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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Brand Recognition and Benefits on Consumer Relationship Quality: A Case Study of Habib Gulzar's Food Products

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| ABSTRACT
In this research, we investigated the impact of brand recognition and benefits on the quality of consumer relationships, specifically focusing on consumers of Habib Gulzar's food products. The study was conducted using a sample size of approximately 384 people, determined through Cochran's formula for unknown population size. Data were collected through a standard questionnaire utilizing a stratified random sampling method. The validity of variables and resulting indicators were assessed using confirmatory factor analysis, and the research hypotheses were tested using a structural equation model. The findings indicated that brand recognition and benefits had a positive and direct influence on customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment. However, the effect of customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment on customer loyalty was found to be inconclusive.

| KEYWORDS

Brand Recognition, Brand Benefits, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Commitment, Customer Trust, and Customer Loyalty.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction
The concept of brand name has a very long history, so some researchers have attributed it to the ancient Egyptian and even older periods. The same old concept is an important part of the product from the viewpoint of consumers; the designation of the brand name adds to the value of the product. The most obvious professional skill of marketers is their ability to create, maintain, care and promote the brand (Kotler, 2001). Brand in the marketing literature is one of the most important concepts in the world and has been researched a lot. Every day, a new aspect of the brand is discussed. Today, companies make huge investments in brand creation in most economic sectors, even in food markets and agricultural and high-tech products. We are witnessing the emergence of countless new brands that are traditionally repelled in this regard (Jalazada & Ekhtiyari, 2009). Product-based trademarks are distinguished on the basis of product shape, composition, performance, compatibility, durability, reliability, repairability, style, and design. As for the service, it includes ease of ordering, delivery, installation, customer training, customer consultation, maintenance and, repair. A company's reputation is based on the quality of its product recognition (Kotler *et al.*, 2006). The name and mark of the product in the customer's mind evoke an image of quality in her/his mind, which will be the primary motivation to stimulate her/him to buy a particular product. Names and trademarks vary in terms of strength and value across the market, and a strong brand name is worth a lot (Vraneševic & Stančec, 2003).

Today is the era of persistent changes and flexibilities that have a deep impact on organizations; hence, organizations, in order to maintain their survival, need to adjust directly or indirectly to the changes that threaten them. In competitive markets, there is an urgent need for flexibility and responsiveness in the organization. Many organizations are faced with increasingly persistent and hesitant competition, which has become more intense through technological innovations, changing market environments, and the changing needs of customers, causing major reforms in the vision of the organization's strategy and revision of traditional patterns

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and, in some instances even contemporary patterns. Consequently, the increasing awareness of customers' expectations leads service providers to inspect the role of marketing strategy in providing product profitability so that they can transform their organization into a customer-oriented and competitive environment (Jelodar *et al.*, 2012). The brand makes organizations exceptional. The wonderful experience of using a brand can cause satisfaction, strong trust, and, as a result, commitment towards that brand. Research has shown that trust is closely related to love and intimacy and is considered one of the most important prerequisites for creating commitment in marketing. On the other hand, customers who are committed to a brand and love that brand become loyal and encourage others to buy from that brand. Loyal customers create profitability, make higher repurchases, and increase the market share. Studying the recognition and benefits of the relationship between brand and consumer is the ultimate goal for many companies that seek to build sustainable and profitable relationships with their customers. Such favorable and strong relationships can create advantages like creating obstacles for competitors to enter the market, reducing price sensitivity, reducing marketing costs, increasing market share, and building positive word-of-mouth advertising (Motaharinejad *et al.,* 2014). The importance of perceived value has been considered in several studies in recent years. Undoubtedly, providing the best possible value to customers is an important topic for service companies in the current competitive market. Companies with the ability to provide valuable service products will gain an important competitive advantage. Customer loyalty and perceived value are essential for organizations and, therefore, have become the focus of marketing strategies in recent years (Ibrahimi & Mansori, 2012). Due to the necessity of this topic, it is essential to address the significant factors that can affect customer loyalty to a brand, which, without it, will be quite difficult for business organizations to identify the benefits of the brand and customer loyalty to the brand. When consumers do not know the brand and its benefits, will not be interested in buying and consuming the product. For this reason, necessary and appropriate measures is required towards brand cognition and benefits and its influence on the quality of customer relationships and loyalty.

Undeniably, it is necessary to bring up organizational systems to a global level in order to have a dynamic organizational future and economic standing in today's highly competitive world. Henceforth, key factors of global changes that caused the brand names to become increasingly essential are the collapse of market boundaries, globalization and the expansion of global trademarks, increasing market segments, creating diversity and shorter life cycles, attracting more customers, electronic commerce, and economic and market instability. Therefore, according to the importance of this problem, the current research tries to investigate the effect of brand cognition and benefits on the loyalty and quality of customer relations, taking the case of consumers of Habib Gulzar's food products with the following objectives:

- Identifying the effect of brand recognition on customer satisfaction;
- Identifying the effect of brand recognition on customer trust;
- Identifying the effect of brand recognition on customer commitment;
- Identifying the effect of brand benefits on customer satisfaction;
- Identifying the effect of brand benefits on customer trust;
- Identifying the effect of brand benefits on customer commitment;
- Identifying the effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty;
- Identifying the effect of customer trust on customer loyalty;
- Identifying the effect of customer commitment on customer loyalty.

Consequently, research hypotheses were established as follows:

H1: Brand recognition affects customer satisfaction.
H2: Brand recognition affects customer trust.
H3: Brand recognition affects customer commitment.
H4: Brand benefits affect customer satisfaction.
H5: Brand benefits influence customer trust.
H6: Brand benefits influence customer commitment.
H7: Customer satisfaction affects customer loyalty.
H8: Customer trust affects customer loyalty.
H9: Customer commitment affects customer loyalty.

Finally, the conceptual model of the research was designed using (Ibrahimi & Mansori, 2012; Shahrokh et al., 2022 & Kamboj, 2018) in Figure 1 as follows:

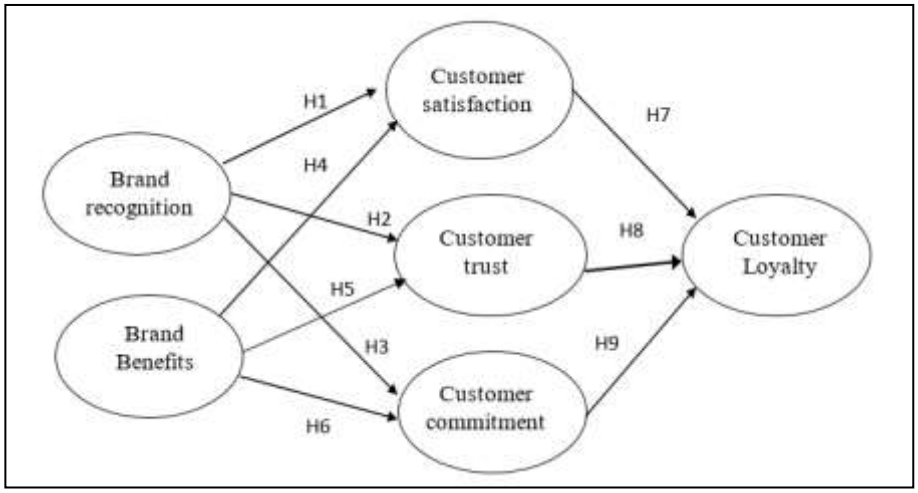

Figure 1: Conceptual model of the research

2. Methodology

The current applied research examines the effect of brand recognition and benefits on the quality of customer relationships among the consumers of Habib Gulzar's food products. Habib Gulzar Production Company, which includes factories producing ice cream, mineral water, juices, non-alcoholic beverages, and machine repair, started operating in 2003. The company has an initial capital of $ 2.157 million. Habib Gulzar company has been able to provide employment opportunities for (530) people, including (130) foreign citizens in Afghanistan. The company has branches in six zones of the country, namely, Balkh, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Herat, Parwan and Kunduz provinces. In addition to working in the distribution of Coca-Cola products in Afghanistan, Habib Gulzar also represents products of Toyota, Japan Tobacco International, Continental Biscuit and Kraft. Further, the company operates in the export and import sectors. The food products that Habib Gulzar Company imports are Nestlé milk, Cream, Maggi, Biscuits and Cerelac.

The statistical population of this research included the consumers of Habib Gulzar's food products, to whom the questionnaires were provided through grocery stores.

2.1 Sample Size and Data Collection

Because the number of consumers of this product is unknown, samples were collected from the target community using a stratified random sampling method. Cochran's formula with unknown population size (equation 1) was applied to determine the sample size, and a total of (384) samples with a given confidence interval of 95%, proportion of the population (p) of 0.5 and margin of error of 5% were interviewed. These values were assigned after sufficient literature studies in the field.

$$n = \frac{Z^2pq}{e^2} = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384.16 \qquad Equation\ 1$$

(Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012)

The questionnaire was the primary tool for collecting information. The questionnaire used in this research was extracted from the article of (Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012). The measurement level of the questionnaire is interval based on a 5-point Likert scale in the positive direction of 1 indicating completely disagree, and 5 completely agree. A brief of each dimension and the number of questions allocated to each dimension is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of dimensions and number of questions related to each dimension considered in the questionnaire

Notion	Dimensions	Number of Questions
The effect of brand recognition and benefits on the quality of customer relationships	Brand cognition	1-2
	Brand Benefits	3-5
	Customer Satisfaction	6-8
	Customer trust	9-10
	Customer Commitment	11-15
	Customer loyalty	16-18

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha. To check the reliability, 30 questionnaires were distributed, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was subsequently calculated. The results of the reliability calculation are presented in Table 2. Since the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was above 0.7 in all items, it is concluded that the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 2: Results of the reliability test

Notion	Dimension	Order	Items	Item Reliability	Dimension Reliability
The effect of brand recognition and benefits on the quality of customer relationships	Brand cognition	1	The logo catches my attention.	.738	.755
		2	Logo helps in brand recognition.	.758	
	Brand benefits	3	This trademark guarantees my security in interacting with the company.	.749	.752
		4	Trademark provides me with pleasant moments.	.742	
		5	The logo leads me to care about my health as a human being.	.740	
	Customer satisfaction	6	I am satisfied with this brand name.	.749	.752
		7	I am happy to use this trademark. I am happy to use this trademark.	.773	
		8	I am happy to use this trademark. I am happy to use this trademark.	.766	
	Customer trust	9	It is a trusted brand name.	.767	.753
		10	This brand name fulfills its promises (does not break promises).	.752	
	Customer commitment	11	I feel loyal to this brand.	.752	
		12	Even if this name and brand become hard to come by, I still tend to buy from this brand.	.739	
		13	I am committed to continuing the relationship with this brand name.	.761	
		14	The association with this brand name is something I have had in mind for a long time.	.755	
		15	I try to maintain my relationship with this brand name.	.754	
	Customer loyalty	16	I recommend the use of products of this brand name to others.	.749	.753
		17	I prefer using the products of this brand to other brands.	.773	
		18	I intend to continue using the products of this brand name.	.766	
Total Reliability				.762	

2.2 Data Analysis

Relevant inferential statistics were applied for data analysis and testing hypotheses. In the first stage, the normality of the data was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the relationship between the variables was checked using the correlation coefficient. Further, to examine the validity of the research variables and the resulting indicators, confirmatory factor analysis was used, and the analysing method of the confirmatory factor analysis was adopted (Rasoli & Amini, 2022). Finally, using the structural equation model, which indeed is a combination of a path analysis diagram and confirmatory factor analysis, the research hypotheses were tested. Although regression analysis is suggested in such a context, and some researchers achieved significant results, including (Rasoli et al., 2021), we opted to utilize structural equation modeling, which is a general and powerful multivariate analysis technique from the multivariate regression family, in other words; it is an extension of the general linear model that allows

researchers to test a set of regression equations simultaneously. Structural equation modeling is a comprehensive statistical approach for testing hypotheses concerning the effect between observed and latent variables, which is sometimes called structural covariance analysis and causal modeling (Bowen & Guo, 2011). Nevertheless, the dominant term these days is structural equation modeling or SEM. In examining the structural part of the model, the relationships between internal and external latent variables (independent and dependent latent variables) are considered. The goal is to determine whether the theoretical relationships between the variables considered by the researcher in the development stage of the conceptual framework have been confirmed by the data.

The model was implemented using Lisrel 8/8 software, and SPSS21 software was used for descriptive statistics, KMO and data normality tests.

3. Result and discussion

In this section, a detailed result of the present work is provided under different subsections.

3.1 Mean and standard deviation of research variables

After entering the collected data into the SPSS software, mean and standard deviations were calculated for each variable, and the results are depicted in Table 3. Since the mean of most of the items is greater than 3, indicates most of the people quantified a value higher than the average value of 3.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of research variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Brand cognition	2.966	.71273
Brand benefits	3.026	.70013
Customer satisfaction	3.044	.71582
Customer loyalty	3.010	.70425
Customer commitment	2.995	.72980
Customer trust	3.023	.72405

3.2 Normality Test of Variables

Before testing research hypotheses, the normality assumption of the data was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to select the type of statistic for testing hypotheses. This test is used to check the claim made about the data distribution of a quantitative variable. The statistical assumptions related to normal distribution are presented as follows:

H_0: The data has a normal distribution.

H_1: The data do not have a normal distribution.

The results of this test are given in Table 4. Because the significance level of the research variables is greater than 0.05 and the value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is between +1.96 and -1.96, the null hypothesis is confirmed; hence, we conclude that the distribution of these variables is normally distributed.

Table 4: Test statistic and significance level of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of research variables

Variables	Test statistic	Significance	Test result
Brand cognition	.232	.912	Normal
Brand benefits	.507	.823	Normal
Customer satisfaction	1.022	.412	Normal
Customer loyalty	.714	.702	Normal
Customer Commitment	.858	.571	Normal
Customer trust	.858	.571	Normal

3.3 Estimating Parameters of the Model

Confirmatory factor analysis is used to analyze the internal structure of the questionnaire and determine the fundamental factors of each structure or existing variable. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis was used to extract and interpret equations related to each latent variable.

The factor loadings of the model in non-standardized and standardized estimation models show the influence of each of the variables or items in explaining the variance of the variable or main factor scores. In other words, the factor load indicates the

degree of correlation of each observed variable (questionnaire question) with the latent variable (factors). The test that is used to measure the significance of the coefficients is the t-test, and the assumptions are as follows:

H_0: The value of the coefficient is zero

H_1: The value of the opposite coefficient is zero

If the statistic value of the test variable is higher than 1.96, it indicates that the measured item is significant; otherwise, the item is removed.

Before conducting factor analysis, it must be ensured whether the available data can be used for further analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index is used to ensure the adequacy of sampling. This index is in the range of 0 to 1; if the value of the index is close to 1, the desired data are suitable for factor analysis; otherwise, the results of factor analysis are not suitable for the desired data (table 5).

Table 5: Bartlett's test and KMO for factor analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.796
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1209.610
	Significant	.000

Table 5 shows the results of KMO for sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test for the appropriateness of the correlation between observations to be used in factor analysis. Since the value of the KMO is high and Bartlett's test is significant, the number of samples is sufficient to perform factor analysis, and the correlation between observations is appropriate.

Later, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted again to measure the significance of the items of the research variables and the results are depicted in Figures 2 and 3.

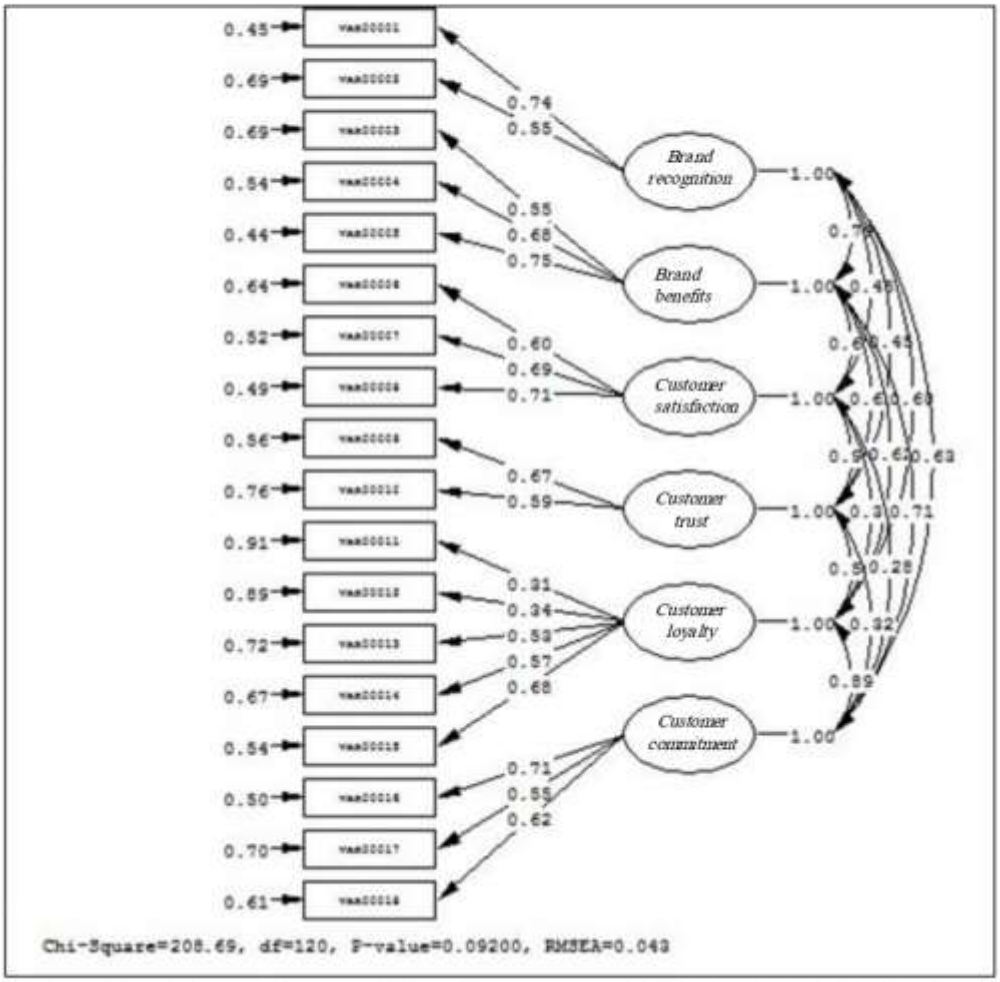

Figure 2: Confirmatory factor analysis of the research variables (standardized estimation)

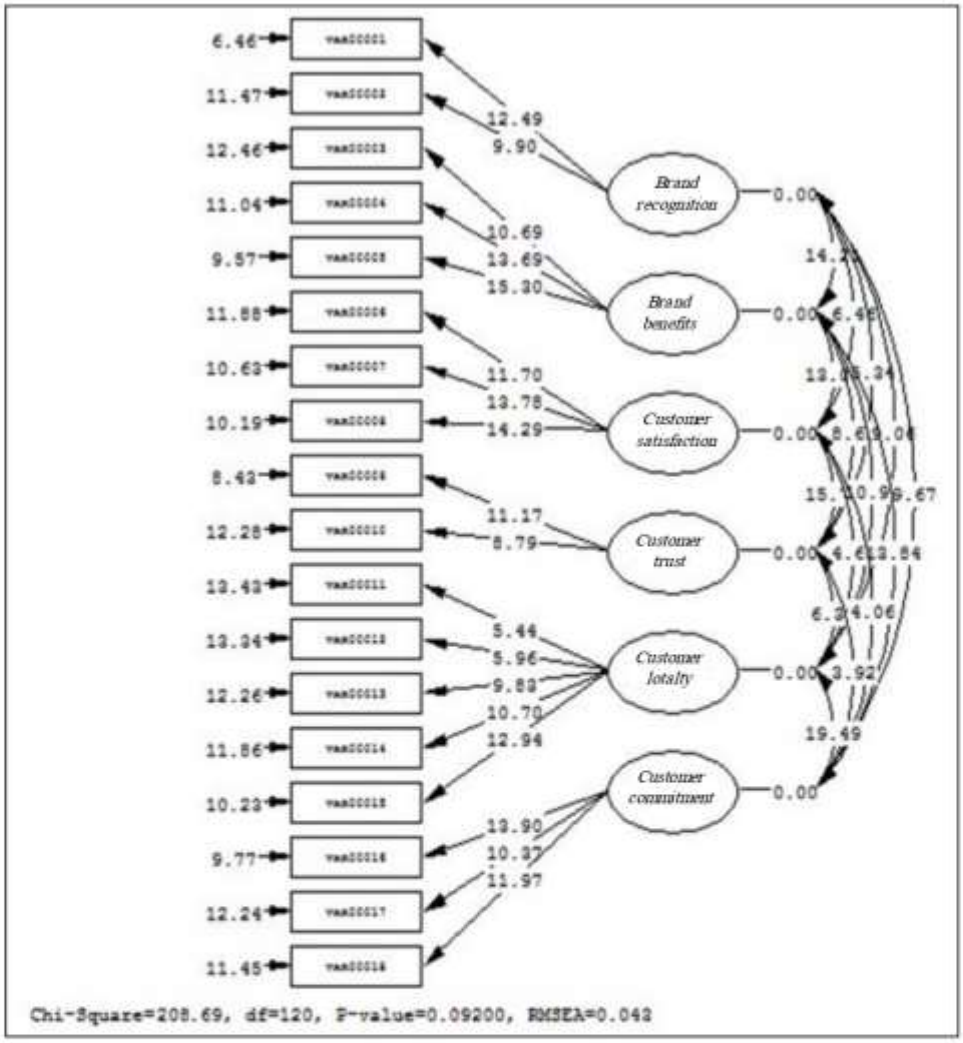

Figure 3: Confirmatory factor analysis of the research variables (Significance of coefficients)

The results of factor analysis (figure 2 & 3) exposed that all the indicators related to the research variables have acceptable t-statistic values of greater than 1.96 and factor loading greater than 0.5; hence, they are considered suitable items for explaining the research variables except for items 11 and 12.

3.4 Model Fit Assessment

There are several indicators to assess the model fit. Among them, the ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom, P-value and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are the most useful for this purpose. Lisrel software provides several statistics regarding model fit indices, and the results of these indices are delivered in Table 6.

The goodness of fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) indicate how good the model is. Related literature recommends a value of greater than 0.9 to be perfect goodness-of-fit indices. Root Mean Square Residuals (RMR) index and Standardized Root Mean Square Residuals value (SRMR) show the square root of the mean squared residuals, *i.e.* the difference between the observed matrix elements in the sample group and the estimated or predicted elements of the matrices. The fitted residuals are obtained by subtracting the sample covariance matrix from the fitted covariance matrix. The closer the value of these indices to zero, the better the model fits. In other words, if the standardized value of this index is equal to zero, it can clearly state that the model is fully fitted. Steiger introduced the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) in 1990, and the acceptable range of this index has been presented differently in different studies. Some researchers state that the value of (RMSEA) for models that have a good fit will be less than 0.5; other researchers, however, consider 0.1 to be reasonable, even in some research, slightly higher values are tolerated.

Table 6: Goodness of fit indices of the model

Indices	Standard value	Calculated value
Comparative Fit Index	+0.9	.91
Goodness Of Fit Index	+0.9	.90
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	+0.8	.092
Probability value	+0.05	.092
Root Mean Square Residual	-0.07	.038
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	- 0.05	.043
Degree of Freedom	-	120
Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square	-	208.69

The results obtained from the calculation of the goodness of fit indices revealed that the RMSEA value is less than 0.05, the significance value is higher than 0.05, and the value of the chi-square ratio to the degree of freedom is less than 3, indicating the model maintains a good fit.

3.5 Examining the Main Research Hypotheses

To check the main research hypotheses, the relationship between the main variables was assessed, and the results are depicted in Figures (4 and 5).

First Hypothesis: The influence of brand cognition on customer satisfaction

The results revealed that the path coefficient of brand cognition and customer satisfaction is 0.62, and the value of the test statistic is 3.23, indicating a positive and significant effect of brand cognition on customer satisfaction. In other words, with an increase of 1 unit in brand cognition, customer satisfaction increased by 0.62 units. Henceforth, the first hypothesis is confirmed, and it is concluded that the recognition of the company's brand by the customer can affect customer satisfaction by 62%. The present results are consistent with the research results of (Ji & He 2013), that stated brand preference has a direct effect on customer satisfaction and (Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012), that accepted the effect of brand recognition on customer satisfaction with a path coefficient of 0.35. A summary of the results is also illustrated in Table 5.

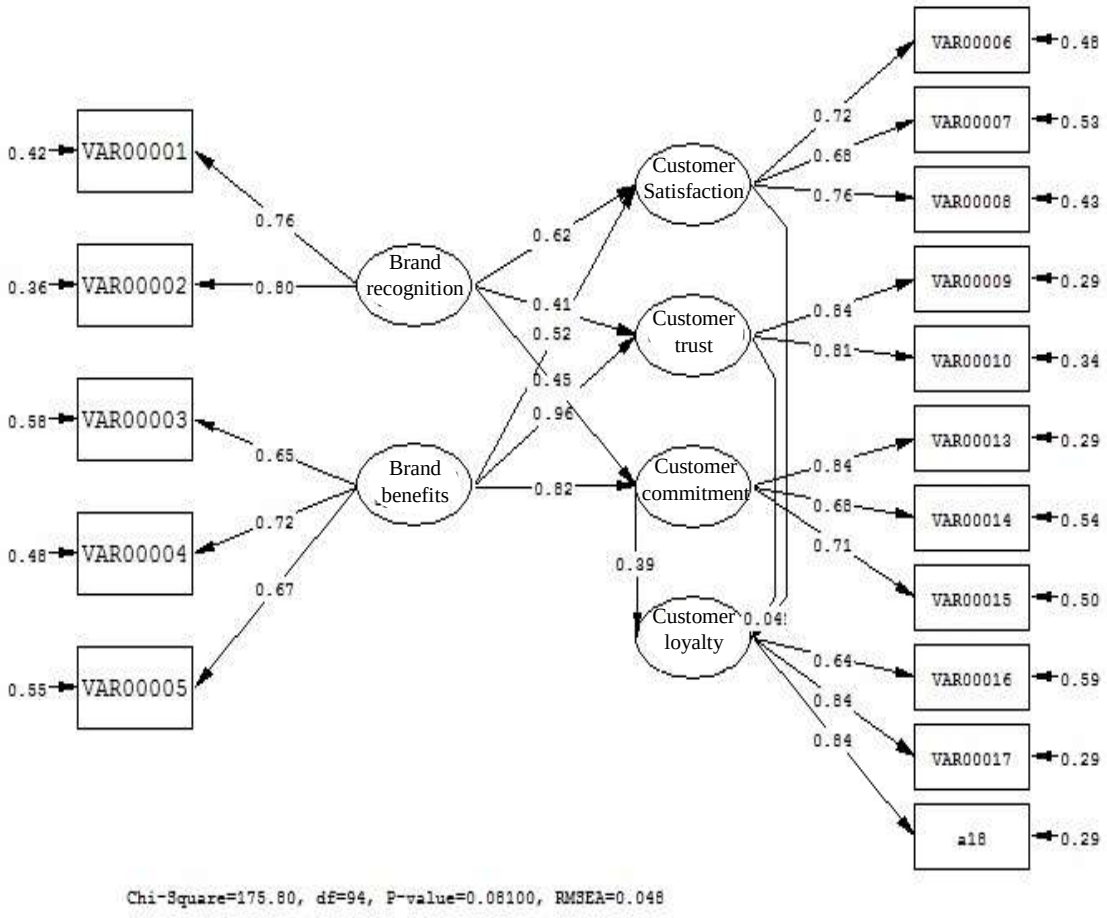

Figure 4: Fitting the conceptual model to the observations (factor loading)

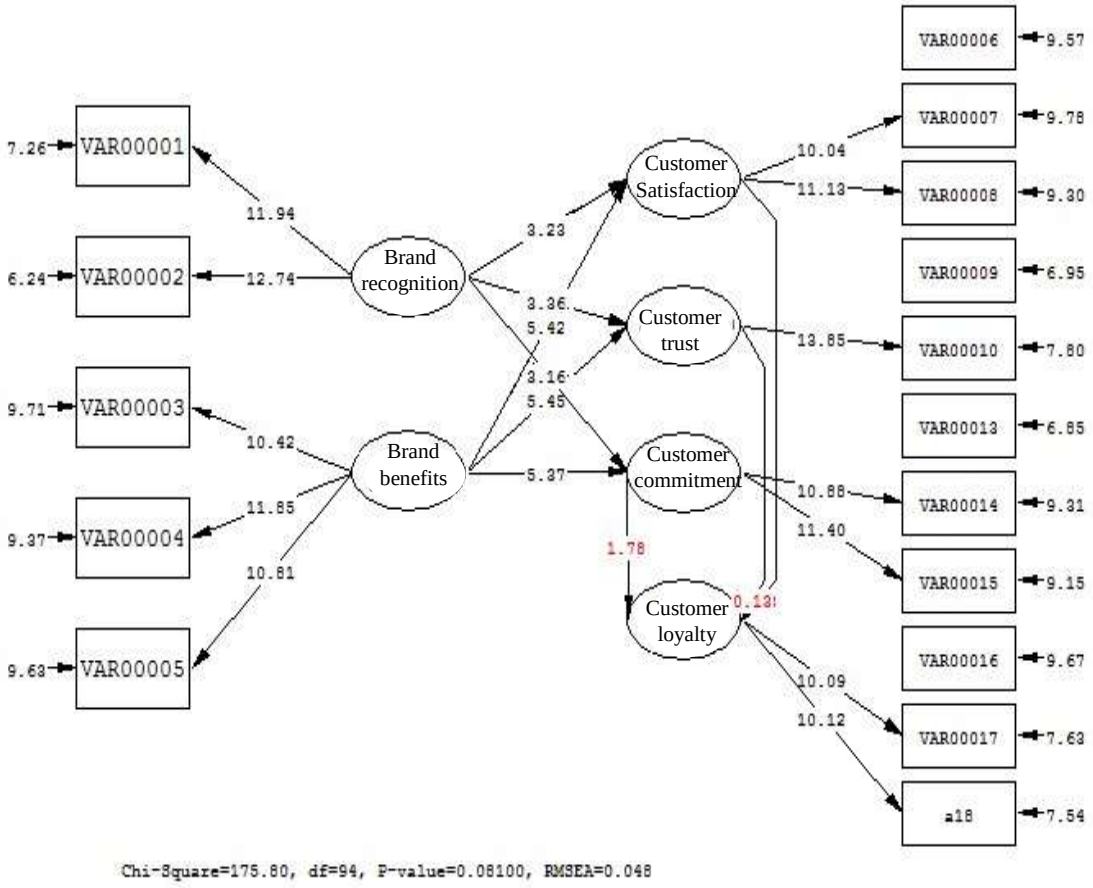

Figure 5: Fitting the conceptual model to the observations (Significance of coefficients)

Second Hypothesis: Effects of brand cognition on customer trust

It is evident from the results that the path coefficient of brand cognition and customer trust is 0.41, and the value of the test statistic is 3.36, stating a positive and significant effect of brand cognition on customer trust. It is concluded that an increase of 1 unit in brand cognition results in a 0.41 unit increase in customer trust. The second hypothesis is also confirmed. From this result, we can conclude that the recognition of the company's brand by the customer can affect the customer's trust by 41%. The present results are further consistent with the findings of (Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012) since they also accepted the effect of brand recognition on customer trust with a path coefficient of 0.21.

Third Hypothesis: Influence of brand cognition on customer commitment

The third hypothesis is also confirmed since the path coefficient of brand recognition and customer commitment is equal to 0.45, and the value of the test statistic 3.16 affirms a positive and significant effect of brand cognition on customer commitment. As a result, an increase of 1 unit in brand recognition, customer commitment surged by 0.45 units. From the results, it is concluded that the recognition of the company's brand by the customer can affect the customer's commitment by 45%. This result is consistent with the findings of (Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012), for they accepted the effect of brand recognition on customer commitment with a path coefficient of 0.11.

Fourth Hypothesis: Influence of brand benefits on customer satisfaction

The path coefficient of brand benefits and customer satisfaction is 0.52, and the value of the test statistic 5.42 supports a positive and significant effect of brand benefits on customer satisfaction. Accordingly, with an increase of 1 unit in brand benefits, customer satisfaction soared by 0.52 units; likewise, the fourth hypothesis is confirmed. It can be concluded that if the customer feels safe interacting with the owners of a particular brand, it can have a positive effect on the customer's satisfaction with the company. The present results are coherent with the findings of (Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012). Because they also accepted the effect of brand benefits on customer satisfaction with a path coefficient of 0.35.

Fifth Hypothesis: Influence of Brand benefits on customer trust

The results related to the fifth hypothesis show a path coefficient of 0.96 between brand benefits and customer trust and a value of 5.45. The t-test implies a positive and significant effect of brand benefits on customer trust. Hence, a unit increase in brand

benefits results in 0.96 units of rise in customer trust, bringing significant evidence to confirm the fifth hypothesis. Consequently, if security is one of the benefits of the brand for the customer, the customer's trust in the brand owners will be significantly improved. The present results are similar to the results of (Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012).

Sixth Hypothesis: Effect of brand benefits on customer commitment

The effect of brand benefits on customer commitment (sixth hypothesis) is also investigated, and the results indicated that the path coefficient between brand benefits and customer commitment is 0.82, and the statistical value of the test is 5.37. It discloses a positive and significant effect of brand benefits on customer commitment; therefore, a unit increase in brand benefits leads to an increases in customer commitment by 0.82 units. In other words, we can conclude that if a particular brand logo creates happy moments for the customer, the customer will buy the same brand the next time and will be committed to the brand as a result. The present results are consistent with the research results of (Nguyen Hau & Viet Ngo, 2012).

Seventh Hypothesis: Effects of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty

The results related to the seventh hypothesis (Effects of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty) are also furnished in Table 5. The result suggests no significant relation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty since the path coefficient between the two variables is equal to 0.04, and the test statistic value is 0.13; the seventh hypothesis cannot be confirmed. This result is different from the findings of (Dam & Dam, 2021; Pérez-Morón et al., 2022), who reported a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Eight Hypothesis: Effect of customer trust on customer loyalty

Structural equations have been used to measure (H8), and the results revealed no significant relationship between customer trust and customer loyalty since the path coefficient is only 0.23 and the test statistic (t-test) value is 1.14. Consequently, the effect of customer trust on customer loyalty, i.e., eight hypotheses, is rejected. This finding also contradicts the finding of (Rivaldo et al., 2022), where they stated a significant effect of customer trust on customer loyalty; however, in this study, it can not be achieved in a 5 percent level of significance.

Nine Hypothesis: Effect of customer commitment on customer loyalty

Finally, the results of examining the effect of customer commitment on customer loyalty demonstrate that the path coefficient between customer commitment and customer loyalty is 0.39, and the value of the test statistic is 1.78; as a result, customer commitment does not have a significant effect on customer loyalty.

Based on the results of the research, the final conceptual model of the research is presented in Figure 6 as follows:

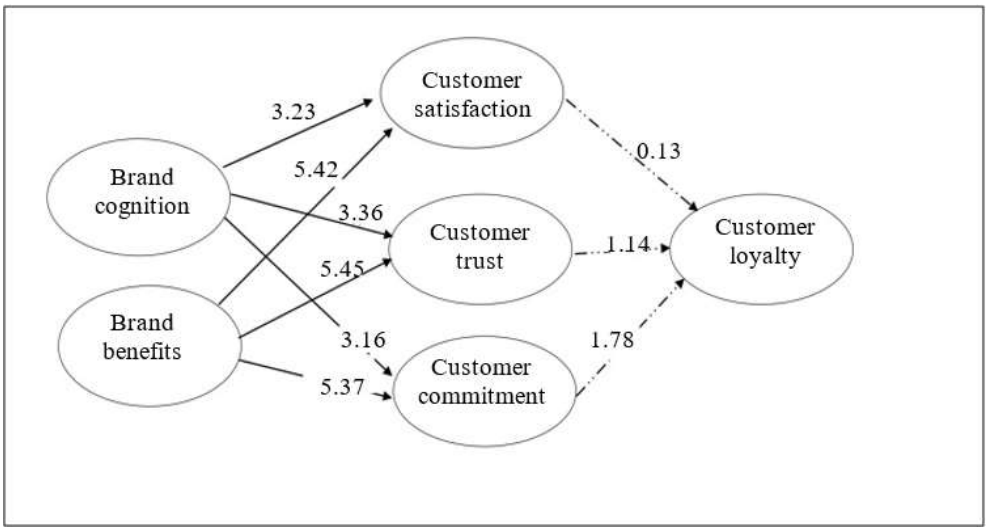

Figure 6. Final conceptual model of the research

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the impact of brand recognition and benefits on the quality of customer relationships, focusing specifically on consumers of Habib Gulzar's food products. Through the formulation and analysis of nine hypotheses using a structural equation model, we confirmed six out of the nine hypotheses. Our findings revealed that brand recognition significantly influenced customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment, while brand benefits had a significant impact on these dimensions as well. However, we did not find significant evidence to support the effects of customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment on customer loyalty.

These findings contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of the importance of brand recognition and its benefits in shaping customer perceptions and behaviors. The study highlights the significance of enhancing brand recognition through targeted advertisements and collaborating with expert designers to create visually appealing and recognizable brand designs. Aligning advertising and packaging with the product can further enhance brand attractiveness and consistency, establishing a strong brand identity with customers.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, such as the specific context of Habib Gulzar's food products and the reliance on self-reported data. Future research could address these limitations by conducting cross-cultural studies and utilizing objective measures of customer behavior. Moreover, further investigation is needed to explore the mediating factors between brand recognition, benefits, customer satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of these variables on customer loyalty while examining additional variables like brand image or perceived quality, which could enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics between brands and customer loyalty.

In summary, this study emphasizes the significant effects of brand recognition and benefits on customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment. While the study did not find significant relationships between customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, it highlights the importance of customer commitment in driving customer loyalty. These findings provide valuable insights for marketers and practitioners aiming to build strong brand-customer relationships and contribute to the existing literature on brand management and customer loyalty.

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