

The influence of brand awareness, brand image and perceived quality on Generation Y's brand satisfaction and brand love: a Samsung smartphone case study

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Abstract

Purpose – The primary purpose of this study is to examine the interaction between brand awareness (BA), brand image (BI), perceived quality (PQ) and brand-relationship elements, namely, brand satisfaction (BS) and brand love (BLOV), among Generation Y (Gen Y) smartphone users.

Design/methodology/approach – This quantitative study was cross-sectional, and a sample of 651 Gen Y Samsung smartphone users from two South African universities completed a questionnaire with structured questions. Structural equation modelling (SEM), Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) and the bootstrapping method were used to analyse data.

Findings – The study found that BA, BI and PQ among Samsung smartphone users have direct and indirect effects on their BS, and ultimately, their emotional attachment to the BLOV.

Research limitations/implications – The sample was confined to the Gen Y cohort of 18–25 years in South Africa. This suggests that the results of this study cannot be generalised beyond the country and as being representative of the views of other generational cohorts. The study focused on the telecommunications industry and therefore, results are relevant to this specific industry. The model presented in this research can be replicated in other industries. The study employed the quantitative approach and future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach to generate more insightful findings. Lastly, the study is cross-sectional and future research could adopt a longitudinal approach.

Practical implications – In terms of practical/managerial implications, the Samsung marketing teams should integrate the BA, BI, PQ, BS and BLOV elements in their brand strategies to continue growing the brand and outmanoeuvre competitors. Direct and indirect results have proven that the BS element is the cornerstone underpinning consumers' emotional attachment to the Samsung smartphone. This implies that companies such as Samsung should invest financial resources toward satisfying their consumers. The insights of this study can further assist marketers of competing products, such as Apple, to develop strategies to capture the lucrative Gen Y market and ultimately increase market share.

Originality/value – This study integrates Esch *et al.*'s (2006) brand-relationship model with Aaker's (1996) seminal brand equity framework to propose and test a conceptual model to explore the interaction between the traditional dimensions of brand equity and the additional brand-relationship elements. Furthermore, the S-O-R theory, pioneered by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), underpins the theoretical foundation of this study.

Keywords Generation Y, Samsung, Smartphone, Brand awareness, Brand image, Perceived quality, Brand satisfaction, Brand love, Brand equity

Paper type Research article

Introduction

The recent Euromonitor International Report (2024) depicts that in the smartphone industry, Samsung currently has the highest retail volume market share of 39% followed by Huawei, iPhone, Hisense and ZTE with 14%, 12%, 8% and 6%, respectively. However, these market



share figures demonstrate that competition in the industry is intense as a result of market infiltration by other competitors. [Murtiasih et al. \(2021\)](#) recommend that to win the competition battle, marketing and brand managers of smartphone brands should invest in devising effective marketing strategies aimed at enhancing the brand equity of the product. Brand equity, which entails dimensions such as brand awareness (BA), brand image (BI), perceived quality (PQ) and brand loyalty (BL), is instrumental in entrenching the product's market share, competitive edge and brand value ([Saleem and Afridi, 2025](#)).

BA is essential in determining the brand's existence in the consumer's mind, and this forms part of the purchasing decision process ([Khrisnanda and Dirgantara, 2021](#)). BA is regarded to have occurred if a consumer is exposed to the brand and can identify and remember it under different circumstances ([Hameed et al., 2023](#)). [Mulyono and Pasaribu \(2021, p. 3\)](#) define BI as a "consumer's perception of the brand's attributes, product features and benefits". According to [Dash et al. \(2021\)](#), an organisation with a favourable BI can benefit by executing product promotions seamlessly in the market, thus having an opportunity to increase brand loyalty. Consumers who associate a product with a positive image tend to be emotionally attached to it and are likely to pay a premium price for such a brand ([Khrisnanda and Dirgantara, 2021](#)). [Shanahan et al. \(2019, p. 58\)](#) define PQ as the "consumer's perception of the product's reliability and dependability". [Al-Zyoud \(2020\)](#) indicates that PQ, which focuses on individual consumers' subjective emotional evaluation of the brand, plays an important role in persuading consumers to buy the product. This aspect of brand equity encourages consumers to choose and purchase the brand over competitors' products ([Masrun et al., 2023](#)).

A study conducted by [Feyisa and Beyene \(2021\)](#) in Ethiopia investigated the direct relationship between brand equity, that is, BA, BI, PQ and brand loyalty on the purchase decision of mobile phones. In this study, it was discovered that BA and BI are contributing factors affecting the decision of consumers to buy a smartphone. [Ono et al. \(2021\)](#) postulated that a relationship between brand equity and the purchase intention of university students exists. The findings of this study revealed that the three elements of brand equity had a positive effect on the university students' purchase intention of a smartphone product. In another study conducted in Vietnam, it was found that brand equity has a positive impact on BS ([Tran and Nguyen, 2022](#)). The aforementioned authors recommended that further research be executed to extend the scope and investigate not only the direct experiences of consumers but also indirect experiences. [Shava \(2021\)](#) asserts that in the South African smartphone industry, research on customer satisfaction is trailing behind despite its importance for brand growth and consumer loyalty.

[Benaiah and Chandrasekaran \(2022\)](#) assert that one of the challenges encountered by companies operating in the smartphone industry is that consumers' satisfaction is relatively low. This declaration is further expressed by [Wahyuningsih et al. \(2023\)](#), who state that a decision to switch brands can be attributed to dissatisfaction with a particular product. [Cho and Hwang \(2020\)](#) express that BLOV is one of the important outcomes of a consumer who is satisfied with a product. BLOV is realised when consumers display signs of emotional attachment towards a particular brand ([Nawaz et al., 2020](#)). This study targeted consumers classified as the Gen Y market segment. The Gen Y cohort, also known as millennials, is represented by individuals born between 1980 and 2000 ([Yudistira and Putra, 2022](#)). According to [Chong et al. \(2021\)](#), Gen Y consumers who reside in various emerging countries have more smartphone devices than other generations such as their parents. The Gen Y market segment is renowned for its spending power, which enables this consumer cohort to purchase products such as smartphones ([Arora, 2023](#)). Gen Y consumers constitute 34% of the South African population and are regarded as a substantial market segment ([Fritz et al., 2024](#)).

Literature review

This section starts by presenting a case for focusing on South Africa. Thereafter, a discussion on the theoretical framework and foundation is presented. Subsequently, the basis for proposing hypotheses is delineated.

The rationale for selecting South Africa

In South Africa, there is approximately over 90% smartphone usage, which translates to an estimated 20–22 million users of this device (Axcell and Ellis, 2023). In the African context, an estimated 1.13 billion people, or 67% of the population, are smartphone owners and users (Mkansi and Nsakanda, 2025). These figures imply that a brand like Samsung has the potential to grow its market share in South Africa and the African continent at large. According to Redda and Shezi (2021), the most prevalent smartphone product in South Africa is Samsung. South Africa is regarded as an important market for international brands like Samsung due to a myriad of reasons, such as the emergence of the middle class and increased buying power (Lee and Robb, 2022). Furthermore, South Africa is regarded as the main gateway to access the African continent, and its gross domestic product (GDP) accounts for 20% of sub-Saharan Africa (Boddewyn and Peng, 2021).

Theoretical framework and foundation

Aaker (1996) brand equity and Esch et al.'s (2006) brand-relationship models. The study's conceptual model is underpinned by two frameworks, namely Aaker's (1996) brand equity and Esch et al.'s (2006) brand-relationship models. The Aaker (1996) brand equity model has been adopted as a theoretical framework in various studies measuring brand equity worldwide (Ekinici et al., 2023; Prachaseree et al., 2022). Aaker (1996) purports that brand equity consists of four components: BA, PQ, BL, and BI. The BA, PQ and BI constructs are defined and delineated in the preceding section. The Esch et al. (2006) brand-relationship model proclaims that BA and BI, which are two of the four dimensions of brand equity, are determinants of whether a consumer will be satisfied with the brand (BS), will trust the brand, and will eventually be emotionally attached to the product (BLOV). Iqbal et al. (2023) describe BLOV as the fondness and connection consumers display towards a certain product or brand.

Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) Stimuli-organism-response (S-O-R) theory. The study's theoretical grounding and foundation is based on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory pioneered by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) to illustrate the interaction between constructs in the proposed conceptual model in Figure 1. The S-O-R model posits that the influence of marketing and social environments stimulate consumers to make a certain decision. These environments stimulate the consumer to process information and may or may not activate the consumer's reaction (Makhitha and Duffett, 2024; Hochreiter et al., 2023). The S-O-R model has been adopted to explain the behaviour of consumers and outcomes such as user experience, purchase decisions and consumer loyalty (Mkpojiogu et al., 2024; Widarmanti et al., 2024). In the context of this study, stimulus elements include BA, BI, and PQ. The organism and mediator element is related to the BS construct, and the response factor is BLOV. The rationale for the adoption of this theory is that a brand with equity among

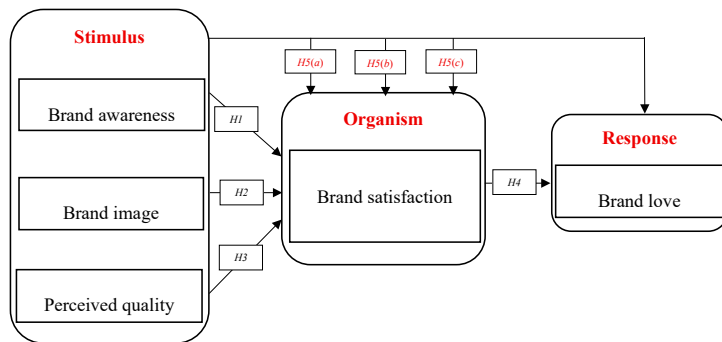


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model. Source: Author's own creation

consumers (stimulus) will lead to their satisfaction with it (organism) and subsequently be emotionally attached to it (response).

Hypotheses development

In the next section, the inter-relationships between the constructs and their ensuing hypotheses are presented.

The inter-relationship between brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality and brand satisfaction. A brand recognised and familiar with consumers provides a sense of satisfaction (Ilyas *et al.*, 2020). It has been argued that brand awareness erects barriers to competitors, makes customers less price sensitive and enhances trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty (Kuada, 2016). BI is deemed to have a substantial relationship with consumer satisfaction and their brand choice over competing alternatives (Zukhrufani and Ratnasari, 2022). This view is supported by Ilyas *et al.* (2020), who state that a recognisable and familiar brand contributes to the consumers' satisfaction with the product. Dos *et al.* (2021) postulate that a brand perceived to have a favourable image provides the consumer with an opportunity to purchase products that are likely to satisfy their needs. A study conducted by Tunahan and Kutlu (2023) found that consumers' satisfaction with mobile phone and computer brands was positively influenced by the quality of the products. The results of another study conducted by Samudro *et al.* (2020) revealed that consumers' PQ of an industrial product influences their satisfaction with the product's performance. A study by Abrokwah-Larbi (2024) found that customer-focused derivatives such as effective processes, customer information quality and customer service quality positively influence customer satisfaction.

Based on the preceding assertions, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1. The BA of the smartphone brand by Gen Y consumers has a positive impact on BS
- H2. The BI that Gen Y consumers have about the smartphone brand has a positive impact on BS.
- H3. The PQ Gen Y consumers believe about the smartphone brand has a positive impact on BS.

The inter-relationship between brand satisfaction and brand love. Aro *et al.* (2018) espouse that BLOV, which is classified as a deep and passionate emotional attachment of consumers to products, is a strategic tactic used by marketers to manage the value of a brand. This emotional attachment is important to brands because, unlike a fad or fling, it signifies the most intensive relationship between the consumer and the brand (Rahman *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, consumers who are emotionally in love with the brand improve the economic value of organisations due to the consumer-brand relationship (Rahman *et al.*, 2021). Prior studies have shown that consumers who are satisfied with the brand forge a relationship with it and ultimately love it (Ledikwe *et al.*, 2019). This sentiment is shared by Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020, 2021), who assert that BLOV is reinforced by consumers' satisfaction with the brand; hence, companies should not only pay attention to satisfying consumers but must endeavour to ensure that the end-user of the brand develops an emotional attachment to the brand, that is BLOV). Based on the discussion presented above, the study hypothesises the following relationship:

- H4. The BS Gen Y consumers have for the smartphone brand has a positive impact on their love for the brand (BLOV).

The mediation relationship between brand equity, brand satisfaction and brand love. In the seminal article by Esch *et al.* (2006), it was argued that irrespective of the awareness and image consumers possess about the brand, their satisfaction level is the precursor to falling in love with the brand. This argument was corroborated by the findings of their study, wherein it was discovered that BA and BI did not have a direct effect on purchase decisions (current and

future). Instead, brand equity represented by BA and BI had an indirect effect on purchase decisions through BLOV and brand trust. According to [Raut et al. \(2019\)](#), the majority of previous studies have deserted investigating the mediating effects of brand trust and BS on the relationship between brand equity precursors (in this instance, BA, BI and PQ) and brand equity outcomes such as BLOV, purchase decisions, brand loyalty, to mention a few. In their study, [Aro et al. \(2018\)](#) found that consumer satisfaction mediates the relationship between BA, BI and BLOV. Therefore, in an attempt to address the aforementioned knowledge gap, the present study empirically analysed the mediating role of BS on brand equity independent variables and the dependent variable (i.e. BLOV). Based on the discussion presented above, the study hypothesises the following relationship:

H5(a). BS mediates the relationship effect of BA on BLOV.

H5(b). BS mediates the relationship effect of BI on BLOV.

H5(c). BS mediates the relationship effect of PQ on BLOV.

It is on the basis of the above discussion that the study's proposed conceptual model, depicted in [Figure 1](#), was conceived.

Research methodology

The cross-sectional study was executed under Protocol Number H16/07/05 granted by the Ethics Review Board of a particular university in South Africa. The questionnaire consisted of five constructs in the form of BA, BI, BS, PQ and BLOV, and these were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The 27 original items to measure the constructs were adapted from previously validated measurement scales ([Severi and Ling, 2013](#); [Shen et al., 2014](#); [Severi and Ling, 2013](#); [Shen et al., 2014](#); [Baalbaki and Guzman, 2016](#); [Chinomona, 2013](#); [Hameed, 2013](#); [Lee et al., 2015](#); [Wallace et al., 2014](#)). The questionnaire was distributed to 844 Gen Y Samsung smartphone users from two South African universities using the purposive sampling technique. The use of students as a sample is acceptable and desirable when they are the majority consumers or users of the product under investigation ([Sardar et al., 2021](#)). Cross-sectional studies are prone to encountering the issue of common method bias. To alleviate this issue, the study employed the procedural remedies recommended by various authors ([Podsakoff et al., 2024](#); [Koob et al., 2021](#)). The measuring instrument was divided into three sections with different instructions for respondents to cautiously read and execute. The questionnaire was pilot-tested to identify and eliminate ambiguous questions. In addition, the measurement scales to evaluate the constructs were derived from nine accredited journal articles. Data was collected from multiple independent respondents from two universities using paper-based and online versions of the questionnaire. Out of the 844 questionnaires disseminated, 651 respondents completed them, resulting in a response rate of 77%. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and AMOS were used to analyse the data. The reliability of the measurement scales adopted in the questionnaire was established using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The data set was deemed to be reliable and acceptable since the Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated in [Table 1](#) exceeded the threshold of 0.6–0.8 ([Raharjanti et al., 2022](#)).

The assessment of the measurement model

The constructs' validity was determined by convergent and discriminant validity methods. Convergent validity was established using factor loadings from the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and average variance extracted (AVE). A factor loading of 0.5 or more indicates that the measurement item is compatible with the respective construct ([Okello et al., 2021](#)). In this study, factor loadings of the measurement items were between 0.52 and 0.88. The exception in this instance is that item BA3, which belongs to the BA construct, had a factor

Table 1. Assessment of reliability and validity of the constructs in the model

Constructs	Item	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted	Factor loadings
Brand awareness		0.628	0.679	0.43	
BA3	Features of the Samsung mobile phone quickly come up in my mind				0.45
BA5	I think of the Samsung mobile phone first among many mobile phones				0.80
BA7	I think the Samsung mobile phone is a leader in the mobile phone industry				0.80
Brand image		0.792	0.818	0.43	
BI1	Using the Samsung mobile phone makes me feel superior				0.63
BI2	The Samsung mobile phone represents efficiency				0.71
BI3	Compared with other mobile phones, the brand image of Samsung mobile phone is unique				0.52
BI4	I have a good impression of the overall image of the Samsung mobile phone				0.68
BI6	I trust the Samsung mobile phone				0.72
Perceived quality		0.891	0.890	0.54	
PQ1	The quality of the Samsung mobile phone is extremely high				0.79
PQ2	The Samsung mobile phone has consistent quality				0.74
PQ3	The Samsung mobile phone has an acceptable standard of quality				0.66
PQ4	The performance of Samsung mobile phone is high				0.74
PQ5	The Samsung mobile phone consistently performs well				0.77
PQ6	The reliability of Samsung mobile phone is high				0.77
PQ7	The quality of Samsung mobile phone is higher in comparison to other phones				0.66
Brand satisfaction		0.939	0.935	0.71	
BS1	I am very satisfied with the performance of the Samsung mobile phone				0.82
BS2	I am very happy with the Samsung mobile phone				0.88
BS3	The Samsung mobile phone does a good job in satisfying my needs				0.78
BS4	I believe that buying the Samsung mobile phone was the right decision				0.86
BS5	I am satisfied with my decision to purchase the Samsung mobile phone				0.86
BS6	Overall, I am satisfied with the Samsung mobile phone				0.84
Brand love		0.928	0.926	0.68	
BLOV1	The Samsung mobile phone makes me feel good				0.84

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

Constructs	Item	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted	Factor loadings
BLOV2	I love the Samsung mobile phone brand				0.84
BLOV3	The Samsung mobile phone is awesome				0.88
BLOV4	I am passionate about the Samsung mobile phone				0.86
BLOV5	I am attached to the Samsung mobile phone				0.79
BLOV6	I love the features of the Samsung mobile phone				0.74

Source(s): Author's own creation

loading of 0.45. However, if the sample of a study has over 500 respondents, it is permissible to include an item with a factor loading below 0.5 (Schreiber, 2021). Therefore, considering that this study had a sample of 651 respondents, the decision to retain this item is justified. Regarding assessing convergent validity, Chaveesuk et al. (2022) assert that the AVE threshold should be equal to or greater than 0.5. In Table 1, it is evident that the AVE figures for PQ, BS and BLOV meet the threshold of 0.5. Although the BA and BI constructs attained AVE values of 0.43, which is below the recommended threshold, Hair et al. (2017) state that an AVE value of less than 0.5 but equal to 0.4 is acceptable on condition that the concerned construct has a composite reliability coefficient of more than 0.6. The composite reliability coefficients for BA and BI are 0.679 and 0.818, respectively (see Table 1). Therefore, the inclusion of these constructs in the final model is justifiable. Discriminant validity was assessed using a correlation matrix. Ordóñez de Pablos (2017) states that to confirm discriminant validity, the correlation coefficients of the paired constructs must be below 0.85. The correlation matrix results reflected in Table 2 confirm the attainment of discriminant validity.

The structural model goodness of fit test

The main techniques used to conduct the model fit assessment and their thresholds (in brackets) are Normed-chi-square = χ^2/df (<3), Goodness-of-fit = GFI (>0.90), Tucker-Lewis index = TLI (>0.95), Comparative fit index = CFI (>0.95) and Root mean square error of approximation = RMSEA (<0.06) (Domenech-Abella et al., 2021). The results derived from the CFA after removing six items (five from BA and one from BI) due to low factor loadings

Table 2. Correlation matrix between construct pairs

Constructs	BA	BI	PQ	BS	BLOV
BA	1				
BI	0.583**	1			
PQ	0.533**	0.677**	1		
BS	0.549**	0.675**	0.741**	1	
BLOV	0.571**	0.706**	0.676**	0.797**	1

Note(s): BA denotes brand awareness; BI = brand image; PQ = perceived quality; BS = brand satisfaction; BLOV = brand love

Source(s): Author's own creation

(see Table 1), the fit indices values for χ^2/df , GFI, TLI, CFI, and RMSEA were 1.418, 0.916, 0.978, 0.982, and 0.025, respectively (see Table 3), indication a goodness of fit.

The structural model and hypotheses testing

This section presents the results of the standardised relationships in the conceptual model depicted in Figure 1. Table 4 depicts the hypotheses relationship outcomes, and Figure 2 illustrates the structural model and its standardised regression weights. H1 stated that BA has a positive and significant influence on BS. The results demonstrate a beta coefficient (β) of 0.25 at $p < 0.001$, and this implies that H1 is supported and accepted. H2 stated that BI has a positive and significant influence on BS. The results show a β value of 0.21 at $p < 0.001$, thus, H2 is supported and accepted. H3 hypothesised that PQ has a positive and significant influence on BS. The results show a β value of 0.20 at $p < 0.001$ and subsequently, H3 is supported and accepted. H4 proposed that BS has a positive and significant influence on BLOV. The results indicate a β value of 0.92 at $p < 0.001$, hence, H4 is supported and accepted. Table 4 portrays that the outcomes of all four hypotheses are significant and supported at 0.01 significance level.

Analysis of mediating effects

In this study, it was hypothesised that the relationship between brand equity and BLOV is mediated by BS. To examine this relationship, the bootstrapping method was utilised. According to Abu-Bader and Jones (2021), this method is recommended because it overcomes the challenge of normality, allows for the resampling of a small sample to a higher number and reduces the risk of type 1 errors. The results in Table 5 depict that all three predictors (i.e. BA, BI and PQ) have significant indirect effects on BLOV through BS. Specifically, PQ showed the strongest indirect effect ($\beta = 0.343$, with a 95% confidence interval (CI) ranging between 0.256 and 0.426), followed by BI ($\beta = 0.134$, with a 95% CI [0.111, 0.239]) and BA ($\beta = 0.053$, 95% CI [0.033, 0.126]), thus, the H5(a-c) is accepted.

Discussion of results and conclusions

The results of this study are presented in two parts. The first part deals with direct relationship results, and the second part focuses on indirect relationship or mediation results. The direct relationships were examined by investigating the influence of BA, BI and PQ on Gen Y's BS and BLOV with a specific focus on the Samsung smartphone brand. The first hypothesis postulated a positive relationship between BA and BS, and a beta coefficient (β) of 0.25 at $p < 0.001$ indicates that H1 is supported and accepted. This hypothesis was confirmed and further supported by the results of previous studies (Zukhrufani and Ratnasari, 2022; Tannady and Purnamaningsih, 2023). These studies found that BS is positively influenced by BA. The

Table 3. Model fit indices of the study's CFA measurement model

Fit indices	Abbreviation	Initial model	Re-specified model
Normed-chi-square	χ^2/df	3.058	1.418
Goodness-of-fit	GFI	0.770	0.916
Tucker-Lewis index	TLI	0.871	0.978
Comparative fit index	CFI	0.878	0.982
Root mean square error of approximation	RMSEA	0.056	0.025

Source(s): Author's own creation

Table 4. Hypothesised direct relationships results

Relationships between constructs			Regression weights	S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>	Label	Outcome
BS	←	BA	0.251	0.051	4,935	***	par_42	Accepted
BS	←	BI	0.211	0.029	7,347	***	par_43	Accepted
BS	←	PQ	0.195	0.026	7,415	***	par_44	Accepted
BLOV	←	BS	0.916	0.056	16,236	***	par_55	Accepted

Note(s): *** = Significant level 0.01
Source(s): Author's own creation

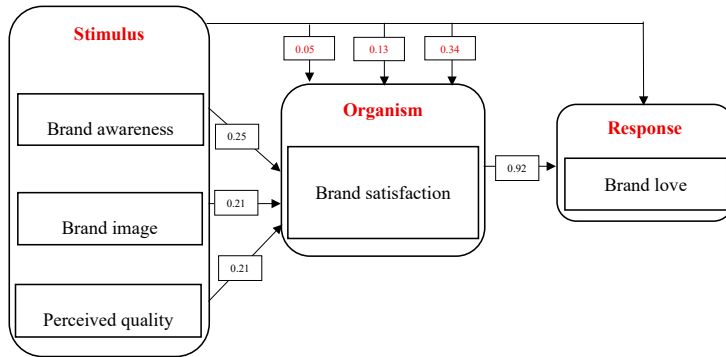


Figure 2. Structural model with standardised regression weights. Source: Author's own creation

Table 5. Hypothesised mediation relationships results

Path	Indirect effect (β)	95% CI for indirect effect	Mediation type	Outcome
BA → BLOV (via BS)	0.053	[0.033, 0.126]	Weak partial	Accepted
BI → BLOV (via BS)	0.134	[0.111, 0.239]	Partial	Accepted
PQ → BLOV (via BS)	0.343	[0.256, 0.426]	Strong partial	Accepted

Note(s): Bootstrap resamples = 5,000. BS = brand satisfaction, BA = brand awareness, BLOV = brand love. All indirect effects are significant at $p < 0.05$ as the 95% confidence intervals do not include zero
Source(s): Author's own creation

second claim hypothesised that there is a positive relationship between BI and BS. This study's results validated this assertion as the results populated a β value of 0.21 at $p < 0.001$, thus, H2 is supported and accepted. This finding was corroborated by other studies (Dayanti *et al.*, 2019; Neupane, 2015), where it was found that the BI of the product is a determining factor in whether a consumer is satisfied with the product or not. However, in a study conducted in Indonesia about the perceptions of a specific city, the results showed that BI did not have a significant impact on consumer satisfaction (Panjaitan *et al.*, 2024).

The third hypothesis proposed that there is a positive influence between PQ and BS. As reflected in this study's results, a β value of 0.20 at $p < 0.001$ indicates a significant relationship; hence, H3 is supported and accepted. The results of this study established that the perceptions of a product's PQ contribute to the BS of consumers towards the product, a

consistent finding with other previous studies (Mulyono and Pasaribu, 2021; Puriwat and Tripopsakul, 2017). Finally, the assumption that there is a positive relationship between BI and BLOV was supported by the results of this study, which revealed a β value of 0.92 at $p < 0.001$. This finding is coherent with the results of studies conducted by Song and Kim (2022) and Drennan *et al.* (2015), who concluded that consumers who are satisfied with a product/brand become emotionally attached to it. In contrast, a study conducted by Safitri (2024) discovered that the image of the Samsung smartphone alone does not necessarily translate to consumers' love towards it (brand).

The second aspect of this study analysed the indirect relationship between brand equity and BLOV as mediated by BS. To examine this relationship, the bootstrapping method was utilised. According to Abu-Bader and Jones (2021), this method is recommended because it overcomes the challenge of normality, allows for the resampling of a small sample to a higher number and reduces the risk of type 1 errors. The results in Table 5 depict that all three predictors (BA, BI and PQ) have significant indirect effects on BLOV through BS. Specifically, PQ showed the strongest indirect effect ($\beta = 0.343$, with a 95% confidence interval (CI) ranging between 0.256 and 0.426), followed by BI ($\beta = 0.134$, with a 95% CI [0.111, 0.239]) and BA ($\beta = 0.053$, 95% CI [0.033, 0.126]), thus H5(a-c) is accepted. These results emphasise the importance of BS as a mediating factor between brand equity and BLOV.

Contributions/implications and limitations

There are practical/managerial and theoretical contributions emanating from the findings of this study.

Practical/managerial implications

In terms of practical/managerial implications, the Samsung marketing teams should integrate the BA, BI, PQ, BS and BLOV elements in their brand strategies to continue growing the brand and outmanoeuvre competitors. Direct and indirect results have proven that the BS element is the cornerstone underpinning consumers' emotional attachment to the Samsung smartphone. This implies that companies such as Samsung should invest financial resources towards satisfying their consumers. The insights of this study can further assist marketers of competing products, such as Apple, to develop strategies to capture the lucrative Gen Y market and ultimately increase market share.

Theoretical implications

With regard to the theoretical contribution, a conceptual model integrating three frameworks was proposed and tested. This adds to the body of knowledge in the brand management discipline by adding new dimensions (i.e. BS and BLOV) to the traditional brand equity dimensions. Future studies seeking to measure the brand equity of a particular brand should consider including these important elements revealed by the findings of this study.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study is not without limitations. The sample was confined to the Gen Y cohort of 18–25 years in South Africa. This suggests that the results of this study cannot be generalised beyond the country and as being representative of the views of other generational cohorts. The study focused on the telecommunications industry and therefore, results are relevant to this specific industry and the Samsung smartphone product/brand. The model presented in this research can be replicated in other industries. The study employed the quantitative approach and future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach to generate more insightful findings using the qualitative technique. Lastly, the study is cross-sectional and future research could adopt a longitudinal approach and observe the Samsung smartphone brand over a prolonged period.

About the author

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