

Enhancing Brand Loyalty through Brand Experience: The Roles of Brand Authenticity and Social Presence

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Abstract

Enhancing brand loyalty has become a challenge for managers; therefore, this study aims to investigate whether brand experience, through brand authenticity, contributes to greater customer loyalty. Further, the study examines brand authenticity as a mediator and social presence as a conditional variable. For this study, the data were collected from 177 customers of various brands through ‘Google Forms’ on a convenience basis. The results revealed that brand experience, both directly and indirectly (through authenticity), contributes to brand loyalty. Moreover, social presence moderates the relationship between brand experience and brand authenticity. The findings have significant implications for the managers.

Keywords: Brand experience, brand authenticity, social presence, brand loyalty

Introduction:

In the modern digital era, consumers can engage with brands through the growing presence of social media platforms, where they share reviews, opinions, feedback, and personal experiences (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024). There are many brands considered experts and market leaders in their domains, and consumers' experiences with these brands are a key source of attraction, driven by emotions and having a significant impact on consumers' attitudes and behaviours (Safeer et al., 2021). Understanding consumers' experience with the brand and how they perceive it—and how to improve it for the consumer's best experience—has become an important topic with the growth of online purchasing and digital platforms (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024). Business which are connected to consumers and maintained the strong and consistent connection with them, are well known about the technological advancement in the sphere of marketing and getting many benefits such as ability to gain competitive edge through more precise segmentation, fulfillment of needs of customer, more profound understanding of accurate preferences of customers, data analytics, insights of customers behavior and expectations (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022).

Improving the brand experience and its authenticity are key to building a strong, emotionally rich consumer-brand connection, increasing buying choices in a supportive way, shaping consumers' brand perception, creating a memorable, rewarding experience, and building an enduring customer relationship. (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024). To increase continued purchase behaviour, companies are investing in and prioritising the delivery of the best, high-quality experience and value to their customers (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). Many studies examine how brand experience influences brand loyalty, with various mediating and moderating variables (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). Authenticity in

branding promotes relationships based on emotions, cultivating consumer loyalty and increasing emotional commitment to the brand because the consumer knows the brand as honest, real, and transparent, and aligns with its stated values (Shahzad et al., 2025). To increase and enhance sustainable competitive advantage and participation in the company, brand authenticity is an important strategic focus for many organisations, driving consumer engagement and consistent consumer value, and laying the foundation for brand loyalty in a sustainable and meaningful way (Shahzad et al., 2025). Now a days, consumers deal with a lot of variety of products and services which is driven through the markets and business continuously provide different offering to their consumers to attract them to fulfill their needs which is changing with the passage of time and maintain the competitive edge and as result consumers choose does not only basis of price and functions of products and services but also trust and perception which is built based on experience which is done positively and these thing lead to profitable and uniqueness in the market. (Khan & Fatima, 2021). Authenticity is assisting to brand for the building uniqueness and different from other brands in the market and relationship with its customers when brand is authentic and genuine toward its promise and value and strong and deep relationship and also build the sense of trust and originality and this increase and improve the bond between brand and audience and with the passage of time reliability convert into loyalty and customers stay on the specific brand and support to specific brand and develop brand consumer connections in the market where competition is high and past studies have directed when brand focus on their authenticity and how consumer trust them as genuinely and which can highly improve how to more authentic which is considered the through the consumers of brand. These things increase trust and strong connections, thereby strengthening the brand's commitment to authenticity and fostering consumer trust and engagement on a long-term basis (Panyekar & Marsasi, 2024). In today's complex market, consumers struggle to find honest, genuinely authentic brands in their practices; this is because authenticity is a top priority in consumer demand for transparency and sincerity, as well as in consumer decision-making (Safeer et al., 2021). From different service domains, such as travel experience and accommodation, to the physical retail environment and brand, consumers now seek authenticity in everything, including a connection to values and a sense of honesty and realness (Safeer et al., 2021). There is one thing that exposes the authenticity of the brand's role in building brand loyalty: the increased craving of consumers for an authentic experience. This craving not only seeks authenticity but also seeks to show the development of an emotional bond (Safeer et al., 2021). Consumers' perceptions of brands are based on interest, love, and behavioural reactions, and these dimensions collectively reflect how consumers explain the engagement and value of brands (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). Customers associate the brand positively after the experience; they are more loyal and satisfied, more likely to advocate for the brand, and more likely to continue buying behaviour (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). The bases of brand loyalty consist of consumer assessments that support brands, including seeing the brand deliver on its promise, consistently delivering on its promise, providing innovative and problem-solving products and services, and perceiving the brand's dedication to its values (Deng et al., 2024). The success of a company is measured through the lens of brand loyalty, and this loyalty does not ensure customer engagement, customer satisfaction, or customer lifetime value; it is also significantly discussed in terms of profitability and market share, two important keys to business success. (Bae & Kim, 2023).

Prior studies emphasise the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty via brand trust and brand perception, which are used as mediators; however, there are few studies on the brand experience effect on brand loyalty, and a research gap exists regarding the impact of different moderators and mediators (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024). However, foundation of brand loyalty depends upon the experience of brand and authenticity of brand, this study focusses and fulfill the research gap through how the four dimension of brand experience which consist of multiple aspects i.e sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual experience or dimensions effects on brand loyalty, brand authenticity explain the relationship as a mediator variable and social presence moderates the relationship between experience and authenticity as a moderator variable.

Attribution theory explains how individual cognitive mechanisms and the cycle of mind account for

individuals' actions (Safeer et al., 2021). However, this explains how they take to the allocation of reasons and also focus on the judgment of reason based on perceived intention and motivation. Consumers look at the details and information about the brand's actions, primarily based on signals from its communication, activities, and replies within their settings. People explain actions and outcomes and respond to those environments by describing what has occurred and why the brand behaves in a specific way (Safeer et al., 2021). Customers purchase products and services and respond to the brand, attributing it to high quality, more features than competitors, innovation, and customer centricity. Consumers perceive authenticity when a brand consistently delivers on its promise and fulfils the value it delivers to its customers. Authenticity plays an important role in building those perceptions, fostering the connection of emotions. Authenticity builds trust and fosters consumer loyalty. In online shopping, how consumers make attributions through external factors and the presence on social sites is important for a brand, as it helps maintain visibility, directly interact with consumers, and prompt more positive reactions and connections. These things increase or decrease the positive attribution made by consumers. Attributes of experience, positive framing, and authenticity related to the brand lead to stronger loyalty. These things encourage consumers to purchase more often. Experience, authenticity, and presence on social sites are the reasons people show loyalty toward brands.

Literature and Hypotheses Development

Brand Experience and Brand Authenticity

Brand experience is a personal inner reaction, like perceptions, feelings, and thinking and behavioral actions and perceptions, and these actions are personal, which consumers have a deeply rooted connection with a different brand (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). The brand's authenticity may be presented in a positive or negative light, depending on its experience and quality, which in turn depend on its activities (Safeer et al., 2021). Consumers look at a brand as an honest and authentic to its value and consumers is brand authenticity and consumer views that brands do not only show image but also provide what they promise and if brand fail to meet the expectation of the consumers related to it or does not present consistency then consumers perceive related to brand as an unauthentic brand (Shahzad et al., 2025).

Authenticity does not build in isolation, but it develops in the brand based on the aspects of experience of the brand, such as sensory, behavioural, intellectual and affective and profitability and consistency in growth increase due to the outcome of the brand experience, which is important for the authenticity and these dimensions are the perceptions related to the brand in the mind of consumers. Also, authenticity is not only a key element but also a driver of business activities, success, achievement, and performance, as well as of aligning the core value and messaging with an authentic, factual basis (Safeer et al., 2021). Similarly, the sensory aspect of experience explains consumers' feelings and knowledge, creating strong brand memories and images, and shaping cognitive awareness and emotional ties to it. However, the behavioural aspect shows how consumers act, connect with, and engage with brands, such as through patterns, advocacy, and participation in brand activities, which is considered the intellectual aspect of the brand experience. This aspect describes the brand's ability to inspire customers to think positively about it. This is also a challenge to consumers' thinking, derived from the storytelling and affective aspects of experience, referring to feelings arising from a relationship with the brand, which are the sources of potential consumers' brand allocation (Bae & Kim, 2023).

H1: Does brand experience affect brand authenticity?

Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty

Positively interacting with the brand plays an important role and creates a satisfactory, enjoyable result. These factors do not influence only immediate satisfaction but also consumers' willingness to

purchase again and to achieve enjoyable results, and these interactions lead to strong connections with the brands, which, in turn, contribute to brand loyalty (Bae & Kim, 2023). It is expected that the experience is a learning process that helps consumers understand, retain, and remember through practical involvement, such as interaction with products, services, or brands. This experience is also considered a personal, internal response by consumers (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). The previous studies show that the loyalty of brand pressure element, which is a more holistic and central aspect, such as experience of brand, authenticity in brand understanding, these factors increase the impact in which way consumer ready and stable the loyalty regarding the particular brand in the competitive market and how to maintain relationship with the brand (Yu et al., 2020). However, when consumers interact negatively, such as quality of product or services provided to customers, that falls short of expectations, disconnect with customer and does not engage with customers and breaks the emotional flow established through the previous connection, leading to weakened trust, satisfaction and brand loyalty (Bae & Kim, 2023). satisfied consumers, make the repeat purchase, enjoying rewarding experience, share feedback and increase the sales with the word of mouth to the others in positive way and if dissatisfied customers keep away from them and choose the alternative brands which are good and provide better quality, feature and price from them and also this cycle of satisfaction and bond make through the emotion and purchasing on the frequent basis develop self-force that involved in the brand loyalty (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). The customer shows loyalty by purchasing repeatedly, avoiding switching brands, and maintaining a relationship with the preferred brand, indicating a strong choice and trust on the consumer's part (Murshed et al., 2023).

H2: Does brand experience have an impact on brand loyalty?

Brand Authenticity and Brand Loyalty

Loyalty to a brand reflects how consumers stick with the product rather than switch to another brand that offers the same features, quality, or pricing. This shows buying habits: more than one-time buying, or when they feel like buying something, their priority is the same brand, indicating a psychological and emotional attachment that influences continuous purchasing of the same brand rather than competitors (Shahzad et al., 2025). Some researchers hold that authentic brands build trust by consistently delivering on their promises to consumers, as many studies have shown (Kumar & Kaushal, 2022). Consumers are more loyal and have a stronger connection with the brand because they feel that it is authentic. They sense brands are true to values, honest in communication real and consistent in promise of delivery, they develop a deep, strong and loving and understandable connection with the brands often design through love, respect, transparency and true and also authenticity in brand increase this connection of consumers with the brand and connections contributes in the loyalty toward brands (Shahzad et al., 2025). When a brand builds an experience on a beneficial basis, aligned with consumers' perceptions, it can improve brand loyalty, leading consumers to use it consistently and be urged to continue using it (Gazi et al., 2025). Loyal customers highly affect the profitability of a business through repeated purchases and product promotion through word of mouth, reviews, feedback, and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok and Instagram, and brand loyalty serves as a highly profitable asset that emphasises the success on a long-term basis (Uysal & Okumus, 2021). Loyal customers build the company's positive reputation, enhance the public image, build trust, support other potential buyers, and serve as brand ambassadors, advocating the brand's products and services (Shahzad et al., 2025). Brand experience affects brand loyalty by triggering emotional responses, building a deep, personal connection with customers, creating a lasting impression, and strengthening the brand's love. It also integrates on a deep, personal level (Gazi et al., 2025).

H3: Does brand authenticity have an impact on brand loyalty?

Brand Authenticity Explains the Relationship between Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty

Authenticity demands that anyone who performs an act do so with their true self, in line with who he is. Individuals are focused on authenticity when the action is performed through the individual; these

actions are derived from feelings and thinking, and these feelings and thinking, which have intrinsic or inner value, are genuine, real, transparent, and honest in every situation (Ting et al., 2021). Iglesias et al. (2019) indicate that the physical relationship arises when consumers of a brand participate steadily through the purchasing, using, and experiencing of products and services, first, and on the opposite side. They further indicated that non-physical relationships arise when consumers form the feeling of a brand through external sources like advertising, promotional messages, feedback and media coverage, and also other supporting elements related to the brand, and these two relationships combine to shape perceptions of consumers and have an impact on the overall connections with the brand in a long-lasting way.

H4: Does brand authenticity explain the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty?

Moderating Role of Social Presence between Brand Experience and Brand Authenticity

Presence on social forums play a significant role to crafting the quality and improving of connection on the online platforms specifically in the environment of online purchasing settings and explains how much people feel, observe and analyze other which are truly during the online talking conversation and communication, developing the conversation feel more real, authentic and personal and experience does not happen only based on physical interaction but happen on the bases of internet and media called indirect interaction (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). Some scholars have the view that that consumers satisfaction does not only depend upon the experience of the brand but also depend on the other presence at social forum on the other’s social availability such as feedback and reviews and word of mouth and social presence impact on experience of e-shopping and also social presence is measurable impact. It affects consumer experience and related activities, such as product and service use, and people have a better shopping experience when they observe rather than talk to others. However, some other scholars explain that customers feel good when social presence is added to online shopping. Similarly, some scholars hold that building a strong connection between how customers experience a brand and how real, authentic, genuine, and relatable it feels is achieved through enhancing social presence (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024). This presence shows the development of comfort and a feel-good experience grounded in emotion, relationships rooted in psychology, the mind, and interaction in the digital environment, improving overall customer connection and engagement on a personal level.

H5: Does social presence moderate the relationship between brand experience and brand authenticity?

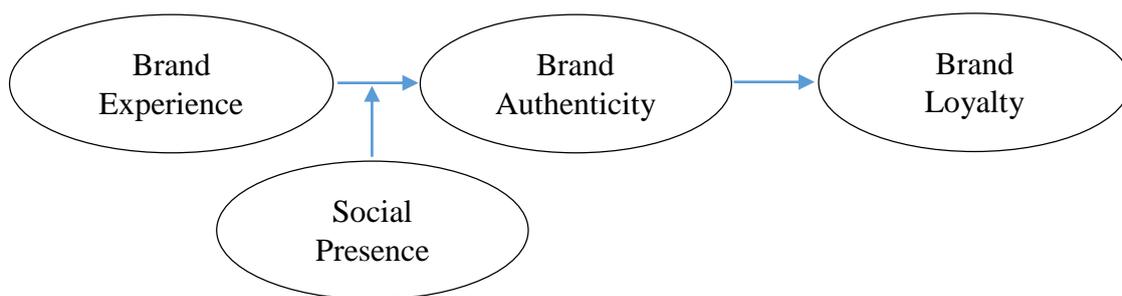


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Sample design and data collection

The quantitative research design was adopted for this study... The time horizon was cross-sectional, as the data were collected at a single point in time. Data was collected in a non-contrived environment.

The unit of analysis was individual consumers of various brands in Lahore, Pakistan (e.g., Sapphire, Khaadi, Limelight, Junaid Jamshed, Almirah), as enhancing loyalty has become a necessity for all brands (Consultance, 2025).

Specifically, the data were collected using ‘Google Forms’, with online links sent to respondents via WhatsApp and/or email (at their convenience). They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses after a brief explanation of the study's purpose. Using the items-to-response ratio, the study approached 400 customers on a convenience basis; 185 responded, but only 177 were included in the final analysis.

Measures

The research questionnaire consisted of four key variables, each measured using multiple items. Accordingly, brand experience was measured using an 8-item scale adopted from Safeer et al. (2021). Similarly, a five-item scale was used to measure brand authenticity, adapted from a study by Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2024). A 4-item scale was used to measure social presence, which was adopted from Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2024). To measure brand loyalty, a three-item scale was used, adopted from a study by Deng et al. (2024). All these items are measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results

There is no missing value due to the option enabled in ‘Google Forms’ that respondents must answer every question. The number of responses decreased due to outlier testing, and the stem-and-leaf method was used. Accordingly, a total of 177 responses were received.

4.1 Data Normality and reliability:

This study used skewness and kurtosis values to identify normality; the cutoff values were ± 1 and ± 3 , respectively. The results show that all values are within the specified limit; therefore, the data is free of any normality issues. Cronbach’s alpha showed that the reliability scores for brand experience, brand authenticity, and brand loyalty were above 0.70, but social presence had a reliability score of 0.69, which was acceptable.

4.2 Correlational analysis

The values of correlation are presented in Table 1, which shows that brand experience is positively correlated with brand authenticity ($r = 0.52, p < 0.01$), social presence ($r = 0.45, p < 0.01$) and brand loyalty ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$). Similarly, brand authenticity is positively correlated with social presence ($r = 0.59, p < 0.01$) and brand loyalty ($r = 0.50, p < 0.01$). Finally, social presence is positively correlated with brand loyalty ($r = 0.43, p < 0.01$).

Table 4.1: Correlation analysis

	1	2	3	4
1-Brand Experience	1			
2-Brand Authenticity	0.52**	1		
3-Social Presence	0.45**	0.59**	1	
4-Brand Loyalty	0.40**	0.50**	0.43**	1

Hypothesis testing

The value in Table 2 shows that brand experience positively influences brand authenticity ($\beta = 0.53, p < 0.01$) and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.49, p < 0.01$). Similarly, brand authenticity positively influences brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.61, p < 0.01$). These results are consistent with the study's hypotheses H1-H3.

Table 4.2: Results of regression

	β	SE	P	Hypothesis
Brand Experience \rightarrow Brand Authenticity	0.53	0.066	0.000	H1 is accepted
Brand Experience \rightarrow Brand Loyalty	0.49	0.086	0.000	H2 is accepted
Brand Authenticity \rightarrow Brand Loyalty	0.61	0.079	0.000	H3 is accepted

This study applied hierarchical regression to examine the mediating role of brand authenticity in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty to value. Table 3 shows that, in the first step, demographic variables were added to control for their effects. In the second step, the brand experience regressed with the brand loyalty, and it showed a significant positive impact ($\beta = 0.49, p < 0.01$). In the third step, brand authenticity was added and regressed with brand loyalty, and it showed a significant positive impact ($\beta = 0.49, p < 0.01$). These results showed that brand authenticity partially mediates the relationship between the brand experience and brand authenticity.

Table 4.3: Hierarchical regression for mediation

Variables	M1(β)	M2(β)	M3(β)
Control Variable			
Gender	0.275*	0.261*	0.258*
Age	-0.009	0.064	0.064
Education	0.079	0.019	0.011
Profession	0.099	0.050	0.032
R ²	0.031		
Independent Variable			
Brand Experience		0.49**	0.23*
R ²		0.185	
ΔR		0.154	
Mediating Variable			
Brand Authenticity			0.49**
R ²			0.304
ΔR			0.119

Finally, to examine the moderation of social presence, the study computed an interaction term between the independent and moderator variables and applied a two-step hierarchical regression (Table 4). The values in step 1 reveal that both brand experience ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.01$) and social presence ($\beta = 0.42, p < 0.01$) positively influence brand authenticity. Further, in step 2, the interaction term (BE \times SP) reduced the effect of brand experience on social presence ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.05$), confirming the moderation and supporting H5.

Table 4.4: Moderation analysis

	$\beta(p)$	$\beta(p)$
Step 1		
Brand Experience (BE)	0.32 (0.00)	
Social Presence (SP)	0.42 (0.00)	
Step 2		
BE \times SP		0.13 (0.03)

Discussion and Implications

Significant concerns about how improving the experience of customers and leading to the loyalty of the brand are not thoroughly discussed because consumers have different types of experiences; however, brands try to improve their quality, offers and new features to solve key issues of experience and expectation associated with consumers (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2024). Usually, brand authenticity, as a mediator, is associated with brand experience (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2022). In this study, brand experience is an independent variable, authenticity is a mediator, social presence is a moderator, and brand loyalty is a dependent variable.

In this 1st hypothesis (H1) which is brand experience has an impact on the brand authenticity was accepted which is also supported to a previous research study conducted by Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2024), it explains that experience in positive way make the consumers to think about the brand related satisfaction, commitment, honest and authentic experience which has significant impact on the authenticity as it has also approved in this study.

According to our results, the second hypothesis (H2), which states that brand experience affects brand loyalty, is accepted, and a significant positive impact is found, as previously reported by Akoglu and Ozbek (2022).

The results of this study also shows the impact of brand authenticity on brand loyalty in the service retail and food and apparel industry hence the 3rd hypothesis is also accepted and have significant positive impact and the findings are the similar with a study conducted by Shahzad et al. (2025) which suggested that brand which is genuine and honest and authentic, arise the action positively and increase the appreciation from the consumer side.

The fourth hypothesis (H4), which explains the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty, predicts partial mediation by brand authenticity, with the effect being significantly positive. That brand experience has a significantly positive effect.

Finally, the study noted that social presence weakens the association between brand experience and authenticity (H5). Rich brand experiences are known to enhance perceptions of authenticity. However, social presence, whether high or low, can tilt brand experiences toward the staged side, making them feel more like performances rather than genuine brand expressions, arousing scepticism and irritation toward the brand (Brinson et al., 2024). Interfaces or agents that are socially present raise expectations regarding human warmth and sincerity. When social expectations are unfulfilled, positive experiences are deemed inauthentic (Li et al., 2025). Moreover, social presence can amplify inconsistencies across touchpoints (context collapse), thereby further diluting authenticity. Thus, social presence can, rather than strengthen, dilute the credibility of experiential brand cues and brand experience.

Theoretical Contribution

Firstly, a previous study examined brand experience and brand loyalty through variables such as perceived quality and brand trust (Deng et al., 2024). However, this study explains brand experience and brand loyalty through brand authenticity as a mediator and social presence as a moderator. When users of a brand use it and feel satisfied, they build an emotional connection and trust in the brand, and assume it is real, accurate, and genuinely authentic. The theory of attribution leads to a positive brand experience when a brand is associated with enjoyable things, mainly when it performs every activity consistently and provides consistent service.

Users of authentic brands feel good, have a positive experience, connect with the brand on an emotional level, and love it. Presence on social sites plays a moderating role in the online shopping environment, shaping the online social environment, enhancing the authenticity of the consumer experience, affecting how users recognise brands, and increasing the likelihood of purchasing goods and services.

Practical Implications

This study shows that companies can benefit from building loyalty with consumers. Experiences with brands in Pakistan's service, food, and clothing industries are significant for building brand loyalty.

Experience prompts consumers to consider the brand is genuine and authentic and to trust its value. Experience may be positive and negative. However, our study shows a positive impact on customer loyalty. Brand authenticity shows a company's promise to its customers who purchase its products and services, thereby strengthening their trust. Online purchasing settings prompt companies to consider different modes of selling products and services to generate more profit, fulfil customer demands, and address feedback and reviews on social media forums.

As customers' brand choices change and technology advances, managers have adjusted the plan accordingly to meet consumers' demand for new products and offers. Managers must align with customers' demands and expectations to ensure authenticity in the consumer's eye, gain a competitive advantage, and generate profit in the market.

Limitations and Future Research

This research study had some limitations. First, this study collected data via convenience sampling via an online survey, which allowed respondents to answer all questions. In this study, respondents are university students aged 20-26, but the number of respondents of other ages was low. We do not have a specific industry brand, but we focus on different industry brands, and respondents may have had a one-time experience with a brand. In the future, this research may be improved by using different data collection methods.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations, this study provides a beneficial gain. This study's findings improve understanding of how consumers relate to brands that develop loyalty across different industries and involve experience, authenticity, and social media, aligning with and supporting the attribution theory. This study increased knowledge and information about experience and loyalty across different industry brands.

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