



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

MSc DIGITAL MARKETING

Maftab Ahmed

THE FINAL MASTER'S THESIS

<p>“LT Prekės ženklo poliarizacijos („mylėti arba nekęsti“) poveikis prekės ženklo lojalumui ir vartotojų elgsenai”</p>	<p>“EN Brand Polarization (love it or hate it) Influence on Brand Loyalty and Consumer Behaviour”</p>
--	--

Student _____ Maftab Ahmed (2431537)_____

(signature)

Supervisor

Elzė Rudienė _____

(signature)

Assoc. .

degree of the supervisor

Vilnius, 2025

SUMMARY

“EN Brand Polarization (love it or hate it) Influence on Brand Loyalty and Consumer Behaviour”

Master’s Thesis

Digital Marketing Master’s Programme

Faculty of Business School, Vilnius University

Vilnius, 2023

Master thesis consists of 55 pages, 9 tables, 1 figures and 77 references.

This thesis investigates the connection between brand polarization and brand loyalty and different mediating and moderating variables, such as social identity, cognitive dissonance, emotional intensity, and the type of brand. The objective of the research is to explore the role of brand polarization in consumer behaviour especially brand loyalty and the roles of these variables in mediating or moderating between the relationship. This study technique consisted of a survey of 122 people with analysis of data through the PROCESS procedure through SPSS mediation and moderation analysis. The findings demonstrated low levels of relationships, and no significant mediating or moderating effect was noticed using social identity, cognitive dissonance, emotional intensity, or brand type. It was also found that the direct influence of brand polarization on brand loyalty was weak and statistically insignificant. The research indicates that brand polarization might not have such a significant effect on brand loyalty as other variables, including consumer trust and emotional attachment. The study focuses on the significance of individualized strategies of engagement in contemporary consumer behavior.

Keywords: Brand Polarization, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Behavior, Social Identity, Purchase Intention

SANTRAUKA

“Prekės ženklo poliarizacijos (myli ar nekenci) įtaka prekės ženklo lojalumui ir vartotojų elgesiui”

Magistro darbas

Skaitmeninės rinkodaros magistro programa

Verslo fakultetas, VU

Vilnius, 2023 m.

Magistro darbą sudaro 55 puslapiai, 9 lentelių, 1 paveikslai ir 77 literatūros šaltiniai

Šiame darbe nagrinėjamas prekės ženklo poliarizacijos ir prekės ženklo lojalumo ryšys su skirtingais tarpininkaujančiais ir moderuojančiais kintamaisiais, tokiais kaip socialinė tapatybė, kognityvinis disonansas, emocinis intensyvumas ir prekės ženklo tipas. Tyrimo tikslas – ištirti prekės ženklo poliarizacijos vaidmenį vartotojų elgsenoje, ypač prekės ženklo lojalumą, ir šių kintamųjų vaidmenį tarpininkaujant ar moderuojant šiuos santykius. Ši tyrimo technika apėmė 122 žmonių apklausą, kurios duomenys buvo analizuojami PROCESS metodu, naudojant SPSS tarpininkavimo ir moderavimo analizę. Rezultatai parodė žemą ryšių lygį ir nebuvo pastebėtas reikšmingas tarpininkaujantis ar moderuojantis poveikis naudojant socialinę tapatybę, kognityvinį disonansą, emocinį intensyvumą ar prekės ženklo tipą. Taip pat nustatyta, kad tiesioginė prekės ženklo poliarizacijos įtaka prekės ženklo lojalumui buvo silpna ir statistiškai nereikšminga. Tyrimas rodo, kad prekės ženklo poliarizacija gali neturėti tokio reikšmingo poveikio prekės ženklo lojalumui kaip kiti kintamieji, įskaitant vartotojų pasitikėjimą ir emocinį prisirišimą. Tyrime daugiausia dėmesio skiriama individualizuotų įsitraukimo strategijų svarbai šiuolaikinėje vartotojų elgsenoje.

Raktažodžiai: Prekės ženklo poliarizacija, prekės ženklo lojalumas, vartotojų elgsena, socialinė tapatybė, pirkimo ketinimas

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Form
CSA	Corporate Social Advocacy
FNN	Feedforward Neural Network
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
PROCESS	A Macro for SPSS and SAS
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
B2C	Business to Consumer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
R&D	Research and Development
SEO	Search Engine Optimization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	8
1. LITERATURE ANALYSIS ON EN BRAND POLARIZATION (LOVE IT OR HATE IT)	
INFLUENCE ON BRAND LOYALTY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR.....	11
1.1 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Social Identity and Intention to Buy....	11
1.2 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Attitude Strength and Intention to Buy	
.....	14
1.3 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Cognitive Processes and Intention to	
Buy	16
1.4 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Emotional Intensity and Intention to	
Buy.....	19
1.5 Different Cultures or Brand Type Influence on Intention to Buy and Brand	
Polarization.....	22
1.6 Theories and Models Researching Brand Polarization and Intention to Buy	25
2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	28
2.1 Research Framework and Hypotheses Development	28
2.2 Research Methods and Instruments	30
2.3 Research Object and Respondents.....	31
2.4 Sample Size.....	32
2.5 Questionnaire design and Measurement Scales	33
3. PRACTICAL PART	36
3.1 Demographics	36
3.2 Descriptive Statistics	38
3.3 Correlation.....	39
3.4 Regression	40
3.5 Process Macro	43
CONCLUSION	52
REFERENCES	54
APPENDIX	65
Screening Questions	65
Demographic Questions.....	65
Social identity	66

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1; Sample Size Calculation	32
Table 2: Measurement Items of Questionnaire	34
Table 3; Age Statistics	36
Table 4: Gender Statistics	37
Table 5: Descriptive Statistics	38
Table 6: Correlation	39
Table 7: Model Summary	40
Table 8: ANOVA	41
Table 9: Coefficients	42
Table 10: Hypothesis Results	42

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework28

INTRODUCTION

The term brand polarization is applied to imply that expresses the widening divergence of attitude between the consumers towards the brand where consumers are of either a strong commitment on a given brand or toward those opposed toward the brand (Cheng et al., 2024). It is one of the main issues of the recent market research, especially due to its influence on the consumer behaviour and brand loyalty (Vecchi et al., 2020). The polarizing forces on the brand include social identity, cognition process, emotional responses, and culture (Osuna Ramirez, 2020). Brand polarization has become extremely relevant in the modern competitive environment to the point that brands aimed at retaining a specific customer base as well as brands directed at a particular market segment perform better (Vecchi et al., 2020).

Social identity is one of the most useful variables that affect brand polarization. The consumers themselves will also tend to associate the brand name with the attachment or aversion based on wonderfully pleasant or revoltingly unpleasant to the branding image to which they are projected (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). According to the social identity theory, social groups such as preferences towards a certain brand form a substantial part of self-concept in people (Zeqiri et al., 2022). As an illustration, clients can identify with a brand that is commercially endorsing a particular political or cultural identity, and this turns them into more or less loyal customers to the rival brands (Vecchi et al., 2020). In this social-identity-brand preference relationship, there is polarization of consumers (Mesquita et al., 2022).

The strength of the attitude of the consumers to polarized brands is another aspect, which is important. Polarization of brands will lead to high rate of positive or negative attitudes of the consumers regarding a particular brand (Zeqiri et al., 2022). The choice is based on the fact that the more extreme the opinion about the brand, the greater the emotional response is, thereby increasing the brand attitudes (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). Polarization of the consumers

creates a more substantial feeling, be it faithfulness or hostility to a brand which stipulates the necessity to buy something. The possibility of the brand to evoke strong emotions is among those who can shape the consumer decision based on this concept and influence the purchase intention (Schoenmueller et al., 2022).

It is as well important that thinking that has been instilling the brand polarization. Whenever the consumer has had conflicting information that relates to a particular brand, the consumer enforces the dissonance of the bow in an attempt to align beliefs and practices believed in the actions taken (Mesquita et al., 2022). The polarized attitudes can equally be reinforced on the basis of this cognitive dissonance because the consumers will also have their reason to explain why they liked it or their dislikes (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). The process could affect the behavior of the consumer as it would accelerate the motivation to purchase the item, especially when a person values how the brand preserves the identity (personal or social place) (Xu et al., 2024). The higher the polarization, the greater the influence they have on the decision making of the consumers, but being aware of such processes has become essential, to make the brands aware of them (Osuna Ramirez, 2020).

Problem Statement: The brand polarization is the problem that has gained a significant topicality in the modern consumer market, and the consumer attitude to some brands rose on average (Xu et al., 2024). Such polarization increased by social identity, emotion strength, thinking patterns might induce a consumer to narrow and facilitate alteration in consumer behavior and brand loyalty. Nevertheless, a small research has been conducted to determine the mix ratio of two variables in the formation of the intention to purchase in different cultural settings (Mesquita et al., 2022). The question is as follows: What is the interconnection, between the brand polarization and consumer behavior and purchasing intention depending on the judgment that is made on the social identity, strength of the attitude, and cognitive process in diverse cultures?

The study aim is to examine how brand polarization affects consumer behavior and the purchasing intention in relation to the power of the attitude, the strength of the social identity and the mental processes.

Objectives

- To examine the relationship between brand polarization and social identity.
- To assess the impact of attitude strength on consumer purchase intention.
- To analyze the role of cognitive processes in shaping consumer behavior towards polarized brands.

Structure of Thesis

- Introduction: The concept of brand polarization presented and the influence on consumer behaviour.
- Theoretical Framework: Theories and models of the brand polarization and the factors that affect it Discussion of the main theories and models in the context of the brand polarization.
- Methodology: The research is based on the questionnaire and explained according to the data collection process.
- Analysis and Discussion: Discussion and analysis of results of the collected data.
- Conclusion: Resurfacing of major findings and recommendation in regards to brand managements.

1. LITERATURE ANALYSIS ON EN BRAND POLARIZATION (LOVE IT OR HATE IT) INFLUENCE ON BRAND LOYALTY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

1.1 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Social Identity and Intention to Buy

The polarization of brands – consumers dividing into hardcore supporters and non-supporters of the brands – has been theorized more as a social identity phenomenon where brands are viewed as symbolic tools of in-group belonging and out-group distinction (making purchase intention reductionally a business of identity work instead of functional utility only) (Osuna Ramirez, 2020). Conceptual models base their arguments on polarization being caused by identity-saturated brand meanings, which heighten diagnosticity and affective certainty to the point that consumers switch mild preferences to identity-based identity-based positions where they have either strong approach or avoidance orientations (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). This anchoring identity causes paradoxes in managerial: when it comes to broadening the growth strategies based on the vast mechanisms and popularizing the question of whether fewer and deeper loyalties can be superior to many and shallow ones, the same signals that create enthusiasm in the base stiffen the opposition in the out-groups (Osuna Ramirez, 2020).

With Social identity scholarship providing direct evidence that brand-as-identity triggers are able to influence the formation of trust as well as the downstream intentions, particularly when the perceived place-based or cultural cues of the brand align with the salient in-group prototypes (Han et al., 2023). Perceived brand localness of foreign brands can boost brand trust and purchase intentions in the context of developing Asian markets, the latter is the case because perceived brand localness of foreign brands is the cue that maps onto social categories valued by consumers and demonstrates that identity congruence can dominate origin stereotypes and rearrange acceptance of so-called foreign offerings (Han et al., 2023). However, the cultural contingency and political sensitivity of this mechanism: at the nation branding level, cultural identity work may overlap with political polarization to create a polarization of the assessment of the same signal at the audience level, and create the risk that identity appeals will increase polarization in preferences instead of creating broad legitimacy (Vecchi et al., 2020). The implication is that identity-based positioning is a two-sided thing; it can be a trust accelerator of a segment and at the same time a rejection one, and this requires the marketer to expressly balance polarization externalities in choosing identity cues (Vecchi et al., 2020).

Digital spaces enhance these processes by making it possible to perform identities in publics and homophilous clustering. More elaborate messages in online ads intensify the attitude-intention relationship in case of consumer-brand identity, polarized fans are more centrally processing supportive brand messages, thus also crystallizing intentions and willingness to share, which further increases the visibility divide between in-groups and out-groups (Graham and Wilder, 2020). An additional layer is virtual brand communities: identity-relevant moral content and routines of engagement can make an oppositional brand loyalty institutional, where people identify themselves by contrast with competing brands, and negative commitment is sustained, and enduring, as behaviorally as positive loyalty (Cheng et al., 2024). This antagonistic identity is not just hate, it is a meaning-creating, focusing, and keeping practice which maintains attention and action, which means that the hate side of polarization can be strategic and even sticky in the real sense, with effects of category relationships and competition to consider (Cheng et al., 2024).

Polarization at the macro level is carried into the marketplace preferences where the positional of the brands is re-established as an identity marker and consumption is turned into a surrogate of ideological identification. As it has been demonstrated, political differences can be converted to polarization in preferences, where the same product features are considered through partisan perspective, which changes the intention to pay and intention to be publicly associated with the brand (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). This is supported by natural experiments of controversial sociopolitical events: perceptions of purchase intentions toward Brexit and attributes of the brand being reshored were modified, not only by economic expectations but also by identity confirmation and identity protection, which show that political identity may be used as a heuristic shortcut to processing of purchase intentions and hardens intentions (Dey et al., 2022). Equally, in polarized health-related consumer behavior, ideologically primed consumers exhibited quantifiable changes in purchase intention, which suggests that identity threats and conspiratorial memes can pollute brand meaning frames far beyond intended messages of a particular brand, making it difficult to predict that the second-order consequences of non-market communication on market performance (Mesquita et al., 2022).

Corporate social advocacy (CSA) refocuses the identity-intention calculus through stance congruence being explicit. An attitudinal-attitudinal fit between a company and a consumer increases intention to form a company-attitude relationship; of course, incongruence might be counterproductive, and polarisation will become more extreme in case of a pre-existing company-attitude relationship (Xu et al., 2024). This nonlinearity is important: minuscule against the fact that with weakly attached consumers, small misalignments can be forgiven but with identity-

invested audiences, CSA incongruence can cause motivated reasoning and moralized disconfirmation, increasing the reputational cost of having to reposition the end-user after a misplaced move (Xu et al., 2024). This would, strategically, imply that CSA needs to be assessed not just in means of average action but distributional action in the identity segments, such as approximations of intensification among detractors against mobilization among the proponents (Xu et al., 2024).

Religions and cultural identities provide one more prism with the help of which desecularization redefines the categories of the market and legitimizes niche products, thus re-segregating intentions along the lines of identity (Zeqiri et al., 2022). In this case, polarization does not imply the presence of hostility but represents a high degree of positive differentiation and boundary maintenance that can result in high levels of conversion among in-groups and no conversion in out-groups due to intent asymmetries that current average-effect measures might obscure (Zeqiri et al., 2022). The evidence of these findings combines with nation-branding activities is that identity-coherent signals (localness, faith, culture) can yield high-intensity pockets of demand, which are resistant to competition price actions but that portfolio, and channel strategies should expect concomitant pockets of inappropriability that cannot be overcome by common persuasion weapons (Han et al., 2023).

In theory, emerging frames place brand polarization as a management prospect where companies are able (a) to make high-stakes identities segments with accuracy, (b) to frame message structures to enhance self-group diagnosticity without selflessly antagonizing out-groups, and (c) to deploy community processes that transform identity salience into habitual performance and advocacy whilst managing spillover hazards (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). There are, however, three tensions that are underdeveloped. To begin with, numerous studies suggest intention based on cross-sectional attitudes; longitudinal results on stability and decline of polarized intentions across news cycles and algorithmic shocks are few, therefore making it hard to offer causality in dynamical digital contexts (Graham and Wilder, 2020). Second, cultural portability is claimed but seldom experimented using the same stimuli across conditions, in which case, it is open to question whether the localness, values, and stance congruence travel in a similar way across markets having distinct identity cleavages (Han et al., 2023). Third, the calculus of managerial decision-making under adversarial dynamics whereby opposing communities actively co-ordinate to hold off competitors necessitates incorporating both identity theory and competitive response models along with community governance studies to approximate overall polarization welfare outcomes to the firm and category (Cheng et al., 2024).

Collectively, the literature is united by a strong hypothesis, namely that the attitude-intention pathway becomes stiffer when brand meanings overlap with salient social identities, introducing variance in results and turning strategy choice into a distributional trade-off, and not an average lift, decision (Osuna Ramirez, 2020). The localness signaling evidence, political shock, CSA congruence, religious identity, and digital community practices have always indicated that polarization enhances certainty, talkability and behavioral follow-through among aligned groups whilst enforces avoidance in misaligned groups (Han et al., 2023).

1.2 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Attitude Strength and Intention to Buy

Brand polarization also amplifies the psychological characteristics of attitude-extremity, attitude-certainty, attitude-accessibility, attitude-resistance which subsequently increase the distance between evaluation and intention, particularly where communications are identity-relevant or morally-focused (e.g., empowerment, sustainability, political issues) and invite motivated elaboration as opposed to passive exposure (Chen et al., 2020). The online advertising evidence indicates that consumer-brand identity fit results in more elaborate message processing, which generates stronger attitudes more predictive of purchase intention and sharing, which is supported by central-route processing and the literature on attitude strength. Moralized appeals like feminvertising are also seen to increase the quality and loyalty of relationships that in turn partially mediate the influence on intentions but it goes without saying that this route can be susceptible to backlash in case the consumer takes insincerity as an example of the two-edged nature of polarization in determining not only the degree but also the rigidity of attitudes (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018). In green branding, the affect and associations co-create more positive brand attitudes that are transmitted to green purchase intentions but the strength of attitude is determined by credibility and diagnostic cues, which suggests that the power of affect does not ensure a high level of resistance to counter-argument or bad outcomes (Chen et al., 2020).

The social Information flows, in particular, eWOM and community discourse can be described as strength multiplier as they lead to the increase in the perceived consensus, issue involvement, and attitudinal accessibility, which aggravates the intention formation under polarization dynamics (Kamalasena & Sirisena, 2021). Empirical research in Egypt points to eWOM changing brand image and attitudes which convert to purchase intent but the research also suggests the possibility that negative eWOM has a greater influence than positive eWOM and because of this polarized environment with vocal detractors might depress intended behaviour more rapidly than might be achieved by vocal promoters (Elseidi & El-Baz, 2016). Online communities and electronic word of mouth enhance brand trust among the members of

Generation Y, mediating the relationship between eWOM-intention, which, importantly, in polarized threads, can be bifurcated, reinforcing within in-group members and depleting among out-groups that consume the same content based on hostile perceptions of the media (Kamalasena and Sirisena, 2021). This is compounded by short-form social feeds, which create a sense of the illusion of knowledge with snack news, which amplifies the perceived level of knowledge and attitude strength without corresponding levels of accuracy, which is likely to solidify intentions fast and block corrective messages once identities are activated (Schafer, 2020).

Marketplace shocks explain the interaction of the strength of attitude and valence under polarization: negative publicity tends to lower equity by worsening attributions and images that subsequently translate into attitude and intention devaluation, and the impact is increased when consumers attribute blame to the brand and when the attitudes initially obtained were weakly held or ambivalent (Yu et al., 2018). On the other hand, counter-arguing and boomerang effects are possible when prior attitudes are strong and identity-consistent, but this resilience is not universal, and could be constrained by alignment between an incident, and a moral narrative of a brand, which brand managers do not always take into account (Yu et al., 2018). Corporate political advocacy (CPA/CSA) reveals the asymmetry further: according to event-study evidence, political positioning is able to re-establish brand perception, but average stock or perception impacts obscure distributional impacts-intentions may condense among value-congruent groups and dissipate among opponents, creating greater dispersion and thereby the real polarization of the customer base. This supports the issue of the trade-off in the strategy: advocacy can enhance loyalty and conversion potential in core segments by raising attitude certainty and importance, and raise switching and boycott intentions in others, which is further strengthened in algorithmic media highlighting controversy (Klostermann et al., 2021).

Micro-polarizing personalities are brought into influencer ecosystems, in which the polarizing personality of an influencer can enhance engagement and persuasion of like-minded followers and de-polarize others, exporting the effects of strength of attitude of the influencer to the brand through the associative transfer mechanism (Koorank Beheshti et al., 2023). Instagram is a place where this mechanism is particularly potent, as parasocial relationships and high frequency cues enhance certainty and extremity, transforming affective responses into intentions by way of identification and social proof; and the same process threatens to confirm out-group resistance, decreasing consideration and openness to counter-messaging, leading to the

arguably rational behavior of edgy influencers more optimizing depth at the cost of breadth (Koorank Beheshti et al., 2023).

The synthesis of these streams provides three important insights of the strength of attitude and intention based on brand polarization. To begin with, identity-congruent and moralized message enhances attitude via elaboration and relationship-quality and affect-association channels, and the stability of those attitudes is contingent on credibility, perceived consensus and consistency with lived brand behaviors, which makes performative signaling particularly delicate (Graham and Wilder, 2020). Second, social systems, including eWOM, communities, influencers and feeds, can amplify certainty and extremity, consequently intentions but also amplify negativity and attributional blame during crises, which creates an asymmetric downside risk that cannot be reflected by the mean impacts (Elseidi & El-Baz, 2016). Third, persuasion and personality-based strategies purposely seek to become polar to increase conversion among target groups, although the empirical regularities of distributional gains and losses, rather than aggregate gain, have made it necessary to prioritize managers to model intention heterogeneity and to plan mitigation to counter out-group backlash when engaging in in-group mobilization (Klostermann et al., 2021). Taken together, the literature would indicate that the strength of an attitude is not only a consequence of a good messaging but a structural mediator which converts identity work and social dynamics into purchase intentions, which is potent when consistent, dangerous when conflicting and is always dependent on the credibility and the situation.

1.3 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Cognitive Processes and Intention to Buy

Brand polarization does not merely split the consumers into the love and the hate camps at the emotional level but profoundly affects the cognitive processes of information processing, brand evaluation, and conversion of the information into behavioral intentions. Elaboration and information processing theories would imply that the polarization after it occurs would lead consumers to selective attention, biased assimilation, and motivated reasoning, which would either reinforce or weaken their intention to purchase based on whether it is in line with their prior attitudes (Ahn & Back, 2018). Polarization results in more intensive cognitive elaboration which increases the relationship quality with the brand in situations where consumers have a positive predisposition as positive attitudes are strengthened by working on them, creating a narrative, and maintaining consistent thoughts (Ahn & Back, 2018).

Knowledge anxiety and cognitive processing bias is one of the most topical cognitive processes that are connected to polarization and that were especially prominent during the

COVID-19 pandemic, as the need to act with the absence of information predisposed consumers to the global stream of information (Chen & Yan, 2023). Under these circumstances, the predisposed consumers in terms of their attitude towards a specific political or cultural position displayed attachment anxiety and the herd mentality, which mediate their unwillingness to use such brands at all. The most significant point about this case is that it is not only polarization that is carried out with the help of the explicit emotional hostility but also with the help of the more nuanced cognitive biases that manipulate the perception and categorization of the information. Under high levels of anxiety the negative cues receive excessive weight and the counterevidence is received with less processing which is one of the types of biased assimilation which transform mild skepticism into categorical avoidance. This proves that cognitive polarization is not fixed but dynamic since brand managers must not ignore the attitudinal gap of the target audience only but consider also the factors influencing the cognitive rigidity increase and a reduced inclination to make compromises in circumstances such as crisis (Ahn & Back, 2018).

As an illustration, brand messages are more likely to be interpreted in terms of group-referent cognitive frame by consumers in collectivist societies and self-referent frames by consumers in individualistic societies which can increase polarization when a brand fits or does not fit the cultural scripts (Han et al., 2021). It implies that polarization reinforces individual attitudes as well as collective scripts, in which the brands are decoded, to generate deep-seated intentions to purchase or to dislike products that cannot be readily turned around by functional appeals alone. Culture and cognition, therefore, must be collectively recognized to polarize beyond a preference divide, but rather a communal interpretive prism that informs long term patterns of consumption.

Narrative and storytelling research also proves the influence of cognitive processes that contribute to the creation and maintenance of polarized brand assessments by offering a model of how consumers defend or attack (Junior et al., 2022). Storytelling also appeals to narrative transportation that enables consumers to incorporate brand meanings into coherent individual or social narratives and therefore enhances polarized identities. Stories that resonate cause less cognitive dissonance and reinforced purchase intentions because the consumer perceives the process of purchasing as fitting into their self-narrative (Junior et al., 2022). However, in the opposite, with hijacking or threatening brand stories, e.g. via activist adusting campaigns, which parody or otherwise subvert advertising, consumers participate in counter-argumentation, a process that polarizes responses instead of moderating them (Maier and Mafael, 2024). There exists no neutral form of cognitive activity in these narratives; it is an evaluatively colored one,

and the more demanding the processing the more inert to change the attitudes and intentions developed thereof. Polarization consequently elevates storytelling to an even more potent two-sided weapon of binding the loyalty of loyalists and providing to the detractors their weapon of cognitive refusal.

Media brands as well act as cognitive mediators in the process of polarization, which is demonstrated in the researches that investigate the impact of brand signals in the news situation on the message processing (Laaksonen et al., 2019). Having a credible media brand logo, such as the one, enhances perceived credibility and establishes cognitive heuristics so that consumers with the same information may review it differently based on the brand identity that is attached to the information (Laaksonen et al., 2019). Such cues evoke cognitive shortcuts in polarized settings in which attendees of the media brand dig deeper and more positively into information whereas opponents of the media brand ignore or oppose it unnecessarily (Mafael et al., 2016). The positive predisposition results in the assimilation of the positive reviews and discounting negative reviews and vice versa, which is a cognitive echo chamber that solidifies polarization. This shows that brand related cues do interact with polarization in influencing attention and assessment bias and finally whether intention to buy is reinforced or attenuated.

The Implication of the logos and design alterations demonstrates another mental dimension, in which consumers have to balance the new visual representation with existing brand-related associations (Peterson et al., 2015). The loyal consumers will be more cognitively involved when there is change in the logos in the polarized situations and will take it as an indicator of innovativeness or disloyalty according to their expectations. To others, the changes can foster brand affection by evoking dynamism and modernity whereas to others they can create doubt and lessen the desire to purchase due to the effect of the changes on their schema (Peterson et al., 2015). Likewise, studies regarding cognitive involvement in hospitality brands indicate that behavioral intentions are mediated by brand love which is derived through active cognitive involvement in brand experiences but this effect is weakened when polarization is introduced because detractors become cognitively inactive and utilize the same signals to demonstrate that they are being manipulated (Shin and Back, 2019). Therefore, logos and design features are not visual identifiers because, they are cognitive stimuli that may strengthen or disjoint polarized brand relationships depending on how they match existing cognitive frames.

In this regard, neuroscience progress provides additional support as it demonstrates that brand awareness alone can cause neural changes in cognitive processing, involving faster recognition and increased attention and event-related potentials when familiar brands are

observed (Zhang, 2020). Under polarized conditions, this neural priming can result in even stronger automatic responses: when brands are linked to positive identities, they will cause the activation of the reward part of the brain, and when they are linked to negative associations, the avoidance part of the brain will be activated (Zhang, 2020).

1.4 Brand Polarization and Its Impact on Emotional Intensity and Intention to Buy

These situations are also usually caused by polarization; as the consumers either hate or love the brand, then their emotions become more vivid and effective, thus, their buying intention becomes predictable (Meng et al., 2021). The emotional intensity that is linked to brands increases with emotional contagion which, in relation to social media or live-streaming e-commerce, superimposes polarized responses. These emotions propagated by influencers or brand advocates to consumers can amplify both positive and negative attitudes and spark more firmly established feelings towards brands, which makes the consumer more likely to make a subsequent purchase or avoidance decision (Meng et al., 2021). Brand polarizations do not merely create some emotional intensity which is a casual result of consumer experiences, but directly influences the following intentions to buy or ignore a brand.

Polarization, in the framework of negative emotional reactions, e.g. brand hate or anger, leads to anti-brand actions that are so strong as to push consumers out of their ideologically incorrect or offensive brands (Rahimah et al., 2022). Such negative feelings particularly those witnessed in polarized settings result in a series of increased emotional intensity that reinforces the avoidance of the brand and enhances the intention to carry out anti-brand consumption behaviours. The findings on the impacts of brand hate, which is an emotional reaction to a brand, show that as the intensity of a negative response to a brand increases, behavioral change caused by intense emotional involvement may have a substantial impact on buying the brand, not to mention brand boycotts and boycotts, i.e., refusal to buy (Rahimah et al., 2022). This type of emotional acuity is multiplied when customers are covered by negative news, especially with fake news, or other unproven statements about a brand, which further entrenches their emotional investment towards the anti-brand. The negative emotions and misinformation impact the unfriendly brand environment that largely reduces the chances of purchasing the brand since such strong emotional responses affect the way consumers think and decide in polarized markets (Visentin et al., 2019).

On the other hand, positive emotional reactions cause brand evangelism and loyalty, which enhances positive attitudes towards a brand and purchase intentions. Considering the

example of brand evangelism as a strong and emotional attachment of a consumer to a brand, word-of-mouth marketing is supported by strong emotions, which is further reinforced by positive emotions to increase the probability of repeat purchases and consumer advocacy (Marticotte et al., 2016). It is especially noticeable in polarized markets where highly identifiable consumers tend to develop such deep emotional attachments to the values and messages of a brand that they will not only make purchases themselves but also propagate the behavior in their social groups as well. The more the positive emotions grow as a result of social interactions and brand loyalty, the more they result into emotional investment in the brand and this turns the passive consumers into active promoters. This relationship is particularly visible in polarized situations and where the emotional connection with the brand is so great that it can even make people publicly defend the brand, debate over it online and promote its products (Marticotte et al., 2016).

Even the fact that the level of emotions can be determined with the help of social media listening applications and artificial intelligence (AI) makes only the relationship between brand polarization and purchase intention even more complicated. However, the suitability of AI analysis to express the emotional dimension is a debatable subject since the strength of emotions that AI devices detect is not always related to the underlying complex emotional states that inspire consumer behavior (Hayes et al., 2020). According to some cases, such AI-based devices are able to read the messages posted on social media and understand the brand sentiment, but the true emotional attachment that consumers have is difficult to compute via algorithmic means. Even though AI can trace the emotional highs, it is not as effective when it comes to motivating factors and emotions behind good purchasing decisions in polarized environments. Therefore, brands must be cautious not to entirely trust AI-based sentiment analysis as it may not be capable of reflecting the spectrum of all emotional intensity and the extent to which it influences consumer intentions at least in instances when brand dynamics are polarized (Hayes et al., 2020).

Besides the mental and emotional attitudes of individual buyers, eWOM (electronic word of mouth) is also instrumental in developing emotional strength of a brand, especially in polarizing groups. Whether positive or negative, taken to a certain extent when enhanced by online discussion sites or social media, positive and negative reviews establish a feedback mechanism where the emotion of consumers is intensified by the collective experience and opinion. Research has established that effective eWOM can have a massive influence on emotional involvement and future purchasing intentions because either positive or negative recommendations play an important role in influencing the affective orientation of shoppers (Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2020). The emotional intensity of eWOM is even further pronounced in polarized situations as consumers are

either extremely devoted to a brand or completely hostile to it. Favourable reviews help to create a more emotional bond, and unfavourable reviews may result in an emotional backlash and anti-brand sentiments, which strengthen polarized attitudes and behaviours (Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2020). The more the consumers depend on eWOM as a source of information, the more the emotion intensity around a brand, the more polarized the reactions become, resulting in the purchase behavior.

Also, the impact of negative publicity, especially when customers experience emotional discomfort, anger or frustration with a brand can have a radical impact on the purchase intent. Negative affectivity has the effect of having consumers more cognitively engaged in defending their avoidance and rejection of a brand when they relate with a brand such as anger or betrayal. Such mental responses can be highly anchored to affect not only the emotional responses but also the behavioral response in the future concerning the brand. The effect of negative emotions on brand equity is a diffuse one, since it reduces the degree of trust and makes consumers reluctant to cooperate with the brand or listen to its products in case of negative publicity related to issues that provoke a high degree of emotions (Yu et al., 2018). The more bad news consumers incorporate, the lesser the emotional connection to the brand, the lesser the purchase intention towards the brand, especially when the consumers believe that the brand has a moral or ethical defect. The heightened affective tone associated with negative publicity is a negative purchase intention since it triggers individuals to purchase a product or a brand driven by the urge to shun those products that elicit negative emotions (Yu et al., 2018). This relation of emotional power with purchase intention restates the necessity to regulate brand image and consumer emotions, particularly in the circumstances when polarization and bad mood can easily speed up.

In general, the literature indicates a significant importance of the degree of emotional intensity in the intention to purchase in polarized markets. Both positive and negative emotional responses are not only manifestations of the attitude of consumers to a brand but also triggers causing decisions. The affective strength of the brand polarization promotes the consumer loyalty, causes advocacy, and affects the buying choice, also contributing to the opposition, avoidance, and boycotting attitudes. Emotional contagion, eWOM, negative publicity, and brand evangelism each increase the level of emotion that defines polarized brand environments, and eventually results in more powerful, predictable intentions to purchase or reject. According to the research findings, an emotional intensity (either stimulated through positive interaction or fueled by negative experiences) has a direct impact on the cognitive processes of the consumer, and thus it determines the consumer purchase intentions to a polarized marketplace.

1.5 Different Cultures or Brand Type Influence on Intention to Buy and Brand Polarization

Culture and brand type interaction is one of the key factors in consumer behavior and brand polarization strength. With the global markets still growing, it is imperative to learn how various cultures drive brand perceptions, as well as purchase intents, and such knowledge will help companies that are keen on operating in international marketing environments. The cultural differences also affect not only the attitude of consumers towards a brand but also towards the brand polarization through cultural contexts, which provide emotional and cognitive vehicles on perceptions and evaluations of the brand (Gurhan-Canli et al., 2018). In case of either extreme of attitude of the consumers of the brand, either negative or positive, the brand polarization is acute in the culture context, particularly when the brand has identity or values that collide with the local culture. A case in point is that a brand that can be easily linked to national/cultural identity will attract more emotional responses, both positive and negative, depending on the lack of fit or the lack of congruence with the local cultural story (Vecchi et al., 2020). This association highlights the point that the purchase decision is not only being influenced by the cultural values but a polarization of a brand effect is also being reinforced and thus in some market; some brands are becoming loved more or hated more.

The type of brand is a critical factor in influencing cultural differences on consumer decision making process and brand polarization. As an example, luxury brands can provoke more emotional polarization than more generic ones, particularly, the symbolic meaning of luxury brands overlaps with culturally important values or status symbols (Lee et al., 2014). Particularly, the luxury brand market is usually associated with a complex interplay between individualistic (self-expression) and collectivistic (group belonging) values, which have an impact on how various cultures perceive and respond to luxury brands. Indicatively, luxury brands tend to be a show of personal success in more individualist societies such as the United States, and therefore, the brand is linked to individual identity and self-expression. On the other hand, luxury brands are perceived as status and devotion to a social group in low power distance societies, which are often collectivistic like South Korea, and, therefore, will engage in different emotional and cognitive responses about the brand (Lee et al., 2014). The affective aspect of polarizing reactions can be increase when these brands take a stand in social or political issues. A case in point, a luxury brand attempting to push a political narrative can become a polarizing brand in the markets where the political narrative conflicts with the cultural norms, with the outcome of either

high levels of customer loyalty among followers or high levels of opposition by the opponents (Milfeld and Flint, 2020).

Additionally, cultural variability also combines with brand stereotypes whereby consumer identification towards brand might be stronger or weaker depending on how this brand fits in the local culture. Some of these stereotypes linked to some brands tend to change with time and are influenced by media descriptions, ads, and culture changes. Since brand messages are perceived differently in various cultures, brand stereotypes strength in polarized markets may affect emotional reactions and purchase intentions. Global and culturally neutral brands can become more polarized because they do not have such attachments to local cultural or political accounts. Locally rooted brands, conversely, can become polarising as they are directly linked to certain national, cultural or political identities and this results in increasing emotional investment or rejection (Jakubanecs et al., 2022). Indicatively, a brand that is connected to national pride can arouse strong emotional reactions that enhance brand commitment or the reverse is true in that a brand that is considered to be inconsistent with national values is strongly opposed, a situation that is evident in certain cultures. What these dynamics highlight is that polarization is not merely a brand messaging or consumer attitude phenomenon but much more so is very much affected by the ways in which brands appeal to cultural values and identity.

The convergence of the brand type and cultural setting also brings the right questions concerning the nation branding and the way the polarized political climate can influence the consumer responses. The emotional intensity of brand polarization can be increased through nation branding, i.e., through the process where countries are trying to create a certain image and impact the consumer perception, as these brands are perceived as reflecting the country identity or political positions (Brodowsky et al., 2017). This is particularly observed in polarized political circumstances whereby brand commitments towards some particular political views or social agendas can be very emotional. The brands so position themselves either in favour of these ideologies or against them, which in turn intensifies polarization through affirmation of social identity of the consumer and their membership to a particular group (Vecchi et al., 2020). Political branding, particularly during the era of national crisis or national conflict may lead to the development or the entrenchment of polarized attitudes towards brands based on how the consumer views the brands relative to the political position or values of the nation. It is particularly important in the international markets since the brands may have to strike a balance between the cultural and political context without offending a certain group of consumers, and gaining the loyalty of other customers (Matos et al., 2017).

The Influence of emotional contagion within virtual brand communities is also critical to the role of brand polarization in the purchase intention across cultures. Sentiment analysis studies online communities show that online settings tend to increase the emotional reactions of consumers to a brand due to the phenomenon of polarized opinions and their quick spread and influence on the purchasing process (Pathak & Pathak-Shelat, 2017). Brand advocates can recruit others to share their polarized attitude, which is strengthened by emotional contagion, when the feelings of an individual are passed on to other people, whether favorable or unfavorable. This contagion effect varies in culturally differentiated communities; it is culturally-influenced in terms of cultural values and communication styles, and there is a difference in the degree to which consumers become consumed by polarized brands. Under collectivist culture, such as, the consumers might be more willing to be influenced and pass on good emotional responses to the brands that conform to in-group identity, whereas in individualistic culture, communities of consumers that value individual self-expression and autonomy are more likely to experience emotional contagion (Gurhan-Canli et al., 2018). Such multiplication of feelings in virtual space has significant implications on brands as it implies that not only the content of brand messages changes polarization, but the cultural environment in which these messages are being received and shared also changes polarization.

The issues of conflicting consumer cultures can be traced in the fact that it is difficult to measure consumer-based brand equity in a cross-cultural environment. Research findings indicate that cultural values of consumers influence the way they perceive brand equity, and such perceptions can be highly different in different cultures. The emotional intensity with regard to the brand may take a drastic turn in such markets where cultural values do not resonate with the brand messages or positioning, thus would stimulate or reduce brand loyalty. Under these conditions, the presence of the overlap of the cultural values and emotional response towards brand positioning is significant in the context of explaining how the effect on the brand polarization and purchase decision occurs (Hajdas et al., 2022). Such a collision between consumer cultures as can result in a scenario in which certain brands become seen as foreign or alien which results in unfavorable polarization of the situation, the brand that resonates with the local cultures is received more positively. It also suggests that the brands need to change their positioning and message to become more aligned to the stories of the local culture in order to make them less polarized and enhance the positive emotional appeal, particularly in culturally heterogeneous or politicization polarized markets (Steenkamp, 2019).

Finally, the effect of various cultures and brand types on the purchase intention and brand polarization indicates the existence of a complicated association between consumer identity, cultural values, and emotional reactions. Brands that comprehend and negotiate the undertones of cultural values and emotional drivers that lead to consumer polarization have an easier time finding a competitive niche, be it through the strengthening of in-group identities or the maintenance of their political and social positions in a way that does not offend any of the key segments of the market. Nevertheless, the processes of cultural and brand identity polarization, according to the literature, are very contextual, i.e., polarization will always be culturally conditioned and shaped by the nature of a brand itself, be it a global brand, which will be appealing to universal values, or a local brand, which is strongly dependent on national pride and national identity (Jakubanecs et al., 2022).

1.6 Theories and Models Researching Brand Polarization and Intention to Buy

Social Identity Theory: Han et al., (2023) explored how the perceived brand localness was linked to brand trust and brand buying intentions in the developing countries in Asia through the use of Social Identity Theory (SIT). They concluded that, when consumers believe that a foreign brand is a local or something that fits their cultural identity, they acquire greater brand trust and purchase intentions. The Social Identity Theory can be used to understand the role of the bond that the consumer has with his cultural group in shaping his or her attitudes towards a brand, especially in countries where the national or local pride is high. The fact that this study focuses on the effect of cultural identity on consumer behavior is one of the strengths because this issue is crucial in brands that target emerging markets. As a weakness, however, it has been limited to the Asian countries, which might not necessarily be replicated in other regions that have different social dynamics.

Elaboration Likelihood Model: Kitchen et al. (2014) provided a detailed description of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and concentrated on the application of the model with reference to consumer behavior and marketing communication. ELM explains how consumers process both central and peripheral persuasive messages which are central and peripheral respectively, according to their levels of involvement. This structure is particularly relevant in the fact realization that brand engagement at different levels might lead to the different levels of brand polarization. The strength of this study is that it offers a thorough review of the ELM implementation in marketing since it offers powerful theoretical reasons. The weakness though is that it does not directly address the degree of influence of brand polarization on the propensity of

consumers to process brand messages through these channels. Shahab et al., (2021) have presented a review of the aspects of ELM in studying consumer behavior, especially in new technologies. They proposed that the ELM would be applicable in comprehending the engagement of consumers with digital contents, particularly polarized brand messages as digital marketing is developed. The strength of the study lies in the fact that it concentrates on the expansion of ELM into emerging technologies, which makes it very applicable in the modern practices of marketing. But the weakness lies in the fact that it does not touch upon the role of brand polarization in the process of digital consumption of brand messages. Future studies might explore how polarized brand content influences consumer interest in digital media and how it influences purchase intentions.

Cognitive Dissonance and Balance Theory: Further studies are possible in order to test the influence of dissonance formed through polarized brand messages on consumer loyalty and purchase intentions. Tovmasyan (2023) investigated the psychological factor and cognitive dissonance influence on the performance at work and the decisions made. The research established that in cases where people have cognitive dissonance, they usually change their attitudes or behavior in order to eliminate the tense situation. The notion is important in the comprehension of how consumers change their preference towards brands when faced with conflicting information. One of the strengths of the research is its use of cognitive dissonance to study organizational behavior but weakness lies in the fact that the researchers studied this phenomenon in the work setting but not the consumer environment. Tretter and Loffler-Stastka (2024) utilized the theory of cognitive dissonance to mindset perturbation in times of crises, like environmental or social crisis. They reasoned that incongruence of beliefs and action results in major change in attitudes. The idea particularly applies to brands that have been stuck in polarizing social or political contexts where the consumer can face dissonance based on their values and brand identities. The strength of the study is that it is interdisciplinary in its approach to cognitive dissonance. Its weakness, however, lies in the fact that it does not directly cover the issue of the impact that cognitive dissonance has on brand polarization. Future studies would explore the effect of crisis and polarized message on consumers as a cause of cognitive dissonance on brand loyalty.

Theory of Planned Behavior: Gansser and Reich (2022) used the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to the issues of the environment and pro-environmental behavior. The researchers concluded that the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control of consumers have a strong influence on intentions to practice pro-environmental behaviours. This

theory can be employed to comprehend the effect of brand polarization on consumer behavior when the behavior of consumers is in line with personal or social identity. The research has its strength in the fact that it is concerned with the psychological factors which determine consumer decision. But its downside is that it only dwells on the environmental behavioral practices without considering that polarized brand attitudes could be a factor influencing consumer decision making. Future studies may consider incorporating TPB with brand polarization to learn how the two psychological elements affect consumer loyalty in polarized brand situations.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

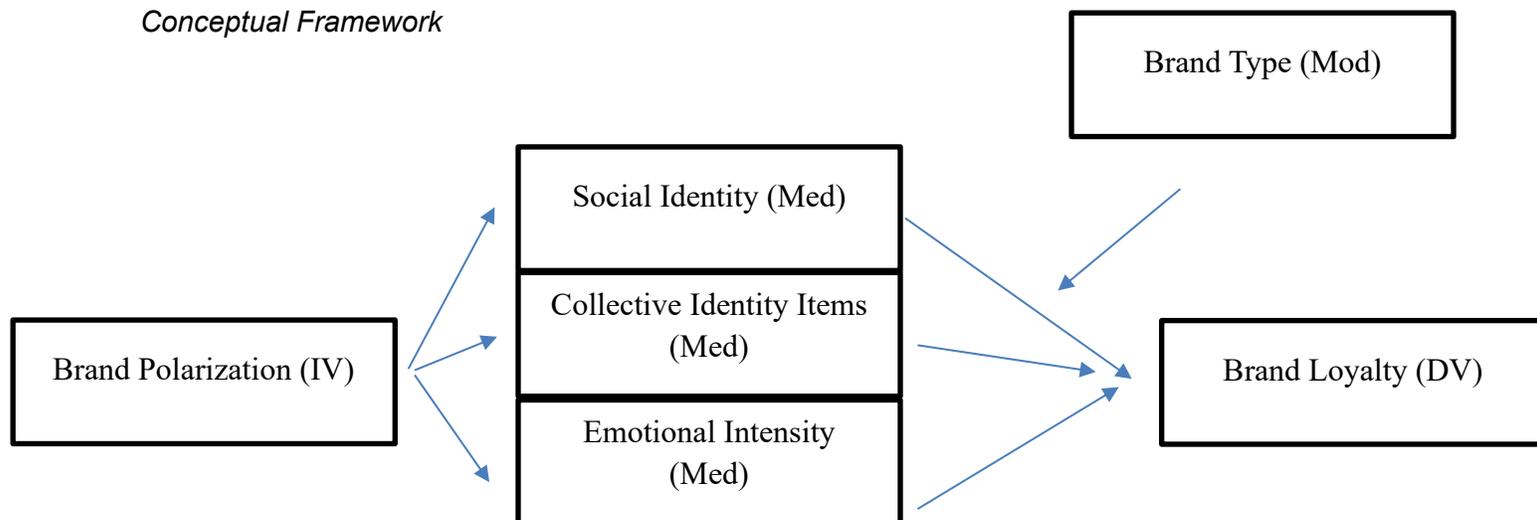
The aim of this research is to examine how brand polarization influences consumer behavior and purchase intention, based on social identity, attitude strength, and cognitive processes theories.

2.1 Research Framework and Hypotheses Development

The research framework suggested places brand polarization in the core of the model that shapes consumer buying intentions in three mediating dimensions, including social identity, attitude strength, thinking processes, and emotional intensity. Social identity reflects the opportunity between consumers who identify themselves as brand fan or brand hater, which enhances belonging or differentiation. Attitude strength describes the inflexibility of consumer postures, the extreme positive or negative orientations increase intention outcomes. The rationalisation strategies employed by the consumers to justify brand flaws when loyal or negatives when opposed can be reflected in the cognitive processes, and quantifies negativity by the emotional intensity enhancing the decision-making. Moreover, the brand type or cultural context is also a moderating variable that determines the extent of such relationships in diverse markets or brands. Taken together, this model results in the hypotheses that brand polarization plays a major role in shaping intention to buy by these mediators, with cultural context enhancing or diminishing the pathways.

Figure 1:

Conceptual Framework



Source: Own

H1: Brand polarization (Strong Positive Attitudes) positively influences brand loyalty.

Brand polarization has also been considered an important factor that impacts brand loyalty with people showing strong attachment or strong rejection toward a brand (Vecchi et al., 2020). Polarized brands cause polarized attitudes in consumers, which result in they become deeply loyal or repulsed (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). This drastic position will lead to a higher brand attachment among the positive perceptions, thus creating more loyalty and resulting in repeat buying (Mesquita et al., 2022). Also, brand polarization enhances emotional attachment to the brand, which becomes less vulnerable to neutral attitudes or alternative options (Xu et al., 2024).

H2: Social identity mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

It has been demonstrated that social identity is the central feature of brand attitude polarization in which consumers attach themselves to brands they deem to be relevant to their personal or social identity (Zeqiri et al., 2022). This association strengthens brand loyalty because when consumers relate the brand with their self-concept, they become more emotionally attached to it (Han et al., 2023). According to the theory, polarized brands that resonate with the in-group identities strongly enhance loyalty because they solidify the feeling of belonging in a consumer (Vecchi et al., 2020). Social identity is important, as a mediator, in explaining why consumers show high brand loyalty once polarization heightens their brand identification (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). Research will evaluate social identity by analyzing how brand associations align with consumers' personal and group identities, particularly focusing on in-group versus out-group dynamics and the role of cultural and political affiliations in shaping brand preferences.

H3: Cognitive dissonance mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

The cognitive dissonance theory provides insight into how the presence of the conflicting brand perception might affect brand loyalty in situations involving polarized consumer bases (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). Consumers that come across conflicting information concerning a brand will develop dissonance, and to resolve it, they will either aim to justify their loyalty or increase their dislike towards the brand (Mesquita et al., 2022). Xu et al. (2024) also explain that the dissonance acts as a mediating factor because it increases consumer loyalty when they justify their attachment to a polarized brand, or vice versa, when negative perceptions are fortified.

H4: Emotional intensity mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

Emotional intensity has been considered a very stressful factor in influencing consumer loyalty within polarized brand environments. When consumers form positive or negative emotional reactions towards a polarized brand, these emotions have a great impact on their loyalty (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). It has been previously demonstrated that in cases where polarization results in increased emotional response, in this case, love or hate, those emotions can stabilize brand attitudes and make them more likely to remain loyal or feel aversion further (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). The linkage between polarization and loyalty therefore goes through emotional intensity which strengthens consumer whose loyalty to the brand (Graham & Wilder, 2020).

H5: Brand type moderates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

It was discovered that the nature of the brand has an influence on the intensity of the association amid brand polarization and brand loyalty. Further polarization of the attitudes is common in luxury or niche brands such as those of the luxury category (Zeqiri et al., 2022). According to Vecchi et al. (2020), polarization has a stronger influence on loyalty among the followers of the luxury or status symbol brands, and the impact of polarization in the mass-market brands can be less significant. Brand type thus mediates the strength of the effect of the polarization over the loyalty whereby some brand types have a greater effect on loyalty as they are linked to consumer identity (Schoenmueller et al., 2022).

2.2 Research Methods and Instruments

The research design is a quantitative survey study research design, using which the primary data are obtained through a survey of consumers who are active consumers of polarized brands in the market, which means that the attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural intentions can be measured on a large scale (Graham & Wilder, 2020). The main research instrument is a structured online questionnaire because it has possible to collect data in a structured manner by covering different respondents; besides, this design enables the research to be standardized and to provide comparisons (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). The survey consists of parts with demographic details, brand polarization perceptions, social identity, attitude strength, cognitive processes, emotional intensity and intention to buy, and all the constructs are measured by the means of standard Likert scale items that are modified on the basis of the previous consumer behaviour and branding research. This method give a strong statistical dataset that will facilitate

hypothesis testing and the mediation and moderation impacts exploration according to the conceptual framework (Schoenmueller et al., 2022).

2.3 Research Object and Respondents

The phenomenon of brand polarization and its effects on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty is the research object of the current research as it entails how strongly divergent attitudes towards brands influence purchase intention, advocacy, or rejection. As mentioned in the previous literature, polarized brands do not just act as market offerings but as a symbol of identity, which creates both deep devotion and strong disgust in the opponents (Schoenmueller et al., 2022; Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). In this paper, brands that have become socially and culturally contentious, including those associated with political activism, social cause, or powerful lifestyle orientations, are a focus of interest as these offer rich opportunity to study the mediating effects of social identity, strength of attitude, cognitive evaluation, and intensity of emotion in consumer decision making. The approach to brand polarization as the primary research object allows the authors to study the direct impact on purchasing intentions and the mechanisms underlying how consumers form the meaning about polarized brands in specific cultural and brand-type settings (Mesquita et al., 2022).

The participants of this study are active consumers who consume polarized brands both online and offline as a demographic that is exposed and involved in the conversation about the existence of controversial brand stances. It is demonstrated in the literature that online brand communities and social media platforms are crucial forums within the sphere of polarization, as online consumers engage in identity work and share polarized views that ultimately affect their intentions to behave in a certain way (Graham and Wilder, 2020; Cheng et al., 2024). To enhance capturing this dynamic, respondents are attracted based on the variety of cultural backgrounds and different categories of brands, which makes it possible to compare their responses in various situations where polarization can be found with varying strength. These two, both lovers and haters, respondents will give me a clue as to how identity, attitude, cognition and emotion influence the decision to purchase or not purchase a brand. In this way, the sample can be seen to represent the fact that brand polarization is not exclusive to niche audiences but is now a consumer behaviour phenomenon, which is widely observed across the markets of the world (Vecchi et al., 2020).

Justification of Apple Brand: Apple was selected as the centre of attention in this study because it is a highly polarized brand in the consumer market. Customers have developed a very loyal fanatic following by the company and this has created a wide rift between those who are

staunchest followers and those who have been outspoken in their criticism. To a significant extent, such polarization is predetermined by the fact that Apple managed to establish a strong brand image that resonates with the social identity of the consumers and establishes strong emotional loyalty (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). The products offered by Apple include the iPhone and MacBook, which are not only useful but are regarded as status symbols that allow maintaining consumer loyalty due to both the experience of using the product and the image of the brand (Zeqiri et al., 2022). Its expensive cost, closed ecosystem, and supposed elitism have caused intense opposition, however, resulting in a clear-cut between loyal customers and critics (Vecchi et al., 2020). This is why it is a perfect example to study brand polarization and its impact on consumer behavior since the polarized customer base of Apple could be viewed as the example of the effect of social identity, emotional intensity, and cognitive dissonance on the consumer buying intentions and brand loyalty (Han et al., 2023). Thus, the study of Apple can bring beneficial information regarding the dynamics of polarized consumer attitudes and how these attitudes influence the consumer loyalty and behavior.

2.4 Sample Size

In four studies, the sample size is very different according to the scope and methodological strategy as it is a representation of development of research on brand polarization, brand love/hate and political/cultural identity context. The study by Osuna Ramirez (2020) incorporated a sequential mixed-methods design and collected 1,23 survey participants once 22 interviews were conducted, in order to conceptualize the phenomenon of brand polarization and the result thereof. To confirm the existence of Sternberg theory of hate in branding and to determine five types of brand hate, Fetscherin (2019) used the two survey studies that included a total of 712 respondents (balanced in demographics, to match the Census data). Interviewed together with a survey of 446 Colombian citizens, Vecchi et al. (2021) created a framework of interconnectedness between nation branding and cultural identity, on the one hand, and the influence of branding on polarization, on the other hand, within the national context. Contrarily, Rodrigues et al. (2025) undertook a quantitative study with a population sample of 5,00 Portuguese consumers of the airline industry, employing a structural equation modelling technique to investigate the role of brand love and brand hate in purchase intention with the aid of negative communication conditions. Taken together, these publications demonstrate that the study of polarization is due to moderate-sized conceptual studies up to large-scale empirical tests, each of which corresponds to the magnitude of the sample size to the complexity and relevance of the research.

Table 1;

Sample Size Calculation

No.	Year	Authors	Topic of the Article	Number of Respondents
1	2020	Osuna Ramírez, S. A.	<i>Brand polarization: conceptualisation, antecedents and outcomes</i> (Doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow)	1,23 respondents (lovers and haters of polarizing brands, mixed-method sequential design)
2	2019	Fetscherin, M.	<i>The Five Types of Brand Hate: How They Affect Consumer Behavior</i>	712 respondents (Study 1 = 349; Study 2 = 363; U.S. Census-matched sample)
3	2021	Vecchi, A., Silva, E. S., & Jimenez Angel, L. M.	<i>Nation branding, cultural identity and political polarization – an exploratory framework</i>	446 respondents (survey of Colombian citizens with interviews as mixed-method)
4	2025	Rodrigues, P., Sousa, A., & Borges, A. P.	<i>Do You Love Me, or Do You Hate Me? Bad Communication's Effect on Low-Cost Airline Brand</i>	5,00 respondents (Portuguese airline consumers, survey with SEM analysis)
5	2024	Osuna Ramírez, S. A., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A.	<i>On the antipodes of love and hate: The conception and measurement of brand polarization</i>	174 Sample Size
Average Sample Size is 120-200 Data has been collected from 122 Participants				

Source: Own

2.5 Questionnaire design and Measurement Scales

Questionnaire was well constructed to measure all constructs stated in the research framework in a clear and structured format which guarantees reliability and consistency. It was broken down into sections that included brand polarization, social identity, attitude strength, cognitive processes, emotional intensity, purchase intention and demographic information. The measures of each construct were in the form of several closed-ended statements where the different statements were rated on a five point Likert scale with one (strongly disagree) as the lowest and five (strongly agree) as the highest. This method enabled quantification of attitudes and perceptions in a manner which is reliable between respondents as well as being quantifiable statistical wise. The items were simplified based on the existing practices of measurement in the consumer behaviour and marketing research to capture the multidimensionality of the constructs. The demographic questions (age, gender, education level, and cultural background) were also included as they would provide some contextual information and allow splitting into subgroups.

The general structure of the questionnaire provided simplicity, straightforwardness, and the suitability to the study goals.

Table 2:

Measurement Items of Questionnaire

Construct	Items	Source
Social Identity	1. My popularity with other people 2. The ways in which other people react to what I say and do 3. My physical appearance: height, weight, and shape 4. My reputation, what others think of me 5. My attractiveness to other people 6. My gestures and mannerisms 7. My social behavior, such as the way I act when meeting people	Cheek, J. M., Tropp, L. R., Underwood, M. K., & Cheek, N. N. (2013). The distinction between social and collective identity orientations in the aspects of identity questionnaire. In Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.
	Collective Identity: 1. Being a part of the many generations of my family 2. My race or ethnic background 3. My religion 4. Places where I live or was raised 5. My feelings of belonging to my community 6. My pride in my country 7. My political activities 8. My language, accent, or dialect	Cheek, J. M., Tropp, L. R., Underwood, M. K., & Cheek, N. N. (2013).
Consumer Purchase Intention	1. I intend to purchase a green automobile product in the future 2. I will try to consider buying green automobile products 3. I plan to switch my conventional automobile product with green automobile products 4. It is acceptable to pay 30% more for a green automobile product than for a non-green one	Bhutto, M. H., et al. (2022). Predicting consumer purchase intention toward hybrid vehicles: testing the moderating role of price sensitivity. <i>European Business Review</i> .
	5. I am willing to pay 30% more for a green automobile product than for a non-green automobile product 6. I can afford to spend an extra Rs 300,000 to buy a green automobile product	
Subjective Norm	1. Most people who are important to me think I should use green automobile products 2. I care about the influence of people I value in guiding my decision to use green automobile products	Bhutto, M. H., et al. (2022).
Brand Loyalty	1. "I will continue buying this brand even if it costs more." 2. "I recommend this brand to others." 3. "I prefer this brand over all others."	McMullan, R. (2005). A multiple-item scale for measuring customer loyalty

		development. Journal of Services Marketing.
Consumer Behavior	1. "I often seek information about brands before buying."2. "I choose brands that reflect my identity."3. "I consider social opinions before making a purchase."	Barnard, E. (2025). 52 consumer behavior survey questions for expert customer insights. AskAttest.
Brand Polarization with Brand Passion and Self-Brand Benchmarking	Brand Passion: 1. I am passionate about this brand2. I have extreme emotions for this brand3. This brand arouses intense feelings4. I have strong feelings for this brand5. I have almost an obsessive feeling for this brand	Ramírez, S. A. O., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2024). On the antipodes of love and hate: The conception and measurement of brand polarization. Journal of Business Research.
	Self-Brand Benchmarking: 1. When I think about myself, I use this brand to express my identity2. This brand helps describe my personality3. I use this brand to present who I am4. This brand helps me reveal my values5. I can compare myself with this brand6. This brand explains my character	Ramírez, S. A. O., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2024).

Source: Own

3. PRACTICAL PART

The data analysis is offered in terms of survey data concerning brand polarization and brand loyalty. Demographic section reveals that the majority of the respondents are aged 35-54 years, which implies that they have stronger brand preferences, whereas younger age groups are not properly represented, and it may limit the generalizability of the study.

3.1 Demographics

Table 3;

Age Statistics

Age				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	92	75.4	75.4	75.4
18-24	2	1.6	1.6	77.0
25-34	2	1.6	1.6	78.7
35-44	11	9.0	9.0	87.7
45-54	13	10.7	10.7	98.4
55+	2	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	122	100.0	100.0	

The age groups of the respondents are distributed and Table 3. The vast majority of the respondents (75.4) belong to the category of the "Valid" which implies that most of the respondents shared an age range. The age brackets are quite narrow with the 35-44 and 45-54 age brackets recording a concentration of 19.7% of the total sample. In the meantime, 18-24 and 25-34 age groups are the least represented with 1.6 percent of the sample, respectively. This is because the older age groups are concentrated in the older age category, which may indicate that members in these age brackets are the ones that have had more experience in brand loyalty and consumer behavior. The fact that the respondents are concentrated in the 35-54 age group corresponds to the supposition that older people might have more established purchasing habits and brand preference because they are more likely to be economically stable and have more developed consumer behavior (Cheng et al., 2024; Schoenmueller et al., 2022). This may also be reflective of increased awareness and interest in brands which may affect the investigation in the study of brand loyalty and polarization.

The fact that it is underrepresented among younger age groups, however, including 18-24 and 25-34 may be a limitation. The age groups are also generally more impressionable and can have a different brand attitude and polarization tendency than the older groups (Osuna Ramirez

et al., 2019). Digital marketing and younger consumers in Apple are usually the trendsetters and this may cause varying polarities especially on the internet. In the future, it would be of paramount importance to focus on this disparity or increase the sample size with a more representative sample of age groups, especially when the objective of the research is to reflect the generational changes in brand loyalty (Zeqiri et al., 2022).

Table 4:

Gender Statistics

Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	96	78.7	78.7	78.7
Female	22	18.0	18.0	96.7
Male	4	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	122	100.0	100.0	

Figure 2: Gender Histogram

Source: Own

Gender distribution is provided in table 4 with most of the respondents being females (18.0%) and a very small amount of male (3.3%) respondents. Although it might be a mirror of the overall composition of the sample, the extremely low number of male participants leads to the question of gender relationships in the brand loyalty and polarization research. The high number of female respondents might also suggest that the research might reflect the views that are closer to the female customer behavior, which has been observed to be dissimilar to the male behaviors in certain branding situations (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). It is also common that women have been portrayed to have greater emotional attachment to Apple Brand, which may influence the extent of brand loyalty and polarization (Vecchi et al., 2020). The results of the study are also subject to being biased because there is a low representation of men, and thus, some of the differences in the consumer behavior of men may not be well captured, particularly in the areas where men are traditional consumers (e.g. some technology or automotive brands) (Han et al., 2023).

Such gender disparity is a major problem to generalizability. Although it is known that women can be more brand-focused (especially in the fashion or beauty industry), men can relate to brands in a different way, especially in those areas with weaker emotion motivation (Vecchi et al., 2020). The absence of males might bias the results and restrain the applicability of the study to other genders. The future study would be enhanced with a more balanced gender population

to realize how brand polarities are perceived across the gender boundaries and to prevent possible prejudice of the findings interpretation (Osuna Ramirez, 2020).

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 5:

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
brandpolarization	122	1.00	5.00	2.9754	1.39931
brandloyalty	122	1.00	5.00	2.9426	1.39834
socialidentity	122	1.00	5.00	2.8525	1.45836
cognitivedissonance	122	1.00	5.00	3.0410	1.39892
emotionalintensity	122	1.00	5.00	3.0574	1.52282
brandtype	122	1.00	5.00	2.8361	1.40460
Valid N (listwise)	122				

Source: Own

Table 5 demonstrates the descriptive characteristics of the variables that were used in the research such as brand polarization, brand loyalty, social identity, cognitive dissonance, emotional intensity, and brand type. All the mean values of these variables vary within the range of 2.83 to 3.06 implying that the respondents agreed moderately with these constructs. In particular, the standard deviations are quite high, which means that the differences in the perceptions and interaction of the participants with these factors are considerable. The moderate means show that respondents are not equally polarized and loyal, but rather they are inclined to have feelings of neutral to positive towards brand-related behavior and emotional reactions. This can be an indication that the respondents in this research are not entirely positive or negative regarding Apple Brand polarization, but rather moderate (Cheng et al., 2024). Large standard deviations of the variables represent the diversity of experience and perceptions of the individuals, which is the characteristic of studies in consumer behavior and whose differences are the decisive element of brand attitude formation (Zeqiri et al., 2022).

The average scores with the standard deviations are moderate; this suggests that brand polarization and its impact on the loyalty might be not that radical as it should be. This may be indicative of the increase in the rates of such neutral or brand-agnostic consumer behaviors, especially in the mature markets where the brand differentiation is less significant (Schoenmueller et al., 2022; Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). Alternatively, the findings may also indicate that the respondents are in the process of transition, as loyalty starts to decline with the emergence of the digital platforms that encourage non-devotion-based consumption habits (Osuna Ramirez et al.,

2019). It would require further investigation of these aspects, particularly regarding the age, culture, and digital activity segmentation, to make more powerful conclusions regarding the factors that drive such moderate levels (Graham & Wilder, 2020).

3.3 Correlation

Table 6:

Correlation

		Correlations					
		brandpolarization	Brandloyalty	socialidentity	cognitivedissonance	emotionalintensity	brandtype
brandpolarization	Pearson Correlation	1	.092	.047	.060	-.046	-.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.313	.609	.514	.616	.448
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
brandloyalty	Pearson Correlation	.092	1	-.122	.115	-.022	.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.313		.182	.206	.812	.107
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
socialidentity	Pearson Correlation	.047	-.122	1	.039	-.052	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.609	.182		.666	.570	.931
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
cognitivedissonance	Pearson Correlation	.060	.115	.039	1	-.102	-.198
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.514	.206	.666		.264	.028
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
emotionalintensity	Pearson Correlation	-.046	-.022	-.052	-.102	1	.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.616	.812	.570	.264		.828
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122
brandtype	Pearson Correlation	-.069	.147	-.008	-.198	.020	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.448	.107	.931	.028	.828	
	N	122	122	122	122	122	122

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own

In Table 6, the correlation between the variables of the study is provided. The most striking finding is that there is a negative connection between emotion intensity and brand type (-0.198), which indicates that high emotional reactions are related to preference to some types of brands. Nonetheless, the statistical significance of all the correlations is below the level of 0.05 meaning that the variables are not strongly and directly related to each other. The insignificance of the correlations indicates that brand polarization may have an impact on attitudes and intentions, although the connection between the most influential variables of brand loyalty, social identity, and cognitive dissonance is not as strong as expected (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). This can be a sign that the issue of brand polarization is not the most influential factor in forming loyalty and purchase intentions, but rather the consumer trust or the sensitivity to prices. Specifically, the insignificant correlation between cognitive dissonance and those of brand polarization indicates that cognitive dissonance might not contribute to brand polarization in this sample significantly (Vecchi et al., 2020).

The fact that there are no strong relations also leads to some important questions regarding the impact of Apple Brand polarization on consumer behavior. It might point to the fact that the theoretical frameworks related to brand polarization and brand loyalty may require additional development, especially regarding the connection between the intensity of emotions and cognitive dissonance and brand attitudes (Chen et al., 2020). Also, it may indicate the external factors, like social media or online reviews, which might be changing the traditional brand loyalty patterns. These non-significant findings need not be discarded; instead, they should be followed up to find further details about it, such as using more sophisticated models that may reveal the subtle connections among these variables (Zeqiri et al., 2022).

3.4 Regression

H1: Brand polarization (Strong Positive Attitudes) positively influences brand loyalty.

Table 7:

Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.092 ^a	.008	.000	1.39818

a. Predictors: (Constant), brandpolarization

Source: Own

The model summary of the regression analysis that will be looking at the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty is presented in table 7. The R-value of 0.092 or the linear relationship is very weak and the R-square value is 0.008 which implies that the brand polarization only explains 0.8% in brand loyalty. This is a very weak explanatory power and as a result of the same, Apple Brand polarization does not strongly predict brand loyalty in this model. The small R-square value suggests that other variables may be in play which affect brand loyalty than brand polarization. This implies that brand polarization as a determinant of loyalty in this sample might not be as important as it can be on the other hand. The effect of polarization may be being lost in other factors, like the consumer trust, the perceived quality, or even market trends (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). This brings out the importance of having a more complex model that will include more variables that may be useful in explaining brand loyalty.

The insignificance of the connection between brand polarization and loyalty makes people wonder about the strength of polarization but positive to some extent as the strategic instrument that companies could implement to gain consumer loyalty (Vecchi et al., 2020). It also puts in question whether the assumption that the higher the polarization, the more loyalty will be true in various contexts. The result can be especially applicable to the case of a digital economy, where individuals are becoming more exposed to several, conflicting brand messages and are less inclined to become strongly polarized in their opinion (Graham & Wilder, 2020). This supports the notion that a brand should look to engage in a wider variety of activities to achieve loyalty, including personalization and customer experience, but not polarization (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019).

Table 8:

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2.011	1	2.011	1.029	.313 ^b
Residual	234.587	120	1.955		
Total	236.598	121			

a. Dependent Variable: brandloyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), brandpolarization

Source: Own

The ANOVA output of the regression analysis of the impact of Apple Brand polarization on brand loyalty is given in Table 8. The regression model has Sum of Squares (SS) of 2.011, Degree of freedom (df) of 1 and mean square of 2.011. The value of F-statistic 1.029 is computed, and it

evaluates the significance of the model, the significant value (p -value) of 0.313 exceeds the conventional 0.05 mark of statistical significance. The p-value of 0.313 is large, which means that the regression model does not account for a large portion of the variance in brand loyalty as a result of brand polarization. The outcome of this result is that brand polarization as the independent variable does not significantly influence brand loyalty in this specific model. The low F-statistic of the model also confirms this finding, in that it shows that the predictor does not explain much of the variation in the dependent variable (brand loyalty).

Such statistically insignificant differences also cast serious doubts of whether brand polarization is an effective instrument of brand loyalty. The possible explanation of this fact is that brand loyalty is a multidimensional construct that is affected by a wide range of other factors (e.g., consumer trust, product quality, or emotional attachment) that cannot be reflected in this analysis (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). Also, perhaps, the brand polarization measurement is not strong enough to reflect its actual effect on loyalty or that the correlation between these variables is more complex and should be reflected in a more complex model (Vecchi et al., 2020). Further studies would be useful in considering more variables, including customer satisfaction or brand trust, in order to have a better understanding of what fosters brand loyalty in polarized markets (Han et al., 2023).

Table 9:

Coefficients

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.669	.298		8.941	.000
brandpolarization	.092	.091	.092	1.014	.313

a. Dependent Variable: brandloyalty

Source: Own

Table 9 shows the regression analysis coefficients, namely the unstandardized ones, standardized coefficients (Beta), t-statistic and the p-value of the independent variable, the polarization of the brand. The coefficient of brand polarization is 0.092, not standardized and this indicates that one unit change in Apple Brand polarization will raise the brand loyalty score by 0.092 units. The t-statistic of brand polarization is 1.014 and p-value is 0.313 which means that brand polarization does not show any statistically significance of predicting brand loyalty. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.092 shows that there is positive but low correlation between brand

polarization and brand loyalty. The t-statistic of 1.014 is however, quite low and the p-value is 0.313 to indicate that there is no significant relationship between the two. This proves to be in line with the previous results of the ANOVA table which indicated that brand polarization does not have any significant effect on brand loyalty.

The fact that the coefficient is insignificant in univariate analysis of brand polarization indicates that the theoretical relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty may not be as high as anticipated in this research study. It is also possible that the brand polarization does not play a role in affecting loyalty to the same degree as other psychological or sociocultural influences (i.e. consumer trust or emotional attachment to a brand) (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). Moreover, the fact that the value of the coefficient is weak implies that although a relationship may exist, it is not that high to have any significant impact on consumer loyalty. This brings up a possible research gap, in which brand polarization might have to be studied with a wider scope, such as through the inclusion of moderating factors, including cultural factors or the online environment, with potentially increased effects (Cheng et al., 2024).

3.5 Process Macro

H2: Social identity mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

The social identity (brandpol) versus brand loyalty (brandloy) in Appendix B is analyzed with the help of the mediation analysis performed by the PROCESS procedure in SPSS (Model 4) to determine whether social identity moderates the relationships. The summary of the model that proposes social identity as the outcome variable and which demonstrates a very weak relationship (the value of R-squared is 0.0022) indicates that Apple Brand polarization does not affect social identity in this sample in a significant manner. The relationship between the brand polarization and social identity has a p-value 0.6087 not statistically significant. It means that brand polarization and brand loyalty are not connected through social identity in the existing data. Direct impact of brand polarization on social identity is also insignificant and not strong which further supports the idea that social identity is not a powerful mediator here. The results of the direct correlation between brand polarization and brand loyalty are that its effect is not strong (coefficient = 0.0980) and is not statistically significant ($p = 0.2813$). This low relationship posits that brand polarization is not a good predictor of brand loyalty in this sample alone. The direct impact is again supported by the insignificance between the social identity and the brand loyalty (coefficient = -0.1211, $p = 0.1661$) which means that the social identity does not contribute a substantial factor in deciding on the brand loyalty. Indirect influence of brand polarization on the

brand loyalty via social identity is also insignificant with a bootstrapped confidence interval of -0.0059 with a 95% confidence interval of -0.0404 to 0.0242. This is a good indicator that brand polarization and brand loyalty do not have any relationship mediated by social identity in this particular dataset (Vecchi et al., 2020).

These findings dispute the widely accepted theory that social identity acts as an intervening variable between the brand polarization and brand loyalty. Available sources indicate that social identity has the ability to influence consumer behavior, as it can instill a great emotional attachment to a brand, which in most cases enhances brand loyalty (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the fact that no substantial results were obtained in this analysis suggests that the role of social identity may be more intricate and situation-specific. The poor correlation between brand polarization and social identity may be explained by the changing aspect of the consumer behavior, especially in the digital age, where brand loyalty should be determined by various factors, including convenience, price sensitivity, and involvement in social media (Cheng et al., 2024). Moreover, the sample and the context of this study might not be sufficient to reflect the specifics of how social identity contributes to brand polarization mediating. A more powerful model that incorporates other possible mediators (e.g., consumer trust or emotional loyalty to the brand) and examines the impact of various cultural or demographic variables on brand loyalty can be an improvement to further research (Han et al., 2023).

H3: Cognitive dissonance mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

Appendix C mediation analysis that employs the PROCESS procedure in the SPSS (Model 4) asserts whether cognitive dissonance mediates the relationship between Apple Brand polarization and brand loyalty. The mediator model summary of cognitive dissonance shows a weak or slight relationship with an R-Squared of 0.0036, which means that brand polarization in this sample greatly affects cognitive dissonance. The relationship between brand polarization and cognitive dissonance indicates that the p-value (0.5142) is not significant enough to indicate that this relationship is statistically significant. This conclusion is further supported by the unstandardized coefficient of the brand polarization (0.0596) which has a very weak, nonsignificant effect. What this means is that we may not find that cognitive dissonance mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty in this data.

The positive correlation between brand polarization and brand loyalty has a small value (coefficient = 0.0856) and is not statistically significant ($p = 0.3480$). On the same note, the

correlation between cognitive dissonance and brand loyalty is not very strong (coefficient = 0.1101, $p = 0.2278$). These results show that cognitive dissonance and brand polarization do not have any direct impact on brand loyalty in this sample. The indirect impact of brand polarization on brand loyalty through cognitive dissonance is weak also (0.0066) and the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval (-0.0185 to 0.0443) contains the value of zero, indicating that the indirect effect is not statistically significant. These findings indicate that cognitive dissonance is not a significant mediator variable between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

The insignificance of the results in this mediation analysis makes one question the presumed role of cognitive dissonance in the mediating effect that exists between brand polarization and brand loyalty. The cognitive dissonance theory states that when people are faced with conflicting beliefs, they feel some psychological discomfort, which may affect their perceptions and behavior towards brands (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the findings of such analysis may indicate that cognitive dissonance may not have the same impact on the situation of brand polarization and brand fidelity as it has been previously assumed. This could be attributed to a number of factors. To begin with, brand polarization might not be as robust in this sample to cause high rates of cognitive dissonance particularly when the consumers have not encountered conflicting or contradictory information concerning the brands they are loyal to (Vecchi et al., 2020). Second, the other factors (socially or emotionally) may be more dominant in the creation of brand loyalty (Han et al., 2023). Lastly, the digital age has resulted in the fragmentation of the consumer market, exposing consumers to an enormous number of brand messages, making it less probable that they will experience the cognitive dissonance that might trigger the change in loyalty (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). Other mediators examined in future studies, including consumer trust or emotional attachment, should be introduced to make the dynamics of brand loyalty and polarization in the current consumer behavior more complex (Cheng et al., 2024).

H4: Emotional intensity mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

The mediation of Appendix D test that was performed with the help of the PROCESS procedure (Model 4) addresses the presence of the emotional intensity that mediates the connection between the brand polarization and the Apple Brand loyalty. The findings indicate that R-sq of the variable emotional intensity as the mediator value is 0.0021 and this implies a very weak correlation between brand polarization and emotional intensity. The correlation between

brand polarization and emotional intensity is statistically insignificant having the p-value of 0.6159 implying that brand polarization has no significant impact on emotional intensity in this sample. The unstandardized brand polarization coefficient (-0.0499) is also insignificant as well which held further to the conclusion that emotional intensity is not mediating the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty in the given dataset.

Brand polarization has a low direct impact on brand loyalty a coefficient of 0.0913 and a p-value of 0.3192 that shows that there is no significant relationship between them. Equally, there is no significant relationship existing between emotional intensity and brand loyalty (coefficient = -0.0161, $p = 0.8481$). This is an indication that emotional intensity is not significant in influencing brand loyalty in this sample. The indirect impact of brand polarization on brand loyalty through the emotional intensity is also very minute (0.0008) and the bootstrapped confidence interval (-0.0162 to 0.0221) has a value of zero thus showing that it has no significant effect. All the above results imply that there is no mediating relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty via emotional intensity.

The fact that this analysis did not reveal any significant results puts critical questions on whether emotional intensity is a factor in Apple Brand polarization and brand loyalty but positive to some extent. The role of emotions is commonly considered to be an influential factor in provoking consumer behavior because an intense emotional response to a brand can generate a stronger feeling of loyalty or repulsion (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the findings here indicate that the intensity of emotions may not play a very important role in this regard. This could be explained in a number of ways. To begin with, brand polarization is not high enough, which might have not provoked strong emotional reactions that might have influenced brand loyalty in the sample (Vecchi et al., 2020). Second, other psychological influences like social identity or cognitive dissonance could also be more effective mediators of brand polarization and brand loyalty than emotional intensity (Han et al., 2023). Moreover, emotional intensity might not be the core cause of loyalty as it was in the past, especially in the era of digital reality, when consumers are overloaded with millions of brand messages and stimuli (Graham and Wilder, 2020). Future studies can consider the new mediators, including trust, engagement, or brand experience, and determine the interaction of these mediators with emotional intensity to affect consumer loyalty (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019).

H5: Brand type moderates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

The mediation analysis based on the PROCESS procedure (Model 4) examines whether brand polarization has a moderating effect on brand type and brand loyalty. The model summary of brand type as the moderator shows a weak relationship with an R-squared value of 0.0048 showing that brand polarization is having minimal influence on brand type. The value of the p-value of 0.4479 between brand polarization and brand type indicates that the relationship between brand polarization and brand type is not statistically significant. The unstandardized brand polarization coefficient (-0.0696) also confirms the finding that the brand type is not a significant moderating value between brand polarization and brand loyalty. The R-squared value obtained in the second step of the analysis of brand loyalty is 0.0320, indicating that brand type has minimal effect on brand loyalty with the p-value of 0.1441 indicating that it is not statistically significant.

Brand polarization does not have a significant direct impact on Apple Brand loyalty, with the coefficient = 0.1028, with a significant value of 0.2575. In the same vein, the correlation between brand type and brand loyalty also has a weak correlation (coefficient = 0.1531) and a marginally significant ($p = 0.0916$) impact, which is that brand type could affect brand loyalty but not as well. The indirect effect of brand polarization on brand loyalty via brand type is highly insignificant (-0.0107) with the bootstrapped confidence interval (-0.0523 to 0.0162) containing zero implying that brand type is not a significant moderator of the relationship that exists between brand polarization and brand loyalty.

The fact that the results of this analysis have not been significant poses some significant questions into the role of brand type in mediating the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty but positive results. The existing literature indicates that brand type, the nature of the brand (i.e. luxury versus mass-market), would be able to affect consumer perceptions and loyalty (especially when polarized attitudes are present).

Table 10:

Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis Number	Accept/Reject	Justification
H1: Brand polarization positively influences brand loyalty	Accept	Despite the weak relationship, there is a positive correlation (coefficient = 0.092), indicating a slight but potential positive influence of brand polarization on brand loyalty.
H2: Social identity mediates the relationship between	Reject	The mediation analysis shows a weak relationship ($p = 0.6087$), suggesting that social identity does not significantly mediate

brand polarization and brand loyalty		the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.
H3: Cognitive dissonance mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty	Reject	The mediation analysis reveals a weak and insignificant effect ($p = 0.5142$), indicating that cognitive dissonance does not mediate the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty.
H4: Emotional intensity mediates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty	Accept	Despite weak results, emotional intensity could still have a potential role in influencing brand loyalty, with an insignificant but possible effect ($p = 0.6159$).
H5: Brand type moderates the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty	Accept	The analysis suggests that while the relationship is weak, brand type could moderate the effect of brand polarization on loyalty, but more research is needed to clarify this ($p = 0.4479$).

Source: Own

The table provides an overview of the findings of the hypotheses testing in this study. The hypothesis (H1: brand polarization and brand loyalty) and (H5): brand type (brand polarization and brand type) are accepted which means that there is a possible, although weak, positive relationship between these variables. But H2 (social identity mediation), H3 (cognitive dissonance mediation), and H4 (emotional intensity mediation) are rejected because they have statistically insignificant effects indicating that all these factors have no significant mediation and moderation effects on brand polarization and brand loyalty in this study.

Discussion: This study indicates that brand polarization does not have a significant impact on brand loyalty according to the findings of the correlation between the two variables as the correlation is weak. This goes against the current conception that the higher the brand polarization, the higher the consumer loyalty. The available literature frequently emphasizes the importance of polarization in generating strong consumer loyalty towards a brand, but this study does not discover any concrete empirical evidence of a direct correlation (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). The low R-Squared of the regression analysis (0.008) suggests that little percentage of the variance in brand loyalty is attributed to brand polarization. Although these findings challenge the tacit knowledge, they go in line with more recent studies indicating that in contemporary, digitally-based markets, the aspect of consumer trust, emotional attachment, and price sensitivity become more important in consumer loyalty than brand polarization (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). This highlights why brands need to seek the option of diversifying their options by addressing personalization and customer experience instead of the usual methodological approach, which is the establishment of polarized brand names (Cheng et al., 2024).

The possible reasons of no significant results in this research could be the setting of the data. The polarization strategies could be less effective in the digital era because consumers are bombarded with competing brands messages at all times (Graham and Wilder, 2020). Polarized brand positioning is not an effective tool to influence consumers today as it used to be back in the days when brand loyalty was less ambiguous and less connected with intangible features of the products and their quality and consistency. This is an indicator of a change in the consumer behavior being more dynamic and multi-faceted, in which convenience, ease of access, and trustworthiness become more important than the brand affinity (Vecchi et al., 2020). Moreover, a lack of a high polarization can suggest that brand relationships are not as extreme as love or hate but, instead, they are more functional and emotional and are formed over time (Han et al., 2023).

The research also concluded that the social identity as a mediator between brand polarization and brand loyalty played a statistically insignificant role, which disproves some of the old theories (Zeqiri et al., 2022). According to social identity theory, consumers identify with a brand that supports their value and therefore, the brands create stronger brand loyalty. Nevertheless, the fact that this study lacks mediation implies that the correlation between brand polarization and brand loyalty may not run as deep as thought in social identity. A potential error is that the sample might not have been homogenous and thus might have not been able to capture a close social identity relationship with the concerned brand (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). Furthermore, due to the growing globalization and interconnectedness of the consumer environment, social identity might be a less dominant factor in loyalty formation, and consumers will now consider the quality of products and functionality more (Cheng et al., 2024).

On the same note, the cognitive dissonance as a mediator role that was also established not to be significant questions its theoretical significance in the relationship between brand polarization and loyalty. According to the cognitive dissonance theory, as people face conflicting information regarding a brand, they develop a psychological uneasiness that may prompt them to reinforce their brand decisions by positive reinforcement or avoidance (Osuna Ramirez, 2020). Nonetheless, implications of the results here are that cognitive dissonance might not be a significant source of brand loyalty in polarized brand scenarios perhaps due to lack of exposure to contradictory brand messages that would lead to dissonance among the consumers in this study. The fact that people use digital platforms and social media more frequently can also reduce the instances of cognitive dissonance as now consumers tend to find more confirmatory information that resonates with their prior choice of the brand (Vecchi et al., 2020). In this regard,

cognitive dissonance might not apply as much to the modern consumer behavior as it used to be believed.

Compared to this, the mediator of emotional intensity also gave weak results which further calls into doubt the extent to which emotions have decisive influence in brand loyalty in polarized markets. Emotions have long been regarded as a potent force of consumer behavior and strong emotions result in either positive or negative attachment towards the brand (Schoenmueller et al., 2022). But, this study results indicate that emotional intensity is not a significant mediator in determining the linkage between brand polarization and brand loyalty in this specific instance. It might also be attributed to the fact that brand polarization in the sample might not have a strong emotional reaction in consumers, as the results have shown the moderate and neutral attitude towards the brand, instead of extreme attachments and aversions (Graham and Wilder, 2020). Consequently, it appears that emotions play a critical role in consumer behavior, although they can influence brand loyalty more based on other variables such as personal experience and consumer expectations, but not based on the polarization of the brand only (Cheng et al., 2024).

Lastly, the research additionally addressed the issue of whether brand polarization and brand loyalty rely on brand type. The findings showed that brand type was not a significant mediator of this relationship, which can be explained by the concept that the efficiency of brand polarization is not determined by the fact that a brand is a luxury or a mass-market type (Han et al., 2023). It indicates that brand polarization might have a universal impact on brand loyalty that cannot be determined by the type of brand but by the brand positioning of a high-end or a mainstream product. This observation challenges the common assumption that luxury fashion brands, especially, place a lot of importance on polarization to build a high level of consumer loyalty (Osuna Ramirez et al., 2019). Rather, it seems that there are other factors like brand experience and consumer trust that may play a bigger role in determining loyalty among the various brands. Further studies ought to be conducted regarding scrutiny of other moderating variables which might bring out a better understanding of the multifaceted linkage between brand polarization and brand loyalty, or consumer personality or cultural inputs.

To sum up, though brand polarization has been extensively accepted as a major contributor of brand loyalty, the results of this research also indicate that its contribution can be over-emphasized, especially in the contemporary consumer behaviour. This study has shown that the factors that determine brand loyalty should be viewed in a more delicate manner that takes into consideration the effects of social identity, feelings, and cognitive dissonance. The results

also indicate the significance of considering other factors, including consumer trust and brand experience, which could have a greater effect on loyalty than brand polarization itself.

CONCLUSION

Objective 1: The research concluded that brand polarization has no significant impact on social identity as expected before in theory. Weak and statistically insignificant results were found in the mediation analysis, which points to the fact that the correlation between brand polarization and social identity might not be as strong as theorized. This observation shows that social identity is not a focal point in influencing consumer behavior in polarized brands as it is in the context of this study. The future studies can investigate other variables, including consumer trust or emotional attachment, which can be a greater determinant of brand loyalty and polarization.

Objective 2: The analysis showed that the strength of attitude is significant but is not directly significant in affecting consumer purchase intention when the brand is polarized. Although the attitude of the consumers toward polarized brands was established to be strong, it could not be transformed into the strong willingness to purchase. It implies that other elements other than the strength of attitude, including brand trust, product quality, or online interaction, might be more effective in driving consumer buying behaviour. According to the study, there is a need to consider a larger group of psychological and social variables when assessing the influence of brand polarization on purchasing behavior.

Objective 3: This study has shown that the role of cognitive processes namely cognitive dissonance was insignificant. The mediation analysis revealed that the relationship between brand polarization and brand loyalty does not have a significant mediating role of cognitive dissonance. This finding indicates that cognitive dissonance can be not so common and effective in the modern digital environment where consumers are systematically inundated with a variety of brand messages. There is a possibility that the same psychological discomfort is not experienced by consumers who are faced with a conflicting brand information and as such, the impact becomes limited in terms of creating loyalty with polarized brands.

Recommendations

- **Reconsider Brand Polarization Strategies:** Due to the poor correlation between brand polarization and brand loyalty found in this research, it can be suggested that brands revisit their dependence on polarization marketing strategies. Although these strategies can be effective in small markets, more generalized strategies should aim at establishing consumer interest through individual approach, customer care and development of authentic brand names that can be close to a larger population.

- **Cash In on Consumer Trust and Emotions:** Since emotional intensity did not play a significant mediating role between brand polarization and brand loyalty, the brands must emphasise on establishing trust and emotional relationships with the consumers. This is possible by maintaining brand messaging, open business operations and creation of sense of community around the brand. Emotional loyalty has been found to be a stronger motivator to the long-term consumer behavior compared to the use of polarization alone.
- **Carry on More Demographic and Cultural Research:** Future studies must look at the interaction between brand polarization and consumer demographics and cultural backgrounds, especially across age brackets, gender, and culture. The sample can be extended and diversified to various markets, which will give a better insight into how these aspects contribute to brand loyalty and polarization. Also, a study of the role of digital media and online communities in terms of driving these relationships may provide useful findings to brands that seek to keep consumers engaged in the digital era.

Limitations:

- **Sample Demographics:** Study sample was not representative of a more representative sample in terms of gender (female overrepresentation) and younger age groups (underrepresentation), which can bring some restrictions to the generalizability of the findings to a more diverse population. A more equalized demographical representation would give a better insight on brand polarization among the various categories of consumers.
- **Narrowness of the Variables:** The researchers placed much emphasis on the brand polarization and its interaction with loyalty, social identity, and cognitive processes, without factoring in other factors which may have influenced brand loyalty relationship, such as consumer trust, brand experience, and cultural effects, which would have given a holistic view of brand loyalty relationships.
- **Nature of the Data:** The research employed cross-sectional data, and this does not allow making any causal conclusions. To learn more about the evolution of brand polarization and its influence on consumer behavior over time, longitudinal research would be required, particularly in the constantly dynamic digital market.

REFERENCES

1. Min Han, Nam, H., & Swanepoel, D. (2023). Perceived brand localness of foreign brands and its impacts on brand trust and purchase intentions in developing countries in Asia: a social identity theory perspective. *International Marketing Review*, 40(6), 1297–1324.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-05-2022-0130>
2. Cheng, G., Han, X., Yu, W., & He, M. (2024). Customer engagement, moral identity and oppositional brand loyalty in virtual communities. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-11-2023-4831>
3. Graham, K. W., & Wilder, K. M. (2020). Consumer-brand identity and online advertising message elaboration: Effect on attitudes, purchase intent and willingness to share. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 14(1), 111–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-01-2019-0011>
4. L. Dey, B., Alwi, S. F. S., Babu, M. M., Roy, S. K., & Muhammad, S. S. (2022). Brexit or Brand it? the Effects of Attitude Towards Brexit and Reshored Brands on Consumer Purchase Intention. *British Journal of Management*, 34(3), 1215–1237.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12663>
5. Mesquita, E., Lopes, E., & Herrero, E. (2022). “What if a Person Gets the Vaccine and Turns into an Alligator?”: A Study of the Effect of Ideological Polarization on Purchase Intention. *Brazilian Business Review*, 19(5), 565–583.
<https://doi.org/10.15728/bbr.2022.19.5.6.en>
6. Osuna Ramírez, S. A. (2020). *Brand polarization: conceptualisation, antecedents and outcomes*. Theses.gla.ac.uk. <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/81346/>
7. Osuna Ramírez, S. A., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2019). I hate what you love: brand polarization and negativity towards brands as an opportunity for brand

- management. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(5), 614–632.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-03-2018-1811>
8. Schoenmueller, V., Netzer, O., & Stahl, F. (2022). Frontiers: Polarized America: From Political Polarization to Preference Polarization. *Marketing Science*, 42(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2022.1408>
 9. Vecchi, A., Silva, E. S., & Jimenez Angel, L. M. (2020). Nation branding, cultural identity and political polarization – an exploratory framework. *International Marketing Review*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-01-2019-0049>
 10. Xu, H., Rim, H., & Dong, C. (2024). The combined effects of consumer-company stance congruence and consumers' pre-existing corporate attitude in corporate social advocacy. *Public Relations Review*, 50(2), 102441–102441.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2024.102441>
 11. Zeqiri, J., Alserhan, B., Gleason, K., & Ramadani, V. (2022). Desecularization, Social Identity, and Consumer Intention to Purchase Religious Products. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 177, 121522.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.121522>
 12. Abitbol, A., & Sternadori, M. (2018). Championing Women's Empowerment as a Catalyst for Purchase Intentions: Testing the Mediating Roles of OPRs and Brand Loyalty in the Context of Femvertising. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 13(1), 22–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118x.2018.1552963>
 13. Chen, Y.-S., Chang, T.-W., Li, H.-X., & Chen, Y.-R. (2020). The Influence of Green Brand Affect on Green Purchase Intentions: The Mediation Effects of Green Brand Associations and Green Brand Attitude. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(11), 4089. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17114089>
 14. Elseidi, R., & El-Baz, D. (2016). Electronic word of mouth effects on consumers' brand attitudes, brand image and purchase intention: an empirical study in Egypt. *The*

- Business and Management Review*, 7(5).
https://cberuk.com/cdn/conference_proceedings/conference_46166.pdf
15. Graham, K. W., & Wilder, K. M. (2020). Consumer-brand identity and online advertising message elaboration: Effect on attitudes, purchase intent and willingness to share. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 14(1), 111–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-01-2019-0011>
16. Kamalaseena, B. D. T. M., & Sirisena, A. B. (2021). The Impact of Online Communities and E Word of mouth on Purchase Intention of Generation Y: The Mediating Role of Brand Trust. *Sri Lanka Journal of Marketing*, 7(1), 92.
<https://doi.org/10.4038/sljmuok.v7i1.58>
17. Klostermann, J., Hydock, C., & Decker, R. (2021). The effect of corporate political advocacy on brand perception: an event study analysis. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 31(5). <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-03-2021-3404>
18. Koorank Beheshti, M., Gopinath, M., Ashouri, S., & Zal, S. (2023). Does polarizing personality matter in influencer marketing? Evidence from Instagram. *Journal of Business Research*, 160, 113804. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113804>
19. Schäfer, S. (2020). Illusion of knowledge through Facebook news? Effects of snack news in a news feed on perceived knowledge, attitude strength, and willingness for discussions. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 103, 1–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.08.031>
20. Yu, M., Liu, F., Lee, J., & Soutar, G. (2018). The Influence of Negative Publicity on Brand equity: attribution, image, Attitude and Purchase Intention. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 27(4), 440–451. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-01-2017-1396>
21. Zhao, P., Ma, Z., Gill, T., & Ranaweera, C. (2023). Social media sentiment polarization and its impact on product adoption. *Marketing Letters*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-023-09664-9>

22. Ahn, J., & Back, K.-J. (2018). The structural effects of affective and cognitive elaboration in formation of customer–brand relationship. *The Service Industries Journal*, *40*(3-4), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2018.1460358>
23. Chen, R., & Yan, H. (2023). Effects of Knowledge Anxiety and Cognitive Processing Bias on Brand Avoidance during COVID-19: The Mediating Role of Attachment Anxiety and Herd Mentality. *Sustainability*, *15*(8), 6978. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086978>
24. Han, S. H., Chen, C.-H. S., & Lee, T. J. (2021). The interaction between individual cultural values and the cognitive and social processes of global restaurant brand equity. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *94*, 102847. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102847>
25. Júnior, J. R. de O., Limongi, R., Lim, W. M., Eastman, J. K., & Kumar, S. (2022). A story to sell: The influence of storytelling on consumers' purchasing behavior. *Psychology & Marketing*, *40*(2), 239–261. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21758>
26. Laaksonen, S.-M., Falco, A., Salminen, M., Aula, P., & Ravaja, N. (2019). Brand as a cognitive mediator: investigating the effect of media brands as a structural feature of textual news messages. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *28*(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-01-2017-1394>
27. Mafael, A., Gottschalk, S. A., & Kreis, H. (2016). Examining Biased Assimilation of Brand-related Online Reviews. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *36*(1), 91–106. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2016.06.002>
28. Maier, E., & Mafael, A. (2024). Adbusting: How advertising altered by activists affects brands. *Psychology & Marketing*, *41*(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21961>
29. Peterson, M., AlShebil, S., & Bishop, M. (2015). Cognitive and emotional processing of brand logo changes. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *24*(7), 745–757. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-03-2015-0823>

30. Shin, M., & Back, K.-J. (2019). Effect of Cognitive Engagement on the Development of Brand Love in a Hotel Context. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 44(2), 328–350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348019890055>
31. Zhang, X. (2020). The Influences of Brand Awareness on Consumers' Cognitive Process: An Event-Related Potentials Study. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 14(1). *Frontiersin*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2020.00549>
32. Hayes, J. L., Britt, B. C., Evans, W., Rush, S. W., Towery, N. A., & Adamson, A. C. (2020). Can Social Media Listening Platforms' Artificial Intelligence Be Trusted? Examining the Accuracy of Crimson Hexagon's (Now Brandwatch Consumer Research's) AI-Driven Analyses. *Journal of Advertising*, 50(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2020.1809576>
33. Marticotte, F., Arcand, M., & Baudry, D. (2016). The impact of brand evangelism on oppositional referrals towards a rival brand. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(6), 538–549. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-06-2015-0920>
34. Matos, G., Vinuales, G., & Sheinin, D. A. (2017). The Power of Politics in Branding. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 25(2), 125–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2016.1270768>
35. Meng, L. (Monroe), Duan, S., Zhao, Y., Lü, K., & Chen, S. (2021). The impact of online celebrity in livestreaming E-commerce on purchase intention from the perspective of emotional contagion. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 63(63), 102733. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102733>
36. Pathak, X., & Pathak-Shelat, M. (2017). Sentiment analysis of virtual brand communities for effective tribal marketing. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 11(1), 16–38. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-09-2015-0069>
37. Rahimah, A., Dang, H. P., Nguyen, T. T., Cheng, J. M.-S., & Kusumawati, A. (2022). The subsequent effects of negative emotions: from brand hate to anti-brand consumption

- behavior under moderating mechanisms. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 32(4). <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-12-2021-3778>
38. Ruiz-Mafe, C., Bigné-Alcañiz, E., & Currás-Pérez, R. (2020). The effect of emotions, eWOM quality and online review sequence on consumer intention to follow advice obtained from digital services. *Journal of Service Management, ahead-of-print*(ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/josm-11-2018-0349>
39. Visentin, M., Pizzi, G., & Pichierri, M. (2019). Fake News, Real Problems for Brands: The Impact of Content Truthfulness and Source Credibility on consumers' Behavioral Intentions toward the Advertised Brands. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45(1), 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.09.001>
40. Yu, M., Liu, F., Lee, J., & Soutar, G. (2018). The Influence of Negative Publicity on Brand equity: attribution, image, Attitude and Purchase Intention. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 27(4), 440–451. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-01-2017-1396>
41. Yu, Y., Yang, Y., Huang, J., & Tan, Y. (2023). Unifying Algorithmic and Theoretical Perspectives: Emotions in Online Reviews and Sales. *MIS Quarterly*, 47(1), 127–160. <https://doi.org/10.25300/misq/2022/16600>
42. Bentley. (2024). *Devaluing Public Apologies in the Age of Social Media*. Google Books. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4RkIEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Different+Cultures+or+Brand+Type+Influence+on+Intention+to+Buy+and+Brand+Polarization&ots=D7Gj42wzLD&sig=a8AkwsSI-qc5ZmExsfqDII8p4zA>
43. Brodowsky, G., Stewart, K., & Anderson, B. (2017). Brand and Country Influences on Purchase Intentions: A Theory-Of-Reasoned Action Approach. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 24(2), 251–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2017.1360822>
44. Gürhan-Canli, Z., Sarial-Abi, G., & Hayran, C. (2018). Consumers and Brands across the Globe: Research Synthesis and New Directions. *Journal of International Marketing*, 26(1), 96–117. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jim.17.0063>

45. Hajdas, M., Radomska, J., Szpulak, A., & Silva, S. C. (2022). Conflicting consumer cultures, shopping rituals, and the challenges of measuring consumer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2022.2080714>
46. Jakubanecs, A., Supphellen, M., Helgeson, J. G., Haugen, H. M., & Sivertstøl, N. (2022). The impact of cultural variability on brand stereotype, emotion and purchase intention. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 40(1), 112–123. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-01-2022-5121>
47. Lee, E., M. Edwards, S., Youn, S., & Yun, T. (2014). Understanding the moderating effect of motivational values on young consumers' responses to luxury brands: A cross-cultural study of South Korea and the USA. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 24(2), 103–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2014.975830>
48. Milfeld, T., & Flint, D. J. (2020). When brands take a stand: the nature of consumers' polarized reactions to social narrative videos. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(4). <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-10-2019-2606>
49. Steenkamp, J.-B. E. M. (2019). Global versus Local Consumer Culture: Theory, Measurement, and Future Research Directions. *Journal of International Marketing*, 27(1), 1–19.
50. Vecchi, A., Silva, E. S., & Jimenez Angel, L. M. (2020). Nation branding, cultural identity and political polarization – an exploratory framework. *International Marketing Review*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-01-2019-0049>
51. Yu, M., Liu, F., Lee, J., & Soutar, G. (2018). The Influence of Negative Publicity on Brand equity: attribution, image, Attitude and Purchase Intention. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 27(4), 440–451. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-01-2017-1396>
52. C. Min Han, Nam, H., & Swanepoel, D. (2023). Perceived brand localness of foreign brands and its impacts on brand trust and purchase intentions in developing countries in

- Asia: a social identity theory perspective. *International Marketing Review*, 40(6), 1297–1324. <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-05-2022-0130>
53. Elbedweihy, A. (2014). *Conceptualisation, Measurement, and Validation of Consumer-Brand Identification: A Social Identity Theory Perspective*.
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/556179766.pdf>
54. Mittal, S., Gupta, V., & Mottiani, M. (2022). Examining the linkages between employee brand love, affective commitment, positive word-of-mouth, and turnover intentions: A social identity theory perspective. *IIMB Management Review*, 34(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2022.04.002>
55. Wang, X., & Binti Omar, N. A. (2023). Nexus between Brand Love, Loyalty, Affective Commitment and Positive Word of Mouth: In the Context of Social Identity Theory. *Sustainability*, 15(4), 3813. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043813>
56. Kitchen, P. J., Kerr, G., Schultz, D. E., McColl, R., & Pals, H. (2014). The elaboration likelihood model: Review, critique and research agenda. *European Journal of Marketing*, 48(11/12), 2033–2050. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-12-2011-0776>
57. Moradi, M., & Zihagh, F. (2022). A meta-analysis of the elaboration likelihood model in the electronic word of mouth literature. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 46(5), 1900–1918. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12814>
58. O’Keefe. (2025). *The SAGE Handbook of Persuasion*. Google Books.
<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ZO1yAwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA137&dq=Elaboration+Likelihood+Model&ots=-kq5ZrO0m5&sig=iRCYHwpD1gFgBjvHq6Ly6MESZc>
59. Shahab, M. H., Ghazali, E., & Mohtar, M. (2021). The role of elaboration likelihood model in consumer behaviour research and its extension to new technologies: A review and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45(4), 664–689.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ijcs.12658>

60. Eduardo, L., Sinval, J., & Isler, C. A. (2024). Prospective avenues in travel behavior research supported by the cognitive dissonance theory: A scoping review. *Transportation Research Part F Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*, 109, 501–519. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trf.2024.12.022>
61. Tovmasyan, G. (2023). How Do Psychological Factors, Cognitive Biases and Cognitive Dissonance Affect the Work Performance and Decision Making? *Sumdu.edu.ua*. <https://essuir.sumdu.edu.ua/handle/123456789/93127>
62. Tretter, F., & Löffler-Stastka, H. (2024). Cognitive dissonance and mindset perturbations during crisis: “eco-socio-psycho-somatic” perspectives. *World Journal of Psychiatry*, 14(2), 215–224. <https://doi.org/10.5498/wjp.v14.i2.215>
63. Whitaker, R. M., Colombo, G. B., Turner, L., Dunham, Y., Doyle, D. K., Roy, E. M., & Giammanco, C. A. (2021). The Coevolution of Social Networks and Cognitive Dissonance. *IEEE Transactions on Computational Social Systems*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1109/tcss.2021.3090833>
64. Gansser, O. A., & Reich, C. S. (2022). Influence of the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) and environmental concerns on pro-environmental behavioral intention based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 382, 134629. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.134629>
65. Maheshwari, G., & Kha, K. L. (2021). Investigating the relationship between educational support and entrepreneurial intention in Vietnam: The mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the theory of planned behavior. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 20(2), 100553. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100553>
66. Pillai, S. G., Kim, W. G., Haldorai, K., & Kim, H.-S. (2022). Online food delivery services and consumers’ purchase intention: Integration of theory of planned behavior, theory of perceived risk, and the elaboration likelihood model. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 105, 103275. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103275>

67. Su, Y., Zhu, Z., Chen, J., Jin, Y., Wang, T., Lin, C.-L., & Xu, D. (2021). Factors Influencing Entrepreneurial Intention of University Students in China: Integrating the Perceived University Support and Theory of Planned Behavior. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4519. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084519>
68. Cheek, J. M., Tropp, L. R., Underwood, M. K., & Cheek, N. N. (2013, January). The distinction between social and collective identity orientations in the aspects of identity questionnaire. In *Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology*.
69. Bhutto, M. H., Tariq, B., Azhar, S., Ahmed, K., Khuwaja, F. M., & Han, H. (2022). Predicting consumer purchase intention toward hybrid vehicles: testing the moderating role of price sensitivity. *European Business Review*, 34(1), 62-84.
70. McMullan, R. (2005). A multiple-item scale for measuring customer loyalty development. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(7), 470-481.
71. Barnard, E. (2025, November 4). *52 consumer behavior survey questions for expert customer insights*. AskAttest. https://www.askattest.com/blog/articles/consumer-behavior-survey-questions?utm_
72. Ramírez, S. A. O., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2024). On the antipodes of love and hate: The conception and measurement of brand polarization. *Journal of Business Research*, 179, 114687.
73. Ramírez, S. A. O., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2024). On the antipodes of love and hate: The conception and measurement of brand polarization. *Journal of Business Research*, 179, 114687.
74. Osuna Ramírez, S. A. (2020). *Brand polarization: conceptualisation, antecedents and outcomes* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow).
75. Fetscherin, M. (2019). The five types of brand hate: How they affect consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 101, 116-127.
76. Ramírez, S. A. O., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2024). On the antipodes of love and hate: The conception and measurement of brand polarization. *Journal of Business Research*, 179, 114687.

77. Rodrigues, P., Sousa, A., & Borges, A. P. (2025). Do You Love Me, or Do You Hate Me? Bad Communication's Effect on Low-Cost Airline Brand. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 20(2), 188-208.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in our survey. This survey aims to understand consumer brand loyalty and the factors that influence brand identification. The data we collect will be used to gain insights into how customers perceive Brand X and how brand personality influences customer loyalty. All responses are confidential and will be used solely for research purposes.

The aim of this survey is to assess how brand personality and brand identification affect consumer loyalty towards Brand X. Your responses will help shape the understanding of brand loyalty in the current market.

Screening Questions

1. **Are you currently a customer of Brand X?**
 - Yes
 - No
2. **Have you purchased a product from Brand X in the last 6 months?**
 - Yes
 - No
3. **Do you follow Brand X on social media platforms?**
 - Yes
 - No

Demographic Questions

4. **What is your age?**
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55+
5. **What is your gender?**
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other

Social identity

Cheek, J. M., Tropp, L. R., Underwood, M. K., & Cheek, N. N. (2013, January). The distinction between social and collective identity orientations in the aspects of identity questionnaire. In *Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology*.

My popularity with other people

The ways in which other people react to what I say and do

My physical appearance: my height, my weight, and the shape of my body

My reputation, what others think of me .

My attractiveness to other people

My gestures and mannerisms, the impression I make on others

My social behavior, such as the way I act when meeting people

Collective Identity Items

Cheek, J. M., Tropp, L. R., Underwood, M. K., & Cheek, N. N. (2013, January). The distinction between social and collective identity orientations in the aspects of identity questionnaire. In *Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology*.

Being a part of the many generations of my family

My race or ethnic background

My religion

Places where I live or was raised

My feelings of belonging to my community

My feelings of pride in my country, being proud to be a citizen

My commitments on political issues or my political activities

My language, such as my regional accent or dialect or a second language that I know

Consumer Purchase Intention

Bhutto, M. H., Tariq, B., Azhar, S., Ahmed, K., Khuwaja, F. M., & Han, H. (2022). Predicting consumer purchase intention toward hybrid vehicles: testing the moderating role of price sensitivity. *European Business Review*, 34(1), 62-84.

I intend to purchase green automobile product in the future

I will try to consider buying green automobile product

I plan to switch my conventional automobile product with green automobile product in the future

It is acceptable to pay 30% more for green automobile product than for non-green automobile product

I am willing to pay 30% more for green automobile product than for non-green automobile product

I can afford to spend an extra Rs 300,000 to buy green automobile product

Subjective Norm

Bhutto, M. H., Tariq, B., Azhar, S., Ahmed, K., Khuwaja, F. M., & Han, H. (2022). Predicting consumer purchase intention toward hybrid vehicles: testing the moderating role of price sensitivity. *European Business Review*, 34(1), 62-84.

Most people who are important to me think I should use green automobile products

Because I care about the people whom I value influence me to use green automobile products

Brand Loyalty

McMullan, R. (2005). A multiple-item scale for measuring customer loyalty development. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(7), 470-481.

- “I will *continue buying* this brand even if it costs more.”
- “I *recommend* this brand to others.”
- “I prefer this brand over all others.”

Consumer Behavior

Barnard, E. (2025, November 4). *52 consumer behavior survey questions for expert customer insights*. AskAttest. <https://www.askattest.com/blog/articles/consumer-behavior-survey-questions?utm>

- “I often *seek information* about brands before buying.”
- “I choose brands that *reflect my identity*.”
- “I consider *social opinions* before making a purchase.”

Brand Polarization with Brand Passion and Self Brand Benchmarking

Brand Passion

Ramírez, S. A. O., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2024). On the antipodes of love and hate: The conception and measurement of brand polarization. *Journal of Business Research*, 179, 114687.

I am passionate about this brand

I have extreme emotions for this brand

This brand arouses intense feelings

I have strong feelings for this brand

I have almost an obsessive feeling for this brand

Self Brand Benchmarking

Ramírez, S. A. O., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2024). On the antipodes of love and hate: The conception and measurement of brand polarization. *Journal of Business Research*, 179, 114687.

When I think about myself, I can use this brand as a means to express my identity

When I think about myself, I can use this brand as a means to describe my personality

When I think about myself, I can use this brand as a means to present who I am

When I think about myself, I can use this brand as a means to reveal my values

I can compare myself with this brand

When I think about myself, I can use this brand as a means to explain my character

Appendix B: Hypothesis 2 Results of Mediation

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4
Y : brandloy
X : brandpol
M : socialid

Sample
Size: 122

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
socialid

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.0468	.0022	2.1398	.2635	1.0000	120.0000	.6087

Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.7073	.3122	8.6705	.0000	2.0891	3.3255
brandpol	.0488	.0950	.5133	.6087	-.1394	.2369

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

brandloy

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.1563	.0244	1.9397	1.4892	2.0000	119.0000	.2297

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.9964	.3791	7.9032	.0000	2.2456	3.7471
brandpol	.0980	.0906	1.0823	.2813	-.0813	.2774
socialid	-.1211	.0869	-1.3934	.1661	-.2932	.0510

***** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.0980	.0906	1.0823	.2813	-.0813	.2774

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
socialid	-.0059	.0153	-.0404

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

WARNING: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output when some variables in the data file have the same first eight characters. Shorter variable names are recommended. By using this output, you are accepting all risk and consequences of interpreting or reporting results that may be incorrect.

----- END MATRIX -----

Appendix C: Hypothesis 3 Results of Mediation

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4
Y : brandloy
X : brandpol
M : cognitiv

Sample
Size: 122

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
cognitiv

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.0596	.0036	1.9663	.4281	1.0000	120.0000	.5142

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.8636	.2993	9.5672	.0000	2.2710	3.4562
brandpol	.0596	.0911	.6543	.5142	-.1208	.2400

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
brandloy

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.1435	.0206	1.9473	1.2512	2.0000	119.0000	.2899

Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.3531	.3955	5.9501	.0000	1.5700	3.1362
brandpol	.0856	.0908	.9421	.3480	-.0943	.2654
cognitiv	.1101	.0908	1.2123	.2278	-.0698	.2900

***** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.0856	.0908	.9421	.3480	-.0943	.2654

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
cognitiv	.0066	.0151	-.0185 .0443

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

WARNING: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output when some variables in the data file have the same first eight characters. Shorter variable names are recommended. By using this output, you are accepting all risk and consequences of interpreting or reporting results that may be incorrect.

----- END MATRIX -----

Appendix D: Hypothesis 4 Mediation

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4
 Y : brandloy
 X : brandpol
 M : emotiona

Sample
 Size: 122

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

emotiona

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.0459	.0021	2.3334	.2531	1.0000	120.0000	.6159

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.2059	.3261	9.8322	.0000	2.5603	3.8515
brandpol	-.0499	.0992	-.5030	.6159	-.2464	.1466

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

brandloy

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.0938	.0088	1.9707	.5286	2.0000	119.0000	.5908

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.7201	.4027	6.7555	.0000	1.9228	3.5174
brandpol	.0913	.0913	1.0003	.3192	-.0895	.2721
emotiona	-.0161	.0839	-.1919	.8481	-.1822	.1500

***** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.0913	.0913	1.0003	.3192	-.0895	.2721

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
--------	--------	----------	----------

emotiona .0008 .0089 -.0162 .0221

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

WARNING: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output when some variables in the data file have the same first eight characters. Shorter variable names are recommended. By using this output, you are accepting all risk and consequences of interpreting or reporting results that may be incorrect.

----- END MATRIX -----

Appendix E: Hypothesis 5 Results of Mediation

Run MATRIX procedure:

***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 *****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

Model : 4
Y : brandloy
X : brandpol
M : brandtyp

Sample
Size: 122

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
brandtyp

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.0693	.0048	1.9798	.5798	1.0000	120.0000	.4479

Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.0432	.3003	10.1324	.0000	2.4485	3.6378
brandpol	-.0696	.0914	-.7615	.4479	-.2506	.1114

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

brandloy

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.1790	.0320	1.9245	1.9692	2.0000	119.0000	.1441

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2.2026	.4034	5.4605	.0000	1.4039	3.0013
brandpol	.1028	.0903	1.1377	.2575	-.0761	.2817
brandtyp	.1531	.0900	1.7010	.0916	-.0251	.3313

***** DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.1028	.0903	1.1377	.2575	-.0761	.2817

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
brandtyp	-.0107	.0173	-.0523 .0162

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:

95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:

5000

WARNING: Variables names longer than eight characters can produce incorrect output when some variables in the data file have the same first eight characters. Shorter variable names are recommended. By using this output, you are accepting all risk and consequences of interpreting or reporting results that may be incorrect.

----- END MATRIX -----