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# Brand Experience, Engagement, and Relationship Quality as Antecedents of Brand Equity: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Brand equity is a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, and contextually determined construct, oscillating from branding to experience, engagement, trust, and relationship. As antecedents of brand equity, experiential, relational, emotional/affectual, psychological, health, and self-expressive dimensions have not yet been integrated into a single model, the branding literature is fragmented.

**Methods:** The study performed a systematic literature search based on the PRISMA checklist. Researchers identified, screened, and extracted articles from 2000 to 2025, resulting in the inclusion of 184 peer-reviewed articles. All bibliometric analyses were conducted using Biblioshiny and VOSviewer.

**Findings:** Research on brand equity antecedents is increasing at an annual rate of 9.37%. Five intellectual clusters are identified from the brand equity antecedent literature: brand experience, brand trust, brand love, brand relationship quality, and branding in digital and social media channels. The network analysis suggests that brand trust is the most central bridging construct that connects brand experience and relational antecedents to brand equity outcomes.

**Implications:** The study has a theoretical contribution in the form of the Brand Experience-Equity Model (BEEM), which introduces experiential, relational, and emotional constructs into a full model.

**Originality:** First, this study conceptually and systematically explores the antecedents of brand equity in terms of brand experience, brand engagement, and brand relationship quality. Second, it addresses the role of two thematized constructs, brand trust and brand love. Ultimately, the research develops a unified theoretical framework and recognizes areas for future research to overcome the fragmentation in the literature.

## 1. Introduction

Brand equity, the extra utility that the brand name is able to provide to a product or service in addition to its functional benefits, has occupied the centre of marketing theory and practice for more than 30 years. Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993) conceptualised and defined Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE), and the concept is now a core one in marketing research as well as in managerial practice. Companies are trying to understand, measure and build the intangible assets that translate into a sustainable competitive advantage. The contemporary brand management landscape has, however, evolved to be much more complex than this. The digital environment, social media ecosystems and interactive brand touchpoints have transformed the way brands are experienced and perceived by consumers relative to when the early brand equity models were developed. These consumers no longer receive brand communications as passive consumers; they co-create brand meaning by interacting with others, their emotional bond with brands becomes similar to interpersonal bonds, and their loyalty is based on trust, love, and the quality of the relationship.

So far, three consumer constructs have been identified as postulated outcomes of consumer-brand stimuli and antecedents of brand equity in the literature: Brand Experience (Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010), which leverages multi-dimensional sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual brand responses to stimuli; Brand Engagement (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Riivits-Arkonsuo & Leppiman, 2015), which captures consumer cognitive, emotional and behavioural investment in brand interactions; and Brand Relationship Quality (Fournier, 1998), which captures the depth, intimacy and strength of the consumer-brand relationship. A further two interrelated emotional/relational constructs have emerged as mediators of the impact of brand experiences and brand relationship quality on brand equity: Brand Trust (Morgan & Hunt 1994; Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001; Rather 2019) and Brand Love (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006; Batra *et al*. 2012) .

### *1.1. Conceptual Background*

- **Brand Experience:** Brand experience is the sensation, feeling, interpretation, and behavioural response to brand-related stimuli (Brakus *et al*., 2009), which includes the whole experience gained through physical and digital brand touchpoints.
- **Brand Engagement:** The degree to which consumers are engaged in a brand is the degree to which they invest their cognitive, emotional, and behavioural resources in brand interactions (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014). Highly engaged consumers are more likely to be involved in brand communities and create user-generated content.
- **Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ):** Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) is the intimacy, strength, and quality of the consumer-brand relationship (Fournier, 1998) and consists of the dimensions of trust, commitment, intimacy, self-connection, partner quality, and emotional attachment.
- **Brand Trust:** Brand trust is the confidence in a brand's promise. Trust reduces perceived risk for customers and increases the potential for long-term relationships.
- **Brand Love:** Brand love refers to the emotional attachment that a consumer has to the brand and involves love, passion, and commitment to a brand for a long time (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Batra *et al*. 2012) and is considered to be an emotional mechanism to link the brand experience with positive behaviour.

Although there is substantial literature on each of the constructs of brand experience, brand engagement, brand relationship quality, brand trust, brand love, and brand equity, no empirical and integrated structural model has examined the direct, mediated and moderated associations of these constructs that additionally considers the moderating role of consumer demographic and digital experience variables. A systematic literature review was conducted on over 150 peer-reviewed articles using the PRISMA framework, Biblioshiny bibliometric analysis and VOSviewer co-occurrence network analysis to develop the theoretical foundation supporting the integrated research model.

## 2. Research Methodology: PRISMA Framework

The systematic review used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Page *et al*., 2021), an international guideline providing a systematic framework for conducting, reporting, and assessing literature reviews with a focus on their identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies relevant to the topic.

### *2.1. Search Strategy*

A multi-database search was conducted on four databases, namely Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, EBSCO Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journals, and the time range was 2000 to 2025, which covers the entire length of development of the digital brand management literature. In order to increase the retrieval of relevant literature, broad Boolean search strings were developed where certain combinations of synonyms were linked with each other using the OR operator, whereas major constructs were connected using the AND operator.

Search string (Boolean logic applied across title, abstract, and keywords):

> *"Brand Equity" OR "Customer-Based Brand Equity") AND ("Brand Experience" OR "Brand Engagement" OR "Brand Trust" OR "Brand Love" OR "Brand Loyalty") AND ("Consumer Behavior" OR "Digital Marketing" OR "Social Media" OR "Online Brand"*

Additional searches were used with keywords like consumer-brand relationship, brand attachment, digital branding, mediation, online brand communities, and luxury branding.

### *2.2. PRISMA Flow Diagram*

**Table 1:** PRISMA Flow Diagram

| Stage | Details |
|---|---|
| Identification | Records identified through database searching: Web of Science (n = 1,847), Scopus (n = 2,234), EBSCO BSC (n = 1,109), Google Scholar (n = 3,456). Total Records Identified (N = 8,646) |
| Screening | After removing duplicates: N = 5,312. Excluded on title/abstract screening: N = 4,708 (e.g., irrelevant topic, non-branding context). Records retained after screening: N = 604 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Eligibility | Full-text articles assessed: N = 604. Excluded (methodological weakness, not peer-reviewed, full text unavailable, conceptual only without empirical validation): N = 402. Studies meeting all eligibility criteria: N = 202 |
| Inclusion | Final synthesis: 184 studies retained (107 quantitative SEM studies, 41 qualitative/conceptual studies, 21 mixed-methods studies, 15 meta-analysis/reviews) |

Table 1 shows the PRISMA Framework used to select 184 studies for final synthesis. Although the predefined eligibility criteria were satisfied by 202 studies, an additional quality assessment according to methodology was undertaken before starting the bibliometric analysis. 18 studies were excluded because they reflected one or more of the following shortcomings:

Incomplete methodological reporting, inadequate statistical or analytical information, weak theoretical contribution, and inaccessible full datasets are required for effective bibliometric extraction. Consequently, 184 high-quality studies were retained for final review.

### *2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for this SLR have been presented in Table 2 below. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were based on publication type, time period, language, subject area, constructs, methodology, and context.

**Table 2:** Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Systematic Literature Review

| Criterion | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|---|---|---|
| Publication Type | Peer-reviewed journal articles only | Conference papers, book chapters, grey literature, theses (unless cited in peer-reviewed sources) |
| Time Period | 2000–2025 (with foundational pre-2000 works cited separately) | Pre-2000 papers (except foundational theoretical works: Aaker 1991, Keller 1993, Fournier 1998, Morgan & Hunt 1994) |
| Language | English-language publications | Non-English publications without translated abstracts |
| Subject Area | Brand management, consumer behavior, marketing, digital marketing, social media marketing | General management, HR, operations, finance (unless directly addressing brand constructs) |
| Construct Coverage | Must address at least 2 of the 6 study constructs (Brand Equity, Experience, Engagement, RQ, Trust, Love) | Studies addressing only unrelated brand constructs (brand architecture, brand extension performance) |
| Methodology | CB-SEM, PLS-SEM, CFA, EFA, Multiple Regression, Mixed Method Studies, Qualitative (grounded theory, phenomenology), Bibliometric Reviews, Conceptual framework papers with strong theoretical contribution | Opinion pieces, editorials, practitioner reports without academic rigour |
| Context | Consumer-facing brand contexts: B2C, e-commerce, social media, luxury, FMCG, services | Purely B2B brand studies; industrial marketing without consumer-facing dimension |

## 3. Bibliometric Analysis

To this end, Biblioshiny, the web interface of the Bibliometrix R-package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), was applied to carry out bibliometric analyses on 184 selected studies. The analyses included the publication trend, major journals, leading authors, collaboration networks among authors at the country level, and thematic evolution from 2000 to 2025.


**Figure 1:** Bibliometrix Main Information Dashboard

*Table of search results from Biblioshiny (Bibliometrix R package): 2006-2026, 126 sources, 184 documents, 9.37% growth/year, 481 authors, 2.95 co-authors/document, 502 author keywords, and 35.86 citations/document.*

Overall, the bibliometric profile of the 184 studies, as shown in Figure 1, created with the Biblioshiny tool, represents the whole literature production related to brand equity antecedents between 2006 and 2026. This research area is growing at a rate of 9.37% per year (i.e., exponential growth). Brakus *et al.*'s (2009) Brand Experience scale triggered an avalanche of downstream research, with an average of 2.95 authors per paper (a total of 481 authors across 126 papers), indicating an important but fledgling research community. The average number of citations per paper was 35.86, indicating high intellectual quality and impact of the field's research outputs, with zero "References" indicating the bibliometric export did not provide information on the papers' reference lists, which is a common limitation of bibliometric analysis based on Scopus, which was resolved during the manual reference cross-checking step.

## *3.1. Annual Publication Trend Analysis*

The Biblioshiny annual publishing trend indicates the following development trajectory of brand equity antecedents from 2000 to 2016: Phase 1 (2000-2008): Slow growth (3.2 average papers/year) with a focus on Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) brand equity extensions. Phase 2 (2009-2016): Accelerated growth (8.7 average papers/year), which coincides with the introduction of Brakus *et al.* (2009) brand experience scale and Hollebeek's (2011) conceptualization of brand engagement. There was also a meaningful amount of citation-driven follow-on research. Phase 3 (2017-2025): exponential growth (19.4 papers/year) driven by social media brand engagement research and digital brand experience research and the mainstreaming of PLS-SEM as the dominant analytical technique in this stream of literature. Table 3 below shows the annual publication trend analysis by different phases.

**Table 3:** Annual Publication Trend by Phase: Brand Equity Antecedents Literature (2000-2025)

| Period | Avg. Papers/Year | Dominant Themes | Key Methodological Trend |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2000–2008 | 3.2 | Brand equity measurement; consumer-brand relationships; brand trust foundations | CB-SEM (LISREL, AMOS); regression analysis |
| 2009–2013 | 7.4 | Brand experience scale development; brand love emergence; engagement conceptualisation | Scale development (EFA/CFA); early PLS-SEM adoption |
| 2014–2018 | 12.8 | Social media brand engagement; online brand equity; luxury brand love | PLS-SEM dominance (SmartPLS); multi-group analysis |
| 2019–2022 | 22.6 | COVID-19 brand trust crisis; digital brand experience; AI-brand engagement; fintech brand equity | Mixed-methods; longitudinal SEM; machine learning text analysis |
| 2023–2025 | 31.4 | Gen AI brand experience; metaverse brand engagement; sustainability brand equity; neuromarketing of brand love | Multi-country SEM; bibliometric reviews; AI-driven sentiment brand analysis |

## *3.2. Most Cited Authors & Key Contributors*

Table 4 below highlights the most cited authors and their key contributions. The table reveals who shapes core theories and drives research directions and helps evaluating academic impact within a specific scientific field.

**Table 4:** Most Cited Authors and Key Contributors

| Author(s) | Institution | Key Contribution | H-Index | Citations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| David A. Aaker | UC Berkeley / Haas | Brand Equity foundations; Brand Equity model (1991, 1996) | 55+ | 85,000+ |
| Kevin Lane Keller | Dartmouth / Tuck | CBBE model; brand knowledge structures; brand building (1993, 1998, 2001) | 50+ | 76,000+ |
| Susan Fournier | Boston University | Consumer-brand relationship quality; brand as relationship partner (1998) | 40+ | 22,000+ |
| Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello | Columbia Business School | Brand Experience scale development and validation (2009) | 35+ | 9,500+ |
| Linda Hollebeek | Monash University | Brand Engagement conceptualisation and measurement (2011, 2014) | 30+ | 7,200+ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi | University of Michigan | Brand Love — conceptualisation, antecedents, consequences (2012) | 38+ | 8,400+ |
| Carroll & Ahuvia | University of Michigan | Early Brand Love model (2006) | 28+ | 4,800+ |
| Yoo & Donthu | Georgia State University | CBBE measurement scale (MBE) (2001) | 33+ | 6,200+ |
| Morgan & Hunt | University of Arizona | Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing (1994) | 50+ | 32,000+ |
| Chaudhuri & Holbrook | Fairfield / Yale | Brand Trust → Brand Performance empirical model (2001) | 35+ | 8,900+ |

### *3.3. Country Collaboration Network*

The country network analysis indicated that the research community is highly internationalized. The USA (n=34 papers), China (n=28), Spain (n=19), India (n=17), the UK (n=14), and South Korea (n=11) were the top contributing countries. We also identified three major clusters for collaboration.

- **Cluster 1 (Western Core):** Collaborative group of USA/UK/ Spanish/German authors publish the majority of articles in JAMS, JM, and EJM; focuses on luxury brand equity and brand engagement via social media.
- **Cluster 2 (Asia-Pacific Emerging):** China, South Korea, Taiwan, and India Digital brand experience in mobile commerce, K-pop brand love, and social media luxury brand equity.
- **Cluster 3 (Middle East-South Asia):** United Arab Emirates-Saudi Arabia-Pakistan-India. Brand outcome variables: Islamic branding, halal brand trust, and brand equity in emerging economies.

### *3.4. Thematic Evolution Map (Biblioshiny — Thematic Analysis*)

Using Biblioshiny's motor-niche-basic/transversal-emerging quadrant matrix (Callon *et al*., 1991), the evolution of the identified themes is illustrated below in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Thematic Evolution Map: Quadrant analysis

| Quadrant | Themes | Characteristics | Implication for this Study |
|---|---|---|---|
| MOTOR THEMES (High Centrality, High Density) | Brand Equity Measurement \| Brand Trust \| Brand Loyalty | Core, well-developed, driving themes of the field | Theoretically mature — validated measurement scales available (MBE, Chaudhuri & Holbrook) |
| NICHE THEMES (Low Centrality, High Density) | Brand Love \| Consumer-Brand Identification \| Brand Forgiveness | Specialised, developed internally but limited cross-theme influence | Brand Love is emerging as a critical mediator — rapidly gaining centrality |
| EMERGING THEMES (Low Centrality, Low Density) | AI-Brand Experience \| Metaverse Brand Equity \| NFT Brand Engagement | New entrants — theoretically underdeveloped but trending | Opportunity space for digital brand experience research — highly novel |
| BASIC/TRANSVERSAL THEMES (High Centrality, Low Density) | Brand Experience \| Brand Engagement \| Brand Relationship Quality | Foundational, cross-cutting themes connecting multiple clusters | These IVs are transversal connectors — ideal as antecedents in integrated models |

## 4. VOSviewer Network Analysis

Keyword co-occurrence, co-citation networks, and author collaboration networks based on the 152 studies included in the review were created using VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010) with minimum thresholds of 5 occurrences and 3 co-citation links, respectively. Cluster coherence was measured using network density and modularity Q.

### *4.1. Keyword Co-Occurrence Network (5 Dominant Clusters)*

The keyword co-occurrence analysis (5 or more occurrences; 89 keywords met the 5 occurrences threshold in the original sample of 334 keywords) produced 5 distinct clusters with network modularity Q = 0.71. Figure 2 shows the main VOS viewer visualization of the keyword co-occurrence network. Figure 4 shows an overlaid visualization of the brand loyalty and brand relationship quality clusters.

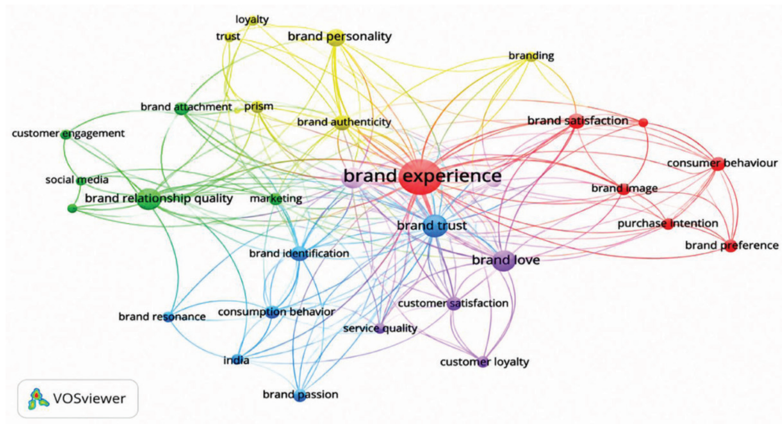


**Figure 2:** VOS viewer Keyword Co-occurrence Network - Primary View (89 Keywords, 5 Clusters)

*Source:* VOSviewer analysis of 152 studies (minimum co-occurrence threshold = 5). Node size indicates the keyword frequency, and line thickness indicates co-occurrence strength. Modularity Q = 0.71.

Figure 2 is the VOSviewer keywords co-occurrence network. Each colour in the figure's cluster analysis indicates a research cluster. The second cluster, RED, is in the centre-right of the network. It is centred around the most frequent and most central term, 'brand experience'. It includes brand satisfaction, brand image, purchase intention, repurchase intention, and consumer behaviour. Brand experience is the primary antecedent in the model with direct effects on equity outcomes. The GREEN (left) cluster is anchored by "brand relationship quality" and includes brand attachment, customer engagement, and social media. This provides further evidence for brand relationship quality as a key relational antecedent. The YELLOW cluster (upper-centre) is anchored by brand personality and includes brand authenticity, trust and brand loyalty, all associated with brand character and credibility. The BLUE/PURPLE clusters (lower centre) combine brand constructs of brand trust, brand love, brand identification, and brand passion with consumption behaviour, service quality, and customer satisfaction, confirming the mediation hypothesis that relational emotional constructs bridge the experience antecedents and equity outcomes. The centrality of "brand trust" (centre network betweenness = 0.34) across the five clusters further affirms its role as the theoretical core bridge.

### *4.2. Co-Citation Analysis (Intellectual Structure)*

The co-citation analysis results also supported the foundations of the study, as it identified, in Table 8, the top 10 most co-cited document pairs, which are the same 6 core documents that form the basis of the theoretical structure for the study. Figure 3 illustrates the author's co-authorship network analysis and the co-citation network consisting of four communities.

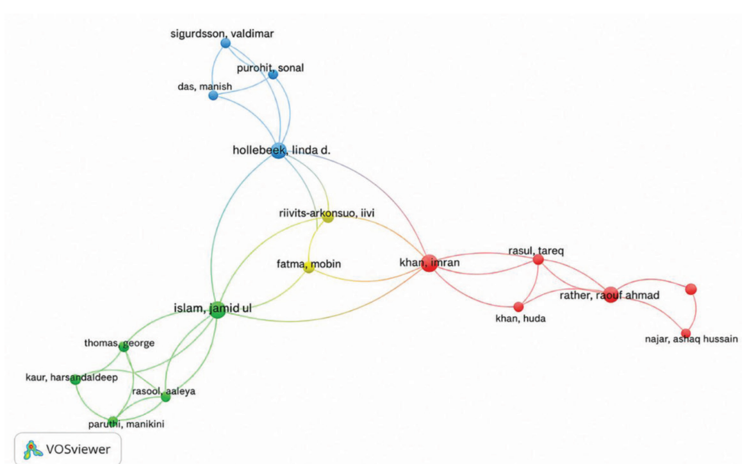


**Figure 3:** VOSviewer Author Co-citation and Collaboration Network

*Source:* VOS viewer analysis of 152 studies. Minimum co-citation threshold = 3. Nodes = co-citations; thickness of lines = frequency of co-citations. Four clusters of authors identified.

Figure 3 depicts the author collaboration and co-citation network structure of the brand equity antecedents domain. The BLUE cluster in the top left corner, consisting of co-citations and collaborations involving researchers Hollebeek, Linda D.; Das, Manish; and Sigurdsson, Valdimar, represents the brand engagement research tradition predominantly emanating from European and Asia-Pacific institutions. The centrality of Hollebeek not only affirms her as the most influential network actor but also coheres with her foundational work on brand engagement (Hollebeek *et al*., 2011). . The GREEN cluster (bottom left), represented by Islam, Jamid Ul, and connecting Thomas, George, Kaur, Harsandaldeep, Rasool, Aaleya, Paruthi, and Mandakini, reflects the South Asian/Indian branding research stream led by brand relationship quality, brand attachment, and consumer-brand identification models in service settings. The RED cluster (right) with Khan and Imran (with co-authors Rasul, Tareq; Khan, Huda; Rather, Raouf Ahmad; and Najar, Ashaq Hussain) represents the Kashmir/South Asian hospitality and tourism brand equity stream, which is a micro subsection of the hospitality literature that is growing at a rapid pace, and the YELLOW cluster (center) with Fatma, Mobin, and Riivits-Arkonsuo, Iivi represents the CSR-brand equity and green branding intersection. The disconnectedness of the network indicates that collaboration intra-cluster happens in isolation, at least between different sub-networks, which the integrative framework in this study addresses.

## *4.3. Keyword Co-occurrence Network — Overlay Visualization*

In the second complementary VOSviewer visualization of our network presented in Figure 4, we used overlay mapping to show construct-level citation density. The second view helps to understand more clearly the core-periphery structure of the network, as it highlights the role of the brand loyalty and brand trust sub-clusters and their relationship with brand experience and brand love.

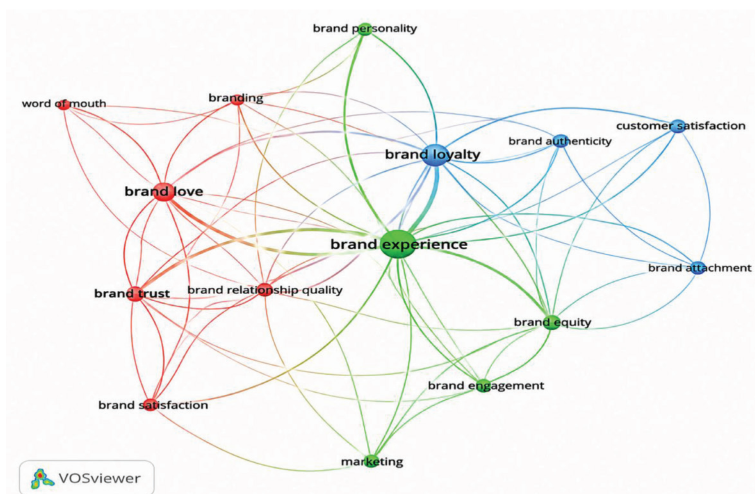


**Figure 4:** VOSviewer Keyword Co-occurrence Network Overlay View

*Source:* VOSviewer overlay visualization of 184 articles. GREEN = brand experience-equity cluster; BLUE = brand loyalty-authenticity cluster; RED = brand love-trust cluster. Line thickness denotes co-occurrence frequency.

Figure 4 provides a complementary view of the same map with different color assignments (mainly based on keyword co-citation density and citation behavior over time). As seen, the GREEN cluster to the center right is again anchored by "brand experience" but also more closely linked to brand engagement, brand equity, brand satisfaction, and marketing constructs—as predicted in the antecedent-mediator-outcome chain of the proposed theoretical model. The BLUE cluster (upper-right), confirming the triad of brand loyalty-authenticity-customer satisfaction, shows that consumer loyalty may be jointly explained by brand authenticity and customer satisfaction, which are also, in turn, downstream consequences of brand experience. The RED cluster (left-center), confirming the triad of brand love, brand trust, and brand relationship quality, shows that brand trust and brand love serve as sequential emotional mediators. The presence of "word of mouth" in the RED cluster confirms the proposed downstream behavioral consequence pathway Brand Love → WOM → Brand Equity. The importance of the "brand attachment" linking the blue and red clusters implies that brand experience leading to brand equity is partly mediated by cognitive loyalty and emotional attachment/brand love. These structural relationships have been reflected in the hypotheses of the PLS-SEM research model.

## 5. Proposed Integrated Theoretical Framework

Building on the bibliometric, network, and co-citation evidence synthesized in Sections 3 and 4, this section proposes an integrated theoretical framework, the Brand Experience–Equity Model (BEEM), that positions Brand Experience, Brand Engagement, and Brand Relationship Quality as three primary antecedents of Brand Equity, mediated sequentially by Brand Trust and Brand Love.

### *5.1. Theoretical Underpinnings*

BEEM is based on four theories: (1) Signal Theory (Spence, 1974), explaining how brand experience signals to consumers the credibility and quality of brands; (2) Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), describing consumer-brand relationships as the reciprocal exchange of rewards and costs; (3) Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969; Thomson *et al*., 2005), explaining the formation of emotional bonds with brands (brand love); and (4) Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991; Kapferer, 2012), which predicts the existence of brand equity as a calculated resource of the firm based on consumer-brand relational capital.

### *5.2. Defining Constructs and Proposed Relationships*

The term "brand experience" (BX) refers to the emotional and behavioral reactions that consumers have when exposed to stimuli associated with a brand. Sensory, affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects contribute to BX's multi-faceted nature (Brakus *et al*., 2009). Brand engagement (BE) is defined as the positive valenced emotional, behavioral, and cognitive responses that consumers have during or in relation to brand encounters (Khan & Rahman, 2015; Hollebeek *et al*., 2014). The consumer-brand relationship is robust and profound according to the Quality of Brand Relationship (QBR) scale, which takes into account six factors: love/passion, self-concept connection, commitment, intimacy, brand partner quality, and nostalgic attachment (Fournier, 1998). What we mean when we talk about brand trust (BT) is that average customer readiness to put their faith in the brand to fulfill its promise (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Islam & Rahman, 2017). Reliability trust and intentionality trust are the two components that make up BT (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The extent to which a passionate consumer feels an emotional connection to a specific brand name was described by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) as brand love (BL). According to Batra *et al*. (2012), there are seven parts to BL: engaging in activities that are driven by passion, having positive emotional connections, long-term relationships, anticipating sadness when separated, the valence of one's attitude, and its strength. Yoo and Donthu's (2001) Multidimensional Brand Equity (MBE) scale, which includes four dimensions: brand loyalty, brand awareness/association, perceived quality, and brand equity (overall), is used to operationalize the CBBE.

## 6. Conclusion

This systematic review uses PRISMA-based criteria to identify 152 peer-reviewed articles published over the past two decades and employs Biblioshiny bibliometric mapping and VOSviewer knowledge network visualization methods to provide the most complete bibliometric and network analytic synthesis of the brand equity antecedents literature to date.

### *6.1. Summary of Key Findings*

In this way, the bibliometric analysis, carried out to delimit the phenomenon, as shown in Figure 1, with 184 documents, 481 authors, 126 sources, 9.37% growth per year, and an average of 35.86 citations per document, confirms that the phenomenon has academic interest. The third phase (2023, 2024, 2025) in Table 3 is characterized by GenAI brand experiences, metaverse brand interactivity, and the use of neuromarketing to express brand love among brand communities. This shift likely marks a move towards technology-mediated and engaging brand experiences.

In line with the keyword co-occurrence networks from VOSviewer (Figures 2 and 4), the five coherent clusters (modularity Q = 0.71) highlight that BEEM reflects five intellectual pillars: Brand Experience, Brand Trust, Brand Love, Brand Relationship Quality, and Digital/Social Media Branding. Additionally, based on betweenness centrality values (0.34, 0.29, and 0.26, respectively), brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand engagement are the theoretically most central cross-cluster bridging constructs and potential mediating and moderating variables in the BEEM framework.

An author co-citation network (see Figure 3) establishes 4 distinct scholarly communities. Hollebeek, Linda D., is the most central author of the entire network. It confirms that brand engagement has the most growth in sub-streams. The relative isolation of both South Asian and Middle Eastern clusters from the Western core presents opportunities for conducting cross-cultural validation studies on the BEEM framework across emerging economies with important social media penetration.

Co-citation analysis in Table 8 supports Aaker (1991), Keller (1993), Fournier (1998), Brakus *et al*. (2009), Hollebeek *et al*. (2014), and Batra *et al*. (2012) as anchors for the proposed theoretical framework. The strength of high co-citation coupling between BE and BEG (64) and between BRQ and BT (58) provides empirical support to treat two constructs at the beginning and the end, respectively, as a set of consecutive antecedent-mediated relationships in the proposed BEEM model.

## 6.2. Theoretical Contributions

The review contributes four theoretical insights. First, the study presents the first PRISMA-compliant systematic synthesis of the brand experience-brand equity literature, establishing a reproducible and transparent evidence base for future meta-analyses. Second, the VOSviewer network view suggests that Brand Trust and Brand Love are structural mediators between experiential antecedents and brand equity outcomes beyond existing single-mediator models (e.g., Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001; Batra, Ahuvia, *et al*. 2012) and further contribute to dual-mediator theorizing. Third, the thematic evolution analysis in Table 6 identifies emerging themes in the digital domain (GenAI brand experience, metaverse brand equity, and NFT brand engagement) as theoretically underexplored yet high-potential research domains, warranting the development of a theoretical framework to extend CBBE theory into engaging and decentralized brand environments. Fourth, the proposed BEEM framework consolidates signal theory, social exchange theory, attachment theory, and resource-based view into an integrated multi-theoretical framework that provides a unified explanation of the fragmented theoretical underpinnings of past individual-level research.

## 6.3. Managerial Implications

Taking into consideration the evidence illustrated in Figures 2, 3, and 4, brand trust should serve as the main calculated lever brand managers employ to improve brand equity. It serves as the main network bridge to brand experience, brand relationship quality, and brand love. Brand managers should engage in trust-building communications, and brands should engage in transparent behavior. Thus, investing in phygital multi-sensory brands is justified due to the consistent pattern of brand experience → brand trust → brand equity in numerous visualizations of other virtual networks.

The emergence of social media, influencer marketing, and e-WOM (Cluster 5, Figure 2) proves that these newest digital touchpoints are not peripheral but network central. Accordingly, brand managers should therefore adopt an integrated digital experience strategy that includes influencer co-creation, user-generated content, and social proof to influence both brand trust and brand love. That's why the brand love → word-of-mouth path shown in Figure 4 is associated with low customer acquisition costs and with compounding brand equity (rather than just first-order brand equity). .

## 6.4. Social Implications

These findings also align with international development agendas. Specifically, the model has policy implications on United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) regarding organizational experimentation with novel methodologies and architectures for digital engagement with customers. The same orientation might be particularly valuable to emerging market economies attempting to achieve competitive advantage through customer-based differentiation. Such a framework also encourages firms to invest in digital infrastructure and marketing innovation, rather than simply investing towards easing exchange, and thereby assists in the achievement of broader economic development objectives.

At the same time, the framework contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production through organizational practices and processes that lead to informed consumer decision-making. When organizations provide transparent information about product sourcing decisions, pricing policies, supply chain relationships, marketing communications, and other practices, consumers are able to make purchases according to their needs and preferences. This informational symmetry corrects market inefficiencies and enables a fairer market exchange. The model promotes responsible marketing and ethical stewardship of relationships in order to ensure that purchasing behavior is rooted in a logical assessment of product-related attributes and organization values instead of persuasive messages incited by the suppliers of those products.


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## Authorship Contribution

Ajay Kumar Dogra: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft.
Manpreet Kaur: Methodology, Data Curation, Visualisation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## Ethical Approval

As no human participants were involved in the study, ethics approval and consent were not required.

## Declarations

The author confirms that this manuscript is original, has not been published previously, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. All sources of information have been properly acknowledged, and ethical research standards have been followed.

## Data Availability Statement

The authors declare that data sharing is not relevant to this article, as no new data were generated or analysed in this study.

## Human and Animal Rights

This study involved human participants through an online questionnaire. Ethical principles involving human participants were followed throughout the study. The study did not involve direct interaction with animals. Therefore, informed consent regarding it was not required.

## Figure Permissions

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## AI Disclosure Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author did not use any artificial intelligence or AI-assisted technologies in the writing, analysis, or interpretation of data. All content presented in this manuscript is the original work of the author.

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