Journal of Research in Social Development and Sustainability
ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

THE ROLE OF BRAND TRUST IN MEDIATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND AUTHENTICITY AND CUSTOMER BRAND PREFERENCE OF THE MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORIES IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN

Abdul Ghaffar
PhD Scholar
Department of Public Administration
University of Karachi
ghaffar.abbasi@yahoo.com

Dr. Syed Shahid Zaheer Zaidi
Assistant Professor
Department of Public Administration,
University of Karachi
sszzaidi@uok.edu.pk

Abstract

In today's environment of higher uncertainty, authenticity has emerged as a key ambition for individuals, rendering it a central issue in modern marketing and a fundamental factor in marketing success. Consumers actively seek authenticity in several aspects of their daily lives to mitigate this deficiency of confidence. In this research, the overall framework or model of brand authenticity is developed, which determines brand preferences mediated through brand trust and moderated by the word-of-mouth relationship. This research utilized a quantitative methodology. The author employed the Smart PLS 4.0 structural equation modelling (SEM) methodology to analyze the data. A convenience sampling approach was employed to get participant data. Among the users of medical laboratory services in Karachi, Pakistan, 343 valid responses were obtained. The findings demonstrate that brand authenticity significantly enhances brand preferences. Another confirmation given by the study is the positive significant role played by the mediation of brand trust in brand preferences. In addition to that, the existing study establishes the fact that WOM moderation exerts a positive influential role in the integrative model of brand authenticity. Managers, policymakers, and researchers pay more attention to the improvement and application of inventive and genuine brand management strategies that strongly affect the choice of medical diagnostic laboratories.

Keywords: Brand Authenticity, Customer Trust, Brand Preferences, Word of Mouth.

Introduction

Currently, consumers have to deal with a globalized market and a growing commercialization of products (Morhart et al., 2015). Consumers seek brands that are pertinent and authentic. Consumers increasingly seek brand authenticity since it has surpassed quality as the dominant purchasing factor (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019). Research indicates that authenticity is fundamental to brand status, equity, and corporate reputation, with some positing it as a cornerstone of contemporary marketing

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

(Napoli et al., 2014). A brand is an essential part of a product maker's strategy, serving as a unique identifier for the product in terms of quality and credibility. A brand signifies a robust market presence and a consumer perception connection. (Kang & Sharma, 2012). Brands that embody a sense of history and engage with old cultures, practices, regions, and beliefs have a unique identity and nostalgic essence that enhances authenticity (Napoli et al., 2014). Brand authenticity is a decision-making criterion that guides consumers' choice of brands and helps consumers define and construct who they are by expressing their authentic selves (Oh et al., 2019).

Although there is an increasing interest in brand authenticity, trust, and word of mouth in preference for healthcare and medical diagnostic laboratories' branding, there are still significant gaps in these elements' interdependent roles and their explicit effect on brand preference in the healthcare industry. Although past research has examined these variables within the general consumer marketplace, such as "brand authenticity, brand trust and SME growth" (Eggers et al., 2013)"Brand authenticity and brand trust" (Schallehn et al., 2014)brand authenticity, brand trust and expected quality (Moulard et al., 2016)authenticity perceptions, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand choice intention (Phung et al., 2019) Little empirical research has been conducted to specifically discuss the variables as they apply to the healthcare industry, where patient experiences and trust are central. Besides, brand authenticity and its effect on trust and the moderate impact of word of mouth on brand trust and, eventually, brand preference have not been well studied in the literature in medical diagnostic laboratories. In addition, most of the studies are inclined to discuss the role of these factors within the bigger healthcare organizations, and smaller and privately owned healthcare providers are under-researched. By providing an in-depth account of the interplay between brand authenticity, brand trust, and word of mouth, this study attempts to fill those gaps and make contributions both theoretical and practical by presenting brand preference in the context of medical diagnostic laboratories.

In the prior studies, different theories have been used, such as the social comparison theory. (Cornelis & Peter, 2017), knowledge theory, and attribution theory (Schaefer et al., 2019). So, the current study focuses on the signaling theory given by Spence (1973), which allows us to see how a party (the signaler) can communicate with another party (the receiver) in a setting with asymmetric information. The theory was first presented in economics and biology, and later, it was implemented in diverse disciplines, including marketing and business.

Besides this, today, individuals seek exceptional services, products, and experiences that fulfill their inner desires. The more complex our environments get, the greater our desire for authentic experiences that resonate with our emotions. The customer experience must be genuine, authentic, appealing, and transparent to meet customers' needs. Failure to deliver by an organization poses a substantial danger of declining sales, reputation, and trust. Ultimately, an authentic brand can distinguish itself from competitors that do not permit customers to see behind the scenes. Exhibiting your company's principles publicly enhances trustworthiness and cultivates enduring brand loyalty among customers. This present work adds to the already existing body of

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

knowledge by addressing one of the most important research gaps by carrying out a study based on the investigation of important relationships in the setting of medical diagnostic laboratories.

Rationale

By examining the mediating function of brand trust in the relationship between customer brand preference and brand authenticity in the setting of medical diagnostic laboratories in Karachi, this study seeks to close the research gap. In service sectors, where customers cannot frequently assess the quality of the service prior to use, brand trust is essential, especially in the healthcare sector (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Ebrahim et al., 2016). In these situations, trust serves as a psychological agreement that fortifies loyalty and lowers ambiguity. Others contend that trust has a major impact on preference and repurchase behavior (Chinomona et al., 2013; Oh et al., 2019), whereas earlier research has demonstrated that brand authenticity leads to trust and positive customer assessments (Fritz et al., 2017; Morhart et al., 2015). Few studies, nevertheless, have experimentally examined this mediation mechanism in the context of healthcare diagnostics, where patient choice is frequently influenced by trust. For practitioners hoping to establish powerful, reliable healthcare brands in Pakistan's diagnostic industry, this study is consequently not only pertinent but also crucial.

Problem Statement

Differentiating services and keeping clients have become major hurdles in the fiercely competitive healthcare sector, especially among medical diagnostic laboratories in Karachi, Pakistan. Patients today are worried about the reliability and reputation of the labs that provide these services, in addition to the precision and cost of the diagnoses. Although brand authenticity—which is the degree to which a brand is seen as sincere, open, and moral—has been extensively covered in marketing literature, little is known about how it directly affects consumer brand preference in the healthcare industry. More importantly, little research has been done on how brand trust mediates this link, particularly in developing nations like Pakistan. The sensitivity of health information, the need for precise testing, and the demands of moral service standards present particular trust-related challenges for diagnostic labs. Diagnostic labs are limited in their ability to develop strategic branding and relationship management activities due to the lack of empirical insights into how brand authenticity translates into client brand preference through trust..

Research Questions

To shed more light on consumer brand behavior, it examines the following research questions:

- How important are brand authenticity and brand trust with regard to brand preference in medical diagnostic and research laboratories?

- Is brand trust a positive mediator between brand authenticity and brand preference?

- Is there a moderating effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) between brand trust and brand preference?

Research Objectives

- To examine the impact of brand authenticity on brand preference in the context of medical diagnostic and research laboratories in Karachi, Pakistan.
- To investigate the effect of brand trust on brand preference among customers of diagnostic laboratories.
- To evaluate the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between brand authenticity and customer brand preference.
- To explore the moderating effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) on the relationship between brand trust and brand preference.

Significance of the Study

By examining how brand trust functions as a mediator between customer brand preference and brand authenticity in the setting of medical diagnostic laboratories in Karachi, Pakistan, this study has both academic and practical importance. Knowing how authenticity builds trust, which in turn influences consumer preferences, can help healthcare providers—particularly diagnostic labs working in a cutthroat metropolitan setting—guide their strategic branding and service delivery.

The results can help managers create brand strategies that prioritize ethical behavior, openness, and consistent service quality in order to win over patients' trust and loyalty over the long run. Academically, the study adds to the little-studied relationship between healthcare services and branding in emerging economies. Using and expanding relationship marketing theories contributes to the expanding corpus of research on brand authenticity and trust-based consumer behavior in non-Western contexts, especially in a high-trust sector like healthcare.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The signaling theory

The signaling theory introduced by Spence (1973) allows for the observation of how a party (the signaler) can communicate with another party (the receiver) in a setting with asymmetric information. In signaler, the signaling theory fundamentally posits that signalers are insiders, such as executives or managers, who acquire information about an individual. (Connelly et al., 2011). From the perspective of the current study, medical diagnostic laboratories act as signalers that attempt to communicate the authenticity of their services to patients /customers. Signaling theory mainly emphasizes intentionally

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

disseminating positive information to indicate advantageous organizational characteristics. The signal is the second characteristic in signaling theory; it is any visible attribute or clue transmitted by the signaler that some signalers are in a better position than others to absorb the associated costs. The receiver: The signal's receiver is the third component in the signaling sequence, which posits that receivers are external parties who are uninformed about the organization but seek to acquire this information (Connelly et al., 2011). As applied to medical diagnostic laboratories, the Signaling theory emphasizes an interplay between signals, receivers, and feedback in developing patient trust, brand preference, and the overall reputation of medical diagnostic laboratory service providers.

Brand authenticity

Brand authenticity is the extent to which consumers regard a brand as real, loyal, and supportive, which fosters positive brand evaluations and emotions, enhancing purchase intentions and brand loyalty. (Kirmani, 2009). Authenticity is generally seen as a behavioral characteristic related to the issue. In the discipline of philosophy, scholars closely associate authenticity with ethical conduct. It further characterizes self-authenticity as a moral ideal of modernity, asserting that authenticity signifies the self's independence and originality. (Fritz et al., 2017)Individuals are considered authentic if they are genuine, take accountability for their activities, and make deliberate value-oriented decisions about their actions and presentations rather than conforming to predetermined or socially dictated beliefs and behaviors. In sociology, authenticity is often noted as not an objective reality but a socially produced phenomenon associated with societal standards. (Fritz et al., 2017). Busser and Shulga (2019) Stated that brand authenticity adheres to the constructivist paradigm of cultivating authenticity as an element of the social process. Customers specifically construct authenticity as architects of perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. The authors identify numerous elements, including continuity, honesty, originality, and credibility. (Portal et al., 2019).

Brand trust

Zboja and Voorhees (2006). Trust is when one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity. Brand trust facilitates an interaction between the consumer and the brand. When customers sense elevated confidence in a particular brand within a social media community, it fosters favorable associations with the brand, resulting in increased faith, commitment, and brand loyalty (Chavadi et al., 2023). Within the relationship marketing framework, trust is regarded as a fundamental element contributing to the efficacy of marketing initiatives. Trust is a property of relational dynamics. (Sung & Kim, 2010). Trust has been regarded as a factor influencing perceptions of service excellence. (Parasuraman et al., 1985)loyalty, communications between parties, and the amount of cooperation (Sung & Kim, 2010). Trust is a crucial variable in the trade network between a company and its partners since it motivates the company to invest in a long-term relationship. (Sung & Kim, 2010). As a conviction, trust encompasses public assessments of competency and benevolence/integrity, elements pertinent to the products and the company. (Basso & Pizzutti, 2016). A brand's competence is demonstrated by the quality and reliability of its products, whilst compassion and integrity are evident in its attentiveness and responsiveness to consumers,

along with honest and consistent communication practices (Pyle et al., 2021). This concept attempts to quantify the viewer's confidence in the reliability and low risk associated with a brand utilized by a favored character (Shoenberger & Kim, 2019).

Brand preferences

Brand preference refers to the degree to which an individual likes the specific service offered by their current firm relative to the services supplied by other companies within their consideration set (Chang & and Liu, 2009)**.** Consumers' brand preferences are determined by their cognitive views of the brand's weighted features (Ebrahim et al., 2016). Psychologists consider preference a learning concept, identifying experience and information processing as the primary sources of consumer preference formation. Brand preference denotes customers' tendency towards specific brands that encapsulate their cognitive processing of brand stimuli. (Ebrahim et al., 2016).

Word of Mouth (WOM)

Among the diverse information sources available to business-to-business (B2B) purchasers, including sales representatives, trade exhibitions, and websites, word-of-mouth (WOM) is often utilized in purchasing decisions. (Kikumori & Ishii, 2023). Industry statistics reveal that 86% of B2B buying decision-makers regard word-of-mouth from peers as the most powerful information source, while over 80% of B2B purchasers disseminate information from sellers to other purchasing decision-makers (Kikumori & Ishii, 2023). Word of Mouth (WOM) is a potent concept in marketing that fosters robust and enduring customer connections, amplifies the efficacy of marketing communications, and improves consumers' information processing duration. (Cavdar Aksoy et al., 2023). WOM denotes informal discourse among individuals regarding assessments of products and services. The value of word of mouth can be good, neutral, or negative. (Anderson, 1998). Signs of positive word of mouth, broadly defined, encompass favorable relationships, dramatic or novel experiences, referrals to others, and even prominent displays. Negative word of mouth comprises product disparagement, unfavorable experiences, gossip, and private grievances. (Anderson, 1998).

Hypothesis development:

Brand authenticity entails preserving a distinctive and reliable image alongside consistent quality assurance (Safeer et al., 2021). It delivers on its commitment to gaining consumer trust, augmenting consumer value, and eliciting favorable feelings. (Fritz et al., 2017). Authenticity was a crucial element of brand experience that positively impacted consumer emotions. Genuine brand characteristics and uniform brand conduct result from favorable brand experiences (Safeer et al., 2021)An authentic brand fulfills its commitments. Individuals who experience genuine brands exhibit a more favorable response, demonstrate heightened emotional attachment, and are more inclined to acquire them. (Loebnitz & Grunert, 2022). Therefore, we develop the following hypothesis:

H_1: Brand authenticity leads to a positive relationship with brand preference.

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

Perceived authenticity is posited to enhance trust levels. (Schallehn et al., 2014). The literature has a consensus that behavioral involvement and authenticity are highly entangled in the trust-building process. (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019). This study demonstrates a positive and robust correlation between brand authenticity and brand trust, indicating that authenticity is a significant determinant of branding success. (Schallehn et al., 2014). Ultimately, the correlation between brand authenticity and trust indicates that elevated views of brand authenticity lead to increased perceptions of brand trust. A brand perceived as more genuine by consumers will be considerably more trusted than brands with a contrary perception. Increased views of brand authenticity will lead to more dependence on a brand to deliver on its brand promise. (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019). Hence, we establish the following hypotheses

H_2: Brand authenticity leads to a positive relationship with brand trust.

Kenning (2008) Stated that Overall trust positively influences purchasing behavior. The main reason for trust's positive influence is its ability to reduce uncertainty. The customer should opt to purchase from a retailer he trusts. Kim (2019) argues that trust is a vital component of the product or service marketing process, as it fosters a long-term relationship between the consumer and the vendor, which ultimately helps the seller. Trust is an individual's inclination, typically manifested by an attitude toward the notion of planned behavior, and there exists a robust correlation between perceived brand trust and purchase intention. Brand trust enhances the probability that consumers will select their products. Despite the absence of reason in the transactional connection, ongoing maintenance and trade foster enduring amicable interactions between suppliers and consumers (Chae et al., 2020). Previous research established that brand trust influences purchase intention, with more brand trust exerting a more significant impact on buy intention. (Chae et al., 2020). Trust is essential for establishing customer relationships and subsequently promoting purchase intentions, which diminishes ambiguity and enhances consumer purchasing behavior. (Tsai et al., 2015). Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis;

H_3: Brand trust leads to a positive relationship with brand preference.

A brand is viewed as authentic, and consumers are more likely to trust that it will satisfy their needs and expectations. Genuineness establishes the framework of trust as it creates a flag that the brand is steady and sets value in its principles. (Yannopoulou et al., 2011). When consumers gain trust in a brand, it is easier to favor it. Trust decreases the perceived risk and uncertainty regarding the purchasing decision, making the consumers more at ease with the brand choice (Chinomona et al., 2013)Trust helps a brand stand a high chance of being chosen among competitors since consumers are convinced of the brand's quality and authenticity. Accordingly, brand trust mediates the connection between authenticity and preference as the psychological mechanism shifts the consumer beyond an initial liking of a brand due to its authenticity to a more permanent brand liking. (Tan et al., 2022). Prior research claims that trust is vital in converting positive perceptions of authenticity into real brand choice behavior (Loebnitz & Grunert, 2022). Therefore, we establish the following hypothesis.

H_4: Brand trust mediates the association between brand authenticity and brand preference.

The moderating role of WOM

WOM refers to verbally exchanging information regarding a specific brand, product, or service among individuals. WOM is not exclusively conveyed in person; it can be generated through encouragement or online dissemination and may be positive or negative. Positive word-of-mouth assists organizations in minimizing marketing costs. (Lin & Lu, 2010). It is a crucial determinant in ultimate purchasing decisions. Previous research established that word-of-mouth has a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between trust and consumer purchase intention. (Lin & Lu, 2010). Individuals require knowledge to develop trust and ensure that purchasing a product or service from a specific company is a secure and judicious decision. Certain research indicates a positive correlation between word-of-mouth and trust in the digital realm. Positive electronic word-of-mouth enhances consumers' emotional trust, their propensity to engage in online shopping, and the relationship between consumers' perceived honesty and attitude. (Jalilvand et al., 2017). Trust is essential to all enduring relationships and is the primary impetus for positive word of mouth. (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Positive word-of-mouth, in offline and online contexts, is a primary objective of contemporary marketing strategies due to the increasing influence of peer assessments and endorsements on customer purchase behavior. (Khan & Fatma, 2023).

H_5: The relationship between brand trust and brand preference is moderated by word of mouth (WOM)

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 represents the study framework, where the relationships between the major constructs are presented. Such associations are supported by empirical data and are planned in accordance with the corresponding hypotheses.

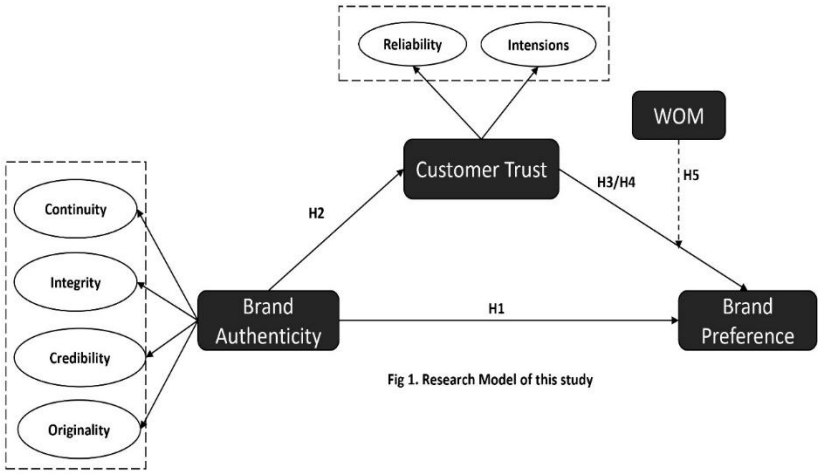


Fig 1. Research Model of this study

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

Research Methodology

Data collection/sample size

The current study used a convenience sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling method, to collect data among people aged 18 years and older who had availed services at the medical diagnostic laboratories within Karachi in Pakistan. There are many labs in the city; however, the research focused on such well-known and widely recognized institutions as the Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH), South City Lab, Chughtai Healthcare Lab, Dr. Essa Lab, and Dow Diagnostic Laboratory. Advanced lab, Hashmanis lab, Dr. Ziauddin lab, and the Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences (LUMHS) lab, Karachi. These laboratories were chosen because of their good status within the medical diagnostic circle, which would make them suitable for providing relevant and reliable data concerning the research. Study involvement was on a voluntary, anonymous, and unpaid basis. A pilot study was also carried out before the main data collection, wherein the relevance and clarity of the questionnaire were confirmed, as well as the assurance that the respondents comprehended the focus of the survey (Lien et al., 2017). The study was carried out with the permission of the management of the chosen laboratories. A total of 367 copies of the questionnaire were issued, and 343 copies were valid and remained after data cleaning. Data filtration and purification were carried out, and a validity check was made to ensure the responses were genuine. Once the sample of 343 genuine replies was obtained, the data analysis procedure was followed. Participants who took part in this survey were 63 percent male and 37 percent female. Most visitors in the laboratory are men.

Data analysis

The data analysis in this study was conducted with the help of the IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0 and SmartPLS software. These instruments were chosen in order to guarantee the strong and thorough research of the gathered information. Following the methodological instructions offered by Hair et al. (2017), the analysis was performed in two separate steps: the measurement model was analyzed to check the reliability and validity of constructs, and the structural model was analyzed to test the hypothesized relationships between variables. The research used the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which has largely been considered to be a powerful methodology in exploratory studies, particularly where the objective is to generate theoretical models in addition to studying intricate interrelationships of latent constructs. According to Sarstedt et al. (2022), PLS-SEM is specifically beneficial in situations where the development of theory is still in early stages and where the research model embraces several indicators and constructs and has predictive goals.

Survey instruments

Measurement scales were derived from credible literature and subsequently validated in pilot research utilizing Likert scales from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree.”. Measurement scales were based on reliable and valid literature and later tested in pilot studies using a Likert scale with a range of “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 =

strongly agree.". The brand authenticity scale was measured with seventeen developed items from Portal et al. (2019). The brand preference scale was measured using five items developed by Chang and Liu (2009). The brand trust scale was measured with eight items taken from Munuera-Aleman et al. (2003). The WOM scale was measured using two items obtained from Mukerjee (2018). See Appendix A.

Analyses and Interpretations

Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 1 indicates that the total number of respondents is 343. The respondents were questioned about their gender; 63% identified as male, while 37% identified as female. This indicates that most responders were male, yet the difference is not statistically significant, suggesting that most hospital visitors were male. See Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of respondents

Demographics	Frequency (n=343)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	217	63
Female	126	37
Age range		
19-30	36	10
31-40	43	13
41-50	114	33
51-60	103	30
60 above	47	14
Personal income in PKR (Monthly)		
Below 15,000	13	4
15,001 – 30,000	81	24
30,001-45,000	43	12
45,001-60,000	133	39
60,000 Above	73	21
Education		
Primary	28	8
Matriculation	51	15
Intermediate	102	30
Graduation	81	24
Master	62	18
M.Phil.	19	5

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

Measurement model

Table 2: Construct Reliability & Validity

Constructs	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Authenticity	BA1	0.738	0.960	0.964	0.609
	BA2	0.746			
	BA3	0.751			
	BA4	0.801			
	BA5	0.734			
	BA6	0.749			
	BA7	0.773			
	BA8	0.791			
	BA9	0.834			
	BA10	0.834			
	BA11	0.789			
	BA12	0.733			
	BA13	0.838			
	BA14	0.820			
	BA15	0.737			
	BA16	0.839			
	BA17	0.745			
Brand preference	BP1	0.865	0.869	0.905	0.656
	BP2	0.752			
	BP3	0.832			
	BP4	0.866			
	BP5	0.725			
Brand trust	BT1	0.835	0.917	0.932	0.632
	BT2	0.774			
	BT3	0.781			
	BT4	0.809			
	BT5	0.791			
	BT6	0.831			
	BT7	0.826			
	BT8	0.706			
Word of mouth	WOM1	0.961	0.920	0.962	0.926
	WOM2	0.963			

Testing the measure of reliability in SmartPLS focuses on composite reliability. This has something to do with Cronbach's alpha and functions as an estimation of the internal consistency of a construct. A value greater than 0.90 of constructs fulfilled the criterion of 0.70. See (Table 2.

Convergent and discriminant validity are highlighted in the validity evaluation of the SmartPLS reflective measurement model. Convergent validity is determined by the average variance extracted (AVE), which ought to be 0.5 and above. This criterion is met when the value is greater than 0.6. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE of the brand authenticity construct exceeds the highest squared correlation of the latent construct with any other latent construct in the structural model, indicating a strong alignment with this criterion. As given in Table 3.

Besides this, all item loadings for pertinent constructs have cross-loading levels that surpass those associated with other latent variables. This research endeavor also fulfills the criteria for discriminant validity. (Chin, 1998). See Table 4.

Table 3 Discriminant validity – Fornell-Larcker criterion

	BA	BP	BT	WOM
BA	0.781			
BP	0.258	0.810		
BT	0.265	0.436	0.795	
WOM	0.199	0.429	0.453	0.962

Note(s): BA = brand authenticity; BP = brand preferences; BT = brand trust; WOM = word-of-mouth

Table 3 presents the results of discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. This method assesses whether constructs are truly distinct from one another. According to this criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct should be greater than its correlation with other constructs. The diagonal values in the table (in bold) represent the square roots of the AVE for each construct: Brand Authenticity (BA = 0.781), Brand Preferences (BP = 0.810), Brand Trust (BT = 0.795), and Word-of-Mouth (WOM = 0.962). These diagonal values are higher than the off-diagonal values in the respective rows and columns, confirming that each construct has satisfactory discriminant validity. This means that the constructs are conceptually and statistically distinct from each other in the model.

Table 4 shows the item loadings and cross-loadings for each construct: Brand Authenticity (BA), Brand Preference (BP), Brand Trust (BT), and Word-of-Mouth (WOM). Each item should load highest on its associated construct and lower on other constructs, which supports discriminant validity at the indicator level. For example, all items of Brand Authenticity (BA1–BA17) show the highest loading on the BA construct (e.g., BA9 = 0.834 on BA), and lower loadings on BP, BT, and WOM. Similarly, BP items (BP1–BP5) load highest on BP (e.g., BP4 = 0.866), BT items (BT1–BT8) load highest on BT (e.g., BT1 = 0.835), and WOM items (WOM1 and WOM2) load highest on WOM (0.961 and 0.963, respectively). The cross-loadings (italicized values) are all lower than

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

the respective item's loading on its construct, further validating the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 4: Item loadings and cross-loadings

	Items	BA	BP	BT	WOM
Brand Authenticity	BA1	0.738	0.213	0.114	0.130
	BA2	0.746	0.255	0.168	0.195
	BA3	0.751	0.208	0.206	0.196
	BA4	0.801	0.211	0.247	0.160
	BA5	0.734	0.188	0.171	0.102
	BA6	0.749	0.187	0.210	0.159
	BA7	0.773	0.215	0.166	0.153
	BA8	0.791	0.253	0.185	0.184
	BA9	0.834	0.169	0.227	0.144
	BA10	0.834	0.156	0.240	0.117
	BA11	0.789	0.159	0.165	0.116
	BA12	0.733	0.233	0.170	0.180
	BA13	0.838	0.133	0.216	0.105
	BA14	0.820	0.156	0.246	0.164
	BA15	0.737	0.181	0.252	0.182
	BA16	0.839	0.300	0.236	0.176
	BA17	0.745	0.146	0.249	0.135
Brand preference	BP1	0.238	0.865	0.482	0.422
	BP2	0.207	0.752	0.267	0.282
	BP3	0.184	0.832	0.336	0.344
	BP4	0.262	0.866	0.344	0.346
	BP5	0.138	0.725	0.287	0.320
Brand trust	BT1	0.201	0.384	0.835	0.409
	BT2	0.165	0.229	0.774	0.290
	BT3	0.230	0.327	0.781	0.357
	BT4	0.240	0.398	0.809	0.338
	BT5	0.211	0.422	0.791	0.384
	BT6	0.248	0.355	0.831	0.390
	BT7	0.219	0.344	0.826	0.364
	BT8	0.132	0.230	0.706	0.325
Word of mouth	WOM1	0.212	0.409	0.400	0.961
	WOM2	0.171	0.417	0.471	0.963

Note(s): The italic values refer to the cross-loadings of the items

Multicollinearity

The variance inflation factor (VIF) is a statistical tool that evaluates multicollinearity among independent variables in a multiple regression model. It measures an increase in the variance of the regression coefficients resulting from multicollinearity. A VIF of 1 signifies the absence of multicollinearity, while a VIF over 1 denotes escalating degrees of multicollinearity. A Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) exceeding 5 or 10 is frequently seen as a sign of significant multicollinearity. (Sarstedt et al., 2017). In the present study, no value exceeds 5. Consequently, this analysis indicates no multicollinearity concerns.

Hypotheses testing

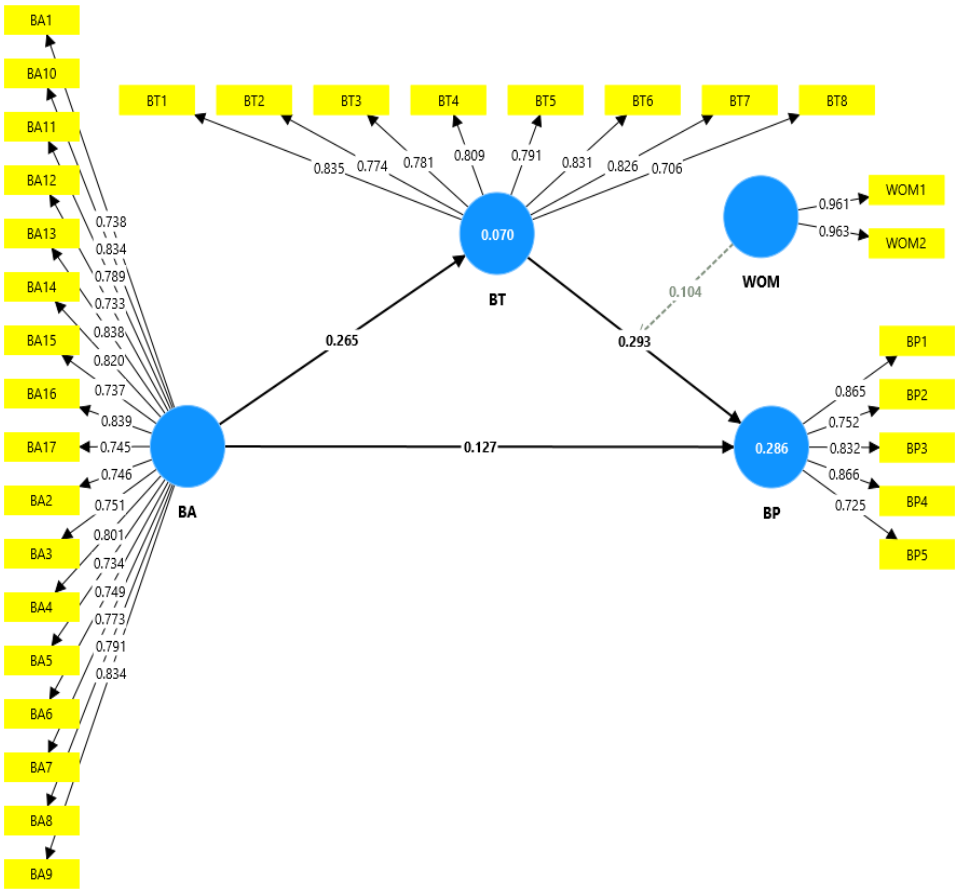
Table 5 shows the output of direct relationships among brand authenticity, brand trust, and brand preference, which gives a complete picture of the relationship of these constructs with each other. The results show that brand authenticity positively and significantly influences brand preference since it has a ($\beta = 0.127$, $t = 2.543$, $p < 0.05$). This finding allows accepting Hypothesis 1 (H1), which implies that brand authenticity is an important factor that defines the preferences of consumers. Also, the data indicate that brand authenticity significantly and strongly affects brand trust as well, with a ($\beta = 0.265$, $t = 5.357$, $p = 0.000$). This allows for the acceptance of Hypothesis 2 (H2) as true and thereby verifies that consumers' perceptions of the authenticity of a brand have a positive impact on their brand trust. In addition, the analysis indicates that brand trust, in its turn, substantially influences brand authenticity, with a ($\beta = 0.293$, $t = 4.7$, $p = 0.000$). This result supports the acceptability of Hypothesis 3 (H3), which is that the trust that customers have towards a brand is strongly linked to their perception of the brand's authenticity. In this study, Smart PLS 4 and bootstrap tests demonstrated that there are statistically significant correlations among the variables, which proves the reliability of the model. Regarding the explained variance, brand trust explains a relatively small portion of variance (0.070). In contrast, brand preference has a more significant value of 0.286, indicating the comparative fitness of the relationship between brand authenticity and brand preference. Table 5 and Figure 2 further demonstrate these results and give a clear visual distinctiveness of the interrelationships among the constructs.

Table 5: Direct effect coefficients

Path	Coefficients	T statistics	P values	Relationship
BA -> BP	0.127	2.543	0.011	Supported
BA -> BT	0.265	5.357	0.000	Supported
BT -> BP	0.293	4.7	0.000	Supported

Note(s): BA = brand authenticity; BP = brand preferences; BT = brand trust

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023



Mediation analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to estimate the mediating value of brand trust in the connection between brand authenticity and brand preference. The results (see Table 6) revealed a significant indirect effect of brand authenticity on brand preferences through brand trust (H4: $\beta = 0.078$, $t = 3.176$, $p < 0.001$); the indirect impact of brand trust on the relationship between brand authenticity and brand preference is statistically significant at a 95% confidence interval, exclusive of zero (CI.95 = 0.040, 0.133). This study indicates that brand trust mediates the impact of brand authenticity on brand preference.

Table 6: 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect

Path	Coefficients	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	LLCI	ULCI
BA -> BT -> BP	0.078	0.024	3.176	0.002	0.040	0.133

Note(s): BA = brand authenticity; BP = brand preferences; BT = brand trust

Moderation analysis

Hypothesis number five (H5) of this research paper states that brand trust is related to brand preference, with word of mouth (WOM) moderating the association. That is, the hypothesis was that the magnitude of the relationship between the degree of customer trust in a brand and customer preference for the brand would differ in the presence of the impact of WOM. This hypothesis is reflected in the empirical results of the study. To be more specific, the analysis showed that the interaction effect between brand trust and WOM was found to be statistically significant, with a (β =0.105, t =2.034, $p < 0.05$), which implies that the relationship is significant at the 5% level. This affirms Hypothesis H5, as it is indicated in Table 7 and graphically shown in Figure 3. As depicted in the interaction graph in Figure 3, the positive relation between brand trust and brand preference becomes stronger when WOM is strong. This indicates that not only does favorable WOM cement the customer relationship with a brand, but also increases their probability of choosing such a brand over its competitors; thus, the importance of WOM in consumer mindset and behavior cannot be underestimated.

Table 7: The Results of the Moderation Effect

Path	Coefficients	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	LLCI	ULCI	Moderation
WOM x BT -> BP	0.105	0.051	2.034	0.042	0.009	0.208	Yes

Note(s): BP = brand preferences; BT = brand trust; WOM = word-of-mouth

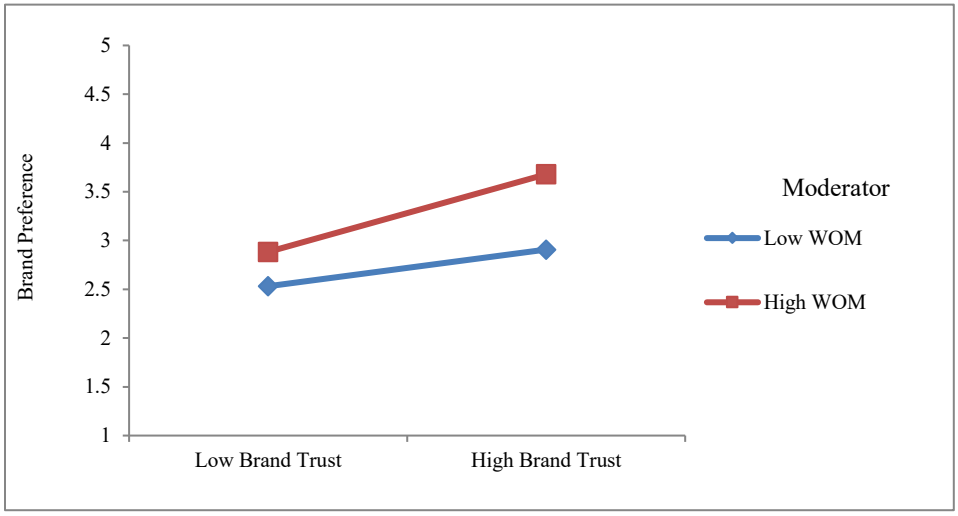


Figure 3. Brand Preference

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has discussed the complex elements that influence customer perception of medical diagnostic laboratories. Brand authenticity, trust, and word of mouth were examined, and they all affect consumer behavior in medical diagnostic services. The connection between diagnostic laboratories and customers' needs requires real and credible communication, where the authenticity of the brand plays a significant role. The present study corroborates previous research, indicating that perceived brand authenticity significantly influences brand choices, serving as an essential precursor to brand trust. (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019; Phung et al., 2019). The given research has come up with significant details on the dynamics of the brand behavior in the environment of the medical diagnostic and research labs. As can be seen in the results, brand authenticity and brand trust positively and significantly affect brand preference. Authenticity and trust are two variables that are the key motivators in determining customers' preference for particular diagnostic service providers. Brand authenticity (the perceived genuineness, transparency and integrity of a brand) is important in consumer attitudes. In contrast, brand trust (reflected in the reliability and trustworthiness in the minds of the customers) strengthens consumer commitment and loyalty to the brand. In addition to the fact that the current research findings are not the only ones showing the influence of these factors on brand preference, they also coincide well with those of previous research carried out in related or similar contexts. This relationship implies the overall relevance of medical diagnostic and research laboratories to invest in the creation of honest brand images and the establishment of trust-based relations with their clientele. Such strategic emphasis may eventually result in customer satisfaction, loyalty and eventual brand equity. (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019; Loebnitz & Grunert, 2022; Portal et al., 2019). **Based on** these results, this study provided theoretical elaboration on the variables, including brand authenticity, brand trust, and brand preference, in studies. Moreover, due to this influence, patients or customers and medical diagnostic laboratory service providers within the Pakistani health sector contemplate the ethical considerations of healthcare service providers. Consequently, the administration of each healthcare institute or medical diagnostic laboratory should prioritize efforts to promote brand authenticity and trust and the quality of service offered.

Research implications and limitations

Theoretical implication

Our research possesses multiple theoretical ramifications. We enhance the brand management literature by elucidating the mediating mechanism of brand trust. The current study's mediating mechanism elucidates the intricate linkages between brand authenticity and preference. This enables us to discern several paths and indirect influences of brand authenticity. Additionally, WOM was identified as a moderator of the association between brand trust and brand preference. Our moderated mediation findings indicated that the mediating impact intensifies with increasing levels of WOM, particularly within our Karachi, Pakistan sample, consistent with existing literature on WOM. (Khan & Fatma, 2023; Pyle et al., 2021).

Practical Implications

The outcome of this research can provide valuable input to healthcare and medical diagnostic laboratory service providers who aim to create sustainable brand preferences in very sensitive and competitive environments. Building brand authenticity is an important pillar supporting the development of trust among patients and stakeholders. That trust, in turn, contributes significantly to positive word of mouth, which is an efficient and economical promotional means in the healthcare and medical diagnostic laboratory environment where reputations are carefully protected. Healthcare brands can build trust and trigger positive brand attitudes by matching their communication and service delivery with sincere values, e.g., transparency, reliability, and genuine patient care. Healthcare organizations are, therefore, able to enhance brand preference, which translates to patient retention, loyalty, and a competitive edge. Besides this, the current study offers insights into the healthcare and medical diagnostic laboratories sector that can be utilized to develop marketing strategies to enhance consumer awareness regarding brand authenticity.

Recommendations

- Strengthen Brand Authenticity via Transparent Practices: Karachi's medical diagnostic labs should concentrate on improving their authenticity by ensuring consistent, ethical, and transparent service delivery. Customers' perceptions of authenticity can be greatly improved by obvious dedication to quality standards and accreditation (such as ISO certification).

- Invest in Brand Trust: Because brand trust mediates the relationship between preference and authenticity, laboratories need to build trust through robust confidentiality protocols, accurate test results, professional staff behavior, and reliable services. Prompt customer service, transparent billing, and routine follow-ups can further reinforce this trust.

- Use Digital Platforms to Strengthen Authenticity and Trust: Diagnostic laboratories should use official websites and social media to provide patient testimonials, success stories, and expert information and communicate their brand values. These platforms can serve as instruments for establishing and preserving brand trust and authenticity with both current and potential patients.

- Customize Patient Experience to Establish Preference: An attempt should be made to customize the diagnostic experience by providing specialized services like home sampling, prompt reporting, and patient education. In a highly commoditized industry, this not only increases brand preference but also cultivates trust.

- Provide staff training on interactions that foster trust: Frontline employees are crucial in influencing patients' opinions. Frequent training on empathy, patient care, privacy management, and moral conduct may guarantee that every encounter with a customer upholds the laboratory's reputation for reliability and brand promise.

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

- Extend Future Research Outside of Urban Areas: To confirm and build on the results, future researchers are urged to conduct this study again in rural or semi-urban settings and various healthcare specialties. The model can be further enhanced by adding moderating variables like age, income level, and kind of healthcare service.

- Include Longitudinal Data: Researchers should also consider longitudinal methodologies to gain a deeper understanding of how trust changes over time and how sustained contacts with a brand impact patient loyalty and advocacy behavior.

Limitations and future directions

The current study offers significant contributions to theory and practice, but has limitations that future research should improve. Initially, we evaluated our suggested model utilizing cross-sectional data. Longitudinal data is essential to ascertain the causal links between constructs. Secondly, due to our scale of brand authenticity, we could not assess the specific functions of its dimensions, such as credibility, continuity, integrity, and originality. (Portal et al., 2019). Consequently, subsequent research is strongly urged to adopt a detailed approach to this idea and examine the specific correlations between each component of brand authenticity and the other constructs in the suggested model. Third, we narrowed our attention to the implications of brand authenticity. However, the detailed literature review of this construct revealed a need to understand brand-related factors further as potential antecedents to brand authenticity and preferences. In future research, researchers may examine the diverse elements affecting brand authenticity and trust to engage in brand preference, specifically emphasizing the role of social and cultural influences in shaping brand preference.

References

Basso, K., & Pizzutti, C. (2016). Trust recovery following a double deviation. *Journal of Service Research, 19*(2), 209–223. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670515625455

Busser, J. A., & Shulga, L. V. (2019). Involvement in consumer-generated advertising. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 31*(4), 1763–1784. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2017-0685

Cavdar Aksoy, N., Kocak Alan, A., & Tumer Kabadayi, E. (2023). How can we create positive word of mouth (WOM) in the world of gaming? The social side of multiplayer games. *Entertainment Computing, 45*, 100541. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2022.100541

Chae, H., Kim, S., Lee, J., & Park, K. (2020). The impact of product characteristics of limited edition shoes on perceived value, brand trust, and purchase intention is focused on scarcity message frequency. *Journal of Business Research, 120*, 398–406. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.040

Chang, H. H., & Liu, Y. M. (2009). The impact of brand equity on brand preference and purchase intentions in the service industries. *The Service Industries Journal, 29*(12), 1687–1706. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642060902793557

Chavadi, C. A., Sirothiya, M., Menon, S. R., & M R V. (2023). Modelling the effects of social media–based brand communities on brand trust, brand equity and consumer response. *Vikalpa, 48*(2), 114–141. https://doi.org/10.1177/02560909231172010

Chin, W. W. (1998). The partial least squares approach to structural equation modeling. In G. A. Marcoulides (Ed.), *Modern methods for business research* (pp. 295–336). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Chinomona, R., Mahlangu, D., & Pooe, D. (2013). Brand service quality, satisfaction, trust and preference as predictors of consumer brand loyalty in the retailing industry. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 4*(14), 181–190.

Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Ireland, R. D., & Reutzel, C. R. (2011). Signaling theory: A review and assessment. *Journal of Management, 37*(1), 39–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310388419

Cornelis, E., & Peter, P. C. (2017). The real campaign: The role of authenticity in the effectiveness of advertising disclaimers in digitally enhanced images. *Journal of Business Research, 77*, 102–112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.03.018

Ebrahim, R., Ahmad, G., Zahir, I., & Fan, Y. (2016). A brand preference and repurchase intention model: The role of consumer experience. *Journal of Marketing Management, 32*(13–14), 1230–1259. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2016.1150322

Eggers, F., O'Dwyer, M., Kraus, S., Vallaster, C., & Güldenberg, S. (2013). The impact of brand authenticity on brand trust and SME growth: A CEO perspective. *Journal of World Business, 48*(3), 340–348. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2012.07.018

Fritz, K., Schoenmueller, V., & Bruhn, M. (2017). Authenticity in branding – Exploring antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity. *European Journal of Marketing, 51*(2), 324–348. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-10-2014-0633

Hair, J., Hollingsworth, C. L., Randolph, A. B., & Chong, A. Y. L. (2017). An updated and expanded assessment of PLS-SEM in information systems research. *Industrial Management & Data Systems, 117*(3), 442–458. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-04-2016-0130

Hernandez-Fernandez, A., & Lewis, M. C. (2019). Brand authenticity leads to perceived value and brand trust. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics, 28*(3), 222–238. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJMBE-10-2017-0027

Jalilvand, M. R., Nasrolahi Vosta, L., Kazemi Mahyari, H., & Khazaei Pool, J. (2017). Social responsibility influences customer trust in hotels: Mediating effects of

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

reputation and word-of-mouth. *Tourism Review, 72*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-09-2016-0037

Kang, A., & Sharma, H. (2012). Using brand personality to enhance brand trust and perceived value: An empirical study of the brand Lux. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Management Research and Innovation, 8*(3), 323–335. https://doi.org/10.1177/2319510X1200800312

Kenning, P. (2008). The influence of general trust and specific trust on buying behaviour. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 36*(6), 461–476. https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550810873938

Khan, I., & Fatma, M. (2023). CSR influence on brand image and consumer word of mouth: Mediating role of brand trust. *Sustainability, 15*(4), 3409. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/4/3409

Kikumori, M., & Ishii, R. (2023). Does B2B WOM usage matter to channel relationship performance? The roles of organizational culture and psychic distance. *Industrial Marketing Management, 114*, 286–296. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2023.08.015

Kirmani, A. (2009). The self and the brand. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 19*(3), 271–275. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2009.05.011

Lin, L. Y., & Lu, C. Y. (2010). The influence of corporate image, relationship marketing, and trust on purchase intention: The moderating effects of word-of-mouth. *Tourism Review, 65*(3), 16–34. https://doi.org/10.1108/16605371011083503

Loebnitz, N., & Grunert, K. G. (2022). Let us be realistic: The impact of perceived brand authenticity and advertising image on consumers' purchase intentions of food brands. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 46*(1), 309–323. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12679

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(3), 20–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302

Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F., & Grohmann, B. (2015). Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 25*(2), 200–218. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006

Moulard, J. G., Raggio, R. D., & Folse, J. A. G. (2016). Brand authenticity: Testing the antecedents and outcomes of brand management's passion for its products. *Psychology & Marketing, 33*(6), 421–436. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20888

Mukerjee, K. (2018). The impact of brand experience, service quality and perceived value on word of mouth of retail bank customers: Investigating the mediating effect of

loyalty. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing, 23*(1), 12–24. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41264-018-0039-8

Munuera-Aleman, J. L., Delgado-Ballester, E., & Yague-Guillen, M. J. (2003). Development and validation of a brand trust scale. *International Journal of Market Research, 45*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/147078530304500103

Napoli, J., Dickinson, S. J., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(6), 1090–1098. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.06.001

Oh, H., Prado, P. H. M., Korelo, J. C., & Frizzo, F. (2019). The effect of brand authenticity on consumer–brand relationships. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 28*(2), 231–241. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-09-2017-1567

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing, 49*(4), 41–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298504900403

Phung, M. T., Ly, P. T. M., & Nguyen, T. T. (2019). The effect of authenticity perceptions and brand equity on brand choice intention. *Journal of Business Research, 101*, 726–736. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.01.002

Portal, S., Russell, A., & Bendixen, M. (2019). The role of brand authenticity in developing brand trust. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 27*(8), 714–729. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2018.1466828

Pyle, M. A., Smith, A. N., & Chevtchouk, Y. (2021). In eWOM we trust: Using naïve theories to understand consumer trust in a complex eWOM marketspace. *Journal of Business Research, 122*, 145–158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.08.063

Safeer, A. A., He, Y., & Abrar, M. (2021). The influence of brand experience on brand authenticity and brand love: An empirical study from Asian consumers' perspective. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 33*(5), 1123–1138. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-02-2020-0123

Sarstedt, M., Hair, J. F., Pick, M., Liengaard, B. D., Radomir, L., & Ringle, C. M. (2022). Progress in partial least squares structural equation modeling use in marketing research in the last decade. *Psychology & Marketing, 39*(5), 1035–1064. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21640

Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Hair, J. F. (2017). Treating unobserved heterogeneity in PLS-SEM: A multi-method approach. In H. Latan & R. Noonan (Eds.), *Partial least squares path modeling: Basic concepts, methodological issues and applications* (pp. 197–217). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64069-3_9

ISSN (Print): 2959-1325, ISSN (Online): 2959-1333
Volume 2, Issue 2, Page 199-221, December 31, 2023

Schaefer, S. D., Terlutter, R., & Diehl, S. (2019). Is my company really doing well? Factors influencing employees' evaluation of the authenticity of their company's corporate social responsibility engagement. *Journal of Business Research, 101*, 128–143. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.030

Schallehn, M., Burmann, C., & Riley, N. (2014). Brand authenticity: Model development and empirical testing. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 23*(3), 192–199. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2013-0339

Shoenberger, H., & Kim, E. (2019). Product placement as leveraged marketing communications: The role of wishful identification, brand trust, and brand buying behaviours. *International Journal of Advertising, 38*(1), 50–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1391678

Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87*(3), 355–374. https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010

Sung, Y., & Kim, J. (2010). Effects of brand personality on brand trust and brand affect. *Psychology & Marketing, 27*(7), 639–661. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20349

Tan, Z., Sadiq, B., Bashir, T., Mahmood, H., & Rasool, Y. (2022). Investigating the impact of green marketing components on purchase intention: The mediating role of brand image and brand trust. *Sustainability, 14*(10), 5939. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/10/5939

Tsai, Y. H., Joe, S.-W., Lin, C.-P., Chiu, C.-K., & Shen, K.-T. (2015). Exploring corporate citizenship and purchase intention: Mediating effects of brand trust and corporate identification. *Business Ethics: A European Review, 24*(4), 361–377. https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12073

Yannopoulou, N., Koronis, E., & Elliott, R. (2011). Media amplification of a brand crisis and its effect on brand trust. *Journal of Marketing Management, 27*(5–6), 530–546. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2010.498141

Zboja, J. J., & Voorhees, C. M. (2006). The impact of brand trust and satisfaction on retailer repurchase intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing, 20*(6), 381–390. https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040610691275