses me.

The brand induces positive feelings and sentiments.

I feel happy when I buy this brand.

The brand has never disappointed me.

The brand stimulates my curiosity.

I have strong emotions for this brand.

This brand provides me a positive experience.

Brand Prestige

I like the brand.

I am very fond of this brand.

The brand is very prestigious.

The brand has a good reputation.

This brand is used by the elite class.

Brand Love

The brand makes me very happy.

I love this brand.

The brand is a pure delight.

I am passionate about this brand.

I am very attached to this brand.

Brand Trust

The brand meets my expectations.

I feel confident about this brand.

The brand has never disappointed me.

The brand guarantees satisfaction.

The brand is responsible.

The brand is reliable.

The brand gives me what it promises.

I trust this brand.

Brand Loyalty

I would recommend the brand to my friends.

I would regret if the brand was not available.

I use this brand as it is my choice.

I am a loyal customer of the brand.

I intend to regularly buy the brand.

I speak positively about the brand.

I encourage other people to buy the brand.

I buy the brand whenever I can.

I represent the brand.

I am willing to pay a high price for buying the brand.

If the brand is not available, I will not purchase other brands.

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