

The Emotional Edge: How Consumer Perception Mediates the Relationship Between Emotional Branding and Purchase Intent

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Abstract

The primary object of this study is to investigate the direct effect of emotional branding on the consumer's purchase intent. Specifically, this study investigates the effect of brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality and brand personality on consumer perception that as a result, increases consumers' purchase intent. In this research (PLS-SEM), Partial least squares structural equation modelling was applied to the data collected from 175 respondents. The results of the measurement model confirm convergent and discriminant validity. According to findings, emotional branding is essential in increasing purchase intent. Findings also assert that perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, and brand personality boost purchase intent through the mediating mechanism of consumer perception. The outcomes of this study contribute to both practical and theoretical domains. Policymakers and top management of brands may use emotional branding to create positive consumer perceptions to boost consumers' purchase intent.

Keywords: Emotional branding, brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality, brand personality, consumer perception, purchase intent, Pakistan.

1 Introduction

In recent years, the business environment has become more competitive and turbulent, in which firms seek superior financial performance. Scholars assert that firms' superior financial performance is primarily dependent on the sales performance of firms (Brush et al., 2000; Heras et al., 2002; Homburg et al., 2020). Scholars assert that a firm's sales are directly associated with consumers' purchase behaviours (Porto et al., 2015). Consumer purchase decisions are driven by the decision-making process, which involves the reasons to buy a particular brand or a situation in which consumers are inclined to purchase a particular product, called purchase intent (Liu et al., 2021). Thus, firms need to understand the antecedents of consumers' purchase intent to achieve

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superior sales and financial performance (Abdul-Muhmin, [2010](#); Chen, [2013](#)). Marketing literature suggests various factors that promote the purchase intention of consumers. For instance, some scholars argue that product characteristics such as product's perceived quality, price and perceived value, guarantee, and variety are important factors contributing to purchase intention (Clemes et al., [2014](#); Mehta & Kumar, [2012](#)). Thus, it is essential to share this information with consumers to create a positive perception of products, which is called branding. Keller ([2003](#)), asserts that branding is a prime factor in differentiating consumers' perception regarding image, attitude and attachment to any specific brand from other brands. Though several studies examined the impact of branding on the consumers' purchase intention, emotions and psychological connection between brand and consumer were neglected.

In the last two decades, scholars have focused on the emotional and psychological association between brand and consumer, termed emotional branding (Ahmadi & Ataei, [2022](#); Efrat & Asseraf, [2019](#); Kim & Sullivan, [2019](#)). Literature shows emotional Branding is a process of a good relationship between a consumer and a Product or brand by provoking their emotions (Thompson et al., [2006](#)). Emotional bonding creates a long-lasting relationship between the brand and consumer. These relationships emerge as a response to the brand's message closely linked to consumers' emotions. Emotional branding is rooted in four key aspects: a) brand loyalty, b) brand association, c) perceived quality, and d) brand personality. Thus, emotional branding is expected to be essential in increasing consumers' purchase intent. Though recent literature shows the paramount importance of emotional branding (Ahmadi & Ataei, [2022](#); Efrat & Asseraf, [2019](#); Kim & Sullivan, [2019](#)), there is a dearth of research explaining how emotional branding dimensions, e.g., brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality, and brand personality in a synergetic way increase purchase intent of consumers? Scholars assert that the direct relationships did not explain the in-depth understanding of the impact of emotional branding on consumers' purchase decisions. Thus, it is essential to explain the underlying mechanisms (Ahmadi & Ataei, [2022](#); Kim & Sullivan, [2019](#); Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). Literature pointed out that consumer's beliefs regarding the brand's price, quality and variety play an essential role in the purchase decision of consumers (Bauer et al., [2012](#)). Marketing literature shows that firms may create a positive belief regarding the brand's characteristics, price, quality and variety by creating an emotional association between the consumer and the brand (Ahmadi & Ataei [2022](#); Malär et al., [2011](#)), which is called emotional branding (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Emotional branding dimension brand loyalty Nguyen, Barrett, and Miller ([2011](#)), brand association Hasan and Hasan ([2019](#)), perceived quality Asshidin, Abidin, and Borhan ([2016](#)) and brand personality (Malär et al., [2011](#)) it is expected that creates a positive perception among consumers. Emotional branding dimensions are expected to create a positive consumer perception and increase purchase intent. Thus, it is crucial to understand how emotional branding dimensions may increase purchase intent through the mediating mechanism of consumer perception.

1.1 Problem Statement

The competitiveness poses various challenges for firms to gain superior performance directly associated with sales performance. It is more important for the firms in Pakistan to focus on performance to sustain in a competitive environment as the failure rate of firms in Pakistan is very high (Hyder & Lussier [2016](#)). The sales performance of firms depends on the consumer's purchase decisions driven by their purchase intent. However, it is difficult to understand and meet the continuously changing demands of consumers. It is more critical in the developing countries like Pakistan, where the purchasing power of consumers is relatively low, but their demands from the brands are very high. Scholars assert that firms may influence consumers' purchase decisions through branding (Mirza et al., [2021](#)). Thus, it is essential to investigate what kind of branding can influence consumers' purchase intent. Recent literature shows that emotional branding has emerged as a prominent tool to create an emotional bond between consumer and brand through

“brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality and brand personality”. Evidence suggests that the emotional value and quality of international apparel significantly influence the purchase intent of university students in Pakistan (Shah et al., [2012](#)).

The apparel sector in Pakistan is considered one of the more intense competitive sectors where national and international firms compete. Thus, it is essential for the top management of fashion brands operating in Pakistan to adopt proper branding practices that enable them to sustain and outperform their competitors. Emotional branding is an essential approach that may help fashion brands achieve a competitive edge (Efrat & Asseraf [2019](#)). In the current literature, no study has investigated how brands in Pakistan can increase and retain consumers' purchase intent. Thus, this study aims to understand the role of emotional branding in increasing consumers' purchase intent in Pakistan.

1.2 Research Questions

The discussion above highlights several research questions which need to be addressed. Thus, this study aims to answer the research questions.

- a) Does emotional branding impact consumers' purchase intent on a particular brand?
- b) How does brand loyalty create a positive perception among consumers that increases the purchase intent of consumers?
- c) How does brand association create a positive perception among consumers that increases the purchase intent of consumers?
- d) How does perceived quality create a positive perception among consumers that increases the purchase intent of consumers?
- e) How does brand personality create a positive perception among consumers that increases the purchase intent of consumers?

1.3 Objective and Significance of Study

This study aims to answer the above research questions and contribute to emotional branding. The findings of this study contribute to both theoretical and practical domains. First, the findings extend knowledge of how emotional branding (Efrat & Asseraf, [2019](#); Kim & Sullivan, [2019](#); Rossiter & Bellman, [2012](#); Thompson et al., [2006](#)) enables brands to increase purchase intent, resulting in superior financial performance and growth. Second, this study contributes to the literature on brand loyalty (Nguyen et al., [2011](#); Sultan et al., [2019](#)), brand association (Susilowati and Sari 2020), brand quality (Asshidin et al., [2016](#); Susilowati & Sari, [2020](#)) and brand personality (Becheur et al., [2017](#); Malär et al., [2011](#)) by investigating their impact on the consumers' perception about a particular brand. Third, findings suggest that brand loyalty, association, perceived quality, and personality create a positive perception among consumers about the price, quality and variety of brands that increase consumers' purchase intent. As a result, brands may achieve superior sales and financial performance (Homburg et al., [2020](#)). Finally, findings provide evidence for policymakers and top management to use emotional branding to create a positive perception among consumers about the brand to boost purchase intent. This enables brands to increase their sales and financial performance to create employment opportunities and contribute to “national gross-domestic product (GDP)”. Thus, the provision of job opportunities and increase in national GDP improve quality of life.

2 Operational Definition of Terms

Emotional branding is the “process of forming a relationship between a consumer and a product or brand by provoking their emotions” (Thompson et al., [2006](#)). Emotional branding is rooted in the four key aspects, such as “a) brand loyalty, b) brand association, c) perceived quality, and d)

brand personality” (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). *Consumer perception* - Consumer perception refers to consumers' beliefs, emotional associations and feelings about a specific brand (Bauer et al., [2012](#)). Brands price, quality and variety create a positive perception among consumers about a particular brand. *Purchase intention* - Purchase Intention is the decision-making process involving the reasons to buy a particular brand or a situation in which consumers inclines to purchase a particular product (Balakrishnan et al., [2014](#)).

3 Chapter - Hypotheses Development

3.1 Emotional Branding and Purchase Intent

Prior literature shows that emotional branding significantly impacts the consumers (Kim & Sullivan, [2019](#); Rossiter & Bellman, [2012](#); Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). For instance, Singla and Gupta (2019) assert that emotional branding plays an important role in increasing brand trust. Findings suggest that emotional branding helps organizations to increase customer commitment and satisfaction (Becheur et al., [2017](#)), loyalty (Mattila 2001) that result in superior firm performance and competitive advantage (Malar et al., [2011](#); Ramanathan et al., [2017](#); Smith & Wright, [2004](#)).

Considering the prior literature, emotional branding plays a vital role in increasing consumer purchase intent for the following reasons. First, brand loyalty is one of the core components of emotional branding that has a substantial influence on consumers' purchase intent. Evidence suggests that brand loyalty plays an important role in uplifting the purchase intent of consumers (Balakrishnan et al., [2014](#); Ceyhan, [2019](#); Foroudi et al., [2018](#)). Second, findings suggest that brand – consumer association has a paramount effect on the purchase intent of consumers (Foroudi et al., [2018](#); Hasan & Hasan, [2019](#); Susilowati & Sari, [2020](#)). Third, literature highlights that consumers' perceived brand quality is a prime factor in increasing consumers' purchase intent (Asshidin et al., [2016](#); Wang et al., [2020](#)). Finally, brand personality has a substantial role in consumers' purchase intent. This is because consumers attach themselves to any particular brand and think their personality is reflected through a specific brand. In this way, the brand becomes the consumer's personality that, as a result, influences his/her purchase intent. Based on the discussions above, this study proposes hypothesis 1, that emotional branding may increase consumers' purchase intent.

H1. Emotional branding has a positive impact on purchase intent.

3.2 Brand Loyalty and Consumer Perception

The brand provides high-quality products to the consumers compared to their competitors to create a positive image and establish a strong relationship between the brand and the consumer. Such position association between brand and consumer promotes trust, resulting in brand loyalty (Vlachos et al., [2010](#)). Brand loyalty comprises consumers' preference for a specific brand over others, willingness to buy the brand irrespective of the price, and recommending the brand to others (Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). Scholars assert that brand loyalty creates a strong bond between consumer and brand, making it difficult for consumers to switch to other brands (DeWitt et al., [2008](#)). Thus, the trust and EB between the consumer and the brand create a positive perception of the brand among consumers (Ramaseshan & Tsao, [2007](#)).

Evidence suggests that brand loyalty positively affects consumer perception (Ceyhan [2019](#); Nguyen et al., [2011](#)). For instance, (2019) conducted a survey in Pakistan for two famous soft drink brands, Pepsi and Coca Cola, to understand the effect of brand loyalty on the consumer's perception. Findings suggest that brand loyalty play a substantial effect to improve consumer perception regarding soft drink brand. Similarly, Safeer ([2022](#)), in a recent study shows that brand loyalty has a significant role in creating a positive perception regarding brand in the minds of consumers by enhancing brand trust. Evidence suggests that brand loyalty creates a strong image, trustworthiness and excellent value among consumers, which has a substantial impact on the CP's

about the brand (Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)).

H2. Brand loyalty (BL) has a positive impact on consumer perception.

3.3 Brand Association and Consumer Perception

Prior literature shows that consumers' association with any specific brand positively associated with consumer perception about the brand (Park et al., [2010](#); Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Brand association is one of the most important factors that creates a psychological bond between the consumer and the brand. Fulfilling psychological needs and belongingness of consumers strengthens the association between the consumer and brand (Park et al., [2010](#)). Evidence suggests that the association strength between the consumer and brand also creates positive feelings among consumers towards the brand (Vlachos et al., [2010](#)). Such positive association between brand and consumer creates a positive perception of positive image, socially responsible, and excellent value among consumers about the brand (Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). Based on the above arguments, this study proposes that,

H3. Brand association (BA) has a positive impact on consumer perception (CP).

3.4 Perceived Quality and Consumer Perception

Consumer perception refers to the beliefs, emotional association and feelings of consumers to a specific brand (Bauer et al., [2012](#)). These feelings and emotional association emerged on the basis of the product price, availability, characteristics and quality of the product. The perceived quality depends on the consumer's belief that the product has good quality and consistency, offers excellent features compared to the competitors, and delivers quality as per the expectation of the consumers (Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). Thus, consumers' belief on the consistency of quality, product features (Chen & Chang, [2009](#)) and meeting the consumers' expectations (Veale & Quester, [2009](#)) result in positive perception among consumers about the product. Thus, based on the literature, this study hypothesizes that the perceived quality of brand leads to positive consumer perception of the brand.

Hypothesis 4. Perceived Quality has a positive impact on consumer perception.

3.5 Brand Personality and Consumer Perception

Scholars assert that the attachment between consumers and a specific brand results in the belief that their personality is reflected through this specific brand (Vlachos et al., [2010](#)) that refers to brand personality (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Brand personality emerges based on the consumers' beliefs that the brand has a strong association with a celebrity which matches the consumer's personality, a unique image compared to others, and an emotional association with the brand (Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). In this way, a particular brand becomes the personality of the consumer, which leads to consumers social preferences of one brand on others (Ridgway et al., [2014](#); Swaminathan et al., [2009](#)). A recent study by Singla and Gupta ([2019](#)), shows that brand personality has a positive association with consumer's perception about the brand's quality, social value, and image. Thus, the personality association with a particular brand plays a vital role in promoting positive perception towards the brand's features, cost and quality among consumers (Ramaseshan & Tsao [2007](#)). Based on the prior literature, this study hypothesizes that brand personality plays an important role in creating a positive perception among consumers of a particular brand.

Hypothesis 5. Brand personality has a positive impact on consumer perception.

3.6 Consumer Perception and Purchase Intent

Purchase intent is explained as the decision-making process which involves the reasons to buy a particular brand or a situation in which consumers inclined to purchase a particular product (Balakrishnan et al., [2014](#)). Scholars assert that consumer's perceptions mainly depend on their

evaluation of the brand's price, quality and variety (Bauer et al., [2012](#)), which increases purchase intent (Erdil, [2015](#); Knight & Kim, [2007](#)). Prior literature shows that consumers perception regarding brand's price has a substantial and positive influence on the purchase intent (Chen et al., [1998](#)). Liu et al. ([2021](#)) assert that consumers perception about the apparel brands is considered as a key driver of higher purchase intent. Literature also shows that the consumer's perception about the brand's quality has a positive association with purchase intent (Wells et al., [2011](#)). Based on the literature, this study proposes that;

Hypothesis 6. Consumer perception has a positive impact on purchase intent.

3.7 Mediating Role of Consumer Perception

Literature shows that purchase intention depends on a set of decision-making steps which rely on consumers' perceptions that are associated with an emotional association with a particular brand (Kim & Sullivan [2019](#); Rossiter & Bellman, [2012](#); Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). Brand provides high-quality products to the consumers as compared to their competitors to create a positive image, and establish a strong relationship between brand and consumer. Such position association between brand and consumer promotes trust, consequently resulting in brand loyalty (Vlachos et al., [2010](#)). Brand loyalty comprises consumers' preference of a specific brand over others, willingness to buy the brand irrespective of the price, and recommend brand to others (Singla & Gupta, [2019](#)). Scholars assert that the brand loyalty creates a strong bond between consumer and brand that makes it very difficult for consumers to switch to other brands (DeWitt et al., [2008](#)). Thus, the trust and emotional bond between consumer and brand create a positive perception of brand among consumers (Ramaseshan & Tsao, [2007](#)). Evidence suggests that brand loyalty has a positive association with consumer perception (Ceyhan [2019](#); Nguyen et al., [2011](#)). For instance, (2019) conducted a survey in Pakistan for two famous soft drink brands, Pepsi and Coca-Cola, to understand the effect of brand loyalty on the consumer's perception. Findings suggest that brand loyalty play a substantial effect in improving consumer perception regarding soft drink brand. Similarly, Safeer ([2022](#)) in a recent study shows that brand loyalty has a significant role in creating positive perception regarding brand in the minds of consumers by enhancing brand trust. Evidence suggests that brand loyalty creates a strong image, trustworthiness and excellent value among consumers, which has a substantial impact on the consumer's perception about the brand (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)).

Hypothesis 7a. Consumer perception plays a mediating role between brand loyalty and purchase intent.

Prior literature shows that consumers' association with any specific brand positively associated with consumer perception about the brand (Park et al., [2010](#); Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Brand association is considered as one of most important factors that create a psychological bond between the consumer and brand. The fulfillment of psychological needs and belongingness of consumers strengthen the association between the consumer and brand (Park et al., [2010](#)). Evidence suggests that the association strength between the consumer and brand also creates positive feelings among consumers towards the brand (Vlachos et al., [2010](#)). Such positive association between brand and consumer creates a positive perception of a positive image, socially responsible, and excellent value among consumers about the brand (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)).

Hypothesis 7b. Consumer perception plays a mediating role between brand association and purchase intent.

Consumer perception refers to the beliefs, emotional association and feelings of consumers to a specific brand (Bauer et al., [2012](#)). These feelings and emotional association emerged based on the product features, price, availability, and quality of the product. The perceived quality depends on the consumer's belief that the product has good quality and consistency, offers excellent features

compared to the competitors, and delivers quality as per the expectation of the consumers (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Thus, consumers' belief in the consistency of quality, product features (Chen & Chang [2009](#)) and meeting the expectations of the consumers (Veale & Qvester [2009](#)) result in positive perception among consumers about the product. Thus, based on the literature, this study hypothesizes that perceived quality of brand leads to positive consumer perception about the brand.

Hypothesis 7c. Consumer perception plays a mediating role between perceived quality and purchase intent.

Scholars assert that the attachment between consumers and a specific brand result in the belief that their personality is reflected through this specific brand (Vlachos et al., [2010](#)) that refers to brand personality (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Brand personality emerges based on the consumers' beliefs that the brand has a strong association with a celebrity which matches with the personality of the consumer, brand has a unique image as compared to others, and an emotional association with the brand (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). In this way, a particular brand becomes the personality of the consumer, which leads to consumers' social preferences of one brand on others (Ridgway & Myers [2014](#); Swaminathan et al., [2009](#)). A recent study of Singla and Gupta ([2019](#)) shows that brand personality has a positive association with consumer's perception about the quality, social value, and image of the brand. Thus, the personality association with a particular brand plays a vital role in promoting positive perception towards the features, cost and quality of the brand among consumers (Ramaseshan & Tsao [2007](#)). Based on the prior literature, this study hypothesizes that brand personality plays an important role in creating positive perception among consumers of a particular brand.

Hypothesis 7d. Consumer perception plays a mediating role between brand personality and purchase intent.

3.8 Research Framework

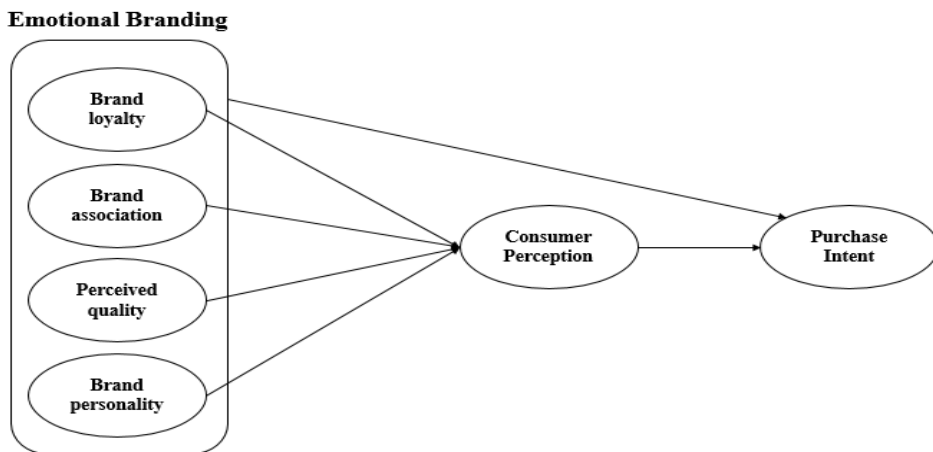


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

4 Research Methods

Research Philosophy

Research methods explain researcher's stance that how researcher observe reality, give meaning to the reality and draw conclusions. Researcher's stance is explained as an ontology and epistemology. This study followed realism ontology and objectivism epistemology as this study is

conducted to investigate the cause-and-effect relationships which are formed based on theory.

4.1 Research Paradigm

Research paradigm explains the method and pattern of conducting research, such as ontology, epistemology, and data collection methods. In line with the purpose, the positivism paradigm is used, which is a mixture of realism, objectivism, quantitative methods and that is a suitable choice of theory testing and investigating cause-and-effect relationships (Bhattacharjee, [2012](#)).

4.2 Research Strategy and Design

There are two major categories of research that are known as qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bhattacharjee, [2012](#)). In line with the objective of this study, a quantitative method of research design was used. Quantitative research enables researchers to formulate hypotheses developed on theoretical assumptions and test cause-and-effect relationships by collecting and analyzing statistical data to form conclusions (Creswell, [2013](#)).

4.3 Data. Collection Method

This study was used the survey method to collect data from respondents. Scholars' elaborate survey research involves the collection of information from people about themselves (Forza, [2002](#)). We have collected data through a questionnaire. In this study, Google forms the online platform that has been used to administer the questionnaire because the online platform is best concerning cost and time constraints. The online questionnaire is the most suitable data collection technique in light of the guidelines and restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4 Research Setting

Research can be conducted by using different research settings, such as field surveys and experimental studies. The field survey setting is used to study the phenomena, as the study's core purpose is to investigate the cause-and-effect relationships empirically. Researchers use cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs to collect data (Bhattacharjee, [2012](#)). This study follows the cross-sectional research, as data of all variables, e.g., independent and dependent variables, is collected simultaneously using a single questionnaire.

4.5 Unit of Analysis

Scholars argue that survey research is conducted mainly at three levels such as individual level, group/team, and organisation level (Bhattacharjee, [2012](#)). The unit of analysis of the current study is the individual level.

4.6 Population

The population for this study includes university students studying in Pakistan. The main reason for selecting university students is the knowledge of brands that enable them to understand and respond to questionnaire items in true spirit.

4.7 Sample and Sampling Technique

Scholars explained two primary sampling techniques: probability and non-probability (Bhattacharjee, [2012](#)). The popular sampling technique is the probability sampling technique, and scholars consider the probability sampling technique more appropriate to confirm the generalizability of findings, as it provides equal chances of occurrences of the sample. Probability sampling is further categorised as simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, systematic random, and multi-stage sampling (Bhattacharjee, [2012](#)). The confidentiality policies of universities restrict the provision of student's information, which is required for probability sampling. Thus, this study used a convenience sampling technique to collect data from the respondents.

4.8 Sample Size

Scholars explain different methods of calculating the sample size from the population (Bhattacharjee, [2012](#)). Hair et al., ([2014](#)) explained that the sample size can be calculated by

multiplying the number of questions by the minimum number of respondents, i.e., 5 or 10. Hence, this study used the guidelines of Hair et al., (2014) to calculate the sample size. In this research 175 respondents participated.

4.9 Measures

Scholars claimed that the reliability of research findings mainly depends on the reliability and validity of the data collection tools (Forza, 2002). Hence, to ensure validity and reliability, this study adopts questionnaires that are already validated by scholars and used in similar studies. Data was collected through a questionnaire from respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. The first section comprises the general guidelines and confidentiality statements and questions related to the demographic of the respondents like age and gender. Further, the questionnaire will comprise questions related to the sample characteristics, such as please complete this questionnaire if you are using any clothing brand. The second section comprises questions related to the study of variables, e.g., emotional branding, consumer perception, and purchase intent.

4.4.1 Emotional Branding

Emotional branding was measured by using a 13 items scale developed and validated by Singla and Gupta (2019). This scale comprises four sub-dimensions: 1) brand loyalty, 2) brand association, 3) perceived quality, and 4) brand personality. The respondents were asked to rate given statements on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. The emotional branding scale shows acceptable reliability as composite reliability CR= is higher than the minimum threshold (i.e., 0.70).

4.4.2 Purchase Intent

Purchase intent was measured by using a 4-items scale adopted from Nan-Hong (2007). The scale contains 4 items. The respondents were asked to rate given statements on a five-point Likert scale one represent strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. The emotional branding scale shows acceptable reliability as composite reliability CR= is higher than the minimum threshold (i.e., 0.70).

4.4.3 Consumer Perception

Consumer perception was measured by adopting a 9-items scale developed and validated by Bauer, Kotouc and Rudolph (Bauer et al., 2012). The respondents were asked to rate given statements on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represent strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. The emotional branding scale shows acceptable reliability as composite reliability CR= is higher than the minimum threshold (i.e., 0.70).

4.10 Data Analysis

A variance based partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique was applied by using Smart PLS 4.0.1 to analyze the collected data. PLS-SEM is considered as the most appropriate statistical technique to test complex models comprising multiple independent, mediators and dependent variables. Further, PLS-SEM is also considered as the most suitable statistical technique for testing higher-order constructs. Scholars recommended PLS-SEM for small data sets as compared to co-variance-based techniques like CB-SEM.

5 Results

To test the proposed model, this study used partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) by using Smart PLS 4.0.1. In recent years, PLS (variance-based approach) has been preferred over covariance-based methods (e.g., AMOS, LISREL) as PLS can simultaneously handle complex models with multiple indicators and constructs, does not impose sample distribution (normality) and rigorous sample size (Hair et al., 2019).

5.1 Measurement model

PLS algorithm was used to confirm the internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the measurement scales. To confirm the convergent validity, this study used the criteria recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981) which suggests that convergent validity may be established if 1) all item loadings exceed .50, 2) composite reliability (CR) values exceed .79, and 3) the average variance extracted (AVE) value exceeds .50. Results in Table I show that the indicators loadings, CR, and AVE values of all constructs are more significant than the minimum threshold level (Hair et al., 2019), thus confirming the convergent validity.

Table 1: Factor Loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Emotional Branding	(2 nd Order Construct)		0.85	0.50
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.67	0.85	0.58
	BL2	0.72		
	BL3	0.79		
	BL4	0.85		
Brand Association	BA1	0.57	0.81	0.59
	BA2	0.84		
	BA3	0.86		
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.40	0.70	0.55
	PQ2	0.97		
Brand Personality	BP1	0.71	0.86	0.67
	BP2	0.84		
	BP3	0.89		
Purchase Intent	PI1	0.63	0.80	0.50
	PI2	0.78		
	PI3	0.76		
	PI4	0.66		
Consumer Perception	(2 nd Order Construct)		0.89	0.50
Price Perception	PP1	0.75	0.86	0.68
	PP2	0.83		
	PP3	0.88		
Quality Perception	QP1	0.52	0.89	0.80
	QP2	0.81		
	QP3	0.89		
Variety Perception	VP1	0.76	0.87	0.63
	VP2	0.80		
	VP3	0.80		
	VP4	0.81		

The discriminant validity was evaluated using Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlation test, which provides more consistent results as compared to Fornell and Jacker's (1981) test (Henseler et al., 2015). The HTMT values of first (1st) order and second (2nd) order constructs (Table II and III) were less than the .90 threshold, confirming discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (1st Order)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Brand Association	-							
2. Brand Loyalty	.57	-						

3. Brand Personality	.56	.38	-					
4. Perceived Quality	.88	.36	.88	-				
5. Price Perception	.84	.24	.64	.87	-			
6. Purchase Intent	.79	.48	.88	.81	.80	-		
7. Quality Perception	.85	.54	.85	.88	.86	.88	-	
8. Variety Perception	.64	.23	.54	.89	.74	.51	.89	-

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (2nd Order)

Constructs	1	2	3
1. Consumer Perception	-		
2. Emotional Branding	.85	-	
3. Variety Perception	.76	.86	-

5.2 Structural model

The structural model was evaluated by using the PLS bootstrapping methods to measure the model's explanatory power, which is explained through R² (Hair et al., 2019). Scholars suggest that the R² between the value of .25, .50, and .75 shows the weak, moderate, and strong association for the endogenous (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). The values of R² (Table IV) show that emotional branding explains 56% and 44% of the variance of consumer perception and purchase intent, respectively.

5.3 Hypotheses testing

PLS bootstrapping is used to examine the hypotheses, including their direct and indirect effects. Hair et al., (2019) assert that the path coefficients in Smart PLS are similar to the standardised beta coefficients in the regression analysis. Hair et al., (2019) further recommend conducting path analysis through a Bootstrapping method with 5000 re-sampling iterations. P value is considered as criteria to confirm a significant relationship, e.g., the value p is less than .05, the relationship is considered significant at a 95 percent confidence interval (Greenland et al., 2016).

Hypothesis 1 proposed that emotional branding has a positive and significant impact on purchase intent of consumers. Results reveal that emotional branding ha a significant and positive effect on purchase intent ($\beta=.46$; $p<.001$). Thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted that emotional branding plays an important role in increasing purchase intent of consumers.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that brand loyalty has a positive impact on consumer perception. Results of direct effect show that brand loyalty has a significant and positive influence on consumer perception ($\beta=.57$; $p<.001$) which confirms hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 postulated that brand association has a positive effect on consumer perception. Results show that brand association has a positive and statistically significant impact on consumer perception ($\beta=.41$; $p<.001$), thus hypothesis 3 is supported.

Hypothesis 4 suggests that perceived quality has a positive impact on consumer perception. Results confirm that perceived quality has a positive and statistically significant effect on consumer perception ($\beta=.19$; $p<.01$), thus hypothesis 4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5 assumes that brand personality has a positive association with consumer perception. Results highlight that brand personality plays a positive and significant influence on consumer perception ($\beta=.36$; $p<.001$), thus hypothesis 5 is supported.

Hypothesis 6 proposed that consumer perception has a substantial impact on the purchase intent of consumers. Results confirm that consumer perception has a positive and significant effect on purchase intent ($\beta=.24$; $p<.01$), thus hypothesis 5 is supported.

Hypothesis 7a assumes that consumer perception mediates the relationship between brand loyalty

and purchase intent. Results of specific indirect effects show that consumer perception serves as a mediating mechanism to transfer the impact of brand loyalty on purchase intent ($\beta=.12$; $p<.01$) is positive and statistically significant, supporting hypothesis 7a.

Hypothesis 7b proposed that consumer perception mediates the association between brand association and purchase intent. Results of specific indirect effects confirm that consumer perception serves as an underlying mechanism to transfer the impact of brand association on purchase intent ($\beta=.10$; $p<.01$); thus, hypothesis 7b is accepted.

Hypothesis 7c postulated that consumer perception is an underlying mechanism between perceived quality and purchase intent. Results of specific indirect effect show that consumer perception plays a significant mediating role ($\beta=.15$; $p<.01$) between perceived quality and purchase intent, extending support to hypothesis 7c.

Hypothesis 7d proposed that consumer perception mediates the association between brand personality and purchase intent. Results of specific indirect effect confirm that consumer perception serves as an underlying mechanism to transfer the impact of brand personality on purchase intent ($\beta=.18$; $p<.01$); thus, hypothesis 7d is accepted.

Table 4: Path Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

	Path Coefficient	
	Consumer Perception	Purchase Intent
<i>Total Effects</i>		
Emotional Branding	-	.46***
Brand Loyalty	.57***	-
Brand Association	.41***	-
Perceived Quality	.19**	-
Brand Personality	.36***	-
Consumer Perception	-	.24**
<i>Indirect Effects</i>		
BL→CP→PI	-	.12**
BA→CP→PI	-	.10**
PQ→CP→PI		.15**
BP→CP→PI		.18**
R ²	.56	.44

Note. n=86. “BL: brand loyalty, BA: brand association, PQ: perceived quality, BP: brand personality, CP: consumer perception, PI: purchase intent.” Bootstrap confidence intervals were constructed using 5,000 resamples. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$.

6 Discussion

Emotional Branding and Purchase Intent

First, finding of this study show that emotional branding plays a vital role in increasing purchase intent of consumers. This is in line with the prior literature that emotional association between consumer and brand has a substantial effect on the purchase decision-making process that leads to consumers' purchase intent (Kim & Sullivan [2019](#); Rossiter & Bellman [2012](#); Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Prior literature shows that emotional branding increase consumers' loyalty, commitment and trust in the brand that results in purchase intent (Becheur et al., [2017](#)).

6.1 Brand Loyalty and Consumer Perception

Second, finding suggests that brand loyalty has a substantial influence on the positive perception of consumers. This is because brands provide high-quality products to the consumers compared to

their competitors to create a positive image, and establish a strong relationship between brand and consumer (Vlachos et al., [2010](#)). This will result in an emotional relationship between consumer and brand that leads towards brand loyalty. In response to brand loyalty, consumers prefer to buy a brand irrespective of the price and availability and recommend to others (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). This brand loyalty creates a positive perception among consumers of a specific brand. Prior literature also supports the findings of this study that brand loyalty has a positive association with consumer perception (Ceyhan [2019](#); Nguyen et al., [2011](#)).

6.2 Brand Association and Consumer Perception

Third, it is also evident from the results that brand association plays an important role in creating a positive perception among consumers of a particular brand. This is because brand association emerges if the brand fulfils the psychological/ emotional needs of the consumers. As a result brand association creates a psychological bond between the consumer and the brand (Park et al., [2010](#)). Brand association also creates a positive feeling and perception about the features and quality of a particular brand that leads to consumers' positive perception.

6.3 Perceived Quality and Consumer Perception

Fourth, findings also assert that a particular brand's perceived quality of products is considered an essential factor in creating a positive perception among consumers. This is because consumers perceive the quality of the products of a specific brand based on the product features, price, availability, and quality of the product. The perceived quality depends on the consumer's belief that the product has good quality and consistency, offers excellent features compared to the competitors, and delivers quality as per the expectation of the consumers (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Thus, consumers' belief in the consistency of quality, product features (Chen & Chang [2009](#)) and meeting the expectations of the consumers (Veale & Qvester [2009](#)) result in positive perception among consumers about the products of a particular brand.

6.4 Brand Personality and Consumer Perception

Fifth, this study postulates that brand personality is vital in creating a positive consumer perception of a brand. The main reason behind this positive association is an attachment between consumer and the brand based on the belief that their personality is reflected through this brand (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). In the presence of brand personality, consumers believe that a particular brand has a unique image compared to others and matches his/her personality (Singla & Gupta [2019](#)). Hence, the personality association with a particular brand plays a vital role in promoting a positive perception towards the brand's features, cost and quality among consumers (Ramaseshan & Tsao [2007](#)).

6.5 Consumer Perception and Purchase Intent

Sixth, findings suggest that positive perception among consumers about a particular brand is considered an essential factor in increasing consumers' purchase intent. This aligns with prior literature that consumers' perceptions of brand price, quality and variety increase purchase intent (Erdil [2015](#); Knight & Kim, [2007](#)). Literature also pointed out that consumers' perception brand's price (Chen et al., [1998](#)), quality and variety has a significant impact on purchase intent (Liu et al., [2021](#); Wells et al., [2011](#)).

6.6 Mediating Role of Perceived Perception

Finally, this study shows that 1) brand loyalty, 2) brand association, 3) perceived quality and 4) brand personality play a paramount role in boosting the purchase intent of consumers towards a specific brand through a mediating mechanism of consumer perception. Findings postulate that 1) brand loyalty, 2) brand association, 3) perceived quality, and 4) brand personality creates a positive perception among consumers about a particular brand that increases purchase intent of consumers. These findings are similar to prior literature.

6.7 Limitations and Future Directions

This study is completed with some limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study may limit the explain-ability of the relationships. Future studies may use longitudinal research design to understand the cause-and-effect relationship better. Second, non-probability sampling may restrict the generalizability of the findings because of the confidentiality of student data and the small sample size. Future studies may apply probability sampling techniques and larger sample sizes to increase the generalizability of the findings. Future studies may also investigate the influence of contextual factors on these relationships.

7 References

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