

Brand Experience, Trust & Customer Satisfaction on Brand Loyalty with Special Reference to the Apparel Industry in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: A brand acts as a mechanism in engaging both buyer and seller in a long-term consumer brand relationship. Repeating purchases is most important to all businesses to gain more income and for continuing businesses. Therefore, it is important to develop loyalty to brand and this study focuses on examining the impact of brand experience, brand trust & customer satisfaction on brand loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach: The quantitative approach was used for this study. 384 of responses were used as the sample of customers who have engaged with the Sri Lankan apparel sector. Multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the conceptual model empirically.

Findings: The findings imply that brand experience, brand trust, and customer satisfaction have a positive impact on brand loyalty.

Originality: The findings offer valuable insights into Sri Lankan apparel industry aiding brand experience, trust and customer satisfaction. The study emphasizes effective brand loyalty, understanding local audience preferences, and the importance of identified variables towards the enhancement of brand loyalty.

Implications: This study suggests that apparel companies in Sri Lanka can enhance brand loyalty and customer satisfaction by enhancing trust, utilizing technology, and fostering emotional connections.

Introduction

The apparel industry plays an important role in the economic growth of both developed and developing nations (MITIR, 2022). This industry is recognized as one of the oldest, largest, and most advanced export sectors in the world (World Bank, 2014). The global apparel industry generated 1,414 USD billion in revenue, contributed 1.9% of gross domestic product (GDP), and experienced an annual growth rate of 4.4% in 2017 (Marketline, 2018). Developing regions such as the Asia-Pacific and Africa account for about 60% of the global apparel retail industry value (Marketline, 2018). This has made the apparel industry the first manufacturing sector in which retail sales were dominated by developing countries, especially in Sri Lanka (CBSL, 2022). This trend is similar to that in the developing economy like Sri Lanka,

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where the apparel industry has assisted the manufacturing sector to contribute 6% of GDP, employs 350,000 workers, and accumulated 13 USD billion in revenue in 2022 (EDB, 2022). As a result, the apparel industry is a largest employer in the manufacturing sector and is one of the main contributors to Sri Lankan economic development (Wikipedia). Although the apparel industry has been recognized as a driver of economic growth in Sri Lanka, it faces numerous challenges that affect its competitiveness and sustainability. The reason is that most of the apparel brands exist to provide similar offerings and prices to customers, leaving little room for differentiation (MITIR, 2022). For the purpose of this study, apparel brands refer to the brands that are owned and operated by retailers themselves and will thus be the focal point of this study. As a result, this creates an opportunity for customers to engage in switching behavior, thus stifling competition among the players in the industry (MITIR, 2022). This behavior results in customers insisting on lower prices, higher-quality products, and consistent service delivery, making it more difficult for apparel brands to retain a loyal customer base (MITIR, 2022). Consequently, to retain its customers in this competitive environment, a business should invest in the cultivation of brand awareness to enhance brand trust in order to stimulate brand loyalty, which ultimately assists in building stronger ties with customers and ensures survival in the marketplace (Chinomona, 2016).

A brand acts as a mechanism in engaging both buyer and seller in a long-term consumer-brand relationship (Margo & Robert, 2000). The traditional method of brand marketing mostly appeals to functional links with consumers, but consumers now wish for a more compelling experience (Schmit, 1999). As mentioned by Schmit (1999) that experiential marketing has proven itself to be a good starting point for studies on consumer-brand relationships. Sahin (2011) Stated that the consumer-brand relationship is in the final stages of the mental brand responses, and he also claimed that the consumer-brand relationship is formed by consumer experience and brand knowledge or brand meanings. Meanwhile, Keller (2001) laid out a series of steps for building brand equity, also suggesting consumer-brand relationships as the final step. The consumer-brand relationship depends largely on the successful establishment of the brand's meanings. These brand meanings can be formed directly from a consumer's experience. As the experience economy unfolds in the 21st century, brand marketers must bond with consumers by staging holistic brand experiences (Schmit, 1999). Furthermore, brand meanings are becoming crucial mediators between brand experience and consumer-brand relationships.

In the last few years, Portuguese multiple-play market has faced some significant changes to the positioning of the different brands. Previously controlled by two of the pioneer brands, a third player was able to quickly enter the market, achieving the leading position in a short time period. In order to do so, this player approached the market in a different fashion (Carrizo-Moreira, Pedro, & Da-Silva, 2017). While the market was traditionally seen as having boring or undifferentiated brands, this player was able to pave its way based on an aggressive marketing campaign. Firstly, the new

entrant completely redesigned their logo adopting a new image and brand colors secondly, they developed partnerships with music festivals and social events and established sponsorships with several sports teams thirdly, they developed a marketing spot with highly experiential components and finally, they used successful Portuguese a start to promote their service. This approach quickly turned the brand into the market leader and its marketing strategy was followed by other brands. As such, these characteristics make the Portuguese multiple-play market a suitable candidate to study the impact of brand experiences, as this moved from a traditional service market into a market where brands invest heavily in marketing campaigns and promotions with highly experiential components. (Carrizo-Moreira, Pedro, & Da-Silva, 2017).

Problem Statement

A brand acts as a mechanism in engaging both buyer and seller in a consumer-brand relationship (Margo & Robert, 2000). The main input of this relationship is brand experience, and the main output of this relationship is brand loyalty. The traditional method of brand marketing mostly appeals to functional links with consumers, but consumers now wish for a more compelling experience and also indicated that experiential marketing has proven itself to be a good starting point for studies on consumer-brand relationship (Sahin, 2011). As Sahin (2011) Stated that the consumer-brand relationship is in the final stages of the mental brand responses and the consumer-brand relationship is formed by consumer experience and brand knowledge or brand meanings. Meanwhile, (Keller, 2001) has identified that consumer-brand relationships depend largely on the successful establishment of the brand loyalty, but it lacks empirical evidence specially in the apparel sector. This brand loyalty can be formed directly from a consumer's experience.

Brands are incredibly important in the commercial center because they relate to the associations' obligations to their clients. Organizations have to adapt to market changes and catch the attention of the market, especially in the fashion retail sector where a wide variety of products meet a comparable need of the buyer which leads for brand loyalty (Samarasinghe, 2019). Therefore, this research study mainly focusses on identifying the impact of brand experience, trust and customer satisfaction on brand loyalty in Sri Lankan apparel industry.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study can be identified as below.

1. To examine the impact of Brand Experience on Brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka.
2. To examine the impact of Brand Trust on Brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka.

3. To examine the impact of Customer Satisfaction on Brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka

Research Questions

According to the above research objectives, research questions can be formulated as follows,

1. What is the impact of Brand Experience on Brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka?
2. What is the impact of Brand Trust on Brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka?
3. What is the impact of Customer Satisfaction on Brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka?

Significance of the study

In the contemporary era, the task of competing can pose a significant challenge. The attainment of various forms of advantage can strategically position a business to achieve success over its competitors. Fostering brand loyalty towards the enterprise or its merchandise can facilitate the expansion of the business. The acquisition of the skill in question is not expeditious, and in the face of larger, more established contenders possessing a robust clientele, it may be perceived as insurmountable to engage in competition (Randalreilly, 2017). When a brand provides a unique experience with minimal credible competition, marketers can effectively position a product or service as superior, innovative, disruptive, or distinct from other offerings in the market. The researcher concludes that possessing distinct qualities is advantageous. The prevalence of this phenomenon is diminishing. In contemporary times, loyalty has become increasingly significant due to the abundance of information and numerous alternatives available. Undoubtedly, brand loyalty stands out as one of the few persistent drivers of competitive advantage in contemporary times (Little, 2022).

The present research endeavors to assess brand loyalty in the Apparel Industry by examining the constructions of brand experience, brand trust, and customer satisfaction. The findings of the study are mainly focused on managerial significance and managers in the apparel industry, practitioners, policy makers can make effective decisions based on the findings of this study. Hence, this research possesses the capability to be utilized by all apparel industry establishments for enhancing brand allegiance.

Limitation of the Study

There are a number of limitations to this study, and the findings also suggest areas for future investigation. The sample size is actually quite modest. By expanding the sample size and including people from additional regions, the study can be strengthened. A

more thorough empirical study of the independent variables and the variables with numerous categories can be carried out with a larger sample size. This study conducted in one community like Sri Lanka, therefore, generalizability of the results remains to be determined by further studies. There are lot of countries in the world. But in this researcher will be used only Sri Lankan context. There are many industries in Sri Lanka. But this study is focused only Apparel industry on Sri Lanka. Loyalty is applicable for all type of companies, not only the apparel Industry. According to the present research, but there is also considerable empirical evidence connecting brand experience, brand satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. The key drawback of this study is that it only examines a single product/service category, which may restrict its generalizability to other fields. Perhaps, similar results should be repeated with several product categories and brands.

Literature Review

Brand Experience

Brand experience is the culmination of all the emotions, joy and excitement that customers feel while engaging with a brand. This could be done through social media platforms, a website, a store, during events, or by working with the customer service team. All of these points of contact between a company and its customers help to shape the entire brand experience and leave a lasting impression (Chacko, 2023). According to Ong (2018)), brand experiences are the result of stimuli that arouse customers' excitement and enjoyment. As a result, customers are likely to repeat those experiences on a regular basis. Moreover, future-directed consumer loyalty should be influenced by brand experience in addition to past-directed pleasure evaluations (Brakus, 2009). According to Yuan and Wang (2020) customers are therefore more likely to recommend this brand to others, buy products from it again, and be less likely to buy from any competitors. Furthermore, brand experience is a crucial component in establishing and sustaining corporate success as well as a lasting relationship with customers (Manthiou, 2017). A strong positive correlation between BE and loyalty was also demonstrated by earlier research (Ong, 2018) and (Sahin, 2011).

Brand experience is an experience or consumer insight that is formed when interacting with a brand (Brakus, 2009). Hwang (2011) Suggests that consumers can be attracted by various visual stimuli, such as logos, designs, shapes, colors, and other aspects that make up a brand. In addition, the services provided by employees are an important part so that consumers can have a satisfying or good experience. According to Fitzgibbones (2018) the creation of a sensory user experience is at the heart of brand experience, which is typically managed by marketing or managerial professionals. This method aids in converting brand awareness into brand loyalty by connecting and interacting with the target audience.

Brand experience is divided into four dimensions of consumer response: sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual (Brakus, 2009). The sensory dimension defines

the visual and brand aspects perceived by consumers sensory (Hwang, 2011). Because it may evoke the consumer's senses of touch, sight, hearing, and scent, the aesthetic part of a brand adds to the sensory experience (Brakus, 2009). Furthermore, the affective dimension defines all kinds of views of consumer experience that are accompanied by a sense of emotion and sentiment (Hwang, 2011). Individuals can view a brand positively or negatively (Kihwan & Kang, 2017).

The behavioral dimension component is represented by a specific reaction to a brand caused by certain stimulants (Wang, 2014). The behavioral dimension shows variations that are formed from consumer actions towards positive brand experiences, and these last long in consumers' minds, and is considered essential marketing practices (Brakus, 2009).

Brand Trust

Brand trust measures the different customers' confidence in the company. It is an obvious illustration of how the brand keeps to its overall principles and fulfills its promises (Schlecht, 2003). As mentioned by prior scholars, the provision of high-quality goods and services can influence customers' perceptions of a brand's reliability (Simmons, 2007). They may trust a company and develop a stronger sense of loyalty if it offers a high-quality product in such an environment. Additionally, a business may experience ultimate success and gain the confidence of various consumers when it receives reliable reviews and ratings (Rehan, 2014).

Other important elements supporting strong brand trust may include experts offering a fair price for the goods being offered and treating consumers well (Swaminathan, 2020). In this regard, it is crucial to make sure that consumers are charged fairly and that customer service issues can be effectively resolved if the business hopes to achieve long-term success (Almeyda-Ibáñez, 2017). Brand trust is crucial for a number of reasons (Vaid, 2003). These factors include repeat business, positive feedback, referrals, and popularity.

Brand trust helps bring to customer value. In this matter, it is clear that when a brand is seen favorably by the public, the consumers benefit (Vander Shee, 2020). Trust in a brand promotes loyalty and repeat business, assuring value creation and meeting client needs. Additionally, Gielens (2019) mentioned that when a brand is primarily trusted, it aids in influencing purchasing choices. In this regard, it is clear that consumer brand loyalty plays a crucial role when making purchasing decisions.

Brand trust also helps in building brand loyalty and in this context, it is critical to comprehend that successful customer relationship management and accurate purchases go hand in hand (Hao, 2019). Last but not least, brand trust can also result in effective brand advocacy (Lipiäinen, 2015). When customers are "satisfied," they support the brand consistently and recommend the goods to other customers, which

produce greater outcomes. In this regard, cultivating a brand advocate is crucial to fostering a favorable experience (Holt, 2016).

A specific customer's general confidence and belief in a brand is known as brand trust. In this regard, it is clear that consumer perceptions of a brand play a significant role in shaping that brand's reputation as a whole. Accordingly, it may have an impact on operating earnings at the bottom (Rooney, 1995). According to (Rowley, 2004), the majority of customers prefer making purchases from online retailers like Amazon because they are confident in the reliability of the brand.

In a world where, thanks to technology, clients have more choice than ever before, conversely, choosing a product or service has become a lot more challenging. Buyers are willing to do their research, but what they truly need is short-handed something that will help them makes decisions about what to buy more quickly and easily. That's when brand trust can be useful. In the long run, this can result in loyalty and advocacy because customers are far more likely to conduct business with brands, they trust (Wall, 2023).

Customer Satisfaction

The term "customer satisfaction" has been studied for a long time because it is based on consumer perception. This paper investigates the potential impact of advertising on those decisions based on assumptions about how consumers choose products and services, how they make those decisions, and the potential effect of advertising on those decisions (Vanhuele & Wright, 2021). Loyal clients are more inclined to use the previous business, make purchases, and recommend them to numerous other people. Additionally, dissatisfied customers frequently visit rival e-commerce sites. Due to the fact that payments can occasionally be made with just a mouse click in traditional commerce, businesses must learn to build customer loyalty in digital services and the website on the internet frequently has a number of rivals (Al-Khayyal, Alshurideh, & Al-Kurdi, 2020).

Consumer satisfaction occurs when a product meets or exceeds a customer's expectations based on prior interactions with the product. Accordingly, consumer happiness affects opinions about whether or not a product would be chosen in the future (Liang, 2018). When a brand or product fulfills the expectations of the consumer, customer satisfaction results (Spreng, 1996). Repurchases and effective word-of-mouth marketing campaigns for the brand are fueled by the loyalty that is generated by consumer happiness. Customer satisfaction also produces mental and emotional fulfillment. This results in a contented and pleased customer (Yee & Mansori, 2016).

Customer satisfaction is defined as a person's feelings of happiness or dissatisfaction as a result of comparing a product or service's perceived performance or outcome to expectations (Kotler P. a., 2016). There are three levels of general satisfaction that customers can experience. If performance falls short of expectations, customers will be

disappointed; if performance meets expectations, customers will feel satisfied; and if performance exceeds expectations, customers will feel extremely satisfied, happy, or excited.

Consumer satisfaction refers to how pleased a consumer is with the products and services they receive from a certain company. According (Zia, 2020), a number of factors influence customer happiness.

1. The quality of a company's products or services is one of the major determinants of how satisfied customers are with them. Customers expect products and services to meet their demands, live up to their expectations, and perform as stated.
2. Customer satisfaction can also be significantly impacted by the caliber of the customer service provided. This covers elements like customer service staff members' responsiveness, the accessibility of assistance materials, and the degree of understanding and empathy shown by the personnel.
3. The cost of goods and services is yet another crucial factor in determining consumer happiness. Customers desire value for their money, and if they believe that the cost of goods or services is excessive, they may become unsatisfied.
4. Another factor that can significantly affect customer satisfaction is how simple and convenient it is to do business with a company. This covers elements like the accessibility of goods and services, the simplicity of purchasing and paying, and the timeliness and dependability of delivery (Zia, 2020).

Apparel Industry around the World

Every type of clothing is included in the garment sector, from sports to business wear, from affordable clothes to designer statement items. High inflation in 2022 caused greater problems for the global apparel sector after the market recovered in 2021 from the Export Performance Report consequences of the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic (Smith, 2023). Production costs increased, while consumer confidence decreased (Smith, 2023).

According to estimates, the worldwide apparel market will generate 1.53 trillion dollars in revenue in 2022, a little down from the previous year. However, it was anticipated that revenue would rise to more than 1.7 trillion dollars in 2023. The United States and China, which both produce far more income than any other nation, are the nations that account for the majority of this demand for clothes. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the same two nations are important players in world trade. China topped the list of countries with the highest value garment exports in 2021. In terms of the value of imported clothing, the US came in second place to the EU (Smith, 2023).

Apparel Industry in Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan clothing suppliers and manufacturers have built a solid reputation for producing high-quality clothing in an ethical manner that is trusted by well-known international fashion companies. The largest and most dynamic contributor to Sri Lanka's economy is the garment and textile manufacturing sector (EDB Sri Lanka). Sri Lankan apparel has expanded from traditional exports and tailoring designs to offering complex solutions, originality, and expertise in BPO services, fashion, R&D, and innovation centers, bridging the country's divide between developing and developed. Comparing exporting nations in the region, the nation has the greatest per-capita garment exports (EDB Sri Lanka).

The largest and most dynamic contributor to Sri Lanka's economy is the garment and textile manufacturing sector completely privately owned and run. From traditional exports and tailoring designs, Sri Lankan apparel has progressed to offer sophisticated solutions, creativity, and experience in BPO services, fashion, R&D, and innovation centers, bridging the gap between the country's developing and developed economies. Of all exporting nations in the region, the nation exports the most clothing per person (Export Performance Report, 2023).

The apparel and textile industry is the backbone of the Sri Lankan economy, generating the highest export revenue as an industry and a key contributor to the country's GDP. According to an online interview review, the garment sector contributes to over 50% of exports while providing over 350,000 direct and 700,000 indirect job opportunities through their supply chain activities (Amalean, 2022). Also, according to the statistics provided by the Export Development Board (EDB), the industry has exported over USD 3, 4 million worth of garments in 2019, mostly to key buyers such as the United States of America, European Union and Middle Eastern countries, Japan, and Australia (EDB, 2023). This explained the significance of garment exports, which was one of the major reasons for selecting the apparel industry as the base of the current study. Other than that, previous experience of the authors gained by working within the industry and the pandemic's significant impact resulting in a 40% decline in performance, also led to selecting the apparel industry (EDB, 2023).

Apparel Industry and Brand Experience in Sri Lanka

Fashion retailers have been compelled to look for cheaper costs and more flexibility as a result of fashion industry trends like declining mass manufacturing, lengthening fashion seasons, and changing supply chain features. As the internet expanded and industry sought more flexibility, an increasing number of fashion retailers began utilizing online retail platforms. Many merchants, however, are unaware of what consumers' value while making purchases through their retail channels or how to improve the shopping experience for their clients (Mahmoud, 2022). The "brand experience" is used to assess the customer's opinion of the variables that they believe are significant when making an offline or online purchase (Weijde, 2020).

Apparel industry and trust and customer satisfaction in Sri Lanka

Because the idea of brand attachment matches the idea of an effective social connection, positive constructs are a focus of current research in the psychology of marketing (Munasinghe, 2020). In the postmodern era, a consumer good may rarely be seen as distinctive and essential, and purchasers' choices focus on what promotes fulfillment, not only externally tied to rational demands, but also organically linked to hedonistic wants and trust (Magnano, 2017). Modern consumers have the ability to alter their purchase behaviors, opting to state requirements that are less logical and more ideological and symbolic.

Additionally, people who trust a company are more resistant to hearing bad things about it. As a result, through perception and experience, customers combat animosity against brands. Consumers reject unfavorable information about the brands they adore. Consumer resistance to unfavorable information is particularly influenced by the charitable aspect of brand trust and the given value aspects of brand love. In the fashion sector, brand experience, brand love, and brand trust are all significantly positively correlated, according to the research (Mahmoud, 2022). When the impact of brand satisfaction and trust on affective and continual commitment was examined, it was found that brand satisfaction only had an impact on affective commitment while brand trust had an impact on both (Ünal, 2012). These findings are consistent with those found in the literature. A satisfied client is not always a loyal customer, and it is acknowledged as such that contentment alone is not a sufficient component for commitment (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998).

Apparel industry and brand loyalty in Sri Lanka

Based on a study conducted by (Cleff, 2013) the correlation between intellectual and behavioral dimension and consumer loyalty could not be verified. The empirical study was directed towards the Adidas sportswear brand, and they conclude that a positive relationship between experience and satisfaction comes from sensory and affective dimensions while intellectual and behavioral elements represent lower significance. It can be stated that it directly affects the brand experience and brand loyalty relationship since buyers' satisfaction is manipulated between brand experience and consumer brand loyalty. (Thembiliyagoda, 2018). The selection of that particular retailer while other retailers available and being the first choice in the future do not reflect the brand loyalty of that retailer & there is a positive and strong relationship between Brand loyalty & fashion wear market in Sri Lanka (Jayasuriya, 2018).

Methodology

Research Approach and Study Design

The purpose of the present study is to examine brand experience, trust & customer satisfaction on brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Under the deductive approach, the explanatory research design engages in hypothesis

testing, which explains the nature of cause-and-effect relationships between variables. To achieve the research objectives, a model representing the relationship between brand loyalty & brand experience, trust & satisfaction was developed through hypotheses.

Survey research is defined as “the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions” (Check & Schutt, 2012). This type of research allows for different methods of recruiting participants, collecting data, and using different types of instruments. Survey research can use quantitative research strategies, qualitative research strategies, or both strategies. It is often used to describe and explore human behavior. Therefore, surveys are frequently used in social and psychological research (Singleton, 2015). Therefore, the present study will utilize a survey method for data collection.

Conceptual Framework

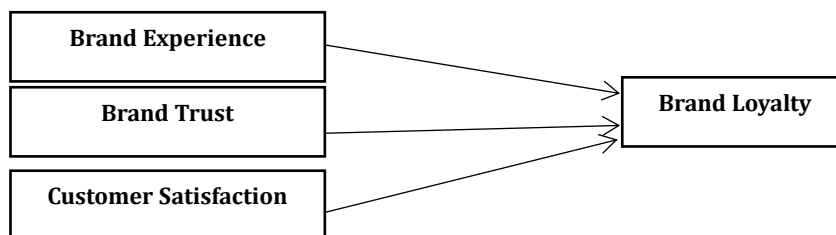


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The following hypotheses were built according to the conceptual framework above.

H1: Brand experience has a significant impact on brand loyalty with special reference to apparel industry in Sri Lanka

H2: Consumer satisfaction has a direct and positive effect on brand loyalty with special reference to apparel industry in Sri Lanka

H3: Brand trust has a direct and positive effect on brand loyalty with special reference to apparel industry in Sri Lanka

Operationalization

In order to test the hypotheses, the measurement items for each dimension need to be identified. The measurement items of the study are based on established scales from the literature. Following table shows the measurement items of each of the variable of this study together with the relevant literature sources.

Table 1
Operationalization

Variable	Measurement Items
Brand Experience	1. This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses. 2. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way

(Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L., 2009)	3. This brand does not appeal to my senses 4. This brand induces feelings and sentiments 5. I do not have strong emotions for this brand 6. This brand is an emotional brand 7. I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand 8. This brand results in bodily experiences 9. This brand is not action oriented 10. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand 11. This brand does not make me think 12. This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving
Brand trust (Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L., 2009)	1. [X]' is a brand name that meets my expectations 2. I feel confidence in [X] brand name 3. [X] is a brand name that never disappoints me 4. [X] brand name guarantees satisfaction 5. [X] brand name would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns 6. I could rely on [X] brand name to solve the problem 7. [X] brand name would make any effort to satisfy me 8. [X] brand name would compensate me in some way for the problem with the product
Customer Satisfaction (Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L., 2009)	1. I am satisfied with my decision to get this brand 2. If I had it to do all over again, I would feel differently about this brand 3. My choice to get this brand was a wise one 4. I feel bad about my decision concerning this brand 5. I think that I did the right thing when I decided to get this brand 6. I am not happy that I did what I did about this brand
Brand Loyalty (Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L., 2009)	1. After using the brand, I grow fond of it. 2. I will definitely buy this brand of product again. 3. I will definitely buy this brand of product although its price is higher than the other brand(s) of the product that offer similar benefits. 4. I will not buy other brands, when this brand is available at the store 5. I will not buy other brands if X is available at the store 6. I consider myself to be loyal to 7. X would be my first choice.

Population & Sample

The scope of study includes customers of Apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the unit of analysis of the study is an individual customer. The sample size is 384 individual customer and the sample technique is the convenience sampling technique. Nonprobability sampling, as defined by (Emma Bell, Bryman, & Bill Harley, 2022), is the practice of sampling that is not based on the standards of probability sampling. The population as a whole is not represented by nonprobability samples, although they can be useful when randomization is not practicable, as in the case of enormous populations. According to the goals and requirements of our research, it was crucial that we precisely define our target demographic. In this case, the author aims to get a sample of Sri Lankan respondents for their questionnaire. Hence, target population was mainly consumers attached with the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. For our particular study, convenience sampling was the fittest to carry out our research effectively. This method involves researchers gathering information from participants that are easily accessible (Emma Bell, Bryman, & Bill Harley, 2022). The method can be helpful when resources, time, and workforce are limited. As a standard practice in

many fields, convenience samples, such as consumer behavior, are widespread in business and management (Emma Bell, Bryman, & Bill Harley, 2022). As a result, convenience samples typically meet relevant purposive sample selection criteria (Emma Bell, Bryman, & Bill Harley, 2022). In the above explanation, the author decided to use convenience sampling because it was easy to gather information from participants who were easily accessible and willing to answer the questionnaire. Because of the limited time that I had, it was the best method to use so that It can be able to gather reliable data, and it was cheap. The sampling size of the research is another factor to consider. Even researchers cannot agree on the sample size, which needs to be mentioned. Generally, they agree that samples larger than 1000 participants have fewer errors, but this is only true for pieces smaller than this. Further, samples' absolute and relative sizes should be distinguished (Emma Bell, Bryman, & Bill Harley, 2022).

Data Collection Method

The cross-sectional survey method will be used to collect primary data from the intended sample. The survey method is the most appropriate technique to collect data from a large population in terms of cost-effectiveness and timeliness factors. To test the hypothesis, the author picked a self-completed questionnaire, also known as a survey that respondents filled out. Primary data differs from secondary data in that primary data is first-hand rather than relying on a preexisting data sample (Saunders, 2019). Respondents are not impacted by administrators' involvement since they self-referentially answer the questionnaire (Emma Bell, Bryman, & Bill Harley, 2022). By sending a questionnaire to a larger population, the sample size can be widened. Participants receive the identical set of questions without having their answers customized (Saunders, 2019). The author electronically disseminated self-completion questionnaires using social media. WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram were the platforms used.

A structure questionnaire has been constructed, including a total of 29 items. The items are measured on an itemized rating scale (five-point Likert-scale) with end points of strongly disagree and strongly agree. Google Forms to construct the questionnaire and these questions were designed to answer the research question and test the hypothesis. The language that has been chosen is English. It was designed with an easy-to-follow layout so that participants would have a pleasant experience answering the questionnaire. Each chapter is introduced with a short headline and questions are arranged according to topics. A vertical scale was designed by the author to reduce the chance of participants entering incorrect answers (Emma Bell, Bryman, & Bill Harley, 2022).

Data Analysis Method

There are three steps involved in data analysis, namely: measuring sample profile, testing the goodness of data and testing the hypotheses. Frequency analysis is used to

measure sample profile. The reliability and validity of the measurement items are administered to test the goodness of data. In here, factor analysis, construct reliability, average variance extracted, Cronbach's alpha values and discriminant validity are tested. In order to test the hypotheses, multiple regression analysis is used.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 2
Age group of the respondents

Age group	Frequency	%
Bellow 25	101	26.3
25-35	220	57.3
35-45	51	13.3
Above 45	12	3.1
Total	384	100.0

This table provides information about the proportion of individuals in each age group, allowing for a clear understanding of the age distribution within the population. There are 101 respondents in the "Below 25" category, making up 26.3% of the overall population. 220 respondents, or 57.3% of the total population, are in the "25-35" age group. 30% of the total population, or 51 respondents, are in the "35-45" age group. There are 12 respondents in the "Above 45" group overall, or 3.1% of the population. There are 384 respondents in total within the population.

Table 3
Gender Status

	Frequency	%
Male	194	50.5
Female	190	49.5
Total	384	100.0

This data shows the distribution of certain attribute genders among 384 respondents in total. Nineteen four males, or fifty-five percent of the total, are found in the data. However, 190 of the population are female, making about 49.5% of the total. Representing the complete sample, the overall percentage sums up to 100.0%.

Table 4
Highest Education Level

	Frequency	%
O/L	8	2.1
A/L	27	7.0
Diploma	168	43.8
Undergraduate	107	27.9
Graduate	64	16.7
Other	10	2.6
Total	384	100.0

O/L (Ordinary Level) is the highest education level for 8 respondents in the sample population, representing 2.1% of the total group. A/L (Advanced Level) is the highest education level for 27 respondents in the sample population, representing 7.0% of the total group. Diploma is the highest education level for 168 respondents in the sample population, representing 43.8% of the total group. 107 respondents in the sample population, representing 27.9% of the total group, are undergraduates. Graduates are at the highest education level for 64 respondents in the sample population, representing 16.7% of the total group. Other educational levels include the 10 respondents of the sample population & it is representing 2.6% of the total group.

Table 5
Working Status

	Frequency	%
Unemployed	70	18.2
Self Employed	78	20.3
Employed	236	61.5
Total	384	100.0

This graph demonstrates that the majority of respondents (61.5%) are employed, with self-employed people coming in second (20.3%). Those without jobs comprise the least of the category (18.2%).

Table 6
Monthly Income

	Frequency	%
Bellow 20000	95	24.7
20000-35000	29	7.6
35000-50000	144	37.5
Above 50000	116	30.2
Total	384	100.0

This data gives a general overview of how respondents' monthly income is distributed. 24.7% of the respondents made less than Rs.20, 000 per month on average. The percentage of respondents who earned between Rs.20, 000 and Rs.35, 000 per month was lower (7.6%). Between Rs.35, 000 and Rs.50, 000 per month was the largest group of responders (37.5%). A small percentage of respondents (30.2%) earned more than Rs.50, 000 each month.

Table 7
Apparel Purchasing Status

	Frequency	%
Weekly	46	12.0
Monthly	289	75.3
Yearly	23	6.0
Other	26	6.8
Total	384	100.0

12.0% of the respondents purchase clothing on a weekly basis, as indicated by the table. This implies that they make a weekly purchase of apparel. 75.3% of the respondents said they buy clothes once a month on average. This suggests that they make one clothes purchase per month. The percentage of responders who buy clothing annually is very low 6.0%. This indicates that they make a yearly purchase of apparel.

Furthermore, 6.8% of the respondents mentioned purchasing clothing at other frequencies not shown in the table. Generally, this information represents how frequently members of this group buy clothing.

Table 8
Considering about brand loyalty when purchasing

	Frequency	%
Yes	384	93.9
No	25	6.1
Total	409	100.0

It appears that a majority of people, around 93.9%, consider brand loyalty when making purchasing decisions. Only a small percentage, about 6.1%, say they do not take brand loyalty into account. It's great to see that many respondents value and prioritize the brands they are loyal to. Brand loyalty can often be an indicator of trust and satisfaction with a particular brand's products or services.

Table 9
Method of Purchasing

	Frequency	%
Physically	297	77.3
Online	48	12.5
Both	39	10.2
Total	384	100.0

Among the 384 respondents, 297 respondents (77.3%) said they would rather make purchases physically. This suggests that among the respondents, physical shopping is the most popular option. Conversely, 48 respondents (12.5%) said they would rather make online purchases. This implies that a lower percentage of the respondents still favor the conventional approach of online visiting a business or place to complete their purchases. Furthermore, 39 respondents (10.2%) said they combine offline and an online method for their purchases. Overall, this information sheds light on respondents' preferences for their mode of payment, with internet shopping being the most often selected choice.

Brand experience

Table 10
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.849
	Approx. Chi-Square	1672.770
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	21
	Sig.	.000

Brand trust

Table 11
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.904
	Approx. Chi-Square	2413.503
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	15
	Sig.	.000

Customer Satisfaction

Table 12
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.830
	Approx. Chi-Square	1825.890
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	10
	Sig.	.000

Brand loyalty

Table 13
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.868
	Approx. Chi-Square	2248.293
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	15
	Sig.	.000

The brand experience data is adequate for factor analysis, as shown by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) score of sampling adequacy of 0.849. There is a statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.001$) according to the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, indicating that the variables are well-matched. Indicating a significant correlation with brand experience, the component matrix displays high loadings on the first component for each of the brand experience items (BE1, BE2, BE3, BE4, BE5, BE6, BE7). Factor analysis is appropriate for this data, as indicated by the KMO measure of sampling adequacy for brand trust, which is 0.904. There appears to be a correlation between the variables, as indicated by the statistical significance of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$). The brand trust elements (BT1, BT2, BT3, BT4, BT5, BT6) all exhibit substantial loadings on the first component of the component matrix, demonstrating their strong correlation with brand trust. The KMO measure of customer satisfaction sampling adequacy is 0.830, meaning that factor analysis may be performed on the data. There may be a link between the variables, as indicated by the statistically significant results of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$). All of the customer satisfaction items (CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4, and CS5) have large loadings on the first component, as shown by the component matrix, demonstrating their strong correlation with customer satisfaction. The data is appropriate for factor analysis, as shown by the KMO measure of sampling adequacy for brand loyalty of 0.868. There may be a link between the variables, as indicated by the statistically significant results of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.001$). According to the component matrix, all of the brand loyalty items (BL1, BL2, BL3, BL4, BL5, and BL6) had high loadings on the first component, demonstrating their strong correlation with brand loyalty. All in all, these findings point to the importance of consumer pleasure, brand experience, and brand trust in influencing brand loyalty. There is a substantial correlation between these factors and brand loyalty, as evidenced by the high loadings of the items on their respective components.

Reliability Analysis

Table 14
Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	No of Items
Brand experience	.954	.955	07
Brand Trust	.785	.747	06
Customer Satisfaction	.938	.923	05

The degree to which the items in a scale or questionnaire measure the same underlying construct is determined by the Cronbach's Alpha measure of internal consistency reliability. Greater internal consistency is indicated by higher scores, which range from 0 to 1. The three variables in this instance customer satisfaction, brand experience, and brand trust all have reasonably high Cronbach's Alpha values, which suggests strong internal consistency. It is generally accepted that values greater than 0.7 are acceptable, however higher values are ideal. It is significant to observe that for each variable, the Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items is marginally higher or lower than the Cronbach's Alpha based on raw items. This shows that the internal consistency of the scales was not considerably affected by standardizing the items.

Table 15
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.248	.357		0.693	0.042		
Brand experience	0.432	.021	.554	4.299	0.000	0.528	1.89
Brand trust	.112	.029	.036	.407	.012	0.252	3.97
Customer Satisfaction	.279	.023	.277	1.041	.037	0.374	2.68

As shown in Table, the p-values of brand experience, brand trust and customer satisfaction were less than 0.05. Hence, these factors are significant determinants of brand loyalty of the apparel industry. Among these factors, brand experience recorded the highest beta value (beta = 0.432) and Customer satisfaction recorded the second highest value (beta = 0.279). Brand trust has the least effect on tea export competitiveness (beta = 0.112).

The overall results of the multiple regression analysis and the study hypotheses are presented below.

Table 16
Results Summary

Hypotheses	Results
H1: Brand experience has a significant impact on brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka	Supported
H2: Customer satisfaction has a significant impact on brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka	Supported

H3: Brand trust has a significant impact on brand loyalty with special reference to the apparel industry in Sri Lanka

Supported

Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of the findings of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of brand experience, brand trust and customer satisfaction on brand loyalty, particularly in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. Hypotheses were formulated and tested using data analysis.

This hypothesis was supported by the analysis, which showed that a positive brand experience plays a critical role in fostering brand loyalty. Consumers who have a favorable experience with a brand are more likely to exhibit brand loyalty. The analysis supported this hypothesis, suggesting that establishing trust with customers is essential to building brand loyalty. When customers trust a brand, they are more likely to be loyal to it. The effect of customer satisfaction on brand loyalty was also investigated, and the analysis supported this hypothesis. It implies that satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit loyalty towards a brand.

Overall, the results show that brand experience, brand trust and customer satisfaction are important factors influencing brand loyalty in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. The findings highlight the importance of creating positive experiences, building trust and ensuring customer satisfaction to foster brand loyalty in this specific industry context. Businesses operating in Sri Lanka's apparel industry can use these insights to develop effective strategies to increase brand loyalty and gain a competitive edge.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of customer satisfaction, brand experience, and brand trust on brand loyalty in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. The study's findings validated the three hypotheses, showing that customer satisfaction, brand experience, and brand trust all had a major and beneficial impact on brand loyalty. The study's conclusions have a significant impact on Sri Lanka's garment sector.

First, giving customers a satisfying and memorable experience may boost their commitment to clothing businesses, according to the positive correlation shown between brand experience and brand loyalty. This emphasizes how important it is to provide clients with distinctive and interesting experiences, such customized services, creative marketing initiatives, and top-notch customer support.

The second finding of the study was that brand loyalty and brand trust were significantly and favorably correlated. This underscores the need to develop trust with clients in order to foster enduring loyalty. To win over clients, Sri Lankan clothing businesses should concentrate on developing a reputation for dependability, honesty, and keeping their word. The study concluded by showing a strong and favorable correlation between brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction. This determines how

crucial it is to fulfill client expectations and guarantee their contentment with the clothing items and amenities. Prioritizing consumer feedback, responding quickly to problems, and always raising customer satisfaction levels are all important for apparel firms.

Overall, the findings of this study provide valuable insights for the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Apparel brands can develop strong brand loyalty among their customers by focusing on enhancing brand experience, building trust and ensuring customer satisfaction. This can lead to customer retention, positive word of mouth and ultimately increased business performance in the competitive apparel market.

Implications of the study

The study's conclusions can be used to emphasize how crucial it is to give consumers in Sri Lanka's apparel sector a favorable brand experience. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, including by offering individualized shopping experiences, premium items, and top-notch customer support. Clothes firms may be able to boost customer satisfaction and cultivate brand loyalty by emphasizing the improvement of brand experience. The relevance of brand trust in Sri Lanka's apparel business can be clarified by this research. Building trust with consumers is essential to sustaining brand loyalty over time. By keeping consistent product quality, keeping their word, and being open and honest about their business procedures, companies can concentrate on developing trust. Apparel companies may be able to increase consumer loyalty and obtain a competitive advantage in the market by putting a strong emphasis on brand trust.

This study highlights how crucial customer happiness is to foster brand loyalty in Sri Lanka's apparel sector. Businesses can raise customer satisfaction levels by continuously meeting or surpassing customer expectations. Achieving this can be accomplished by taking into account elements like product quality, cost, ease of use, and post-purchase support. Clothing firms may be able to boost repeat business and brand loyalty by meeting the needs of their customers first. This study might recommend the use of loyalty programs as a tactic to improve brand loyalty in Sri Lanka's apparel sector. Customers that regularly interact with a company can be eligible for incentives, awards, and special benefits through loyalty programs. Apparel firms have the opportunity to enhance customer retention, foster brand advocacy, and fortify brand loyalty through the implementation of efficient loyalty programs.

In Sri Lanka's apparel business, this study can demonstrate how technology can enhance brand loyalty. Technology may be used by businesses to improve consumer interactions, tailor marketing campaigns, and improve the entire brand experience. AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants, for instance, may handle consumer inquiries, make recommendations that are tailored to each individual, and streamline the purchasing process. Fashion brands may be able to increase customer loyalty and maintain their competitive edge by adopting technology. Additionally, the significance

of developing strong emotional bonds with consumers in Sri Lanka's apparel sector can be emphasized by this study. Businesses may build stronger relationships with consumers by evoking strong emotional responses in their audience through marketing campaigns, brand values, and storytelling. Positive word-of-mouth recommendations and heightened brand loyalty can result from this emotional connection. Furthermore, this study can emphasize the necessity of ongoing development in Sri Lanka's apparel sector in order to preserve and strengthen brand loyalty. Businesses should evaluate client input on a frequent basis, keep an eye on industry developments, and modify their approach as necessary. Clothing firms may remain relevant, fulfill changing consumer expectations, and cultivate enduring brand loyalty by consistently enhancing their offerings.

In conclusion, there are a number of potential ramifications for this study on consumer satisfaction, brand experience, and brand loyalty in Sri Lanka's garment sector. Apparel companies can potentially strengthen brand loyalty and achieve sustainable growth in the Sri Lankan market by focusing on improving customer satisfaction, building brand trust, leveraging technology, creating loyalty programs, fostering emotional connections, and embracing continuous improvement.

Further Research Suggestions

Future researchers can improve the study's strength by increasing the sample size and involving individuals from more places. Think of including a more varied group of participants in terms of age, gender, income bracket, and geography. This study aims to offer a more thorough comprehension of the variables that impact brand loyalty within the garment sector. Comparing the garment industry's performance in Sri Lanka with that of other nations or areas would help to increase the findings' generalizability. This comparative study can provide insight into any particular elements or cultural influences that are particular to Sri Lanka and may have an impact on brand loyalty. Furthermore, analyzing and contrasting the brand loyalty dynamics of various Sri Lankan businesses might yield insightful information.

Conclusion

According to the study, in Sri Lanka's apparel business, customer satisfaction, brand trust, and brand experience all positively correlate with brand loyalty. According to this, consumers are more likely to show brand loyalty when they believe a company is reliable, have good experience with the company, and are happy with their interactions. In order to promote brand loyalty, brand trust is essential. Consumers who have faith in a brand are more likely to stick with it over time, making repeat purchases and spreading good word-of-mouth recommendations. Transparent communication, ethical business practices, and the regular delivery of high-quality products are the foundations of trust. Brand loyalty is influenced by brand experience as well. Emotional ties are forged between customers and positive experiences like tailored conversations, easy shopping, and special encounters. Customer satisfaction is

increased by these encounters, which also strengthens their brand loyalty. Another important factor that promotes brand loyalty is customer satisfaction. Consumer loyalty to a brand is increased when they are pleased with all aspects of their experience, including the quality of the product, the customer service, and the support provided after the purchase. Remaining loyal to a brand is more likely when clients are satisfied and are less likely to switch to competitors.

The study's conclusions emphasize how critical it is to concentrate on customer satisfaction, brand experience, and brand trust in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. Companies should place a high priority on developing trust through ethical business practices, honest communication, and constant delivery of high-quality products if they want to increase brand loyalty. Additionally, they ought to make an investment in fostering favorable brand experiences through interaction personalization, enhanced shopping experiences, and memorable moments. Furthermore, businesses ought to make an effort to go above and beyond the expectations of their clients and guarantee elevated degrees of client contentment via superior product quality, client support, and after-sale assistance. It is significant to remember that the specific setting of Sri Lanka's garment industry served as the foundation for this result. To validate these results in other industries or regions, more investigation and analysis could be needed. That being said, the study's findings regarding the favorable correlation between brand trust, brand experience, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty offer significant business opportunities for Sri Lankan apparel businesses.

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