Investigating the Factors Influencing Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Customer Brand Engagement

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Abstract: *This research examines how brand psychological ownership, brand intimacy, and brand trust affect customer brand engagement and how customer brand engagement influences purchase intentions. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the study investigates the mediating role of customer brand engagement. Data was collected through an online survey from a sample of 443 current or potential customers of fashion apparel brands, selected via convenience sampling. The analysis and testing of research hypotheses were performed using SPSS and SmartPLS. The findings provide empirical evidence of the positive impact of brand intimacy on customer brand engagement. Furthermore, both brand psychological ownership and brand trust positively influence customer brand engagement. Customer brand engagement also serves as a mediator in these relationships and has a positive effect on purchase intentions. This paper contributes to the limited literature on the fashion apparel industry in Pakistan, offering valuable insights for local brands in developing effective branding and marketing strategies. The results highlight the importance of customer brand engagement in shaping purchase intentions for fashion apparel marketers.*

Investigating the Factors Influencing Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Customer Brand Engagement

1. Introduction

Historically, fashion was seen as a privilege of the wealthy, but it has recently become accessible to all. As a result, the global fashion industry's income has significantly increased over the past decade, particularly in the apparel sector (Chauhan et al., 2023). The fashion industry has experienced remarkable growth and is currently valued at US$200 billion (Palm, 2023). The apparel sector plays a crucial role in the economic development of both advanced and emerging countries (Ledikwe, 2020). The global textile and apparel market is vital to daily life and ranks among the most competitive industries in the global economy (Desore & Narula, 2018).

In Pakistan, the textile and apparel industry is of paramount importance. It is one of the largest sectors in the economy, contributing 46 percent to the manufacturing sector and 67 percent to the country's total exports. The textile industry accounts for 10.20 percent of Pakistan's gross domestic product and employs 40 percent of the labor force. Current trends create a positive outlook for the Pakistani apparel sector, indicating its potential to significantly boost the nation's economic growth. As China reduces its garment exports due to rising labor costs, opportunities arise for other garment-exporting countries, such as Pakistan, to fill the gap in the global clothing market (Khan et al., 2023). The fashion sector is a vital part of Pakistan's economy, with numerous emerging local brands like Gul Ahmed, HSY Studio, Junaid Jamshed, and Khaadi catering to various niche markets (Atta et al., 2024).

Defining 'fashion' can be challenging, but it generally refers to currently popular apparel (Madinga et al., 2020). Fashion encompasses the dominant styles or visual appeal that gain widespread popularity during specific periods, often influenced by prevailing social, political, and economic contexts. Additionally, fashion's inherent drive for novelty and originality contributes to its continuous evolution (Gupta et al., 2019). It includes various aspects such as clothing, hairstyling, and adornment (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021).

Over the past 15 years, research on consumer engagement has gained significant traction (Jinliang et al., 2023; Sallaku & Vigolo, 2024). Although customer engagement has been a focus of academic inquiry since

2006, it only gained widespread recognition in 2010 (Lim et al., 2022). However, limited research has evaluated the relationship between customer intimacy and brand engagement (Ngoc Dan & Ngo Trong, 2023). Customer engagement has been listed as a Tier I research priority by the Marketing Science Institute since 2010 (Bhattacharjee et al., 2023). Despite the growth of consumer engagement research, a significant gap exists in the literature, particularly regarding studies conducted in developing economies (Wahid & Gunarto, 2022), highlighting a notable deficiency in current academic work (Hollebeek et al., 2022).

Emerging economies often face challenges like inadequate infrastructure, resulting in distinct market dynamics compared to industrialized nations. Most existing research has focused on customer engagement in developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding customer engagement in developing markets, which warrants further investigation (Hollebeek et al., 2022). It is essential to recognize that Pakistan's unique sociocultural and economic dynamics may lead to distinct patterns not observed in other contexts (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Customer engagement yields positive marketing outcomes, including increased profitability, competitive advantage, and sales growth (Shah et al., 2024). Marketers anticipate that in the next five years, efforts to emotionally engage customers will boost annual visits from engaged customers by 40 percent and increase profitability by 20 percent (Cheung et al., 2020). A Gallup study found that fully engaged customers generate 23 percent more revenue, wallet share, and profitability compared to average customers, while actively disengaged consumers spend 13 percent less (Tourchian et al., 2022). Organizations strive to actively engage consumers with their products and brands due to its significant impact on financial performance (Prentice et al., 2019). Marketers continuously seek ways to enhance customer engagement, as engaged customers tend to be more loyal, make more purchases, and complete more transactions per purchase (Sung, 2021). Effective customer engagement strategies extend beyond mere transactions to foster lasting customer relationships (Venkatesan, 2017), resulting in long-term competitive advantages for businesses (Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

The primary aim of this research is to explore the effects of brand intimacy (BIT), brand psychological ownership (BPO), and brand trust (BT) on customer brand engagement (CBE). We also examine the mediating role of CBE between these independent variables (BIT, BPO, and BT) and

purchase intention (PI). Additionally, this study investigates the influence of CBE on the purchase intention of fashion apparel brands.

This research provides valuable insights for managers looking to engage consumers in initiatives that foster brand engagement. The findings reveal that BT, BIT, and BPO significantly impact CBE, which in turn directly influences PI. This study makes a significant contribution to the marketing field by addressing previously identified gaps and enhancing the understanding of CBE's potential. By examining the relationships between BIT, BPO, BT, and CBE, as well as their impact on purchase intention, this research enriches the academic discourse on fashion clothing companies. It also enhances social exchange theory (SET) by investigating factors influencing CBE and its outcomes, which have largely been overlooked in the literature. Finally, this research deepens the understanding of engagement dynamics within a developing economy.

The subsequent sections of this paper are organized as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical and empirical literature review; Section 3 outlines the study methodology; Section 4 discusses the results; and Section 5 concludes with implications, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Exchange Theory

This study is based on SET, which serves as its theoretical foundation. SET suggests that individuals form and maintain relationships based on the belief that these interactions yield mutual benefits, thereby promoting reciprocity among the parties involved (Blau, 1964). The theory highlights that social interactions can provide symbolic benefits, such as admiration, esteem, intimacy, and aspiration, leading individuals to feel compelled to reciprocate to those who offer such rewards (PhamThi & Ho, 2024). When engaging in exchanges, individuals aim to maximize their benefits while minimizing costs (Jahan & Kim, 2021). SET is widely regarded as a robust framework for understanding the relationships between firms, brands, and customers (Gligor & Bozkurt, 2022). It posits that the connections formed between entities, such as firms and customers, are influenced by the rewards and costs associated with their interactions, which can be analyzed to reveal the benefits and drawbacks of these relationships (Gomes et al., 2025). SET enables us to explore the importance of BIT, BPO, BT and CBE as critical factors affecting purchase intentions in the fashion apparel sector.

2.2. Brand Intimacy

Brand intimacy refers to a deep mutual understanding developed through the exchange of information between a brand and its customers (PhamThi & Ho, 2024). It describes an individual's strong connection with a specific brand (Guttena et al., 2024). Almubarak et al. (2018) measure interpersonal intimacy by assessing consumers' positive emotions toward a brand to evaluate the closeness between customers and firms. Companies utilize intimacy to create emotional bonds between customers and their brands (Almubarak et al., 2018). Customers experience brand intimacy when they believe that a brand genuinely cares about their needs and is committed to understanding and fulfilling them. This involves effective communication that allows a company to truly grasp its customers' preferences and choices (Bairrada et al., 2018).

2.3. Brand Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership is defined as a state in which individuals feel that the target of ownership—whether material or immaterial—belongs to them (Pierce et al., 2001). It reflects a consumer's perception of owning the products or brands they engage with. A psychological bond develops between customers and their chosen brand through their interactions (Kim & Jin, 2020). This connection is strengthened when customers identify with the brand, resulting in a sense of psychological ownership (Zhang et al., 2023).

2.4. Brand Trust

Trust has attracted significant scholarly and practical attention across various academic fields (Portal et al., 2019). While this exploration has enriched the understanding of the concept, it has also complicated efforts to integrate diverse perspectives on trust and reach consensus on its nature (Nawaz et al., 2020). Trust can be defined as the assurance or belief consumers have in a company's ability to deliver goods or services without causing disappointment or betrayal (Akrout, 2019).

2.5. Customer Brand Engagement

For over a decade, customer engagement has been recognized as a vital marketing strategy, garnering interest from both academics and practitioners (Connell et al., 2023). It is a psychological state that arises from an individual's interaction or experience with a product or brand (Hollebeek

et al., 2016). An increasing number of companies seek to enhance customer connection to improve brand engagement (Jinliang et al., 2023).

2.6. *Purchase Intention*

Purchase intentions indicate the likelihood that consumers will buy a product or service in the near future (Kautish et al., 2023). This concept is crucial as it significantly influences a company's business performance, representing the initial impression customers form about a product or service before making a purchase and establishing loyalty (Keni et al., 2022). Purchase intention can be defined as 'a consumer's conscious plan or intention to make an effort to purchase a product' (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 56).

2.7. *Hypothesis Development*

Brand intimacy enhances customer engagement and interaction, promoting effective relationships between consumers and brands (Ngoc Dan & Ngo Trong, 2023). The level of intimacy is determined by how customers and brands communicate, reflecting the customer's perception of their close affiliation with the brand (Chu et al., 2019). Previous research has established a correlation between BIT and CBE (Ngoc Dan & Ngo Trong, 2023). Additionally, earlier studies have shown that CBE is influenced by brand intimacy in the context of Twitter (Read et al., 2019). However, research on the impact of brand intimacy on CBE within the fashion apparel sector is limited. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Brand intimacy positively affects customer brand engagement.

Individuals often develop a sense of ownership over both physical and non-physical entities, including products, brands, places, and destinations (Kumar & Nayak, 2019a). To cultivate lasting customer engagement, it is essential to establish BPO (Harmeling et al., 2017). BPO, which serves as a precursor to CBE, is a relatively new concept in the literature (Kumar & Nayak, 2019b). Prior research has shown that BPO positively influences CBE (Roy Bhattacharjee et al., 2023). The relationship between BPO and CBE has been underexplored in the fashion clothing industry. In light of this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Brand psychological ownership positively influences customer brand engagement.

CBE is fundamentally trust-based, as all interactions and transactions require a degree of trust. Individuals are more likely to engage in cooperative interactions when trust is established (van Tonder & Petzer, 2018). Trust plays a crucial role in the relationship between consumers and marketers, facilitating the formation of expectations. A lack of trust is recognized as a significant factor leading to customer disengagement (Agyei et al., 2020). Previous research has identified a positive relationship between brand trust and CBE (Patrizi et al., 2024). Based on this discussion, we formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Brand trust positively affects customer brand engagement.

There is an increasing acknowledgment of the importance of CBE as a vital strategic focus in marketing (Ahmed et al., 2024). CBE leads to positive marketing outcomes (Shah et al., 2024). Purchase intention is a key metric for businesses, reflecting actual consumer behavior and helping predict the likelihood of a customer making a purchase within a certain timeframe (Bianchi et al., 2019). Higher engagement with a product increases the likelihood of purchase (Prentice & Loureiro, 2018). Previous studies have shown a positive correlation between CBE and purchase intention (Zeqiri et al., 2025). Based on this review, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Customer brand engagement positively affects purchase intention.

Empirical research has demonstrated that CBE serves as a mediator in various models that explore different causes and effects of CBE (Jayasingh et al., 2025; Ndhlovu & Maree, 2024). For instance, CBE has been identified as a mediator between innovativeness and customer value co-creation behaviors (Yen et al., 2020). Additionally, research has highlighted the role of customer engagement as a mediator between customer experience and behavioral intention (Gomes et al., 2025). To investigate the mediating effect of CBE between brand intimacy and purchase intention, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Customer brand engagement mediates the relationship between brand intimacy and purchase intention.

Numerous studies have recognized CBE as an important mediating variable (Agyei et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2021). CBE mediates the relationship between antecedent factors (such as customer satisfaction, brand trust, commitment, and customer value) and outcomes like loyalty

intention (Petzer & van Tonder, 2019). Additionally, research indicates that customer engagement mediates the relationship between a company's corporate social responsibility efforts and consumers' purchase intentions (Al-Haddad et al., 2022). To explore the mediating role of CBE between brand psychological ownership and purchase intention, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Customer brand engagement mediates the relationship between brand psychological ownership and purchase intention.

Trust is a crucial factor that significantly impacts positive attitudes toward purchasing behavior, thereby enhancing purchase intentions (Dabbous et al., 2020). Numerous marketing studies emphasize the importance of trust in consumer-business relationships (Kim et al., 2019). Previous research has also examined the mediating role of CBE (Kwon et al., 2021). For example, Prentice et al. (2019) found that customer engagement mediates the connection between social identification and purchase intention. To test the mediating role of CBE between brand trust and purchase intention, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7: Customer brand engagement mediates the relationship between brand trust and purchase intention.

Figure 1: Research model
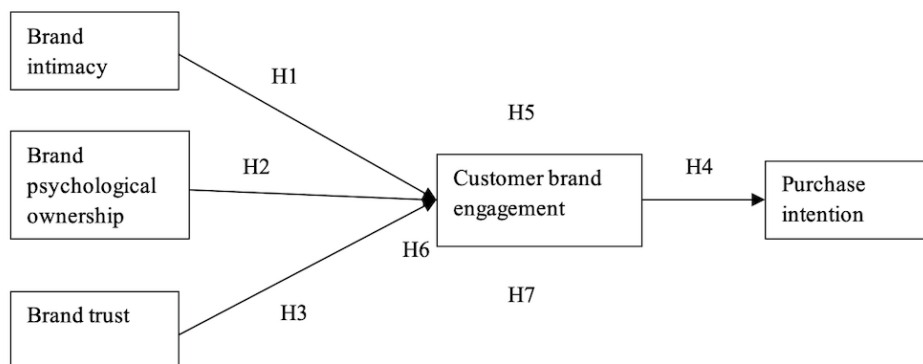
3. Research Design

Research design is defined as 'the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to the study's initial research questions and ultimately its

conclusions' (Yin, 1994, p. 28). It is primarily categorized into quantitative and qualitative methods, with variations in characteristics, interaction frequency, sample type, and reference timeframe (Saunders et al., 2009). Quantitative research investigates specific phenomena by examining numerical data using statistical and mathematical methods (Yilmaz, 2013). This study employed a deductive explanatory research strategy aimed at establishing cause-and-effect relationships between variables.

3.1. Population and Sampling

The population for this investigation consists of consumers of fashion apparel brands in Pakistan. Various sampling techniques, classified as probability and non-probability methods, can be used to obtain a sample that accurately reflects the entire population (Creswell, 2009). Researchers must make several choices when selecting a sampling strategy, with the primary decision being between probability and non-probability methodologies. Non-probability sampling is often favored in academic research due to its cost-effectiveness and convenience (Sarstedt et al., 2018). This study utilized a non-probability convenience sampling approach, with voluntary participation from respondents from diverse backgrounds.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires, which are cost-effective and minimize interviewer bias (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researchers gathered data from targeted respondents through an online survey tool, effective for capturing participants' attitudes and behaviors (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Properly worded questions can lead to higher response rates in online surveys (Lyons et al., 2005). The academic marketing literature includes numerous examples of online questionnaires (Khan et al., 2021). This research adopted the survey method, following prior studies that utilized similar methodologies to examine consumer behavior in Pakistan's fashion apparel sector (Abrar et al., 2021; Sandhu & Shabbir, 2023). Survey research allows for the collection of substantial data, which can be analyzed using various methods, including inferential and deductive approaches, making it particularly effective for defining large populations.

3.3. Sample

There are various options for determining sample sizes. A sample size of fewer than 50 is considered inadequate, while a size between 51 and 100 lacks sufficient statistical power. A sample size of 101 to 200 is deemed

appropriate, 201 to 300 possesses high statistical power, 500 is considered robust, and 1,000 is exceptional (Comrey & Lee, 1992). In this study, the initial survey distribution generated 508 responses. A two-step data cleaning process was implemented to ensure data quality and utility for analysis.

After conducting face validity checks for completeness and consistency, questionnaires with incomplete or inconsistent responses were excluded. Additionally, a pattern-detection algorithm was used to identify and eliminate potential duplicate responses and outliers. As a result of this initial screening, 480 questionnaires were retained. Further data cleansing involved rigorous outlier detection procedures, including univariate and multivariate analyses to identify and remove extreme values that could distort the results. Descriptive statistics were analyzed to ensure data consistency. After these evaluations, a final sample of 443 respondents was confirmed, indicating high to strong statistical power.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with Smart PLS 3.0 software. The model was evaluated using fit indices, including the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The relevance of path coefficients was assessed through bootstrapping. PLS-SEM is suitable for both simple and complex models (Hair et al., 2014) and is widely used across various fields, such as marketing, accounting, human resource management, hospitality and tourism, and entrepreneurship (Rehman et al., 2023). Consumer behavior research has frequently employed PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2011) due to its robustness and versatility for both predictive and exploratory research, particularly with non-normally distributed data and small sample sizes (Ahmed et al., 2024).

3.5. Measures

This study utilized existing instruments to evaluate the constructs of BIT, BPO, BT, CBE and PI. Four items were adapted from Hollebeek et al. (2014) to assess CBE, while four items from Pierce et al. (2001) were used to evaluate BPO. BIT was assessed with four items derived from Aaker et al. (2004), BT was evaluated using five items from Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) and Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003). Lastly, PI was measured with a five-item scale from Lee et al. (2008) and Son et al. (2013). All constructs were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.'

3.6. Common Method Bias

To address the issue of common method bias, this research employed Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The test results indicated that a single factor accounted for 39.6 percent of the total variance, significantly below the 50 percent threshold. Therefore, the study's data was free of common method bias. Variance inflation factor values were also examined to assess multicollinearity, with all values below 5 confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues within the model.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Analysis

Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown of the survey participants. The sample consisted of 49.2 percent females and 50.8 percent males. Notably, 35.7 percent of participants were under 25 years old, while 57.8 percent were MPhil or PhD students. Additionally, 58.5 percent of respondents identified as single, and over half (50.1 percent) reported a monthly income below PKR 20,000.

Table 1: Demographic analysis

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	225	50.8
	Female	218	49.2
Qualification	Less than primary	01	0.2
	Primary	02	0.5
	Matriculation	01	0.2
	Intermediate	19	4.3
	Graduation	164	37.0
	MPhil/PhD	256	57.8
Marital status	Unmarried	259	58.5
	Married	176	39.7
	Divorced	04	0.9
	Widow	01	0.2
	Separated	03	0.7
Age	Less than 25	158	35.7
	26–30	112	25.3
	31–35	86	19.4
	36 and above	87	19.6
Monthly income	Less than 20,000	222	50.1
	21,000–50,000	93	21.0
	51,000–80,000	75	16.9
	81,000 and above	53	12.0

4.2. *Measurement Model Assessment*

This study evaluates the measurement model's convergent and discriminant validity. To assess convergent validity, we analyzed the model's loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability. As shown in Table 2, composite reliability values ranged from 0.876 to 0.928, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7. Convergent validity is confirmed when the AVE surpasses 0.50 (Henseler & Guerreiro, 2020), and our results show AVE values between 0.641 and 0.764, which are all above the threshold.

Table 2: Measurement model assessment

Constructs	items	Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Brand Intimacy	BIT1	0.803	0.838	0.892	0.673
	BIT2	0.807			
	BIT3	0.859			
	BIT4	0.812			
Brand Psychological Ownership	BPO1	0.845	0.897	0.928	0.764
	BPO2	0.860			
	BPO3	0.885			
	BPO4	0.904			
Brand Trust	BT1	0.835	0.862	0.901	0.646
	BT2	0.742			
	BT3	0.838			
	BT4	0.822			
	BT5	0.776			
Customer Brand Engagement	CBE1	0.786	0.810	0.876	0.641
	CBE2	0.862			
	CBE3	0.854			
	CBE4	0.689			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.804	0.880	0.912	0.676
	PI2	0.784			
	PI3	0.811			
	PI4	0.856			
	PI5	0.854			

Table 3 outlines the Fornell-Larcker criteria used to evaluate the discriminant validity of the model constructs. Discriminant validity is confirmed by calculating the square root of each construct's AVE and comparing it to the correlations between constructs (Ahmed et al., 2024). According to the Fornell-Larcker criteria, the square root of the AVE must exceed the correlations among the constructs. Table 3 demonstrates that the

square roots of the AVE values (shown on the diagonal) are greater than the corresponding correlations (off-diagonal values), thereby confirming discriminant validity.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	BIT	**BPO**	**BT**	**CBE**	**PI**
BIT	0.821				
BPO	0.634	0.874			
BT	0.688	0.556	0.804		
CBE	0.615	0.560	0.608	0.801	
PI	0.549	0.469	0.569	0.608	0.822

An alternative method for assessing discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, is presented in Table 4. The HTMT criteria suggest that values should be below 0.85, although some experts allow values to reach 0.90 (Ahmed et al., 2024). The HTMT values in Table 4 are below 0.90, satisfying the requirement for discriminant validity.

Table 4: HTMT values below 0.90

	BIT	**BPO**	**BT**	**CBE**	**PI**
BIT					
BPO	0.727				
BT	0.803	0.624			
CBE	0.747	0.656	0.725		
PI	0.638	0.522	0.649	0.716	

4.3. Structural Model Assessment

We applied the proposed structural model to the data to evaluate its fit and test the hypothesized relationships. Two common goodness-of-fit measures, R-squared and Q-squared, were utilized to assess the model's explanatory power. Path analysis was performed to examine the direct and indirect effects of the proposed relationships, with results summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Hypotheses testing

Relationships	β	t values	p values	Decision	F square
BIT -> CBE	0.267	3.998	0.000	Supported	0.059
BPO -> CBE	0.224	5.119	0.000	Supported	0.054
BT -> CBE	0.300	4.973	0.000	Supported	0.086
CBE -> PI	0.608	17.009	0.000	Supported	0.586
BIT -> CBE -> PI	0.162	3.652	0.000	Supported	
BPO -> CBE -> PI	0.136	4.877	0.000	Supported	
BT -> CBE -> PI	0.183	4.833	0.000	Supported	

Notes: Critical t-values. * 1.96 (p < 0.05), ** 2.58 (p < 0.01).

As indicated in Table 5, all hypothesized paths exhibited statistically significant direct correlations ($p < 0.01$), confirming the positive impacts suggested in the hypotheses. Specifically, hypothesis 1 is supported by a significant positive link between BIT and CBE (β = 0.267, t = 3.998, p = 0.000). Similarly, hypothesis 2 is validated by a statistically significant positive correlation between BPO and CBE (β = 0.224, t = 5.119, p = 0.000). Hypothesis 3 is also supported by a substantial positive connection between BT and CBE (β = 0.300, t = 4.973, p = 0.000). Furthermore, hypothesis 4 is confirmed by a strong relationship between CBE and PI (β = 0.608, t = 17.009, p = 0.000). Additionally, findings support hypothesis 5 by showing that CBE mediates the relationship between BIT and PI (β = 0.162, t = 3.652, p = 0.000). Hypothesis 6 is confirmed as well, with CBE mediating the relationship between BPO and PI (β = 0.136, t = 4.877, p = 0.000). Finally, hypothesis 7 is upheld, as CBE mediates the relationship between BT and PI (β = 0.183, t = 4.833, p = 0.000). The F-square values presented in Table 5 provide insight into the effect size on the endogenous variables (CBE and PI).

The model's predictive power (Q^2) assesses its utility, while the explanatory power (R^2) quantifies the variance accounted for in each endogenous component within the sample (Ahmed et al., 2024). As shown in Table 6, the adjusted R-squared values for CBE and PI are 0.47 and 0.36, respectively, indicating that the model explains approximately 47 percent of the variance in CBE and 36 percent in PI. The proposed model aligns well with the collected data, evidenced by an SRMR of 0.08. This suggests that the model effectively captures the overall structure of the relationships between the variables and accounts for a significant portion of the variability in the dependent variable(s). Additionally, Table 6 reveals positive Q^2 values for CBE and PI at 0.281 and 0.230, respectively, indicating the model's strong predictive potential (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Table 6: R squared, adjusted R squared and Q squared values

	R2 values	Adjusted R2	Q² values
Customer Brand Engagement	0.472	0.468	0.281
Purchase Intention	0.369	0.368	0.230

The structural model and factor loadings are visually represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Structural model and factor loadings
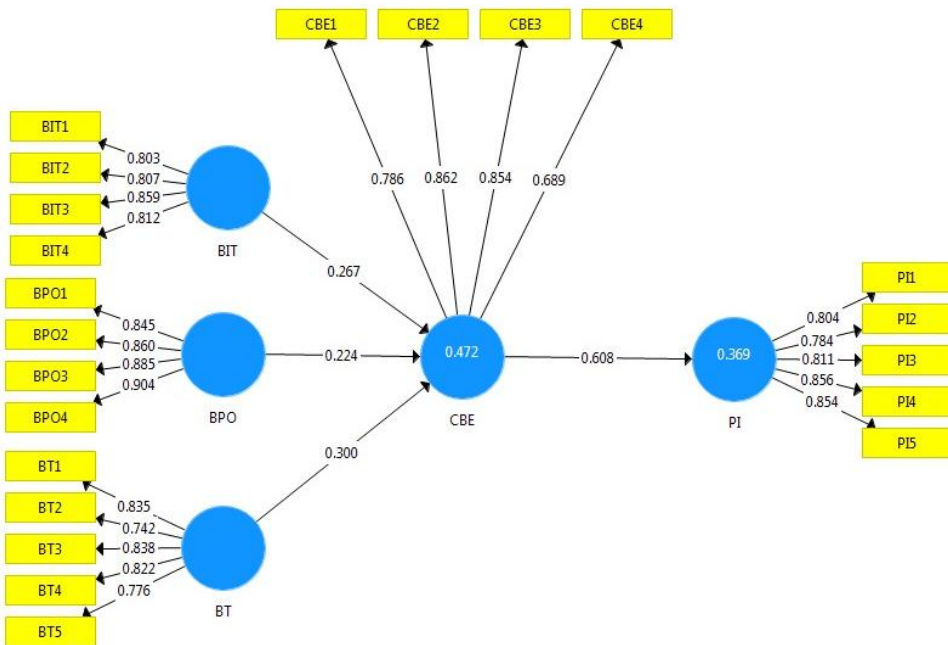
4.4. Discussion

This study investigates the relationships among BIT, BPO, BT, CBE and PI within Pakistan's fashion clothing sector. By developing a model and examining its causes and effects on fashion clothing companies, this research enhances our understanding of CBE. The findings confirm the interconnections between BIT, BPO, BT, CBE, and PI, advancing current knowledge by exploring CBE's mediating role. Notably, this is the first study to examine CBE as a mediator between BIT and PI specifically in the fashion apparel sector.

The empirical evidence significantly deepens our understanding of how BIT, BT, and BPO influence CBE. This research thoroughly analyzes CBE's impact on PI, with results aligning closely with previously established correlations. In summary, the empirical findings validate all hypotheses of the study. Consistent with earlier research (Ngoc Dan & Ngo Trong, 2023), the results indicate that BIT positively impacts CBE. This study represents a pioneering effort to explore the relationship between BIT and CBE, particularly concerning fashion apparel brands. Additionally, a connection between BPO and CBE was established, supporting findings from prior studies (Bhattacharjee et al., 2023), which suggest that BPO positively influences CBE. The study also confirms that BT affects CBE, in alignment with previous research (Patrizi et al., 2024). Moreover, the findings reveal that CBE positively impacts PI, consistent with earlier conclusions (Zeqiri et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the results indicate that CBE mediates the relationship between BIT and PI, suggesting that enhancing CBE can significantly amplify BIT's effect on purchase intention. CBE also serves as a mediator between BPO and PI, implying that improving CBE could enhance BPO's impact on purchase intention. Similarly, CBE plays a mediating role in the relationship between BT and PI, indicating that boosting CBE could intensify BT's effect on PI; these findings are consistent with previous research (Ma & Ma, 2022). This engagement is crucial as it encourages consumers to actively participate in brand relationships. Overall, the current study demonstrates that CBE mediates the proposed relationships effectively.

5. Conclusion

Despite the significant growth in literature on CBE, empirical research on its causes and effects remains limited. This study develops a model for consumer behavior management and empirically investigates CBE's determinants and consequences, thereby contributing substantially to the existing knowledge on CBE and fashion apparel brands. Additionally, PI is examined as an outcome variable of CBE. This research adds valuable insights to the expanding field of CBE studies within the fashion apparel sector by assessing the impacts of BT, BPO, and BIT on CBE and the subsequent effects of CBE on PI, while also exploring its mediating role in these relationships.

Growing interest in CBE among scholars and professionals reflects a trend among businesses to reevaluate their marketing strategies to enhance customer engagement. However, this task is becoming increasingly complex

due to hyper-competition. A sample of 443 users from fashion apparel firms was analyzed to derive the empirical findings, and PLS-SEM was employed to assess the data.

This study enriches current marketing literature by demonstrating that BIT, BPO, and BT directly influence CBE, with CBE acting as a mediator in these relationships. By analyzing the connections among BIT, BPO, BT, CBE, and PI, the research provides valuable insights into the processes that foster consumer-brand interactions. Three hypotheses were formulated to explain the indirect (mediation) effects, while four accounted for direct effects. This research significantly contributes to the literature on Pakistan, a developing country that has been relatively overlooked in prior studies.

In summary, this study examines the empirical causes and effects of CBE while formulating a comprehensive model for consumer behavior management. The findings enhance the literature on CBE and fashion clothing companies, demonstrating that purchase intention serves as an outcome variable for CBE. The insights gained from this research offer national clothing businesses guidance for developing effective branding and marketing strategies for promoting fashion apparel brands.

The study's results have important implications for both academics and practitioners. They can improve fashion clothing companies' understanding of the factors influencing Pakistani consumers' purchase intentions for fashion apparel brands, enabling the development of targeted marketing strategies for this market.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This work enhances the existing literature by offering theoretical insights into the relationship among BIT, BPO, BT, and PI, with CBE acting as a mediator. It provides new scientific perspectives on the drivers and consequences of CBE in the fashion apparel sector, particularly within emerging economies. By examining CBE in this context, the study broadens the applicability of established theories and models, most of which have been developed based on research conducted in industrialized nations (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Understanding the interplay between BIT, BPO, BT, CBE, and purchase intention is essential for uncovering the mechanisms that foster customer-brand relationships.

The findings of this research have significant implications for the marketing and branding strategies of Pakistani fashion apparel companies.

This study contributes meaningfully to the fields of CBE and fashion clothing. Although CBE is a relatively new concept, various authors have proposed several theoretical frameworks, yet empirical support remains limited (Hollebeek, 2018). This research responds to calls for greater empirical validation of the CBE concept, providing evidence of its contextual relevance (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). This aligns with the academic demand for a deeper understanding of consumer engagement, bolstered by empirical data from diverse settings (Leckie et al., 2016). The study enriches the current literature and offers empirical backing for a model that links CBE with other concepts in the fashion apparel industry.

We address previous calls for more empirical studies on diverse nomological networks and cultural contexts (Aladwani & Dwivedi, 2018). This research, conducted in the developing country of Pakistan—a collectivist society—aims to assess and validate the CBE scale, highlighting its unique characteristics compared to industrialized nations (Junaid et al., 2019).

5.2. Managerial Implications

The findings of this research hold significant practical importance, particularly for practitioners in Pakistan. In addition to the theoretical insights, these results provide valuable guidance for the fashion clothing sector in shaping strategies for apparel businesses. The study underscores the urgent need for increased focus and investment in CBE within the fashion industry. The insights derived from this research will assist clothing marketers and brand managers in developing more targeted and effective branding initiatives. Enhancing customer engagement can lead to increased market share and a sustainable competitive advantage in the highly competitive fashion clothing sector. Furthermore, to achieve brand engagement, companies should conduct consumer sentiment analyses to foster greater intimacy (Ngoc Dan & Ngo Trong, 2023).

Based on our findings, managers must cultivate brand trust to improve CBE outcomes. Companies can enhance their CBE performance by fostering stronger brand trust. A fashion apparel company should implement an appropriate business intelligence system and promote customer engagement through rewards programs and incentives, considering the positive relationship between CBE and purchase intention. The significance of developing customer brand engagement in the fashion sector is that its growth is likely to enhance consumers' purchasing intentions. Thus, fashion apparel marketers should prioritize building

customer brand engagement. The study also identifies factors that promote CBE in the emerging market of Pakistan, emphasizing that focusing on the right drivers can enhance consumers' purchase intentions.

The study provides compelling justification for marketers to adopt CBE as a strategy for influencing purchase intention in the fashion apparel sector. To create effective marketing strategies, brand managers must understand the relationships Pakistani customers have with fashion apparel companies. Marketers should enhance their customer engagement efforts, as they are expanding the scope and intensity of their initiatives. Samala et al. (2019) observed that marketers have significantly intensified their engagement strategies for various fashion brands in recent years, especially in the fashion industry, where customer engagement and purchase frequency tend to be higher than in other product categories. According to the findings, marketers should focus on designing promotional strategies for fashion clothing brands that strengthen CBE, thereby increasing consumers' purchase intentions. This research contributes to multiple dimensions of CBE literature in the fashion apparel sector and is significant for managers tasked with developing communication strategies.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research has several limitations that warrant further investigation in future studies. The study utilized a cross-sectional design in Pakistan, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should incorporate longitudinal studies and cross-national comparisons across various cultures. The focus on the fashion clothing segment may yield diverse attitudes toward different products. Future studies should explore a variety of products and samples beyond fashion apparel brands to validate this model.

Researchers investigating customer engagement can examine numerous factors, such as brand image and interactivity, alongside other relevant variables that influence engagement. The relationship between consumer engagement and brand intimacy is underexplored (Wang & Lee, 2020), presenting an opportunity for future research to investigate how customer engagement impacts brand intimacy. Given that this study was conducted in a developing nation, cross-cultural research on CBE would be beneficial for confirming its findings across different cultural contexts. Future research could also evaluate the proposed model using alternative methodologies. While this study primarily focused on the positive aspects of CBE, it did not address factors that may contribute to negative

engagement. Future researchers should investigate negative engagement, which could yield valuable insights into disengaged customers and provide different frameworks for managers to utilize.

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