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Impact of Brand Personality on the Different Stages of Brand Loyalty: Gender Moderation

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the correlation between brand personality and various phases of brand loyalty within the particular setting of footwear brands in Bangladesh. This study also explores the moderating role of gender in the relationship of brand personality and brand loyalty. This study utilises Aaker's brand personality scale and Oliver's multi-stage brand loyalty model, which includes cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of brand loyalty. A total of 430 data has been collected using a structured questionnaire survey. Structured equation modeling (SEM) technique has been applied to analysis the data. Result shows that brand personality has a positive significant impact on all of the brand loyalty stages. Results also reveal that gender moderates the relationship of brand personality and brand loyalty. This study is empirically significant in the sense of structure and study area and subject matter context as it finds a very limited work. This study will also help the brand managers and marketing practitioners to establish link to brand personality to brand loyalty behavior.

Keywords: *Affective loyalty, Cognitive loyalty, Conative loyalty, Brand personality, Gender, Footwear Brand.*

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Introduction

Nowadays, the purchase process for consumers is far more complicated than earlier. What thoughts and considerations occupy a buyer's mind before, during, and after making a purchase? What factors do purchasers consider while selecting a brand? What factors go into their decision? When it comes to picking a brand, consumers aren't always reasonable. Emotions frequently influence their purchase decisions, and it can also happen unconsciously. Their affiliation with the brand is one of the aspects that influence their decision-making process. According to previous research, Consumers frequently utilize brands to build, reinforce and communicate their self-concepts (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). As a result, brands can function as symbols and means of self-expression (Aaker, 1999; Keller, 1993). Customers, in particular, frequently favor the brand that most suits their personality. Consequently, brand personality can differentiate one brand from another and positively contribute to building a relationship with that brand (Aaker, 1996).). Consumers prefer the brand that has a distinct brand personality (Mengxia, 2007).

Existing brand personality also increases with the increase of loyalty, satisfaction, positive emotion. (Lee et al., 2009) and trust (Louis & Lombart, 2010). The perceived value of a product can be enhanced by brand personality (Kolbl et al., 2020; Coelho et al., 2020), which in turn contributes positively to brand choice, generate feelings, and intent to buy (Zhang, 2017).

According to existing literature, there has been an increase in the number of brand personality studies across diverse sectors, products (Kim et al., 2018), and services in recent years (Xu et al., 2016). Several studies have examined the luxury market segment, finding that while focusing on the luxury market as a whole could be profitable, it would be more effective to classify luxury consumers according to their preferred brand personalities (Brun and Castelli, 2013; Lim et al., 2013) in order to better target these customers (Jones and Runyan, 2016). According to Sung and Kim (2010), the important role of brand personality in the marketing domain has resulted into an increase in study aimed at evaluating its use in product and service markets. Prior studies have examined the suitability of Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) for restaurant brands (Austin et al., 2003), as well as the creation of new scales to assess the brand personality of website (Chen & Rodgers, 2006) and personality of news media brands (Kim et al., 2010).

Bangladesh holds a huge market and has enough capacity in footwear production and export. Currently, the country holds the 8th position in the global footwear market in terms of the volume of production. As to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) report for 2022, Bangladesh's footwear exports for the fiscal year 2021-2022 (July to January) amounted to $941.67 million. The footwear industry's domestic market size is approximately $200 million. Approximately 20-25 percent of the entire footwear output in Bangladesh is allocated for domestic use, with the remaining percentage being exported. The nation's footwear makers have consistently been creating high-quality shoes. In the past, the majority of corporations limited their business only to exporting. Due to shifts in people's lifestyles and rising purchasing power, numerous corporations are increasingly venturing into the local market with their own brand. Although Aaker's BPS is widely used in numerous fields both domestically and internationally, currently, there is no empirical indication in the available literature to substantiate the assertion that study has been undertaken on the influence of brand personality on the different phases of buyer brand loyalty. Observing the absence of studies regarding the brand personality and brand loyalty stages motivate the author investigate into the footwear industry of Bangladesh. Therefore, the objectives of the current research are to-

a) Examine the impact of brand personality on different phases of brand loyalty; and
b) Investigate moderating effect of gender in the relationship of brand personality and different stages of brand loyalty.

Literature review

Brand personality, in contrast to the functional advantages of a brand, is the symbolic landscape of the brand. (Plummer, 1984). Prior to the 1980s, when theoretical studies were just getting started, the majority of marketing scholars believed that brand personality and brand image were interchangeable (Birdwell, 1968; Freling and Forbes, 2005). There were even some of researchers who blended the two phrases to create a new one, which they called brand character (Bellenger, Earle, and Wilbur from 1976). They focus on the similarities between brand personality and image while ignoring the variances in their biased research. A reputable brand is frequently associated with a distinct and lucid brand personality, which is more closely linked to its symbolic value than to its utilitarian or functional value (Le et al., 2012). As a consequence, marketers often allocate substantial time, energy, and financial resources to not only establish brand recognition and familiarity, but also to distinguish their products or services from competitors by utilizing unique brand personality characteristics. Individual brand personality traits may potentially originate, be shaped, or be perceived via consumer brand communications, including but not limited to salesperson interactions and advertising messages (Le et al., 2012).

However, Experts have now started acknowledging that brand personality is not a separate category of association; rather, it is shaped by a multitude of factors. (Vinyals-Mirabent et al., 2019). For instance, brand quality and innovativeness are a factor that plays a role to brand personality (Coelho et al., 2020). Consequently, it is incorrect to underestimate the significance of utilitarian value in brand personality research (MacInnis, 2012). The advantages of a powerful brand personality are well-documented. Firms may employ it to establish a common denominator for the marketing of a brand across cultures and to differentiate products in order to increase consumer preference and usage (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Moreover, a positive relationship exists between brand personality and the levels of trust and loyalty. (Fournier, 1994; Doney et al., 2007; Kumar et al., 2006). Additionally, under specific conditions, brand personality is more strongly associated with customer-brand connections (Chang and Chieng, 2006). Additionally, brand personality has a favorable impact on brand preference, brand feelings, and intention to buy (Zhang, 2007) as well as the perceived value of the good or service (Kolbl et al., 2020; Coelho et al., 2020). The study conducted by Coleman et al. (2015) revealed a positive correlation between brand personality and brand performance. Past research reveals that different product categories have different guidelines when it comes to brand personality (Voorn and Muntinga, 2017; Kolbl et al., 2019).

In recent years, the analysis of brand personality has increasingly shifted to the online sphere (e.g., Torres & Augusto, 2019; Garanti & Kissi, 2019). Researchers have explored how consumers perceive companies as possessing human-like traits in various digital contexts, including internet sites (Shobeiri et al., 2015), social platforms (Machado et al., 2019), and through virtual brand associations (Youn & Jin, 2021). A specific image is formed in the consumer's mind when a brand is associated with a human personality. For example, sports shoes are associated with the masculinity dimension, while the Blackberry Smartphone is associated with the qualities of sincerity and friendliness (Upshaw, 1995). In the same way as human beings, brand personality requires time to evolve, as it is influenced by the consumers' perceptions of the product. Consumer personality and brand personality are connected ideas because consumers who identify with a particular image or personality would select products or service that complement their identity (Tuan et al., 2012). Brand personality is a critical marketing element that can significantly impact the purchasing decisions of consumers. For instance, when a product is described as honest or welcoming, customers are more likely to consider purchasing it (Louis and Lombart, 2010; Bouhlel et al., 2009). According to Kapferer (2000), brands only help consumers make decisions when faced with uncertainty and risk. Customers may associate with a brand more strongly if it has a "personality" that mirrors their own values and character traits. Brand personality is defined by Aaker (1997) as an aggregation of human traits associated with a brand. Brand personality is defined by Plummer (1985) as the impression that customers have of the brand. According to Batra et al. (1993), the integral part of a brand image is brand personality. This encompasses all the connections between consumer characteristics, lifestyle, and brand specialties. Brand personality is a strategically important construct that can help firms achieve long-term differentiation and competitive advantages. (Freling and Forbes, 2005; Plummer, 2000). According to Keller (1993), a brand's personality is an intangible quality that is associated with feelings and symbols rather than the product itself. According to Aaker (1997), a brand's personality is its own unique combination of attributes that consumers associate with the product. An effective means of differentiation, it has the potential to influence consumer preferences for the better (Heding et al., 2009).

A brand may be defined by a "personality" that consumers can relate to and identify with, based on their own views and personalities. Brand personality is defined by Plummer (1985) as how customers see the brand. Brand personality is the internal link that connects the whole brand image, according to Batra et al. (1993). It includes all the bridges between the consumer's identity, the brand's specialization, and the consumer's lifestyle and traits. A company's ability to maintain a competitive advantage and stand out from the crowd depends in large part on the brand

personality they cultivate. Worldwide and domestically, footwear brands still lack a distinct personality. In their study of the Chinese sportswear market, Tong and Li (2013) discovered that brand personality significantly affects how consumers perceive the quality of products and their tendency to purchase both domestic and foreign sportswear brands. Mustamil et al. (2014) examined brand personality of Nike sportswear by breaking down Aaker's (1997) BPS model and found many of the brand personality traits are related to the brand. Besides, the dignified dimension is Nike's most prominent personality trait. Another research also shows that, a luxary leatherwear and fashion brand Bonia has a high competence, sophistication and sincerity characteristics in brand personality (Hassan et al., 2019).

The Brand Personality Model

A stream of researchers has measured the brand personality from the different perspective and has generated brand personality scale (BPS) over the last 3 decades. Among them Aaker (1997) is the pioneer who has developed a five dimensional brand personality model of measurement. Later on Ambroise et al. (2005), Sweeney and Brandon (2006), Bosnjak et al. (2007), Geuens et al. (2009), Heine (2009), Quintal, Lee and Soutar (2010), and Heere (2010) have developed brand personality measurement scale on the basis of different perspective, theory and product category. Aaker (1997) proposed a new five-factor model for brands called the Brand Personality Scale (BPS), which is based on the major five personality traits (big five) model used to describe humans. Hers was the first study of its kind to develop a measurement personality model for use in brand marketing. Prior to her research, researchers employed instruments that were either improvised or directly derived from personality psychology, which had validity concerns in the marketing sector. Using the "Big Five" framework for human personality, she developed a model of brand personality that allowed her to overcome these challenges. There are numerous characteristics that are associated with each of the five fundamental dimensions. For example, terms like honesty and originality define sincerity, while words like strong and outdoorsy define ruggedness (Guthrie, 2007). In a factor analysis developed by Aaker (1997), 631 randomly selected US residents were asked to rate 40 different brands based on 114 different personality qualities. Through the use of principal components factor analysis, five crucial elements were identified. This Brand Personality Scale (BPS) aggregates the five aspects of brand personality into fifteen categories to describe the characteristics and organization of the dimensions. The Brand Personality Scale, together with its dimensions, facades, and items, is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

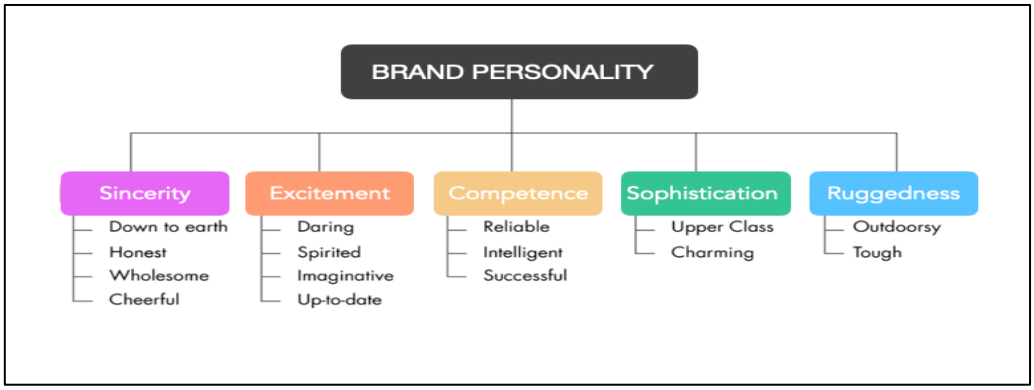

Figure 1: Brand Personality Model Source: (Aaker, 1997)

Relationship of Brand personality and brand loyalty

Developing scales to measure brand personality, previous research has also made efforts to experimentally identify a connection between the personality of a brand and consumer behaviors, specifically in terms of brand loyalty (Sop and Kozak, 2019; Choi et al., 2017; Fournier, 1998). Prior research has demonstrated that when consumers view a brand as having a distinct and recognizable personality, it can lead to favorable outcomes such as increased brand

recognition, positive word-of-mouth reputation, heightened brand loyalty, and a greater likelihood of buy. This is because brand personality has seen as "a collection of trait inferences formed by consumers through repeated observation of behaviors exhibited by the brand under the guidance of its manager" (Fournier, 1998). This perception leads consumers to the reinforcement of their cognition, emotional bonds, and leads to the behavioral consequences to the brands they are familiar with. Further, studies have shown that brand personality influences customer loyalty positively in the tourism and hospitality industry, which supports previous marketing research findings.

There has been a scarcity of study that has particularly investigated the correlation between the personality of a footwear brand and consumer loyalty. A recent study conducted by Hassan et al. (2019) specifically aimed to uncover the brand identity of Bonia, a luxury fashion, footwear, and apparel firm. The brand was perceived as genuine, skilled, and refined in the Malaysian market. A more recent study conducted by Pelupessy and Tehuayo (2021) examined the relationship between the personality of the Nike footwear brand and consumers' inclination to purchase. They found that consumers' intent to buy is significantly correlated with the personality of the brand. In addition, other researchers (Alazzawi, 2019; Mustamil et al., 2014) have also conducted studies on the topic of footwear brands. A subsequent group of researchers (Singh, 2016; Lai and Teo, 2019; Indrabrata and Balqiah, 2020) conducted a study on the brand loyalty of footwear brands and discovered that customer loyalty is influenced by a range of product and non-product characteristics. Brand personality is a non-product attribute. Recent research has mostly defined loyalty as consisting of cognitive, emotional, and conative components (Han et al., 2019; Ahn and Back, 2018; Kim et al., 2013).

In spite of several efforts to examine connections between the various stages of loyalty, Few empirical studies have examined the concept that brand personality affects cognitive-affective-conative loyalty. Given the examination of relevant literature and the adoption of a specific conception of loyalty in this study, the subsequent hypotheses were formulated.
H1*: Brand personality has a positive influence on cognitive loyalty.*
H2*: Brand personality has a positive influence on affective loyalty.*
H3*: Brand personality has a positive influence on conative loyalty.*

Relationships among cognitive, affective, conative loyalty
Several previous studies in various contexts have examined the connections between cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, and conative/behavioral loyalty (Han et al., 2011; Yuksel et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010; Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006 and Back, 2005). Back (2005) investigated the development of clients' attitudinal loyalty. The research findings revealed a significant positive correlation between cognitive loyalty and affective loyalty, as well as between affective loyalty and conative loyalty. The research identified cognitive loyalty as consisting of value and benefits, whereas affective loyalty was found to be composed of emotion and satisfaction. Furthermore, a key component of conative loyalty is the individual's intention and willingness. Yuksel et al. (2010) consistently discovered that the loyalty of travelers based on their emotions was directly related to their loyalty based on their thoughts, and that their loyalty based on their actions was influenced by their allegiance based on their emotions. Their discovery aligned with the empirical research conducted by Evanschitzky and Wunderlich (2006), which showed that attitudinal loyalty progresses through sequential stages of cognition, affect, and conationLee et al. (2010) looked into how hotel customers make decisions that are good for the environment and found that customers' positive emotional evaluations of eco-friendly hotel experiences were highly influenced by how they thought about those experiences. These emotional evaluations then led to their intentions to behave positively towards the hotel. According to research by Han et al. (2011), which focused on the hospitality sector, cognitive loyalty significantly impacts affective loyalty and positively influences conative loyalty through affective loyalty.

Affective loyalty, which consists of positive and negative feelings as well as satisfaction appraisal, played a crucial role as a mediator in these interactions. That is to say, their finding provided more evidence that the cognitive, emotional, and conative stages are sequential in the development of attitudinal loyalty. The offered empirical evidence lends credence to the postulated causal chain of conative, affective, and cognitive components that make up attitude loyalty.

H4*: Cognitive brand loyalty positively impact on affective brand loyalty.*

H5*: Affective brand loyalty positively impact on conative brand loyalty.*

Moderating Effect of Gender

Furthermore, as footwear is a product associated with fashion. Several research (Rocha et al., 2005; Pentecost and Andrews, 2010; Nikhashemi and Valaei, 2018) have discovered a direct and moderating correlation between demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and generational cohorts, and the preference for and loyalty towards fashion brands. Pentecost and Andrews (2010) examine the various generational cohorts, such as baby boomers, generation X, and generation Y, and discover that customers from generation Y had a higher purchase frequency compared to other generational cohorts. The present study will focus on examining the significant impact of gender disparities. Researchers have increasingly focused on the influence of gender disparities in consumer studies and marketing. According to Das (2014); Jin et al. (2013); Homburg and Giering (2001), and, there have been a lot of research on how gender affects customer behavior, attitude formation, and product evaluation. According to Jin et al. (2013), female consumers are more impacted by human interaction when it comes to their buying behavior compared to male customers. According to Homburg and Giering (2001), males exhibit a tendency to engage in expedited shopping in comparison to females. Women are willing to allocate a significant amount of time for purchasing their products or services (Das, 2014). A study conducted by Homburg and Giering (2001) in the automotive industry revealed that women who express satisfaction with their automotive purchase are more likely to engage in repeat purchases compared to men. Previous research has demonstrated that the symbolic qualities of a brand alter depending on the gender of the consumer, and the evaluation of the many parts of a brand's personality differs between males and females (Grohmann, 2009). The data unequivocally show that there are distinct variations in the behavior of male and female consumers. The fluctuations in these variables can impact the trajectory of brand personality in relation to different phases of brand loyalty within the footwear sector. The previous debate leads to the formulation of the following hypotheses.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed and proposed:

H6a*: There is a significant differential impact of gender (male and female) in the relationship of brand personality and cognitive brand loyalty.*

H6b*: There is a significant differential impact of gender (male and female) in the relationship of brand personality and affective brand loyalty.*

H6c: *There is a significant differential impact of gender (male and female) in the relationship of brand personality and conative brand loyalty.*

H6d*: There is a significant differential impact of gender (male and female) in the relationship of cognitive brand loyalty and affective brand loyalty.*

H6e*: There is a significant differential impact of gender (male and female) in the relationship of Affective brand loyalty and conative brand loyalty.*

Novelty of the Study

Though there is a wide range of research found on brand personality with its different behavioral aspect of brand, lacks of research or very few researches has conducted on footwear brands specially in Bangladesh. In addition, there are a great number of researches that examine the relationship between the personality of brands and the behavioral loyalty of its customers, but the concept of attitudinal loyalty has been ignored. Consequently, the researcher made use of the chance to explore the connection between the brand personality and the consumers' attitudinal

loyalty, including cognitive, emotional, and conative loyalty theories. Furthermore, the brand personality scale developed by Aaker in 1997 has been applied in a variety of businesses and sectors, including automobiles, mobile phones, automotive brands, destinations, hotels, and many more. Some footwear brands like Nike, Bonia etc. have also been applied Aaker's BPS but it confined in determining the personality in different cultural aspect. In Bangladesh there is no evidence of study in regard to application of Aaker's BPS on footwear brands. So the study is worthy and timely to investigate the relationship of brand personality of footwear brands and different stages of brand loyalty. Thus, taking into consideration the assumptions that were presented earlier, we are looking forward to the construction of the conceptual model that is shown in Figure 2.

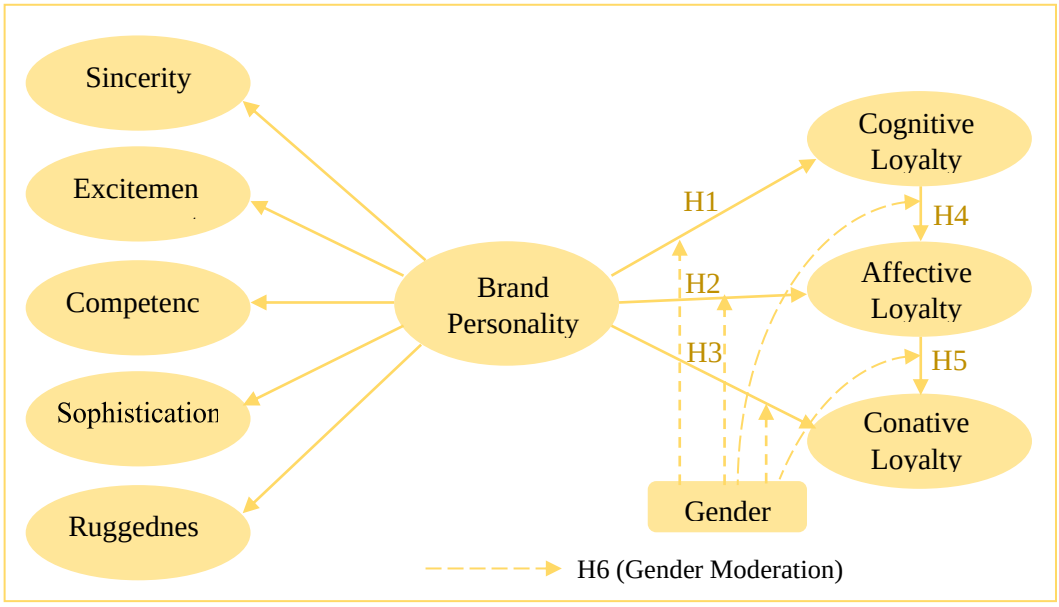

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Industry selection

The focus of the present study lies in the footwear business in Bangladesh. The footwear sector was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, footwear items are easily noticeable, which leads buyers to analyze the symbolic characteristics of the brand. Secondly, footwear is considered as a highly fashion related as well as comfort related product, which necessitate a thorough purchasing procedure from buyers. Before making a final purchase choice, it is reasonable to presume that customers will research and compare various shoe brands.

Sampling

This study employed a quantitative research approach. A structured questionnaire was developed for data collection. As the footwear product's customers are vast on all over the country hence convenience sampling method was administered. Additionally, three big divisions namely, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Rangpur were selected randomly for data collection. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data through face to face, email and social media communication to Bangladeshi footwear brand users who have purchased their shoes, sandals or the similar types of footwear products over the last five-year. For the survey to be valid, it needs to cover a period of at least five years, giving customers plenty of time to become familiar with their own shoe brand. Moreover, it can be assumed that those who have worn the same brand of shoes for at least five years are probably considering getting a new pair. With the help of 430 actionable responses, researchers were able to deduce the influence of brand personality on the various phases of customer loyalty. According to Hair et al. (2011), an effective sample size range

from thirty to five hundred. It was anticipated that resource restrictions should direct the consideration of sample size (Malhotra et al., 2007; Hair et al., 2017). There is no text provided. It is generally a challenging task to determine the appropriate sample size. Bryman and Bell (2011) asserted that sampling is a crucial component of the research process in social survey research. Moreover, a larger sample size enhances the accuracy of a sample. The researcher collected samples from three major cities in the country, and found that the population is diverse. To obtain accurate results, a bigger sample size will be required. The current study employs mathematical computations and heuristics to ascertain the sample size. A sample size greater than 100 and at least five times as many responses as the number of items investigated are recommended guidelines for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2009). On the other hand, Barclay (1995), Gefen (2000), and Ringle et al. (2013) stated that ten times respondent can be considered for each factor. Additionally, they indicated that the standard and advanced statistical analysis, such as structural equation modeling (SEM), suggest that a sample size of 200 is considered fair, while a sample size of 300 is considered good. Thus, the proposed sample size of 430 for the current investigation is justified and meets the required criteria.

Aaker's BPS Model and Variables

The original Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale contains 42 item variables on the based on 15 item façade variables. Later the researchers modified the models and items according to the necessity of cultural and industry convergence. This study used 36 items of the main model under five dimensions which are related to the footwear industry. Rests are omitted on the basis of the opinion of the marketing scholars and researchers. A pre survey was conducted to the respondents and some of the items were meant similar to them for the cultural reason. Redundancy of the similar meaning items was avoided. Some items were renamed for the appropriateness to the respondents and for the study.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Researchers utilize SEM as a statistical tool to examine multivariate data and elucidate correlations between various variables (Hair et al., 2010). According to Malhotra and Birks (2007), SEM allows researchers to study the links between many independent variables and dependent variables. Regression models are not as comprehensive as SEM since it takes into account several dependent and independent variables. Tests of theory and specific correlations between observable and hypothetical latent constructs are best suited for this approach. SEM integrates elements of both regression analysis and factor analysis, offering a comprehensive approach to understanding the underlying structure of data. By assessing both direct and indirect effects, SEM provides insights into the intricate interplay between variables, making it a valuable tool for hypothesis testing and theory development. Its flexibility and ability to handle measurement error and latent constructs make SEM widely applicable across various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, education, and marketing. This study utilized covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) to examine the suggested theoretical framework and the study hypotheses. The SPSS AMOS (Version 24.0) software was employed for this purpose.

Analysis and Findings

Sample profile

A visual representation of the respondents' demographic characteristics can be found in Table 1. It can be observed that out of the total of 430 responders, 301 are male (representing 70 percent), and 129 are female (representing 30 percent). In terms of the age of the respondents, over 70% of them fell into the age range of adults between the ages of 18 and 25 (48.60%) and between 26 and 35 (26.05). Majority of the respondent's educational qualification is HSC (27.67%), graduate (52.33%) and post-graduate (15.81%). The statistics also portrays that majority of the respondents are students (50%) in occupation. Rests government (21.86%) and private service holders (11.16%) are the noticeable segments. More than 80% respondent's average maximum

monthly income is tk 30,000. As the maximum number of the respondents is student, they earn very little (below 10,000) and most of them rely on their parents.

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Demographic Data

Variables and items	Number of samples (n)	Percentage (%)	Variables and items
Gender	Male	301	70.00
	Female	129	30.00
		430	100.00
Age	18-25Years	209	48.60
	26-35 Years	112	26.05
	36-45 Years	69	16.05
	46-55 Years	33	7.67
	Above 55 Years	7	1.63
		430	100.00
Education	Bellow SSC	5	1.16
	SSC	11	2.56
	HSC	119	27.67
	Graduation	225	52.33
	Post-graduation	68	15.81
	Doctorial Degree	2	0.47
		430	100.00
Occupation	Student	215	50.00
	Business	46	10.70
	Government Service	94	21.86
	Private Service	48	11.16
	Home Maker	17	3.95
	Others	10	2.33
		430	100.00
Monthly Income	Bellow 10000	211	49.07
	10000-20000	50	11.63
	20000-30000	89	20.70
	30000-40000	50	11.63
	40000-50000	9	2.09
	Above 50000	21	4.88
		430	100.00

Evaluating CB-SEM Measurement model

In the SEM method, two types of models are utilized: the measurement model and the structural model. Through the use of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the measurement model investigates the indicators that are associated with each construct and assesses the authenticity and reliability of the construct. On the other hand, in order to assess the hypotheses, the structure model illustrates how variables relate to one another across constructs (Hair et al., 2010). The measurement model, also known as the baseline model, displayed satisfactory standardized loadings for all components in Figure 3. These loadings above the desired threshold of 0.5, as suggested by Hair et al. (2010), and Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Table 2 summarizes the several model fit values of the measurement model. CMIN test which includes chi-square, χ^2 (1611.018), degrees of freedom, df (954) and normed chi-square, χ^2/df (1.689). A few more fit indices are the comparative fit index (CFI=.944), the incremental fit index (IFI= 0.945), the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI=.940), the standardized root mean residual (SRMR=0.04), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA= 0.040). Chi-square and goodness fit index are examples of absolute fit indices that are based on samples (Kline, 2005).

When working with a big sample size and a lot of observable variables, it can be difficult to get statistical significance for the model. According to Bagozzi and Yi (1988), the possibility of experiencing difficulties with the χ2-test is a factor that contributes to the elevation of the probability of rejecting the model. As stated by Tabachnick and Fidell (2006), the normed chi-

square (χ2/df) is 1.689 which is less than of its threshold value 2, furthermore, the ratio of 3:1 is determined by Hair et al. (2010) and Kline, (2005). Both of these studies were conducted in the United States. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is the most popular statistic for evaluating model fit in comparison to the population as a whole, not merely the sample (Hair et al., 2010). Hair et al. (2010) state that the model appears to be well-fitting based on the RMSEA values, which vary from 0.05 to 0.08. In addition, the value of the badness of fit index, also known as the SRMR, is lower than 1.0, which indicates that it is considered to be favorable (Kline, 2005). In structural equation modeling (SEM), the incremental fit indices are utilized extensively. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is an enhanced iteration of the Normed Fit Index (NFI), whereas the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) is an improved rendition of the Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI). The IFI is able to overcome the variability of the NNFI, which has values that range from 0 to 1 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2006). According to the criterion, values of IFI that are larger than 0.9 imply that the model is fitted good (Hair et al., 2010; Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Kline, 2005). Furthermore, according to Iacobucci (2010), if the model CFI, IFI, IFI, or TLI is larger than 0.9, his is evidence that the model fits the data in a manner that is both satisfactory and appropriate. According to the above discussion it can be said that the value of the fit index of the measurement model falls within the prescribed value by the different researchers.

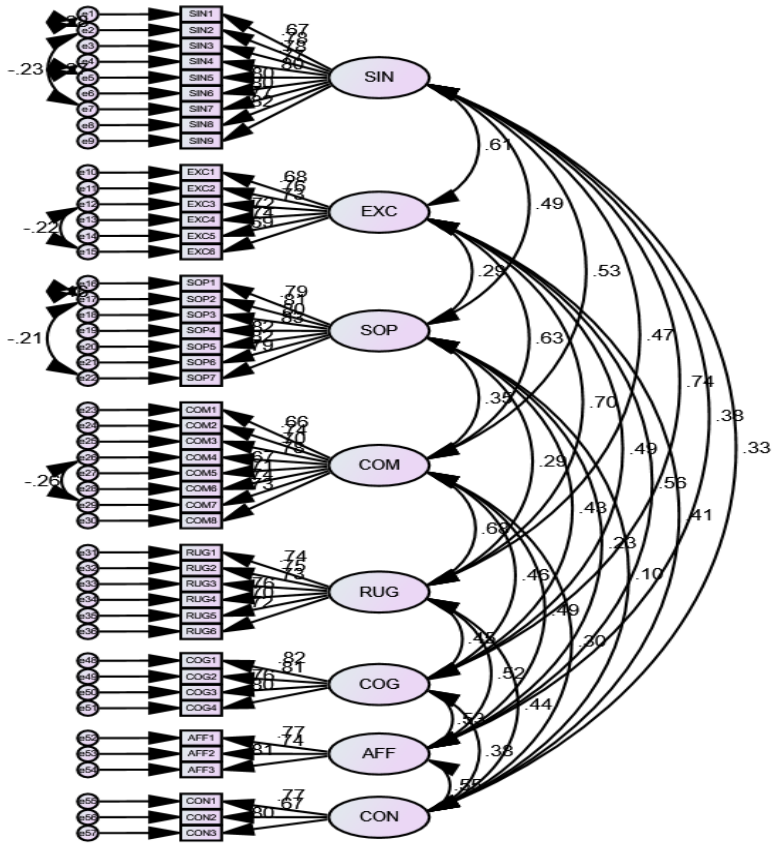

Figure 3: Measurement Model

Table 2: Summary of model fit of measurement model

Measure	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	IFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Estimate (GOF)	1611.018	954	1.689	.944	.945	.940	.04	0.40
Threshold	--	--	<3	>.9	>.9	>.9	<.08	<.08

Convergent Reliability and validity

According to Table 3, the research included brand personality qualities such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. In total, there were 36 items applied in the study. These dimensions were adopted from Aaker's(1997) brand personality scale. Oliver (1999) was the source of the brand loyalty categories that were accepted. These constructs included cognitive, affective, and conative components. Table 3 depicts the result of convergent validity and reliability for the study. Factor loading, typically considered significant if above 0.5, is a measure of the strength of association between an indicator and its underlying construct. But in our analysis, all standardized loading estimates ranges from 0.664 to 0.831. Then, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is a statistical measure used to assess multicollinearity in regression analysis. A VIF below 5 indicates low correlation between the predictor variable and other predictors. VIFs between 5 and 10 indicate moderate correlation, while VIFs above 10 show strong model predictor correlation, which may be unacceptable (James et al., 2013). From the table it can be seen that the VIF value for all constructs are below 5. Thus, the model does not have any multicollinearity issues. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is calculated as the mean variance extracted from factor loadings, reflecting the amount of variance captured by the construct. According to Hair et al. (2017), an AVE value exceeding 0.5 is considered satisfactory and is commonly used as a rule of thumb. In this model, all AVE values meet the prescribed threshold, with each exceeding 0.5.

Composite reliability (CR) is a key metric for assessing the internal consistency of measurement instruments in structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Hair et al. (2010) suggest that a CR value of 0.7 or above is considered acceptable, reflecting strong internal consistency among the observed variables. However, Bagozzi and Yi (1988) suggest that even CR values starting from 0.6 may be acceptable, particularly when other constructs in the model exhibit strong reliability. In our model, the CR value for all constructs is above .7 which means the constructs are consistent with their respective items (Table 3).

Cronbach's alpha (α) is a widely recognized statistic used to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of a scale or measurement instrument. Hair et al. (2010) indicate that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 is commonly considered acceptable, and values as low as 0.60 may be deemed acceptable for exploratory research purposes. This study shows that the cornbach's alpha (α) value for all constructs ranges from .79 to .93 which implies the reliability of the model (Table 3).

Table 3: Convergent reliability and validity of measurement model

Constructs	Measurement Items	Factor Loadings	VIF	CR	AVE	α
Brand Personality (BP)						
Sincerity (SIN)			2.849	0.932	0.606	0.933
	Down to earth	0.670				
	Customer oriented	0.778				
	Honest	0.788				
	Sincere	0.775				
	Real	0.799				
	Wholesome	0.797				
	Cheerful	0.798				
	Sentimental	0.762				
	Friendly	0.815				
Excitement (EXC)			2.101	0.867	0.520	0.863
	Trendy	0.674				
	Exciting	0.759				
	Spirited	0.730				
	Young	0.723				
	Unique	0.737				
	Up to date	0.702				
Competence (COM)			1.907	0.894	0.513	0.890
	Reliable	0.664				

	Hardworking	0.740				
	Secure	0.699				
	Intelligent	0.756				
	Successful	0.675				
	Leader	0.715				
	Experienced	0.719				
	Superior	0.732				
Sophistication (SOP)			1.307	0.930	0.654	0.929
	Upper class	0.784				
	Expensive	0.807				
	Glamorous	0.805				
	Good looking	0.831				
	Charming	0.819				
	Smooth	0.820				
	Feminine	0.793				
Ruggedness (RUG)			2.083	0.876	0.540	0.875
	Outdoorsy	0.740				
	Masculine	0.738				
	Tough	0.727				
	Rugged/Rough	0.771				
	western	0.705				
	Hard	0.723				
Brand Loyalty						
Cognitive Loyalty (COG)			2.565	0.876	0.638	0.876
	Quality	0.827				
	Performance	0.819				
	Best	0.767				
	Benefit	0.782				
Affective Loyalty (AFF)			1.696	0.813	0.593	0.812
	Like	0.773				
	Feel	0.726				
	First choice	0.811				
Conative Loyalty (CON)			1.696	0.790	0.558	0.787
	Continue	0.768				
	Consider	0.666				
	Recommend	0.800				

Notes: VIF=Variance Inflation Factor, CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted, α=Cronbach's α,

Discriminant validity

Both the Fornell and Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations analysis are extremely popular methods that are utilized for the purpose of determining the discriminant validity of a test. The Fornell and Larcker criterion, introduced by Fornell and Larcker (1981), focuses on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the distinctiveness of constructs. This criterion stipulates that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than its correlations with other constructs in the model. Essentially, it suggests that a construct should explain more variance in its indicators than it shares with other constructs, thereby ensuring discriminant validity. The discriminant validity of any two constructs may be evaluated by doing a comprehensive study that compares the values of the average variance extracted (AVE) with the squared correlation estimate between the two constructs. This can be done for any two constructs. When determining whether or not discriminant validity has been established, it is necessary for the AVE to be greater than the squared correlation estimate. As a consequence of this, the squared correlation estimate between constructs will be compared to the AVE that was generated, as shown in Table 4. When determining whether or not discriminant validity has been established, it is necessary for the AVE to be greater than the squared correlation estimate. In light of this, the AVE that was obtained will be compared to the squared correlation estimate that was calculated between the constructs, shown in Table 4. The findings affirms the presence of discriminant validity among constructs, as indicated by the average variance extracted (AVE) surpassing the squared correlation estimate for any pair of constructs.

Table 4: Discriminant validity

	SIN	EXC	SOP	COM	RUG	COG	AFF	CON
SIN	**0.778**							
EXC	0.611	**0.721**						
SOP	0.487	0.295	**0.809**					
COM	0.528	0.627	0.347	**0.716**				
RUG	0.475	0.697	0.286	0.682	**0.735**			
COG	0.742	0.488	0.433	0.463	0.446	**0.799**		
AFF	0.383	0.559	0.23	0.491	0.517	0.532	**0.77**	
CON	0.328	0.41	0.104	0.304	0.436	0.384	0.55	**0.747**

Structural Model

Table 5 shows that the SEM results conducted in AMOS demonstrate an adequate level of fit. Following the guidelines of Tabachnick and Fidell (2006), the chi-square value (χ^2 = 1809.87) with degrees of freedom (df = 972) and a significance level (p < 0.005), along with the normed chi-square (χ^2/df = 1.862), are within the recommended threshold of 2. Additional fit indices, such as the Incremental Fit Index (IFI = 0.92) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.92), surpass the minimum threshold of 0.9. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.45) and Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR = 0.63) also remain within acceptable levels for the structural model. Although there are slight differences between the measurement model and structural model, the overall model is considered appropriate.

Table 5: Summary of model fit of structural model moderated by gender

Measure	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	IFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Estimate (GOF)	1809.87	972	1.862	.929	.930	.925	.063	0.45
Threshold	--	--	<3	>.9	>.9	>.9	<.08	<.08
χ^2	Chi Square							
df	Degrees of freedom							
χ^2/df	Normed Chi-Square							
CFI	Comparative Fit Index							
IFI	Incremental Fit Index							
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index							
SRMR	Standardised root mean residual							
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation							

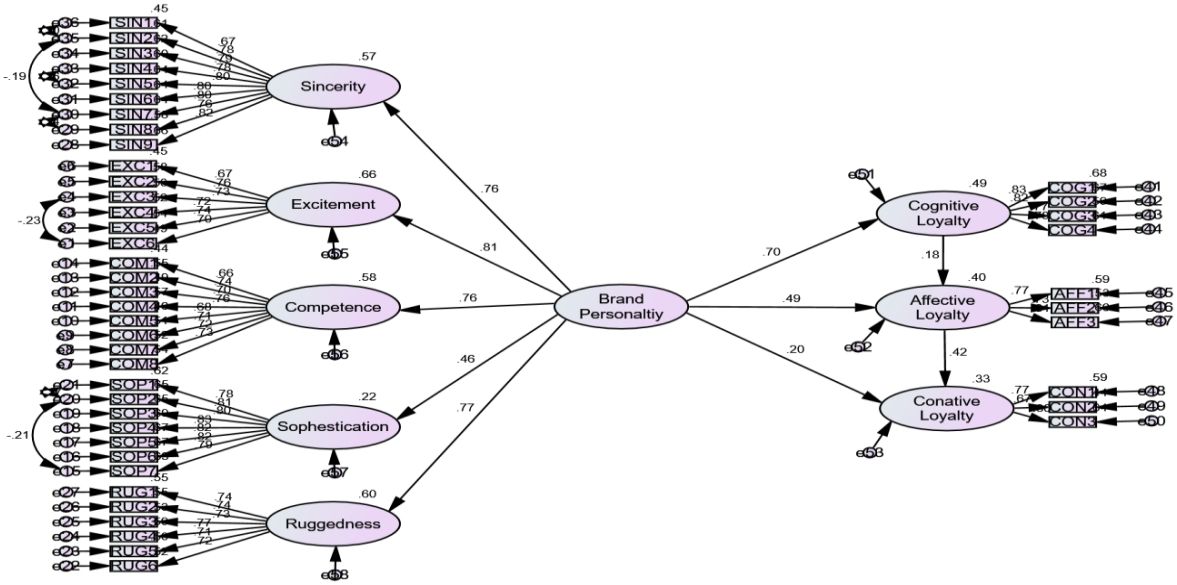

Figure 4: AMOS-Path Model

Test of hypothesis results

As stated by Sun et al. (2014), a hypothesis test is a technique that is utilized to evaluate the validity of a statement concerning a specific characteristic of a population population. It serves as a means to make statistical judgments concerning a population, relying on data obtained from a sample. In this study, the hypotheses were formulated and subsequently evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM) with a significance level of $\alpha = .05$. Hypotheses undergo examination through the evaluation of path estimates utilizing critical t-values. According to Hair et al. (2010), the conclusion that the hypothesis is valid is reached when crucial values are found to be lower than the significance level of 0.05 and when the t-value is found to be 1.96 percent. Conversely, critical values below 1.96 are considered insignificant, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. The outcomes of hypothesis testing demonstrate the validation of 5 hypotheses investigated. Table 6 presents the comprehensive findings of the hypothesis testing that was conducted.

Table 6: Result of Structural Relations and Path Significance (Hypotheses Test)

Hypothesis				**Estimate**	**S.E.**	**C.R.**	**P**	**Decisions**
H1	BP	--->	COG	.702	.081	10.901	0.000***	Accepted
H2	BP	--->	AFF	.491	.070	5.725	0.000***	Accepted
H3	BP	--->	CON	.202	.078	2.716	0.007**	Accepted
H4	COG	--->	AFF	.185	.050	2.387	0.017*	Accepted
H5	AFF	--->	CON	.424	.101	5.401	0.000***	Accepted
R-Square								
Cognitive Loyalty				0.493				
Affective Loyalty				0.403				
Conative Loyalty				0.327				

Notes: *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05; (Based on t, two-tailed test)

Hypothesis 1: Brand personality positively influences cognitive loyalty.

The findings indicate that the initial hypothesis (H1), which posits a direct link between brand personality and the brand cognitive loyalty, is supported (Table 6). Specifically, brand personality shows a notable positive influence on brand cognitive loyalty, as evidenced by a path estimate is 0.702, t-value is 10.901, and the relationship is significance at the level of 0% (p=0.000) which is below the 5% level of significance.

Hypothesis 2: Brand personality positively influences affective loyalty.

The findings provide support for the first hypothesis (H2), which proposes that there is a direct connection between the personality of a brand and the consumers' affective loyalty. Brand personality is found to have a significant positive influence on brand affective loyalty, as indicated by a path estimate of 0.491, a t-value of 5.725, and a significance level of p = 0.000 (Table 6).

Hypothesis 3: Brand personality positively influences conative loyalty.

The findings indicate that the estimated path is 0.202, the t-value is 2.716, and the p-value is 0.007 linking brand personality to conative brand loyalty is also statistically significant (Table 6). Consequently, hypothesis (H3) is upheld and subsequently accepted, suggesting that Conative brand loyalty is significantly impacted by the personality of the brand, which has a large direct influence.

Hypothesis 4: Cognitive loyalty positively influences affective brand loyalty.

The result exhibits in table 6 offer support for the hypothesis (H4), which posits a direct link between customers' perception of cognitive brand loyalty and their affective brand loyalty. With a path estimate of 0.185, a t-value of 2.387, and a significance level of p = 0.017, it can be inferred that cognitive brand loyalty has a direct and statistically significant positive influence on affective brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 5: Affective brand loyalty positively influences conative brand loyalty.

The results validate the initial hypothesis (H5) concerning the direct relationship between customers' emotional identification with a brand and their emotional attachment to the brand.

The path estimates of 0.424, t-value of 5.401, and significance level of p = 0.000 (table 6) indicate that affective brand preference has a direct and statistically significant positive impact on conative brand loyalty.

Regression Coefficient

Table 6 also represents the R-Square value which is also known as coefficient of determination. This indicates that the percentage of variance explained by exogenous (independent) observed variables of an endogenous (dependent) variable (Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). A strategy that is based on covariance is used to obtain the value, which is generated from a squared multiple correlation coefficient table. According to Chin (1998), a strong level of goodness of fit is indicated by a value of 0.67, a moderate level by 0.33, and a weak one by 0.19.
In this study there were three endogenous variables such as cognitive loyalty (COG), affective loyalty (AFF) and conative loyalty (CON) and the r-square value of these variables were 0.49, 0.40 and 0.33 respectively which indicates the moderate to substantial model fit. Thus, it can be said that 49.3% of cognitive loyalty, 40.3 % of affective loyalty and 32.7% of conative loyalty variance are explained by the independent variables.

Moderating Role of Gender

An investigation into whether or not gender has an impact on the impacts of brand personality on various stages of brand loyalty was carried out through the use of a multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA). According to Hensler and Fassott (2010), this method is recommended in situations where either the independent variable or the moderator variable represents a categorical character.
Here, gender was a categorical moderating variable (male or female), therefore it didn't need to be refined. In addition, no F-test was used to look at the actual difference between the two groups. Of the 430 responders, 301 (or 70%) were male and the remaining 129 (or 30%) were female. For the purpose of determining how gender influences the influence of brand personality on various dimensions of brand loyalty, AMOS carried out a multi-group analysis (MGA) to study the relationship. The fit indices of multi-group analysis of gender are summarized in Table 5.7. Table show all the parameter of fit indices satisfies the benchmark values of respective items.

Table 7: Structural model outcome of moderating effect of gender

Hypothesis	Relationships			Male		Female		z-score
				Estimate	P	Estimate	P	
H6a	BP	--->	COG	0.848	0.000***	0.967	0.000***	0.547
H6b	BP	--->	AFF	0.417	0.000***	0.367	0.005***	-0.320
H6c	BP	--->	CON	0.176	0.029*	0.279	0.170	0.472
H6d	COG	--->	AFF	0.049	0.449	0.293	0.000***	2.443**
H6e	AFF	--->	CON	0.532	0.000***	0.623	0.003***	0.382

Notes: *** p-value < 0.001; ** p-value < 0.01; * p-value < 0.05

The findings reveal significant gender differences in how brand personality impacts cognitive affective and conative brand loyalty. When it comes to males, the personality of the brand has a direct and significant influence on the level of conative brand loyalty (β=0.176; p-value: 0.029), whereas for females, brand personality directly affects conative brand loyalty (β=0.279; p-value: 0.170) but the result is insignificant. Similarly, cognitive loyalty has a direct but insignificant impact on affective brand loyalty (β=0.049; p-value: 0.449) for males, whereas for females, cognitive brand loyalty directly affects affective brand loyalty (β=0.29; p-value: 0.000) and the result is significant. Hence the hypothesis H6c and H6e possesses the gender difference and consequently accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that, for males, brand personality can generate conative brand loyalty where for females it is insignificant. And for females, cognitive loyalty can strongly influence the affective loyalty where for males it is insignificant. The rest hypotheses like brand personality to cognitive loyalty (H6a), brand personality to affective loyalty (H6b) and affective loyalty to conative loyalty (H6e) is indifference with respective to male and female. Thus, H6a, H6b and H6e are rejected. So, the results suggest that there is no significant differential

impact of male and female in those relationships. The Z-score provides a statistical test result that the group difference of the hypotheses is significant or not. Though the hypothesis H6c and H6d shows the differential impactful result, but only H6d is statistically significant (z=0.443, p is <0.01).

Result Discussion

The results of the study indicate that brand personality has a favorable influence on both cognitive and affective forms of brand loyalty, as well as cognative brand loyalty. The self-concept idea is supported by these findings. Self-concept, as defined by Pervin and John (2001), is a component of personality. A positive association between self-concept and product image has been found in several studies (Sirgy et al., 2000; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy, 1982; Levy, 1959). According to Sirgy and Su (2000), buyers are more likely to purchase things that are identical with their own image. buyers will not feel satisfied purchasing a product that does not fit with their image. Additionally, there is support for the association between conative brand loyalty and brand personality, which is in line with Kumar et al. (2009) findings, who proposed that purchase intentions might be influenced by a positive attitude and a favourable opinion of a brand. The concept of conative loyalty is frequently associated with purchase intentions and subsequent purchases. According to Hartel and Russell-Bennett (2010) and Oliver (1999), consumers initially establish cognitive loyalty, then emotional loyalty, and finally conative loyalty. Additionally, customers who come to understand a footwear brand's positive personality will start to create a favorable cognitive belief and exhibit emotional or preference responses. This may result in the perception of benefits from using the product (Kumar et al., 2009; Ha and Janda, 2014). In order to arouse favorable feelings and attitudes in their target audience, marketers constantly work to highlight the importance of their product brand. Additionally, the results show that customers first establish cognitive loyalty, which is followed by affective loyalty and finally conative loyalty. These findings are consistent with studies conducted by Härtel and Russell-Bennett (2010) and Oliver (1999).

The study also found that the relationship between brand personality and the different stages of brand loyalty is moderated by gender. The study also reveals that gender moderates the link between affective and cognitive loyalty. H6c and H6d are therefore supported in this situation. Because of this, the influence that males have on the personality of a brand and the conative brand loyalty relations is not only favorable but also large in comparison to the influence that females haveIn contrast, females have a more favorable and significant impact on both cognitive and affective brand loyalty relations than males do. This result is consistent with Engel et al. (2012), who observed that consumer behavior varies between males and females. Additionally, Jin et al. (2013) suggested that female consumers place greater importance on the symbolic value of a product compared to male consumers which is also partially true for this study. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the symbolic aspect of a brand is more closely associated with brand personality, which differs between males and females.

Conclusion

There is a dearth of empirical research to identify the brand personality that motivate consumers during the process build brand loyalty in their minds, despite the fact that there are very few empirical researches and a limited number of conceptual writings that aim to enhance our knowledge of various stages of brand loyalty and brand personality development. The main aim of this research is to examine how the Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale interacts with different level of brand loyalty. Additionally, the study aims to investigate how demographic characteristics affect these factors. In order to accomplish these goals, several research questions were formulated. The research findings reveal that all dimensions of brand personality—sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness—are pertinent for defining the brand personality construct in the Bangladeshi footwear market. To address potential cross-

cultural measurement challenges, the study employed Aakers's (1997) brand personality scale assessment.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Prior research on brand personality has predominantly concentrated on assessing the reliability, credibility and applicability of Aaker's BPS and discovering the familiar characteristic shared by various cultural groups (Wang et al., 2008). The present investigation assessed the suitability of Aaker's (1997) BPS for footwear brands within the specific context of Bangladesh, which diverges from the American environment from where originated the model. Brand personality dimensions are pertinent to footwear brands, according to the findings of this study. The present study investigates the impact of brand personality of footwear brand on brand loyalty in an effort to answer the questions. Consequently, this research makes a significant contribution to the current body of literature concerning the theory of brand personality and the theory of multistage brand loyalty. Marketers are able to engage with customers on a more profound level and cultivate relationships that will last longer when they have a brand personality. As a result, consumers may develop a deeper connection to shoe brands with well-known personalities. Using the aspects of brand personality to gain a better understanding of the associations that customers have with their products can be beneficial for managers of footwear companies. Brand managers and marketers of footwear brands may benefit from gaining a deeper understanding of their brand's personality as a marketing strategy. This will help them attract more consumers and hold on to the ones they currently have.

Future Research Direction

This study provides some scope and direction for future research. Firstly, In order to confirm the results of this study, it is recommended that future studies test this hypothesized model in various cultural and industrial contexts. Besides this, the mixed method approach may be incorporated to justify the quantitative outcome of the study. Furthermore, it would be intriguing to see the impact of various aspects of brand personality on customers' cognitive, emotional, and cognitive loyalty in future studies. This analysis can supplement the results and shed light on which aspect of brand personality is more influential at different points in the customer journey toward brand loyalty. Thirdly, the current study conducts an investigation that focuses specifically on the attitude-based aspects of brand loyalty. Action loyalty is not included in this investigation because it is difficult to measure and observe. Additionally, it would be advantageous to incorporate behavioral loyalty into the model. Lastly, other demographic and psychographic characteristics data can be used as moderator and mediator that will broaden the insights of the outcome of the model.

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