

DECODING THE CONSUMER MIND: LINKING BRAND EQUITY TO PURCHASE INTENTIONS THROUGH ATTITUDE IN EMERGING MARKETS

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Abstract

Background: This research examined the effect of Brand equity, customer-based-brand equity dimensions, namely brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance with the social influence, on purchase intentions in fashion apparel, traditionally tailored indigenous products in Swat, KP, Pakistan. Further, this study investigates the mediating role of brand attitude. *Method:* The current research employed a multistage cluster sampling followed by purposive and convenience sampling to collect data from 310 respondents using a survey instrument. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling was used to test the hypothesized relationships among the study variables. *Results:* findings revealed that brand identity, brand response, and brand resonance were positively connected to purchase intentions. The brand meaning and social influence were insignificantly related to purchase intentions. Moreover, brand attitude mediates the relationship between brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and social influence. Additionally, the brand attitude does not mediate the relationship between brand resonance and purchase intentions. *Originality:* This research assesses the relationship between brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, brand resonance, social influence, and purchase intention in Swat, KP, and Pakistan. It demonstrates the mediating role of brand attitude, yielding a novel perspective on how brand equity shapes consumer behavior. *Conclusions:* The current study found that brand identity, brand response, and brand resonance significantly affect purchase intentions. However, brand meaning and social influence show no significant association with purchase intentions. Brand attitude significantly mediates the relationship between brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and social influence, but is not significant for brand resonance. The study provides theoretical refinement, actionable insights, and future directions.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary marketing realm, branding strategy, as a prime determinant of marketing strategy, has progressively been marked as a robust instrument for achieving distinctive competencies (Rita et al., 2026). Successful branding strategies revolve around delving into consumers' attitudinal preferences, behavioral tendencies, and perceptual opinions, which are central to marketing principles (Rismawati et al., 2026). Brand equity denotes the composite of the value-added benefits and operational efficiency that a brand offers (Pandita, 2022). According to Devi (2023) It occupies a credible position in corporate strategic plans, given that consumers prefer strong brands that serve as a powerful symbol. In the branding context, brand equity has evolved into a factor that shapes consumer behavior, initiated with awareness, interest, desires, and action (Swaminathan et al., 2022). Keller (1993) proposed the Customer-based brand equity model, which represents the distinctive capabilities a brand carries in consumers' minds, generates specific responses to the brand marketing mix, compared to their reactions to the same promotional components assigned to a fabricated or imagery name of the brand. Within his framework, brand salience, brand imagery, brand judgments, and brand resonance serve as foundational components that form consumers' brand perceptions (Gupta et al., 2024). In light of the preceding arguments, it is assessed that brand equity occurs when a consumer knows about the brand, has a favorable impression, and remembers distinct brand attributes with exclusive associations (Oliveira et al., 2023).

Fashion and culturally rooted industries are among the most brand-conscious segments, in which consumer purchases are strongly determined by their perceptions of the brand (Chrimes & Boardman, 2023; Zaki & Wu, 2026). In emerging economies, the unique association of the branding strategies is unexplored in the northern areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Province of Pakistan, particularly in the Swat region, which represents such contexts embedded with cultural heritage and traditional fashion, with national and locally designed products like Islampur, Pashmina shawls, traditional Kani, and Woolen stoles,

branded clothing, antique jewelry, gems, Swati embroidery and stones representing an iconic symbol of brand identity in the local market (Marwat & Yousafzai, 2024). Prior research has explored the brand equity and purchase intentions in Westernized and digitally advanced economies (Dinh et al., 2023; Lili et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2023). However, little research has considered how brand equity may influence purchase intentions in locally and culturally rich heritage-based hand-knitted shawls, branded apparel, and fashion accessories. Swat, being a culturally embedded industry, is highly brand-sensitive, which entails academic investigation. Swat is famous for its intricate embroidery on shawls and delicate Kani and pashmina fabric, which have a historic and cultural identity with artisanal provenance (Noor et al., 2025). Handicrafts and locally manufactured fabrics in fashion and branded apparel represent shopping goods, and brand equity dimensions can significantly predict consumer purchase intentions (Malhotra & Saravanan, 2025). Therefore, the core purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the Customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model dimensions (brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance, with the addition of social influence) and the purchase intentions, with the mediating role of brand attitude in the Swat region of KP, Pakistan.

Brand attitudes refer to consumers' overall appraisal of brand value, which serves as a foundation for consumer behavioral preferences (Ozdemir et al., 2023). Brand attitude is the composite of product-specific traits, utilitarian, and experience-driven characteristics (Huang & Liu, 2022), and non-product related facets such as emotional and symbolic attributes (Hong et al., 2022). Çavuşoğlu et al. (2023) ascertains it as a value-expressive mechanism that allows consumers to articulate their self-image. Despite considerable research on brand equity and CBBE model dimensions, the mediating role of brand attitude in the relationship between brand equity dimensions and purchase intentions remains unexplored in the northern areas of KP, Pakistan. Brand attitude acts as a conduit between consumers' brand recognition and recall, and their purchase-driven loyalty (Hwang et al., 2021). As stated by Zanger et al. (2022)

Brand attitude demonstrates the strategic role of consumers' cognition, which converts their perceptions into actionable purchase intentions. In the context of a culturally rich region of KP, Swat, traditional hand-embroidered textiles and the branded apparel sector, brand attitude may serve as an evaluative yardstick for the utilitarian and symbolic assessment of branded apparel. The Swat region is deemed appropriate for multiple reasons, including deep-rooted customary apparel embedded with global demand, and improved digitalization has paved new avenues for the youth through social media platforms, thus altering purchase consumption patterns in the region (Khan & Rahman, 2021; Rahim et al., 2019).

Customer-based brand equity is denoted as the distinct influence of brand cognition on buyers' response to brand-integrated promotional offers (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2021). Unique attributes attached to a specific brand represent its differential impact, which stems from brand awareness and recall that lead to purchase decisions (Nuseir & Elrefae, 2022). According to Stukalina and Pavlyuk (2021), consumer feedback reveals their attitudinal preferences and behavioral intentions ignited by the brand's integrated marketing communications. Therefore, the brand is favorable and unfavorable based on the equity attached to it. Positive customer-based brand equity generates healthy cash flows, lowers costs, and improves operational efficiency (Qiao et al., 2022). The current study focuses on the dimensions of the CBBE model, namely, Brand Identity (BI), Brand Meaning (BM), Brand Response (BR), Brand Resonance (BR), and Social Influence (SI), impact on the Purchase Intentions (PI), with the mediating role of Brand Attitude (BA). Purchase intention is the consumer's probability of purchasing a particular product or brand, which represents their willingness or likelihood to make a purchase (Benhardy et al., 2020). The CBBE model, initially proposed by Keller (1993), demonstrates brand power from a consumer perspective, which classifies brands into six types. Brand salience is divided into brand awareness and brand recall dimensions, which work as brand identifiers (Ishrak & Al-Mamun, 2022). According to Benhardy et al. (2020), the second building block gives meaning to the brand and

has two further classifications: brand performance and imagery. The third element drives customer responses, which have two, namely, brand judgements and feelings (Tasci, 2020). At the top of the pyramid, the CBBE model describes the relationship between brand and the customer, revealing their attitudinal loyalty and community attachments (Gupta et al., 2024).

Brand Identity (BI) has Brand salience (BS), which lies at the bottom of the pyramid, referring to the brand's basic knowledge, encompassing its awareness and recall dimensions that answer the who are you question (Gupta et al., 2024). Moreover, it is the efficacy of brand elements to perform their function as product identifiers. Brand meaning (BM) is the composite of brand performance (BP) and brand imagery (BI). BP refers to the brand competency to meet the customer's functional requirements, shaped by characteristics and utilities such as core components, product credibility, endurance, maintenance efficiency, model and design, and price (Gundona et al., 2023). BI refers to the external attributes of goods and services, such as a brand's ability to meet cognitive and affective customer needs (Tasci, 2020). In addition, brand imagery is formed through customer experiences and the company's integrated communication mix (Parris & Guzmán, 2023). Brand Response (BR) constitutes Brand Judgments (BJ) and Brand Feelings (BF), which collectively determine the consumer purchase response. According to Tasci (2021), brand judgments comprise a consumer perceptual evaluation and attitudinal perspective of a specific brand that arises from their lived experiences and interactions with the brand. Brand feeling stems from consumers' affective and emotional responses to a brand, manifested in warmth, happiness, satisfaction, excitement, zeal, social approval, and self-assurance (Boronczyk & Breuer, 2020). Brand Resonance (BR) is at the top of the CBBE model, the emotional connection consumers build with a specific brand, which entails behavioral and attitudinal loyalty, sense of community, and active involvement (Yağız & Özer, 2023). Thus, the current study aims to examine the relationship between the four dimensions of the CBBE model (Brand Identity, Brand Meaning, Brand Response, Brand Resonance) and Social

Influence on consumer purchase intentions, with Brand Attitude as a mediator.

2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Customer-Based Brand Equity Model

The Customer-Based Brand Equity Model Keller (1993) As a multidimensional construct, it represents the differential impact on consumers' reactions to the marketing mix. Customer-based brand equity manifests when customers know about the brand, which forms favorable and unfavorable opinions, distinctive brand associations, and differential brand cues that enhance brand equity (Naing, 2023). The CBBE model has been widely employed in the consumer psychology discipline (Akbar et al., 2023; Akbar et al., 2017; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2021), which generates a comprehensive body of literature. In the fashion-branded apparel sector, brand equity holds profound significance due to its symbolic and status-conscious nature, extensively intertwined with identity, expression signaling, self-image, social approval, and cultural heritage symbols (Linanda et al., 2025). This study is intended to inspect the relationship between the CBBE model dimensions Brand Identity, Brand Meaning, Brand Response, Brand Resonance, Social Influence, and Purchase Intentions. Moreover, this study intends to identify the mediating role of Brand Attitude on the relationship between the CBBE model and Purchase Intentions.

2.2 Brand Identity and Purchase Intentions

Brand identity is the composite of strategic mechanisms that firms use to amplify their exposure, prominence, and competitive distinctions, power, and value, shaping consumer perceptions and impressions of the brand (Hasanah et al., 2023). Achieving a high brand identity means achieving brand salience. Brand identity represents Brand Salience as a building block, integrating brand awareness and recall elements, which create, maintain, and demonstrate the visible brand elements (Behrozi & Sohrabi, 2022). Moreover, it encompasses all brand identifiers that synergistically disseminate a coherent value proposition to the consumers (Gupta et al., 2025). Acar et al. (2024) conceptualized brand identity through Social Identity Theory, which revealed a significant impact on brand lifestyle, congruence, and

repurchase intentions. Empirical evidence reveals that a brand's identity is a prime consideration in brand equity, leading towards purchase decisions (Escobar-Farfán et al., 2024). Likewise, Shams et al. (2024) identified brand identity as a significant predictor of consumer purchase intentions in the digital era, with consumer belief as a moderator, representing it as an initial progression stage in developing brand attitudinal loyalty. In a similar nature study conducted by Akhsani (2025), in the beauty and fashion industry, brand identity is the most influential predictor of purchase intentions, demonstrating that awareness and recall elements have profound worth in gaining a competitive edge in a cluttered market. Furthermore, consumer brand identification is a core stimulus that reinforces brand engagement and purchase intentions in the Pakistan fashion apparel sector (Aziz & Ahmed, 2023). Additionally, Azzari and Pelissari (2020) highlighted brand identity and awareness as foundational drivers to brand equity, mediated by perceived quality, brand associations, and loyalty. Brand identification enhances favorable perceptual opinions of brand promotional campaigns, which attenuates unfavorable views of detrimental advertisements (Graham & Wilder, 2020). Therefore, consumers with low brand identification are likely to engage in spreading negative word-of-mouth. In light of the findings from previous studies, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H1: Brand Identity significantly impacts consumer purchase intentions.

2.3 Brand Meaning and Purchase Intentions

Brand Meaning denotes an in-depth assessment of the brand with respect to its performance and imagery, which collectively reflect functional attributes and status-signaling characteristics of brand knowledge (Batra, 2019). Brand performance refers to the ways brands attempt to meet the utilitarian and operational needs. Therefore, it explains the intrinsic brand attributes that define fundamental product dimensions (Iyer et al., 2021). Brand imagery describes the brand's extrinsic attributes, integrating all aspects of psychological and social impacts, which rest on consumers' abstract perceptions rather than its actual functions (Alzate et al., 2022). Brand meaning stems from the strengths, favorability, and uniqueness of

brand associations, which shape purchase intentions (Keller, 2025). To create brand equity, a brand should possess a dominant position, favorable brand evaluations, and distinctive competencies that occupy a central role in major purchase decisions. Mohit et al. (2026) conducted a bibliometric assessment of 402 Scopus-indexed articles, examining the association between brand image and purchase intention through the PRISMA technique. The results demonstrate the significance of brand image as a central theme across time periods (1995-2024). Similarly, Li et al. (2021) demonstrate that favorable corporate image contributions in building patriotic brand image, known for its extrinsic traits, significantly impact purchase intentions for domestic products in Taiwan. Furthermore, brand meaning, integrating the brand image, performance, communication, and personality, significantly enhances purchase intention (Mao et al., 2020). Internal branding, with strategic brand management, improves brand performance (Iyer et al., 2018). In the banking sector, customer-based brand equity performance and imagery dimensions lead to customer satisfaction and repeat purchase (Gupta et al., 2024). Drawing upon prior research, the present study develops the following hypothesis:

H2: Brand Meaning significantly impacts purchase intentions.

2.4 Brand Response and Purchase Intentions

Brand response is operationalized as consumers' responses to a brand, marketing offers, and its integrated marketing communication campaigns, reflecting how they perceive and feel about a specific brand (Stukalina & Pavlyuk, 2021). Brand judgments and feelings collectively generate brand responses, whether they arise from the head or the heart. According to Marmara (2025), brand judgments are consumers' subjective evaluations and perceptions of a brand, how they integrate brand associations and imagery to form varied beliefs. Brand judgments are formed based on quality, credibility, considerations, and superiority (Keller, 2016; Mitra & Jenamani, 2020). Brand feelings refer to consumers' affective and emotional reactions that evoke symbolic value, generated through effective management of marketing and promotional content (Oliveira et

al., 2023). As stated by Catherine et al. (2024), brand feelings of warmth, fun, happiness, excitement, security, confidence, and self-esteem are a composite of impressions that marketers can express through articulating their integrated communications that stimulate consumer response. Brand responses with positive judgments and pleasant emotions generate customer purchase (Brunner et al., 2019). Research has proven the positive association between brand response and purchase intentions (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2020; Brunner et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2021). Similarly, Goyal and Verma (2024) examined the significant impact of overall brand equity (positive response) on purchase intentions in the telecommunication sector. Likewise, Gupta et al. (2024) highlighted the significance of customer-based brand equity determinants in enhancing customer satisfaction and purchase intentions in the Indian Banking sector. Therefore, brand judgments and feelings are the key predictors that shape consumer purchase intentions. Superior, credible, and strong brands generate positive feelings, thereby creating powerful brand equity in purchase decisions. Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H3: Brand Response significantly impacts Purchase Intentions.

2.5 Brand Resonance and Purchase Intentions

Brand resonance is positioned at the top of the CBBE model, the ultimate level of customer relationship and identity alignment with the brand, which describes the magnitude of customer loyalty (Husain et al., 2022). According to Keller (2016) Brand resonance depicts the continuum of brands that synchronize with their self-image, revealing their cognitive connection to the brand. Furthermore, it integrates all the activities customers seek to engage in to gain information about the brand, repeated purchases, brand advocacy, and positive word-of-mouth (Moura et al., 2019). Brand resonance has four classifications: behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachments, sense of community, and active engagements (Keller, 1993). Brand resonance starts with behavioral loyalty, reflecting repeat purchase in terms of brand share of category sales; it describes how often and how much a consumer buys a particular brand (Kim et al., 2020). Attitudinal attachments show the

emotional and psychological association with the brand that arises from brand love, and consumers invest additional energy in brand acquisition driven by attachments (Akbar et al., 2025). A sense of community demonstrates a sense of connectedness, kinship, and affiliation to the people who use the same brand, which shows their identification with the brand community (Husain et al., 2022). Brand engagement is predicted as a robust validation and the strongest confirmation that consumers carry out beyond simply purchasing, which occurs when consumers exert their highest level of effort into the brand (Saputra et al., 2021). Empirical evidence has supported the significant connection between the brand resonance dimensions and consumer purchase intentions in multifaceted domains (Krishnakumar et al., 2026; Kumaresan & Chandramohan, 2024; Shang et al., 2017). Similarly, Qadri et al. (2024) identified cause-related marketing significantly influences repurchase intentions, mediated by brand resonance dimensions that strengthen corporate brand identity and purchase intentions. Likewise, Liu et al. (2026) derived the positive mediation of emotional resonance and customer-brand identification on the relationship between perceived brand heritage and purchase intentions in live commerce settings. Based on the preceding literature, the following hypothesis has been developed;

H4: Brand Resonance significantly impacts Purchase Intentions.

2.6 Social Influence and Purchase Intentions

Social influence is the process by which consumers' perceptions, opinions, and thoughts are shaped by societal considerations, which affect their purchase intentions. Social influence has a substantive impact on consumers' cognitive beliefs and psychological dispositions (Su & Lockwood, 2026). According to Davlembayeva et al. (2025) The social influence framework has transformed the integrated communication mix, which intends to maximize revenues and stimulate sales. The Social Influence Theory, coined by Kelman (1958) dictates consumers' attitudes, opinions, and enduring actions influenced by influential peers and reference groups, encompassing conformity, adherence, and value adoption. Moreover, social influence entails an array of distinctive processes that are

highly related to enculturation, social interactions, and community involvement, which influence consumers' consumption and purchase patterns (Oliveira et al., 2025). Furthermore, the strength of social influence depends on the connectedness among individuals, timing, attributes, and personality traits of the network, which shapes their purchase preferences and actions (Ahmad et al., 2023). Social influence shapes healthy food consumption and purchase intentions (Gong et al., 2025). Research-based investigations suggest social influence as a significant predictor that affects consumer purchase intentions (Gunawan et al., 2023; Joshua, 2025; Lan & Tran, 2024; Zhao et al., 2023). Similarly, Liang et al. (2024) explored consumers' digital media settings and the trust mechanisms they develop from friends and family, virtual influencers, and social media content in crafting brand image which ignites purchase intentions. Online reviews, ratings, and customer feedback analysis are the determinants of social influence that help in final purchase decisions (Ahn & Lee, 2024). Additionally, brand perception, social influence, and brand personality significantly influence purchase intentions (Keni et al., 2022). Based on the existing literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H5: Social Influence significantly impacts Purchase Intentions.

2.7 Brand Attitude as Mediator between CBBE model, Social Influence, and Purchase Intentions

Brand attitude is the composite of favorable and unfavorable consumers' interpretations of a particular brand, shaped by their cognitive processing (Endarwan & Lastiati, 2026). Brand attitude reflects predispositions toward a brand that generate explicit purchase actions (Hagger, 2026). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitude is a learned predisposition to act persistently positively or negatively toward a particular course of action. Thus, brand attitude is an evaluative belief that arises from affective, cognitive, and conative components and stimulates consumers' reactions toward brands (Baggio & Kumar, 2023). Percy and Rossiter (1983) define brand attitude as consumers' brand judgments congruent with their expected competence in meeting their consumption

motives. This purpose-driven description of brand attitude reveals that consumers can hold distinct attitudes towards the same brand contingent on their buying motives and purchase occasions. Empirical research has found a significant association between brand attitude and the CBBE model dimension (Kumaresan & Chandramohan, 2024). Vashisht (2020) investigated 229 student gamers to examine brand prominence, brand recall, and brand attitude across varying levels of involvement. The findings revealed that high involvement levels lead to favorable brand attitudes in the advergaming context. Similarly, Razak et al. (2019) empirically examined the moderating role of brand attitude on the association between brand awareness and repurchase intentions, indicating significant moderation and a strong connection between brand awareness and repurchase intentions in a high brand attitude. Likewise, Joo et al. (2026) investigated brand distinctiveness in the coffee industry and ascertained that the brand logos significantly influence brand attitude and purchase intentions. Furthermore, augmented reality product presentation shapes consumer behavior, which articulates affective consumer responses, positive purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth through brand attitude (Zanger et al., 2022).

Moreover, the CBBE model's top-tier element, brand resonance, is built on key perceptual behavioral elements, including brand loyalty, brand attitude, and symbolic brand identity, which foster strong consumer-brand relationships (Saputra et al., 2021). Social influence and purchase intention are significantly driven by social influence (close friends, family circles, e-viewership, subscriptions), trust, and brand image, which together form the overall brand attitude, offering key marketing insights (Liang et al., 2024). Similarly, Chien et al. (2024) identified a significant association between social influence, brand attitude, and purchase usage intentions. Based on the existing literature, the following hypothesis was formulated

H6: Brand Attitude significantly impacts purchase intentions

H7: Brand Attitudes mediates the relationship between Brand Identity and Purchase Intentions

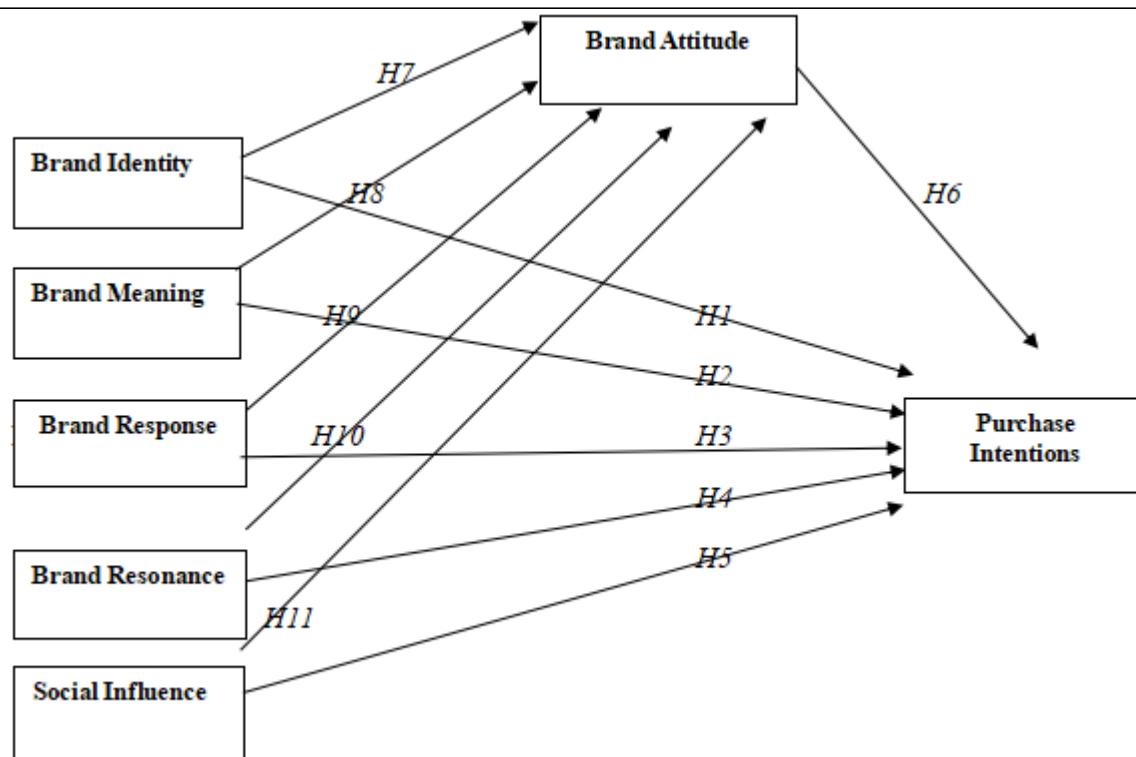
H8: Brand Attitudes mediates the relationship between Meaning and Purchase Intentions

H9: Brand Attitudes mediates the relationship between Brand Response and Purchase Intentions

H10: Brand Attitudes mediates the relationship between Brand Resonance and Purchase Intentions

H11: Brand Attitudes mediates the relationship between Social Influence and Purchase Intentions

FIGURE# 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



3. METHODOLOGY

Given the proposed hypotheses, the empirical approach was quantitative and employed a survey. Accordingly, a survey instrument with closed-ended scale items was used to examine the target population's perceptions and attributes. The study adopted a multi-stage cluster design, a purposive and convenience sampling. The target population was categorized into three distinct clusters to ensure broader representation of consumers. Cluster one included general consumers approached at high-traffic branded apparel outlets and shopping locations. Cluster two comprised students from educational institutions, particularly universities and colleges. Cluster three consisted of consumers participating in online communities and social networking platforms related to fashion and branded apparel consumption. In the first stage, the Swat District was divided into major clusters, including Mingora as the primary urban hub, Saidu Sharif, Matta, Khwaza Khela, and Charbagh. In the second stage, high-density fashion apparel shopping locations (Qambar City Centre, Javed Trade Centre, Odigram), local markets (Suvastu Gallery, Islampur Market, Cheena Market, Javed Niaz Plaza, Ali Shopping Centre, Main Bazaar), and consumer locations were purposively selected within each cluster.

Data were collected from consumers in these high-traffic retail markets, students at educational institutions, and participants in online communities through a field survey. In the third stage, respondents were approached through convenience sampling, with careful screening to ensure they met the inclusion criteria (consumers aged 18 and above and who have purchased fashion apparel in Swat within the last year). Educational institutions (Swat University, Government Post Graduate College Saidu Sharif, Degree colleges in Kanju and Mingora) were also selected as they represent the youth segment, which is strongly influenced by social influence and highly responsive to brand identity and meaning (Febrian & Himawan, 2025). In addition, data collection was supplemented by multi-mode survey administration, such as Google Forms distribution in online communities (Facebook, WhatsApp groups), and physical field-based administration.

The sample size in the current study was calculated to be 385 using the Cochran (1940) formula. Based on this sample size, 430 questionnaires were distributed, 310 were collected, and analyzed. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, and data would be used solely for research purposes. The questionnaire was composed of two sections.

The first part covered the respondents' demographic characteristics, while the second part contained the main survey related to the study's constructs. The current study has employed available literature-based measures to develop a questionnaire. Each question was analyzed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Brand identity was measured using 5 questions adapted from the study conducted by Yoo and Donthu (2001), which assessed the brand recognition and recall. The brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance were derived from Keller (2001). The question item on social influence and purchase intentions was extracted from the study of Liang et al. (2024). The current research has employed Structural Equation Modeling through Smart PLS to test the hypotheses of direct and indirect associations among the study's variables. Initially, descriptive statistics, reliability, and validity were assessed, followed by hypothesis testing. The mediating role of brand attitude was tested by conducting bootstrap sampling.

4. RESULTS

Table 4.1: *Respondents Demographics*

Respondents Characteristics	Category	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	158	51.0%
	Female	152	49.0%
Age	Under 21	68	21.9%
	21-25	89	28.7%
	26-30	67	21.6%
	31-35	57	18.4%
	35 and above	29	9.4%
Occupation	Student	106	34.2%
	Self-employed	97	31.3%
	Professionals	34	11.0%
	Govt/Private jobs	34	11.0%
	Others	39	12.6%
Education	No formal education	32	10.3%
	Primary/Secondary	59	19.0%
	Bachelors	118	38.1%
	Masters	37	11.9%
	MS/M.Phil.	64	20.6%

4.2 Measurement Model

The measurement model evaluates how well the observed indicators represent their underlying latent constructs. It assesses reliability and validity through factor loadings, composite reliability, AVE, and discriminant validity

4.1 Descriptive statistics

A total of 340 questionnaires were distributed to respondents, of which 310 were complete and usable for analysis. The remaining 30 were either incomplete or blank and were therefore excluded. This resulted in a response rate of 91.18%, indicating a highly satisfactory level of participation. The demographic profile (Table 4.1) shows that 310 respondents show a nearly equal gender distribution, with males comprising 51.0% (158) and females 49.0% (152). With respect to age, the largest group was 21-25 years (28.7%), followed by under 21 years (21.9%), 26-30 years (21.6%), 31-35 years (18.4%), and 35 years and above (9.4%). Regarding occupation, students represent (34.2%), followed by self-employed (31.3%), others (12.6%), professionals (11.0%), and government/private employees (11.0%). Education-wise, the majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (38.1%), while 20.6% had an MS/M. Phil., 19.0% had primary/secondary education, 11.9% had Master's degrees, and 10.3% had no formal education.

(Ramayah et al., 2018). First, the indicator loadings for all items exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.841 to 0.926 (see Table 4.2). This confirms that each item reliably represents its respective latent construct. In particular, Brand Attitude (BA) items show

very high loadings (0.906–0.926), while other constructs such as Social Influence (SI) and Purchase Intention (PI) also demonstrate consistently strong item reliability. Regarding internal consistency reliability, both Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 for all constructs. CA values range from 0.884 (Brand Response) to 0.936 (Social Influence), while CR values range from 0.886 to 0.937. These results confirm excellent internal

consistency across all measurement scales. Convergent validity is further supported by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, all of which are above the recommended minimum of 0.50. The AVE values range from 0.722 (Brand Response) to 0.786 (Social Influence), indicating that each construct explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators. Notably, Social Influence (0.786) and Purchase Intention (0.781) demonstrate particularly strong convergent validity.

Table 4.2: *Convergent validity and VIF*

Constructs	Items	Loadings	VIF	CA	CR	AVE
Brand Attitude (BA)	BA1	0.913	1.8	0.928	0.930	0.769
	BA2	0.926	1.9			
	BA3	0.913	1.7			
	BA4	0.906	1.8			
Brand Identity (BI)	BI2	0.859	1.6	0.895	0.897	0.737
	BI3	0.873	1.7			
	BI4	0.883	1.6			
	BI5	0.856	1.5			
Brand Meaning (BM)	BM1	0.853	1.7	0.923	0.924	0.764
	BM2	0.877	1.8			
	BM3	0.894	1.9			
	BM4	0.895	1.8			
	BM5	0.851	1.7			
Brand Response (BR)	BR2	0.884	1.6	0.884	0.886	0.722
	BR4	0.893	1.7			
	BR5	0.841	1.5			
Brand Resonance (BRE)	BRe2	0.870	1.8	0.907	0.909	0.771
	BRe3	0.890	1.9			
	BRe4	0.875	1.8			
	BRe5	0.859	1.7			
Social Influence (SI)	SI2	0.873	2.0	0.936	0.937	0.786
	SI3	0.908	2.1			
	SI4	0.913	2.2			
	SI5	0.890	2.0			
	SI6	0.853	1.9			
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	0.873	1.8	0.930	0.931	0.781
	PI2	0.885	1.9			
	PI3	0.877	1.8			
	PI4	0.887	1.9			
	PI5	0.897	2.0			

4.3 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was checked employing Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. As shown in Table 4.3, the test diagonal values (BI = 0.858, BM = 0.874, BRE = 0.878, BR = 0.850, SI = 0.887, BA = 0.877, PI = 0.884) correspond to the square root of the AVE for each construct. The off-diagonal values represent correlations between constructs. Discriminant validity is established when each construct's diagonal value exceeds its correlations with other constructs. In this case, all constructs meet this condition. The

Table 4.3: Fornell and Larcker criterion

Constructs	BI	BM	BRE	BR	SI	BA	PI
BI	0.858						
BM	0.821	0.874					
BRE	0.742	0.724	0.878				
BR	0.776	0.752	0.781	0.850			
SI	0.828	0.791	0.804	0.832	0.887		
BA	0.812	0.791	0.768	0.801	0.852	0.877	
PI	0.832	0.786	0.793	0.845	0.851	0.861	0.884

Table 4.4: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

Constructs	BI	BM	BRE	BR	SI	BA	PI
BI							
BM	0.821						
BRE	0.742	0.724					
BR	0.776	0.752	0.781				
SI	0.828	0.791	0.804	0.872			
BA	0.812	0.891	0.768	0.801	0.852		
PI	0.832	0.786	0.793	0.845	0.851	0.861	

4.4 Structural Model

PLS-SEM analysis was conducted to assess the proposed association among the study's variables. Hypothesis 1: The findings confirmed that Brand Identity (BI) positively predicts purchase intentions (PI) through a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.241$, $t = 4.253$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 2: Brand meaning (BM) did not have a significant direct effect on PI ($\beta = 0.032$, $t = 0.687$, $p = 0.493$). Hypotheses 3 and 4 showed a significant positive direct effect of PI. Brand Response ($\beta = 0.118$, $t = 2.089$, $p = 0.038$) and Brand Resonance ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 3.270$, $p = 0.001$), thus supporting H1, H3, and H4, respectively. Social Influence ($p = 0.888$) did not

Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio is another mechanism to check the discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 4.4, all constructs show acceptable discriminant validity because the correlations between constructs (e.g., BI-BM = 0.821, BI-BRE = 0.742, BI-PI = 0.832, etc.) are generally lower than their respective square roots of the AVEs (e.g., SI = 0.872, BA = 0.852). This indicates that each construct accounts for more variance with its own indicators than with constructs, confirming the distinctiveness of variables.

have significant direct effects on Purchase Intention, leading to the rejection of H2 and H5. The findings dictated that Brand Attitude was the strongest direct predictor of Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.472$, $t = 7.389$, $p < 0.001$), strongly supporting H6. The details are presented in Table 4.5.

Regarding mediation, Brand Attitude significantly mediated the relationship between most independent variables and Purchase Intention. The mediation was strongest through Social Influence (indirect $\beta = 0.148$, $t = 4.908$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Brand Identity (indirect $\beta = 0.102$, $t = 3.862$, $p < 0.001$). Significant mediation effects were also found for Brand

Response (indirect $\beta = 0.066$, $p = 0.014$) and Brand Meaning (indirect $\beta = 0.062$, $p = 0.004$), supporting H11, H7, H9, and H8. However, Brand Attitude did not significantly mediate the relationship between Brand Resonance and Purchase Intention (indirect $\beta = 0.037$, $p = 0.074$), resulting in the rejection of H10. The goodness of fit of the structural model was evaluated using the SRMR and NFI indices. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

(SRMR) value was 0.036 for both the saturated and estimated models, which is well below the recommended threshold of 0.08 (Sarstedt et al., 2021). This indicates an excellent model fit. Additionally, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.872, exceeding the acceptable cut-off value of 0.80 (Saleh et al., 2025). This further confirms that the proposed model demonstrates acceptable fit to the data.

Table 4.5: Hypotheses Testing

<i>Paths</i>	<i>(β)</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H1: BI $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.241	4.253	0.000	YES
H2: BM $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.032	0.687	0.493	NO
H3:BR $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.118	2.089	0.038	YES
H4: BRe $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.152	3.270	0.001	YES
H5:SI $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.008	0.141	0.888	NO
H6: BA $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.472	7.389	0.000	YES
<i>Mediation effect</i>				
H7: BI $\longrightarrow$ BA $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.102	3.862	0.004	YES
H8:BM $\longrightarrow$ BA $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.062	2.917	0.004	YES
H9: BR $\longrightarrow$ BA $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.066	2.481	0.014	YES
H10: BRe $\longrightarrow$ BA $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.037	1.791	0.074	NO
H11: SI $\longrightarrow$ BA $\longrightarrow$ PI	0.148	4.908	0.000	YES

Table 4.6: Model Fit Criteria

Fit Indicators	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Recommended Value	Decision
SRMR	0.036	0.036	< 0.08	Excellent Model Fit
NFI	0.872	0.872	> 0.80	Close to the Acceptable criteria

5. DISCUSSIONS

This research has evaluated the dimensions of the Customer-based brand equity model (Brand Identity, Brand Meaning, Brand Response, Brand Resonance) and added Social Influence on Purchase Intentions. The mediating role of Brand Attitude was investigated in the relationship between the CBBE dimensions and purchase intentions in KP, Swat. The results confirm H1, which states that brand identity positively affects purchase intentions. The results are consistent with previous studies based on social identity theory and self-congruity theory, which revealed that brand identity has a positive relationship with repurchase intention (Acar et al., 2024). Hence, this study proposes that brand identity, including brand awareness, brand recall, and brand salience, has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Furthermore, brand attitude mediates the relationship between

brand identity and purchase intentions, supporting H7. The results do not support H2; brand meaning does not have a significant effect on purchase intentions. The lack of a significant relationship between brand meaning and purchase intention indicates that symbolic and associative meanings of brands are not directly related to consumer buying behavior in the context of branded apparel and local handicrafts. Consumers are more interested in price, fashion, and functional value than in symbolic interpretation in apparel branding. The results showed that brand-related meaning variables have indirect effects on purchase intention through mediators like attitude, self-congruity, and perceived quality, and not direct effects (Chen et al., 2021). Although the direct relationship between brand meaning and purchase intentions is insignificant, the indirect effect through brand attitude is significant,

indicating that the relationship becomes significant when brand attitude is considered. Thus, the findings of this study indicate that brand attitude significantly mediates the relationship between brand meaning and purchase intentions, supporting H8. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, the cue utilization theory proposed by Olson and Jacoby (1972) supports this finding, suggesting that consumers rely more on intrinsic product cues than symbolic brand associations in emerging markets. Findings support H3 and H4, confirming that brand response and brand resonance significantly influence purchase intentions. These align with Kimiagari and Malafe (2021), utilitarian (brand judgments, quality, and credibility) and brand feelings (emotional responses and hedonic stimuli) shape purchase intentions. Similarly, our findings are consistent with research by Raut et al. (2020), which revealed a positive connection between brand resonance and purchase intentions. The resulting brand resonance scale provides brand managers with a robust measure of the strength of consumer-brand relationships, offering a significant empirical contribution to branding literature. The findings reject H5, as it suggests that social influence does not significantly impact purchase intentions. Previous studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding the societal impact on consumption patterns. For instance, in a study by Hoonsopon and Puriwat (2016), it was determined that peer groups did not significantly affect the purchase intentions of social value and hedonic shoppers. However, findings reveal that the direct relationship between social influence and purchase intention becomes significant through the mediating effect of brand attitude, thus supporting H11. Brand attitude mediates the relationship between brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and purchase intentions, supporting H7, H8, and H9. The findings are consistent with the previous research by NI (2024), which identified a significant effect of brand attitude on the relationship between brand awareness and brand image. Therefore, increased brand salience in consumer cognition leads to a positive brand attitude that stimulates purchase actions. However, the mediating role of brand attitude between brand resonance and purchase intentions is not significant, thereby

rejecting hypothesis H9. The findings are in line with results reported by Bui et al. (2023), which state that brand attitude does not mediate the relationship between experience-driven assessments and brand attitudinal loyalty, considered a key element of brand resonance.

5.2 Theoretical contributions

Existing studies have focused on cognitive and affective mediators; the current research recommends that behavioral evaluations and emotional attachments translate brand perceptions into actual purchase decisions. This view is consistent with the CBBE model and shows the importance of strategic branding and brand attitude in consumer purchase intentions. The results offer a valuable theoretical understanding of the inconsistency of some constructs in the CBBE framework. Specifically, the direct effects of both variables (Brand Meaning and Social Influence) on Purchase Intention were insignificant, but the indirect effects through the mediating variable of Brand Attitude were significant. This implies that consumers might not directly connect social or symbolic brand associations to their purchase decisions unless they first form positive brand attitudes. This contribution builds on the current knowledge of indirect behavioral mechanisms in branding theory. Further, the study provides context-specific evidence to the consumer behavior and branding literature by exploring the relationships between branding constructs and purchase intention in a developing market. The results offer empirical evidence for the usefulness of the Customer-Based Brand Equity framework in emerging markets, where branding and social influence mechanisms differ from those in developed markets.

5.2 Practical Contributions

The findings offer valuable insights for marketing practitioners, brand managers, corporate decision-makers, and digital strategists who aim to sustain their competitive position through effective brand management. A pivotal implication is the critical need to boost purchase intentions by cultivating the brand assets that strengthen the customer-brand relationship. First, the findings illustrate that brand identity and brand meaning are distinctive competencies that the firm can gain by meticulously designing its market offerings through integrated marketing

communications. Furthermore, the findings reveal the significance of brand identity, which requires the firm to invest in generating a clear, uniform, and prominent brand identity across all customer touchpoints. Strong brand awareness and recall help consumers quickly recognize the company's offers that align with their values and beliefs, increasing favorable perceptual opinions and purchase likelihood. Second, the findings illustrate that brand response and resonance significantly predict purchase intentions, helping brand managers actively monitor and enhance customer satisfaction, and automation of the feedback mechanism fosters an emotional connection that builds brand response. Marketing practitioners can build brand resonance by engaging their customers in loyalty and community involvement programs that offer customization, which can significantly improve long-term customer-brand relationships. Third, the inclusion of social influence demonstrates that consumer decisions are not purely individual but are strongly shaped by peers, online reviews, and social media interactions. Practically, this suggests that firms should invest in influencer marketing, user-generated content, and digital word-of-mouth strategies to amplify positive brand perceptions and reduce uncertainty in purchase decisions. Another prime contribution is the role of brand attitude as a mediator, which served as a powerful stimulus in enhancing purchase intentions. The findings elucidate that the firm should not only emphasize its brand equity and marketing offerings but also nurture positive brand attitudes achieved through congruity in integrated marketing communications content, value-added emotional branding, and trust-building initiatives.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical framework of the current research is the CBBE model, which is used to explore the relationships among variables in the study in the context of apparel, branded clothing, and locally manufactured products in KP, the Swat region in Pakistan. The results indicate that the dimensions of brand equity are context-dependent predictors, with the brand identity (recall and recognition), brand meaning, and brand response (judgments and feelings) influencing consumer purchase intentions. Furthermore, the results indicate that all

dimensions proposed in the CBBE model have significant effects on the formation of brand attitude. Further, brand attitude is a significant mediator of purchase intentions. The findings also reinforce the significance of social influence, with brand attitude mediating consumers' decision-making, emphasizing the peer opinions, online reviews, and the influence of social networking. Interestingly, the psychological link between brand exposure and consumer behaviour was found to be important; brand attitude was confirmed to mediate between brand-related stimuli and actual purchase intent. Overall, the study is an informative contribution to the literature on the interplay between integrated branding strategies and social dynamics on consumers' decisions. It highlights the need for a consistent and coherent approach to branding, through other communication channels and consumer attitudes, which affect purchasing intent.

7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This research is very useful in explaining the relationship among brand constructs, brand equity dimensions, social influence, brand attitude, and purchase intention. There are a few limitations to this study, however. First, the study is a cross-sectional research design, which has limited ability to establish causal relationships over time. Consumer perceptions and attitudes may evolve, and longitudinal studies may provide a more complete picture of this evolution. Secondly, the data were collected from a sample of the population or cultural context, and therefore may not apply to other contexts. Future studies might be conducted using a larger sample size and with a wider range of samples from other areas to enhance external validity. Thirdly, the constructs studied are limited, while the framework of brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, brand resonance, and social influence is quite solid; other variables may play a significant role in explaining purchase intention, such as brand trust, perceived value, and emotional attachment, which should be explored in future studies. Fourth, the study is self-reported and thus may be subject to common method and social desirability bias. Behavioral data or experimental designs could be included in future studies to strengthen the results of this

study. Based on the current research, it is recommended to integrate and evaluate the mediating and/or moderating variables that strengthen and/or weaken relationships in this research. Consumer involvement, digital engagement, and cultural orientation can provide more meaningful insights, for example, into the brand-consumer relationship. Moreover, cross-industry comparisons can be used to determine whether the proposed model can be applied to other contexts, such as fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), retail industry, technology, healthcare, and financial services industries.

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