

A STUDY ON BRAND PREFERENCE OF MOBILE PHONES IN SELECTED CITIES OF KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine the complexities of customer choices in the mobile phone industry in Karnataka, with a specific emphasis on certain towns within the state. The comprehension of brand preference has significant importance for mobile phone makers and marketers, since it exerts a direct impact on customer choices and buying behaviours. Moreover, with the implementation of this study in certain urban areas, our objective is to unveil potential regional disparities and intricacies in consumer conduct and inclinations. These findings might provide significant perspectives for the development of focused marketing tactics. The elements that affect consumers brand preferences regarding mobile phone brands in few select locations of Karnataka were determined in this study.

Design/methodology/approach

The investigator conducted a survey-based investigation to collect viewpoints on brand inclination and its antecedents concerning mobile phone brands in certain cities of Karnataka. The survey was disseminated through both online and offline channels. An online questionnaire was created using Google Forms and was shared through social media platforms and professional networks, while the offline survey was conducted in shopping centers and corporate buildings. Subsequent to data cleansing and modification, 479

out of 513 responses were considered for further analysis. The theoretical model of the precursors of brand preference, established through an extensive examination of the available literature, was authenticated using the partial least squares methodology.

Limitations

The study's sample size may be insufficient to adequately capture the diversity of individuals residing in urban areas. The methodology used in participant selection for the research may have introduced potential biases, hence potentially compromising the accuracy and validity of our findings. The potential for respondents to provide inaccurate information in surveys or interviews may introduce bias and compromise the integrity of our data. The potential obsolescence of our research arises from the dynamic nature of individuals' phone choices, which are subject to alter over time. The analytical instruments used for data analysis may not provide a comprehensive representation. It is possible that a comprehensive examination of phone brands may not be conducted, perhaps resulting in the omission of significant ones.

Findings

Factor analysis identified three factors that influence brand preference: brand loyalty, perceived excellence, and trust in the brand. Partial least squares analysis demonstrated that all three factors have a similar impact on brand preference. Additionally, research has shown that brand preference is directly and indirectly influenced by trust in the brand and perceived excellence (via brand loyalty).

Originality/value

This research proposes and assesses a comprehensive framework that takes into account numerous factors that lead to brand preference.

Keywords: The perception of quality, brand choice, brand loyalty, Karnataka's mobile phone market, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

India arose as the second-largest global market for smartphones, propelled by a population that is progressively inclined towards technology and interconnectedness. The state of Karnataka in India has emerged as a prominent centre for the nation's IT and technology industries, contributing significantly to the ongoing technological revolution. The present-day arena of mobile phone markets is experiencing a great deal of volatility due to intensified competition and fluctuating consumer brand choices. Companies and suppliers of mobile phones are facing cutthroat competition on a worldwide level. The mobile phone market is presently one of the most unpredictable due to the surge in competition and advancements.

All the crucial literature on brands and brand strategy discusses the concept of brand preference. Brand preference is a topic that is covered by experts such as Aaker (1996), Keller (2003), Kapferer (2008), and de Chernatony, who explore various subjects related to brand equity, brand image, brand knowledge, brand awareness, brand association, and service branding (2006). However, none of these experts emphasize brand preference in their analysis of brand strategy. Conversely, Nilson (2000) argues that brand preference should be a critical consideration in brand management, while Lin (2002) asserts that it is essential in product creation. In dynamic markets where brand loyalty is hard to come by, brand preference can be significant. Brand managers should strive to continuously promote and revitalize brand preference, but this topic has received relatively little attention, and the research that has been done is scattered across different times, sectors, and locations. While some studies examine the factors that lead to brand choice, most only focus on one or two factors (e.g., Ayanwale et al., 2005; Chang & Ming, 2009; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Jamal and Good, 2001). Only Mitchell and Amioku (1985) provide a more comprehensive model that simultaneously considers several brand preference characteristics. Singh et al. (2005) argue that more research is necessary to gain a better understanding of brand preference and its antecedents, and there needs to be more knowledge on how brand preferences are established - it is hard to disagree with this assertion.

Long-established models have been applied to explain brand preferences. These models concentrate on consumers' cognitive assessments of brand attributes on a rational basis. Experiential marketing, the cornerstone of branding, has changed the brand from a collection of traits into a variety of experiences. Additionally considered are both rational and irrational aspects of client behaviour. (Schmitt, 1999, 2009). The commoditization of goods and brands has grown as a result of technological development. Therefore, it is difficult for consumers to distinguish different brands using only functional traits.

Experiential appeals are such brand-building components that support brand differentiation and increase consumer preference. (Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002; Schmitt, 2009; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). Businesses encounter challenges because they must create a competitive advantage by providing unique experiences in order to succeed. (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Schmitt, 1999, 2009). These exchanges are essential for forming consumer brand preferences and motivating future purchases. (Gentile et al., 2007; Schmitt, 1999, 2009).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

As stated in the introduction, there hasn't been a lot of empirical study on the elements that precede or influence brand preference. What constitutes a liking for a certain brand is under dispute. Therefore, a variety of contributions to branding and brand strategy, as well as past studies emphasising the elements

that influence brand preference, have had an impact on the research discussed in this article. The brand preference definition that will be employed in this study is first established. Different specialists from various fields have various ideas about brand preference and theories about the connections between this choice and other branding components. For example, Chang and Ming (2009) believe that brand preference results from brand equity and loyalty, whereas Keller (2003) believes that brand preference precedes brand loyalty and brand equity. Brand loyalty and brand preference have been used interchangeably by other authors (such as Rundle-Thiele and Mackay, 2001). This study identifies brand preference as a pre-requisite for brand loyalty.

2.1. Brand Preference

Customers' preferences are frequently explained using expectancy-value models, such as Fishbein's (1965) model of consumer attitude. This idea holds that a consumer's preference for a brand is influenced by how they perceive the brand's weighted features. (Bass & Talarzyk, 1972; Bass & Wilkie, 1973). This approach is still widely employed and helps with preference research. (Allen, Machleit, Kleine, & Notani, 2005; Muthithcharoen, Palvia, & Grover, 2011). But for the following reasons, it has drawn criticism: First, customer assessments are predominantly influenced by utilitarian views, and brand preference is expressed as a single value obtained from an algebraic equation (Bagozzi, 1982). Second, it disregards other factors, such emotional reactions, that have an impact on preferences. (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2005; Allen et al., 2005). (Grimm, 2005; Zajonc & Markus, 1982; Bagozzi, 1982). Third, only a limited range of basically utilitarian products are covered by the use of this paradigm. (Park & Srinivasan, 1994). Multi-attribute models have, however, been questioned regarding their applicability for goods with tangible characteristics that only slightly influence consumer choices. (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Zajonc & Markus, 1982). Fourthly, this model's algebraic equation suffers from a reduction in predictive power due to the addition of weightings. (Churchill, 1972; Sheth & Talarzyk, 1972). In addition, this strategy's "halo effect" could influence your decision-making regarding branding and design. (Leuthesser, Kohli, & Harich, 1995). This has necessitated considering additional methods of determining brand preferences in addition to the consumer's salient beliefs about brand attributes.

The key sources of consumer choice learning, according to psychologists, are experience and information processing, who also regard preference as a learning concept. (Amir & Levav, 2008; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Sheth, 1968). Brand preference, according to Howard and Sheth (1969), sums up how consumers process cognitive information about brand stimuli and relates to their propensity for brands. Emphasis is focused on the central control mechanism and mental faculties of the consumers in this theory and other

information processing models. (Bettman, Capon, & Lutz, 1975). As a result, a consumer's perception of a brand's attributes influences their preferences or attitudes, which in turn influences their intentions and brand selections. (Bagozzi, 1982). As a result, preference serves as a transitional state between the consumer choice model's inputs and outputs. It is the connection between the processing of information and the choice or purchase that is made. (Bagozzi, 1983). For preferences to emerge, it is advised that experience and the brand meaning people have stored in their minds be merged. According to this study, brand preference is a behavioural propensity that indicates a consumer's perception of a brand. According to one theory, experience enhances memory, and vivid details serve as a clear indication of client preferences. (Paivio, 1971). According to Schwarz (2004), customers use their past experiences as reliable sources of information when weighing their options and making decisions. Customers like businesses that offer memorable experiences. (Goode, Dahl, & Moreau, 2010).

2.2. Brand Trust:

The idea of brand trust is built on the assumption that a brand and its customers have a relationship, according to branding literature. (Zehir et al., 2011). In contemporary branding literature, there are several ideas of brand trust. (Shin et al., 2019). Consumers' trust in the calibre and dependability of a vendor's goods was described as trust. (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Brand trust is defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) as the willingness of customers to trust that the brand can achieve its stated aim. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The notion that a brand will remain trustworthy and please the customer underpins interactions with it, and brand trust is a representation of that confidence. (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). Only risky situations are appropriate for the idea of trust. (e.g., in the case of a wider or smaller variety amongst brands). Customers were, in fact, less likely to trust a brand when they thought a product was dangerous since they knew they could rely on it. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Doney & Cannon, 1997). A consumer's propensity to rely on a brand in the face of uncertainty because they believe it will produce beneficial results is another definition of brand trust. (Lau & Lee, 1999). Some academics contend that as brand preference and consumer trust in a particular brand grew, so did the likelihood of repeat purchases. (Chinomona et al., 2013; Sheth & Parvatijar, 1995). In a prior study, brand preference was predicted by brand trust. (Afsar, 2014; Chinomona et al., 2013). Additionally, there was a connection between brand trust and the likelihood of making a purchase, suggesting that if brand trust has increased, the likelihood of making a purchase has also increased. (Aydin et al., 2014; Sanny et al., 2020). Brand trust influences purchase intention positively, according to previous studies. (Aydin et al., 2014; Sanny et al., 2020).

2.3. Perceived Value:

Perceived value caught the attention of researchers. (Hanaysha, 2018; Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived worth has been researched from four different perspectives. Value was placed after price. It is conceivable to compare the value and the price on an equal footing, in other words. Second, my money was a good investment. Third, the value demonstrated the compromise between price and product quality. The second and third interpretations looked at the trade-off between cost and benefit and showed how value is essential to the exchange process. The benefit resulted from a careful assessment of a subject of judgement while upholding the evaluation standards. (Pan & Kang, 2017; Zeithaml, 1988). Other researchers claimed that the smallest criterion of a good or service's perceived worth was its price. Perceived value, in a broader sense, refers to the price consumers are prepared to pay in exchange for the advantages of owning or using the good or service. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Another definition of perceived value was how customers weighed the total advantages of the good against the time and money they spent making the transaction. (Hellier et al., 2003). Perceived value was a key antecedent of brand preference and favourably influenced it, according to past studies. (Ebrahim et al., 2016; Hellier et al., 2003; Muzakir & Damrus, 2018). According to several studies, the perceived value came before the purchasing intention (Y. Hu, 2011; Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangin, 2017). The perceived value was found to have a positive effect on purchase intention in earlier empirical studies (Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangin, 2017; Hsieh, 2016; Hu, 2011).

2.4. Brand Loyalty

In the literature on marketing, brand loyalty is defined in a variety of ways. Giddens (2002) asserts that a customer exhibits brand loyalty when they are willing to pay extra for a certain brand within the same product category and suggests that brand to other people in their personal lives. Another approach to describe brand loyalty is a strong desire to use or repurchase a preferred good or service in the future, which results in recurring brand purchases. (Oliver, 1999; Knox & Walker, 2001; Rundle-Thiele & Mackay, 2001). Brand loyalty, according to published literature, increases sales revenues, market share, and profitability for businesses, assisting them in expanding or, at the very least, maintaining their market position. (Keller, 2008; Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 1997). In addition, brand loyalty is necessary for a company to succeed and compete. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Every company strives to have strong brand loyalty linked with its brands as a result. (Morrison & Crane, 2007). Brand loyalty is the inclination of a consumer to purchase a specific brand name in a specific product category; it results from the brand's perceived excellence rather than its price. (Chaudhuri A, 1999). Brand loyalty has been demonstrated to exist when a customer is willing to pay extra for a specific brand within the same product category and recommends that brand to others. Additionally, brand loyalty was defined as a firm commitment to making

future purchases of a favoured brand of goods or services. (Oliver, R. L, 1999 & Nawaz, N.-U.-A., & Usman, A, 2008). Increase and maintain brand loyalty was the major goal of marketing tactics, especially in markets with fierce competition, extreme unpredictability, and a loss of product distinction. The results of the current study demonstrated a relationship between brand loyalty and specific marketing benefits including lower marketing costs, more new clients, and larger trade transactions. (Chinomona R, 2013). Additionally, for a company to succeed and remain competitive, brand loyalty is crucial. (Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B, 2001). Every business therefore needs strong brand loyalty for its brands. (Morrison, S., & Crane, F. G, 2007).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Context:

The research context serves as a framework for comprehending the study's emphasis on the preferences for mobile phone brands in particular cities located within the state of Karnataka, India.

- a. The state of Karnataka exhibits a diverse economic terrain, characterised by the presence of industries such as information technology, manufacturing and agriculture. The selection of mobile phone brands by consumers can be influenced by income levels, employment rates, and the prevailing economic conditions in the chosen cities.
- b. The study undertaken cities are located within the state of Karnataka, which is renowned for its technologically inclined populace and varied geographical characteristics. Consumer preferences in mobile phone brands may be influenced by the locations and unique characteristics of cities.
- c. Karnataka is considered a leading state in India with regards to technological advancements. The brand preferences of individuals in these cities are influenced by significant factors such as connectivity, internet penetration, and smartphone adoption rates.
- d. The demographic composition of these cities exhibits variations with respect to age, gender, education, and income. Demographic characteristics frequently exert a significant influence on the formation of consumer preferences regarding mobile phone brands.
- e. The cultural and social dynamics of Karnataka, including its rich culture, traditions, languages, and social norms, have the potential to influence consumer behaviour and preferences. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account these cultural and social factors when analysing consumer behaviour in this region.

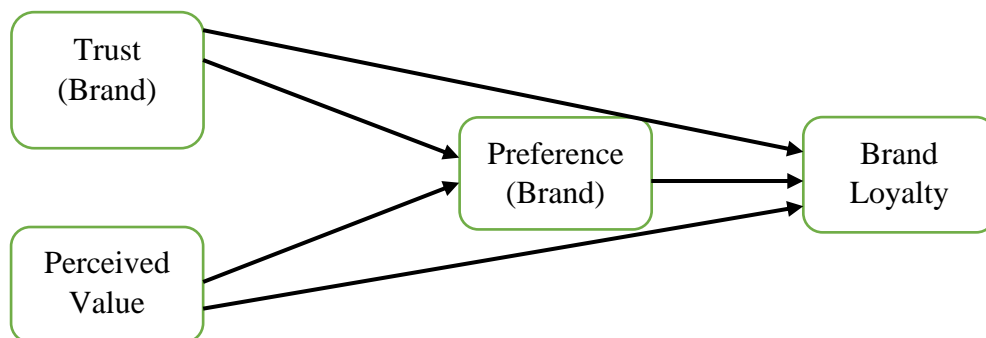
3.2: Data Collection:

The researchers developed an online questionnaire utilising Google Forms, which was subsequently disseminated through various social media platforms and professional networks. Additionally, an offline survey was conducted in shopping centres and corporate buildings. After conducting data cleansing and modification procedures, a total of 479 responses out of the initial 513 were deemed suitable for further analysis. The theoretical framework encompassing the antecedents of brand preference, which was developed based on a comprehensive review of existing literature, was validated utilising the partial least squares approach.

3.3: Objectives of the study:

- To investigate the factors influencing consumer preference for mobile phone brands in Karnataka's cities.
- To identify and analyze the influence of brand loyalty's antecedents.
- To ascertain the relationship between brand preference and brand adherence.

3.4: MODEL CONSTRUCTION:



3.5: HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY:

- H1: Brand trust probably affects brand loyalty.
- H2: Brand trust likely has an impact on consumer brand preference.
- H3: Perceived value most likely affects brand loyalty.
- H4: Perceived value is likely to affect brand selection.
- H5: Brand preference likely affects brand loyalty.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Measurement Model Evaluation: Composite Reliability and Validity

To analyze and evaluate the construct's dependability, the researcher employed Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability metrics. According to estimated Cronbach values of 0.814,.769,.784, and.733, the calculated values are higher than the required value of 0.70, indicating that the dependability of brand trust, preference, loyalty, and perceived quality is good. Computed composite reliability ratings of .876, .864, .861, and .876 for the constructs were discovered to be higher than the typical value of 0.70. The construct scores are therefore thought to be trustworthy. As a result, the construct is suitable for the remainder of the analysis with a standard score of 0.70 for assessing internal consistency. The analyses' results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

The convergent validity of the components was assessed using factor loading scores and average variance extracted (AVE). The constructs were loaded between .715 and .817, and the estimated AVE values for the constructs - .639, .615, .608, and .639—all exceed the threshold value of 0.5, confirming the constructs' strong convergent validity. With regard to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which assesses the discriminant validity of the constructs, the results showed that the square root of AVE for the reflective constructs of brand trust, perceived quality, brand preference, and brand loyalty was higher than that of the associated latent variable, and that the discriminant validity for the construct was thus found to be satisfactory. The analysis's results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

4.2. Model Fit Evaluation

The computed chi-square value of 391.214 was deemed significant at a p-value and a 95% confidence level. (0.000). The model was determined to have a strong match for analysis since the standardised root means square was found to be 0.063, which is less than the upper limit criterion of 0.08. The multicollinearity problem was also resolved by measuring VIF values. Finding that all metrics were below the cutoff of 5 resolved the multicollinearity issue. The NFI value was calculated to be 0.0897, which is very close to the required standard norm one and shows that the model is a good match. The NFI value is equal to 1 minus the suggested model's Chi-square value divided by the null model's Chi-square value. Table 4 presents the outcomes of the model fit analysis.

Table 1: Construct's Loading and Reliability:

Brand Trust			
Construct	Factor Loading	Communality	Cronbach's Alpha
I trust the phone brand	.813	.752	0.814
This phone brand is secure	.765	.643	
I believe this phone brand to be trustworthy	.775	.664	
This phone brand is reliable	.842	.713	
Perceived Quality			
Value for money is high in the phone I am using	.817	.663	.769
In comparison to other brands, the likely quality of the phone used by me is extremely high	.791	.751	
Pricing of the phone is Competitive	.715	.733	
In comparison to other phones selected phone is leading in the market	.811	.699	
Brand Preference			
This phone brand seems appealing to me.	.761	.733	.784
Compared to other similar brands of phones, I choose this one.	.741	.672	
If all else is equal, I prefer this brand of phone.	.803	.783	
I favour this phone brand in general.	.814	.684	
Brand Loyalty			
I was satisfied with the product during my last purchase experience	.776	.685	.733
I would buy the same brand on the next purchase	.817	.671	
I would recommend the phone to others	.793	.614	
The selected phone would be my first choice among other brands	.810	.599	

Table 2: Construct's Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Trust	.876	.639
Perceived Quality	.864	.615
Brand Preference	.861	.608
Brand Loyalty	.876	.639

Table 3: Construct's Discriminant Validity:

Constructs	Brand Trust	Perceived Quality	Brand Preference	Brand Loyalty
Brand Trust	0.743			
Perceived Quality	0.667	0.779		
Brand Preference	0.664	0.693	0.792	
Brand Loyalty	0.684	0.659	0.688	0.841

Table 4: PLS Model Indices

INDICES	MODEL VALUES
Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR)	.063
D_ULS	.529
D-G1	.238
D-G2	.214
Chi-square	391.214
NFI	.897

Table 5: Testing of Hypothesis

Construct Relationship	Hypothesis	Coefficients	t-Value	P-Value	Results
Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty	H1	.513	6.925	.000	Accepted
Brand Trust → Brand Preference	H2	.341	4.746	.000	Accepted
Perceived Quality → Brand Loyalty	H3	.298	3.627	.000	Accepted
Perceived Quality → Brand Preference	H4	.311	4.127	.000	Accepted

Brand Preference → Brand Loyalty	H5	.307	3.974	.000	Accepted
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Table 6: Construct Relationship and Path Coefficients

Construct Relationship	Path Coefficients	F ²	Construct	R ²	Q ²
Brand Trust → Brand Loyalty	0.513	0.169	Brand Loyalty	0.642	0.231
Brand Trust → Brand Preference	0.341	0.074			
Perceived Quality → Brand Loyalty	0.298	0.167	Brand Preference	0.701	0.296
Perceived Quality → Brand Preference	0.311	0.093			
Brand Preference → Brand Loyalty	0.307	0.103			

4.3. Construct Relationship and Path Coefficients

A strong influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables is indicated by the calculated R square value of 0.701. Brand preference was discovered to be strongly influenced by brand trust (0.341), perceived quality (0.311), and brand loyalty (0.311). (0.307). All three variables accounted for 70.1% of the variation in brand choice. According to the alternative model, brand trust had a more significant effect on brand loyalty (0.513) than perceived quality (0.298). Brand trust and brand loyalty were found to have a medium influence (0.169), as were perceived quality and brand loyalty, according to calculated effect sizes (0.167). The most negligible effect was discovered in the association between perceived quality and brand preference (0.093). In contrast, the medium-weak effect was discovered in the relationship between brand loyalty and brand preference (0.103) and (0.074). Scores of 0.231 for brand loyalty and 0.296 for brand choice, which are greater than zero in the calculated results for the model's predictive relevance for endogenous variables, suggest that the model's predictive power is appropriate for endogenous latent variables. The analysis results are shown in Table 6.

5. Conclusion:

This study explores the phenomenon of mobile phone brand preferences in specific cities of Karnataka. The present study provides insights into the determinants that impact consumer decision-making within a rapidly evolving and highly competitive market. It has been found that there exists substantial variation in consumer preferences for mobile phone brands across different cities within the state of Karnataka. Various factors, such as economic conditions, demographics, and cultural influences, significantly contribute to the formation of these disparities. Brand preferences are significantly influenced by economic conditions, which encompass factors such as income levels and employment opportunities. The choices made by individuals are influenced by factors such as their purchasing power and the range of employment opportunities accessible within their region. The degree of technological advancement and interconnectedness in the chosen urban areas significantly influences consumer preferences for brands. Cities that possess superior internet access and advanced mobile network infrastructure exhibit a preference for brands that offer features that effectively utilise these technological capabilities. The determinants of brand preferences were found to be age, education and income levels. Younger, more educated populations with higher income levels often gravitated toward brands offering advanced features. Consumer behaviour in Karnataka, specifically in the chosen cities, was significantly impacted by the diverse cultural and social dynamics prevalent in the region. The influence of regional customs, linguistic variations, and societal conventions contributed to the formation of individual preferences.

The relationship between perceived quality and brand trust accounts for 64.2% of the variability seen in brand loyalty. The study revealed that a one-unit increase in brand trust had a significant impact on brand loyalty, resulting in a change of 0.513 units. Similarly, a one-unit increase in perceived quality was also shown to have a significant effect on brand loyalty, resulting in a change of 0.298 units. The predictor factors of perceived quality, brand trust, and brand loyalty shown a significant influence on brand selection. The key determinants of brand choice may be attributed to three variables, together accounting for 70.1% of the observed variance. The study revealed that a one-unit increase in brand trust corresponded to a 0.341-unit increase in brand preference. Similarly, a one-unit increase in perceived quality was associated with a 0.311-unit increase in brand preference, while a one-unit increase in brand loyalty was linked to a 0.307-unit increase in brand preference.

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