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**EXPERIENCE AS A MODERATOR OF INVOLVEMENT AND
SATISFACTION ON BRAND
LOYALTY IN A BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS SETTING**

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Experience as a moderator of involvement and satisfaction on brand loyalty in a business-to-business setting 02-314R

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Received 28 November 2003; received in revised form 18 May 2004; accepted 26 August, 2004

Abstract

This paper examines the relative influence of two key antecedents of brand loyalty—satisfaction and involvement—and the moderating effect of experience, using a sample of business buyers. The central argument of this paper is that the strength of the effect of these variables on attitudinal brand loyalty will vary with the level of customer experience with purchasing the service. Building on previous research which examined low-risk, customer product settings [Kim, J., Lim, J.S., & Bhargava M. (1998). The role of affect in attitude formation: A classical conditioning approach. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 26 (2): pp143-152; Shiv, B., & Fedorikhin, A. (1999). Heart and mind in conflict: The interplay of affect and cognition in consumer decision making. *Journal of Consumer Research* 26: 278], this study shows that for a high-risk setting, involvement with the service category will be more dominant in its influence on brand loyalty than satisfaction with the preferred brand. Furthermore, it was found that experience moderated the influence of involvement and satisfaction on attitudinal brand loyalty for a high-risk business-to-business service. This study provides new insights into the theory and practice of buyer behaviour and business-to-business brands.

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Keywords: Brand loyalty; Attitudinal brand loyalty; involvement; Satisfaction; Experience

I. Introduction

Most business research is primarily in the goods arena particularly manufactured goods, with little focus on services (Dawes, Dowling, & Patterson, 1993; Patterson, Johnson & Spreng; 1997). Consequently, much of the research to date has a manufacturing basis resulting in business-to-business services being poorly defined and under researched (Javalgi & Moberg, 1997; Johnston & Lewin, 1997; Patterson et al., 1997). There is also a dearth of research into business brands even though organizations such as Accenture, Yellow Pages, IBM, and Hewlett Packard generate billions of dollars from their business-to-business brands (Lyons, 1998). Given that the activity on branding in the business-to-business sector and services in general is increasing (Rosenbroijer, 2001), it is timely to investigate customer responses to business brands.

Given the lack of empirical studies in business services loyalty (Patterson et al., 1997; Quelch & Ash, 1981), this research follows the guidelines offered by industrial marketing researchers, Wind and Webster (1972) who suggest modifying generalized models of consumer research for the business-to-business sector. There is evidence that brand equity- a consumer branding concept-is applicable to the business sector (Bendixen, Bukasa, & Abratt, 2004; Gordon, Calantone, & di Benedetto, 1993; Hutton, 1997) and brand awareness preference in business markets (Yoon & Kijewski, 1995). Thus, it is likely that the brand loyalty concept is also relevant to the business sector. This research is one of the first to examine brand loyalty concept in the business sector.

Considerable attention has been given to brand loyalty, attitudinal brand loyalty in particular (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), and increasingly the interplay of affect and cognition in attitudinal brand loyalty is being investigated (Bagozzi,

Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Härtel, McColl-Kennedy, & McDonald, 1998; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999). Despite the recognition that there is a need to build brands in a business-to-business context (Bendixon et al., 2004; Gordon et al., 1993; Hutton, 1997), no study has investigated the antecedents of attitudinal brand loyalty in a business services setting.

It is posited that satisfaction with the preferred brand (Giese & Cote, 2000) and involvement with the service category are important determinants of attitudinal brand loyalty. This paper addresses an important gap in the business literature by examining the relative influence of these two antecedents of brand loyalty. The central argument of this paper is that the strength of the effect of these variables on attitudinal brand loyalty will vary according to the level of customer experience with purchasing the service. Building on previous research which examined low-risk, customer product settings (Kim, Lim, & Bhargavi, 1998; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999), this study shows that for high-risk settings, such as is generally the case for this business services, involvement with the service category will be more dominant in its influence on brand loyalty than satisfaction with the preferred brand.

This paper commences with a discussion the conceptual framework including literature on brand loyalty, satisfaction, involvement, and the role of previous experience leading to hypotheses development. The results of the study of 267 businesses are presented. This paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and their managerial implications as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Conceptual framework

A key perspective in this research is that business-to-business and consumer markets are not entirely separate. They share some characteristics. This supports Fern and Brown's (1984) claim that the differences between the consumer and business sectors may not be as distinct as to warrant completely separate research. Hunt's (1991) criteria for classification also support this view. Indeed, Sheth (1979) views the two sectors as the end points on a continuum, rather than mutually exclusive categories. This perspective encourages consumer constructs to be tested in business-to-business settings. Thus, given the practical evidence of the success of brand-building efforts in the business sector, an investigation of brand loyalty is appropriate.

2.1. Attitudinal brand loyalty

It is generally accepted that brand loyalty is a two dimensional construct (Day, 1969), comprising attitudinal brand loyalty and behavioural brand loyalty (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996). Attitudinal brand loyalty consists of brand attitudes, attitudes toward intention to repurchase and brand commitment (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002; Mellens, Dekimpe, & Steenkamp, 1996). In contrast, behavioural brand loyalty is defined as the customer's tendency to repurchase a brand revealed through behaviour which can be measured and which impacts directly on brand sales (Hammond, East, & Ehrneberg, 1996)

The debate regarding the definition of brand loyalty and its subsequent measurement has occupied academic thought for over 30 years (Baldinger & Rubinson, 1997; Ehrenberg, 1997; Jacoby, 1975, Tarpey 1974). However, it is becoming apparent that the definitions of brand loyalty and related customer behaviour varies across market and product types (Rundle-Thiele & Bennett, 2001). Although some business-to-business goods and services are inexpensive and relatively low risk such as purchasing minor stationery items including pens, pencils, staples, paper (goods) and copier repair; delivery of office supplies and outsourcing custodial, security or cafeteria services (services), many business-to-business goods and services are high transaction value and driven by an accountable purchasing process. In these instances, it is likely that careful consideration is given to the selection of a brand and it is unlikely to be an impulse purchase with little or no decision-making. In addition, services are generally viewed to be higher risk than goods due to the lack of pre-purchase information available. This is particularly so with professional services such as engineering, accounting, executive recruiting, and advertising. Brand loyalty for these business-services is likely to include attitudinal loyalty and, if a business customer believes the brand to be appropriate and is committed to purchase (attitudinal loyalty), it is expected that they are more likely to repurchase (behavioural loyalty).

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined attitudes as evaluative judgments based on socially constructed beliefs. Researchers have since moved away from viewing attitudes solely as the result of cognitive processes toward a view that attitudes are comprised of both affective and cognitive components (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Dube, Cervellon, & Jingyuan, 2003; Kim et al., 1998; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Indeed, the current two-dimensional view of attitudes is a progression from the traditional tripartite view of attitudes; that being cognitive, affective, and conative.

Only in the last few years have the separate contributions of affect and cognition been considered in the area of brand loyalty (Caldow, 1998; Dick & Basu, 1994; Gremler & Brown, 1998; Kim et al., 1998). The study reported here develops this area by examining the interrelationships between satisfaction (affective variable) and involvement (cognitive) as key antecedents of attitudinal brand loyalty.

Satisfaction is defined as an affective response to a purchase situation (Rabin & Griffin, 1998; Bagozzi et al., 1999). Oliver (1996) classifies satisfaction as one of five end-states: satisfaction-as-contentment, satisfaction-as-pleasure, satisfaction-as-relief, satisfaction-as-novelty, and satisfaction-as-surprise (Oliver, 1989, 1996). Oliver suggests that disconfirmation of expectations is present when the satisfaction mode is pleasure, relief or surprise (Oliver, 1996). In these circumstances, satisfaction occurs when the performance of a product or service meets the expectations of the purchaser. If performance fails to meet expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs, which results in dissatisfaction (Patterson et al., 1997).

Congruent with the proposition that affective reactions influence attitudes (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), recent studies have demonstrated that satisfaction is an

antecedent of attitudinal brand loyalty, with increases in satisfaction leading to increases in attitudinal brand loyalty (Bennett, 2001; Bolton, 1998; Jones & Suh, 2000; Ringham, Johnson & Spreng, 1994). Similarly, research has shown that evaluation of a service following purchase and consumption leads to brand attitudes, which play an important role in determining whether the buyer will purchase that service again (Ziethaml, 1981).

2.3. *The role of involvement*

The involvement construct is crucial when considering the purchasing process used by both individual and business-to-business consumers, and is discussed by both attitudinal and behavioural theorists when addressing the issues of brand loyalty and purchasing (Bloch & Richins, 1983; Bloom, 1981; Lovelock, Patterson, & Walker, 1998; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991). Involvement has been defined as "the general level of interest in the object or the centrality of the object to the person's ego structure" (Day, 1970, p. 10). Involvement depends on three factors (Engel, Warshaw & Kinnear, 1987): needs, externally prompted feelings of self-relevance, and personal responses to the product (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Zaichowsky, 1985). The level of involvement that customers have with respect to a product, brand, or purchase decision is an important determinant of their behaviour (Peter & Olsen, 1987).

Research suggests that involvement has both intrinsic and situational determinants (Bloch & Richins, 1983; Shaffer & Sherrell, 1997). Intrinsic determinants, also called enduring involvement, refer to the knowledge about the product category that a customer gains over time and that is stored in long-term memory (Celsi & Olson, 1988). This knowledge base determines which aspects of information about the product category customers will attend to and which aspects they will discard. In contrast, situational involvement is temporary, occurring for a particular purchase situation (Bloch & Richins, 1983; Shaffer & Sherrell, 1997).

East (1997) asserts that involvement has an impact on whether the purchase process consists of formal search and evaluation (planning) or is more habitual. Low involvement purchasing tends to be habitual whereas high involvement requires planning (East, 1997; Ray, 1973). Therefore, if the purchase employs high involvement, it is expected that there will be more complex conscious engagement in cognitive activity.

Prior research demonstrates the link between involvement and attitudinal brand loyalty (Beatty, Kahle, & Homer, 1988; Traylor, 1981). The more involved a business is in the purchase, the more likely they are to be loyal to that brand (Oliva, Oliver, & Macmillan, 1992). Even if dissatisfaction with the brand arises, if businesses have invested a great deal in the process (highly involved), they will resist brand switching (Oliva et al., 1992). The more involved purchasers are, the more likely it is that they have identified a particular brand as the "best" choice for their situation (Oliver, 1993). In contrast, the less involved purchasers are in the buying process, the more likely they are to think of the purchase as being trivial or of little importance and thus are likely to be prone to brand switching.

Essentially, increases in involvement and satisfaction are therefore posited to be associated with increases in attitudinal brand loyalty (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002; Mellens et al., 1996). Thus, the following hypothesis is derived:

H1: An increase in satisfaction and involvement will be associated with an increase in attitudinal brand loyalty.

2.4. *The role of experience*

Many services are associated with high levels of perceived risk. This is certainly the case for professional services such as legal, accounting, and advertising (Mitchell, 1994) where credence qualities are high and customers tend to have difficulty evaluating the service even after they have been consumed the service. It would be expected that as a business customer becomes familiar with a business service and the service providers, that the information gained would form the basis of future decisions (Murray, 1991). Thus, experience, as a personal source of information, is likely to play an increasingly important role, particularly for professional services and is a probable risk-reduction strategy.

Kim et al. (1998) study of the interplay between cognition and affect on attitude formation, measured experience as frequency of exposure to advertising. Where there was little explicit information available for respondents to cognize, results indicated an inverse relationship between the impact of affect and cognition on attitude formation, moderated by frequency of exposure or experience. Kim et al.'s (1998) sample represented a low-risk, low involvement consumer product (pizza). In contrast, this study uses a higher risk, higher involvement professional business-to-business service (purchase of advertising).

The level of risk associated with a purchase is thus expected to affect the relationship of cognition and affect in attitude foundation. Indeed, Kim et al. (1998) found that attitudes were more affected by emotion in a low exposure context and conversely by cognition in a high exposure context. In this context, motivation is proposed to be low when involvement is low (Petty, Cacioppo, & Shumann, 1983) and peripheral route processing occurs bypassing cognitive processing (Kim et al., 1998). In contrast, when involvement is high, as would be the case for a high-risk purchase such as a professional business service, central route processing is likely to occur because motivation is likely to be high (Petty et al., 1983; Kim et al., 1998). It is expected, therefore, that the relationship between the affective, cognitive, and attitudinal variables in the Kim et al., (1998) study, which used a low-risk, low involvement product, will be reversed in a high-risk, high involvement context, which is the setting of the current study. The proposed theoretical reversals are presented in Table 1.

Situational involvement usually results from perceived risk (Bloch & Richins, 1983), whereas enduring involvement usually results from prior experience. Enduring involvement appears to be the relevant type of involvement for this research in that it is present over time and is not related specifically to situational factors. Consequently, the remainder of the discussion is limited to the considerable enduring involvement and its effects on attitudinal brand loyalty.

As the main evaluation of a service occurs after consumption (Ziethaml, 1981), prior experience with a service has a substantial impact on brand-choice for subsequent purchases of the service. Thus, attitudes towards the brand are primarily formed after the first purchase. This evaluation, in turn, is used as pre-evaluation for repeat purchases. Brand loyalty is thus developed through the experience of repurchasing a brand over time (Sheth, 1968). Consistent with this notion are findings that show that the more frequent the prior experience, the stronger the attitude (Smith & Swinyard, 1983). An understanding of the role of previous experience with a

purchase decision is therefore critical to an understanding of the development of attitudinal brand loyalty.

Furthermore, research findings indicate that the lower the level of involvement, the more habitual the purchasing

Table 1
Effect of experience on attitude formation process

Experience	Low risk and low involvement context	High risk and low involvement context
Low experience	Affect dominates attitude formation	Cognition dominates attitude formation
High experience	Cognition dominates attitude formation	Affect dominates attitude formation

process (East, 1997). As experience is expected to lead to greater confidence in one's evaluations about the value of a product/service category, it reduces the need for further information search and evaluation. The more experience a customer gains with the product/service category and preferred brand, the less time they are likely to spend on the purchase process unless a situation occurs that causes them to reconsider (e.g. sales promotions, availability, financial situation, or changed needs). Therefore, experience with the preferred brand should decrease the need for high involvement and hence, increase habitual purchasing.

Congruent with this argument is research on a low-risk product (pizza), which found that, as the level of exposure to an object increased, the influence of beliefs on attitude was greater than the influence of emotion (Kim et al., 1998). In other words, in the absence of cognitive processes, affective variables had a higher relative impact on attitudes than did cognitive variables. The reverse, however, is expected in a perceived high-risk setting. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

H2: For business services, in conditions of low experience; the influence of involvement will be more dominant in its influence of attitudinal brand loyalty than satisfaction.

Satisfaction is a positive affective reaction to an outcome of a prior experience (Ganesan, 1994) and is an important factor in determining the next purchase of the product/service (Patterson et al., 1997, Richins & Bloch, 1991). Purchasing a service may be regarded as high-risk unless the purchaser has experience with the service (Ziethaml, 1981). The general lack of pre-purchase information and the high-risk generally associated with business services place an emphasis on the purchaser developing a post-evaluation based on actual experience. This post-evaluation leads to the formation of an attitude, which appears to be embodied in the construct of attitudinal brand loyalty. The satisfaction derived and attitude formed as part of a prior experience (Ganesan, 1994) then impacts on subsequent purchases (Oliver, 1980), completing the cyclical pattern.

Given a lack of previous experience (East, 1997), a business-to-business customer purchasing a professional service for the first time is more likely to think about the process, and thus use the central processing route to attitude formation. As the customer's experience increases, so does the likelihood that one will engage in automatic processing where decisions proceed on the basis of highly accessible

information (Härtel, 1999). The more experience customers have with being satisfied with the preferred brand, the more accessible the satisfaction-brand attitude link (Simon, 1993). This proposition is consistent with research that shows that customers with a high level of knowledge about the product/service tend to make a better purchase choice, which in turn, increases the level of satisfaction they experience (Shaffer & Sherrell, 1997). Additionally, the more experience, the more evaluation information is available and the less need to engage in cognitive search processes. Thus, the peripheral processing route is more likely to lead to attitude development. On this basis, it is hypothesized that:

H3: For business services, in conditions of high experience, the influence of satisfaction will be more dominant in its influence on attitudinal brand loyalty than involvement.

3. Methodology

3.1. *Sample and procedure*

One of the criteria for brand loyalty to exist is that there must be "...one or more alternative brands out of a set of brands..." (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). The criteria for selecting a business service were, (a) the service should be commonly purchased; (b) the service should be associated with at least two well-known brands; (c) the service should be considered high-risk; and (d) high levels of competition should exist between the alternative brands. On the basis of these criteria, directory advertising was selected as the service and the most competitive area in Australia for directory advertising was selected as the sample location.

As this paper is concerned with the construct of previous experience, businesses selected to participate in the research were required to be repeat purchasers. Consequently, businesses selected had a minimum of 1 year's previous experience with advertising in a telephone directory in the region. Random selection from a database of customers of directory advertising was used. and the majority of the sample was in the small business sector.

Business-to-business marketing is not only concerned with large corporate organizations or manufacturers, it is concerned with all businesses, which take many forms. Small business is one of these categories. While the use of a sample of small businesses as a business-to-business study is relatively rare, it is nonetheless a valuable example of business marketing, particularly given the importance of the sector's contribution to the overall economy. In the U.S., small business constitutes 99% of all businesses and creates more than two-thirds of all new jobs (U.S. Government, 2001). In Australia, small business represents 97% of all private-sector businesses in Australia and employs 49% of the private-sector workforce (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

The majority (89.4%) of respondents in this study were small businesses as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a small business is any organization that is independently owned and operated is closely controlled by owners/managers who also contribute most if not all of the operating capital, and the owners/managers hold the principal decision-making responsibility (ABS, 2001). With respect to business structure, 49% of the businesses in the sample had a company structure, which coincides with the proportion reported

by the ABS. The dominant industries represented in the sample were personal and other services (24.2%), retail trading (22%), and construction (12%).

The survey instrument was distributed to a total of 1472 decision-wakers, identified through simple random selection within each of the directory brands. A key issue in business-to-business research is identifying the decision-maker(s) to avoid respondents: guessing because they do not know the answer (Wind & Webster, 1972). The surveys were therefore sent to the person who has the signing authority for the advertising identified through access to company records. Additionally, the instructions for the survey requested that the person responsible for the final decision. complete the survey. After eliminating 141 incomplete surveys and undeliverable surveys, there were 267 useable surveys.

An examination of non-respondents revealed equal distribution across directory brands. The response rate of 20.7% while perceived as relatively low in consumer research, is acceptable in business research due to the difficulty in obtaining cooperation from businesses (Baldauf, Reisinger, & Moncrief, 1999; De Vans, 1995). Non-response bias was assessed using the technique of comparing early and late respondents. Comparing waves of early and late respondents (as recommended by Armstrong & Overton, 1977) on a range of demographic characteristics revealed no significant differences ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that non-response bias was not a problem.

A common approach to achieving heterogeneity involves introducing differences in item keying direction to reduce respondent acquiescence (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Reverse scoring can achieve this purpose. However, Herche and Engelland (1996) suggest reverse-scoring to avoid agreement-bias degrades the uni-dimensionality of the scale. This is deemed a far more serious problem for validity than agreement bias (Schriesheim & Eisenbach, 1995). Uni-dimensionality is a "necessary condition of assigning meaning to estimated constructs" (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988, p. 414). Without uni-dimensionality amongst items of a construct, the items cannot be said to be valid measures of the latent construct. To overcome the possibility of agreement bias, items of the same construct were interspersed with items from another construct; thus, questions of a similar nature were separated.

3.2. *Construct measures*

Established scales for the "attitudinal brand loyalty", "involvement", and "satisfaction" constructs were used in the study. Each construct was measured using multiple indicators that assists in capturing the full theoretical meaning underlying the constructs and reduces measurement error (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 2000). Convergent validity was achieved through the use of single factor congeneric model using structural equation modelling (see Table 2). Items that had residuals higher than the recommended 2.54 or *T*-values less than 2.0 were eliminated (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Attitudinal brand loyalty was measured with five-point Likert scales on attitude towards intention to repurchase, brand attitude, and brand commitment dimensions (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002; Mellens et al., 1996). The overall attitudinal brand loyalty score was calculated by averaging the responses to all items in the scale (see Appendix A for items). A higher score indicates a higher level of attitudinal brand loyalty.

In the business-to-business sector, purchasing is considered to be more rational in its foundations with buyers evaluating their options and considering the functionality the service has for their business (Morris, 1992). Therefore, it is appropriate to use

measures of satisfaction that are evaluative in nature and that reflect the economic value of the purchase. Economic satisfaction as distinct from social satisfaction is the evaluation of the economic outcomes of a relationship (Geyskins & Steenkamp, 2000). Thus, Oliver's (1980) widely used satisfaction measures (Oliver, 1980; Westbrook & Oliver, 1981; Patterson et al., 1997; Shaffer & Sherrell, 1997) were adapted for this research as they are evaluative and goal-directed in nature. A five-point Likert scale was used and the overall satisfaction score, calculated by averaging the responses to all items in the scale (see Appendix A for items). A higher score indicates a higher level of satisfaction.

Involvement was measured with Zaichowsky's Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) (Zaichowsky, 1985), which was adapted to determine the level of involvement each customer had with the purchase of directory advertising. This scale shows good validity and high internal consistency. Involvement has been measured with both semantic differential (Martin, 1998; Shaffer & Sherrell, 1997) and Likert scales (Bloch & Richins, 1983; Richins & Bloch, 1991). Zaichowsky (1985) states that Likert scales are not appropriate for involvement research; as they are product specific. Instead, she advocates the use of semantic differential scales using a series of bipolar items, which result in a measure that is applicable to all product/service types. Accordingly, the 10-item version of the Personal Involvement Inventory was used with a semantic differential scale (Zaichowsky, 1985). The overall involvement score was calculated by averaging the responses to all items in the scale (see Appendix A for items). A higher score indicates a higher level of involvement.

4. Results

Prior to testing the hypothesis, a confirmatory factor model was tested to assess measurement and refine the measures. The relationship between satisfaction, involvement and attitudinal brand loyalty was, then tested using structural equation modeling and chi-square difference test.

4.1. *Confirmatory factor analysis results*

The construct "attitudinal brand loyalty", commenced with nine indicators and was reduced to five by eliminating the indicators with standardized residuals greater than 2.54. The resulting statistics were a RMR less than 0.00, GFI and AGFI greater than 0.90, and a chi-square with 5 *df* of 6.68. The indicators were very good measures of attitudinal brand loyalty and had high convergent validity as evidenced by the composite reliability of 0.94, variance extracted estimate of 0.75, and that 58% of the indicator's variance was explained by the latent construct.

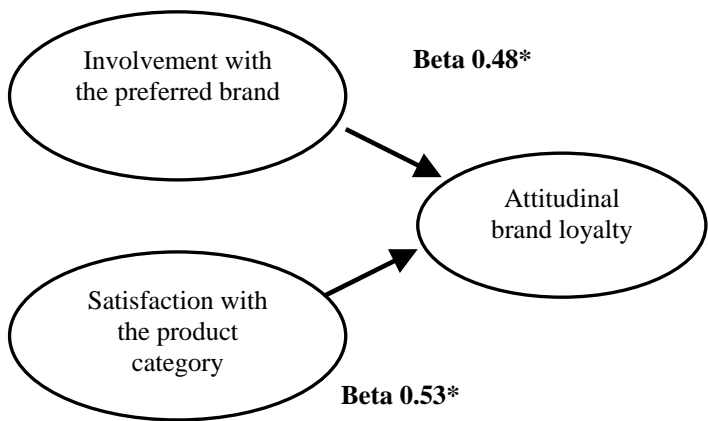
The "satisfaction" construct commenced with six indicators and was reduced to five. The resulting goodness-of-fit statistics were a RMR of 0.05, GFI and AGFI greater than 0.90, and a chi-square with 5 *df* of 4.22. Even though the RMR is slightly higher than 0.05, it is still within an acceptable range. The indicators were very good measures of satisfaction and had high convergent validity as evidenced by the composite reliability of 0.98, variance extracted estimate of 0.93, and that 90% of the indicator's variance was explained by the latent construct.

"Involvement" commenced with eight indicators and reduced to four. The resulting statistics were a RMR less than 0.05, GFI and AGFI greater than 0.90, and chi-square with 2 *df* of 1.12. Six items were deleted leaving those that reflected the cognitive dimension of importance rather than the dimension of interest (see Appendix A for

items). The indicators were very good measures of involvement and had convergent validity as evidenced by the composite reliability of 0.94, variance extracted estimate of 0.80, and that 82% of the indicator's variance was explained by the latent construct. These results for all three constructs indicate the measurement fits the sample data well and is adequate for use (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The final items are listed in Appendix A.

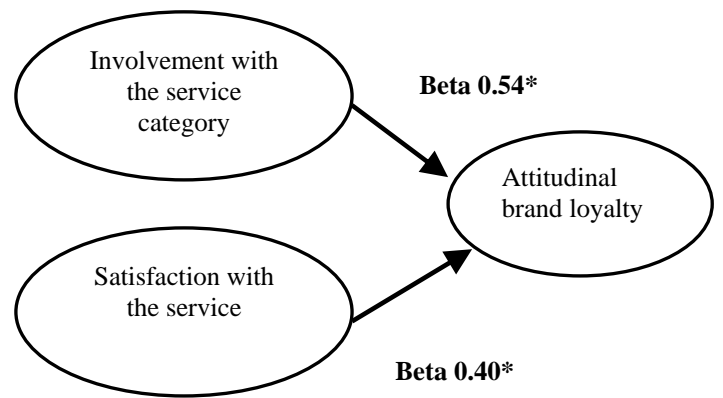
Table 2
Summary of reliability and validity for construct items

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Reliability	Extracted variance	Validity (GFI)
Attitudinal brand loyalty	3.9	0.89	0.94	0.75	0.04
Satisfaction	3.89	0.88	0.98	0.93	0.04
Involvement	4.05	0.99	0.94	0.80	0.80



* significant at 0.05

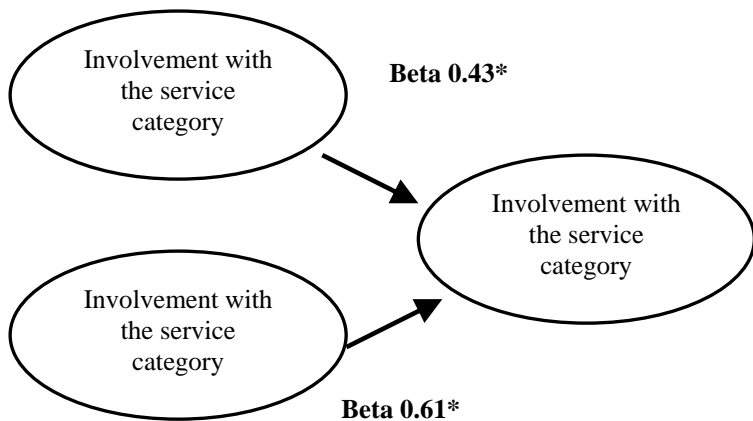
Fig. 1 Influence of involvement and satisfaction on attitudinal brand loyalty



* significant at 0.05

Fig. 2. High experience group

Fig. 3. High experience group



The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling and a chi-square difference test. As shown in Fig.1, there is a significant relationship between involvement and satisfaction as antecedents of attitudinal brand loyalty, supporting prior research in this area. The standardized coefficients were 0.48 for the involvement—attitudinal brand loyalty link and 0.53 for the satisfaction- attitudinal brand loyalty link. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

The data was then split into two groups based tin the level of experience (the number of years the respondent advertised with any brand) so that multi-group could be performed. A tertial split (comparing top third with bottom third of sample) was used to split the groups to ensure discrimination between the two groups. To test which variable had the greatest effect on the formation of attitudinal brand loyalty, a path analysis using LISREL was conducted. This analysis allowed a direct comparison between the relative strengths of satisfaction and involvement on attitudinal brand loyalty to be made. As long as the standardized path coefficients are significantly different from each other, it can be stated that the higher the path coefficient, the higher the impact on attitudinal brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 2 asserts that cognitive rather than the affective variable dominate the formation of attitude when respondents have lower levels of experience with purchasing .the service. The results are shown in Fig. 2, which provides standardized coefficients for the impact of the cognitive and affective variables. The coefficients for low experience were 0.54 and 0.40 for involvement and satisfaction respectively (both significant at $p<0.05$). It was expected that involvement would dominate the formation in conditions of low experience, thus the results support Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 asserts that in conditions of high experience, the influence of satisfaction will be more dominant in its influence on attitudinal brand loyalty than involvement. Fig. 3 provides the standardized coefficients for the impact of involvement and satisfaction on attitudinal brand loyalty. The coefficients for high experience were 0.43 and 0.61 for involvement and satisfaction, respectively (both significant at $p<0.05$). These results show that satisfaction dominated involvement in the formation of attitudinal brand loyalty for the high experience group, thus supporting Hypothesis 3.

The chi-square difference test was conducted between the groups to identify if the paths for the groups were significantly different. The analysis was carried out using LISREL, by constraining a path in each of the two groups to equal. The test statistic is computed by subtracting the chi-square of the constrained model from the chi-square of the unconstrained model. The degrees of freedom for the test are the difference in degrees of freedom for the two models. It is assumed that the chi-square difference statistic follows a chi-square distribution.

Table 3

Chi-square difference test between low and high experience groups

Model	Chi-square unconstrained	Chi-square constrained	Chi-square difference at 1 <i>df</i>
Involvement-attitudinal brand loyalty	302.89	268.21	34.68
Satisfaction - attitudinal brand loyalty	302.89	268.75	34.14

Table 4
Correlation between satisfaction, involvement and attitudinal loyalty

	Attitudinal brand loyalty low experience	Attitudinal brand loyalty high experience
Satisfaction	0.77	0.68
Involvement	0.78	0.52

As shown in Table 3, the chi-square difference was 34.68 for the involvement-attitudinal brand loyalty link and 34.14 for the satisfaction-attitudinal brand loyalty link. This exceeds the critical value, which for 1 degree of freedom, is 3.84. The results thus demonstrate that both paths were significantly different between the groups. In other words, experience moderated the effect of satisfaction and involvement on attitudinal brand loyalty. As predicted, involvement, as the cognitive variable, was the dominant influence on attitudinal brand loyalty when there was less experience in purchasing the service category but, as experience increased, satisfaction-the affective variable-became the dominant influence.

The correlation between satisfaction and attitudinal brand loyalty, and involvement and attitudinal brand loyalty decreased with experience as shown in Table 4. The explained variance in attitudinal brand loyalty was 0.76, for the low experience group and 0.15 for the high experience group, indicating that factors other than satisfaction and involvement are more important in determining attitudinal brand loyalty when experience increased. Further research is needed to identify these flaws.

5. Discussion

This study examined the Influence of satisfaction and involvement on attitudinal brand loyalty for a professional business service. The results support the view that satisfaction and involvement are antecedents of attitudinal brand loyalty. Each construct significantly contributed to the total explained variance in attitudinal brand loyalty. Additionally, the results provide encouraging empirical support for the hypothesized moderating effect of experience on the relationships between these antecedents (satisfaction and involvement) and attitudinal brand loyalty.

The finding that involvement decreased with experience provides further evidence that involvement is highest in the early experiences of a product/service or brand as demonstrated by (East, 1997; Sheth, 1968;). This argument is premised on the belief that, as the purchaser becomes more familiar and gains experience with a product/service, the level of information-seeking and decision-making diminishes. Accordingly, the more routine the purchase, the less likely purchaser involvement, and the more likely that habitual buying takes place. Results of the present study provide support for the premises upon which the predicted antecedents of attitudinal brand loyalty are based.

This finding is significant in that this study is one of the first to investigate the relationship between key antecedents of attitudinal brand loyalty in a business-to-business context. Importantly, this study demonstrates for the first time that affect as evidenced by satisfaction with the service category may play a greater role than cognition as evidenced by involvement in a high-risk business-to-business service purchase when respondents have high levels of experience with purchasing the

service. The findings provide further encouraging evidence of the need to consider the interplay of affect and cognition in the development of attitudinal brand loyalty (e.g. Härtnel et al., 1998; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999).

Two of the key implications for the theory are first, the role of emotion in business purchasing and second, the importance of brand loyalty business services. Satisfaction is one of the most researched affective variables in marketing (.Bagozzi et al., 1999); however, its affective role in business services has not been clearly addressed. It is interesting to note that while there is little acknowledgement of emotion in business marketing (Sweeney & Webb, 2003), satisfaction is a well-known business construct. This research indicates that emotion may play more of a role in business purchasing than previously thought, inviting further research to investigate this.

The second implication is the importance of researching brand loyalty for business services. The high mean score (3.9 out of 5) suggests that attitudinal brand loyalty is important for business purchases and thus may have a significant role for actual repurchase. A great deal of business-to-business research is focused on relationship marketing, and while this is a critical factor it is not an end in itself, that is, businesses aim for effective relationships so that they may increase loyalty to the organization and result in organizational success. Thus, a study of loyalty is a logical extension of relationship marketing and thus an important research area in an increasingly competitive sector.

6 Managerial implications

The proposition that customers' internalized information about brands increases with experience has important managerial implications. Specifically, customers with low levels of experience will rely more on external cues about the brand and less on internal cues such as satisfaction and involvement. Low experience customers therefore may rely more on external information search and less on internal information search than high experience customers. Consequently, certain forms of promotion that depict other customers' positive experiences with the brand may be more effective for low experience customers than for high experience customers. For these high experience customers, internal information search appears to be a more critical determinant of attitudinal brand loyalty. Therefore, business practices aimed directly at effecting customer satisfaction are more likely to impact upon attitudinal brand loyalty for this segment of the customer base.

The finding that satisfaction is a stronger determinant of attitudinal brand loyalty for experienced decision-makers suggests that experienced customers are more likely to switch brands if they have a bad experience. Consequently, post-sales service would be particularly important for high experience customers. Attending to post purchase sales service for customers with high levels of experience is not something that is generally done. Yet this research suggests this is very important and hence managers are encouraged to focus attention on retaining such customers.

Findings regarding the role of experience in brand attitude indicate that there appears to be value in segmenting markets based on customer experience. The data suggest the need for different branding campaigns for different levels of experience. Specifically, the retention strategy appears to be the most critical focus of branding campaigns for low experience customers. In contrast, a reward strategy appears to be the most critical focus for high experience customers. That is, since satisfaction accounts for more of the variance in high experience customers' attitudinal brand loyalty, efforts should be focused on facilitating satisfaction. In sum, these results

show that continued efforts at identifying the differential roles of involvement and satisfaction on attitudinal brand loyalty have the potential to aid the development of more effective promotion and delivery of service strategies in a business context.

Limitations and further research

As the study was restricted to businesses-to-business context and in particular, the purchase of a professional service, care must be exercised regarding generalizing the findings. The geographic context for the study was a regional center, this was selected as it was the most competitive area in the country for the purchasing of directory advertising (and competition is a necessary prerequisite for brand choice to occur), and thus this limits the scope of the research.

In addition, this research focuses on a single business service and while this reduces sources of extraneous variables and increases internal validity, it reduces the application to all business services. To overcome these limitations and enable findings to be generalizable to a larger population, future research samples could be drawn from a national source with multiple service types.

There are several obvious topics for future research that arise from this study. An investigation in other aspects of brands would be appropriate, particularly in a variety of different types of business products (goods and services) to identify similarities and differences. Further understanding is required of other antecedents of brand loyalty and the possible consequences. It would be interesting to compare these between consumer and business goods and services. Finally, there needs to be further investigation of the role of cognition and affect in business services. The prevailing business marketing models and theories are based on rational purchasing processes with little understanding of the impact of emotions. Human behaviour cannot be understood without considering emotion (Ashkanasy, 2003; Bagozzi et al., 1999; Sweeney & Webb, 2003) and thus it is likely that in some, if not all, business purchasing emotion has a part to play.

Appendix A

* indicates eliminated items

Attitudinal brand loyalty scale

Purchasing advertising with my preferred brand in the next issue would be:						
Bad	1	2	3	4	5	Good
*Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	Pleasant
Unfavourable	1	2	3	4	5	Favourable
*Negative	1	2	3	4	5	Positive
Undesirable	1	2	3	4	5	Desirable
*Foolish	1	2	3	4	5	Wise
*Unlucky	1	2	3	4	5	Likely

I would recommend my main brand to other people (scale of 1-5).

Using a scale from 1 to 5, please tell me how committed you are to purchasing your preferred brand of directory advertising.

Satisfaction scale

1. I am satisfied with my decision to advertise in my preferred brand.
2. My choice to purchase advertising in my preferred brand was a wise one.
3. I feel good about my decision concerning my preferred brand.
4. I think that I did the right thing when I decided to advertise in my preferred brand.
5. If I had to do it all over again, I would feel the same about advertising in my preferred brand.
6. I am happy that I did what I did about advertising in my preferred brand.

Involvement scale

<i>How would you describe the purchase of directory advertising?</i>						
<i>Place an X on the: ___ which best reflects your opinion for each row.</i>						
Please complete each row						
Unimportant	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Important
*Boring	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Interesting
Irrelevant	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Relevant
*Unexciting	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Exciting
Means nothing to me	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Means a lot to me
*Unappealing	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Appealing
*Mundane	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Fascinating
Worthless	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Valuable
*Uninvolving	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Involving
*Not needed	___:	___:	___:	___:	___:	Needed

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