

Leveraging Brand Equity through Brand Love and Brand Respect: A Conceptual Extension through Lovemarks Theory

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Article History:	ABSTRACT
Received: 26 Oct, 2022	Purpose: In the twenty-first century, firms must continuously work on how to improve brand equity. This study applies the lovemarks theory to examine the direct relationships between brand love, brand respect, brand advocacy, and brand equity. The study also investigates the indirect relationship of brand advocacy between brand love and brand equity, and between brand respect and brand equity.
Revised: 05 Dec, 2022	Design and Methodology: Data was gathered from 350 smartphone users through a structured questionnaire adapted from the literature to test the model in the context of the smartphone industry by using the non-probability sampling method. The confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation technique (SEM) were evaluated using SPSS 20.0v and AMOS.
Accepted: 27 Dec, 2022	Findings: Results of the study revealed that meritoriously dealing with two elements of lovemarks i.e., brand love and brand respect is of paramount significance in building brand equity in the case of smartphone brands. The results indicate that brand love and brand respect directly affect brand equity while brand advocacy has a mediation impact between brand love and brand equity, between brand respect and brand equity. Implications: This study added to the domain of branding literature by theoretically and empirically evaluating the antecedents of lovemarks theory in the context of smartphone brands. The paper has managerial implications for companies to spot crucial factors that may help them to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage through building brand equity and proposes significant aspects for managers to consider while developing strategies for consumers. Keywords: Brand Love, Brand Respect, Brand Equity and Lovemarks Theory.

1. Introduction and Background

Brands create a significant contribution to our lives as they motivate consumers to focus more on ‘who I am’ rather than ‘what I have’ (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2022). Brand elements play various roles and functions between any individual and organization (Keller, 2021). Brands are not objective things, but they are inherently holding an ‘emotional connection’ and the consumer’s identity exhibited in them. These personal bonds are considered as being the main objective for

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consumer-brand relationship building. Historically, Roberts (2005) developed a concept of the deep emotional connection of the consumer toward a brand. The author also contended that the emotional connection concept is relevant to the concept of brand love and is termed as an emotion-laden bond between a consumer and an object (Kashif, Korkmaz Devrani, Rehman, & Samad, 2021; Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2022). Positive feelings of consumers toward the brand, influence them to perceive it as a high-quality brand which enhances the perception of brand respect at the same time (Heitmann et al., 2020; Ishaq, 2021; Qorbani et al., 2021).

In today's competitive market, marketers must gain consumers' loyalty by developing strong emotional connections between consumers and brands; therefore, marketers need to develop emotive brand and brand communities to foster a personal bond with the consumers (Alić & Mujkic, 2022). Marketing practitioners and brand managers are focusing on creating an effective marketing practice to strengthen the relationship between consumers and brands which automatically leads to brand value (Connors et al., 2021). It is established through previous research that consumer-related promotions from different firms positively impact brand equity in those market segments that are dominated by loyal customers. At the same time, marketers are considering the emotional attachment of consumer with a brand that offers them not only financial benefits but also assist in sustaining the long-term relationship (Gilal et al., 2022). Positive outcomes of brand love have been anticipated by many researchers in the past, for instance, positive Word of Mouth (WOM), brand loyalty, more willingness to pay a premium price, purchase intention, and accept product failure (Palusuk, Koles, & Hasan, 2019). Consumers' positive perception, positive product evaluation, communication, and behaviours lead to satisfaction which positively contributes to developing brand respect. Hence, it is observed from previous studies that brand love drives brand equity and brand advocacy as well. In marketing orientation, advocacy is an advanced tool that enables firms to capture more returns. It is an important concept for marketers to engage customers continuously through WOM and recommendations from trusted sources which highly influences customers' purchasing decisions (Martillo Jeremías & Polo Peña, 2021)

Moreover, this increasing trend becomes a part of everyday conversation today which signifies that community participation reinforces one's commitment to a certain brand. So, the current study analyses the consumer's perception of their preferred brands in terms of love and respect which increases the level of brand advocacy and eventually affects brand equity (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). Furthermore, the literature suggests that there is considerable work in the area of consumer-brand relationships which allows us in understanding how consumers build long-term relations with the brands (Aaker, 2012; Algharabat, Rana, Alalwan, Baabdullah, & Gupta, 2020). This study investigates that brand advocacy mediates the relationship between brand love, brand respect, and brand equity. Furthermore, this study is grounded on the lovemarks theory which emphasized the role of an emotional attachment of the consumer, and is conducted

specifically on smartphone users, as it is assumed that consumers' behaviour has changed over time, and they are emotionally attached to their brand which is essential for brand equity measures.

Previously, scholars have explored the effect of brand love on brand equity based on interpersonal love theory. However, there is inadequate research regarding the proposed relationships from the perspective of the lovemarks theory. Most of the research has been done focusing on the antecedents of the lovemarks in which scholars established measures of these antecedents, but few studies focused on other relationships with brand love and brand respect. Literature shows that brand love and brand respect are the two building blocks of the Lovemark theory that generate value from the consumer when they are emotionally attached to the brand. There are some consequences in consumers' decision-making for the smartphone because of their high involvement and high intensity of the brand switching due to their 'something new' and 'something different' behaviour. To make a strong brand that develops long-term relations with customer, firms are now finding different ways to create emotional connectivity among consumers which motivate them to speak favourably with others about their brand to overcome switching behaviour. Therefore, there is a requirement to understand how brand love and brand respect inspire the consumer to maintain their loyalty and ultimately create brand advocacy, which resultantly could affect brand equity as mandated by Hafez (2021), Shaalan et al. (2022) and Lang et al. (2022) in their studies. Based on this understanding, this study evaluated the impact of brand love and brand respect on brand equity under the mediation effect of brand advocacy by using the lovemarks theory in the context of telecommunication industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand Love

Brand love has received growing consideration (Nguyen & Feng, 2021) given its potential to augment customers engagement, brand advocacy, commitment, and loyalty (Palusuk et al., 2019), and has become an important concept in both the academic and business worlds (Bıçakcıoğlu et al., 2018; Ceyhan & Yozgat, 2021; Hafez, 2021). The concept of brand love has proven to be a useful focal variable for understanding a variety of brand-related outcomes (Ahuvia et al., 2020; Chen & Qasim, 2021) but at the same time, despite its clear advantages, research on brand love is scarce, and as a concept insufficiently developed and literature holds inconsistent views about the role of brand love (Zhang et al., 2020).

Torres et al. (2021) demonstrated that consumer emotional attachment to a specific brand name is termed, brand love. The notion of brand love is a combination of feelings, attitudes, and emotions that extort consumer behaviour after consumption. Brand love is found to be conceptualized on different affective-laden perceptions, such as passion-driven behaviour, positive emotional connections, self-brand integration, a long-term relationship, positive attitude,

and separation anxiety (Lv & Wu, 2021) hence, brand love is a prediction of far strong consumer-brand relationship (Arghashi et al., 2021) rather than the positive approach and satisfaction (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2022). Love for particular brands is the integral function of a consumer's self-expressiveness as buying behaviour for a certain brand because it describes the consumer's his or her self to others (Arghashi et al., 2021). In addition, brand love is the description of consumer and brand which evolve around three facets 'intimate, passionate, and committed' accomplished only when there is deep affection, and separation anxiety both considered relative to the perspective of loved objects. Brand love has three dimensions i.e. passion, affection, and connection same as an attachment, and is a prerequisite of brand love that developed over time, and involves affective memories to relate to the entity within the self. Based on the literature of social psychology there are different theories mainly focused on the notion of love among individuals, most recommended and highlighted theory pragmatic to the consumer-brand relationship is the Triangular Theory of Love by Sternberg (1986).

The idea of brand love is deep and enduring (Lv & Wu, 2021), which consumer endures when destitute of a brand for a long period (Hemonnet-Goujot & Valette-Florence, 2022; Torres et al., 2021). Most of the studies explored various antecedents of brand love in particular status as self-expressive brands, quality of a brand, hedonic brand, and brand identification and consumer behavioural related consequences (Khan et al., 2021). The research stream shows the significant influence of brand love on brand commitment in the consumer-brand relationship. Brand affect and brand continuance are two dimensions of brand commitment influenced by brand love; as love is a significant component to sustain and maintain the connection with the brand for both facets functional and affective (Kashif et al., 2021). It influences not only attitudinal loyalty but also significantly influences behavioural loyalty. In literature, brand love is observed as a more arousing, possess, and more emotional construct than brand liking and has less emotional intensity than interpersonal love (Le, 2021).

2.2 Brand Respect

Brand respect is determined by the evaluation of brand performance by the consumers. Brand trust enhances via overcoming the risk to enhance the performance expectations which encourages brand respect from the cognitive view of the brand image (Jahanvi & Sharma, 2021). Gottman (1996) stated that respect is a concept of being kind, empathic, sympathetic, and attentive thus respect and intimacy seem to be duplicate elements of empathy. According to different psychologists and sociologists, brand respect is also an emotional dimension that is a central part of building strong relationships between the consumer and the brand (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006). Two constituents of brand respect are familiarity and favourability; if the brand is more liked and known then respect is built. Previous studies contented that brand respect resembles brand affect, persuaded by brand loyalty. Trust, reputation, and performance of the brand are the

main influencers of brand respect. Brand respect has its basis in the lovemarks theory Roberts (2004). The author described brand respect as positive awareness of the consumer and it is an amalgamation of three components: brand trust, brand performance, and brand reputation. Understanding consumers and gratifying their expectations leads to trust (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018, p. 7); brand respect is consumers' willingness and consistent belief in a brand that truly cares about consumers' benefits.

Various studies have stated respect as a factor influencing relationship success, but there is diminutive research on this construct. Researchers have accepted that brand respect is crucial in building a strong relationship between the brand and the consumers. Positive feelings of consumers toward the brand influence the consumer to perceive it as a high-quality brand which enhances the perception of brand respect (Tan et al., 2019). Moreover, authors develop new brand image measures by using antecedents of brand respect to support the lovemark theory. Another stream of research indicated that brand respect correlated with three loyalty expressions like consumers' repurchase intentions, positive WOM, and willingness to pay a premium price (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018).

2.3 Brand Advocacy

Highly contented customers are brand advocates, who significantly raise the brand performance and raise the propensity of other potential customers toward a specific brand (Choi, Kroff, and Kim 2021). It is established that when buyers adore the brand they are passionate to talk about the good things with others (Wilk, Soutar, and Harrigan 2019). Consumers who are engaged with the brand actively gather information from different sources regarding brand features, usage and benefits to assess the brand which helps in building brand knowledge and emotional connection to the brand that leads to a high level of satisfaction and loyalty which provoke consumers to create advocacy of their brand (Bilro, Loureiro, and Guerreiro 2019). Emotional bonds assist consumers to connect with the brands and participate through WOM to flow information regarding their experiences with products and services among consumers.

2.4 Brand Equity

According to the consumer perspective, brand equity is 'the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of a brand' (Keller, 1993, p. 2). Brand equity is 'intangible assets' and the co-creation of value and firm performance (Anabila, 2020; Jeon, 2017). Brand equity is defined as 'a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbols that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers' (D. A. Aaker, 1991, p. 15). Every firm desire is to be loved by consumers and the idea of brand love is deep and enduring (Lv & Wu, 2021), which consumer

endures when destitute of a brand for a long period (Hemonnet-Goujot & Valette-Florence, 2022; Torres et al., 2021).

Most of the studies explored various antecedents of brand love in particular status as self-expressive brands, quality of a brand, hedonic brand, and brand identification and consumer behavioural related consequences (Khan et al., 2021). Brand equity is created from consumer satisfaction via brand love (Nawaz, Jiang, Alam, & Nawaz, 2020). Overall brand equity is the outcome of brand love (Verma, 2021) in the context of consumer-based brand equity (Meirani, 2019). Product offerings must be related to a customer's needs where it could develop brand equity (Narteh, 2018). The favourable perceived brand experience enhances brand image and brand value (Koay, Ong, Khoo, & Yeoh, 2020). High brand equity represents the positive brand association and perceived brand quality (Keller, 1993). High perceived quality increases consumer retention and positive WOM (Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob, 2011; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Lovemarks Theory at Work

This study is grounded within the framework of Lovemarks theory. Previously, researchers have applied this theory to study different aspects of brand loyalty, willingness to pay a premium charge, and engagement in positive WOM (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018; Mattia et al., 2018; Song et al., 2019). Lovemarks theory is centred on the emotional bond between the consumers and the brands. Three main factors contributing to love are 'sensuality, mystery and intimacy' same as in respect 'performance, reputation and trust' both emotional and cognitive aspects are used to connect the consumers with a specific brand.

3.2 Integration of Variables and Hypotheses Development

3.2.1 Brand Love and Brand Equity

According to Sternberg (1986), love can be assumed based on three components i.e. intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. The theory proposed in the context of interpersonal love in which author discussed that intimacy indicates the emotional attachment 'feelings of connectedness, closeness, and bond' where passion is the level of 'motivation the driver which causes the romance, allurements, sexual consummation, and related experiences' and decision/commitment is the cognitive component of love which assist in maintain long term relationship. Sternberg argued not all three components need to exist for the presence of love; components will vary within different types of love. Past research indicated that brand love can fortify existing bonds between consumers and brands. The concept of brand love seems to be the most passionate and emotive evaluation of the brand because consumers are more emotional rather than rational while evaluating the brand (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Batra et al., 2012), it reveals that it's a natural source of cognitive valuation termed brand equity. In this case when a consumer

loves a brand then he/she tends to prefer that brand over the competition and it positively affects the brand equity. Hence, we hypothesized that

H₁: Brand love has a positive impact on brand equity.

3.2.2 Brand Love and Brand Advocacy

Highly contented customers are brand advocates, who significantly raise the brand performance and raise the propensity of other potential customers toward a specific brand (Marsden et al., 2005). It is established that when buyers adore the brand they are passionate to talk about the good things with others. The Lovemark viewpoint recommends that there is an important principle to attract the consumer is the use of stories 'attract memories' because consumer remembers stories more when they are more emotional, interesting, and touchy so, they can recall the brands better. Thus, consumers share and promote these stories to different consumers which indicate their attention toward the brand and that they truly get involved and engaged and actively play a part in the development of brand image in other consumers' mind. These inspirational consumers easily associate their lives with the brand and share their emotions and what they feel about the brand to engage others; they act as 'brand advocates, community members, and brand owners'. Based on the logic provided by lovemarks theory, we proposed that

H₂: Brand love has a positive impact on brand advocacy.

3.2.3 Brand Advocacy and Brand Equity

Previous researches find a relation between brand advocacy and brand equity (Du et al., 2007; Lowenstein, 2011; Pai et al., 2015). This study focuses on a different aspect how the advocacy of one consumer about a brand influences the equity of the brand. Brand advocates are those consumers who choose a single brand rather than other brands in the market, providing the highest share to the favourite brand by telling others how they have a positive relationship and how much value and advantage they gain from their selected brand. It is claimed that the emotional perception of the customers regarding the brand is connected to the products they want to buy; hence it is encouraging the willingness of the buyer to become an advocate of the products from the same brand and it cultivating the brand equity by maintaining a long-term relationship with this brand. Based on these presumptions of Robert (2004) that advocacy positively contributes in the importance (value) of the brand. We hypothesize that

H₃: Brand advocacy has a positive impact on brand equity.

3.2.4 Brand Respect and Brand Equity

According to different psychologists and sociologists, brand respect is also an emotional dimension that is a central part of building strong relationships between the consumer and the

brand. Two constituents of brand respect are familiarity and favourability; if the brand is more liked and known then respect is built. Previous studies contented that brand respect resembles brand affect, persuaded by brand loyalty. Brand respect has its basis in the lovemarks theory (Roberts, 2004). Robert described brand respect as positive awareness of the consumer and it is an amalgamation of three components: brand trust, brand performance, and brand reputation. Understanding consumers and gratifying their expectations leads to trust. The functional aspect of a brand (brand respect) is a root cause of lovemark experiences that derive the consumer-brand relationship development process, a stronger impact on loyalty. Brand respect is more powerful as its not only attracts high loyalty customers but also provides the best talent and offerings which lead to high level of perceived value. This perspective proves that:

H₅: Brand respect has a positive impact on brand equity.

3.2.5 Brand Respect and Brand Advocacy

Brand respect is the cognitive aspect of providing the best quality service to the customers that no one else provides. Positive attitude influence consumers to be more likely committed to a brand or more likely to interact with the brand. To develop long-term relationship between consumer and brand firm develop strong brands which deliver the promises they made to decrease brand switching which will differentiate them in the market (Gumparthi & Patra, 2020). Despite of this when consumer experience quality seeking products it develops trust among the consumer which provoke them to attach their lives to the brands and generate positive WOM about the brand. Moreover, lovemarks theory elucidates that brand respect is an amalgamation of (performance, trust, and reputation) to develop a positive perception of the brand in the consumer's mind while there is a strong image in the mind of the consumer then he will be willing to approach that brand and experience it. Hence, these positive experiences lead the consumer to speak favourably, resist negative information and have the capability to stick with that brand to maintain their loyalty. Thus, we propose that:

H₆: There is a positive effect of brand respect on brand advocacy.

3.2.5 Brand Advocacy as a Mediator

Brand advocacy is the depth and breadth of a brand's 'strong, favourable, and unique image which in turn facilitates consumer response positively. Advocates tell how they feel and think about a specific brand. These responses are based on the consumer experiences from the brand which highlighted the role of attachment, trust, and satisfaction which ultimately leads to brand equity. Lovemark relationship is anticipated encouraging a consumer to remain loyal to their brand, willing to pay premium charges and spread positive WOM to their adored brand to create the value of the brand in the consumers' minds. Referring to Robert (2004) lovemarks are usually the events and experiences that persons love passionately and have strong feelings about their

signature brand. These set of experiences lived by the consumer will last forever in the consumer’s mind which develops feelings termed as advocacy for brand and eventually influence brand equity.

H4: Brand advocacy mediates the relationship between brand love and brand equity.

H7: Brand advocacy mediates the relationship between brand love and brand equity.

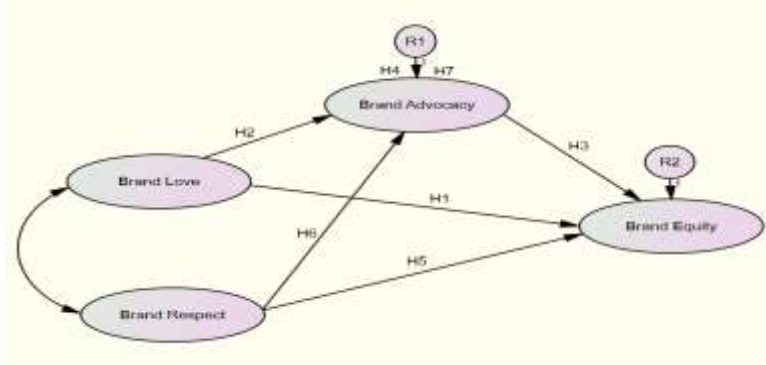


Figure 1 Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sampling

This study embraces an explanatory research design and cross-sectional data was collected. This study focuses on a quantitative approach. Respondents of the study are individual consumers who are users of different smartphone brands i.e, Samsung, Oppo, Apple, Huawei, HTC, and Nokia). The present study used a convenience sampling technique. A self-administrated structured questionnaire was developed for data collection, in which 500 questionnaires were distributed from which 418 responses were received. After screening them, 350 respondents were used for analysis. The data was collected from students at several Pakistani universities. The study mainly targeted young consumers as they have a high market share in the Pakistani market and hold great importance in the international market (Nikhashemi, Jebarajakirthy, & Nusair, 2019).

3.2 Measures

In this study, measurements were drawn from the existing literature. 5 items of brand love and 8 items of brand respect are adopted from Cho et al. (2015). 7 items of brand advocacy have been adopted from Wallace et al. (2014). 4 items of brand equity have been adopted from YOO and Donthu (2001). The questionnaire has two sections “A” and “B”. First section includes the items of focal variable and second section is related to the demographic’s questions related to age, income and gender information of the respondents. Five point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly Agree) is used for data collection.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Statistical Analysis

SPSS version 22.0 and the Analysis of Moments Structure (AMOS) version 22.0 were used for the analysis of data. SEM as a technique was employed to examine the theoretical model. SEM permits us to develop relationships between numerous measures and predictor variables. SEM analysis the fitted model of this research study into two stages one is called validation of measurement model and the other is called structural model. Through CFA called Confirmatory Factor Analysis and in the second stage the hypothesis is tested (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001a).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N=350)

Constructs	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Tolerance	VIF
BL	9.00	25.00	20.46	3.75	-0.63	0.18	0.42	2.38
BR	18.00	40.00	31.85	5.51	-0.29	-0.65	0.35	2.84
BA	14.00	35.00	27.50	5.05	-0.49	-0.46	0.43	2.31
BE	5.00	20.00	14.77	3.56	-0.32	-0.48	Dependent Variable	

Notes: BL=Brand Love; BR= Brand Respect; BA= Brand Advocacy; BE= Brand Equity

4.2 Descriptive of Demographics

The first question on demographics asks for the respondent's gender. In analysis, most of the respondents were female, with 52.6% and the rest were males i.e. 47.4%. This gender proportion portrays female dominance in smartphone users. The next question is regarding the respondent's age group. There were four different ranges for respondents' age (18-24) (25-34) (35-44) (45 and above). Most of the respondents fell into the first range i.e., 77.4%, in the second range there were 20.6% respondents; the remaining 1.4% were from the third range and the fourth range 0.6%.

4.3 Measure Validation

Table 2: The Goodness of Fit of Individual CFA (N=350)

Constructs	Items	Unidimensionality of Scale				Convergent Validity			α
		χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	

BL	5	0.40	0.99	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.99	[0.75-0.82]	0.89
BR	8	1.10	0.99	0.99	0.01	0.01	0.99	[0.70-0.77]	0.89
BA	7	2.15	0.98	0.98	0.02	0.05	0.97	[0.50-0.75]	0.86
BE	4	2.28	0.99	0.99	0.15	0.06	0.99	[0.50-0.85]	0.80

Source: Author's own Findings

Table 2 shows the goodness of fit indices for individual CFA. All indices are well inside the range as mandated in SEM literature. Cronbach's Alfa values are ≥ 0.7 , which confirms that the items in the scale are reliable and error-free. The results of individual CFA indicate that the data is fit for further analysis.

4.2.1 Nested Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA's nested Analysis were analysed and the values are under the threshold level of the parameters while few error terms were correlated to get more accurate fit indices like $e7 \leftrightarrow e8$ and $e9 \leftrightarrow e10$ were correlated, also $e9 \leftrightarrow e12$ and $e16 \leftrightarrow e24$, $e23 \leftrightarrow e24$ were correlated to get the perfect fit indices.

Table 3: The Goodness of Fit for Four Factors Nested CFA (N=350)

Model	χ^2/df	Unidimensionality of Scale					Convergent Validity		Reliability
		p	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	α
CFA-1	2.65	0.01	0.89	0.87	0.91	0.05	0.89	[0.59-0.80]	0.93
CFA-2	2.01	0.01	0.90	0.94	0.93	0.04	0.90	[0.59-0.80]	0.93

Source: Author's own Findings

We used two methods to confirm convergent validity. Table 3 shows the NFI value of 0.90 and secondly Factor Loadings (FL) ≥ 0.5 , which supports the convergent validity. For discriminant validity was used Fornell and Larcker (1981) method. The square roots of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of constructs were larger in comparison to the individual correlation coefficient values. Table 4 shows the square root values of AVE's in the diagonal.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (Covariance among Latent Variables) (N=350)

Constructs	BL	BR	BA	BE
BL	0.79†			
BR	0.74**	0.75†		
BA	0.66**	0.73**	0.76†	
BE	0.39**	0.47**	0.52**	0.68†

Notes: ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); \sqrt{AVE} Values in the Diagonal

4.3 Structural Model

We estimated the structural model in subsequent 2 stages; firstly we checked the goodness of fit indices of the model, secondly, the model was revised in terms of correlating error terms of indicators to get more appropriate indices and finally we checked the direction and significance of the proposed relationships. We developed recursively developed model to overcome the issue of identification following the guidelines mandated by Hair et al. (2006).

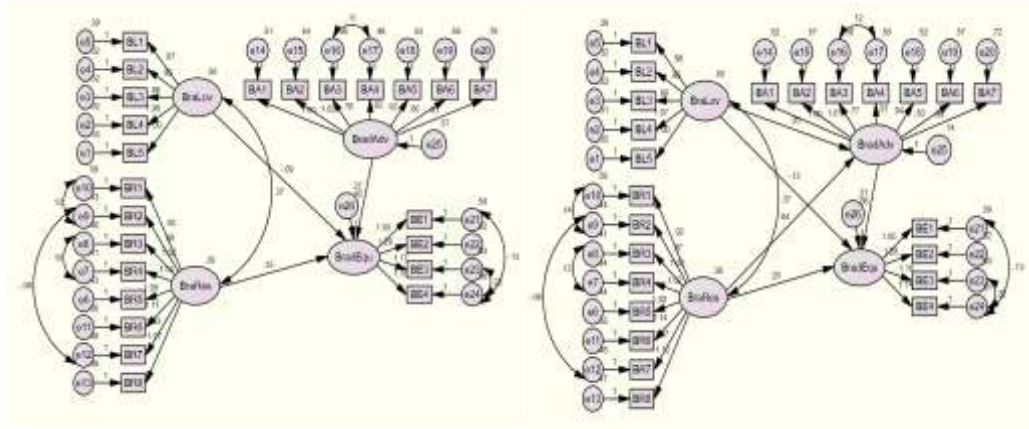


Figure 2 Research Model

Table 5: Results of Structural Equation Analysis for Two Competing Models

The relationships between variables	Direct effect model		Indirect effect model		
	β	S.E	β	S.E	
H1: BL→ BE	-0.09	0.12	Insignificant		
H3: BA→ BE	0.49***	0.06	Significant		
H5: BR→ BE	0.35***	0.14	Significant		
H2: BL→ BA			0.19**	0.10	Significant
H6: BR→ BA			0.70***	0.13	Significant
Model Comparison Indices between Direct and Indirect Effect Models for Mediation Analysis					
H4: BL→ BA → BE					
H7: BR→ BA → BE					
χ^2		778.93		482.50	
df		242		240	

χ^2 / df ratio	3.21	2.01
GFI	0.86	0.90
TLI	0.82	0.91
CFI	0.86	0.94
RSMEA	0.08	0.05
R ² (BA)	0.00	0.75
R ² (BE)	0.32	0.43

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$; * $p < 0.05$

Table 5 indicate that BL has no effect on BE ($H_1: \beta = -0.09, p > 0.001$) hence H_1 is rejected. As H_2 stated that there is a positive effect of BL on BA, the result given in Table 5 indicates ($H_2: \beta = 0.19, p < 0.001$), hence H_2 is accepted. H_3 stated that there is a positive effect of BA on BE. Based on results given in Table 5 again demonstrates ($H_3: \beta = 0.49, p < 0.001$), hence H_3 is also accepted. H_5 stated that there is a positive effect of BL on BE ($H_5: \beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$), consequently H_5 is also accepted. H_6 stated that there is a positive effect of BR on BA ($H_6: \beta = 0.70, p < 0.001$) hence H_6 is also accepted. Moreover, H_4 and H_7 explain the mediation of BA between the relationship of BL and BE and BR and BE.

Based on the comparison of the direct and indirect effect models, we can conclude that H_4 and H_7 regarding the mediation of BA among BL and BE and BR and BE are accepted. To evaluate the level of significance of BA (mediator) on the relationship among BL and BE, the online Sobel test statistic was 7.67 with SE = 0.12 at $p = 0$ indicating a significant effect of BA between BL and BE, in addition to this, the mediating effect of BA among BR and BE the online Sobel test statistic was 7.02 with SE 0.13 at $p = 0$ was also found significant.

5. Discussion

Results show that brand love does not affect brand equity, from the previous literature it is possible to infer that brand love is not that much the strongest element in the general construction of brand equity (Gómez & Pérez, 2018). Brand love has an influencing effect to fortify the existing bonds among consumers and brands (Machado et al., 2019); however, it also increases brand loyalty which is one of the outcomes and components of brand equity it means brand love influences the value of the brand indirectly behaving as a mediator in the previous studies. Hence, this study shows that brand love was not a suitable independent variable for the direct relation of brand equity. Moreover, current research explained that brand respect is a positive perception of the consumer that positively enhances the value of the brand. If a brand provides good performance, a positive impression and builds trust among consumers, they tend to be more committed to relationships and more likely to interact with that brand with a positive attitude.

Results match with previously held studies where brand love is found to be linked with brand advocacy (Burnasheva et al., 2019; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Sarkar, 2011).

If consumer develops strong emotion and admires a significant brand it encourages them to say good words to others. It was stated that emotional connection makes the consumer too obsessive that they give a chance to a brand if there is negative information spread about it (Wallace et al., 2014). The present study confirmed the relation between brand advocacy and brand equity. It identified that when consumers became an advocate of their brand they are probably enhancing the equity of the brand. The findings of the result match with the previous study where it is found that there is a link between advocacy and equity (Pai et al., 2015). The study revealed the mechanism through which brand equity is influenced by brand love. Advocacy was proposed as the mediator in the study between the relationship of brand love and brand equity hence, it is established with literature and current research on brand love with the mediate mechanism enhances brand equity. In the case of brand respect, current research identified that it has a significant relation with brand advocacy which is aligned with previous studies. Literature suggested that when a consumer has a positive perception in their mind consumer become too passionate to share their positive experiences with others on the behalf of the companies which show a sense of ownership in their behaviours (Pawle & Cooper, 2006).

This study supported the predicting mediating role between respect and equity as it shows significant results. In the literature, there was little research conducted that brand advocacy mediates the relationship between brand respect and brand equity (Roberts, 2005). Hence, it is indicated that while consumers have strong perceptions and positive feelings about the brand it is difficult to manipulate the image easily. The investigation of the study makes a significant contribution to managerial implications. First of all, research provides empirical evidence for brand love that there is no direct relation with brand equity. In the mediation mechanism, there is a positive relationship between brand love and brand equity. Brand advocacy is proven as a suitable mediator for the relationship of brand love and brand equity and brand respect and brand equity. It was stated that consumer behaviour is influenced by trust, promotional activities and the perception that they have in their mind. Hence, we need to flourish more brand respect to enhance marketing activities (advocacy) for the ultimate progress in brand equity.

In the dynamic nature of the environment, perception lies in the mind of the consumers' which matters a lot in the competitive market. Functional and emotional experiences subsidize brand equity just to inspire the consumers who spread good words about the brand. It is suggested from our study work and previous studies that a brand must first develop trust among the consumers via a performance that helps in developing positive perception. Hence, managers should focus on the advancement of strategies to keep their place in the competitive market. Marketers should give several multisensory experiences to the customers to position the brand on the next level in the aspect of lovemark that cannot be irreplaceable. The proposed model of the study helps the brand managers to determine the styles of love and respect, that consumers feel

for his/her brand and use this information for the appropriate implementation of marketing strategies that enhance consumer-brand relationships.

Subsequently, companies could further increase the progression and sustainability of lovemark experiences through respect and love within the promotion of positive experiences to further increase brand value. Results suggest that managers should take an account the length of the consumers' experiences to determine how they recognize the brand in comparison to others to develop strong associations and build a positive image in the consumer mind. A manager should need to continue these two variables in developing their customer relationship strategies, it will predict the consumers defending attitude on the behalf of the organization would preserve the brand.

6. Limitations and Future Directions

This study contributes in a theoretical and practical manner but there are also some limitations in the study. Research is cross-sectional which means we had a small sample size due to one-time data collection because of time and resource limitations. Hence, it is logical to expect that some situational factors led to biases in the survey. Secondly, the target population of this study is only individual smartphone users so; it does not apply to other industries due to the limited scope of the industry. Moreover, respondents' behaviour while collecting the data might inflate the results of the study due to a lack of awareness regarding the research and the absence of a culture that appreciates and encourage research which causes some problems.

Firstly, this study has mediating effects on the variable so; the proposed model can be expanded further by adding a moderators like brand personality, consumer-brand engagement, and brand loyalty to analyse the impact of the individual behaviour from the perspective of lovemark. Further, it is suggested to evaluate the research model by using interrelationship theories like attachment theory. The current study focuses only on the smartphone industry; other industries should also consider likewise FMCG industry, sports industry, and hedonic products to understand the results among different product categories. The present research is based on cross-sectional data collection so to avoid the common method biases data can be collected on the longitudinal method. Future research should explore other consequences of brand respect due to limited study in the aspect of lovemark as it is a building block in developing an emotional bond.

7. Conclusion

Today the most considered aim is to attain a place in the minds and hearts of the consumers, marketers now understand the strategies to enhance the value of the brand in the consumers' minds by encouraging them, creating a positive perception, and emotional connections and spreading the favourable word of mouth that will finally provide results in the form of prolonged loyalty. Consumers are becoming more conscious about their brands which show how much they are

connected to their brands and feel a sense of ownership about their favourite brand. The present study had several aims as the study gives evidence that brand love and brand respect play a key role while both are linked with favourable promotion activities in predicting brand equity among smartphone users. Smartphone users are more likely to show a positive image in their minds and loyalty while they show trust and commitment to a significant brand. Furthermore, research gives evidence for brand equity through mediating mechanism of brand advocacy. The mediating effects are analysed which were missed in previous literature. The study indicates different ways through which love and respect both emotive and cognitive aspects positively enhance the value of the brand in the consumer's mind with positive advocacy. Likewise finding show that advocacy is a significant mediator which shows that different experiences with a brand are a perceptual gateway throughout lovemark formation like the memory that strengthens the consumer-brand relations. From the study it is concluded that when there is love there is respect without respect, we cannot engage a consumer and cannot emotionally target them so, it is proved that brand love positively influences the presence of advocacy on brand equity.

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