THE IMPACT OF BRAND TRUST AND BRAND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY ON BRAND LOYALTY IN THE CONTEXT OF EMERGING MARKET LIKE PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Purpose:
The concept of brand loyalty is of critical importance to the business as it plays a dominant role in providing competitive advantages for the companies and brands in devising their marketing strategies. With the advent of modern digital platforms of consumer interaction with the brands, the focus of marketing is shifting towards relationships from the traditional approach of marketing mix. So, the emphasis is made by researchers on the determinants and approaches of building relationships between consumer and brand that eventually foster brand loyalty.

Methodology:
Sample size for this study was 160 with a respondent response rate of 94.3 %. Survey method through questionnaire was adopted to collect data for this study. Constructs were adopted from relevant and established literature. It had 5 items related to demographic based on nominal scale. Additionally, it had 42 items related to the prime objectives of the study. It was based on 7 points grading scale. After preliminary analysis including normality, validity and reliability, an analysis of multiple regression was carried out to test the desired hypothesis.

Findings:
The study found that brand trust was the strongest predictor of consumers' brand loyalty towards a particular preferred brand, followed by brand relationship quality, perceived quality and brand identification. The study has taken a narrow perspective with limited number of variables. Further studies would incorporate higher number of variables. Additionally, other studies could incorporate the mediating and moderating roles of independent variables and demographic & other factors.

Conclusion:
The firm should focus to enhance the trust related to brand among customers to stabilize the consumers' brand loyalty.

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1. Introduction

The concept of branding is a popular subject in the modern marketing context and a significant and notable amount of research work is completed not only by researchers and academics but by marketers as well may it be research on launch of new product or creating awareness about existing products or brands(Karam & Saydam, 2015). The term brand can also be defined as a combination set of all tangible and accompanying intangible characteristics and attributes that are crafted to design and create identity and awareness of a particular product, person, place, service, or organization etc. and to build their reputation among customers and consumers. It helps the consumers to immediately recognize the familiar versus likeable product(Chovanová et al., 2015)

The primary objective of the branding strategy is to craftand prepare brands that are uniquely different from those of the competitors, so that the number of their substitutes is reduced in the market(Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). The holistic and comprehensive viewpoint of brands in order to craft a long term branding strategy encapsulates a wide range and set of activities, exercises that range from product innovation to integrated marketing communications(Chovanová et al, 2015.)

Over the period of time, the dynamics of branding has emerged as a top priority of the management as these are the brands that constitutes the most cherished, valuable and strategically important resources that the companies have.(Keller & Lehmann, 2006.).The Marketing Mix (4 Ps) has traditionally been used to develop brands that provides superior value to the customers than the competitors to create competitive advantages (Wood, L 2000).Evidence is also provided in past researches that the brands and labels that have a superior brand image and awareness are more valued and likely to be purchased repeatedly by consumers(Hoyer & Brown, 1990).

In accordance with these, a model covering and describing the fundamental elements that lay down the foundation of basis of consumer loyalty towards a particular clothing brand would be of supreme interest for researchers, academicians, industry practitioners and marketers. That will help them better understand the behavior to develop loyalty towards a particular brand, of the consumer in the emerging markets context like Pakistan.

Thus, in order to provide a concrete theoretical groundwork and framework for the basis of identifying influential factors that drives this consumer behavior, this paper integrates an important wave of past researches and literature under the structure of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Consumer Brand Relationships (CBR)(Fournier, Breazeale&Fetscherin 2012; Tsai 2011) and consumer attitude development towards a particular brand within a traditional structure of cognitive, affective and conative (CAC) stages. (Evanschitzky 2006; Oliver 1999).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Consumer Brand Relationships (CBR)

In the light of available literature and compositions, the concept and idea of relationships among the brands and consumershave emerged as an established and proven research area that is growing (Heinrich&Fetscherin 2014). In past studies, there are a number of factorswhich the researchers have explained, that drives the research interest in this particular area and domain. Namely, the dialogue and discourse of consumer focused marketing using traditional marketing mix has shifted its focus emphasis to relationships model of brand engagement (Patterson & O'Malley 2006; Sheth&Parvatiyar 1995a)

Drawing from the available literature on marketing, consumer behavior and branding related to business to consumer (B2C) model of marketing, it is observed that the brand image and brand personality, which received much importance once by the brand owners failed to unearth the real motivating elements. Studies suggest that every consumer may have a distinctive image of the brand but that does not mean that he will buy that brand (Blackston 1992b). later, Fournier identified three relatively more important principles of brand consumer relationships that includes CBR being purposive, multiplicity, and process phenomena (Fournier 2009).

2.2. Theoretical Grounding

The available literature and the theory of reasoned action, and consumer brand relationship in light of cognitive, affective and conative model, a conceptual framework was developed. The conceptual framework is depicted in Figure # 1. This is followed by a debate and discussion on Brand Loyaltyand its constituents' elements, as depicted in the below conceptual framework.

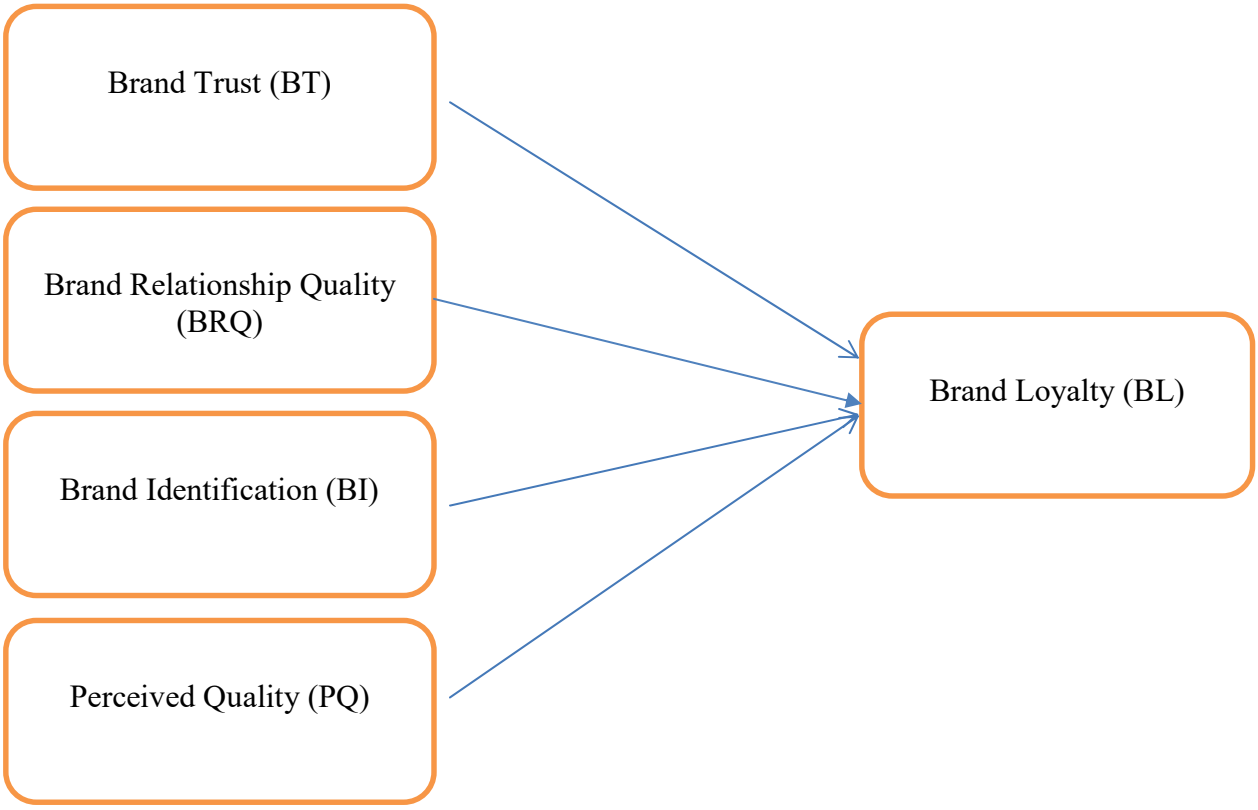

Figure.1. Conceptual Framework Representing Study Variables
Source: Author's own elaboration

The term Brand loyalty refers to consumer specific brand related responses over time, as a result of psychological procedures and processes, and associations (Kyner &Jacoby 1973). Brand loyalty is more than consumer's preference of a specific brand over other but a deep psychological attachment which is formed and set up over a long period of time (Knox & Walker 2001). Other researchers described the phenomena of brand commitment that it's the attitude of consumers' dedication and intention to the consumer brand relationship and its longevity (Thorbjørnsen et al. 2002).

The consumer may manifest the concept of brand loyalty in many ways. For example, by expressing preferred choice, creating positive word of mouth, brand recommendation to others, showing a deep loyalty towards the company that own a particular brand of preference and by the display of positive post purchase and repurchase behavior (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman 1996). Brand loyalty helps consumers simplify the buying process while at the same time it provides companies with the perks and advantages including but not limited to the overall cost of marketing and capitalizing on building brand equity. (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011.)

Not only loyal brand customers are ready and willing to pay extra bucks for their preferred brand but also the cost of exciting and attracting a new customer by the company is about six folds higher than retaining an already existing customer (Mellens & Steenkamp, 1996.).

Despite the researchers' profound interest in brand loyalty, it is noted that common measurement and clearly defined definition of the concept has been scarce and lacking (Knox & Walker, 2001).In the recent times there has also been a move towards a building relationship focused approach to foster brand loyalty (Tsai, 2011.). And this complimentary and relational perspective depicts and reflects a recent shift of emphasis and focus from a transactional approach to relationship building approach in brand management and marketing. (Leahy, 2011)

2.3. Brand Loyalty and Brand Trust

The conception of Brand trust refers and mention to the conviction and confidence that the consumers have in the brand's dependability, reliability and intentions that it exhibits during the lifetime of the consumer brand journey (Delgado-Ballester 2005). And for a successful and long-term consumer brand relationship, trust is always considered to be a defining characteristic that has been widely investigated (Morgan & Hunt 1994). In 1998, with the emergence of a concept whereby brands were suggested by researchers as living entities, Fournier added a new domain named brand partner quality in her brand relationship quality model which are more or less similar to the construct that is known as trust.(Brasel, Aaker, J2004; Fournier 1998),and thus, the brand trust has been considered and well-argued to be conceptually homogenous or closely associated to brand partner quality. In this particular context, past research has put back brand partner quality with brand trust as a major dimension of brand relationship quality (Nguyen & Nguyen 2011).
When brands are considered living relational partners, it is widely accepted as evident from pat researches that the magnitude of brand trust lay the foundation of brand commitment and loyalty as it makes the exchange relationship among consumers and brand(Chaudhuri& Holbrook, 2001), highly valued consumers only show commitment to something they value (Moorman, Deshpande&Zaltman 1992). Despite the availability of multiple choices in brands, if the consumers commit to a single brand and expect it to fulfill brand promise, the situation is vulnerable to over promise under delivery or lack of their intention to help the customers in the situations that are problematic. The risk and uncertainty about the expectations being met, play a vital role in consumer decision to purchase a particular brand(Delgado-Ballester 2005) and it is evident from past studies that the consumers are likely to be more devoted and committed to a brand that has built trust, as this helps them in reducing the perceived risks that are involved, especially in the situations of augmented vulnerability (Chaudhuri,& Holbrook, 2002).

H_1: Brand trust comes across a positive effect on customer brand loyalty

2.4. Brand Loyalty (BL) and Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ)

With the advent of modern marketing and branding conception, brand loyalty was considered and viewed synergistically with brand commitment for a considerable period of time. Later, behavioral intentions were also included along-with commitment in defining brand loyalty (Beatty &Kahle 1988). In the light of past researches, we can say that brand loyalty is a subjective brand specific behavioral response that develop over time (Jacoby, & Kyner, 1973). Further research carried out by Zeithaml, Parasuraman& Berry, (1996),suggests that loyalty and commitment responses are not only limited to a consumer commitment to repurchase a particular brand but also to create a positive buzz about the brand and also recommending others to purchase that brand. While mentioning both, the brand loyalty and brand relationship quality as the primary and core strength of brands and consumers' relationship, Fournier (1998) originally regarded brand loyalty, similar as commitment, and is part of as well as stemming and budding from brand relationship quality.(Fournier, 1998).

When brands are considered living entities, psychologically the consumer brand relationship progressively reach to a level where it requires sustained efforts to maintain that relationship as is needed in human relationships. This requires commitment to be loyal to a brand despite the alternate offering that are present in the market offered by competitors (Kleine, Kleine III & Allen 1995).So, to conceptually delineate and map out brand loyalty from other constructs of brand relationship, in cognitive as well as affective stages of relationships among consumer and brands, in this particular research, the consumers' brand loyalty is referred to behavioral intention or brand specific repurchase commitment (Oliver, 1999).

H_2: Consumer brand relationship quality shows a positive effect on consumer brand loyalty

2.5. Brand Loyalty and Brand Identification

Brand identification is referred to the customers perceived oneness with, or the sense of belongingness to a particular brand (Papista & Dimitriadis; 2012).It refers to the phenomena where the consumer sees a congruence linking one's self and brand identity and expects the brand to fulfil and satisfy the consumers' need of self-expression and to boost their self-esteem (Sirgy, 1982; Kressmann et al.; 2006).Researchers has defined the conception of brand identification that it is the strong formation of relationship over the period of time that helps the consumers not just to express but also to enhance their self-concept (Tuškej, Golob &Podnar; 2013).

Secondly, the past studies also suggest that the more the consumers' associates and identify with a particular brand, chances are they are more likely going to create positive and productive word of mouth, referrals to others and show a behavior of frequent repurchase and brand loyalty (Kim at al. 2001). The conception of brand's identification is primarily based on the premise of the social identity theory that is widely accepted in other domains other than branding and marketing as well and defines the premise of oneness with the group of others and emphasize that the identification with a particular brand fulfils the need for customers' social identity and also self-definition(Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010)

H_3: Brand identification shows a positive effect over brand loyalty

2.6. Brand Loyalty and Perceived Quality

Perceived Quality refers to the extent to which a particular brand fulfills the expectations and beliefs of its customers and consumers. It is actually not the real quality of the products but it refers to the personal thought and idea of a consumer with respect to a

certain brand or for that matter a product(Shahid et al, 2017.). Consumers' perceived quality of a particular brand is appraised as an input of customer satisfaction process. The quality of the product (or service) takes place before the consumers' thoughts, perception, and satisfaction process. The firms are expected to produce the brand, either a product or a service at a certain desired quality.(Yaman, 2018).

Past researches suggest that perceived brand or product quality is the judgment of a consumer that he made to the overall superiority shown by a particular brand in excellence over the alternatives available by the competitors (Donthu & Lee 2000; Netemeyer et al. 2004). This concept is derived from the work of Zeithaml's, (1988.) definition of perceived quality of a brand or a product. Nevertheless, perceptions of quality made by the consumers are not only dependent on the product attributes but also from the other elements of the marketing mix including price, promotion, and place (Zeithaml, 1988.).

Literature on branding suggests that when a consumer perceive the quality of a brand or a particular product to be high, it is highly likely to repurchase and become a loyal customer (Keller 1993; Aaker, DA 1996). Jacoby in 1971 proclaim that higher the perceived quality of a particular brand, the more differentiated value it will add to that brand than from the competitor brand and consumers will consider the brand with high perceived quality to be greater value for money and pay-off by associating and using that particular brand and also it will result in repurchase behavior and positive word of mouth to other consumers (Barrett, Nguyen, & Miller 2011; Netemeyer et al. 2004).

The consumers make perception about quality before they actually thought about perceived value the brand will offer and think about the benefits the brand will offer them (Zeithaml,1988; Keller, 1993). Past research has suggested that the majority of variation in cosumers' perceived value is determined and explained by perceived quality and also it is a better predictor of intention to repurchase. (Aaker, 1996).

H_4: Perceived quality affects the brand loyalty, positively

3. Methodology

3.1. Population and Sampling

The prime focus of the study was in education sector specifically students. Further, non-probability technique of sampling was used and approximately 160 students and academic staff were requested to completely fill the questionnaire. The response rate of the respondents turned out to be 94.3 %.

3.2. Respondents Profile

64 % of all the respondents were less than 30 years in age and 36% were above the age of 30 years.(Means= 2.43 and SD .753). Around 34.4%respondents were married while the other remaining 65.6 % were single. Also, on the basis of gender, 42.4 % of the respondents were males and 57.6 % were females.

3.3. Scales & Measures

The instrument i.e., the questionnaire that we used in this study has nominal scale based 7 questions for demographic profiling. The other questions that were pertinent to the study objectives were developed on 7 point Likert scale. Where 1 (one) represents the respondent being in strong disagreement and 7 (seven) being in strong agreement with the statement. A brief summary of scales and the measures is listed below in Table # 1.

Table 1: Summary of Constructs

Construct (Items)	Source	Items	Reliability
Brand Loyalty (BL) (9)	(Kahle& Beatty, 1988; Donthu, Yoo, & Lee 2000; Zeithaml, Berry &Parasuraman 1996)	9	.77 to .84
Brand Trust(BT) (8)	(Delgado-Ballester&Munuera-Alemán 2005)	8	.71 to .79
Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) (13)	(Fournier 2009)	13	.70 to .76
Brand Identification (BI) (5)	(Mael&Ashforth 1992)	5	.74 to .85
Perceived Quality (PQ) (7)	(Dodds, Monroe &Grewal 1991; Yoo, Donthu& Lee 2000)	7	.71 to .81

Source: Author's own elaboration

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

In order to investigate and examine the internal consistency and normality, the descriptive analysis was administered whose results are presented below in Table no. 2.

Table 2.Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Alpha	Mean.	Std.Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Loyalty	.604	5.008	.7172	-.497	.372
Brand Trust	.795	5.668	.7023	-1.206	1.769
Brand Relationship Quality	.912	5.316	.9693	-1.649	3.200
Brand Identification	.91	4.511	1.539	-.602	-.496
Perceived Quality	.641	5.255	.6986	-1.980	9.387

Source: Author's own elaboration

The results presented above in Table no. 2 depicts that the Cronbach alpha (reliability) of Brand Relationship Quality was found to be the highest (α= 0.912, Mean = 5.31, Std.Dev. = 0.96) and Brand Loyalty was the minimum among all(i.e. α =0.604, Mean. = 5.008, Std. Dev. = 0.717). The reliability, of all the used constructs, was found to be greater than 0.6 which is the indication of according to(Bryman & Bell, 2015), the acceptable values of internal consistency.

The variable Perceived Quality has the lowest value for Skewness (SK=-1.98) while the variable Brand Loyalty has the highest value for Skewness (SK =-.497). However, Kurtosis value is found to be highest for Perceived Quality i.e, (KR=9.387) and is found to be lowest for the variable Brand Identification i.e. (KR=-.496). Since all the values for the variables used, were found to lie in between the range of +3.5 and hence it may be supposed that all the constructs used, have normality that is univariate. (Bell & Bryman, 2015).

4.2. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was investigated to examine if the used constructs are different from each other. The observed results are presented below in Table # 3.

Table .3. Convergent Validity

	Mean	Std. Dev [1]	VE [2].	Reliability
Brand Loyalty	5.0088	.71716	.414	.604
Brand Trust	5.6689	.70226	.689	.795
Brand Relationship Quality	5.3164	.96929	.735	.912
Brand Identification	4.5113	1.53911	.525	.91
Perceived Quality	5.2554	.69861	.632	.641

1. Standard deviation, 2. Variance explained

Source: Author's own elaboration

The results in above Table shows that the variance explained and reliability for all the available/ used constructs are found to be more than 0.5 and 0.6 respectively. That depicts that the constructs adopted are all different from each other.

4.3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant Validity when examined suggests that whether all the adopted variables are distinct and unique from each other or not. (Bell & Bryman, 2015).And the results that were observed are present below in the Table no. 4

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5
BL[1]	(.604)				
BT[2]	.445	(.795)			
BRQ[3]	.432	.664	(.912)		
BI[4]	.306	.460	.576	(.91)	
PQ[5]	.405	.587	.582	.467	(.641)

1. Brand Loyalty (BL), 2. Brand Trust (BT), 3. Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ), 4. Brand Identification (BI) 5. Perceived Quality (PQ)

Source: Author's own elaboration

The results observed in Table no. 4 are depictive of the fact that square root of the variance explained is higher than the square root of each value of correlation. These findings suggest that the adopted constructs that are being used in this study are distinct and also unique from each other (Bell & Bryman, 2015).

4.4. Brand Trust (BT) and the Brand Loyalty (BL)

The first hypothesis that the Brand Trust shows a positive effect on Brand Loyalty was investigated via (simple) regression. And the results that were observed are presented below in Table no. 5.

Table 5: Regression Results

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		
Model	B	Std. Error.	Beta	t	Sig.
(Construct)	2.435	.428		5.690	.000
Brand Trust	.454	.075	.445	6.057	.000

Dependent variable Brand Loyalty, $R^2 = 0.192$, F-stat = 36.69, $P < 0.001$.

The results observed after performing regression analysis and presented in Table # 5 suggests that the brand trust (BL) has a positive effect on brand loyalty (BL) and the results are also found to be statistically significant.

4.5. Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) and the Brand Loyalty

The second hypothesis that the brand relationship quality (BRQ) shows a positive effect

on the brand loyalty (BL) was investigated via simple regression. The observed results are presented below in Table no. 6.

Table # 6: Regression Results

	Unstandardized Coefficient			Standardized Coefficient	
Model	**B**	**Std.Error.**	**Beta**	**t.**	**Sig.**
(Construct)	3.310	.295		11.205	.000
Brand Relationship Quality	.320	.055	.432	5.846	.000

Dependent variable Brand Loyalty, R^2 = 0.187, F-stat = 34.177, P< 0.001.

Source: Author's own elaboration

The results observed suggest that brand relationship quality shows a positive and statistically significant effect on brand loyalty.

4.6. Brand Identification (BI) and Brand Loyalty (BL)

The third hypothesis that the Brand Identification has a positive effect on the Brand loyalty, was also examined through simple regression. The observed results are presented below in Table no. 7.

Table 7. Regression Results

	Unstandardized Coefficient			Standardized Coefficient	
Model	**B**	**Std. Error.**	**Beta**	**t.**	**Sig.**
(Construct)	4.366	.173		25.211	.000
Brand Identification	.142	.036	.306	3.920	.000

Dependent variable Brand Loyalty, R^2 = 0.094, F-stat = 15.37, P< 0.001.

Source: Author's own elaboration

The results above in Table # 7 suggest that the brand identification has a positive and statistically significant effect on consumer brand loyalty.

4.7. Perceived Quality (PQ) and Brand Loyalty (BL)

The fourth hypothesis that the perceived quality has a positive effect on the brand loyalty was also examined through (simple) regression. The observed results are presented below in Table no. 8.

Table 8. Regression Results

	Unstandardized Coefficient			Standardized Coefficient	
Model	**B**	**Std.Error.**	**Beta**	**t.**	**Sig.**
(Construct)	2.826	.408		6.931	.000
Perceived Quality	.415	.077	.405	5.400	.000

Dependent variable Brand Loyalty, R^2 = 0.164, F-stat = 29.163, P< 0.001.

Source: Author's own elaboration

The results shown above in Table # 8 suggest that the perceived quality has a statistically significant and positive result on brand loyalty.

5. Discussion

- The results observed from regression and presented in Table no. 5 suggest that brand trust has a statistically significant and positive effect on customers' brand loyalty. Several past studies have also validated and emphasized on the positive effect of brand trust on brand loyalty, which means that with the rise of brand trust, the loyalty for a particular brand also increases (Delgado-Ballester 2005).
- The results suggests that brand relationship quality (BRQ) has statistically significant and a positive effect on customers' brand loyalty. Past Studies have also suggested that in the context of a particular brand, brand relationship quality plays a leading role in predicting the intention of the consumer to be loyal to a particular brand(Jacoby & Kyner 1973).
- Past studies also suggest that brand relationship quality and trusting beliefs about a particular brand, are not just only the strong predictors of brand loyalty but also complement each other (Oliver 1999). Brand relationship quality also play a significant role in customers' decision to use and recommend a particular brand to the peers as well (Kleine, Kleine III & Allen 1995).
- The (regression) results that are presented in Table # 7 suggest that brand identification is positively and statistically significantly related to customers' brand loyalty to a particular brand. Also, this finding is in consistency with the findings of previous studies that customers may at times are consciously willing to develop congruence among self and brand identity (Kressmann et al. 2006). It is also evident in past studies that formation of relationship over the period of time that helps the consumers not just to express but also to enhance their self-concept (Tuškej, Golob &Podnar 2013).
- In Table # 8, the relationship among customers' brand loyalty and perceived quality has been examined and the results suggest that there exists a positive and statistically significant relationship among the two variables. Past studies also suggests that even if the customer believe that associating with a particular brand is useful but the quality is not worth buying the brand, they will abandon the transaction or simply refuse to use that particular brand at all (Shahid et al., 2017).
- Past studies also suggest that the more is perceived quality of a particular brand in the mind of the consumer, more will be the loyalty shown by the customer in using and recommending that particular brand to the peers by creating a positive word of mouth (Donthu & Lee 2000).

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

In this particular study, we tried to examine the relationship among customers' brand loyalty and various attributes that has an influence on building that loyalty toward a particular and later preferred brand. The attributes include brand relationship quality, brand trust, perceived quality, and brand identification. The results indicate that brand relationship quality, brand trust, perceived quality, and brand identification have a statistically significant and positive effect on customer brand loyalty.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

In this particular study, we adopted a quantitative approach, whereas, mixed

methodologies may be adopted to investigate the issue in future studies. Also, future studies and researchers may try and examine the influence of demographic variables on consumers' brand loyalty towards their preferred brand. Since the study was primarily restricted to education sector in Karachi, future researchers and researches may consider exploring other sectors and industries operating in, and cities, of Pakistan. Furthermore, role of culture in adopting new brand management practices like recent sift towards building brand relationships, may also be examined.

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