

Impact of Antecedents of Brand Attachment on Brand Loyalty through Consumer Brand Engagement: Evidence from Some Selected Restaurants in Chattogram

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to examine the impact of antecedents of brand attachment on brand loyalty through consumer brand engagement through the application of attachment theory. While various researches examined the impact of different constructs on brand loyalty, the combined effects of antecedents of brand attachment and consumer brand engagement as mediators are under-researched. Using a non-probability convenience sampling and a 7-point Likert scale self-administered questionnaire the study surveyed 520 customers who experienced the services of selected six restaurants in Chattogram. The study has confirmed six hypotheses through AMOS 26 and five mediation hypotheses through the Hayes process micro 4.2. The results specify that brand attachment and consumer brand engagement are direct predators of brand loyalty. Consumer brand engagement is the successful mediator of the associations of brand attachment. These findings provide valuable contributions to academicians and managers; it established three new links between consumer brand engagement with brand attachment, consumer brand engagement with brand loyalty, and brand attachment with brand loyalty. These links will enlighten the literature and confirm that engaged customers are easily inclined to be attached and loyal to the brand, and emotionally and psychologically attached customers turn out to be brand loyal.

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Key Words: Brand Identification, Brand Psychological Ownership, Value Congruity, Social Interaction Ties, Consumer Brand Engagement, brand loyalty, attachment theory.



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1. Introduction

Brand loyalty is a significant concept in branding literature and practitioners, which, as offered by Aaker (1991), reflects a consumer's deep commitment to repeatedly choosing their favourite brands (Oliver, 1999). Since the 1990s, brands have transformed from mere identifiers into valuable assets that significantly impact companies' success (Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017) and positively contribute to creating a better world (Chandy et al., 2021). Brand loyalty brings incredible benefits for businesses: repeat purchases, fosters positive word-of-mouth, builds a strong barrier to brand switching (Torres & Marshall, 2018), simplifies decision-making for consumers, and strengthens the market share of the company (Pratomo & Magetsari, 2018). Brand attachment has been established as a significant factor in the branding literature in the last two decades (Li et al., 2020). Brand attachment is the consumer's emotional bonding with a brand (Schmitz et al., 2021). It reflects how a brand aligns with consumers' self-identity and enhances commitment (Charton-Vachet & Lombart, 2018). When consumers feel that they are attached to the brand, it carries unbelievable benefits for the company: creating positive word-of-mouth (Magnoni et al., 2021), non-price sensitive (Li et al., 2019), boosting the company's brand equity and performance (Heinberg et al., 2020). Customer brand attachment is more significant than attitude and loyalty in forming sustainable relationships with firms (Sciarrino, 2021). The study will show how these connections drive brand loyalty.

Consumer brand engagement (CBE) is the investment of the customer's resources for interactions and involvement with the brand through face-to-face and remote communication (Hollebeek et al., 2021). CBE provides several benefits: increasing sales, reducing operating costs, creating positive word-of-mouth, increasing recommendations, higher profitability, and enhanced brand loyalty (Singh & Srivastava, 2019). Moreover, CBE creates an emotional relationship with the brand, generating brand attachment (Hwang & Lee, 2019) and brand loyalty (Bergel et al., 2019; Kaur et al., 2020). If a customer has any brand attachment, he/she will continue a consistent relationship with the particular brand (Loureiro et al., 2017), which can finally produce brand loyalty (Li et al., 2020). From the above discussion, the study concludes that brand loyalty, brand attachment, and consumer brand engagement are crucial factors in a firm's profitability and sustainability.

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Most of the studies are based on the antecedents of brand attachment: customers' trust (Taylor & DiPietro, 2020), CSR perceptions (Heinberg et al.,2021); brand personality (McManus et al.,2022); brand experience (Magnoni et al.,2021; Hussain et al.,2021); consumers' motivations (Tran et al.,2021); brand attitude (Tan et al.,2018); brand image (Diallo et al.,2021); perceived value (Liu et al.,2020); brand-self congruence (Rabbanee et al.,2020); self-brand connection (Loh et al.,2021); brand identification (Chang et al.,2020). First, the study identifies five understudied antecedents of brand attachment: social interaction ties, brand identification, brand psychological ownership (BPO), value congruity, and consumer brand engagement. Previous studies have yet to explore these relationships within the same framework. Moreover, while the link between value congruity and customer engagement remains under-examined, both are crucial for stimulating hotel brands (Islam et al., 2019). More research needs to be offered on the relationships among customer brand engagement, attachment, trust, and loyalty (Prentice & Loureiro, 2017; Prentice et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020). Most research has focused on destination brand loyalty and luxury hotels. However, limited studies have been conducted on restaurant brand attachment, customer brand engagement, and brand loyalty in the same framework, which is significant for the restaurant industry's growth. Therefore, this study chose this framework for the restaurant, which significantly contributed to Bangladesh's economic development by employing nearly 2 million men and over 100,000 women, including thousands of privately owned restaurants (BBS, 2021). Second, customer engagement is crucial to the success of a restaurant business (Sashi, 2019); this study will support other research that failed to establish the direct impact of CBE on brand loyalty (Steinhoff et al., 2018). On the other hand, the formation of brand loyalty is complex, so there is a call for further research into various loyalty drivers to understand better customer-brand relationships (Li et al., 2020). Third, the study responds to another research request to apply attachment theory firmly in brand attachment research (Bagozzi et al., 2021). Fourth, it aims to extend knowledge of brand attachment antecedents and the mediators of consumer brand engagement and brand attachment on brand loyalty. Further research is needed to investigate the mediation role of CBE on brand loyalty (Rather & Camilleri, 2019). This study proposes the above research framework that highlights six factors

influencing brand loyalty to specific restaurants, offering valuable insights for strategy development on the brand, which will be helpful in managerial decision-making.

2. Research Objectives and Questions

The study has the following research questions to understand the research objectives:

- How do antecedents of brand attachment influence consumer brand engagement?
- How do brand identification, brand psychological ownership (BPO), social interaction ties, value congruity, and consumer brand engagement (CBE) affect brand attachment?
- How do consumer brand engagement (CBE) and brand attachment impact brand loyalty?
- How does consumer brand engagement (CBE) mediate the relationship between brand identification, brand psychological ownership (BPO), value congruity, and SIT about brand attachment?
- How does brand attachment mediate the relationship between consumer brand engagement (CBE) and brand loyalty?

3. Theoretical Background of Research

3.1 Attachment Theory

The study used the attachment theory because it is conceptualized in different fields (Boateng et al., 2020), specifically marketing (Thomson et al., 2005; Loureiro et al., 2012). Maximum research on brand attachment is also underpinned by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), which conceptualizes strong emotional connection of the customer with brands (Loureiro et al., 2012) that influences brand loyalty (Kaufmann et al., 2016; Ilicic et al., 2016). The attachment theory measures the balance of personal feelings between closeness and distance from crucial people (Ainsworth, 1979). It explains the different attributes of the relationship between individuals and groups of people who embrace a deep emotional (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1979), psychological connection, and strong, long-term, enduring relationship between a brand and its consumers (Saldanha et al., 2020; Guevremont, 2021). Moreover, attachment appears from previous experiences with the

object and has a relative strength based on thoughts, feelings, and behaviours towards a particular object (Martiyanti et al., 2021). The attachment has three perspectives: *social structure-based attachment* relates to physical structures that fix an individual/ place/ object, *bonding-based attachment* captures emotional ties and relates to long-enduring ties, and *identity-based attachment* relates to the inclusion of an object to an individual's self-concept and reflects shared perceptions with the brand (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; Hinson et al., 2019). However, Individuals can develop attachments not only to other people but also to objects (Hinson et al., 2019; Park et al., 2010) such as service firms (restaurants) (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2016; Hyun & Kim, 2014). Moreover, attachment has two approaches: *bonding-based attachment*, which results from an emotional linking between a consumer and a brand, and *identity-based attachment*, which includes consumer perception of the oneness of the brand (Hinson et al., 2019). This study's bonding-based attachment includes brand psychological ownership because it is the strong bonding relationship with the brand and higher assessment of the brand (Kamleitner & Feuchtl, 2015; Lessard-Bonaventure & Chebat, 2015; Kirk et al., 2015) and social interaction ties which explain the personal relationship between customers and firm and eventually generate customer loyalty (Boateng et al., 2020). In contrast, identity-based attachment includes brand identification, which builds a complete understanding of customer-brand relationships (Wolter et al., 2016; Tuškej & Podnar, 2018; Chang et al., 2020). Additionally, attachment theory describes *homophiles*, which explains that people with similar characteristics may have a greater possibility of attaching than those with dissimilar characteristics (Kim & Altmann, 2017). This study uses value congruity and consumer brand engagement as homophile aspects because it is the level of similar characteristics about service value perception that also influences brand attachment (Yuniari et al., 2020). The study considered brand identification, psychological ownership, value congruity, social interaction ties, and consumer brand engagement as the stimuli of brand attachment, producing long-lasting, value-laden emotional and personal relationships with restaurant brands that generate brand loyalty in customers' minds.

3.2 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a stakeholder relationship with the focal brand, which shows purchasing, promoting, advocating, engaging, co-creating, and co-owning the brand (Parris & Guzman, 2022). So, it is an indispensable aspect of the success of long-term relationships (Bernarto et al., 2020). Brand loyalty has behavioral and attitudinal components (Oliver, 1999; Li et al., 2020). Behavioral loyalty expresses repeat purchase behavior, the share of wallet and quantity, and frequency of brand purchases (Kosiba et al., 2018), and attitudinal loyalty represents a consumer's positive attitude toward a particular brand (Cossio-Silva et al., 2015) and overall customer satisfaction (Lu & Xu, 2015) and consumer who has high attitudinal loyalty are likely to recommend than low attitudinal loyalty (Li et al., 2020). This study considers both components of brand loyalty. However, the firm received significant benefits from loyal customers (Aluri et al., 2019): endorse the brand to family, friends, peers, and others and a strong connection to preferred brand (Šerić & Praničević, 2018); positive attitudes toward certain brands (Kosiba et al., 2018; Bergel et al., 2019); can become advocates of the brand (Cha et al., 2016); show love and affection on the branded product and services (Bergel et al., 2019); repurchase intentions of customers (Bergel et al., 2019); forming deeper connections (Šerić & Praničević, 2018), enhancing market share, and establishing long-term sustainability (Yoo & Bai, 2012). Moreover, active engagement shows brand loyalty between customers and stakeholders (Kaur et al., 2020).

4. Conceptual Model and Research Hypotheses

4.1 Brand Identification

Brand identification comes from identity-based attachment under the attachment theory, which explains why consumers recognize oneness with the brand (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). It is created from consumer interactions that offer social benefits: belonging and identity expression (Swaminathan et al., 2020) and consumer fascination towards the brand with some of the same self-definitional attributes (So et al., 2017). If the brand characteristics are reliable and similar to customer feelings, they hold favourable attitudes toward the brand (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018). Moreover, consumers with high brand identification are more highly engaged in supplementary behaviors to

the brand than others (Yoshida, 2017). Consumer–brand identification is driven by brand attachment (Wolter et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2020), which is also the dominant antecedent of consumer behavior: repurchase intention and word-of-mouth (Romero, 2017). Moreover, brand identification positively impacts brand attachment (Zenker et al., 2017), is associated with customer loyalty (Popp & Woratschek, 2017), and also influences CBE (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018). Based on this discussion, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H1a: Brand Identification has a positive impact on CBE.

H1b: Brand Identification has a positive impact on brand attachment.

4.2 Value Congruity

Value congruity comes from *homophile aspects* of attachment theory that explain the level of similarity in service value perception, which also influences brand attachment (Yuniari et al., 2020). If the brand attributes are consistent with customers' values, they show a good attitude towards the brand (Han & Hyun, 2017). The value congruity represents the value-added services of the service brands (heterogeneity), which leads to satisfactory psychological outcomes such as belief, fulfillment, and positive consumer behavior (Sriwidadi et al., 2022). Moreover, consumers always accept value congruity to develop and maintain relationships with other customers and the brand (Yuniari, 2020). Value-congruity accelerates the emotional connections with the brand, which provides social benefits to that brand (Davvetas & Diamantopoulos, 2017). Value congruity has a positive influence on CBE (Hinson et al., 2018; Kumar & Nayak, 2018; Yuniari et al., 2020; Sriwidadi et al., 2022) and a significant impact on brand loyalty (Yuniar et al., 2020). Based on this discussion, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H2a: Value-congruity has a positive impact on Consumer brand engagement

H2b: Value-congruity has a positive impact on brand attachment

4.3 Brand Psychological Ownership

Brand Psychological ownership (BPO) comes from bonding-based attachment under attachment theory, which is the consumer's emotional state in which one experiences feelings of possessiveness and being mentally attached to an

object without owning it (Pierce et al., 1992). It is categorized by "mine" or "my," which indicates references to actual characters (Kirk et al., 2018). Moreover, BPO is the personal feeling of the brand, which has three aspects: control, familiar knowledge, and personal involvement with the brand (Kuchmaner et al., 2019). If a customer owns something, the target of proprietorship becomes attached to the customer itself (Lee & Kim, 2020). The resulting performance of BPO is positive motivational, attitudinal, and behavioural outcomes for the brand (Peck & Shu, 2018). BPO positively influences brand attachment (Sriwidadi et al., 2022) and CBE (Sriwidadi et al., 2022; Kumar & Nayak, 2018).

H3a: BPO has a positive impact on consumer brand engagement.

H3b: BPO has a positive impact on brand attachment.

4.4 Social Interaction Ties (SIT)

Social interaction ties (SIT) come from bonding-based attachment, which represents a long-lasting (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981) and an interpersonal relationship between person to person/ object/ and a customer with a brand (Wang & Wang, 2013). These relationships of brands also influence the transfer of personal possession to shared possession (Swaminathan et al., 2020), which is closer, stable, pleasant, and entertaining within societies that contribute to developing brand identification and creating long-term relationships with others (Augusto & Torres, 2018). Moreover, SIT influences the application of the value creation process (Mingione et al., 2020), responds to customers' investigations and conversations, and spreads relevant information (Zhou et al., 2020). SIT positively influences CBE (Phua et al., 2017) and brand attachment (Hogg & Rinella, 2018; Xu et al., 2021).

H4a: SIT has a positive impact on CBE

H4b: SIT has a positive impact on brand attachment.

4.5 Consumer-Brand Engagement

Customer brand engagement (CBE) comes from the homophile aspect of attachment theory. CBE is a strong customer feeling (Erciş et al., 2012) that creates an emotional attachment with brands, which finally turns into advocates on behalf of the brand (Sashi, 2012; Gummerus et al., 2012). Engage customers who do not conduct only traditional transactions (Wei et

al., 2013) but also include consumers' emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and psychological connections with the brand (Rather, 2018; Algharabat et al., 2020). However, CBE can increase customer loyalty, which leads to firm profitability (Rather, 2019) because customers may receive service experiences from existing customers (Kozak & Kozak, 2018), and it is also true that prospective customers will depend on information and recommendations of past customers (Rather & Camilleri, 2019). So, a consumer with a higher level of engagement ensures brand loyalty and positive relationships than those with a low level of engagement (Harrigan et al., 2017). Moreover, CBE positively influences brand attachment (Harrigan et al., 2018; Kumar & Nayak, 2018; Sriwidadi et al., 2022) and creates a positive influences brand loyalty (Harrigan et al., 2017; Hollebeek, 2018; Bergel et al., 2019; Kaur et al., 2020; Yuniari et al., 2020; Sriwidadi et al., 2022).

H5a: CBE has a positive impact on brand attachment

H5b: CBE has a positive impact on brand loyalty

4.6 Brand Attachment

Attachment is an emotional relationship between human beings, between humans and animals, destinations, objects (Loureiro, 2017), consumers and brands (Loureiro & Sarmento, 2019), and results of psychological engagement (Brodie et al., 2013). Brand attachment is the consumers' significant emotional connection and feelings over time between customers and brands (Schmitz, 2021), whereby they consider that brand an integral part of self-concept (Malär et al., 2011). It plays a role in the involvement and memories of the customer on the preferred brand. It significantly contributes to creating behavioral intentions (Hwang et al., 2021) because it is a target-oriented emotional relationship with a preferred brand (Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019). Moreover, brand attachment increases the customer's cognition (Frasquet et al., 2017) and develops brand extensions and commitment (Chang et al., 2020). Additionally, attached consumers have a long-lasting, durable relationship with a preferred brand that advances brand loyalty (Šerić & Praničević, 2018) and provides exclusive benefits to the firm: they show resistance to negative information (Lin et al., 2021), positive behavior on brand activities (Walsh et al., 2019), repeat purchase and citizenship

behaviour, and brand loyalty (Diallo et al., 2021); spread encouraging word-of-mouth (Magnoni et al., 2021) and perceive brand information as reliable and trustworthy (Zhang & Patrick, 2021); buy new products without hesitation (Aboulnasr & Tran, 2020). Brand attachment is an essential prerequisite for brand loyalty (Japutra et al., 2018)); as well as customer loyalty (Rather & Camilleri, 2019).

H6: Brand attachment has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

4.7 Mediating Role of Consumer Brand Engagement

Engaged customers are expected to build positive attitudes regarding the brand as early as possible rather than not engaging customers (Harrigan et al., 2017). More engaging customers have more legitimized powers over their brand due to appreciation of their self-beliefs and values (Islam et al., 2017). Moreover, brand identification is the critical antecedent of CBE and positively impacts it (Tuskej & Podnar, 2018). Value congruity is crucial to maintaining and developing customer-brand relationships (Islam et al., 2017) and positively influences CBE (Yuniari, 2020). Furthermore, BPO positively impacts CBE and brand attachment (Sriwidadi et al., 2022) and indirectly influences CBE (Gong, 2018). BPO and value congruity indirectly influence brand attachment through CBE (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). Additionally, social interaction ties directly affect brand engagement (Phua et al., 2017) and indirectly influence brand attachment (Xu et al., 2021). So, a positive relationship appears among value congruity, brand identification, CBE, and customer loyalty (Rather & Camilleri, 2019). Therefore, CBE successfully mediates fashion products between attachment and brand loyalty in India (Samala & Katkam, 2020) and brand identification and brand loyalty in Pakistan (Aziz & Ahmed, 2023).

H7a: CBE has a mediated relationship between brand identification and brand attachment.

H7b: CBE has mediated the relationship between value-congruity and brand attachment.

H7c: CBE has mediated the relationship between BPO and brand attachment.

H7d: CBE has mediated the relationship between SIT and brand attachment.

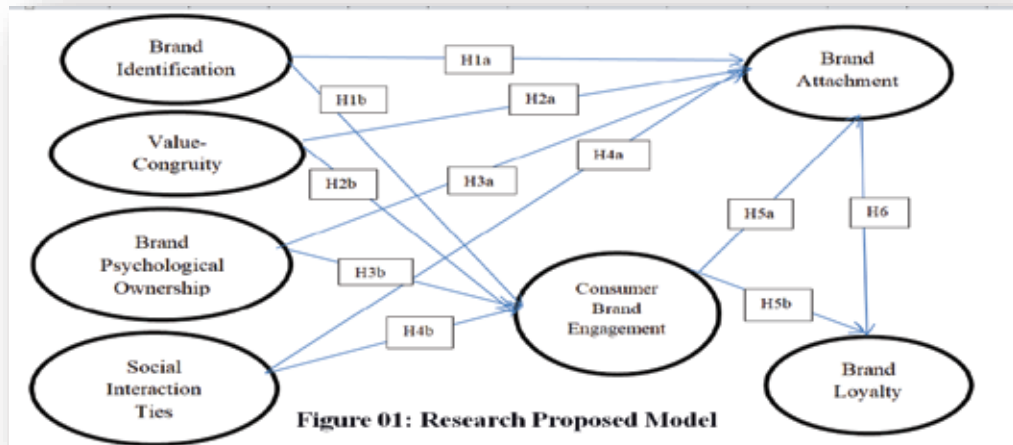
4.8 Mediating Role of Brand Attachment

The current study highlights that brand attachments create powerful emotional connections between customers and restaurant brands, which is similar to others (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Yen et al., 2018). Brand attachment has mediated crucial relationships between CBE and brand loyalty (Li et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020); CBE and purchase intention (Kumar & Nayak, 2019b); brand image and brand loyalty (Diallo et al., 2021); brand experience and purchase intention (Nierobisch et al., 2017), nostalgic brand positioning and brand equity (Heinberg et al., 2020), materialism, utilitarian values and impulsive buying (Lim et al., 2020).

H8: Brand attachment has mediated the relationship between CBE and brand loyalty

4.9 Research Proposed Model

The study followed attachment theory to develop a conceptual model presented in Figure 01.



5. Methodology

5.1 Sampling and Procedure

The study empirically investigated the impact of antecedents of brand attachment on brand loyalty through CBE using the collected data. A self-administered questionnaire is used in data collection, which is the best approach (Zikmund, 2000). The study has adopted a translation process from English to Bangla to diminish translation bias (Wilson & Dewaele, 2010). The study selected six famous restaurants, Afgan, the Arrosto, Barcode, Pizza Co, and Bir Chattala, based on different areas, brand names, types of food menus, and vast numbers of customers that purely represent Chattogram City. This study collected customer data after eating from those restaurants using a non-probability convenience sampling technique due to the unavailability of a sampling frame for probability sampling (Agrebi & Jallais, 2015). A pilot study was performed on 30 customers (five customers from each restaurant) that crossed the threshold value of 10 (Saunders et al., 2012) to assess the questionnaire's face and content validity (Pallant, 2020). The study collected 600 customer data from 6 restaurants. After collecting data, the study found that 80 questionnaires had excessive missing data, so 520 respondents' data were only usable, which is within range of the standard sample size of structured equation modeling of 200-500 (Hinkin, 1995).

Table 01 shows the characteristics of the restaurant customers used in this study, with male respondents being 64.4% and females being 35.6%. Maximum respondents' incomes of 32.1% were taka less than 80,000, 26.5% were 80000 to taka 100,000 taka, and 22.3% were incomes from 120000 taka to 140000 taka. Moreover, the maximum respondents were 28.86% of students, 27.88% of business people, and 23.08% of private job holders. On the other hand, 49% of customers were under-graduated, and H.S.C. and graduated completed respondents were 15.4%. Additionally, maximum numbers of the respondent, 75.8%, were 20 to 30 years old, 74.4% were single, and 25.6 % were married. Moreover, the maximum number of customers, 53.1%, maintained a relationship with the restaurant for less than 2 years, 36.5% of customers for 2 years to 4 years, and only 10.4 % for more than 4 years. Additionally, most customers enjoyed restaurant food through 44.6 % face-to-face, 16.7% offline, and 38.7% online and offline.

Table 01: Demographical profile of the Restaurant

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender: Male	335	64.4	Education: SSC Completed	30	5.8
Female	185	35.6	HSC Completed	80	15.4
Income: Less than taka 80,000	167	32.1	Graduation Completed	80	15.4
Tk 80,000 to less than tk 100,000	138	26.5	Post-Graduation Completed	42	8.1
Tk 100,000 to less than tk 120,000	116	22.3	Other	33	6.3
Tk 1,40,000 to less than tk 1,60,000	27	5.2	Age: Less than 20 years	51	9.8
Tk 1,60,000 or above	20	3.8	20 years to less than 30 years	394	75.8
Profession: Students	150	28.86	40 years to less than 50 years	20	3.8
Govt. Organization	50	9.7	50 years to less than 60 years	8	1.5
Private Company	120	23.08	60 Years or Above	1	.2
House Wife	50	9.61	Marital Status: Married	133	25.6
Others	5	0.96	Single	387	74.4
Duration of Relationship: Below 2 years	276	53.1	Type of Relationship: Face to face	232	44.6
2 years to 4 years	190	36.5	Online order	87	16.7
4 years to 6 years	54	10.4	Both	201	38.7
Sources: Field Survey: March-May, 2023					

5.2 Measure

The study used a structured questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale because it is simple (Malhotra & Dash, 2016) and reduces measurement error (Fotiadis & Stylos, 2017). Here, 1=strongly disagreed, 2= disagreed; 3= somewhat disagreed; 4=natural; 5= somewhat agreed; 6=agreed and 7=strongly agreed. Brand identification has been adopted from the research work of Mael & Ashforth, 1992, social interaction ties (SIT) from Chiu et al., 2006, and brand loyalty adopted from the study of Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006. The construct of brand attachment and Brand Psychological ownership (BPO) have been measured by applying the variables used by Pierce et al., 2003 respectively. The construct of value congruity has been adopted from the research work of France et al., 2016; consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty are accepted by Hollebeek et al. 2014. The study used SPSS 23 for testing the measurement model fitness, AMOS 26 for testing structural model fitness, and

Hayes Process Micro 4.2 for measuring the proposed model's mediation effect.

6. Analysis of Findings

6.1 Measurement Model

The study has evaluated the measurement model by scale reliability, construct validity, convergent and discriminant validity through inter-item reliability (Cronbach's Alpha coefficient), composite reliability (CR), and averaged variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The study has brand identification, social interaction ties, brand psychological ownership, value congruity, and consumer brand engagement as antecedents of brand attachment, and consumer brand engagement and brand attachment are also antecedents of brand loyalty. The study used Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to measure data appropriateness and suitability (Hair, 2010). Table 02 shows that the value of the KMO is 0.957, which is superior to the threshold value of 0.6 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). The study has seven factors, which explained 95.7% of the variance and 0.000 values in Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which is less than 0.005 (Field, 2007). All items of the construct have been loaded into their construct as 0.576 to .804, higher than the table value of loading 0.5 (Hair, 2010). The composite reliability of all seven constructs is CR=0.8319 to 0.927, which is higher than the critical value of 0.7 (Nagapan, 2014). Moreover, the range of the AVE is 0.78 to 0.9225, which is also higher than the threshold value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010, 2017), so the data set fulfills the criteria of the convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, all constructs of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values range from $\alpha = 0.821$ to 0.985, higher than 0.8, which ensures good reliability (Sekaran, 2003) and internal consistency of data (Brahmah, 2016). Table 02 shows that all correlation coefficient values are from $r = 0.376$ to 0.703, which proves that the data set is free from multi-collinearity problems because no correlation coefficient is more than 0.85 (Kline, 2015). It is shown that all antecedents of brand attachment, CBE, and brand loyalty are

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Table 02: Factor Loading of Measurement Model

Rotated Components Matrix								AVE	CR	Alpha
Components										
	CB	BL	SIT	BPO	BA	BI	VC			
CBE6	.804							.773	.922	.985
CBE8	.761									
CBE7	.750									
CBE5	.743									
CBE4	.694									
CBE3	.693									
CBE1	.664									
CBE2	.649									
BL4		.751						.784	.865	.877
BL3		.749								
BL2		.737								
BL1		.711								
SIT3			.768					.799	.876	.874
SIT2			.750							
SIT4			.681							
SIT1			.627							
BPO2				.782				0.78	.927	.821
BPO1				.751						
BPO3				.679						
BA3					.696			.798	.840	.840
BA2					.688					
BA1					.681					
BI1						.781		.800	.926	.827
BI2						.674				
BI3						.576				
VC1							.732	.922	.832	.829
VC3							.649			
VC2							.645			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.957/ .000										
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square 9756.453										
Sources: Field Survey: March-May, 2023										

positively correlated. It explain that the increasing level of brand identification, social interaction ties, brand psychological ownership, value

Table 03: Correlation of the Construct

Construct	BI	SIT	BPO	VC	BA	CBE	BL
Brand Identification	.800						
Social Interaction Ties (SIT)	.671**	.894					
Brand Psychological Ownership (BPO)	.598**	.676**	.883				
Value-Congruity	.609**	.669**	.620**	.960			
Brand Attachment	.578**	.625**	.588**	.694**	.893		
Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE)	.559**	.507**	.445**	.560**	.610**	.879	
Brand Loyalty	.503**	.484**	.376**	.498**	.542**	.703**	.885
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
Diagonal matrix represents the square root of average variance extracted; off diagonal matrix are shown the inter-item correlation							

congruity will increase in CBE and brand attachment which also enhance brand loyalty Moreover, the discriminate validity of the data set by the square root of AVE between each pair of factors is higher than the correlation estimated between factors (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2017). So, the study reveals that the data set fulfills the criteria of higher reliability, internal consistency, convergent, and discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009).

6.2 Structural Model

The measurement model has been evaluated the convergent and divergent validity by factor loadings and fit indices. The structural model (Figure: 02) of SEM χ^2/df is 695.633/322 at $P=0.000$. CMIN=2.16; RMSEA=0.042, GFI=0.913; CFI= 0.961; TLI=0.954; NFI=0.930; RFI=0.918; IFI= 0.916 (Hair et al., 2020), so the structural model fits with empirical findings because all fit indices higher than the threshold value. The structural model is adequate for measuring the relationships between the proposed constructs. So, the model is a good fit with brand identification, social interaction ties, BPO, value congruity, and CBE, which are the antecedents of brand attachment, and also a good fit with CBE and brand attachment are the consequence of brand loyalty in restaurant brand in Chattogram.

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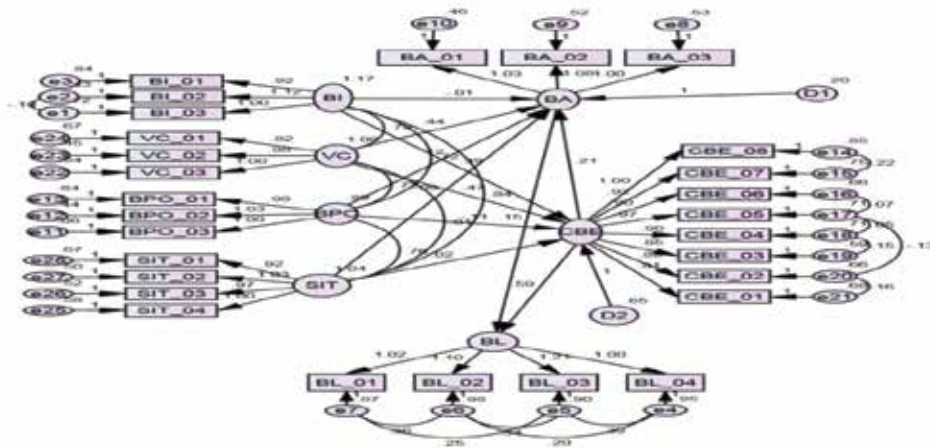


Figure 02: Structural Model

Moreover, the study has investigated hypotheses based on the score of the structural model based on critical region (C.R.)/ t-values (≥ 1.96) (Gefen et al., 2000), and level of significance p- statistics ≤ 0.05 (Ringle et al., 2015). Table 04 reveals the summary of hypotheses testing. There are eleven hypotheses; six hypotheses are supported, and five are not supported.

Hypotheses H1a and H2a are supported. So brand identification ($t=4.71$, $p=0.000$) and value congruity ($t=5.085$, $p=0.000$) positively impact CBE. The hypothesis of H2b is also accepted. So value-congruity ($t=6.369$, $p=0.000$) positively impacts brand attachment. On the other hand, H1b, H3b and H4b are not supported. So, brand identification ($t=-0.154$, $p=0.877$), BPO ($t=1.678$, $p=0.093$), and SIT ($t=1.26$, $p=0.208$) have no positive impact on brand attachment. The selected restaurant brands failed to create close emotional and social long-term value-laden customer relationships due to a lack of regular interaction, communication, activities, and networking. Therefore, customers do not feel that any brand is similar to their self-concept. Simultaneously, H3a and H4a are also rejected. So, BPO ($t=-1.046$, $p=0.296$) and SIT ($t=0.191$, $p=0.848$) have no significant impact on CBE because the selected restaurant

Table 04: Hypotheses Testing Result based on SEM

Hypotheses	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Supported/ Not Supported
H1a: Brand Identification has impact on CBE	0.394	0.084	4.71	***	Supported
H1b: Brand Identification has impact on brand attachment	-0.008	0.055	-0.154	0.877	Not Supported
H2a: Value-congruity has impact on CBE	0.466	0.092	5.085	***	Supported
H2b: Value-congruity has impact on brand attachment	0.444	0.07	6.369	***	Supported
H3a: BPO has impact on CBE	-0.105	0.101	-1.046	0.296	Not Supported
H3b: BPO has impact on brand attachment	0.119	0.071	1.678	0.093	Not Supported
H4a: SIT has impact on CBE	0.02	0.103	0.191	0.848	Not Supported
H4b: SIT has impact on brand attachment	0.09	0.071	1.26	0.208	Not Supported
H5a: CBE has impact on brand attachment	0.207	0.042	4.938	***	Supported
H5b: CBE has impact on brand loyalty	0.593	0.057	10.448	***	Supported
H6: Brand attachment has impact on brand loyalty	0.153	0.055	2.782	0.005	Supported

brands are unsuccessful in creating stimuli about customer interest to interact regularly with the brand, such as providing an online review, watching advertisement and sales promotion on social media. Moreover, a higher level of CBE is a direct, positive, and significant relationship with favorable intentions towards the brand, such as brand attachment and brand loyalty, because H5a and H5b are supported. So, CBE positively impacts brand attachment ($t=4.938$, $p=0.000$) and brand loyalty ($t=10.448$, $p=0.000$). H6 is supported. So brand attachment ($t=2.782$, $p=0.005$) significantly positive impacts brand loyalty.

The study used the sample mediation analysis using ordinary least squares path analysis by PROCESS SPSS macro Hayes, 2022. It uses 5000 bootstraps and a 5% level of significance. Mediation hypotheses are accepted based on LLCL and ULCL values, which are not zero. So, the study has proved that all mediation hypotheses are supported (Hayes, 2013). Hypotheses H7a, H7b, H7c, and H7d are supported because all hypotheses' LLCL and ULCL values are more significant than zero. Hypothesis H7a (indirect effect= 0.2030; LLC=.1434, ULCL=.2620) suggests that brand identification positively impacts brand attachment via CBE mediation. Hypothesis H7b (indirect effect

Table 05: Mediating Hypotheses Testing Result Based on Hayes Process Micro 4.2

Construct	Effect	Se	Std. Coff.	t	p	LLCL	ULCL	Result
H7a: CBE has a mediated relationship between brand identification and brand attachment.								
Total Effect	.5028	.0312	.5785	16.1405	.00	.4416	.5640	Supported
Direct Effect	.2999	.0341	.3450	8.8031	.00	.2329	.3668	Supported
Indirect effect	.2030	.0302	---	-----	-----	.1434	.2620	Supported
H7b: CBE has mediated the relationship between value-congruity and brand attachment.								
Total Effect	.6762	.0308	.6941	21.9428	.00	.6157	.7368	Supported
Direct Effect	.5000	.0345	.5132	14.4733	.00	.4321	.5679	Supported
Indirect effect	.1762	.0291	-----	-----	----	.1216	.2353	Supported
H7c: CBE has mediated the relationship between BPO and brand attachment.								
Total Effect	.5787	.0350	.5883	16.5579	.00	.5109	.6485	Supported
Direct Effect	.3892	.0343	.3949	11.3490	.00	.3218	.4565	Supported
Indirect effect	.1905	.0308	-----	-----	----	.1332	.2533	Supported
H7d: CBE has mediated the relationship between SIT and brand attachment								
Total Effect	.5987	.0329	.6247	18.2074	.00	.5341	.6633	Supported
Direct Effect	.4066	.0344	.4242	11.8283	.00	.3390	.4741	Supported
Indirect effect	.1922	.0300	-----	-----	-----	.1359	.2535	Supported
H8: Brand attachment has a mediated relationship between CBE and brand loyalty								
Total Effect	.7231	.0321	.7030	22.5003	.00	.6599	.7862	Supported
Direct Effect	.6101	.0398	.5933	15.3351	.00	.5320	.6883	Supported
Indirect effect	.1129	.0302	-----	-----	----	.0551	.1728	Supported

=.1762; LLCL=.1216, ULCL=.2353) indicates that value congruity positively impacts brand attachment via the mediation of CBE. Moreover, Hypothesis H7c (indirect effect=.1905; LLCL=.1332, ULCL=.2533) represents that BPO positively influences brand attachment via the mediation of CBE. Moreover, Hypothesis H7d (indirect effect=.1922; LLCL=.1359, ULCL=.2535) confirms the positive mediation impact on the association between brand attachment and social interaction ties. So, the study ensures that the customer brand engagement (CBE) is a positive, statistical significant mediator. Moreover, Hypothesis H8 has (indirect effect=.1129; LLCL=.0551, ULCL=.1728), which also ensures that the positive, statistical significant mediation impact of brand attachment on the association between CBE and brand loyalty.

6.3 Discussion

The study's main objective is to determine the impact of antecedents of brand attachment on brand loyalty through CBE. The study demonstrates that the measurement model fits with the difference index, which confirms high reliability, convergent and divergent validity, and is free of multi-collinearity problems. So, the proposed model fits empirical findings. First, these empirical findings reported that all antecedents (brand identification, BPO, value congruity, SIT) of brand attachment positively correlate with customer brand engagement in restaurant brands in Chattogram. Moreover, brand identification also positively impacts CBE, which has similar studies (Rather & Camilleri, 2019; Molinillo et al., 2022), and value congruity also statistically impacts CBE like others (Yuniari et al., 2020; Sriwidadi et al., 2022). Secondly, this study found that brand identification, BPO, value congruity, social interaction ties, and CBE positively correlate with brand attachment. Value congruity and CBE positively impact brand attachment, which is related to others (Sriwidadi et al., 2022). However, brand identification, social interaction ties, and BPO have no statistically significant impact on brand attachment, which has dissimilar findings, such as brand identification (Molinillo, 2022), BPO (Sriwidadi et al., 2022), and SIT (Xu et al., 2021) also positively impact on brand attachment. Third, this study also reveals that CBE positively impacts brand attachment in the exact alignment of Sriwidadi et al., 2022; and Rashidiran and Hoshyar, 2022. CBE also positively influences brand loyalty like others (Rather et al., 2018; Adhikari & Panda, 2019; Yuniari et al., 2020; Susanti et al., 2021; Sriwidadi et al., 2022; Rashidiran & Hoshyar, 2022; Chairunnisa & Raswanti, 2023). Moreover, brand attachment also positively impacts brand loyalty similar to others (Japutra et al., 2019; Mandagi et al., 2022; Rashidiran & Hoshyar, 2022; Chairunnisa & Raswanti, 2023) and dissimilar findings (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2021; Chairunnisa & Raswanti, 2023). Fourth, brand identification, BPO, value congruity, and social interaction ties positively and indirectly impact brand attachment via consumer brand engagement. It has similar studies such as BPO (Gong, 2018; Kumar & Nayak, 2019), value congruity (Kumar & Nayak, 2019), and SIT (Xu et al., 2021) have indirect statistical positive influence on brand attachment via CBE. Other studies have found that customer engagement is a successful mediator between consumer

community identification, brand love (Paruthi et al., 2022), and social identification and purchase intention (Prentice et al., 2019). So, CBE is a statistically significant mediator in establishing the indirect relationship between antecedents of brand attachment (brand identification, value congruity, BPO, SIT) and brand attachment. Fifth, the study discloses that brand attachment indirectly influences CBE and brand loyalty. So, brand attachment is a statistically significant mediator in producing the indirect link between CBE and brand loyalty, like others in tourism social media (Li et al., 2020; Kumar & Nayak, 2019a) and cosmetic brands in Indonesia (Chairunnisa & Raswanti, 2023). The study shows that CBE and brand attachment have a strong relationship and impact brand loyalty because they contribute to retaining the customer with a brand, influencing repetitive buying behavior, making positive recommendations to family, friends, peers, group members, and online reviews.

6.4 Theoretical Implication

Firstly, the present study develops a conceptual model to examine the impact of brand identification, value congruity, BPO, and SIT, CBE on brand attachment and the impact of CBE and brand attachment on brand loyalty in the restaurant industry in Chattogram. It adds a new framework to the literature, which needs more literature on restaurants (Li et al., 2020), reducing the literature gap. Moreover, brand attachment and CBE are studied individually (Hinson, 2018). The current study establishes the link between CBE and brand attachment joint impact on brand loyalty, which reduces the literature and empirical gap. Second, this study extends the Kumar & Nayak, 2018 proposed model. They have proposed that BPO and value congruity are the antecedents of CBE, and brand attachment and brand loyalty are the consequences of CBE. The current study adds two new antecedents of CBE, brand identification and SIT because these four antecedents directly impact CBE and simultaneously impact brand attachment. Third, this study reveals that brand identification, value congruity, BPO, SIT, CBE, and brand attachment are the drivers of brand loyalty, positively related to brand loyalty. It responds to other research requests for brand loyalty drivers (Li et al., 2020). Moreover, it established that CBE positively impacts brand loyalty, which is not the case with other findings (Steinhoff et al., 2018). Third, this

study applied attachment theory to develop the research conceptual framework, which has fulfilled the research request of Bagozzi et al., 2021. It is considered that BPO and SIT construct thought comes from bonding-based attachment, brand identification from identity-based attachment, value congruity, and CBE from homophile aspects of brand attachment theory. It reveals that brand identification, BPO, value congruity, SITs, and CBE are jointly and individually developed customer psychological connection to the brand, which is called brand attachment, that confirms brand loyalty in customers' minds. Fourth, the study emphasizes the model of Sriwidadi et al., 2022; they proposed the same model with two new links: "BPO with brand attachment" and "value congruity with brand loyalty." However, they avoided consumer brand engagement as a potent mediator on the association between BPO and brand attachment and value congruity with brand loyalty in their model. So, the current study shows that CBE strongly mediates the relationship between brand identification, BPO, SIT, and value congruity with brand attachment by Hayes process micro. Fifth, this study verified that brand attachment strongly mediates CBE and brand loyalty. It also responds to the request of (Li et al., 2020), which extends the literature.

6.5 Managerial Implication

First, this study proved a positive association among brand identification, value congruity, BPO, SIT, CBE, brand attachment, and brand loyalty in the selected restaurant in Chattogram. It explains that if the restaurant's management ensures CBE, brand attachment, and brand loyalty, they must practice heightened BPO, value congruity, SIT, and brand identification. Second, the study also shows that a higher level of CBE confirms a sophisticated level of attachment to the preferred restaurant, ensuring the customer's repeated buying behavior and favorable brand recommendation. Concurrently, it also confirms that higher levels of brand attachment and CBE approve of brand loyalty. Third, the study also found that the maximum number of customers, 53.1%, maintained a relationship with the restaurant for less than 2 years, 36.5% of customers for 2 years to 4 years, and only 10.4 % for more than 4 years. So, restaurant management has enormous opportunities to sustain customer relationships for over 5 to 10 years. Fourth, the study found that most customers enjoyed restaurant food through 44.6 % face-to-

face, 16.7% offline, and 38.7% online and offline. So, it advises the restaurant management to increase online engagement with the customer through the restaurant's Facebook page and increase the alignment with the food delivery channel to easily navigate the customers' restaurant page through the food delivery apps. Fifth, the study reveals that BPO and SIT do not positively impact customer brand engagement and attachment in the case of restaurant brands. So, this study recommends the following suggestions to the restaurant management in Chattogram: 1. to develop intimate relationships with customers, 2. to apply social media marketing, 3. to develop a social network among the customers, 3. to interact regularly with customers with variation of the menu, 4. to enrich customers' emotional and physiological relationship with a brand which increase customer equity/ ownership feeling, 6. to arrange the food carnival with joining all significant restaurants in chattogram for creating attention of every level of customers which will increase the market share, 7. to charge the reasonable price with food quality, ambient environment, and brand image. Restaurant brand management will follow the above-mentioned advice to increase CBE in the restaurant because a higher level of CBE increases brand attachment, and an increased amount of brand attachment also empirically confirms brand loyalty. Loyal customers feel delighted that it is their restaurant and enjoy the menu type, quality, and atmosphere that they can share with family, friends, relatives, and peers themselves.

6.6 Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research Direction

The study found that brand identification, value congruity, BPO, SIT, CBE, brand attachment, and brand loyalty have statistically significant positive associations. It concludes that increased CBE and brand attachment with a particular brand enhances brand loyalty. Moreover, this study reveals that, theoretically and empirically, brand identification and value congruity are statistically significant predictors of CBE. Value congruity and CBE are the crucial antecedents of brand attachment. Brand attachment and CBE are significant direct predictors of brand loyalty. Additionally, the study proved that CBE is the successful mediator of the associations of BPO, value congruity, SIT, and brand identification with brand attachment. Brand attachment is also a significant mediator between CBE and brand loyalty in

selected restaurant brands in Chattogram. The study made an enormous contribution from theoretical and managerial perspectives. However, it has also limitations. 1. It has considered six brands in the restaurant industry in Chattogram, a single industry, and a single city; only one theory, the attachment theory, so model generalization is impossible. 2. Various constructs influence CBE and attachment in branding literature, but the study considered only four antecedents. 4. It ignores the direct and indirect links among BPO, brand identification, SIT, and value congruity with brand loyalty. 6. It also ignores risk factors of attachment, CBE, and loyalty of restaurant brands, such as security, food adulteration, and price variation. So, future researchers will study different industries, cultures, theories, and risk factors. They will also consider different antecedents of CBE, brand attachment, and brand loyalty.

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