Branding Brilliance: Unveiling the Impact of Branding on Consumer Purchase Decisions in the Enchanting Valley of Kashmir

Section A-Research paper

Branding Brilliance: Unveiling the Impact of Branding on Consumer Purchase Decisions in the Enchanting Valley of Kashmir

Dr. Mohmad Altaf Tali[1] ,Dr. Irfan Ahmed Sheikh[2,] Dr. Asra Inkesar[3]
Dr. Shakeeb Mohammad Mir[4*]

[1]Selection Grade Assistant Professor, Business School, SSM College of Engineering, Pattan, Baramulla, India. Mail: tali.altaf@gmail.com.
[2]Associate Professor, College of Finance, Management and Development, Department of Public Finance & Accounting, Ethiopian Civil Service University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, East Africa, Mail: irfansheikh@ecsu.edu.et.
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, College of Administrative and Financial Sciences, Saudi Electronic University, Riyadh 11673, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Mail: a.inkesar@seu.edu.sa.
[4*]Doctoral Fellow at DMS, Central University of Kashmir, Ganderbal, J&K, India. Mail: shakeebibnhamid@cukashmir.ac.in.

Abstract

This study probes the interplay of branding and consumer purchase intentions in Jammu and Kashmir's apparel industry. Focusing on brand awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty, the research aims to empower businesses with insights for enhanced customer loyalty and increased sales. Conducted among diverse university students, the study bridges gaps in literature on the links between brand awareness, purchase intentions, perceived quality, and loyalty. Objectives include deciphering brand awareness's direct impact on purchase intentions, perceived quality, and loyalty. It also explores how perceived quality and brand loyalty reciprocally influence brand awareness and purchase intentions. The study hypothesizes positive effects of brand awareness on purchase intentions, perceived quality, and loyalty. It anticipates perceived quality's favorable impact on purchase intentions and brand loyalty. Perceived quality and brand loyalty are seen as mediators between brand awareness and purchase intention. This study shines a light on branding's influence in the Indian apparel sector, emphasizing its power to shape consumer perceptions and intentions. By dissecting brand awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty, it guides businesses to bolster branding strategies and thrive in a changing market. As a guiding star, these findings offer illumination to navigate complexities and achieve lasting success.

Keywords: Branding, consumer purchase intentions, brand awareness, purchase intentions, perceived quality, and loyalty, mediation.

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1. Introduction

Over the years, Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) has gained significant attention as a crucial factor impacting brand reputation (Aaker, 1991). Brands hold immense value for organizations due to their role as a stable revenue source that is difficult for competitors to imitate (Smith & Milligan, 2002). Brands play a vital role in a company's success by differentiating their products from rivals in the minds of customers. This underscores the importance of consistent, long-term brand management and development. Brands are the result of sustained efforts by a corporation over many years.

Research highlights that brand equity captivates the interest of academics, marketers, and business executives alike. Managing and nurturing brands have long been recognized as essential organizational objectives (Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2008). While branding originally aimed to distinguish products from competitors (Cowley, 1991), trademarks can convey various meanings to consumers, fostering emotional attachments (Pitta & Franzak, 2008; Fournier, 1998). Today's marketing landscape is dynamic and competitive, with a plethora of products, services, and marketing endeavors. This environment has led to shorter product cycles and an increased focus on providing innovative rather than purely functional products to customers. As a result, branding has evolved beyond identification to establishing emotional connections with consumers. These personal connections foster brand loyalty and justify the company's innovative communication strategies to engage consumers.

1.1 Branding Insights

Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) has been explored through various lenses, revealing how consumers choose brands (Netemeyer et al., 2004). Brand equity represents the value added by the brand name in consumers' minds. Core factors, including perceived quality, value for cost, uniqueness, and willingness to pay more, influence brand purchases (Aaker, 1991). Keller (1993) defines CBBE as the impact of brand knowledge on customer response. Perceptions, based on practical or symbolic factors, shape brand associations. Core aspects affect buying intent and behavior (Aaker & Keller).

1.2 Indian Apparel Market

India's growing middle class and economic setup make it a global fashion hub. With 8% annual GDP growth, India's consumer market is booming, surpassing China, Mexico, and Brazil. The

Indian apparel market, valued at $59.3 billion in 2022, attracts international fashion companies. While the market is evolving, challenges remain, such as fragmented sales channels. As technology adoption increases, growth in the apparel industry is evident.

1.3 Branding in Indian Apparel

Building brand trust and awareness is vital for success. Brand awareness fosters customer relationships and loyalty, influencing purchase intentions. Understanding the link between brand knowledge, perception, quality, and loyalty aids in branding apparel effectively.

1.4 Apparels, Branding, and Purchase Intentions

Apparel choices involve intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Brand recognition correlates with purchase desire. The presence of brands impacts clothing product evaluation, highlighting the interplay between branding and consumer behavior. In summary, CBBE's significance in the Indian apparel market lies in understanding core aspects that shape consumer behavior and influence purchase intentions. Effective branding can tap into these factors, driving growth and success in a dynamic and promising market.

The Indian apparel market holds a prominent global position, marked by substantial growth. The sector presents immense growth potential driven by the burgeoning economy and sizable population. Consequently, both domestic and international companies recognize the imperative to make substantial investments in this market to sustain their market presence and generate substantial revenues. In light of this, a comprehensive study was undertaken to discern the factors that exert influence over the purchase intentions of apparel consumers in the specific Indian region of Kashmir. The research involved surveying students from five distinct educational institutions within the region as a part of this endeavor.

Certainly, the subsequent content of the paper is structured into four clearly defined and separate sections. Each section delves into specific aspects of the study, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The organization of the paper into these distinct sections ensures a logical flow of information and facilitates a coherent presentation of the research findings.

2. Literature Review

"Branding is a living entity and it is enriched or undermined cumulatively over time, the product of a thousand small gestures." - Michael Eisner, CEO Disney

In the world of business, establishing and nurturing robust brands is a pivotal objective. Powerful brands wield substantial influence, both in the present and the future, contributing significantly to revenue generation. As such, the strategic management of brands aims to craft enduring brand identities capable of withstanding the test of time, adaptable to various product offerings and market demands. The concept of branding traces its roots back through history, evolving across diverse eras (Keller, 2003). The contemporary landscape of the twenty-first century witnesses profound shifts in branding strategies employed by organizations, driven by the quest for competitiveness and viability in the fiercely competitive market. The persistence and success of modern enterprises hinge upon their ability to gather and leverage insightful consumer preferences to survive and thrive in the market.

2.1 Brand

With the rapid stride of globalization, competition escalates, necessitating innovation to distinguish brands. The satisfaction derived from observing acquaintances, colleagues, and acquaintances using the same brand amplify brand loyalty. Presently, individuals seek up-to-date experiences, whether in consumables or apparel. In today's consumer landscape, high-end and branded products hold prominence, allowing consumers to leave their mark. Consequently, brands aligned with luxury, influence, and affluence are referred to as status brands.

In the contemporary societal framework, people aspire to project elevated status, a desire achieved through the adoption of reputable brands. Modern consumers align their preferences for consumables, garments, and even home aesthetics with their lifestyle choices. The manner of product utilization and individual lifestyle influences consumer behavior, with premium and branded products serving as markers of status. Brands associated with luxury, prestige, and societal standing are embraced as symbols of class, opulence, and status. Such brands convey an aura of sophistication and symbolize the pursuit of status, thus earning the classification of status brands. Branding encompasses crucial components like identity, image, personality, and evolving dynamics, shaping the perceptions and interactions between brands and consumers.

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), a brand is a composite of name, term, symbol, or design, or a combination thereof, intended to distinguish a seller's products or services and differentiate them from competitors (AMA, 2009). This definition, while accurate, does not fully encapsulate the comprehensive role and emotional resonance embedded within the branding phenomenon. Kotler and Armstrong (2009) expand on the concept, defining a brand as

a name, symbol, imprint, or design that identifies the producer or provider of a product or service. Kapferer (2008) emphasizes that a brand extends beyond mere identification, delving into the emotional and mental associations forged with consumers, elevating the perceived value of the product or service. Brands encapsulate meanings and interpretations, promising fulfillment and satisfaction, thereby influencing purchasing decisions. Therefore, brands wield a profound influence on consumer identity and purchasing behavior.

2.2 Brand's Multi-Dimensional Significance

Kotler (1999) introduces the multi-dimensional nature of a brand's significance, offering insight into six layers of meaning that a brand can convey to consumers:

a) Attributes: A brand communicates specific attributes that enhance its appeal, such as prestige or reliability. For instance, Mtn pledges ubiquitous network coverage, ensuring connectivity "everywhere you go.

b) Benefits: Beyond features, a brand underscores the benefits that enrich a product's attributes, rendering it more compelling.

c) Values: A brand reflects the company's ethos, principles, and structure, projecting a distinct corporate identity.

d) Culture:The brand resonates with the cultural traits and characteristics of the target audience, aligning with the sensibilities of the typical consumer.

e) Personality: Brands can exhibit behavioral traits akin to the desired consumer behavior. For instance, Mtn Ghana's alignment with popular Ghanaian musician Samini as a brand ambassador imparts a specific personality trait.

f) User: At times, a brand mirrors the end user, forging a connection between the brand and the final consumer.

In essence, the brand embodies not only tangible features but a rich tapestry of intangible meanings and perceptions. Successful branding extends beyond mere differentiation; it cultivates emotional connections and shapes consumer identities, influencing preferences and choices. The power of branding lies in its ability to be more than just a symbol—it is a dynamic force that shapes perceptions, influences behavior, and leaves an indelible mark on the consumer psyche.

2.3 Keller's Brand Building Model

Keller (2001) presents a brand building model consisting of four sequential steps:

a) Brand Identity Establishment: Ensuring brand identification with customers and linking the brand in customers' minds with a specific product category or need.

b) Brand Meaning Creation: Firmly establishing brand meaning by strategically associating both tangible and intangible brand attributes in customers' minds.

c) Eliciting Positive Brand Responses: Evoking favorable customer responses aligned with the established brand identity and meaning.

d) Forging Active Loyalty Relationships: Transforming brand responses into strong, active loyalty connections between customers and the brand.

To achieve these steps, six brand building blocks are vital: Brand Salience, Brand Performance, Brand Imagery, Brand Judgment, Brand Feelings, and Brand Resonance. This model guides brand strategy development, implementation, and interpretation, offering marketers comprehensive coverage of essential branding aspects and actionable insights.

Keller (2003) explores brand knowledge's multi-dimensionality for measurement purposes. The study, rooted in cognitive psychology, defines consumer brand knowledge as the cognitive representation of the brand, encompassing all descriptive and evaluative brand-related information stored in consumer memory. The study outlines multiple dimensions of brand knowledge, including Awareness, Attributes, Benefits, Images, Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes, and Experiences. The research advocates adopting holistic perspectives that encompass the multidimensional nature of brand knowledge to advance both general and leveraging-specific branding theories and practices.

Ahmed H. Tolba and Salah S. Hassan (2009) investigate the relationship between Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) and brand market performance (BMP). Their integrative Brand Equity model dissects CBBE into three dimensions: Knowledge Equity (KE), Attitudinal Equity (AE), and Relationship Equity (RE). Through a two-phase analysis, covering both consumer and brand levels, the study establishes correlations between CBBE constructs and brand market performance. Attitudinal loyalty and satisfaction emerge as key drivers of Brand Preference and intention to re-purchase among brand users. Among non-users, value and image play a pivotal role in influencing Brand Preference. Notably, value is the principal factor impacting Brand Preference among luxury consumers, while image is more impactful among economy consumers.

Pallabi Mishra and Biplab Datta (2011) propose a model highlighting the role of brand assets as antecedents and their impact on Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) consequences. They analyze brand Nokia using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study introduces the Perpetual Asset Management (PAM) model, investigating assets like brand name, awareness, personality, and their effects on Brand Preference and Purchase Intention. Their findings suggest that enhancing Brand Loyalty, brand association, brand name, and brand communication can boost CBBE. However, Brand Preference doesn't always translate into enhanced Purchase Intention. The study's scope is limited by its focus on a single brand and geographic region.

2.4 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness holds significant importance from a consumer perspective in various contexts. It represents the strength of a brand's presence or recall in consumers' memory, impacting their ability to recognize and identify the brand in different situations (Keller, 1993; Rossiter & Perry, 1987). This concept encompasses two dimensions: brand recall and brand recognition. It reflects the connection between the brand and consumers' memory, reflecting a robust, positive, and distinctive relationship.

Brand awareness plays a vital role in influencing consumer behavior and purchase decisions. It assists consumers in selecting established and recognizable products (Keller, 1993; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). It has a bearing on consumer expectations and can serve as a basis for product categorization (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). As consumers have more awareness about a brand, their buying expectations can improve, and certain brands can exert a substantial impact on their perception, thereby affecting purchase decisions.

In consumer decision-making, brand awareness acts as a heuristic, aiding consumers in making choices and contributing to the management of customer-based brand equity (Chung et al., 2013; Anic, 2010; Gupta, 2011; Ou, Shih, Chen & Wang, 2011). The underlying hypothesis suggests that generating awareness is crucial for driving consumer attitudes and associations with a brand or company. This not only strengthens the brand but also creates a foundation for positive beliefs and associations, contributing to brand attitude. Anupam Jain and Meenakshi Sharma (2013) conducted a study on brand awareness in rural areas concerning Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). Results showed that brand awareness was significant in rural areas, particularly for beauty care and healthcare products. People were willing to spend more on branded products as it elevated their status in the village. Norazah Mohd. Suki (2013) explored the impact of

consumers' environmental concerns, green product awareness, price, and brand image on purchasing decisions. The study revealed that awareness of price and brand image significantly influenced the purchase decision of green products. Sawant R.P. (2012) examined the role of advertising in promoting men's wear brands, showing that advertising played a crucial role in driving buying decisions. Hsin Kuang Chi et al. (2009) demonstrated the interplay between brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty in relation to purchase intention among cellular phone users. Ragavendran P.G. (2008) focused on brand awareness improvement methods and identified consumer expectations related to quality, benefits, and packaging for a shampoo brand.

2.5 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is a complex concept that is challenging to define clearly (Garvin, 1988). It constitutes a vital component of customer-based brand value (Nguyen, Barrett & Miller, 2011; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). It doesn't directly concern the objective quality of a product, but rather focuses on consumers' perception of the overall quality compared to its competitors (Aaker, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988). While technical attributes represent the functional aspects of a product, perceived quality is tied to how consumers envision the product's general quality (Zeithaml, 1988). Consumer views directly influence the nature of a product (Boulding et al., 1993).
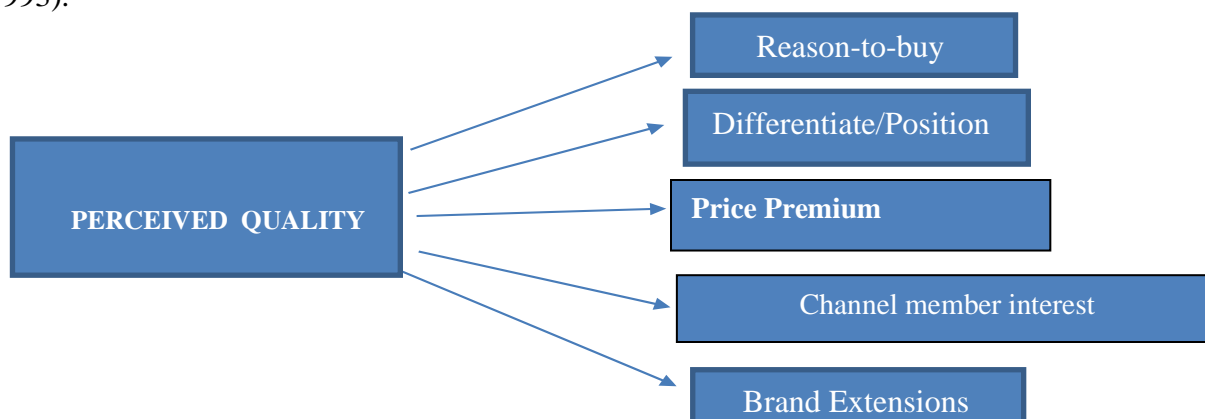

Fig. 2.4

Perceived quality can be classified into two groups: inherent traits and outward characteristics (Zeithaml, 1988). Inherent traits encompass physical features like design, appearance, and color, while outward characteristics pertain to non-physical attributes such as brand name, packaging, price, and quality certification (Bernue's et al., 2003).

High perceived quality enables a brand to differentiate itself from competitors and justify premium pricing (Aaker, 1991). Aaker (1991) emphasizes the significance of perceived quality, illustrated in Figure 2.4

a) **Reason-to-Buy:** Brand differentiation is crucial for influencing consumer purchasing decisions. The perceived quality of a brand plays a significant role in driving customer choices. When apparent attributes are positive, advertising and promotion efforts become more effective.

b) **Differentiate/Position:** Positioning a brand based on its apparent attributes is essential for standing out in the market. Strong positioning can act as a barrier for competitors, making it challenging for them to undermine the brand's appeal.

c) **A Price Premium:** Perceived quality allows for charging premium prices for products, which can lead to increased profits. A price premium can also enhance the brand's perceived value, creating a "you get what you pay for" belief among consumers.

d) **Channel Member Interest:** Marketing intermediaries, such as retailers and wholesalers, play a vital role in the distribution of a brand. High-quality products that align with a channel's image can strengthen relationships and drive distribution.

e) **Brand Extensions:** Strong brands with high perceived quality have the potential to successfully introduce new products in different categories. Brand extensions capitalize on the brand's reputation and can lead to higher success rates

f) **Brand Loyalty:** Brand loyalty is the commitment to consistently repurchase or patronize a preferred product or service. It goes beyond simple purchase frequency and is influenced by factors like product quality, satisfaction, and past experiences.

g) **Purchase Intention:** Purchase intention reflects a consumer's interest in buying a product. It's influenced by various factors, including consumer values, attitudes, brand awareness, perceived quality, and social context. Purchase intention is a crucial aspect of consumer decision-making.

2.6 Relationship between Perceived Quality and Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a multidimensional construct that encompasses cognitive, affective, and conative components in consumer attitudes. This loyalty is often characterized by one-sided brand-specific social responses over time, including commitments to repurchase and recommend. The concept of brand loyalty has evolved over time, originally seen as brand commitment and later equated with attitudinal proclamations of devotion. Some researchers have focused on

emotional attachment, capturing emotional bonds within brand relationships, while others emphasize the impact of perceived quality on brand loyalty.

In this context, brand loyalty is demonstrated through one-sided responses, including commitments and behavioral intentions. Research has explored emotional attachment, which captures emotional bonds and influences brand loyalty positively. Past studies have examined brand relationship quality, which encompasses dimensions like trust and nostalgia. The connection between perceived quality and brand loyalty has been explored, with some studies indicating perceived quality as a primary driver of brand loyalty. Notably, perceived quality has been found to influence brand image. Considering these findings, this study proposes the following research gap.

2.7 Research Gap

The current study followed a quantitative methodology, similar to the approaches taken by other researchers in the field. It used statistical data, tables, and models, akin to the methodologies surrounding the topic. Extensive planning and organization were necessary for the current study, mirroring the efforts of other researchers. The research designs in this area involved thorough analysis and synthesis, paralleling the processes in the current study. Many studies related to the topic offer solutions for human and organizational issues. The present study's findings are expected to aid manufacturing, marketing organizations, and consumers in addressing practical problems.

The current study utilized a cross-sectional quantitative research design, collecting survey data at a single point in time. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed, including frequencies and percentages for categorical variables. This approach differed from certain studies in the field. The current study's design also contrasts with approaches used by managers or leaders to solve organizational problems, such as participatory or action research. These approaches involve collaboration between researchers and stakeholders, aiming to take action and solve real-world problems. While the goals are similar, the approaches differ from the current study's methodology.

2.8 Objectives of the study

1. The aim of this study is to investigate the factors affecting both branding and customer purchase intentions.
2. This research seeks to assess how brand awareness impacts customers' intentions to make purchases.

3. The objective is to analyze how brand awareness influences customers' perception of product quality.

4. This study aims to examine the effects of brand awareness on customer brand loyalty.

5. The goal is to explore the connection between perceived product quality and consumers' intentions to make purchases.

6. This research aims to determine the link between customer brand loyalty and their intentions to make purchases.

7. The objective is to investigate how both perceived product quality and brand loyalty influence consumers' decisions.

8. This study aims to understand how perceived product quality mediates the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intentions.

2.9 Hypotheses

H1: Brand awareness positively affects consumers' purchase intentions.

H2: Brand awareness has a positive influence on consumers' perceived quality.

H3: Brand awareness positively impacts consumers' brand loyalty.

H4: Perceived quality has a positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions.

H5: Brand loyalty positively influences consumers' purchase intentions.

H6: Perceived quality has a positive impact on consumers' brand loyalty.

H7: Perceived quality mediates the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention.

H8: Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention.

3. Research Methodology

The section discusses research methods used in the study, including sample size, sampling strategy, and data gathering. It also covers measurement validity, reliability, and rationale for statistical analysis. This chapter summarizes the systematic approach to complementing existing literature and aiding practitioners. To achieve internal consistency, a meticulous and well-connected research technique is crucial.

A literature review provided insights into the research paradigm and study instrument. Data collection involved a survey approach. Statistical methods were used to analyze acquired data. The research explored relationships among various factors through

hypotheses. Quantifying data establishes causal relationships between variables (Malhotra, 2002). Empirical findings confirmed significant links between variables. The conceptual model suggests interconnected factors (Aaker, Kumar & Day, 2001), necessitating quantitative data and statistical approaches (Aaker et al., 2001). The study's goals define the research method/approach for hypothesis verification using statistical techniques (Rosner, 1990). The employed research technique is causal hypothesis testing.

3.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to establish questionnaire validity and reliability prior to the main research. The questionnaire items were adapted from existing studies on brand loyalty, awareness, quality, and purchase intention. After consulting marketing professionals and modifying the questionnaire based on their feedback, a pilot investigation was carried out with adjustments.

This pilot research, involving 100 respondents from two universities and two colleges in the Kashmir Region, evaluated the measuring scale's characteristics and minimized discrepancies. Demographic categories like gender, age, and education were equally represented among the participants. Data collected were analyzed using various statistical methods in SPSS 25.0 and AMOS 25.0. Results demonstrate the scale's reliability and validity, confirming its suitability for the upcoming comprehensive investigation.

3.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Using SPSS 25.0, the pilot phase data underwent Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to uncover underlying components (Hair et al., 2006). The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method with varimax rotation (utilizing Kaiser Normalization) was employed (Nunnally, 1978). Component determination utilized Eigen values > 1 and cumulative variance of 50% as a threshold. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.788 (Table 3.1) exceeded the 0.50 limit. All 19 items loaded onto 4 components, explaining 81.3% of cumulative variance. Bartlett's test of sphericity scored high (2136.561) with 0.000 significance and 171 degrees of freedom (Table 3.1), indicating component relatedness. EFA findings are provided below.

Table3.1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Measures		Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.788
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2136.561
	Df	171
	Sig.	.000

3.3 Communalities

"Communalities" represent the extent of correlation between an individual item and all other items in the study. Communalities are considered acceptable when exceeding 0.40, as values below that threshold suggest the item struggles to load onto the component. All research items possessed communalities surpassing 0.40.

3.4 Factor Extraction Matrix

Utilizing the "varimax" rotation method and principal component analysis, EFA was performed. The factor extraction process employed Eigen values to retrieve components. This analysis yielded 4 components with Eigen values exceeding 'one' (Figure 3.1). Consequently, the research obtained 4 components, explaining over 81% of cumulative variance. In social sciences, a cumulative variance between 50% and 60% is considered satisfactory (Hair Jr et al., 1995).

3.5 Rotated Component Matrix

Factor loading values indicate the alignment between observed variables and underlying factors. Notably, no cross-loading occurs among items across different factors. Each item exclusively loads onto its designated factor.

3.6 Evaluation of Research Instrument/Pilot Phase

Preliminary validation and verification of the measuring scale is crucial before proceeding to the final stage.

3.7 Validity

The scale's validity was assessed through convergent and discriminant validity methods.

3.8 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity pertains to the interconnectedness of variables within a component. Convergent validity is indicated by factor loading values of variables. To demonstrate convergent validity, it is recommended that the average loading of variables exceed 0.70 (Gaskin, 2018). All fifteen factors possess average factor loadings exceeding 0.70, affirming the instrument's convergent validity.

3.9 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity pertains to the extent of dissimilarity between specific elements. Items or variables should be connected with their designated factor while displaying distinct variation concerning other factors. Discriminant validity can be assessed through the factor correlation matrix. Correlation coefficients between components should not exceed 0.70, as higher values suggest shared variation. Utilizing the promax rotation technique (with Kaiser Normalization) and "principal axis factoring" for extraction (Gaskin, 2018), the factor correlation matrix was generated. The inter-construct correlation are all below 0.70, signifying discriminant validity. This confirms that variables do not exhibit strong correlations with each other.

3.10 Reliability

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed through "Overall Cronbach's Alpha" and "Split Half Reliability." The outcomes of these assessments are elaborated below.

3.10.1 Cronbach's Alpha

The Cronbach's Alpha result is 0.837 (Table 3.2), surpassing the social science research benchmark of 0.60 (Hair et al., 1998).

Table 3.2

Cronbach'sAlpha	No.of Items
.866	19

3.10.2 Split Half Reliability

The research employed SPSS 25.0 to divide the 19-item scale into two parts, comprising 10 and 9 items, respectively. The results of this assessment reveal favorable correlation coefficients, as depicted in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

		Value	.881
	Part 1	N of Items	10[a]
		Value	.860
Cronbach's Alpha	Part 2	N of Items	9[b]
	Total N of Items		19
Correlation Between Forms			.226
	Equal Length		.369
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Unequal Length		.370
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			.368

a) The items are: BAW1, BAW2, BAW3, BAW4, BAW5, PRI1, PRI2, PRI3, PRI4, PRI5.

b) The items are: PRI5, PQ1, PQ2, PQ3, PQ4, PQ5, BL1, BL2, BL3, BL4.

Note 1: BL - Brand Loyalty; PQ - Perceived Quality; BAW - Brand Awareness; PRI - Purchase Intention.

3.11 Main Study

The pilot study's reliable findings propelled the research into its final stage. The ensuing section delves into the research's design, instrument, sampling methodology, statistical tools, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis outcomes, data collection approach, models, and research methodologies adopted in this study.

3.12 Research Design

This study employs an exploratory, causal, and descriptive research approach. It seeks to comprehend the relationship between brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and purchase intention. Given the underexplored nature of customer buying intentions, particularly within the apparel industry, an exploratory design is employed to shape the study's focus, define variables, and finalize the research instrument. This design also aided in identifying antecedent factors influencing purchase intention. Descriptive research approaches further elucidated the impact of various variables on purchase intentions. From a survey perspective, this is a

quantitative research design, as survey data was quantified. The questionnaire aimed to solicit responses regarding purchase intentions and its determinants. The collected data was analyzed to draw generalizable conclusions. This research is cross-sectional, involving data collection at a specific time period.

3.13 Sampling Design

This section addresses the study's population, study region, sample frame, sampling unit, sample size, sampling technique/method, and contact method used.

3.14 Population for the Study

The study's sample was drawn from individuals aged 18-35 years, specifically students enrolled in selected colleges and institutions across India's Kashmir region. The population was segmented based on Erikson's Psychological Stages into "Early Adulthood" (17-23 years), "Middle Adulthood" (23-29 years), and "Late Adulthood" (31-35 years) to represent the age of young consumers. College and university students were targeted due to their apparel purchasing tendencies.

3.15 Study Area and Sample Frame

The study encompassed the Kashmir Region in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Data collection occurred in chosen institutions and universities, including both private and public colleges and universities.

3.16 Sample Unit

The sample unit is integral to accurate population forecasts. Students enrolled in higher education institutions served as the sample unit for this study.

3.17 Sample Size

For the main study, a sample size of 384 was determined. The formula used to calculate the sample size (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970):

$$n = [N * P * (1 - P)] / [(ME^2 * (N - 1)) + (X^2 * P * (1 - P))]$$

Where:

- N = Population size

- X^2 = Chi-Square value for a specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom

- P = Population proportion (0.50 for this study)

- ME = Acceptable margin of error (expressed as a proportion of 5%)

Considering a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, a 0.50 population proportion, and a Chi-Square value of 3.84 (with 1 degree of freedom), the calculated sample size for populations ranging from 1 lakh to 10 lakh was determined to be 384. To account for the population's distribution across the Kashmir division of the union territory and to allow for attrition, the sample size was increased to 400. However, a total of 600 questionnaires were distributed to accommodate potential non-responses.

3.18 Sampling Method

Given the widespread distribution of the research population, a multi-stage sampling strategy was employed. The first stage involved the random selection of five districts from the Kashmir Region out of a total of ten districts. The second step encompassed the selection of universities and college institutions. Finally, individual sample units (students) were chosen from various departments within the educational institutions.

Table 3.4: Sampling Distribution

Questionnaires distributed in the Kashmir Region = 600 Ratio of questionnaires distributed between universities and colleges 1:3 (150:450)		
Number of sample universities	3	
Final sample from each university	150/3 = 50	
Ratio of questionnaires (450) distributed between government and private colleges1:1(225:225)		
Colleges in Kashmir Region		
No of sample government colleges	No of sample private colleges	
5	5	
Final sample from each college	225/5 = 45	225/5 = 45

In the Kashmir division of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the student population in higher education institutions exceeds one lakh (AISHE, 2017-18, All India Survey on Higher Education). Given that the college population is more than three times that of universities, out of the 600 surveys distributed, 150 were allocated to universities and 450 to colleges. This equated to 75 surveys for selected universities and 225 questionnaires for both government (5) and private colleges (5). Details are provided in Table 3.4.

Table 3.5 lists selected government colleges within the Kashmir division, along with student enrollment figures. Students from various departments were chosen using simple random selection based on their roll numbers.

Table 3.5 Sample allotment in Government Colleges

Districts	Selected Government Colleges	No. of students selected
Srinagar	Amar Singh College	45
Ganderbal	Government Degree College	45
Awantipora	Government Degree College	45
Anantnag	Government Degree College	45
Pattan	Government Degree College	45
Total	5	225

Table 3.6 presents details regarding selected private colleges within the Kashmir division. The student selection process involved simple random selection from diverse departments based on their enrollment or roll numbers.

Table 3.6 Sample sharing in Private Colleges

Districts		Private Colleges Selected	No. of students selected
Srinagar		Candid Educational Society	45
Ganderbal		Qamariya College of Education	45
Awantipora		Master Institute of Technology	45
Anantnag		Hilal Instiutute Society	45
Baramulla	Apex Educational Trust	45	
Total	5	225	

Following the allocation of questionnaires to colleges, the remaining 150 questionnaires were dispersed among 3 universities situated across 3 districts. Within this distribution, 150 questionnaires were divided in a 50:50 ratio among students from the Central University of Kashmir, IUST (Islamic University of Science and Technology), and the University of Kashmir within the Kashmir Region.

Table 3.7 provides comprehensive information on the number of students represented at each

institution. The method of student selection involved simple random selection from diverse departments based on their respective roll numbers.

Table 3.7 Sample sharing in Universities

Districts	Number of students selected	Name of the University
Srinagar	50	University of Kashmir
Ganderbal	50	Central University of Kashmir
Awantipora	50	IUST
Total	**150**	

3.19 Methods of Data Collection

To achieve research objectives, both primary and secondary data sources were utilized.

3.19.1 Primary Data

The primary data, a significant portion of this research, was collected through a survey approach using a research instrument. This instrument gathered data on brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and purchase intention, while also capturing respondents' demographic traits. Question arrangement aimed to elicit favorable responses, with immediate clarifications provided for any uncertainties.

3.19.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data encompassed dissertations, publications, journals, research articles, and case studies. The study effectively employed online resources such as databases, web pages, and e-libraries to achieve its goals. The theoretical framework drew upon numerous sources concerning brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and purchase intention.

3.19.3 Population and Sampling Unit of the Study

Though Kashmir's apparel consumers represent diverse demographics, this survey specifically targeted students in higher education institutions due to their reflective attitude towards apparel buying. A structured questionnaire collected responses from students originating from various cultural and geographical backgrounds.

3.19.4 Research Instrument

A structured research instrument was crafted for data collection from higher education institutions in the Kashmir Region. Extensive literature review and expert consultation informed its creation. This

questionnaire focused on "brand loyalty," "brand awareness," "perceived quality," "purchase intention," and demographic data. Well-structured with 5-point interval and nominal scales, it consisted of three sections. The first included filter and brand preference questions, the second contained 19 variables questions, and the third featured demographic queries about gender, education, and age.

3.19.5 Measures

Most statements from existing scales were rephrased for research relevance and respondent comprehension. Table 3.8 provides a summary of questions derived from various investigations.

Factor	Items.	Questions	Questionnaire Source
Brand Awareness	1(BAW1)	Some attributes of my favourite apparel brand strike my mind quickly.	Netemeyer et al., 2004;Tong and Hawley(2009)
	2(BAW2)	I can abruptly recognize my favourite apparel brand" within other apparel brands.	
	3(BAW3)	I am known with my favourite apparel brand.	
	4(BAW4)	My favourite apparel brand is peculiar with respect to brands.	
	5(BAW5)	My favourite apparel brand really stands out__distinguished among brands.	
Purchase Intention	6(PRI1)	I am interested in buying my favourite apparel brand	Najied et al. (2021):Rizwaneta l.(2021)
	7(PRI2)	I consider buying my favourite apparel brand	
	8(PRI3)	I will buy my favourite apparel brand	
	9(PRI4)	I am conscious about my economic situation when shopping for my Favourite apparel brand	

	10 (PRI5)	I look seriously to find the best return for my money and watch my spending during my favourite apparel brand	
Perceived Quality	11(PQ1)	I trust the quality of the products provided by my favourite apparel brand.	Netemeyer et al., 2004;Tong and Hawley(2009)
	12(PQ2)	Products provided by my favourite apparel brand‖ are of good quality.	
	13(PQ3)	When I use my favourite apparel brand, I feel I have spent on better brand.	
	14(PQ4)	Products offered by my favourite apparel brand are reliable.	
	15(PQ5)	In comparison to other brands my favourite apparel brand‖ is a good value for the money.	
	16(BL1)	I consider myself loyal to my favourite apparel brand.	
	17(BL2)	My favourite apparel brand would be my first choice when shopping.	
	18(BL3)	I will regularly purchase from my favourite apparel brand as long as it remains customer oriented.	
	19(BL4)	I am still willing to buy from my favourite apparel brand even if the price of products provided by it is a little higher than that of other apparel brands	

Source: Questionnaire adopted by the researcher

4. Analysis of Data

This section discusses the statistical methods used to analyze the data in the study. The data underwent validation for validity and reliability through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques. Descriptive statistics and factor analysis were performed using SPSS 25.0, while SEM calculations were conducted using AMOS 25.0.

4.1 Data Cleaning

The dataset underwent cleaning before statistical analysis. Initially, 600 questionnaires were distributed, but only 559 were collected. Cleaning involved the following stages:

4.2 Missing Data

29 incomplete responses were removed, leaving 529 questionnaires for analysis.

4.3 Sample Outliers

11 outliers, identified using standard deviations (<0.50), were eliminated, yielding 518 responses.

4.4 Unengaged Responses

6 unengaged responses were discarded, resulting in 513 functional responses for analysis.

4.5 Assumptions for Regression Analysis through SEM

4.6 Normality

Prior to conducting Regression Analysis via SEM, four assumptions were tested on the main study dataset to verify hypotheses.

4.7 Skewness

Skewness values (±3 range for normality) from SPSS 23.0 showed data was within acceptable limits, implying normality. Skewness test results are shown in Table 4.1.

4.8 Kurtosis

Kurtosis values were also used to assess normality. All values in Table 4.1 fall within the ±3 range, confirming data's adherence to normality assumption.

Table 4.1 Normality Statistics

	Brand Awareness	Perceived Quality	Brand Loyalty	Purchase Intention
Mean	3.6850	3.6058	3.3107	3.4710
Std. Deviation	1.14269	1.14283	1.22166	1.13961
Variance	1.306	1.306	1.492	1.299
Skewness	-.708	-.470	-.211	-.385
Std. Error of Skewness	.108	.108	.108	.108
Kurtosis	-.270	-.710	-1.282	-.759
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.215	.215	.215	.215
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

In summary, the dataset underwent meticulous cleaning, resulting in 513 valid responses for analysis. Prior to Regression Analysis using SEM, normality assumptions were tested, and both skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable limits, ensuring data normality.

4.3 Linearity

To ensure a linear association between predictor and endogenous constructs, a linearity test was conducted using SPSS 23.0. If the connection between predictor and endogenous constructs is nonlinear, running Regression Analysis through SEM becomes ineffective. The study employed

an ANOVA test, computing R2 values, to assess linearity. The results reveal significant p-values, indicating a linear relationship between predictor and outcome variables. This substantiates the presence of a linear association between exogenous and endogenous variables (Wang et al., 2017).

4.4 Multicollinearity

The third assumption tested for regression analysis is multicollinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when predictor factors are highly correlated. In this study, multicollinearity was evaluated using "Tolerance" (acceptable level > 0.25) and "Variable Inflation Factor" (VIF) values (acceptable range between 1 and 10) (Hair et al., 1998). Upon assessment, no evidence of multicollinearity was found in the dataset. The Tolerance and VIF values met the specified criteria, suggesting that predictor variables were not strongly interrelated.

4.5 Autocorrelation

The final assumption to be tested is autocorrelation, which asserts that residuals related to constructs (observations) should not exhibit correlations among themselves. Autocorrelation's presence in a dataset can lead to unreliable regression outcomes. In this study, the Durbin-Watson measure was employed to identify autocorrelation. Values exceeding 3 or falling below 1 indicate autocorrelation. After conducting the Durbin-Watson test, it was determined that no autocorrelation existed in the dataset. The obtained values did not surpass the range of 3 to 1, confirming the absence of autocorrelation in the data.

4.6 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is employed to reduce the number of elements in data collection to a manageable quantity (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Factor loadings of 0.50 or higher are deemed optimal for retaining factors. EFA also eliminates factors with minimal associations with others (Hinkin, 1995). The EFA findings for each of the four constructs under study are provided below.

4.6.1 KMO and Bartlett's Test

For this study, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is 0.879, surpassing the minimal criterion of 0.50, indicating "sampling adequacy" in the data (Hair et al., 1998). The "null hypothesis," which assumes that the "factor correlation matrix" is an "identity matrix," is rejected based on the results of "Bartlett's Test of Sphericity." At 171 degrees of freedom, the Chi-Square value is

10533.861 (p = .000) (Table 4.2). This indicates a connection between the constructs and affirms the accuracy of the EFA findings.

Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Measure		Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.879
	Approx. Chi-Square	10533.861
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	171
	Sig.	.000

4.6.2 Communalities

Communality signifies the correlation strength among all components of the study. To be considered suitable for analysis, communality values must exceed 0.40. In this study, all items exhibit communality values greater than 0.40.

4.6.3 Factor Extraction Matrix

The EFA employed the "principal component analysis" method with "varimax rotation" and factor extraction based on Eigen values (>1). The Eigen scores for all components progressively decrease from construct 1 to 19. By retaining elements with Eigen values above 1, four factors were extracted. These four variables account for 81.5% of the variance, surpassing the 50% adequacy threshold (Hair Jr. et al., 1995).

4.6.4 Rotated Component Matrix Analysis

The purpose of the "rotation matrix" is to evaluate the alignment between observed variables and their corresponding constructs (dimensions). The results of this analysis reveal that each of the items or variables loads distinctly onto its own specific factor.

4.7 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Measurement Model Assessment

Following the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the four derived factors underwent "confirmatory factor analysis" (CFA) for further validation. The results of the CFA are detailed below, confirming the validity and reliability of the entire scale.

4.7.1 Measurement Model

The design of the "measurement model" within this research project was structured to enable interconnections between all constructs. This approach facilitated the placement of each data item into its corresponding construct, ensuring a comprehensive and coherent framework. The

model fit indices obtained following the execution of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), as depicted in fig. 4.2, were found to fall within acceptable thresholds as defined by Hair et al. (2010).

Table 4.3 Model Fit indices

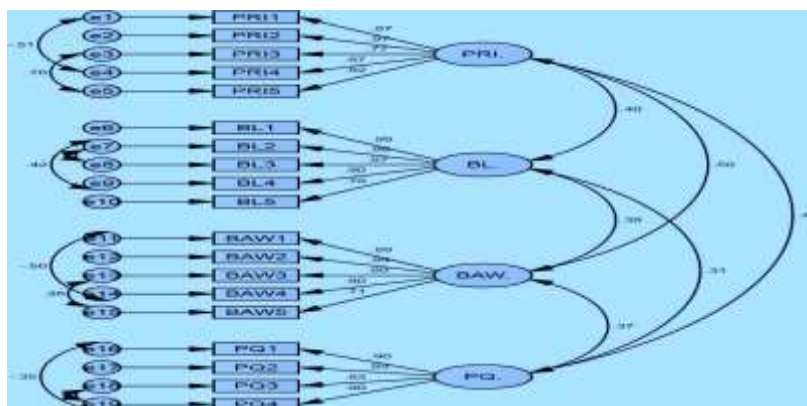| Index		Test value	Cut off value/Range
Absolute fit index	Chi square	629.11; *p=.000*	> 0.05
	Degrees of freedom	138	
	CMIN/DF (normed chi-square)	4.5	1< Cmin/df< 5
Badness of fit	RMSEA	0.08	≤0.08 means good fit
Goodness of fit	GFI	0.891	≥0.8meansgoodfit
	AGFI	0.850	≥0.8meansgoodfit
Incremental fit index	CFI	0.953	≥0.9meansgoodfit
	NFI	0.941	≥0.9meansgoodfit
	TLI	0.942	≥0.9meansgoodfit

Source: Authors own.

Figure 4.2: Measurement Model 1

Note 1: BL-Brand Loyalty; PQ-Perceived Quality; BAW-Brand Awareness; PRI-Purchase Intention.

4.8 Validity and Reliability Assessment

All standard loadings exceed the threshold of 0.70, in accordance with Fornell and Larcker (1981). This robustly indicates that the instrument possesses well-established convergent validity. Furthermore, each item's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) rating, as illustrated in Table 4.4, surpasses the 0.50 criterion. This confirms the establishment of convergent validity according to Fornell and Larcker (1981). Table 4.4 also demonstrates the scale's discriminant validity, as the square root of the AVE values is greater than the inter-correlation between variables, as outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Moreover, the instrument's Composite

Reliability (CR) values, as presented in Table 4.4, exceed the threshold of 0.60. This signifies that the instrument is reliable and dependable. In summary, the results indicate that the instrument exhibits strong validity and reliability, substantiating its credibility for use in the study.

Table 4.4: Standardized Regression Weights

Items	Direction	Factor	Estimate
PRI1	<---	PRI.	.874
PRI2	<---	PRI.	.972
PRI3	<---	PRI.	.774
PRI4	<---	PRI.	.974
PRI5	<---	PRI.	.819
BL1	<---	BL.	.992
BL2	<---	BL.	.879
BL3	<---	BL.	.870
BL4	<---	BL.	.899
BL5	<---	BL.	.779
BAW1	<---	BAW.	.892
BAW2	<---	BAW.	.839
BAW3	<---	BAW.	.803
BAW4	<---	BAW.	.897
BAW5	<---	BAW.	.707
PQ1	<---	PQ.	.905
PQ2	<---	PQ.	.928
PQ3	<---	PQ.	.833
PQ4	<---	PQ.	.904

Source: Data Compilation by the authors for the Current Study

4.9: Overall Reliability Assessment

Reliability can be conceptualized as a measure of consistency in evaluations. In this study, reliability was assessed using the "Cronbach's alpha" coefficient. The calculated value for Cronbach's alpha was 0.955, exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.60 established by Hair et al. (2006). This high Cronbach's alpha value further confirms the overall reliability of the measurement instrument used in the study. The value suggests a strong internal consistency

among the items within the instrument, reinforcing its dependability for capturing consistent responses from participants.

Table 4.5 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.932	.932	19

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

4.10 Split-Half Reliability Assessment

An additional approach to assess the dependability of the scale involves comparing the correlation values between one half of the factor items and the other half. This method provides insights into the internal consistency of the scale. The results obtained from this analysis were favorable, as indicated by the values presented in Table 4.5.

Measures	Value
Value Part1	
Cronbach's Alpha	.924
Value	10[a]
Part2	.899
No of Items	9[b]19
Total No of Items Correlation Between Forms Equal Length	.562
Spearman-Brown Coefficient Unequal Length	.720
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient	.720
	.716

4.10.1: Split-Half Reliability Assessment for Items

In this section, the split-half reliability of the scale was evaluated for the following items:

BAW1, BAW2, BAW3, BAW4, BAW5, PRI1, PRI2, PRI3, PRI4, and PRI5.

4.10.2: Split-Half Reliability Assessment for Items

Similarly, the split-half reliability analysis was conducted for the following items: BL1, BL2, BL3, BL4, BL5, PQ1, PQ2, PQ3, and PQ4.

Source: Data Compilation by the Scholar for the Current Study

Note 1:- BL: Brand Loyalty- PQ: Perceived Quality- BAW: Brand Awareness- PRI: Purchase Intention

These sections indicate that split-half reliability assessments were performed on two separate sets of items related to different constructs. The source of the data compilation is attributed to the scholar conducting the current study.

4.11: Structural Model Analysis

The Structural Model incorporated various constructs, namely "brand awareness" (independent variable), "perceived quality," and "brand loyalty" (mediating variables), along with "purchase intention" (dependent variable). The study aimed to investigate the direct effects of "brand awareness" on "purchase intention," "perceived quality," and brand loyalty. Additionally, the direct influence of "perceived quality" and brand loyalty on "purchase intention" was examined, as well as the mediating role of "perceived quality" and brand loyalty in the relationship between "brand awareness" and "purchase intention."

4.12.1: Evaluation of Structural Model (I)

The initial iteration of the Structural Model (I), as represented by Figure 4.1, was executed with the primary objective of examining the direct influence of "brand awareness" on "purchase intention." The model fit indices, denoted as [Figure 4.2], exhibit values that fall within acceptable ranges.

Table 4.6 Model Fit indices

Index		Test value	Cut off value/Range
Absolute fit index	Chi square	147.1;*p=.000*	> 0.05
	Degrees of freedom	25	
	Cmin/df (normed chi-square)	5.8	1< Cmin/df< 8
Badness of fit	RMR	0.07	≤0.08 means good fit
Goodness of fit	GFI	0.947	≥0.8means good fit
	AGFI	0.884	
Incremental fit index	CFI	0.977	≥ 0.9 means satisfactory fit
	NFI	0.972	≥ 0.9 means satisfactory fit
	TLI	0.958	≥ 0.9 means satisfactory fit

Figure 4.3 (a) Structural Model

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note 1: BL-Brand Loyalty; PQ-Perceived Quality; BAW-Brand Awareness; PRI-Purchase Intention.
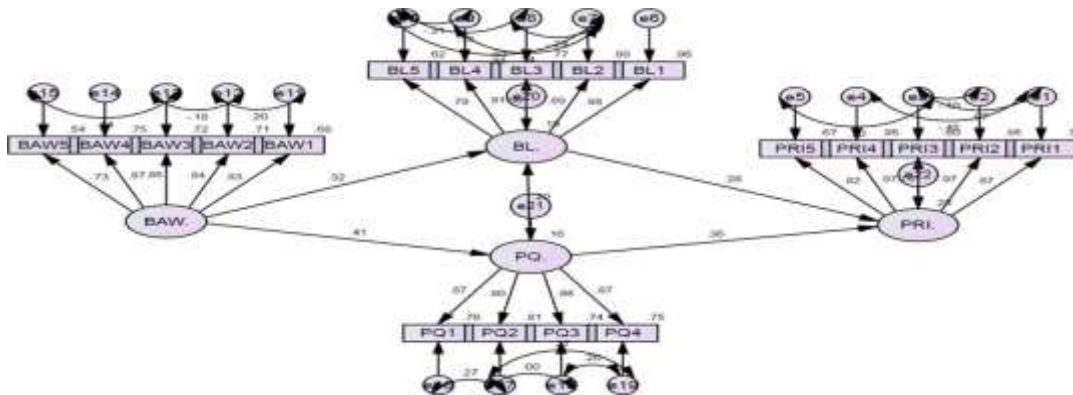

Figure 4.3 (b) Structural Model

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note 1: BL-Brand Loyalty; PQ-Perceived Quality; BAW-Brand Awareness; PRI-Purchase

Intention.

Table 4.6 presents the structural model coefficients obtained from path analysis, encompassing both standardized and unstandardized values.

Table 4.7 Structural Model Coefficients

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Un-standardized Estimate	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.P
PRI	BAW	0.506	0.502	.047	10.659 ***

Note1: BL-Brand Loyalty; PQ-Perceived Quality; BAW-Brand Awareness; PRI-Purchase Intention.

4.12.2: Evaluation of Structural Model (II)

The evaluation of the Structural Model (II), denoted as [Figure 4.3(b)], ensued. The model fit indices for this iteration are presented in Figure 4.3(b) and demonstrate values that fall within acceptable ranges, as indicated by the results detailed in Table 4.15.

Table 4.8 Model Fit indices

Index		Test value	Cut off value/Range
Absolute fit index	Chi square	604.6;*p=.00*	> 0.05
	Degrees of freedom	131	
	Cmin/df (normed chi-square)	4.61	1< Cmin/df< 8
Badness of fit	RMSEA	0.08	≤0.08 means good fit
Goodness of fit	GFI	0.894	≥0.8means good fit
	AGFI	0.847	
Incremental fit index	CFI	0.955	≥0.9means satisfactory fit
	NFI	0.943	≥ 0.9 means satisfactory fit
	TLI	0.941	≥ 0.9 means satisfactory fit

Table 4.9 Structural model estimates (Un-standardized)

DependentVariable	IndependentVariable	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
PQ.	BAW.	.415	.050	8.252		***
BL.	BAW.	.362	.055	6.622		***
BL.	PQ.	.222	.053	4.191		***
PRI.	BL.	.265	.039	6.727		***
PRI.	PQ.	.376	.047	8.022		***

Source: *Data compilation by the scholar for the present study*
Note1: ****Means p =0.001.*
Note1: *BL-Brand Loyalty; PQ-Perceived Quality; BAW-Brand Awareness; PRI-Purchase Intention.*

Table 4.8 and Table 4.9 display the structural model coefficients obtained from the path analysis. These coefficients offer insights into the relationships among the variables within the structural model.

4.13 Results from Hypothesis Testing

The research hypotheses were evaluated using both "Structural Model Coefficients" and "mediation" analyses. The "Structural Model Coefficients" are discussed below, and they were utilized to test the study hypotheses. The results of the analysis indicate that all of the study hypotheses were statistically significant.

4.13.1 Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variable.

1. Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Intention

SEM analysis supports hypothesis H1, suggesting that "purchase intention" is directly influenced by "brand awareness" ($\beta = 0.50$ and R2 = 0.25). This implies that greater product awareness might lead to increased purchases by customers.

2. Influence of Brand Awareness on Perceived Quality

SEM analysis supports hypothesis H2, indicating that "perceived quality" is positively influenced by "brand awareness" ($\beta = 0.40$ and R2 = 0.16). This suggests that product awareness could contribute to an enhanced perception of product quality by customers.

4. Influence of Brand Awareness on Brand Loyalty

SEM analysis supports hypothesis H3, indicating that "brand loyalty" is positively influenced by "brand awareness" ($\beta = 0.32$ and R2 = 0.19). This suggests that increased awareness might lead to higher customer loyalty.

5. Influence of Perceived Quality on Purchase Intention

SEM analysis supports hypothesis H4, showing that "perceived quality" positively influences "purchase intention" ($\beta = 0.36$ and R2 = 0.28). This implies that better perceived quality could lead to increased purchase intention.

6. Influence of Brand Loyalty on Purchase Intention:

Path analysis through SEM supports hypothesis H5, indicating that "brand loyalty" positively influences "purchase intention" ($\beta = 0.28$ and R2 = 0.28). This suggests that customers with brand loyalty tend to purchase more products from the same brand.

4.13.2 Mediation Results

In this research, mediation analysis was conducted using the "bootstrapping" technique, employing the user-defined "Estimand" methodology proposed by Gaskin (2016). The study explored the mediating roles of both "perceived quality" and "brand loyalty" as mediators in the relationship between the independent variable "brand awareness" and the dependent variable "purchase intention."
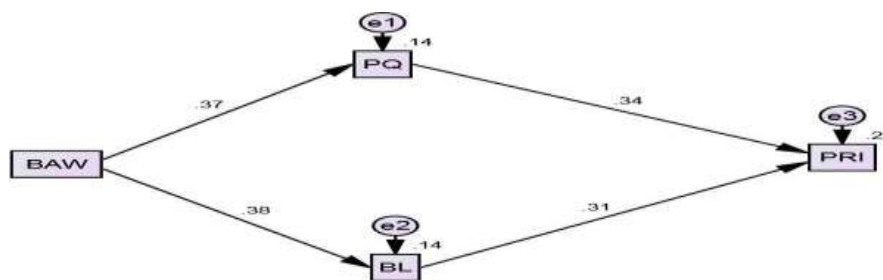
Mediation analysis
Mediation Model-I

Figure 4.4 Mediation Model-I

In the first model (Figure 4.4), "Perceived Quality" operates as a mediator in the relationship between "brand awareness" and "purchase intention." To investigate the presence of an indirect effect, implying mediation, the "bias-corrected bootstrapping analysis" was employed using a 2000 bootstrap sample at a 95% confidence range (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The mediation analysis utilized the user-defined Estimand technique proposed by Gaskin (2016). This technique standardizes parameter names across pathways for analyzing indirect effects.

In this approach, "A" represents the route between "brand awareness" and "purchase intention," while "B" represents the path between "perceived quality" and "purchase intention." The product of A and B yields the indirect effect. With a 2000 bootstrap sample and a 95% confidence interval, the bias-corrected bootstrap analysis was employed to calculate the indirect impact.

Table 4.9 presents the outcomes of the biased-corrected two-tailed significance test. It displays both lower and higher values/scores, with the indirect impact p-value being statistically significant. This signifies that "perceived quality" mediates the influence of "brand awareness" on "purchase intention."

Table 4.10 Results from Mediation Model-I

Parameter	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
MyEstimand	.123	.077	.178	.001

Moreover, the values of standard error and the amount of bias are given below.

Table 4.11 Results from Mediation Model-I

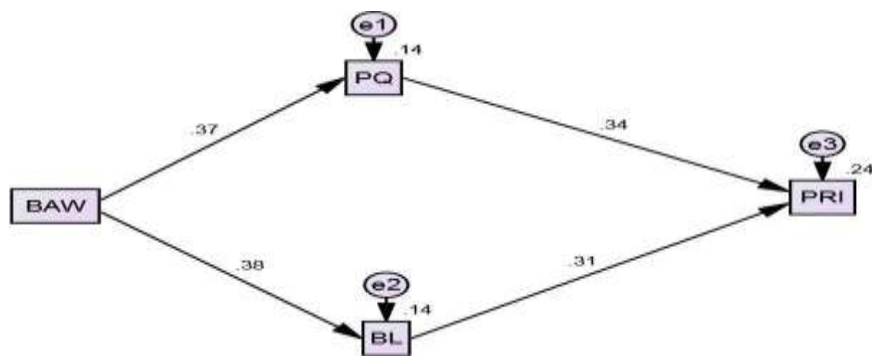| Parameter	SE	SE-SE	Mean	Bias	SE-Bias
MyEstimand	.026	.000	.124	.001	.001

Mediation Model-II:

Figure 4.5 Mediation Model-I1

Mediation Analysis: Brand Loyalty as a Mediator

In the second model (Figure 4.5), "Brand Loyalty" acts as a mediator in the relationship between "brand awareness" and "purchase intention." To assess the indirect effect, implying mediation, the "bias-corrected bootstrapping analysis" was applied using a 2000 bootstrap sample at a 95% confidence range (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The mediation analysis utilized the user-defined Estimand technique proposed by Gaskin (2016). This technique standardizes parameter names for analyzing indirect effects.

In this context, "A" represents the pathway between "brand awareness" and "Brand Loyalty," while "B" signifies the path between "Brand Loyalty" and "Purchase Intention." The product of A and B determines the indirect effect. Employing a 2000 bootstrap sample and a 95% confidence interval, the bias-corrected bootstrap analysis was used to calculate the indirect impact.

Table 4.12 presents the outcomes of the biased-corrected two-tailed significance test. It presents both lower and higher values/scores, with the indirect impact p-value being statistically significant. This implies that "Brand Loyalty" mediates the relationship between "brand awareness" and "purchase intention.

Table 4.12 Results from Mediation Model-I

Para meter	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
MyEstimand	.115	.073	.169	.001

Moreover, the values of standard error and the amount of bias are given below.

Table 4.13 Results from Mediation Model-I

Parameter	SE	SE-SE	Mean	Bias	SE-Bias
MyEstimand	.024	.000	.116	.001	.001

Mediating Role of Perceived Quality between Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention:

The mediation analysis reveals that "perceived quality" mediates the impact of "brand awareness" on "purchase intentions."

Mediating Role of Brand Loyalty between Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention:

The mediation analysis demonstrates that "brand loyalty" mediates the impact of "brand awareness" on "purchase intention."

5. Findings, Conclusion and Implication

5.1 Findings

The adopted instrument, with minor adjustments, underwent a pilot study involving a survey with 125 respondents from the Kashmir region of India. However, for statistical purposes, only 100 valid responses were considered. "SPSS 22.0" was utilized, and before applying "EFA," data cleansing procedures were employed, including outlier removal and handling unengaged or missing responses. With a cutoff of 0.5, the factor loading approach was employed, revealing a 4-dimensional structure represented by 19 items.

Factor analysis (exploratory) during pre-testing affirmed 4 major dimensions. Validity was confirmed through "Bartlett's Test of Sphericity" and "KMO" metrics. Principal Component Analysis revealed that 4 factors explained over 80% of variance, exceeding the 50% threshold. Reliability, assessed by "Cronbach's alpha," exceeded threshold levels. Split-half reliability confirmed instrument consistency. Construct validity was assessed through average loadings, and discriminant validity was achieved via "Promax" rotation.

The main study included 600 respondents from ten Kashmiri districts in India. After validating regression assumptions, "EFA" was applied to 513 responses. All items validated in the pilot study remained. "AMOS 22.0" conducted "CFA," confirming the previously established factor structure. "CFA" results validated the scale's integrity, demonstrating convergent and discriminant validity.

Path analysis explored relationships between independent and dependent variables. All 8 study assumptions were met. Brand awareness significantly influenced perceived quality, followed by brand loyalty and purchase intention. Brand loyalty had the highest impact on purchase intention, with perceived quality also exerting a substantial influence. Mediation analysis showed both perceived quality and brand loyalty mediating the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention.

5.2 Conclusion

Over the past three decades, branding research has grown significantly. However, scant attention has been directed towards examining the mediating aspects of branding in relation to purchase intentions, especially within the apparel sector. The literature on consumer behavior and branding remains contentious, particularly concerning purchase intentions. This study investigates the interplay between brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and purchase intention, shedding light on this subject. It also delves into the roles of two mediators in the initial decision-making process. With the apparel industry's development and the absence of mediating factors, this research is a valuable contribution to the field of branding.

The study tests theorized relationships and confirms links between brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and purchase intention. The implications, conclusions, and future recommendations are discussed in this research. Businesses in the apparel industry are urged to bolster brand awareness and quality perception to satisfy consumers, fostering loyalty and purchasing behavior. Moreover, this study introduces a fresh perspective on the mediating role of brand loyalty and perceived quality between brand awareness and purchase intention. This perspective offers apparel brands insights to enhance customer buying through improved quality perceptions and increased customer loyalty, resulting in stronger, lasting consumer relationships.

5.3 Implications

This study carries practical implications for various stakeholders, alongside theoretical insights. The study's dimensions provide a foundation for strategies and interventions to achieve business

objectives. Cultivating brand awareness and loyalty is a time-consuming process, necessitating active promotion and improvement worldwide to boost purchase intentions. Coupling these efforts with targeted brand communication enhances the likelihood of success. The study spotlights the apparel industry, advocating the enhancement of brand awareness, perceived quality, and loyalty to elevate purchase intentions.

Brand loyalty can stem from uniqueness, style, or convenience, driven by thorough brand knowledge or price considerations. Companies strive for customer loyalty to foster brand devotion, striving to meet needs and address issues. Loyalty is pivotal for sales, pricing, and customer retention. Customer investment in a brand leads to repeat purchases, reflecting emotional ties. Loyalty can lead to higher prices and customer advocacy. Two loyalty types exist: behavioral and emotional. Emotional ties drive greater purchasing likelihood. Some companies retain customers through cost-effective services, while others prioritize brand-centric strategies.

Purchase intent is the likelihood of future product or service purchase based on brand exposure and satisfaction. The journey involves need recognition, research, decision-making, and product usage. Enhancing brand loyalty requires focusing on perceived quality. Strategies encompass celebrity endorsements and varied collections. Durability, style, and other attributes enhance quality perception. Brand consistency and customer care foster loyalty. Brands need visibility for inclusion in the consumer's choice set.

Apparel brands can enhance quality perceptions via marketing and emphasizing brand care. Product features, image, and reputation play crucial roles. Indian marketers can influence local perception of quality through quality management, R&D, and enhancing retail image. Advertising can raise awareness and loyalty. In conclusion, the study presents a model for boosting brand loyalty and purchase intention, offering strategic insights for brand management.

As with any research project, this study had several limitations, as outlined below. Firstly, the adoption of a cross-sectional design framework involved collecting data from respondents only once, potentially not yielding the most comprehensive outcomes according to contemporary standards. Secondly, the study concentrated on respondents from a single region in India, excluding various critical regions. Thirdly, the focus primarily on a young population segment may have introduced bias by omitting other age groups. Fourthly, the selection of respondents solely from colleges and universities might introduce bias into the findings. Additionally, the

sample size estimated for this study might not be sufficiently large to generalize the findings to the broader apparel market.

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