FACTORS EFFECTING BRAND LOVE: MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND UNIQUENESS AND MODERATING ROLE OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract

This study aims to predict the effects of Product Quality, Brand Innovativeness, Brand Credibility and Brand Intimacy on Brand Love, while factoring in the mediating role of Brand Uniqueness and moderating impact of Product Involvement. The Triangular Theory of Interpersonal Love and the Experiential Approach form the basis of the framework for this study. A survey was conducted, by distributing self-administered questionnaires among 500 respondents of the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Data Analysis was done on SPSS, using correlation and regression analysis with the help of Andrew Hayes PROCESS. The results revealed that the association between antecedents of Brand Love was partially mediated by Brand Uniqueness, whereas, the predicted moderating role of Product Involvement remained negligible and varied with each independent variable. The study shall be useful for brand managers, marketers and practitioners, as the results highlight importance consumers place on various brand attributes.

Key Words: Perceived Quality, Brand Innovativeness, Brand Credibility, Brand Intimacy, Brand Uniqueness and Product Involvement.

Introduction

The concept of Brand Love has garnered much attention in recent years with consumers' willing to pay high premium for their loved brands. The concept does not simply constitute the affection and appreciation a person holds for a brand, rather it is built upon deeper connections customers forge with their favorite brands, such as the core values a brand stands for, its reputation and image.[1] Research has shown that consumer-brand relationship is a deeper phenomenon and is made up of several factors such as passion, self-commitment, intimacy, satisfaction etc.[2]

A closer look at psychological literature gives several definitions and types of interpersonal love (e.g., romantic, empathetic/ humane) with varying degrees of affection depending on the particular category of love itself.[3] However, there is convincing evidence that love is not limited to interpersonal relationships

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only but the concept extends much beyond human/personal interactions to encompass love for material good as well. In the domain of marketing, for instance, love could encompass feelings and emotions consumers attach to their favorite brands including brand identity (e.g., its packaging and logos), quality and performance, understanding, conviction and values the brand signifies. Researchers argue that brand love needs to be understood at a deeper level, based on consumer experience, perceptions and emotional attachment.[4] Brand relationships, similar to personal relationships are formed, nurtured and maintained more by emotions than by facts or rational judgments. Psychologists, researchers and marketers are finally recognizing that brand choices are made in much the same way and therefore have focused their attention on exploring this relationship in depth. Similar to love or friendship between individuals, brand love is an emotional bond that consumers form with their favorite brands. Consumers interpret brands as an extension to themselves and this phenomena drives their purchase decisions.[5]

Similar to interpersonal love,[6] where trust in a partner is deemed an important element of a relationship, trust in brand is an important determinant of brand love. Factors such as reliability, honesty and repute form essential building blocks of brand love.[7] Since the concept of brand love is still a relatively nascent notion, researchers are still investigating as to what essential factors constitute brand love. Research in this domain is also shaped by different conceptualizations of brand love. The present studies available on this subject present a multitude of factors that can be labelled as antecedents of brand love, however, these constructs are not comparable and much work is required to be done to determine a conclusive set of factors that constitute brand love. It is important to develop a deeper understanding of factors leading to this concept as this knowledge can help enhance brand image and brand loyalty. Marketers and brand managers need to be cognizant of the key drivers of brand love and utilize this knowledge to position products and achieve competitive position in the Industry.[8]

With the above context in view, the present study aims to look at how certain antecedent factors namely; Perceived Quality (PQ), Brand Innovativeness (NPI), Brand Credibility (BC) and Brand Intimacy (BI) effect Brand Love (BL). While doing so, the researchers have kept Brand Uniqueness (BU) and Product Involvement (PDI) in the mediating and moderating roles

respectively, to assess how the aforementioned factors shape this relationship. The analysis and results will thus contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject.

Literature Review

The special bond customers form with their preferred brands are indicative of a deeper relationship, the foundations of which are based on trust, intimacy, credibility, perceived value and uniqueness .[9] Recent studies have concluded that customers experience a special affection for their favorite brands, much in the same way as the feelings of love felt in a relationship.[10],[11] Shimp and Madden argued that consumers form relations with products, which range from feelings of dislike, to slight affection to adoration in the same manner, as observed in person to person relationships.[12] Their work is based on Theory of Love, which is based on three important elements viz; Intimacy, Passion and Commitment, which are also analogous to customer-product relationships.[13] Carroll and Ahuvia argue that brand love is a sound indicator of consumer satisfaction, which then further leads to desirable post-consumption behavior.[14] Rauschnabel and Ahuvia introduced the concept of Anthropomorphism in brand love, stipulating that customers attribute human characteristics or behaviors to brands and factors such as perceived quality and intimacy form important components of brand love.[15] Brand qualities such as brand credibility, customer intimacy and brand uniqueness form essential determinants of brand love. Tulin Erdem[16] refers to the credibility of brand as the brand's trustworthiness and, hence, forms symbolic signal. Uniqueness of the brand caters to a person's to be discerned differently from others, thereby, satiating egoistic needs.[17] Brand intimacy is a quality that assures consumers that the brand is continuously responding to their unique longings and forms an intimate, personal connection with its customers.[18]

Uniqueness of the brand comprises both tangible and intangible aspects; so for instance quality is seen as a tangible part of uniqueness in customer views and novelty of a brand is perceived as a unique intangible attribute.[19] In this regard, Corona, a Mexican beer has managed to build a unique image in its customer's eyes by portraying a bright, scenic and relaxed summer scene with charming sunsets, sandy and sultry beaches. No other brand has been able to associate beer with such a novel, captivating theme better than Corona, hence, building a unique position in the marketplace.[20] Perceived Quality is also closely

linked to brand prestige in that the notion of high esteem comes with high standards of quality.[21]

In the coming section, each construct will be explained separately to form corresponding hypotheses.

Brand Love

Ahuvia was amongst the early researchers to conduct an empirical study on the feeling of affection felt towards objects in which he assessed how consumers experience love for commodities.[22] Researchers in the past have revealed that people have a tendency of developing an affiliation for objects like products and brands. Carroll and Ahuvia introduced the word 'Brand Love' in their study. In this study, they explored the factors leading to brand love enhancement and the results of brand love. They defined brand love as *"the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name."* Another important concept is emotional attachment which is defined as *"a relationship-based construct that reflects the emotional bond connecting an individual with a consumption entity (e.g. brand, person, place or object)."*[23] Brand love is an obsessive and fervent emotional attachment and inclination consumers tend to experience towards a brand (Meisenzahl, n.d.). It is a passionate feeling that comes through a series of repetitive phases of consuming the brand. When a consumer loves a brand, he opts to purchase it without any reason and he believes that their loved brand is the only one performing at excellence.

Product Involvement

Marketers and researchers have always aspired to understand the underlying drivers of customer purchase decision patterns. Individuals vary distinctly from one another, when it comes to buying same category of products. In their quest to understand consumer behavior, the construct of product involvement has been a subject of great interest amongst marketing practitioners and academics alike.[24] Product Involvement is, therefore, defined as *"the level of a consumer's interest in purchasing a certain product type and how committed they are to purchasing a given brand."*[25] Found out amongst other important product attributes, brand uniqueness and product quality play an important role in determining product involvement.[26] Hanzaee and Taghipourian concluded that in case of products with low involvement, brand

credibility played a significant role in influencing brand appeal and consequent purchase decision.[27] Batra et al., in their study to investigate the antecedents and consequences of brand love, recommended that the role of product involvement as a moderating factor must be investigated. Hence, this research has kept this variable in a moderating role and investigated how it impacts the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, as well as its impact on brand love.

Brand Uniqueness

Uniqueness of the brand is stated as the degree to which a brand defers from similar competing brands in the market.[28] By virtue of being unique, a brand can command a premium price.[29] Golder, Mitra, and Moorman (2012)[30] found out that people have an inherent desire to stand out from each other. This desires compels them to search for uniqueness and individuality. Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, and Donthu (1995)[31] found out that customers had a tendency to opt for products that seemed unique and different. In other words, customers were attracted to products that differentiated them from products in the same category. Consumers' need for uniqueness had been found to be related to their level of product involvement, which in turn, was related to their overall knowledge about a certain product.[32] Bairrada et al. have found that brand uniqueness has a noteworthy indirect consequence on brand love, henceforth its consequences on brand love are somewhat interceded.[33]

Perceived Quality

Perceived Quality is the customers' assessment of the quality of a product or service, both in terms of what that product/service offers and how it fares as compared to other competing offerings. Hence, perceived quality is more about a customer's belief and acceptance with regards to the credibility of a product.[34]

Quality is also deemed essential to the development of strong service dominant brands, because it augments perceived superiority of the brands and helps to discriminate brands in competitive markets.[35] Vera established the moderating effect of Product Involvement on Perceived Quality and Brand Love.[36] Based on the above discussion, our first hypothesis will be, thus, formulated as follows:-

H 1: Perceived Quality predicts Brand Love with Brand Uniqueness as a mediator and Product Involvement as a Moderator.

Brand Innovativeness

An innovation refers to a unique idea or a practice or object, which is perceived as novel by the individuals. It could be a re-combination of old ideas presented with a new approach. Brand innovativeness, alludes to shoppers' view of the capacity of the brand to bring advancements into the market. This implies that product or service extensions by a brand are deemed brand innovativeness i.e., how well an existing brand introduces new exciting products into the market.

The present buyers search for items that address the utilitarian needs successfully, yet offer a hedonic worth and give a feeling of uniqueness too. In this unique circumstance, item structures that can effectively consolidate usefulness and feel in an imaginative manner are quickly separated in the market, making various focal points for the firm.[37] Both brand and product inventiveness is defined by seen freshness, oddity of highlights, uniqueness of usefulness, and benefit.[38] Boisvert and Ashill found out that brands offering new product or service line extensions are viewed positively by consumers, as they deem the new product/service unique and this implies that an involving decision has to be made by the consumer, this implies that Product Involvement can assume the role of a moderator and, hence, we can hypothesize that;[39]

H 2: Brand Innovativeness predicts Brand Love with Brand Uniqueness as a mediator and Product Involvement as Moderator.

Brand Credibility

Brand credibility is defined as the trustworthiness of the product by its parent brand, which means that consumers perceive that the brand has the knowledge and preparedness to continuously deliver what has been promised.[40] Brand credibility and brand uniqueness possess important elements to portray a mental image of the brand in consumers' minds.[41] Brand credibility, which relates to the authenticity of the information claimed by a brand, gives buyers confidence and trust in their favorite brand. In a market crowded by a plethora of products, credibility is viewed as one of the most significant attributes of a

brand.[42] Furthermore, with credible brands, Thomas found out product involvement is also high, hence, our third hypothesis is;[43]

H 3: Brand Credibility predicts Brand Love with Brand Uniqueness as a mediator and Product Involvement as a Moderator

Brand Intimacy

Intimacy of brand, the recognition that a certain brand caters to their needs, implies that customers form an intimate bond with their favorite brands.[44] As a result loyal customers of a particular brand believe that their trusted brand consistently caters to their preferences and likes.[45] This mirrors the concept of closeness and understanding in relational love.[46]

As impression of closeness develop, more customers ought to see a brand as novel, original and unique and, thus, results in high product.[47] We form our fourth hypothesis as follows;

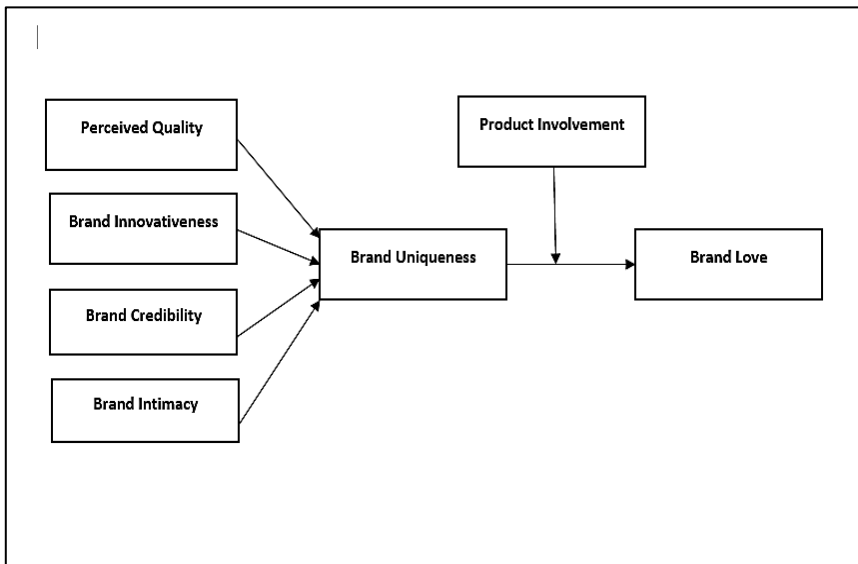*H 4: Brand Intimacy predicts Brand Love with Brand Uniqueness as a mediator and Product Involvement as a Moderator*

Theoretical Support

Brand Love can be understood through Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Interpersonal Love,[48] which comprises three elements (a) intimacy; implying closeness and affection experienced in relationships; (b) passion; encompassing the feelings of lust and desire; and (c) decision/commitment; meaning to love and stay committed to that love in the long run . Researchers in the past have concluded that consumers develop love for certain brands in the same way as those described in Sternberg's theory, though there are certain other attributes that also determine customer's love for a certain brand. The Self-Expansion Model has also been adapted to describe consumer-brand relationships.[49] According to the Self-Expansion Model, people increase self-worth by creating close relationships, which in turn, help them increase material and social resources, perspectives, and identities. These resources include social support, possessions, information, and friendship networks. Hence, customers develop close associations with certain brand, as this helps increase their material and social resources. The Experiential Approach also provides an essential framework to understand Brand Love. The approach argues that consumer experience is based on the pursuit of fantasy, feelings and love.[50] Consumers

make purchase decisions on the basis of evaluating tangible, intangible and symbolic characteristics of a brand.

Based on the earlier research, this paper investigates various factors shaping brand love. As highlighted, this study examines the role of Product Quality, Brand Innovativeness, Brand Intimacy and Brand Credibility in shaping consumer's love for brands. It further includes Brand Uniqueness and Product Involvement in mediating and moderating roles respectively to understand a holistic perspective on brand love.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Problem Statement

The study was undertaken to assess how perceived quality, brand innovativeness, brand credibility and brand intimacy impact brand love with brand uniqueness as a mediator and product involvement in the mediating role.

Significance

Brand Love is a relatively new construct in the marketing research realm. Consumers today are more fashion savvy and knowledgeable about products than ever before. They place high premium on factors such as brand repute, loyalty, image, stature, quality, novelty, value and appearance. Product selection has become an increasingly complex process and customers make their choice

after assessing a multitude of factors. Developing an in-depth understanding of various product features that drive customer choice becomes the ultimate priority for marketers to gain competitive edge in the market. This study will, therefore, add great value to the existing literature, as it will identify some new factors that shape Brand Love.

Research Methodology

The research methodology comprises four sections viz; research design, population and study sample, research instrument and data analysis. Research design elucidates the technique used for conducting the research, Study sample highlights the sampling technique applied, the research instruments section states the various scales used for measuring the variables followed by the data analysis section which details various tests conducted to analyze the data.

Research Design

The study used quantitative research technique where several hypothesis were developed and tested. Survey questionnaires, as primary data gathering tools were prepared to gather information and then sent to respondents to get their views on items. The reason for using quantitative research technique was to enhance the generalizability of the study. The study is cross-sectional in nature and carried out in a non-contrived environment.

Population and Study Sample

Population comprises of the users of apparel brands of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Convenience sampling technique was used to gather data from 500 male and female respondents. These respondents were approached while shopping in malls of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan. The said respondents were shopping in prominent malls i.e., Safa Mall, Giga Mall, Centaurs etc. The reason for selecting respondents from malls were that most of the brand sensitive consumers visit aforementioned malls of twin cities as these have outlets of all major brands. Out of the 500 questionnaires distributed amongst participants, 315 were deemed usable after scanning for missing or incomplete data. Out of these 315 forms, 131 (=41.5%) were filled by male respondents and the remaining 184 (=58.5%) by female participants, yielding an overall response rate of 63%.

Research Instruments

This research used pre-tested and authenticated scales used in the earlier studies. For measuring perceived quality, the scale has been adapted from Netemeyer et al. (2004), new product innovativeness is measured using scale from Fang (2008),[51] brand credibility from Tülin Erdem (2014),[52] brand uniqueness adapted from Netemeyer et al. 2004, brand love scale is taken from, Zarantonello L., Formisano M., Grappi S (2016) and product involvement scale was taken from Mittal (1989).[53]

Data Analysis and Results

There were two parts of data analysis i.e. data screening which has a purpose to check the normality of the data, any outliers and any values if missing before further analysis and secondly reliability of the measures was checked. SPSS was used to test the hypothesis developed to examine the associations in the model. Correlation analysis and linear regression is conducted to test the hypotheses in the second stage. All variables met the threshold value of reliability starting from .718 (Product Involvement) to .905 (brand love).

The reliability of all scales also lies above 0.60 which is the acceptable range. The reliability of the complete scale which consists of 43 items in total has a reliability of 0.826.

Table 1 presents the correlation amongst various variables. If correlation between any two variables is 0.90 or above, it shows multicollinearity. Here, the maximum value of correlations 0.664, hence the issue of multicollinearity doesn't exist.

The table shows that significant correlation exists between some variables under investigation. Brand Love (BL) has significant positive relationship with five variables viz; Product Quality PQ (0.536), Brand Innovativeness NPI (0.554), Brand Credibility BC (0.451), Brand Uniqueness Bu (0.557) and Brand Intimacy BI (0.451). However, its relationship with Product Involvement (PDI) is negative and significantly low (-0.118), as compared to other variables.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix (n=315)

Correlations		PDI	PQ	NPI	BC	BU	BL	BI
PDI	Pearson Correlation	1						
PQ	Pearson Correlation	-.097	1					
NPI	Pearson Correlation	-.033	.649**	1				
BC	Pearson Correlation	.017	.659**	.666**	1			
BU	Pearson Correlation	-.222**	.692**	.630**	.634**	1		
BL	Pearson Correlation	-.118*	.536**	.554**	.451**	.557**	1	
BI	Pearson Correlation	-.214**	.611**	.600**	.696**	.632**	.593**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								

Product involvement (PDI) has a weak negative relationship with product quality PQ (-0.097), brand innovativeness NPI (-0.033), brand uniqueness BU (-0.222), brand love BL (-0.118), brand intimacy BI(-0.214) and weak positive relationship with brand credibility(0.017).

Product quality (PQ) has a strong positive relationship with brand innovativeness NPI (0.649), brand credibility BC (0.659), brand uniqueness BU (0.692), brand love BL (0.536) and brand intimacy BI (0.611).

Brand innovativeness (NPI) has a strong positive brand credibility BC (0.666), brand uniqueness BU (0.630), brand love BL (0.554) and brand intimacy BI (0.600).

Brand credibility (BC) has a strong positive relationship with brand uniqueness BU (0.630), brand love BL (0.554) and brand intimacy BI (0.600).

Regression Analysis was conducted to test and measure the associations among the variables of the study. The PROCESS MACRO by Andrew Hayes was used to conduct the regression analysis. Table-2 to Table-4 show the results of the regression analysis done to check the mediation and moderation effects.

Table 2: Moderated Mediation for H1

Outcome Variable Brand Uniqueness (BU)		R-Sq 0.4796	P-value 0.0000		
Outcome Variable Brand Love (BL)		Int_1 -0.2144	P-value 0.0015	LLCI -0.3460	ULCI -.0827
M*W		R2-Chng 0.0207	P-value 0.0015		
Mediator	W	Effect	LLCI	ULCI	Boot SE
Direct Effect	-	0.1764	0.0755	0.2773	0.0513
Conditional Indirect Effect of X on Y with M	2.1250	0.2956	0.1645	0.4326	0.0679
	2.3750	0.2624	0.1479	0.3844	0.0601
	3.5000	0.1127	-0.0370	0.2568	0.0747
Index of Moderated Mediation PDI: Index -0.1331		-	-0.2667	0.0128	0.0647

Results for H1

For moderated mediation analysis, Model 14 of Andrew Hayes Process has been used here. BL (Y) is the dependent variable, whereas PQ (X) is the independent variable. BU is mediator (M) and PDI is the moderator (W).

The first section of results indicate that PQ is a significant predictor of BU as R-Sq is 0.4796 implying that 47.96% variance in BU is caused by PQ. P-value is 0.0015 (<0.05) thereby meaning that the results are significant.

The moderating effect is weak but still significant as the interaction term shows a value of Int_1 =-0.2144 which remains significant as p-value <0.05 and the interval is negative for both lower and upper bounds. The R2 chnge of 0.0207 shows that moderating effect is present, though it depicts a weak moderation effect, the value being closer to 0.

Direct effect of product quality on brand love is 17.64% as the effect has a value of 0.1764 which is significant as p-value is 0.0007 and is < 0.05.

The indirect effect of product quality on brand love is checked by applying bootstrap estimation technique using 5000 bootstrap samples. The mediating effect of brand uniqueness on brand love is checked at varying levels product involvement i.e., below average, average and above average. The results show that at high levels of moderator PDI, the mediating effect becomes insignificant

as the signs of lower bound and upper bound change and don't remain the same, therefore implying "o" as a probable value. However, at low level of PDI, the mediating effect is significant as the lower and upper bound values are both positive.

The Index of moderated mediation shows a value of -0.1331 with the both the lower and upper bounds of bootstrap confidence intervals showing values in negative. This implies that moderated mediation is present at lower values of the moderator.

Table 3: Moderated Mediation for H2

Outcome Variable Brand Uniqueness (BU)		R-Sq 0.3967	P-value .0000		
Outcome Variable Brand Love (BL)		Int_1 -0.2006	P-value 0.0021	LLCI -0.3280	ULCI -0.0732
M*W		R2-Chng 0.0186	P-value 0.0021		
Mediator	W	Effect	LLCI	ULCI	Boot SE
Direct Effect	-	0.3319	0.2006	0.4633	.0667
Conditional Indirect Effect of X on Y with M	2.1250	0.3562	0.2095	0.5148	0.0782
	2.3750	0.3154	0.1936	0.4454	0.0639
	3.5000	0.1321	-0.0668	0.2942	0.0918
Index of Moderated Mediation PDI: Index -0.1630	-		-0.3712	0.0017	0.0932

Results for H2

For moderated mediation analysis, Model 14 of Andrew Hayes Process has been used here. BL (Y) is the dependent variable, whereas NPI (X) is the independent variable. BU is mediator (M) and PDI is the moderator (W).

The first section of results indicate that NPI is a significant predictor of BU as R2 is 0.3967 implying that 39.67% change in the mediator BU is caused by NPI. P-value is 0.0000 (<0.05) thereby meaning that the results are significant.

The moderating effect of PDI is weak but still significant as the interaction term shows a value of Int_1 =-0.2006 here which remains significant as p-value <0.05 and the interval is negative for both lower and upper bounds. The R2

Change of 0.0186 shows that moderating effect is present, though it depicts a weak moderation effect, the value being closer to 0.

Direct effect of brand innovativeness on brand love is quite significant at 0.3319 which means that   33.19% change in BL is brought about by NPI. Here p-value is 0.0000 which is < 0.05 and hence depicts mediation by BU.

The indirect effect of brand innovativeness on brand love is checked by applying bootstrap estimation technique using 5000 bootstrap samples. The mediating effect of Brand Uniqueness on brand love is checked at varying levels of the moderator PDI i.e., below average, average and above average. The results show that at high levels of moderator PDI, the mediating effect becomes insignificant as the signs of lower bound and upper bound change and don't remain the same. However, at lower levels of PDI, the mediating effect is slightly more significant as the lower and upper bound values are both positive.

The Index of moderated mediation shows a value of -.1630 with the lower and upper bounds of bootstrap confidence intervals showing being negative and positive respectively. This implies that overall, moderated mediation is not significant.

Table 4: Moderated Mediation for H3

Outcome Variable Brand Uniqueness (BU)		R-Sq 0.4019	P-value .0000		
Outcome Variable Brand Love (BL)		Int_1 -0.2526	P-value 0.0002	LLCI -0.3857	ULCI -0.1194
M*W		R2-Chng 0.0290	P-value 0.0002		
Mediator	W	Effect	LLCI	ULCI	Boot SE
Direct Effect	-	0.1057	-0.0246	0.2359	0.0662
Conditional Indirect Effect of X on Y with M	2.1250	0.4420	0.3034	0.5846	0.0716
	2.3750	0.3938	0.2768	0.5153	0.0608
	3.5000	0.1770	-0.0119	0.3514	0.0926
Index of Moderated Mediation PDI: Index -0.1927		-	-0.3753	-0.0369	0.0857

Results for H3

For moderated mediation analysis, Model 14 of Andrew Hayes Process has been used here. BL (Y) is the dependent variable, whereas BC (X) is the independent variable. BU is mediator (M) and PDI is the moderator (W).

The first section of results indicate that BC is a significant predictor of BU as R^2 is 0.4019 implying that 40.19% change in the mediator BU is caused by BC. P-value is 0.0000 (<0.05) thereby meaning that the results are significant.

The moderating effect of PDI is weak but still significant as the interaction term shows a value of Int_1 = -0.2526 here which remains significant as p-value <0.05 and the interval is negative for both lower and upper bounds. The R^2 Change of 0.0290 shows that moderating effect is present, though it depicts a weak moderation effect, the value being closer to 0.

Direct effect of Brand Credibility on Brand Love is not significant in our study as it stands at 0.1057 and p-value of 0.1115 which is > 0.05. This shows that there is no mediation here.

The indirect effect of Brand Credibility on Brand Love is checked by applying bootstrap estimation technique using 5000 bootstrap samples. The mediating effect of Brand Uniqueness on Brand Love is checked at varying levels of the moderator PDI i.e., below average, average and above average. The results show that at high levels of moderator PDI, the mediating effect becomes insignificant as the signs of lower bound and upper bound change and don't remain the same. However, at lower levels of PDI, the mediating effect is slightly more significant as the lower and upper bound values are both positive.

The Index of moderated mediation shows a value of -0.1927 with the lower and upper bounds of bootstrap confidence intervals showing being both negative values implying that "0" is not a probable value here. This suggests that overall, moderated mediation is not present and is insignificant for this relationship.

Table 5: Moderated Mediation for H4

Outcome Variable Brand Uniqueness (BU)		R-Sq 0.3988	P-value .0000		
Outcome Variable Brand Love (BL)		Int_1 -0.1672	P-value 0.0002	LLCI -0.2935	ULCI -0.0408
M*W		R2-Chng 0.0127	P-value 0.0097		
Mediator	W	Effect	LLCI	ULCI	Boot SE
Direct Effect	-	0.2979	0.2027	0.3932	0.0484
Conditional Indirect Effect of X on Y with M	2.1250	0.2353	0.1230	0.3588	0.0602
	2.3750	0.2103	0.1107	0.3221	0.0538
	3.5000	.0978	-.0346	0.2887	0.0675
Index of Moderated Mediation PDI: Index -0.0999		-	-0.2148	0.0079	0.0563

Results for H4

For moderated mediation analysis, Model 14 of Andrew Hayes Process has been used here. BL (Y) is the dependent variable, whereas BI (X) is the independent variable. BU is mediator (M) and PDI is the moderator (W).

The first section of results indicate that BI is a significant predictor of BU as R^2 is 0.3988 implying that 39.88% change in the mediator BU is caused by BI. P-value is 0.0000 (<0.05) thereby meaning that the results are significant.

The moderating effect of PDI is weak but still significant as the interaction term shows a value of Int_1= -.1672 here which remains significant as p-value <0.05 and the interval is negative for both lower and upper bounds. The R^2 Change of 0.0127 shows that moderating effect is present, though it depicts a weak moderation effect, the value being closer to 0.

Direct effect of brand intimacy on brand love is significant at 0.2979 which means that 29.79% change in BL is brought about by BI. Here p-value is 0.0000 which is < 0.05 and thus implies that the results are significant and there is mediation.

The indirect effect of brand intimacy on brand love is checked by applying bootstrap estimation technique using 5000 bootstrap samples. The mediating effect of brand uniqueness on brand love is checked at varying levels of the moderator PDI i.e., below average, average and above average. The results show that at high levels of moderator PDI, the mediating effect becomes insignificant

as the signs of lower bound and upper bound change and don't remain the same. However, at lower levels of PDI, the mediating effect is slightly more significant as the lower and upper bound values are both positive. The Index of moderated mediation shows a value of -0.0999 with the lower and upper bounds of bootstrap confidence intervals being negative and positive respectively. This implies that overall, moderated mediation is not significant for this relationship.

Discussion and Conclusion

Brand love holds a special value for consumers and it is a function of certain attributes that are cherished by customers.[54] Our study, hence, aimed to investigate certain factors that predict brand love in a bid to better understand the phenomena. As found in previous studies, product quality effects brand uniqueness as it causes significant variance in the latter. This is also supported in previous studies. Similar to previous studies product quality also has a positive direct effect on brand love as also shown in our results. Our study checked moderated mediation by product involvement and brand uniqueness, respectively, for first time and it was found that moderated mediation is present at lower levels of moderator and it isn't that significant.

Brand innovativeness is also found to be a significant predictor of both brand uniqueness and brand love. This also is in line with some previous studies that have linked innovativeness positively with brand love.[55] Sparse literature is available on the relationship between uniqueness and brand innovativeness. Our study, therefore adds value to the existing literature by concluding that brand innovativeness significantly predicts brand uniqueness. This could be attributed to the fact the customers find innovative brands as unique and exclusive and hence value this attribute. However, moderated mediation results remain insignificant implying that product involvement doesn't play a significant role in determining brand love in this case. This may be due to the fact that when a brand is considered unique and innovative, customers already love it and hence don't spend much time in making a decision.

Brand credibility is a significant predictor of brand uniqueness, however, our study found that its effect on brand love are not significant. Earlier studies have shown mixed results as well founding that credibility is a significant predictor of both brand love and brand uniqueness but the results vary across

different samples. This could be attributed to cultural differences and demographics. Sometimes customers develop such a strong bond with brands they love that they tend to forget incidents that jeopardize the credibility of a brand. Overall, moderated mediation is also not present and is insignificant for this relationship.

Finally, intimacy relates positively to both brand uniqueness and brand love in our case. Although the overall model shows weak moderated mediation results. Brand intimacy implies how customers recognize the brand to be actually catering to their needs and concerns.[56] This sensitivity therefore brings about special sentimental attachment for customers, contributing to the development of brand love.

Our research has proposed a new model to understand brand love by introducing brand uniqueness and product involvement in mediating and moderating roles respectively. Overall the results show that moderated mediation is insignificant in this research. The study adds to the body of knowledge that although brand uniqueness is found to partially mediate the associations amid Brand Qualities and Brand Love, product involvement as suggested to be checked as a moderator was unable to moderate any association. We can draw from the study that product involvement does not play a significant role in impacting the effect of Perceived Value on Brand Love.

Limitations and Recommendations

Various limitations might have had a bearing on our results. The first impediment could be that since the data was collected from only customers who were shopping in the malls. The sample size could be broadened to add more people. Secondly the sample size could also be made significantly larger for better results. Future researchers can make an effort gather data from other sectors and expand the sample size to enhance the variety of perceptions. The study was cross sectional in nature, future researchers can carry out a longitudinal research in this context which will enable them to assess the deviations over a longer period of time. Such a study would enable the researchers, to evaluate the potential factors leading to Brand love on different occasions and examine the short, medium and long-term impacts on Brand Love.

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