

Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty Relationship in Cosmeceuticals: Understanding the Moderating Influence of Brand Trust

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the connections among brand loyalty and brand personality dimensions Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness of the cosmeceutical industry, and tests the moderating impact of brand trust. This study employed a quantitative method, and data was collected through purposive sampling from 328 cosmeceutical consumers. The findings show that Sincerity and Excitement significantly boost loyalty, which indicates that emotional attachment plays an important role in consumer commitment. On the other hand, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness have a minimal impact on loyalty because they are less important for this industry. The findings also show that the moderating effect of Brand Trust was non-significant, meaning that trust is important, but it works independently, not increasing the impact of brand personality on loyalty. These results contribute to the existing literature by affirming the emphasis of emotional branding strategies within the cosmeceutical industry and contradicting the proposition that trust operates as a moderator in brand relational dynamics. For practitioners, this means that further engagement in authentic emotionally-appealing branding strategies to strengthen consumer loyalty while allowing for trust to be established through ethical and transparent practices is needed. Further investigation is urged to consider other possible moderating factors or to look at these relationships in other industries.

Keywords: Brand personality, brand loyalty, brand trust, cosmeceutical industry, emotional branding, consumer behavior

INTRODUCTION

Due to the increase in customer's use of skincare and anti-aging products, the cosmeceutical industry, which integrates both cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, has had impressive growth in the past couple of years (Tiwari et al. 2020; Brandt et al. 2011; Rajagopal 2010). Above offering both beauty and caffeine, dermatologic products market themselves through mixed marketing techniques utilizing both functional and cosmetic approaches (Epstein, 2009; Jalil et al., 2021). Under such environments, the creation and maintenance of active brand images is vital for establishing brand loyalty. An equally compelling brand personality is helpful to differentiate the loyalty behaviors of consumers within their emotional attachments to brands and has been shown to affect their loyalty behaviors (Tutor et al., 2024; Teimouri et al., 2016). Although brand personality has strategic importance in consumer decision making, there are gaps in the literature as to how its elements impact brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry (Jamshidi & Roustae, 2020). Although extensive research has been done on brand personality and loyalty with the general consumer products, the specific nature of cosmeceuticals because of their dual focus on efficacy and aesthetics poses unique challenges and opportunities (Nuryakin et al., 2023; P & Ka, 2017). This suggests that consumer evaluations of brand personality may vary significantly in this context from other industries. Additionally, far too many studies do not deny one-sided personality traits such as sincerity, sophistication, competence, and ruggedness the necessary time and attention to see how these traits translate to long-term commitment, devotion, and loyalty in the cosmeceuticals market (Jamshidi & Roustae, 2020; Taghipour & Loh, 2017; Rajagopal, 2010). These gaps highlight the need for in-depth studies which apply stringent theoretical approaches and qualitative

analysis tailored for particular sectors to attend these issues appropriately. Filling in this gap is important for boosting academia and allowing operatives to craft and implement marketing techniques to develop and integrate effective brands in the cosmeceutical sector.

This analysis aims to analyze how brand personality affects brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical sector. It considers which aspects of brand personality have the strongest impact on brand loyalty among consumers of cosmeceuticals. Furthermore, it attempts to determine how brand personality, on both emotional and rational bases, drives loyalty and in what ways brand loyalty is described, through the consumer's perspective. This research achievement has important consequences for the theory and practice. In one respect, the work adds to the body of literature on brand personality by providing a case of its manifestation in a very particular and largely unexplored context (i.e. products of cosmeceutics). On the other hand, the findings can help marketers of cosmeceuticals improve brand loyalty through appropriate brand identity strategies aimed at building brand personality. The integration of these perspectives can provide cosmeceutics marketers, researchers, and policy makers with valuable knowledge that will help evolve and enhance their practical activities in the space. The gaps in knowledge have so far remained open might serve as a great basis for propositions aiming at increasing the competitiveness of brands in the marketplace of constant change.

Problem Statement & Motivation

The industry of cosmeceuticals is innovative and highly competitive, creating an environment where brands compete to build long-lasting relationships with consumers. In this regard, brand identity, the particular set of human characteristics attributed to a brand, emerges as a major driver of achieving consumer loyalty and positive brand perception (Azizah & Wiraguna, 2024; Thakur & Kaur, 2016). An Empirical Examination of Relationship Between Emotional Attachment and Attitudinal Brand Loyalty Towards Luxury Fashion Brands. *Dlsu Business & Economics Review*, 26(1), 1. <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=9942>. Several studies underline the fact that strong emotional brands with distinct personalities not only foster brand loyalty but also increase product differentiation, emotional attachment, and purchase intentions (Švrakić & Arslanagić-Kalajdžić, 2023). Nonetheless, despite the advantages noted, the influence of brand personality on consumer brand loyalty in the field of cosmeceuticals is still unknown. Most literature concentrates on the marketing of personality in consumer goods products, ignoring the special conditions prevailing in the cosmeceutical market that integrates both functional and beauty (Teimouri et al., 2016; Jamshidi & Rousta, 2020). This duality adds more depth to brand-consumer relationships, which calls for more research on the role of brand trust as an antecedent and moderator of the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty (Sakinah, 2019).

Moreover, attention to the specific aspects of brand personality such as sincerity, excitement, sophistication, competence, and ruggedness that are most pertinent to consumers of cosmeceutical products is scant, creating an important gap in the brand literature. In addition, trust significantly influences the buying behavior of consumers in the cosmeceutical industry due to the nature of these products (Siahaan et al., 2023). While there is consensus that brand trust is a primary antecedent of loyalty, the presence of brand trust alongside brand personality remains largely unexplored (Hussain et al., 2023; Hasan et al., 2024; Villagra et al., 2021). This gap prevents marketers and researchers from formulating effective branding strategies that integrate brand personality and trust as core components (Azizah & Wiraguna, 2024; Siahaan et al., 2023). Fulfilling this gap is important not only for developing conceptual models of brand management, but also for providing practical guidance to cosmeceutical companies who want to improve customer loyalty and competitive edge. This study aims to address these outstanding issues by investigating brand trust as a potential moderator and thus enriches the literature on consumer-brand relationships within the cosmeceutical industry (Mabkhot et al., 2017; Villagra et al., 2021; Sahin et al., 2011).

Research Question and Objectives

The industry that combines cosmetics and pharmaceuticals known as cosmeceuticals emphasizes the integration of science and beauty, which creates the necessity for the marketers to build the strong brand personality traits of sincerity, competence, and sophistication in order to develop emotional ties and connections with the consumers. Loyalty is important for all products, but the role of trust is especially pronounced for health-related products which moderates the impact of the brand personality on the loyalty

bond and it still remain largely unsupervised. Filling this void gives a better understanding of consumer behavior, builds the brand management theory, and draws the attention of marketers to the necessity of trust and loyalty building. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the significant gap by addressing the question of how brand personality traits affect brand loyalty in the purchase of cosmeceutical products, and the degree to which brand trust acts as a moderator to that relationship. Specifically, the purpose of this research is to analyze the impact of brand trust as a moderator reinforcing or weakening the said relationship. The purpose of the study fills this void by:

Studying the impact of brand personality traits (sincerity, competence, sophistication) on consumer brand loyalty within the cosmeceutical industry.

Investigating the impact of brand trust moderation, assessing how brand trust changes the relationship of brand personality with loyalty.

The results of this study pave the way in addressing the gap in literature regarding brand personality and brand trust. For marketers in the cosmeceuticals industry, these findings will be useful in a competition where claims about product efficacy, safety, and reliability are crucial to consumer purchasing behavior.

Significance of Study

This specific research adds value to brand management in the cosmeceutical field by filling a significant gap in theory, investigating the interplay between the brand personality dimensions and brand loyalty with brand trust as a moderating variable. The results contribute to the understanding of consumer-brand relationships, particularly in the perception of service industries focused on health. On the practical side, it helps marketers devise branding approaches oriented toward trust creation and loyalty nurturing that enable brands to stand out in crowded markets. The results can serve policymakers to advocate for clear marketing communications for health products and respond to the call for credible brands from consumers. All in all, the research offers guidance to practitioners, researchers and policymakers regarding branding and consumer protection in an ever-changing environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The cosmeceutical industry

Progress in natural compounds, bioactive peptides and nanotechnology has resulted in remarkable development lesions in the cosmeceutical industry (Ganesan and Choi 2016). These new developments have improved product effectiveness and safety in response to growing consumer needs for multifunctional cosmetic and skincare products. The global market cap is estimated to be USD 120.18 billion by 2030 which is expected to grow at a CAGR of 9.5 percent (Cosmeceuticals Market Size To Surpass USD 128.54 Bn By 2032 n.d.; Taofiq et al. 2017; Brandt et al. 2011). This growth is most prominent within the Asia-Pacific region, as the increasing disposable income coupled with increasing awareness of skin health are strong motivators (Brandt et al. 2011). Product development and consumer expectations are changing because of new phenomena like nutricosmetics and incorporation of bioactive substances like peptides and ceramides.

Major players such as L'Oréal and Estée Lauder pour a lot of money into research and innovation to stay competitive (Tiwari et al., 2020). To perform well in this ever-changing marketplace, brands must develop customized marketing approaches that accentuate product performance and correspond with the advancementsof technology (Brandt et al., 2011; Epstein, 2009). Connecting with consumers through digital channels to encourage brand engagement is crucial in establishing positive relationships with the audience (Zollo et al., 2021). In addition, focusing on sustainability, innovation and consumer education bolster a brand's position so that it can meet the challenge types posed by the changing needs of the cosmeceutical industry.

Brand Personality and Brand Loyalty Relationship

The interaction of brand personality and brand loyalty is of great importance in the cosmetic and cosmeceutical field. As defined in Aaker (1997), brand personality is the set of human attributes that a brand is believed to possess. As a consumer, emotions can be attached to the brand because we tend to have or want traits like sincerity, excitement, or sophistication (Park & Ahn, 2024; Aaker & Fournier, 1995). This is prevalent in cosmetics and cosmeceuticals industries, where self-image and personal expression are crucial (Rössner, 2023). In this sector, a favorable brand reputation leads to customer loyalty (Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, 2023; Rajagopal, 2010). A strong brand personality provides attachment because the consumer perceives the brand as a part of his or her identity or aspirations (Aaker, 1997; Hayes et al., 2006; Yang & Lee, 2019).

The linkage of brand personality and brand loyalty has attracted considerable attention in the context of the cosmetics and cosmeceutical sector. In a study conducted by Jamshidi and Rousta (2020), it was revealed that centripetal factors of brand loyalty such as brand satisfaction were primarily affected by psychological components of marketing such as brand personality, brand image, and branding experience. Other researchers including Susanto and Handayani (2020) also found a deep correlation between a brand's image and their customer loyalty within the e-commerce field. Pour et al. (2020) highlighted the drastic changes brands made in accordance to shifts in customer satisfaction towards aagrame and glamour. While Islam et al. (2023) stated other Shintaro and Jilion mobile companies in the European market have no option but to market themselves aggressively because conglomerates like Shintaro and Jilion command the market. Not only these, they laid a groundwork which focused on the interplay between relative brand identification with brand personality and consumer loyalty which other researchers noted before Khalid, and Lada (2009) stemmed from the observation made a few years earlier with regard to the impact brand image has on customer satisfaction.

While the existing research provides valuable insights into the factors that drive brand loyalty in the cosmetics and cosmeceutical industry, the findings may not be fully applicable to the current market landscape, as the industry and customer needs are constantly evolving (Sun, 2022; Susanto & Handayani, 2020; Jamshidi & Rousta, 2020; Chung & Park, 2015).

H1: Brand personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) positively influence brand loyalty:

H1a: Sincerity positively influences brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry.

H1b: Excitement positively influences brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry.

H1c: Competence positively influences brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry.

H1d: Sophistication positively influences brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry.

H1e: Ruggedness positively influences brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry.

These sub-hypotheses allow for a more granular examination of how each brand personality dimension impacts brand loyalty, facilitating a deeper understanding of their individual contributions to brand-building efforts in the cosmeceutical sector.

The Moderating Roles of Brand Trust

Studies focusing on cosmeceutical products have recently emerged, underscoring the importance of both brand trust and loyalty in driving consumer behavior within markets where safety, efficacy, and authenticity are decisive factors. Trust arises serves as a mediator whereby product quality, brand image, and consumer satisfaction translates into loyalty, particularly among the health-conscious. Employing Emotional branding, which seeks to align brand's values to the consumers' self image, is also found to be effective in generating trust, which is further enhanced by ethical and transparent dealings (Qiu et al., 2021; Mesiya, 2020). Studies underline the effectiveness of focusing on urban female consumers, stressing a reliance on product integrity along with ethical consideration (Rajavi et al., 2019). This makes clear how fierce the competition is and how

much innovation vernacular is needed, concentrating on research in the spheres of globalization, digital trust, and branding's sustainability influence. The constituents incorporated within cosmeceuticals are of utmost significance as they provide product manufacturers the ability to position their products and therefore obtain a portion of the market.

Brand trust serves as an important moderating parameter within the association of brand loyalty and brand personality because it considerably affects the strength of this relationship (Villagra et al., 2021; Filo et al., 2007). Although brand personality traits like sincerity, excitement, and competence are well known to engender emotional attachment and loyalty, their impact is largely dependent on the level of trust the consumers have in the brand (Mabkhot et al., 2017). Trust functions as a filter through which consumers interpret and accept the projected claims and values of a brand's personality. For instance, in a trust worthy brand in the cosmeceutical industry, where products tend to have similar functions, customers are assured of product quality, safety, and reliability, leading to brand loyalty (Susanto & Handayani, 2020; Jamshidi & Rousta, 2020).

This Internet-based purchasing scenario presents the moderating role of trust because consumers have to depend on a mix of virtual interactions and virtual cues sent out to make persona. Put differently, when trust is high, brand personality attributes like competence and sincerity are easily converted to consumer loyalty (Magdy, 2024; Menidjel et al, 2017). On the other hand, in the absence of trust, even skillfully crafted brand personalities may never be able to sustain consumer relationships (Lepkowska-White and Kortright, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2016). The present study intends to examine the trust-brand personality relationship with the aim of providing useful guidance for cosmeceutical brands on how to constructively harness trust to foster loyalty. By establishing trust as a primary factor, brands are able to shift the priming effects of their personality on consumers to ensure engagement and sustaining competitive advantage (Susanto & Handayani, 2020; Jamshidi & Rousta, 2020). Based on prior discussions the following hypothesis is put forth:

H2: Brand trust moderates the relationship between brand personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) and brand loyalty in the context of cosmeceutical products.

H2a: Brand Trust moderates the relationship between Sincerity and brand loyalty in the context of cosmeceutical products.

H2b: Brand Trust moderates the relationship between Excitement and brand loyalty in the context of cosmeceutical products.

H2c: Brand Trust moderates the relationship between Competence and brand loyalty in the context of cosmeceutical products.

H2d: Brand Trust moderates the relationship between Sophistication and brand loyalty in the context of cosmeceutical products.

H2e: Brand Trust moderates the relationship between Ruggedness and brand loyalty in the context of cosmeceutical products.

From the perspective of a literature review, the development of the cosmeceutical industry is fueled by the growth of natural compounds, bioactive peptides, and nanotechnology, alongside the blending of brand personality and equity in strategic consumer engagement. In essence, the available literature points out the importance of brand personality traits like sincerity, excitement, and sophistication in engendering customer loyalty, within a trusting environment. The relations between brand personality, trust, and loyalty indicate the importance of further research to address the changing needs of consumers, multiculturalism, and brand politics with sustainability concerns within the cosmeceutical industry.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized an exploratory method as well as a deductive strategy in order to corroborate the conceptual framework. The theoretical bases for the constructs of brand personality, brand loyalty, and brand trust were taken and customized from the pre-existing models by Aaker (1997), Harris and Goode (2004), Oliver et al. (1997), and Delgado-Ballester (2011). The investigation sought to confirm two primary assumptions, each with five additional subsidiary assumptions, as was explained in the proposed outline of the research (Figure 1). The intended sample encompassed Malaysian respondents, and the sampling took place in seven representative metropolitan areas in Malaysia, which are Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Kota Bharu, Johor Bahru, Kuantan, Kuching, and Kota Kinabalu.

Using purposive sampling, 328 respondents meeting certain criteria were recruited, and it took approximately three months to collect the data. The requirements that participants needed to fulfill included being at least 18 years of age, being cognizant of or having purchased cosmeceuticals before, and being able to financially support purchasing these products. A self-administered questionnaire, which was developed and revised for ease of comprehension and relevance through many iterations of face validity, was used to gather information. The last instrument incorporated included 101 measurement items allocated to three constructs; brand personality (42 items), brand loyalty (16 items), and brand trust (6 items). Each item was evaluated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). SmartPLS 4 was used to analyze the data and conduct structural equation modeling (SEM), which greatly confirmed the interrelationships and interactions within the conceptual framework. The findings of the study provided important understandings on the brand personality, loyalty, and trust of the cosmeceuticals within Malaysia's market. The methodology provided in the study also gave perspective on the implementation of the framework. The proposed conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1 below.

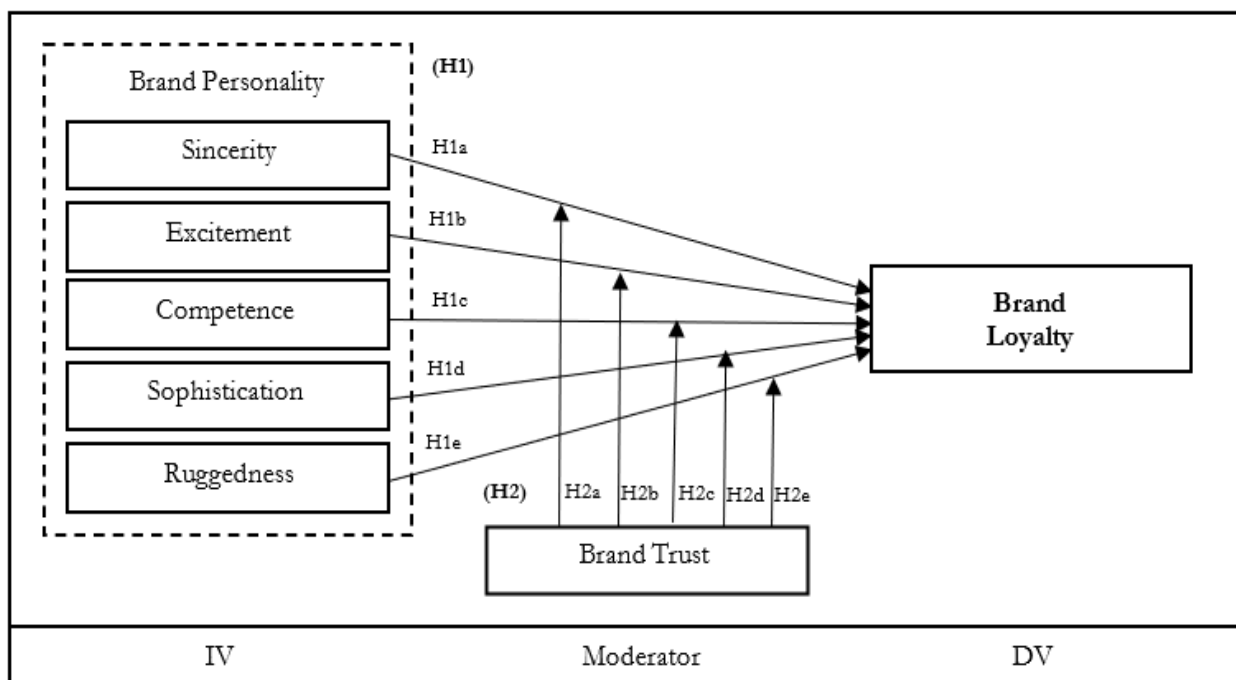


Figure 1: A proposed conceptual framework of the study

Source: Adopted and modified from Aaker (1997); Harris and Goode (2004); Oliver et al., (1997); Delgado-Ballester (2011).

The framework integrates five dimensions of brand personality, sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness as key influencers of brand loyalty toward cosmeceutical products. Brand loyalty extends beyond repeat purchases, encompassing trust, emotional connections, and shared values between the brand and its customers. Brand trust moderates this relationship, amplifying the positive effects of specific brand personality traits on loyalty. Together, these elements highlight the interplay between personality, trust, and loyalty in fostering enduring consumer-brand relationships.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Demography Profile

Table 1 provides a detailed profile of the respondents (n = 328) in the study on cosmeceutical brand preferences. The majority are female (79.3%), while males account for 20.7%, reflecting the common interest of women in cosmeceutical products. In terms of education, half hold a bachelor's degree (50.0%), followed by respondents with high school (25.0%), master's (11.0%), secondary school (6.7%), and doctorate qualifications (7.3%). Occupation data show that most are employed in the government sector (36.9%) or private sector (36.3%), with smaller proportions being self-employed (17.0%) or students (9.8%). Monthly income levels reveal that nearly half earn RM3001–6000 (49.4%), followed by RM1000–3000 (29.6%), with fewer respondents in higher income brackets, such as RM6001–9000 (14.6%), RM9001–12000 (4.6%), and above RM12000 (1.8%). The profile highlights a predominantly educated, middle-income, working professional demographic, reflecting their significant role in influencing cosmeceutical brand preferences and purchasing decisions.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents (n = 328)

| Profile | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 68 | 20.7 |
| Female | 260 | 79.3 |
| Education Level | | |
| Secondary School | 22 | 6.7 |
| High School | 82 | 25.0 |
| Bachelor's degree | 164 | 50.0 |
| Master's degree | 36 | 11.0 |
| Doctorate (PhD) or equivalent | 24 | 7.3 |
| Occupation | | |
| Self Employed | 56 | 17.0 |
| Government Sector | 121 | 36.9 |
| Private Sector | 119 | 36.3 |
| Student | 32 | 9.8 |
| Monthly Income | | |
| RM1000 – 3000 | 97 | 29.6 |
| RM3001 – 6000 | 162 | 49.4 |
| RM6001 – 9000 | 48 | 14.6 |
| RM9001 – 12000 | 15 | 4.6 |
| RM12000 – RM15000 above | 6 | 1.8 |

Measurement Model: Model Fit

Model fit evaluates how well the proposed model (measurement or structural) matches the data. Good model fit indicates that the model is consistent with the observed data. Based on Table 2 below the absolute fit indices for the Saturated and Estimated Models in your SMART PLS 4 analysis indicate an acceptable model fit. The SRMR values (Saturated: 0.050; Estimated: 0.049) are well below the threshold of 0.10, demonstrating a low level of discrepancy between the observed and predicted correlation matrices, which supports a good fit. Both d_ULS (Saturated: 0.797; Estimated: 0.791) and d_G (Saturated: 0.524; Estimated: 0.522) are closer to 0, indicating minimal differences in Euclidean and geodesic distances, respectively, further affirming the model's alignment with the data. The Chi-Square values (Saturated: 1058.791; Estimated: 1051.381) are relatively high, which is expected in large sample sizes and not overly concerning in PLS-SEM since the method prioritizes predictive relevance over exact fit. Lastly, the NFI values (Saturated: 0.773; Estimated: 0.774), although slightly below the ideal of 0.90, are acceptable for exploratory research, particularly in the cosmeceutical industry, where complex constructs like brand trust and consumer behavior often lead to moderate fit indices. Overall, the results suggest your model is robust and suitable for analyzing key factors in the cosmeceutical context.

Table 2: Model Fit

| Absolute fit indices | Saturated Model | Estimated Model |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| SRMR | 0.050 | 0.049 |
| d_ULS | 0.797 | 0.791 |
| d_G | 0.524 | 0.522 |
| Chi-Square | 1058.791 | 1051.381 |
| NFI | 0.773 | 0.774 |

Reliability and Convergent validity

Table 3 shows the measurement model's reliability and convergent validity, factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). However, from the total of 350 respondents, only 328 were included in the final analysis due to statistical considerations (i.e. incomplete or ineligible responses and missing responses). Additionally, a few items, specifically BT1 and BT5, were removed due to low factor loadings. The results in Table 3 demonstrate strong reliability and convergent validity across constructs, ensuring robust measurement for analyzing consumer behavior in the cosmeceutical industry. All constructs exhibit factor loadings above 0.70, indicating that individual indicators significantly contribute to their respective constructs. Cronbach's Alpha values exceed the threshold of 0.70, confirming internal consistency, while Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.745 to 0.951, surpassing the minimum requirement of 0.70, thus ensuring construct reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeds the 0.50 threshold, confirming that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators, indicating strong convergent validity.

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity

| Constructs | Item Code | Factor Loading | Cronbach Alpha | CR | AVE |
|------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Sincerity | BPSD | 0.881 | 0.846 | 0.864 | 0.711 |
| | BPSH | 0.828 | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | BPSW | 0.831 | | | |
| | BPSCC | 0.832 | | | |
| Excitement | BPED | 0.897 | 0.887 | 0.889 | 0.747 |
| | BPES | 0.876 | | | |
| | BPEI | 0.824 | | | |
| | BPEU | 0.857 | | | |
| Competence | BPCR | 0.814 | 0.830 | 0.835 | 0.748 |
| | BPCI | 0.899 | | | |
| | BPCS | 0.879 | | | |
| Sophistication | BPSU | 0.898 | 0.751 | 0.719 | 0.773 |
| | BPSC | 0.860 | | | |
| Ruggedness | BPRO | 0.786 | 0.708 | 0.745 | 0.733 |
| | BPRT | 0.921 | | | |
| Brand Trust | BT2 | 0.837 | 0.899 | 0.951 | 0.659 |
| | BT3 | 0.841 | | | |
| | BT4 | 0.849 | | | |
| | BT6 | 0.801 | | | |
| | BT7 | 0.767 | | | |
| | BT8 | 0.771 | | | |
| Brand Loyalty | BLAC | 0.860 | 0.887 | 0.891 | 0.747 |
| | BLAA | 0.839 | | | |
| | BLACC | 0.866 | | | |
| | BLB | 0.893 | | | |

In the cosmeceutical context, these results validate the measurement of brand personality dimensions, Sincerity (AVE: 0.711), Excitement (AVE: 0.747), Competence (AVE: 0.748), Sophistication (AVE: 0.773), Ruggedness (AVE: 0.733)—as well as Brand Trust (AVE: 0.659) and Brand Loyalty (AVE: 0.747), as reliable factors influencing consumer perceptions and loyalty. This ensures that the constructs are suitable for modeling complex consumer behaviors, such as trust and loyalty toward cosmeceutical brands, which are crucial for competitive differentiation in a saturated market.

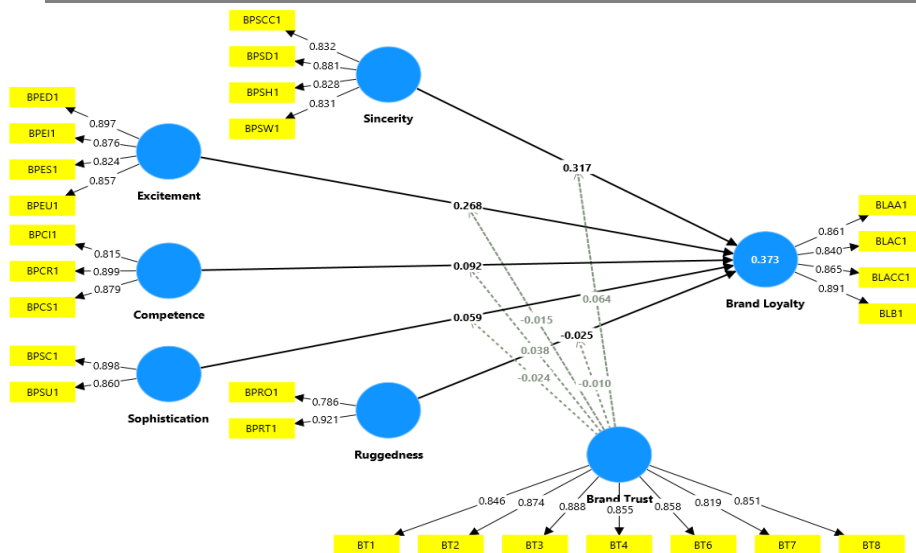


Figure 2: Structural Model

The structural model highlights Sincerity ($\beta = 0.317$, $p < 0.001$) and Excitement ($\beta = 0.268$, $p < 0.001$) as the most influential dimensions driving Brand Loyalty, emphasizing the emotional connection consumers have with these traits. Competence ($\beta = 0.092$, $p > 0.05$), Sophistication ($\beta = 0.059$, $p > 0.05$), and Ruggedness ($\beta = -0.025$, $p > 0.05$) show limited or no significant effects, indicating their lesser relevance in the cosmeceutical industry context. Although Brand Trust demonstrates high loadings on its indicators, its moderating effects on the relationship between brand personality and loyalty are non-significant, implying that trust operates independently and is likely a baseline expectation in this industry.

Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Discriminant validity assessment has become a generally accepted prerequisite for analyzing relationships between reflectively measured constructs (citation). The results highlight the interaction effects and relationships between key constructs in the cosmeceutical industry, emphasizing the nuanced dynamics of brand personality, trust, and loyalty. Brand Loyalty shows meaningful associations with key brand personality dimensions like Sincerity (0.555), Excitement (0.511), and Competence (0.41), confirming their significant role in driving loyalty. While Sophistication (0.284) and Ruggedness (0.151) exhibit weaker correlations, they remain relevant in niche consumer preferences.

Brand Trust demonstrates weaker direct correlations across constructs, including Brand Loyalty (0.06) and personality dimensions, indicating its potential indirect influence through interactions. Interaction terms, such as Brand Trust \times Excitement (0.187) and Brand Trust \times Sincerity (0.112), suggest moderate synergies, reinforcing the importance of combining trust with emotional dimensions like sincerity and excitement to enhance consumer connections. Overall, the findings suggest that cosmeceutical brands should emphasize sincerity, excitement, and competence in their branding while leveraging trust strategically through tailored interactions to enhance consumer loyalty in this competitive market. These insights are critical for crafting emotionally resonant marketing strategies and fostering lasting relationships with consumers.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

| Construct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Brand Loyalty | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brand Trust | 0.06 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Competence | 0.41 | 0.057 | | | | | | | | | |
| Excitement | 0.511 | 0.057 | 0.389 | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Ruggedness | 0.151 | 0.054 | 0.339 | 0.21 | | | | | | | |
| Sincerity | 0.555 | 0.045 | 0.49 | 0.434 | 0.263 | | | | | | |
| Sophistication | 0.284 | 0.076 | 0.426 | 0.242 | 0.203 | 0.259 | | | | | |
| Brand Trust x Sophistication | 0.111 | 0.058 | 0.05 | 0.069 | 0.09 | 0.035 | 0.119 | | | | |
| Brand Trust x Excitement | 0.187 | 0.091 | 0.128 | 0.19 | 0.191 | 0.038 | 0.073 | 0.031 | | | |
| Brand Trust x Competence | 0.101 | 0.085 | 0.011 | 0.13 | 0.075 | 0.048 | 0.057 | 0.226 | 0.303 | | |
| Brand Trust x Ruggedness | 0.111 | 0.121 | 0.07 | 0.195 | 0.124 | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.18 | 0.005 | 0.168 | |
| Brand Trust x Sincerity | 0.112 | 0.101 | 0.045 | 0.033 | 0.038 | 0.136 | 0.04 | 0.13 | 0.288 | 0.459 | 0.165 |

Structural Model

The structural path coefficients provide valuable insights into the drivers of Brand Loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry. Among the five dimensions of brand personality, Sincerity (H1a: $\beta = 0.329$, $p < 0.001$) and Excitement (H1b: $\beta = 0.253$, $p < 0.001$) significantly influence Brand Loyalty, emphasizing the importance of emotionally engaging and authentic brand positioning. These results suggest that sincere and exciting brand messages resonate well with cosmeceutical consumers, enhancing loyalty. In contrast, Competence (H1c: $\beta = 0.079$, $p = 0.148$), Sophistication (H1d: $\beta = 0.087$, $p = 0.064$), and Ruggedness (H1e: $\beta = -0.002$, $p = 0.957$) show weak or non-significant effects. While competence and sophistication may contribute to consumer perceptions of quality and elegance, their limited influence suggests that these attributes alone are insufficient to build loyalty. Ruggedness is irrelevant in this context, likely due to its mismatch with the typical branding strategy of cosmeceuticals.

The interaction terms reveal that Brand Trust does not significantly moderate the relationship between brand personality dimensions and Brand Loyalty. All moderating effects (e.g., Brand Trust \times Sincerity (H2a: $\beta = -0.039$, $p = 0.617$), Brand Trust \times Excitement (H2b: $\beta = -0.091$, $p = 0.157$)) are non-significant, suggesting that while trust is essential, it does not amplify the effects of personality dimensions on loyalty. For cosmeceutical brands, emotional attributes like sincerity and excitement are key drivers of loyalty. Functional dimensions such as competence and sophistication, while relevant, play a lesser role, and ruggedness is not impactful. Trust should be nurtured independently rather than relying on its interplay with brand personality dimensions. This calls for strategies emphasizing emotional connection and authentic brand storytelling to foster consumer loyalty effectively.

Table 5: Structural path coefficients

| Hypothesis | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (O/STDEV) | P values |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Sincerity -> Brand Loyalty (H1a) | 0.329 | 0.329 | 0.054 | 6.043 | 0.000** |
| Excitement -> Brand Loyalty (H1b) | 0.253 | 0.254 | 0.061 | 4.12 | 0.000** |
| Competence -> Brand Loyalty (H1c) | 0.079 | 0.094 | 0.054 | 1.45 | 0.148 |
| Sophistication -> Brand Loyalty (H1d) | 0.087 | 0.088 | 0.047 | 1.858 | 0.064 |

| | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Ruggedness -> Brand Loyalty (H1e) | -0.002 | 0.003 | 0.043 | 0.054 | 0.957 |
| Brand Trust x Sincerity -> Brand Loyalty (H2a) | -0.039 | -0.014 | 0.077 | 0.501 | 0.617 |
| Brand Trust x Excitement -> Brand Loyalty (H2b) | -0.091 | -0.069 | 0.064 | 1.42 | 0.157 |
| Brand Trust x Competence -> Brand Loyalty (H2c) | 0.024 | 0.006 | 0.075 | 0.324 | 0.746 |
| Brand Trust x Sophistication -> Brand Loyalty (H2d) | -0.08 | -0.074 | 0.054 | 1.47 | 0.143 |
| Brand Trust x Ruggedness -> Brand Loyalty (H2e) | 0.069 | 0.052 | 0.054 | 1.274 | 0.204 |

Notes: n=328; $p < 0.05^*$; $p < 0.01^{**}$

Moderation: Slope Analysis

Slope analysis in moderation examines how the relationship between an independent variable (e.g., Sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness) and a dependent variable (e.g., Brand Loyalty) changes at different levels of a moderator (e.g., Brand Trust). The benefit is that it visually identifies and quantifies the strength and direction of moderation effects, providing clearer insights for decision-making.

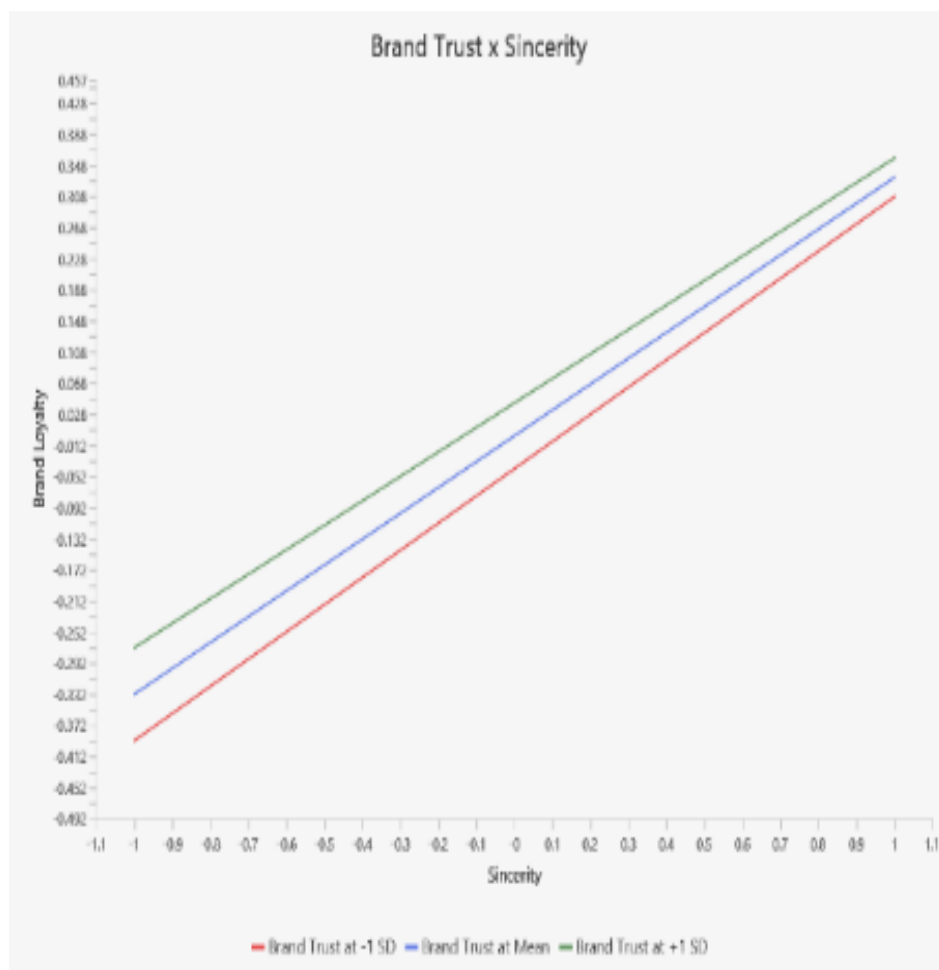


Figure 1: Slope Analysis of the Moderation Effects (Sincerity)

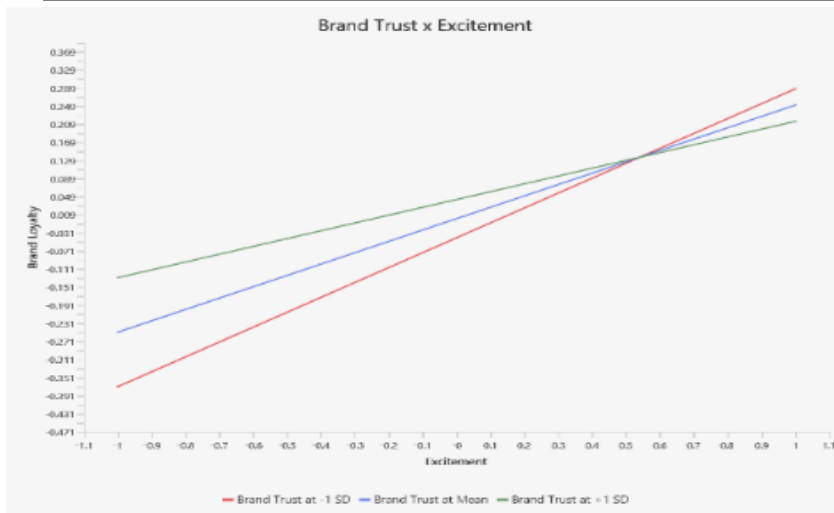


Figure 2: Slope Analysis of the Moderation Effects (Excitement)

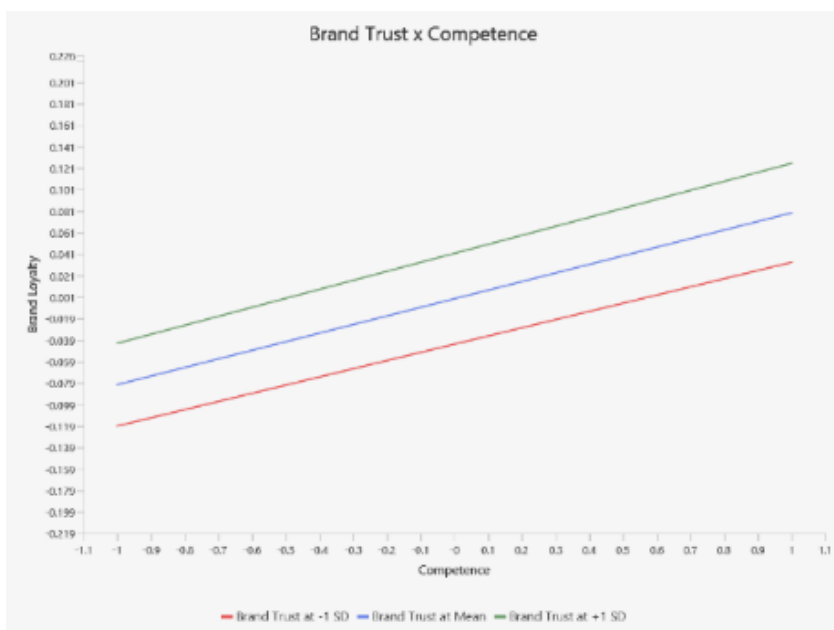


Figure 3: Slope Analysis of the Moderation Effects (Competence)

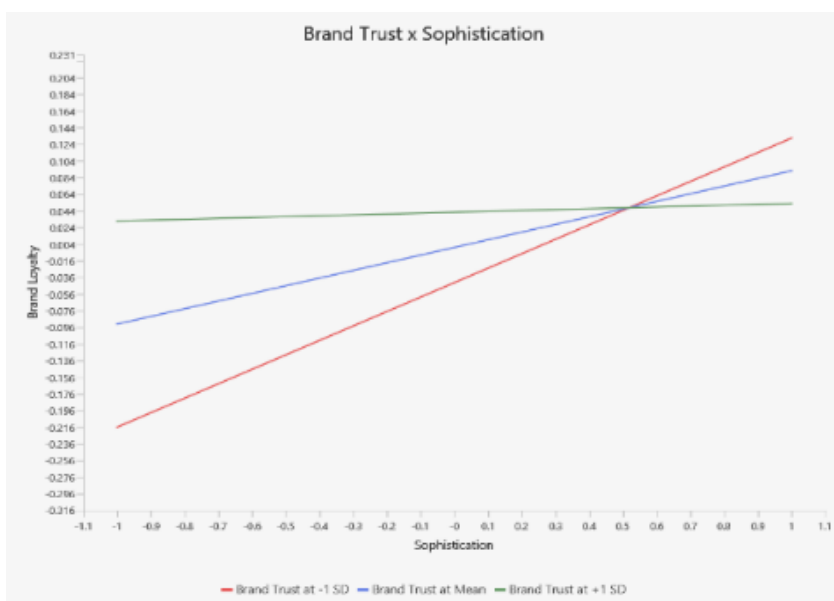


Figure 4: Slope Analysis of the Moderation Effects (Sophistication)

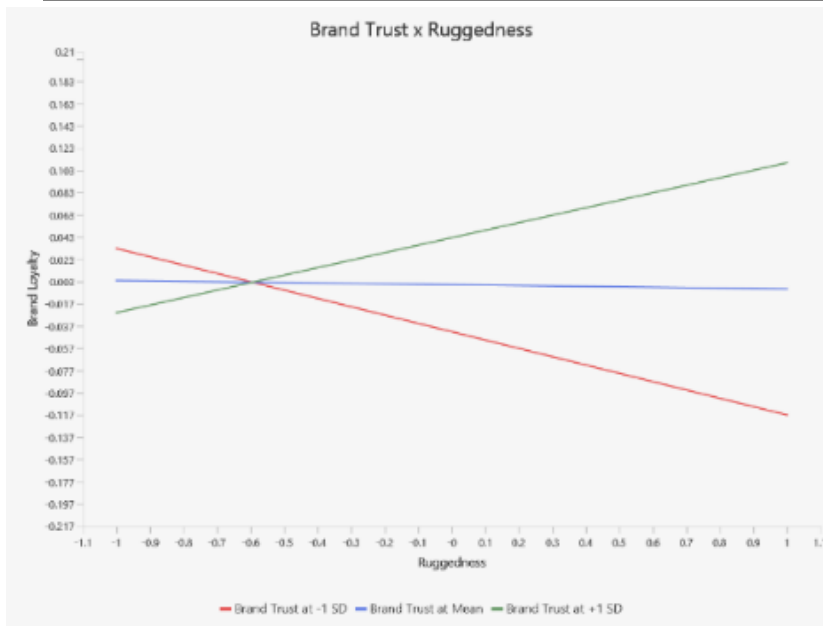


Figure 5: Slope Analysis of the Moderation Effects (Ruggedness)

The slope analysis for the moderation effect of Brand Trust on the relationships between Sincerity, Excitement, and Competence with Brand Loyalty indicates non-significant interactions. In the Sincerity interaction (Figure 1), although the slopes show a slight upward trend, the differences across Brand Trust levels are minimal, indicating no meaningful moderation. For Excitement (Figure 2), Sophistication (Figure 4), and Ruggedness (Figure 5), the slopes intersect slightly, suggesting variability, but the moderation effect remains insignificant as Brand Trust does not notably alter the relationship. In the Competence interaction (Figure 3), the parallel nature of the slopes shows a consistent but weak influence, further confirming the non-significance of the moderation effect. Overall, the findings suggest that while brand trust shows theoretical potential, it does not significantly moderate the impact of these brand personality dimensions on brand loyalty in the cosmeceutical industry.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of brand personality dimensions (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness) on Brand Loyalty within the cosmeceutical industry and to test whether Brand Trust moderates these relationships. This section reviews the key findings concerning the hypotheses, addresses the research questions, and highlights their theoretical and practical implications.

Significant Influence of Brand Personality Dimension (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness on Brand Loyalty

The findings confirm the hypotheses set by the study by suggesting that **Sincerity** (H1a: $\beta = 0.329$, $p < 0.001$) and **Excitement** (H1b: $\beta = 0.253$, $p < 0.001$) features have a significant impact on Brand Loyalty, which is of principal importance in the cosmeceutical industry. The results also corroborate earlier works (Aaker, 1997; Sung & Kim, 2010) which assert that emotionally Intelligent brand attributes like sincerity and excitement enhance customer relationships and loyalty to greater heights. Excitement and Sincerity are expressed through energetic, innovative, and dynamic traits, which appeal to consumers in need of new and stimulating. At the same time, Sincerity reflects wonderful traits like honesty, genuine care, and compassion which appeal largely to class of cosmeceutical consumers who purchase products based on trust and ethical branding. This is important in the cosmeceutical industry where brands have to differentiate their products and offer compelling experiences to build brand loyalty. The results above further underline the need for marketers to use emotional driven strategies that incorporate strong sincere messages and brand narratives in order to gain more commitment from consumers.

On the other hand, the relationships of Brand Loyalty with **Competence, Sophistication** and **Ruggedness** were weak or not significant (H1c: $\beta = 0.079$, $p = 0.148$; H1d: $\beta = 0.087$, $p = 0.064$; H1e: $\beta = -0.002$, $p = 0.957$). These findings indicate that competence and sophistication, while assumed to enhance quality and elegance, do not significantly promote loyalty. This is contradictory to some previous studies (e.g. Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Lee & Kang, 2013) which found that competence is a major determinant of brand loyalty. Perhaps the most relevant reason is the emotional nature of the cosmeceutical industry where the appeal of attributes such as sincerity and excitement overshadow the functional side. The insignificance of ruggedness further substantiates its scarcity in this context. Ruggedness refers to the strength and durability of a product and is more relevant for outdoor or utilitarian brands (Aaker, 1997). Its disconnect with the cosmeceutical image of beauty, care and trust explains why it has little effect on Brand Loyalty. In general, these results both support and contradict the existing literature. In line with Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework and other researches, Sincerity and Excitement are important predictors of loyalty, demonstrating the emotional bond with the brand. Nonetheless, the low weight of Competence and Sophistication is at odds with research that considers these traits as pivotal for quality concerned customers (Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

Non-significant Moderating Role of Brand Trust

The results show that Brand Trust does not significantly moderate the relationship between brand loyalty and its brand personality dimension. In particular, the moderating effects of Brand Trust on Sincerity (H2a: $\beta = -0.039$, $p = .617$), Excitement (H2b: $\beta = -0.091$, $p = .157$), and Competence (H2c: $\beta = 0.024$, $p = 0.746$) are not significant. This finding is in contrast to the earlier studies (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005) which justify that trust magnifies the impacts that brand attributes have on consumer loyalty. The absence of moderation implies that while Brand Trust is indeed a key driver of loyalty, it weakens the impact of brand personality dimensions. One possible explanation is that trust works as a primary driver of loyalty instead of a moderator. Consumers of cosmeceuticals may already consider trust as an unvoiced norm, especially considering the nature of risk involved with these products. Therefore, trust might not change the effect of brand personality dimensions on loyalty; rather it needs to be earned through genuine commitment to quality, clarity, and ethical conduct.

In addition, the non-significant moderation effect of Brand Trust corresponds with studies that claim trust operates as a prerequisite rather than a magnifying factor in relationships with brands (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). This result disputes the argument that trust invariably enhances other brand-related elements, especially within sectors where trust is an antecedent factor.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This research makes a theoretical contribution to literature on brand personality by illustrating the primacy of emotional features (Sincerity and Excitement) over functional ones (Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness) in the context of the cosmeceuticals industry. It contributes to the discussion on the impact of Brand Trust by showing its limited moderating impact, which indicates a more autonomous than interactive role of trust with brand personality dimensions. For managers and marketers, these findings are helpful in formulating strategies aimed at improving Brand Loyalty. Cosmeceutical brands need to focus on achieving emotional responses through sincere and exciting brand communications. Strategies that focus on authenticity, care, and innovations will be more appealing to consumers than those that emphasize functional attributes such as competence and sophistication. In addition, although trust is important, it should be built, not around the brand personality, but through the ethical treatment of consumers, product transparency, and strict adherence to quality.

This research identifies Sincerity and Excitement as the most important drivers of Brand Loyalty in the cosmeceutical sector while showing that Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness have little effect. The non-significant moderating role of Brand Trust indicates that trust is important, but it does not intensify the effect of brand personality dimensions on loyalty. These results are useful for both theorists and practitioners in point of consumer emotional branding and trust as a caregiving factor of consumer brand loyalty. Further studies can focus on different moderating variables or the relationship between brand personality and trust within other industries.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

This paper examines Sincerity and Excitement as the main predictors of Brand Loyalty in the cosmeceutical sector while highlighting the role of emotional bond as a driver of consumer devotion. It goes to show how traits that evoke emotion such as sincere affection and care, as well as innovative energetic excitement, prove to be more powerful than functional or aspirational ones towards brand loyalty. On the other hand, the traits of Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness are shown to have weak or no impact at all, indicating that while functional attributes such as skillfulness and stylishness may enhance a brand's image, they are too soft to build loyalty in an emotion-driven context. The weak effect of Ruggedness further demonstrates its dissonance from the cosmeceutical sector, which is linked more to beauty and care and less to harshness and strength.

Importantly, the study has also discovered the brand trust's moderating effect on the relationship between brand personality dimensions and loyalty to be non-significant. This suggests that trust, while being extremely vital in gaining consumers' support and lessening risks, does not enhance the effect of brand personality. Rather, trust seems to operate as a mute expectation within the cosmeceutical industry where trust and effectiveness are the primary issues. These results enhance the existing brand personality literature by confirming strong influences of emotional branding strategies while providing additional evidence of trust's autonomous nature. From a practical perspective, marketers in the cosmeceutical sector should develop sincere and exciting emotionally appealing brand strategies to deepen customers' emotional attachment to them. Genuine brand communication, active brand advocacy, and engaging product stories can cultivate greater consumer loyalty than excessive focus on competency and sophistication. Building upon this study, future work can look at other proposed moderators, such as the level of brand involvement, perceived risk, or customer segmentation, in order to increase understanding of the relationship between brand personality and loyalty. Further, cross-sectoral studies between high and low emotional and functional engagement sectors could better examine the relationships between brand personality and brand trust.

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