

EFFECT OF BRAND LOVE ON BRAND LOYALTY AMONG LOCAL CHAIN SUPERMARKET IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.

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Abstract: The retail sector has experienced rapid growth and transformation over the last decade, shaped by intensified competition, the COVID-19 pandemic, technological innovation and changing consumer preferences. This dynamic has had a negative impact on brand loyalty worldwide, and similar patterns are apparent in African markets. Despite the increasing importance of customer loyalty, there is limited empirical evidence of brand loyalty induction in Kenyan supermarkets. This study examined the effect of Brand love on brand loyalty. The study was based on the theory of Planned Behavior. A descriptive survey design was used, focusing on eight local supermarket chains in the Nairobi area with established loyalty schemes. the sample size was 384, Data were collected by means of structured questionnaires, coded, sorted and analyzed using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression method in the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Reliability was assessed by Cronbach's alpha and cumulative reliability and the construction and content validity were confirmed. The descriptive statistics reveal a moderate (acceptable) level of brand love among supermarket customers, as reflected by the overall average score of $M = 3.33$ ($SD = 1.06$). This suggested that while customers generally hold positive emotional dispositions toward their preferred supermarket brands, the depth of emotional bonding is not uniformly strong across all dimensions of brand love. Further, the findings showed that brand love had a positive and significant influence on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.553$, $t = 12.580$, $p < 0.05$). This result implies that consumers who experience strong emotional attachment, affection, and passion toward a supermarket brand are more likely to remain loyal to that brand. From the result findings the local chain supermarkets should creating meaningful emotional experiences that go beyond transactional benefits. For practical application they should cultivate emotional resonance through branding, customer engagement, and memorable in-store experiences. These findings will be of value to academic theory as well as to practical application to marketing practitioners in the retail industry

Keywords: *Switching cost, Brand loyalty, Retail Sector*

Submitted: 2026-09-02; Revised: 2026-09-03; Accepted: 2026-09-07

1. Introduction

Supermarkets are currently battling each other on every major corner by stealing customers from one another Ng'ang'a (2024). In the retail sector in Kenya, keeping customers loyal to the brand is very crucial for their survival since many retail chains have closed down some of their branches, and the uncertainty of supermarkets' recovery has translated into customer mistrust and disloyalty. According to Abdul-azeez (2022), the research showed that in practice, brand loyalty is becoming more important for business organizations than customer loyalty. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that retailers should integrate their loyalty programmes into different marketing strategies

Describing the current state of brand loyalty as declining would be an understatement. Across various surveys, a consistent theme emerges: consumers are more adaptable and less committed to brands than ever before. Studies from the Consumer Satisfaction Index have consistently shown that even satisfied consumers do not necessarily remain loyal to the same company or brand for their next purchase. Consumer behavior experts have coined new terms to capture this shift. For instance, "selection repertoire" indicates that consumers no longer stick to a specific set of brands within a product category or company; instead, they choose from a range of brands with varying probabilities. Terms like "shared loyalty" or "multiple loyalties" reflect this complex reality, leaving marketers concerned as they witness a decline in brand loyalty (Desveaud et al., 2024; Pillay, 2025).

In the face of constantly changing digital markets and product knowledge, consumers have a wide range of brands to choose from; the growing number of brands in marketing has had a significant impact on brand loyalty. Maintaining brand loyalty has become a challenging task for businesses since consumers tend to choose one brand over another when their needs change. More research into how to develop innovative products that appeal to both present and potential consumers has been spurred by this threat to brand loyalty. Numerous studies have determined the major factors influencing brand loyalty due to the importance of cultivating brand loyalty in the marketing and customer behavior segments (Sharif et al., 2022). On the other hand, brand loyalty research has gained new momentum in recent years. The factors that affect consumer loyalty are still unknown, despite a great deal of research on the subject. (Tabaku and Kruja 2019).

Brand loyalty signifies a customer's commitment to maintaining a lasting relationship with a brand, which is highly valued by companies due to its cost-effectiveness compared to acquiring new customers. Acquiring new customers involves substantial expenses such as advertising, personal selling, account setup, and customer education. Conversely, brand-loyal customers contribute significantly to a business's success by spending more on its products or services, making repeat purchases, and recommending the brand to others.

In today's fiercely competitive business environment, combined with the increasing demands of consumers, the retail sector continues to contribute significantly to the global economy. It is noteworthy that the retail and wholesale sectors account for the third largest contributor to Nigeria's GDP. South Africa boasts almost 2,000 shopping malls covering more than 24 million square metres, while Kenya has seen its number of outlets increase by 54 percent in the last five years. (Thi Thi Bull, 2012).

Globally, the retail market surpassed \$26 trillion in sales in 2021 and is projected to exceed \$30 trillion by 2024 (Sabanoglu, 2022). This industry plays a crucial role in the economy, accounting for approximately 5.1% of the UK's GDP (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Over the past few years, the retail sector has undergone significant transformations, moving

from traditional domestic markets to large-scale retail operations with the establishment of retail brands (Thu Thi Bull, 2012).

In today's fiercely competitive business landscape, coupled with rising consumer demands, the retail sector continues to make substantial contributions to the global economy. Notably, the retail and wholesale sectors rank as the third-largest contributors to Nigeria's GDP. South Africa boasts nearly 2000 shopping malls spanning over 24 million square meters, while Kenya has experienced a 54% increase in its store count over the past five years. (Thu Thi Bull, 2012).

Over the past ten years, the supermarket industry in Kenya has undergone significant change. The rise of regional chains like Naivas and Quickmart and the arrival of global corporations like Carrefour increased competition. The sector had an average occupancy rate of 79.4% in 2023, according to the Kenya Retail Report 2024. This was mostly due to aggressive expansion by both domestic and foreign retailers (see Cytonn, 2024). In order to retain consumers in the face of intense competition, supermarkets must cultivate a strong sense of brand loyalty, as this expansion highlights. Supermarkets play crucial roles for both suppliers and consumers. They provide consumers with a convenient one-stop shopping experience, a wide range of product choices, and an enhanced overall shopping environment, potentially leading to lower costs. For suppliers, supermarkets offer opportunities to engage in the value chain, enabling them to expand their capabilities and grow their businesses (Nair, 2018).

Brand love is a relatively recent concept in marketing that has gained significant attention in the literature since its initial discussion by Bigne et al., 2020; Hegner et al., 2017; Drennan et al., 2015). As described by Schlesinger (2021), brand love is defined as the intense emotional attachment that a satisfied consumer feels toward a specific brand. It encompasses deep feelings of satisfaction and attachment to the brand. Additionally, brand love can be understood as the level of passion and emotional connection that a happy customer has with a particular brand, as noted by Shetty & Fitzsimmons 2021). In this study, the operationalization of brand love focuses on the inner emotions and feelings associated with a brand, leading to satisfaction and a loving relationship with the brand (Zhang et al., 2020; Heinrich et al., 2012).

According to the research done by Richey (2020), it indicates that the associations we make with brands can be more related to the deep emotions that we have with other people that we are in a relationship with. Consumers have been going out of their way to show their dedication to certain brand logos by tattooing them on themselves. Moreover, it is worth noting that a significant 75% of consumer buying experiences are influenced by the emotions they associate with a brand. This underscores the importance of brand love as a potent element in modern marketing, prompting companies to develop strategies aimed at cultivating and enhancing this emotional connection with their brand. Brands have become one of the ways that many consumers, especially the youth, have started to define themselves. It is worth noting from the research done by Fortes et al. (2019) that brand love has a positive effect on brand loyalty. Brand love and brand attachment are new concepts in marketing, according to Bairrada et al. (2016). Further, they indicated that the antecedents of brand love are not known since it's a new concept that was proposed to nature the relationship between the brand and customers.

Statement of the Problem

The retail industry worldwide has undergone significant changes over the past few years, driven by stiff competition, the COVID-19 pandemic, advances in technology and changes in consumer behavior. These changes have affected brand loyalty negatively a cross leading worldwide economies like America, China, and India etc. The same trend has been

experienced, in retail sector in Kenya. where the local supermarket segment is facing a lot of competition ranging from the vibrant entry of international chain stores into the Kenyan market, small kiosks, and convenience stores. The competitive environment has made it challenging for local chain supermarkets to retain customers since customers are exposed to a large number of brand alternatives. Local supermarkets are also impacted by the rise of online shopping, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has increased the shift to e-commerce and made consumers switch brands and shop more online, which decreases brand loyalty. The challenging economic conditions in Kenya have compelled consumers to alter their buying patterns. Concerns regarding brand loyalty were raised by each of these problems. According to a review of the literature, a number of studies on brand loyalty have been conducted, and the findings are inconsistent in terms of design, methodology, and context. As a result, this study needs to fill in these gaps. Felix (2014); Muturi et al., (2017); Wel & Alam (2011); Mise J. K. et al., (2013); Samson et al., (2014); Chesula O. W., (2021); Molla (2010). Conceptual gaps are apparent in the literature review, whereby current research studies have recognized numerous elements that impact brand loyalty; however, they have largely scrutinized different determinants individually or in different groupings. For instance, some research has concentrated on brand-related factors and others on customer-related factors (Evanschitzky et al., 2022; Chesula, 2021; Osman, 2021; Athanasopoulou, 2018; Muturi et al., 2017; Moolla & Bisschoff, 2017). Current studies have similarly emphasized the significance of numerous determinants of brand loyalty (Desveaud et al., 2024) and the role of brand love in increasing brand loyalty (Wu, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to address these Gaps.

Research Objective

Evaluate the Effect of brand love on brand loyalty among local chain supermarkets in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

H⁰¹: There is no statistically significant effect of brand love on brand loyalty among local chain supermarkets in Nairobi County, Kenya;

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) was established by Icek (1991). They established it to foresee the behavior of humans and to designate all behaviors over which individuals have the competence to apply self-discipline. The significant part of this theory is behavioral intent, which is subject to people's attitudes around the likelihood that the behavior will have the anticipated consequence and the subjective assessment of the value and the risks of that consequence. TPB proposes that a person's attitude toward conduct, perceived behavior and subjective norm, control the outcome of behavioral intention. The first notion of the theory is behavioral intent, that is, the encouraging aspects that influence behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The stronger the intent to be involved in a certain behavior, the more likely it is that he will also engage in this behavior. The second notion is attitude towards behavior, the degree to which a person assesses a specific behavior positively or negatively. Attitude involves behavioral beliefs and outcome assessments. Subjective norm is the third concept, representing a social pressure to do or not do a specific behavior (favorable or unfavorable).

According to Sabrina et al. (2017), the scholars carried out research on using the theory of planned behaviour to comprehend brand love. The study used the theory from the perspective of brand love. The study analyzed the effect of numerous parts of brand love, encompassing shoppers' attitudes towards loving a brand, subjective norms, and perceived control factors. The outcomes demonstrate that the proposed theory offers valued insights into brand love. Whereas attitudes towards loving a brand have a strong effect on brand love among both high- and low-involved consumers, affordability plays only a slight part in experiencing brand love. The subjective norm was established to uphold brand love amid highly involved buyers, while the tendency to sentimentalize resulted in higher brand love among less involved buyers. Additionally, the theory of planned behavior is one of the most recognized theories for understanding and foreseeing behavior, as validated by Hyungsuk et al. 2016). It is an extension of the awareness of normal behavior. Thus, a person's wish to participate in certain actions to develop brand love can be subjected to attitudes, subjective standards, and controls. The first ground of the study states that brand love is, statistically meaningfully, influenced by attitude towards a product or service. The outcomes of the study showed that customer attitude has no obvious effect on brand love when the p-value is greater than 0.05 (Salman et al., 2022).

This theory applies to this study since it offered valued understandings of brand love, since buyers' attitudes towards loving a brand have a robust effect on brand love. Further, the theory added to a more profound theoretical understanding of the managerially applicable ideas of brand love and brand loyalty. Further, by integrating brand love and brand loyalty into the TPB framework in this way, marketers and researchers can gain a profound understanding of how emotional connections with brands affect consumer decisions and behaviors.

2. Literature Review

Brand Love on Brand Loyalty

Brand love is a comparatively current topic of research in marketing, as cited by Bairrada et al. (2016). Further, they indicated that the antecedents of brand love are not known since it is a new concept that was proposed to nurture the relationship between the brand and customers. The research focused on understanding the factors influencing brand love and its outcomes. Using a structural model, the study examined how brand love correlates with word of mouth, brand loyalty, and customers' willingness to pay a premium price. The findings of the study revealed a positive relationship between brand love and these outcomes, aligning with the research conducted by on the role of brand love and consumers' demographics in building consumer-brand relationships. Their study explored variables such as consumer-brand relationship, brand equity, brand love, and brand loyalty, employing a structural equation model analyzed through SmartPLS3. The results indicated that brand love emerged as a significant determinant of brand loyalty and the strongest predictor of brand equity.

Drennan et al. (2015) conducted a study titled "Examining the role of wine brand love on brand loyalty: A multi-country comparison," focusing on variables such as customers' wine experience, knowledge, brand satisfaction, and brand trust as determinants of brand love, and examining the impact of brand love on brand loyalty. The study utilized structural equation modeling to test its hypotheses and found that brand love directly and indirectly influences brand loyalty among wine consumers. Additionally, brand satisfaction showed a significant positive relationship with brand love, while wine knowledge and experience positively influenced satisfaction and brand trust. This study aligns with Heinrich's (2012) previous research, which highlighted the importance of brand love and brand trust in building brand

loyalty and brand relationships. Similarly, Huang (2017) explored the mediating roles of brand trust and brand love in the relationship between brand loyalty and brand experience, focusing on mobile phone brands. Their findings revealed that both brand trust and brand love mediate the relationship between brand loyalty and brand experience.

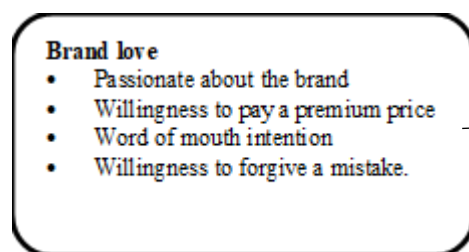
Moreover, Sallam (2015) conducted a study aiming to understand the antecedents of brand love and its impact on brand equity, with brand loyalty as a mediator. The variables examined included satisfaction, brand identification, brand equity, brand love, and brand loyalty. The results indicated that brand love had a stronger positive effect on brand identification compared to satisfaction. Additionally, brand loyalty partially mediated the relationship between brand equity and brand love, demonstrating the significant influence of brand love on brand loyalty. The study suggested further studies could focus their efforts on other service industries that have lasting relationships with their customers, other than insurance companies. This study filled in this gap by using different mediating variables other than brand loyalty. The study also was carried out in the retail sector, focusing more on supermarkets.

Le (2019) conducted research to explore the influence of brand love on brand loyalty, specifically investigating the moderating roles of social influences and self-esteem. The study developed a questionnaire to test its hypotheses and utilized partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) for analysis. The findings revealed that both social influence and self-esteem significantly and positively moderated the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty. Similarly, Fortes et al. (2019) studied the impact of brand loyalty determinants within the context of soft drink brands. Their research included variables such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand love, and brand personality, using structural equation modeling and multivariate statistics for analysis. The study discovered that consumption levels acted as a moderator in the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty, indicating that customers' emotional connections with a brand were influenced by their consumption patterns.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework below represents the relationship between the variable that is the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable.

Independent Variable



Dependent variable

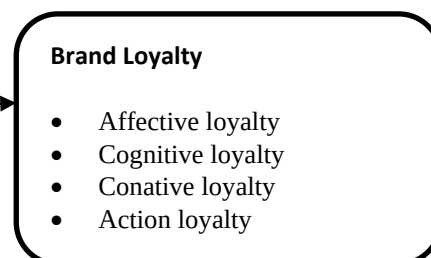


Figure 1. Operational Framework for Brand Loyalty.

3. Research Method

The study used a descriptive survey design to help researchers to address the questions of what, where, when, and how to address a research problem; however, it did not definitively answer the question of why. The descriptive design was ideal for this study because of the well-defined

and clear problem being examined, which requires precise rules and data collection and analysis procedures for the effective testing of hypotheses. This study used a quantitative method of research within the positivist approach of the research philosophy, which focused on collecting new data relevant to the research problem from a large population. In addition, the study used a cross-sectional approach, where data were collected from different individuals at one time point without affecting the study variables (Thomas, 2023 and June 22).

The target group for this study was eight local supermarkets in the Nairobi area which had well-established loyalty schemes. The observation unit consisted of customers registered in the loyalty programmes of these supermarket chains in the Nairobi district. Combining all these supermarkets with loyalty schemes allows for a comprehensive analysis of brand loyalty in the different market segments (Lawrence & Muato, 2022)

The sample size of this study was composed of customers registered in the loyalty programmes of eight local supermarkets which had loyalty schemes in place. As there is no reliable list of the number of customers registered in these loyalty schemes, the study considered the infinite size of the population, which refers to a population so large that it is impossible to count each individual member (Paul et al., 2013). In this study, the Cochran formula (1977) was used to determine the sample size for the infinite population and 384 representative sample sizes were calculated. This survey used a disproportional stratified sample followed by a simple random sample of 384 respondents distributed evenly across the eight supermarkets with loyalty schemes, with 48 respondents being evenly distributed.

The study used raw data. The study collected the primary data using Structural Questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale. In order to gather data for this study, the study used face-to-face interaction to increase the delayed response time of respondents. The researcher politely approached shoppers as they left the supermarket after finishing their shopping.

The analysis of the data was facilitated by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). The data analysis covered both descriptive and non-descript statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, means and standard deviations have been performed. Correlation analysis was performed to determine the strength and direction of the association between the variables, and then a simple least squares regression analysis (LSRA) was performed to estimate the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Hypothesis testing was performed using 95-percent confidence limits ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Regression analysis was used as the inferential statistics method $BL = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BLV + \epsilon$ where: BL= brand loyalty; β_0 = regression constant; β_1 = regression coefficient; BLV= Brand love; ϵ = error term.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

384 customers were given questionnaires through direct, on-site visits to specific supermarket locations in order to guarantee accessibility and relevance. A primary rate of return of 94.8 percent was achieved with the return of 364 questionnaires. Two questionnaires were found to be incomplete or incompletely completed after the data was verified; as a result, they were not included in any additional analysis. As a result, 362 valid and admissible questionnaires were obtained, yielding an effective response rate of 94.3%.

Brand Love

This part explores the extent to which customers develop emotional attachment and affective commitment toward their preferred supermarket brands, capturing feelings of joy, passion, advocacy, forgiveness, and willingness to make sacrifices. The descriptive statistics summarizing customers' perceptions of brand love are presented in Table 1

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Brand Love*

Statement	N	M	SD
Shopping at my favorite supermarket brand gives me a sense of joy and happiness.	362	4.15	0.75
I feel a strong passion for the supermarket brand I regularly shop at.	362	2.80	1.31
I am willing to pay higher prices for products at my favorite supermarket brand because of my loyalty.	362	2.64	1.24
I frequently refer my preferred supermarket brand to Family and friends.	362	3.89	0.89
I am likely to forgive my preferred supermarket brand if it fails to meet my expectations.	362	3.16	1.10
Average Score (BLOV)	362	3.33	1.06

Note. N = 362. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The mean values are greater, which means that there is a stronger perceived brand love when switching brands of supermarket.

The findings in Table 1 reveal a moderate (acceptable) level of brand love among supermarket customers, as reflected by the overall average score of M = 3.33 (SD = 1.06). This suggests that while customers generally hold positive emotional dispositions toward their preferred supermarket brands, the depth of emotional bonding is not uniformly strong across all dimensions of brand love. The relatively higher standard deviation indicates noticeable variability in responses, implying that emotional attachment to supermarket brands differs considerably among customers. From a theoretical standpoint, this pattern suggests that supermarket loyalty in Nairobi County is driven more by functional and relational benefits than by deep emotional passion alone.

At the individual item level, emotional enjoyment emerges as a good to excellent component of brand love. The statement "Shopping at my favorite supermarket brand gives me a sense of joy and happiness" recorded a high mean (M = 4.15, SD = 0.75), indicating that customers derive positive affective experiences from shopping at their preferred supermarkets. Similarly, the tendency to recommend the supermarket to family and friends (M = 3.89, SD = 0.89) reflects a good level of brand advocacy. These findings imply that positive shopping experiences and satisfaction translate into word-of-mouth referrals, which are critical for organic brand growth and competitive advantage in the retail sector.

However, deeper indicators of brand love, such as passion and sacrifice, appear relatively weaker. The statement relating to strong passion for the supermarket brand recorded a low mean (M = 2.80, SD = 1.31), while willingness to pay higher prices due to loyalty registered the lowest mean (M = 2.64, SD = 1.24), both reflecting weak to acceptable levels. These results suggest that although customers enjoy shopping at their preferred supermarkets, this enjoyment does not consistently translate into intense emotional attachment or price tolerance. In practical

terms, this indicates that customers may still be price-sensitive and open to switching when faced with better value alternatives, limiting the depth of emotional loyalty.

Forgiveness toward brand failure also reflects an acceptable but not strong level of brand love. The item “I am likely to forgive my preferred supermarket brand if it fails to meet my expectations” recorded a moderate mean ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.10$), suggesting that customers’ emotional bonds provide some tolerance for service lapses, but not unconditionally. Collectively, these findings imply that brand love in the supermarket context is primarily experiential and relational rather than deeply emotional. For practitioners, this underscores the need to go beyond transactional satisfaction by building stronger emotional narratives, personalized engagement, and symbolic value if supermarkets are to cultivate deeper brand love that enhances long-term brand loyalty and resilience against competitive pressures.

4.2. Discussion

Brand love and Brand Loyalty

The null hypothesis (H_{01}) stated that brand love has no significant effect on brand loyalty. However, the findings of this study demonstrated a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between brand love and brand loyalty. This implies that consumers who experience strong emotional attachment and affection toward a brand are more likely to develop loyalty to it. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected, confirming that brand love significantly influences brand loyalty.

Beyond direct effects, previous studies have also shown that the strength of the brand love–loyalty relationship is moderated by consumer-specific and contextual factors. For example, Le (2019) demonstrated that social influence and self-esteem positively moderate the link, while Fortes et al. (2019) established that consumption levels shape the degree to which brand love affects loyalty in soft drink markets. These findings are consistent with this study since brand love is an essential driver of loyalty; the magnitude of its effect may vary depending on personal, psychological, or situational conditions. The current findings therefore extend existing scholarship by confirming the robustness of this relationship, while also acknowledging that it may interact with external factors in shaping consumer behavior. Similarly, the studies by Heinrich (2012) and Huang (2017) are consistent with this study because brand love in the supermarket context is primarily experiential and relational rather than deeply emotional. For practitioners, this underscores the need to go beyond transactional satisfaction by building stronger emotional narratives, personalized engagement, and symbolic value if supermarkets are to cultivate deeper brand love that enhances long-term brand loyalty and resilience against competitive pressures. Product contexts.

The findings also echo those of Sallam (2015), who showed that brand love significantly strengthens brand identification and indirectly impacts brand loyalty through its effect on brand equity, showing that the emotional connections fostered by brand love apply across diverse industries. This broadens the applicability of brand love, confirming it as a crucial determinant of loyalty regardless of sectoral boundaries.

The strong positive influence of brand love on loyalty illustrates the centrality of affective attitudes in driving consumer behavior. In line with the theory of Planned behavior, consumers’ emotional attachment, affection, and identification with a brand translate directly into behavioral intentions and actual loyalty outcomes. This finding highlights that rational evaluations alone are insufficient to explain loyalty, as emotional engagement exerts a distinct and potent influence on consumers’ commitment to the brand. By demonstrating the significant

role of brand love, the study emphasizes the need to incorporate affective constructs into theoretical models, recognizing that emotional and relational experiences are fundamental drivers of consumer loyalty, particularly in competitive retail sectors where differentiation is largely experiential.

The conclusion relates to the role of brand love in shaping brand loyalty. The study confirmed that emotional connections significantly enhance loyalty, suggesting that customers who feel affection and attachment toward a supermarket are more likely to remain loyal. This emphasizes the importance of creating meaningful emotional experiences that go beyond transactional benefits. In practice, supermarkets should cultivate emotional resonance through branding, customer engagement, and memorable in-store experiences. Theoretically, this finding extends the discourse on affective antecedents of loyalty, reinforcing the idea that loyalty is not purely rational but is also deeply influenced by emotional bonds.

Recommendations

The findings of this study provide several important contributions to theory by extending, refining, and reinforcing existing models of consumer behavior and brand loyalty. First, the results affirm the relevance of the theory of Planned Behavior by demonstrating that consumers' intentions to remain loyal to supermarkets are strongly influenced by their attitudes toward the brand and the subjective norms surrounding shopping decisions. In practice, the significant effects of brand love show that attitudes shaped by both rational and affective drivers translate into loyalty behaviors. This study thus recommends extending the theory of planned behavior by incorporating structural and relational barriers, such as switching costs, into the conceptualization of perceived behavioral control. Doing so would strengthen the explanatory power of the theory in consumer contexts characterized by high competition and low switching thresholds.

The study established that brand love plays a significant role in shaping loyalty, pointing to the importance of cultivating emotional bonds with customers. Managers should move beyond transactional interactions to deliver experiences that resonate with customers' values, aspirations, and lifestyles. Initiatives such as community engagement programs, corporate social responsibility activities, and storytelling campaigns can humanize the brand and create emotional connections. When customers develop affection for the supermarket brand, they are more likely to remain loyal even in the face of competitive offers.

Recommendations for further research

The study was carried out in an urban setting within Nairobi County, where consumer behavior is influenced by unique factors such as higher purchasing power, exposure to multiple supermarket options, and lifestyle preferences. Extending future research to rural counties or smaller towns would be valuable in identifying whether loyalty is shaped differently in regions with fewer retail alternatives, distinct cultural values, or different shopping patterns.

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