

The Mediating Role of Brand Love in the Relationship between Brand Experiences and Brand Loyalty (Special Reference to FMCG Sector in Sri Lanka)

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Retail brands have realized the importance of creating a strong brand to be able to differentiate in today's fierce market. To establish a strong brand, current marketers are focused on providing unique and memorable brand experiences which will attach the customer to an emotional relationship that leads to brand love. Experience marketing and brand love are novel concepts in marketing and due to the novelty, limited research has been conducted. This study aims to fulfill these research gaps, by developing a research model shaped by the brand resonance model and customer brand relationship theory to analyse how brand love act as a mediator in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. The study was developed on quantitative approach. Sample consisted of 300 consumers and both multi-stage stratified sampling and systematic random sampling were used as sampling techniques. Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equations Modeling. The findings of the study demonstrates a complementary partial mediation of brand love. The three dimensions of brand experience positively influences brand love, and the sensory experience is identified as the major driver of brand love. Both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty are positively influence by brand love, and out of the two dimensions, brand love has a greater impact to drive attitudinal loyalty. The research model explains 52 percent of variance of brand love, 52 percent of variance of behavioral loyalty and 53 percent of attitudinal loyalty. The study concludes that brand love play a significant role in making a strong positive relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. Therefore marketers should consistently create authentic customer experiences, that are worthwhile and personally engaging, which will lead the customer to a long term loyalty to the brand and enrich the customer brand relationships.

Keywords: Brand love, Brand experience, Attitudinal loyalty, Behavioral loyalty, Customer brand relationships