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## Article

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Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences (PJCSS)

## Provided in Cooperation with:

Johar Education Society, Pakistan (JESPK)

*Suggested Citation:* Sarmad, Imran; Imtiaz, Muhammad Ahsin; Bukhari, Syed Muhammad Hassan; Abbas, Ali; Munir, Ismat (2024) : Brand experience and brand loyalty: The moderating role of brand trust and the mediating role of brand love in Pakistani smartphone users, Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences (PJCSS), ISSN 2309-8619, Johar Education Society, Pakistan (JESPK), Lahore, Vol. 18, Iss. 1, pp. 40-61

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/294808>

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# **Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty: The Moderating Role of Brand Trust and the Mediating Role of Brand Love in Pakistani Smartphone Users**

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## **Article History**

Received: 10 Jan 2024      Revised: 19 Mar 2024      Accepted: 24 Mar 2024      Published: 31 Mar 2024

## **Abstract**

The current study looks at the relationships in the Pakistani smartphone market between brand experience, brand love, and brand loyalty. In addition, we also study brand trust's moderating effect. The data was collected from 300 Pakistani smartphone users. Structural equation modelling (SEM) and PROCESS macro model 8 were used for data analysis. This research showed that the experience of a brand is a significant factor in determining both love and loyalty to that brand. The outcomes of the research indicated that there was a substantial relation between brand experiences and brand loyalty, with brand love serving as a mediating component in this relationship. We found that there was a statistically significant relationship between brand trust and brand experiences as well as brand loyalty. On the other hand, the association between brand experiences and brand love was tempered by confidence in the brand concerned. This pioneering study examines Pakistani smartphone users' interests and behaviors and it also examines how brand trust mediates these variables.

**Keywords:** Brand experience, brand love, brand trust, brand loyalty, smartphone users, Pakistan.

## **1. Introduction**

The use of smartphones has grown widespread, as people depend on their devices for a wide range of everyday tasks, including communication, entertainment, and productivity. The typical individuals use their phone for three hours and fifteen minutes per day, according to the latest statistics (Laricchia, 2023). While using their smartphone brands, consumers go through a variety of experiences. Customers develop a love / loyalty relationship with a brand via this brand experience (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021). The phone's design and hardware, its functionality and services, its software, and the caliber of the company's customer support and other elements may all have an impact on brand love as well as loyalty in the smartphone business. Users are more likely to develop deep affection and display brand loyalty for businesses that regularly provide superb items and

outstanding customer service. Numerous elements may affect a customer's brand love and experience when it comes to smartphone brands (Christino et al., 2020). If users find a smartphone company's products to be visually beautiful, trustworthy, and user-friendly, for instance, they may have a favorable brand experience with the company. However, users may have a bad brand experience and be less inclined to enjoy the company's phone if it often fails or has terrible customer care. There are many popular smartphone brands globally i.e Samsung, Apple, OPPO, Xiaomi and Huawei. The brands work to enhance their customers' brand loyalty as the smartphone industry becomes more competitive. Providing customers with a great brand experience is essential to building brand loyalty. A sensory experience, like the eye-catching color of my smartphone, is an illustration of a user experience linked to a smartphone brand. It is essential to comprehend the aspects of the brand experience that impact brand loyalty. According to Coleman (2018), customers prefer to purchase brands that provide unforgettable experiences. Understanding the elements that influence customers' brand love and loyalty is essential when they interact with brands on smartphones. Scholars in the field of marketing have devoted significant attention to the construct of brand experience within this context (Huang, 2017).

For a company to function well, a high degree of client loyalty must be attained (Griffin, 2002). Market share and the financial performance of a corporation are impacted by brand loyalty (Watson et al., 2015). Marketing academics have suggested and evaluated a wide range of constructs, such as brand attachment (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021), brand equity (Parris & Guzmán, 2023), brand advocacy (Wong, 2023), brand loyalty (Soleimani et al., 2023), and brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009). All these notions fall under brand-consumer relationships (Fourmier, 1998). In accordance with the consumer-brand relationship theory, the strength of the connection between the customer and the brand leads to an increase in brand loyalty. This research examines how brand love, trust, and experience affect brand loyalty.

According to Zhang et al. (2020), brand loyalty is strongly influenced by brand trust. Previous research has primarily concentrated on examining the primary emphasis of brand trust, which encompasses both direct and indirect consequences of brand loyalty (Wang, 2002). There has been discussion on how brand trust influences brand loyalty. According to some researchers, brand trust has a direct impact on brand loyalty (Pan et al., 2012). On the other hand, there is a perspective that argues the indispensability of mediating factors in cultivating brand loyalty (Matzler et al., 2008). The existing academic literature on brand management lacks research on brand trust's regulatory function in brand experience, brand love, and loyalty (Kim & Jones, 2009). By concentrating on online buying, Kim and Jones (2009) examined brand trust's moderating role. That research gap exists between older and contemporary studies. Filling the research gap is important as a result. This, we surmise, is due to the fact that the majority of researchers considered brand loyalty and brand love to be directly correlated. But we anticipate that brand trust will moderate the link between

them. Based on our analysis, there is a strong positive correlation between brand experience and consumers' emotional connection, and this relationship becomes even stronger with an increase in brand trust. Brand loyalty emerges because it builds brand trust, facilitating mutually beneficial and highly valued business relationships (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The likelihood of customer loyalty towards a brand is positively correlated with the degree of confidence that customers have in the brand. Trust in a brand may have an effect on the experience, affection, and loyalty of a brand. It is anticipated that the degree of trustworthiness connected with the brand will be proportional to the degree to which the strength of their relationship will rise. In this research, the relationship between brand trust, brand experience and loyalty are investigated via the lens of brand love. With Pakistani smartphone users serving as the primary demographic of interest, this research focuses solely on them.

This study aims to investigate and contribute to the existing body of literature on brand management by addressing the following research issues. Our first objective is to examine brand experience and brand love as complex and multifaceted constructs. The brand experience is comprised of four distinct components: behavioral, emotional, intellectual, and sensory. Brand love may be seen as including two distinct dimensions: intimacy and passion. According to empirical research, it has been shown that multidimensional concepts tend to be more effective compared to single dimensions (Edwards, 2001; Law & Wong, 1999). Two perspectives, namely the factor view and the composite view, have been proposed in relation to multidimensional ideas (Law et al., 1998). This study investigates brand love and brand experience's multifaceted relationships and characteristics as limited research exists on brand experience and love (Santos & Schlesinger, 2021).

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) examined brand trust as a mediator or independent variable of brand loyalty. This research analyzes how brand love and trust modify brand experience and loyalty. Currently, there is a lack of knowledge regarding the factors that contribute to brand loyalty as well as the consequences it may have. This study's main goal is to emphasize how crucial brand love can create brand loyalty. This will be accomplished by looking at how brand love acts as a mediator. The next sections include the development of hypotheses, followed by detailed methodology adopted, data analysis, discussion of results with theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

In light of the growing importance of brand relationships in the Pakistani smartphone market, this study investigates into the complex interplay between brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, and brand trust among Pakistani smartphone users. This review synthesizes the literature on these constructs to provide a comprehensive overview of the theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings that underpin the relationships between brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, and brand trust in the Pakistani smartphone market.

### 2.1 Brand Experience Impact on Brand Love

According to Brakus et al. (2009), the notion of brand experience comprises the internal, subjective reactions of consumers, such as feelings, emotions, and ideas, together with their behavioral responses that are triggered by stimuli linked to a brand. The stimuli include a range of components, including the design and identity of the brand, communications, and packaging. Brakus et al. (2009) categorized the brand experience into four distinct areas: behavioral, intellectual, emotional, and sensory. The phenomenon in which a brand elicits sensory responses in the domains of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch is commonly known as the sensory brand experience (Andreini et al., 2019). Feelings and emotions that are brought on by a brand are called affective brand experiences. The power of a brand to provoke thought in consumers is referred to as an intellectual brand experience (Bapat & Thanigan, 2016). Body-related experiences, ways of life, and brand interactions are all part of behavioral brand experience (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). A satisfied customer's deep emotional connection with a certain brand is known as brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). It is believed that brand love is a more nuanced idea that consists of three essential components: strong emotional ties, acts motivated by passion, and self-brand integration (Batra et al., 2012). On the other hand, affection and passion are the two main components of brand love, which is a higher-level construct. Brand love is a well-recognized construct that encompasses two fundamental components: intimacy and passion (Albert et al., 2009). Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka (2019) suggests that the nature of the product or service offered may have an impact on several aspects of brand experience, such as sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral factors, which in turn affect brand love. In accordance with the results of Sarkar et al. (2012), this viewpoint is consistent. Brand love was characterized by Sarkar et al. (2012) as a combination of intimacy and passion. The construct denoting the extent of customer affinity for a particular brand is commonly known as the intimacy dimension. According to Batra et al. (2012), the passion component measures how much consumers' feeling of "rightness" concerning the relationship entails high brand desire. Customers develop opinions, whether favorable or unfavorable, about a brand as they utilize its products or services. Consumers who like using the brand will come to adore it. (Joshi & Garg, 2021). Consumers who have positive brand experiences are more inclined to develop emotional attachment and exhibit favorable brand love (Safer et al., 2021). Drawing from the above-described rationales, it can be inferred that the phenomenon of brand experience plays a significant role in fostering brand love. Hence:

➤ *H1: There is a positive relationship between brand experience and brand love.*

### 2.2 Brand Experience Impact on Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the propensity of customers to exhibit a preference for a particular brand and sustain their use of that brand, despite external factors and marketing tactics designed to encourage them to switch to other brands (Aaker, 1996; Oliver, 1999). Behavioural and attitudinal loyalty are components of brand loyalty (Watson et al., 2015). Consumers who

often buy the same brand are said to exhibit behavioural loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Consumers' psychological dedication to the brand is a component of attitude loyalty (Odin et al., 2001). This research focuses on behavioural fidelity among these two elements.

We anticipate customers to repeat satisfying brand encounters because they provide delightful results. In other words, brand loyalty among consumers is influenced by pleasant brand experiences. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and Oliver (1999) posit that individuals who have favourable encounters with a particular brand show a greater inclination to make repeat purchases and suggest products to others via word of mouth and display reduced frequency of purchasing alternative brands. Francisco-Maffezzolli et al. (2014) concentrated on perfume and bath soap firms and found no correlation between brand experience and loyalty. Meanwhile, in another study Iglesias et al. (2011) looked into the relationship between consumers' emotional investment in, and loyalty to, several brands across many industries, including footwear, computers, and vehicles. Positive brand experiences might not always lead to brand loyalty.

Brand experience and loyalty were shown to be affected by emotional attachment. According to Ong et al. (2018) provided evidence of the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty, focusing on Malaysian restaurant companies. Remember that previous studies on brand experience and loyalty had conflicting results. However, companies that provide exceptional customer service may successfully cultivate brand loyalty. Our analysis suggests that there should be a positive correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. Drawing upon the previously mentioned theoretical and practical framework. Hence:

- *H2: There is a positive relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.*

### *2.3 Brand Love Impact on Brand Loyalty*

Customers show a willingness to buy products from businesses they respect. One of the most important factors influencing a consumer's brand loyalty is the degree of emotional attachment they have with brand (Bagozzi et al., 2017). Subsequently, brand affection plays a part of nurturing brand loyalty (Kazmi & Khaliq, 2019). They contend that establishing and advancing brand loyalty is greatly aided by the idea of brand love. In Pakistani cosmetics companies' context, Kazmi and Khaliq (2019) research examined the relation between brand love and brand loyalty. Their empirical analysis found a strong positive association between brand loyalty and love. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) found a strong correlation between brand loyalty and brand love. Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) used two polls to evaluate brand love and loyalty. This inquiry targeted iPod and Panadol. Their research shows that brand attachment boosts loyalty. Hence:

- *H3: There is a positive relationship between brand love and brand loyalty.*

#### 2.4 Brand Love Role as A Mediator

Research shows that brand experience fosters brand love and commitment. It is proposed that brand love acts as a moderating factor to assist us understand how brand experience is related with brand loyalty (Trivedi & Sama, 2021). In previous research Huang (2017) examined how brand love mediates brand experience and loyalty. In this research, brand loyalty was divided into two distinct dimensions: behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Furthermore, brand experience was categorized into three distinct aspects: the sensory experience, intellectual experience, and behavioral experience. The study found that the brand love effect fully mediates behavioral experience, behavioral loyalty, and attitudinal loyalty. Kazmi and Khalique (2019) observed that brand love moderates brand loyalty and brand experience in Pakistani cosmetics enterprises. Theoretically, Roy *et al.* (2013) lays out the whys and how's of brand loyalty development.

Although not explicitly tested, the researchers postulated that brand love would moderate the connection between positive brand experiences and customer loyalty. The study conducted by Francisco-Maffezzolli *et al.* (2014) aimed to examine the link between consumer loyalty, brand experience, and brand relationship quality in the perfume and bath soap sector. Researchers examined the mediating role of brand relationship quality to better understand the link between pleasant brand experiences and consumer loyalty. The researchers explored the mediating function of brand connections to better understand the relationship between positive brand experiences and customer loyalty. Though emotions alone had no effect on brand loyalty, sentiments like love or passion dramatically strengthened it, according to the study. Between the instances of brand experience and the ensuing growth of brand loyalty, the idea of brand love acts as a bridge (Santos & Schlesinger, 2021). Hence:

- *H4: Brand love acts as a mediating variable between brand experience and brand loyalty.*

#### 2.5 Role of Brand Trust as A Moderator

The formation of consumer-brand linkages requires an appreciation of the basic significance of brand trust. The perceived risks of buying a certain brand will go down as customer confidence in that brand increases (Wang, 2002). The perceived risk connected with buying the brand will go down as people come to trust it more. Consumers' faith in a company's ability to fulfill its aims is called brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). This study found that trust modified the link between positive brand experiences and positive brand love. The effects of trust in a brand on customer loyalty and satisfaction are examined in this research. Interactions between the firm and its customers lead to an increase in brand trust over time. When people adore a brand, they are more likely to trust it (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Joshi & Garg, 2021). Urban *et al.* (2000) found that trust increases brand loyalty and consumer-brand interactions. This research suggests that brand

trust is necessary for brand experience and loyalty. This may be due to brand trust fluctuations, which affect brand experience and loyalty. Brand experience and brand loyalty should be positively correlated, with more trustworthy businesses showing a higher link. Hence:

- *H5: Brand trust will moderate (strengthen) the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.*

Garg et al. (2016) posit that the relationship between brand experience and brand love is moderated by the notion of brand trust. According to their existing brand experience, consumers have emotional and intellectual sentiments about the brand. Brand characteristics like brand dependability and confidence influence consumers' trust in a brand. Customers tend to trust companies that have previously delivered a satisfying experience. Consequently, a durable connection may be formed between customers and the brand. Consumers are encouraged to make routine purchases when they have faith in a brand, according to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Because of this, customers get fond of branded goods that provide a memorable and enjoyable experience (Bairrada et al., 2018). Hence:

- *H5: Brand trust will moderate (strengthen) the relationship between brand experience and brand love.*

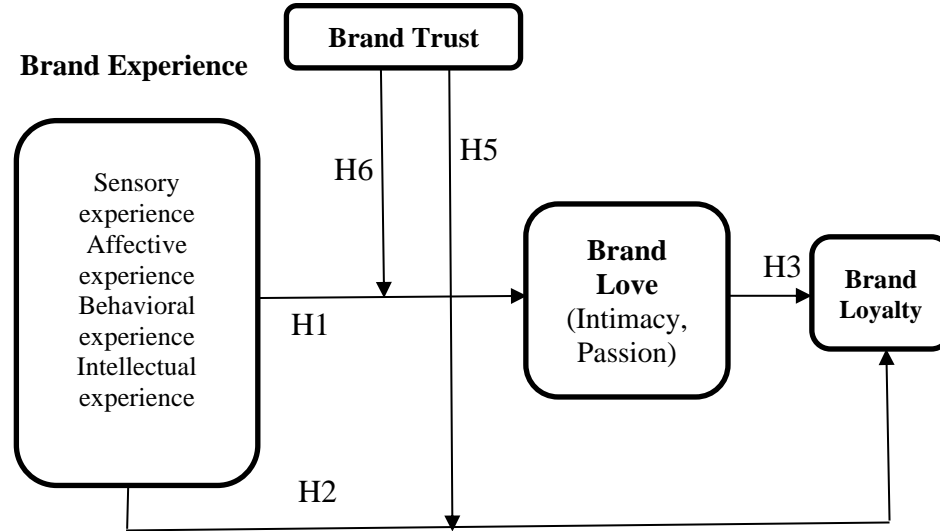
If brand trust functions as a moderator in the relationship between brand experience and brand love, then it is conceivable that the degree of confidence in a brand may conditionally impact the degree to which the indirect link between brand experience and brand loyalty is altered. When the level of trust in a brand is low (high), it is anticipated that there would exist a diminished (heightened) correlation between the perception of the brand and the degree of loyalty towards it. Thus, we propose H7 as follows:

- *H7: Brand trust is moderated the indirect relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty via brand love.*

The conceptual framework of this study revolves around the complex relationships between brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, and brand trust within the Pakistani smartphone market. Drawing upon existing literature and theoretical foundations, the study posits that brand experience serves as a fundamental driver of both brand love and brand loyalty. Additionally, the study explores the moderating effect of brand trust on the relationship between brand experience and brand love. By explaining these complex interrelations, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms driving consumer behavior and brand preferences in the Pakistani smartphone market.



The hypothesized / conceptual framework of our research is presented in Figure 1:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Data Collection and Sample

In July 2023, we used a convenience sample approach to gather data using a structured questionnaire to evaluate the assumptions put forth in the conceptual model. Given the nature of our research objectives and the characteristics of our target population, convenience sampling emerged as the most suitable approach because convenience sampling allowed for easier access to participants within this population. This approach allowed us to efficiently gather data from individuals who were readily available and accessible, thereby saving time and resources. Our study focuses on smartphone users those were readily accessible within a constrained timeframe. Moreover, the accessibility of the target population facilitated swift data collection, enabling us to meet our research objectives within the allotted time frame. This survey focused on Pakistani smartphone users of different brands. The smartphone was chosen as a study object since it was determined that it was the most appropriate product for brand experience research because it is something we all use on a daily basis. Through a self-administered survey we collected data from 300 smartphone consumers. Data is analyzed using PROCESS macro model 8 in SPSS and AMOS using structural equation modeling.

### 3.2 Measures

Each of the variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, except for the demographic characteristics. Each creation was given a scale that was tailored to it. The four aspects of the Brakus et al. (2009) scale—sensory, emotive, intellectual, and behavioral—were used to assess brand experience. Four items were used to measure the sensory experience, affective experience, and intellectual experience. Three questions were used to measure behavioral experience. To measure brand trust four items from the Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) were used. The scales developed by Batra et al. (2012), Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), and Sarkar et al. (2012), which include the aspects of intimacy and passion, were used to assess brand love. Four items were used to gauge the intimacy and passion dimension. The Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) scale, which consists of four items was used to gauge brand loyalty.

### 4. Data Analysis and Results

The demographic characteristics of a sample population consisting of 302 individuals. The participants' gender distribution shows that 56.3% (170 individuals) identified as male, while 43.7% (132 individuals) identified as female. Regarding age groups, the largest proportion of participants fell within the 20-30 age range, accounting for 43.4% (131 individuals) of the total sample. The second most represented age group was 31-40, comprising 29.1% (88 individuals), followed by 14.6% (44 individuals) in the 41-50 age range. The 51-60 age group constituted 8.6% (26 individuals) of the sample, and those above the age of 60 represented 4.3% (13 individuals). As for the participants' educational backgrounds, the majority, 52% (157 individuals), held a bachelor's degree. Around 22.2% (67 individuals) had completed their master's degree, while 18.5% (56 individuals) had an M.Phil. degree. A smaller proportion, 7.3% (22 individuals), held a Ph.D. In terms of smartphone preferences, the most popular brand was Apple iPhone, chosen by 21.9% (66 individuals) of the participants. OPPO and Samsung Galaxy were selected by 18.9% (57 individuals) and 14.4% (44 individuals) of the sample, respectively. Huawei was preferred by 10.9% (33 individuals), while Xiaomi was the choice for 8.6% (26 individuals) of the participants. The remaining 25.3% (76 individuals) opted for other smartphone brands.

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix**

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Affective	1.00							
2. Sensory	.729**	1.00						
3. Behavioral	.566**	.597**	1.00					
4. Intellectual	.613**	.705**	.440**	1.00				
5. Intimacy	.555**	.417**	.544**	.743**	1.00			
6. Passion	.498**	.794**	.749**	.625**	.542**	1.00		
7. Brand loyalty	.709**	.669**	.629**	.407**	.715**	.451**	1.00	
8. Brand trust	.499**	.682**	.329**	.598**	.634**	.443**	.630**	1.00

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows the correlation matrix, where each cell represents the Pearson correlation coefficient between variables in the row and column. Diagonal cells show each variable's correlation coefficient, which is always 1.00. "Affective" and "Sensory" have a statistically significant positive association at the 0.01 level, as shown by the correlation coefficient of .729\*\*. Brand love and brand trust have a .499\*\* correlation coefficient, showing a 0.01-level positive association. Similarly, the values of all other relationships are within the acceptable range.

#### 4.1 Measurement Model

We evaluated construct psychometric characteristics using Amos structural equation modeling. After running the CFA in Amos 22, we find acceptable results. The measurement model demonstrated a good match to the data ( $X^2/df = 3.15$ , CFI = 0.943, TLI = 0.935, RMSEA = 0.054). The findings of the measurement model, which evaluate the convergent validity and reliability of the several constructs in this research, are shown in Table 2. Factor loading indicates how strongly an item is related to its underlying construct. All factor loadings in this table are relatively high, ranging from 0.890 to 0.944, which indicates that the items are strongly associated with their respective constructs. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of items that measure the same concept. In this table, all Cronbach's alpha values are relatively high, ranging from 0.892 to 0.927, indicating good internal consistency. Composite Reliability is another measure of internal consistency and reflects the reliability of the construct in terms of the relationship between its indicators. In this table, all CR values are high, ranging from 0.934 to 0.961, indicating good reliability. The last column displays the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values corresponding to each construct. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures convergent validity. It measures how much variation the construct's components

explain compared to measurement error. The table displays high AVE values, which range from 0.796 to 0.859, indicating strong convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Constructs	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Sensory experience	SE1	0.916	0.912	0.951	0.828
	SE2	0.924			
	SE3	0.909			
	SE4	0.890			
Affective experience	AE1	0.892	0.892	0.940	0.796
	AE2	0.908			
	AE3	0.842			
	AE4	0.924			
Behavioral experience	BE1	0.899	0.908	0.934	0.825
	BE2	0.917			
	BE3	0.908			
Intellectual experience	IE1	0.907	0.905	0.947	0.818
	IE2	0.907			
	IE3	0.905			
	IE4	0.900			
Intimacy	IN1	0.909	0.920	0.956	0.846
	IN2	0.925			
	IN3	0.916			
	IN4	0.929			
Passion	PA1	0.901	0.918	0.955	0.843
	PA2	0.918			
	PA3	0.930			
	PA4	0.929			
Brand Trust	BT1	0.927	0.927	0.961	0.859
	BT2	0.944			
	BT3	0.914			
	BT4	0.922			
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.915	0.925	0.960	0.856
	BL2	0.915			
	BL3	0.934			
	BL4	0.938			

The heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) analysis, employed to evaluate construct discriminant validity is depicted in Table 3. To ensure that research constructs are unique, discriminant validity is essential.

**Table 3: Discriminant Validity of Constructs Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)**

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Brand Experience	—			
2. Brand Trust	0.72	—		
3. Brand Love	0.79	0.85	—	
4. Brand Loyalty	0.81	0.76	0.79	—

$N = 300$ ; all HTMT correlations are within  $-1 < \text{HTMT} < 1$

The diagonal entries in this table are dashes because they compare each concept with itself, which always yields perfect correlation (1.0) and is unhelpful for discriminant validity testing. The off-diagonal entries show construct-pair HTMT correlations. Each cell displays inter-construct correlation strength. For instance, brand experience and brand trust have a modest positive association of 0.72. Brand experience correlates 0.79 with brand love and 0.81 with brand loyalty. The correlations between these constructs indicate moderate to strong positive associations. The table shows a 0.85 connection between brand trust and brand love and 0.76 between brand trust and brand loyalty, showing moderate to high positive associations. Finally, brand love and brand loyalty have a 0.79 correlation, indicating a modest positive association. Importantly, all HTMT correlations are within the permissible -1 to 1 range, showing no multicollinearity. The findings indicate that the constructs are separate and assess various underlying notions, as planned in the research study.

#### 4.2 Common Method Variance

Since the interviewees gave us self-reported measures, common method variation (CMV) could be a problem. We used two statistical methods to look for any possible common technique bias. The eight-factor model fits better than the one-factor model in our confirmatory factor analysis. Additionally, the CFA initially suggested the absence of substantial common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). When compared to the measurement model with eight factors, the single-factor model for all constructs generated ( $X^2 = 5437.8$ ,  $df = 433$ ) as compared to ( $X^2 = 1287.7$ ,  $df = 333$ ). CMV is not an important concern in this experiment because to the much worse performance of the one-factor model compared to the measurement model ( $\Delta X^2 = 4851.8$ ,  $\Delta df = 30$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Second, for any substantive items that may be contaminated with CMV, CMV is modeled using ULMC factor loadings. The data fit improved marginally using ULMC in the model ( $\Delta X^2 (30) = 432.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\Delta CFI = 0.034$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA = 0.014$ ,  $\Delta TLI = 0.041$ ). The

technique effects are small, according to various fit indices, even if the total chi-square statistics are substantial (Richardson et al., 2009). According to both statistical studies, common procedure bias was not a significant issue.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing (Structural Model)

Understanding the relationships between multidimensional concepts and their respective dimensions holds significant importance (Edwards, 2001). Higher-order concepts typically fall into one of two categories as described by Law and Wong (1999). When the relationship extends from the overarching construct to its individual dimensions, it is termed a superordinate construct. Here, brand experience and brand passion used as superordinate construct. Previous research tended to describe brand experience and brand love as having only one dimension, rather than several dimensions (Safeer et al., 2021). Testing each unidimensional impact is advantageous in this technique, but it is constrained in its capacity to examine higher-order components. Using brand love and brand experience as high-order structures, this research seeks to overcome this limitation (Singh et al., 2021). Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 are tested as second-order factor models from a superordinate viewpoint.

**Table 4: Structural Path Coefficients**

Relationship	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
H1: Brand experience → Brand Love	0.014*	17.1	0.00	0.968	1.024
H3: Brand experience → Brand Loyalty	0.083*	10.77	0.00	0.661	0.321
H2: Brand love → Brand Loyalty	0.081*	10.48	0.00	0.692	1.004
H4: Brand experience → Brand love → Brand Loyalty	0.147*	9.81	0.00	0.452	1.032

(N = 302), \*\*p<0.05

Table 4 shows the structure path coefficients of this study. For H1, which explores the relationship between brand experience and brand love. The finding shows the significant relationship ( $\beta = 0.014$ ,  $t = 17.1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). H2 examines the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty. The finding shows the significant relationship ( $\beta = 0.081$ ,  $t = 10.48$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). For H3, which investigates the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. The finding shows the significant relationship ( $\beta = 0.083$ ,  $t = 10.77$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The combined impact of brand experience and brand love on brand loyalty is meaningful and plays a significant role in driving brand loyalty ( $\beta = 0.147$ ,  $t = 9.81$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, H4 is accepted.

In order to carry out a moderated mediation analysis in PROCESS Model 8, which was designed by Hayes (2017), the regression bootstrapping technique was used. The purpose of this study was to assess the validity of hypotheses H5, H6, and H7. For the purpose of testing hypotheses 5, 6, and 7, we created composite indices for each component by averaging the relevant elements and setting their means to zero (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). The results of the conditional process analysis are shown in Table 5.

Study results found that brand trust moderates brand experience-brand loyalty relationships ( $\beta = 0.005$ ,  $t = 7.85$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This lends support to H5. To be more precise, there is a statistically significant moderating influence of brand trust on brand experience and brand love at different levels such as at low level (M-SD) ( $\beta = 0.003$ ,  $SE = 0.019$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), at medium level (M) ( $\beta = 0.006$ ,  $SE = 0.023$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), CI [0.002, 0.133]), and at high level (M-SD) ( $\beta = 0.004$ ,  $SE = 0.011$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), CI [0.001, 0.128]). So, H6 was proven correct. Supporting H7, the moderated mediation index was statistically significant (index = 0.003,  $SE = 0.0047$ , 95% CI [0.0001, 0.008]). A measure of the moderator's influence on a mediated relationship is the moderated mediation index (Hayes, 2017). The results suggest that the idea of brand love acts as a mediator in the link between brand experience and brand loyalty, with brand trust playing a moderating function (refer to Table 5). It was found that the conditional indirect effect was statistically significant at three different levels of brand trust: low (M-SD) ( $\beta = 0.005$ ,  $SE = 0.021$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), medium (M) ( $\beta = 0.008$ ,  $SE = 0.004$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), CI (0.007, 0.177), and high (M-SD) ( $\beta = 0.009$ ,  $SE = 0.028$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), CI [0.001, 0.210]). This research implies that the mediating effect grows as confidence in the brand grows (Hayes, 2017).

**Table 5: Moderated Mediation Analysis**

	Beta	SE	<i>t-value</i>	p-value
Mediator - Brand Love				
Brand Experience	0.644	0.032	20.13	<0.05
Brand Trust	0.351	0.029	12.66	<0.05
Brand Experience X Brand Trust	0.005	0.009	7.85	<0.05
DV - Brand Loyalty				
Brand Experience	0.536	0.081	12.94	<0.05
Brand Trust	0.567	0.094	5.99	<0.05
Brand Love	0.309	0.058	5.34	<0.05
Brand Experience X Brand Love	0.027	0.016	4.68	<0.05
	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Index of moderated mediation	0.003	0.0047	0.001	0.008

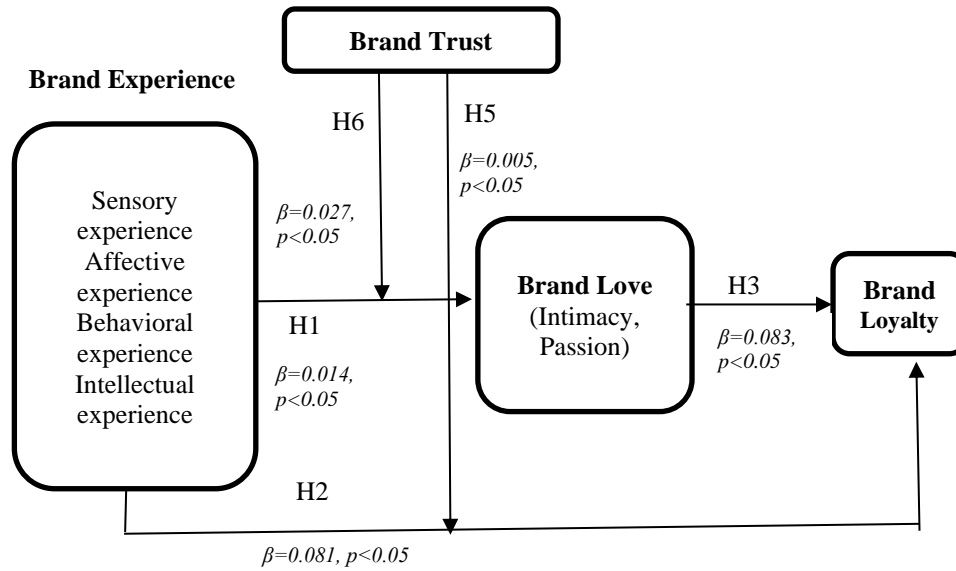


Figure 2: SEM Results

### 5. Discussion

The purpose of this research is to examine how brand love and trust mediate brand experience and brand loyalty. This research examines how brand love and trust effect loyalty and experience. Additionally, the study explores how brand exposure affects brand loyalty. Customers have several interactions with the chosen smartphone brand on a daily basis. The level of commitment shown by consumers is influenced by their favorable interactions with a brand, leading to an increase in brand loyalty.

Our research has shown that brand experience had a positive impact on brand love. This indicated that people who had a more positive experience with a brand would have a greater level of passion towards that brand and it is align with Roy et al. (2013). Such that positive brand experiences enhance brand loyalty. This study also indicates that suggests that brand love increases brand loyalty, this means that the customers love for the brand results increases the commitment and this is also aligned with the Ong et al. (2018). Brand love also connects positive brand experiences to loyal customers. This study reveals that brand love may moderate this relationship that is aligned with the previous studies of Kazmi and Khaliq (2019) and Roy et al. (2013). Consumer trust in brands moderated the link between brand love and positive brand experiences. This suggests that a customer's brand preference is greater when they trust a brand. Sensory and intellectual experience components affected intimacy, whereas emotional and intellectual experience components affected passion. Both intimacy and passion have an effect on a consumer's loyalty to a



brand. The results also show that in terms of brand loyalty, the component of passion is more important than intimacy. This study shows how brand trust affects good brand experiences and brand loyalty. Moreover, brand trust acts as a moderator between brand experience and brand love. In prior studies on the role of brand trust, there are Bae & Kim (2023) whose results are consistent with our findings.

#### *5.1 Theoretical Implications:*

Our findings support consumer-brand relationship theory, which states that brand experiences, emotions, trust, and loyalty impact consumer-brand interactions. Brand experience drives brand love and loyalty among Pakistani smartphone users, according to our research. This supports consumer-brand relationship theory that great brand experiences foster emotional ties and attachment, increasing brand love and loyalty. Brand trust moderates brand experience and brand love in our research study. Consumer-brand relationship theory stresses trust in building and maintaining meaningful connections between customers and brands. Our findings show that increased brand trust enhances the effect of pleasant brand experiences on brand love, highlighting the importance of trust in building strong emotional attachments with a business. Our research illuminates the complex dynamics of brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, and brand trust in the Pakistani smartphone industry, supporting consumer-brand relationship theory. These results enhance consumer-brand relationship theory by deepening customer behavior and brand preferences.

Brand trust has been studied as an independent variable in brand experience, love, trust, and loyalty studies. According to the findings of this study, the association between having a positive brand experience, loving the brand, and being loyal to the brand is moderated by the component of having trust in the brand. Based on the research results, there seems to be a correlation between brand experience and brand love, with brand trust playing a moderating role in this correlation. To provide further precision, a discernible correlation exists between an individual's familiarity with a brand and their affinity towards said brand, with the intensity of this connection being amplified when consumers exhibit a heightened degree of trust in the brand in question.

Second, this study considers positive brand experiences and affection for a brand to be high-order components. Research that has previously been conducted on these concepts has been framed in terms of first-order elements throughout its whole. This research implies that brand experience and brand love might be theoretically higher-level structures. This research also reveals that brand trust actively controls brand experience, affection, and loyalty. The research found a favorable correlation between brand loyalty, brand love, and brand experience. The researchers found that this connection is much higher in situations in which consumers see the company as being more trustworthy.

Our results support the consumer-brand interaction hypothesis, especially in the Pakistani smartphone industry. The idea states that customers form brand relationships based on their perceptions, experiences, and emotions. Our study shows that brand experience greatly affects brand love and loyalty among Pakistani smartphone users. Positive brand experiences strengthen consumer-brand ties. Our research also shows that brand love mediates the link between brand experience and brand loyalty, supporting the premise that emotional attachment drives customer loyalty. In addition, brand trust moderates the link between brand experience and brand love, suggesting that customers' faith in a brand might affect their emotional connection with it. Our research sheds light on consumer-brand connections in the Pakistani smartphone industry and their culturally particular processes and dynamics.

### *5.2 Managerial Implications:*

The implications of the research outcomes have substantial consequences for the field of management. This research reveals that one's experience with a brand has a more substantial impact on their feelings about that brand among who use smartphones. The firms that make smartphones should try to increase consumer loyalty and satisfaction with their products. To do this, we have two primary suggestions. First, from the point of view of design, the end user should get pleasure from the product's beauty, and second, from the point of view of functionality, it is essential to effectively address the many issues faced by customers. For example, software reliability, hardware performance, battery life, and compatibility. The functional concerns in this regard also need to be addressed in order to meet the expectations of the customers and make them loyal. When these two conditions are met, consumers will have a positive impression of the brand. Second, to make the brand experience more impactful and satisfactory, manufacturers need to innovate at every touchpoint of the user journey. Even it is product design, or customer service, UI/UX designs, and overall customer satisfaction with a product help a manufacturer increase its brand love and loyalty follow up. Third, the findings of this study indicate that a bigger influence on brand loyalty among smartphone users is affection for the brand. Therefore, firms that make smartphones should aim to improve their customers' experiences with their brands. In conclusion, the firms behind these brands need to do more to cultivate a deeper sense of love and appreciation for their products. In order to do this, the managers are required to give a wide array of brand experience sources such that marketing events and storytelling.

### *5.3 Limitations and Future Research*

While the study gives us some very relevant information about brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, and brand trust in the Pakistani smartphone industry, some key limitations should be taken into account. First, the use of cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish a cause-and-effect relationship among variables that are therefore to be explored through longitudinal studies to explore the temporal relationships among these constructs. Furthermore, the possibility of common method bias arising when using self-

report methods might cause an upward bias in the correlations of variables. Moreover, the focus of the research on smartphone users in Pakistan means that the generalization to other cultural situations or market segments might not be possible since there is a need of comparative research done in other regions or demographics. Longitudinal studies will shed light on stability and dynamics of brand perception, and together with that will uncover underlying, causal relationships between brand experience, brand love, brand loyalty, and brand trust. Furthermore, the use of mixed-methods approach which involves combining the results of quantitative analyses with qualitative information like focus groups or interviews might generate a more comprehensive comprehension. Another important factor that should be considered is the moderating effect of the demographic variable such as age, gender, income and education which will provide more detailed information about the factors that are responsible for the consumer's brand perception and behavior in Pakistan smartphone market. Moreover, further investigation could incorporate other factors or theories that were not addressed in this study. For example, consideration of variables including perceived value, brand personality and perceived quality could make brand-consumer relationships for better understanding. Moreover, using theories like the social identity theory and the self-concept theory could reflect on brand relationships from different angles that were not considered before in case of Pakistani smartphone market.

### **Research Funding**

The authors received no research grant or funds for this research study.

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