

Research article

Which Mediates Consumer buying Behavior in FMCG Sector? - Brand Identity or Brand Equity- A Rural Consumer Perspective in Tamilnadu, India

O que media o comportamento de compra do consumidor no setor de bens de consumo de movimento rápido? - Identidade da marca ou valor da marca - Uma perspectiva do consumidor rural em Tamilnadu, Índia

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Abstract

Introduction: Of all the techniques, it is the brand building that establishes a significant bond between the marketers and the customers. This is only starting the decision in the consumer buying behavior process but the marketer needs to face enormous challenges in creating brand positioning since it needs in-depth understanding. **Methodology:** This paper particularly endeavors to analyze the influence of brand identity on the consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector, and for this purpose, 485 FMCG customers from the rural side of Tamilnadu were selected through a convenience sampling method. **Results:** The result showed an optimistic association of brand awareness, equity, and salience with consumer purchasing behavior. It is the brand equity that positively mediated the consumer buying behavior and loyalty. Spectral analysis result confirmed the long term periodicity effect of brand equity and brand identity on the consumer loyalty. **Conclusions:** Marketer should establish the brand identity among the rural customers through various promotional activities, and try to create the brand equity among them as these two have a good impact on their buying process.

Keywords: Brand Awareness; Brand Salience; Brand Positioning; Customer Erosion; Customer Satisfaction.

Resumo

Introdução: De todas as técnicas, é a construção da marca que estabelece um vínculo significativo entre os profissionais de marketing e os clientes. Isso é apenas o início do processo de decisão de compra do consumidor, mas o profissional de marketing precisa enfrentar enormes desafios na criação do posicionamento da marca, uma vez que requer um entendimento profundo. **Metodologia:** Este artigo se esforça particularmente para analisar a influência da identidade da marca no comportamento de compra do consumidor no setor de bens de consumo de movimento rápido (FMCG). Para tanto, 485 clientes de bens de consumo de movimento rápido (FMCG) da zona rural de Tamilnadu foram selecionados por meio de um método de amostragem por conveniência. **Resultados:** O resultado mostrou uma associação otimista entre o conhecimento, o valor e a relevância da marca com o comportamento de compra do consumidor. Foi o valor da marca que mediou positivamente o comportamento de compra e a lealdade do consumidor. O resultado da análise espectral confirmou o efeito periódico de longo prazo do valor da marca e da identidade da marca na lealdade do consumidor. **Conclusões:** O profissional de marketing deve estabelecer a identidade da marca entre os clientes rurais por meio de diversas atividades promocionais e tentar criar o valor da marca entre eles, pois esses dois fatores têm um bom impacto em seu processo de compra.

Palavras-chave: Conscientização da marca; Saliência da marca; Posicionamento da marca; Erosão do cliente; Satisfação do cliente.

1. Introduction

In India, Fast Moving Consumer Goods ranking as a fourth-largest sector, has witnessed strong consumer-driven growth especially in the rural belt with a revenue projection of 6% to 8% during 2026 because of its incredible sales growth (i.e.) 9.9% sales in the rural against the sales of 2.6% in the urban side (Source: IBEF) owing to the marketing strategy adopted by the marketers in the rural area, as if they have recognized that the rural and semi-urban market are the only sources for their future growth (Pareek & Pincha, 2013).

Other reasons were rural customers' income hike and lifestyle change (Devi & Meetei, 2025) which coined them to have a thought about quality, performance, reliability, brand, and other important factors while purchasing (Ali et al., 2012) rather than preferring the cheapest and unbranded products (Prakash & Raunaque, 2025; Ahuja & Tabeck, 2024). This remarkable transformation in their attitude and development is due to the brand awareness and identity fostered by social media platform.

Despite this knowledge and awareness, customers trial attitude could be converted to the preference only through product and brand value proposition (Jha, 2013) and particularly, price, quality, availability along with the brand is the most important perceptual factors for it (Prakash & Raunaque, 2025; Morkunas & Grismanauskaitė, 2023) along with sustainability of products in the market (Vehmaset et al., 2024), differences in their experience may lead to brand consumer erosion (Herraro et al., 2025). Even they were not willing to engage if there is no unique value proposition, even in the well-established brand (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012).

Any customer, irrespective of residential area, prefers the brand or product only through its identity or equity as it has added value to it (Satvati et al., 2016), and this could be possible only through brand awareness, brand image, and perceived quality (Boix et al., 2025). It is the brand equity that has a superior impact on consumer behavior: loyalty and future repurchase decisions (Nibsaiya & Kumar, 2023), and this could be achieved only when consumers have a strong association with the brand (Mohan & Sequeira, 2016). This brand equity is also enhancing both customers' behavioral and attitudinal loyalty.

Many attempts were made earlier to identify the influence of brand identity; brand equity with the consumer buying pattern and loyalty specially in the FMCG sector. (Lan et al., 2025) proved the direct and indirect impact of brand equity on the purchase intention and the brand preference: (Erislan, 2025; Rizwan et al. 2021) confirmed that brand equity significantly influencing the consumers' purchasing decision through perceived quality and brand loyalty.

(Desta & Amantie, 2024) proved the indirect impact of brand equity on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. Author(s) of this study have attempted uniquely to find the impact of factors such as brand awareness, attitude, brand identity, and brand equity on the consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector, particularly in the rural side of Tamil Nadu. While doing so, the mediating role of brand equity among consumer buying behavior and loyalty was also studied. The following research questions were put forth.

1. Does brand equity significantly mediate the consumer buying behavior and the customer loyalty?
2. Which positively influences the consumer buying behavior -Brand identity or Brand equity?
3. Whether consumer buying behavior directly impacting the consumer loyalty?

This paper has the following subsections: Review of literature and the research gap based on a theoretical model which connects the various factors that impact consumer buying behavior followed by research method and findings and discussion along with the limitations and scope for future research.

It is assured that the outcome will have a better insight about the consumer buying behavior through brand equity in the FMCG sector and the above research questions definitely make the marketers plan for the future marketing strategy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

In view to explore the brand equity among the consumers in any domain in the market, marketers need to follow the consumer based brand equity (CBBE) model proposed by Kevin Keller during 1993. It has six stages (i.e) Brand salience (recognition), Performance (fulfilling the needs through quality, reliability, durability and service effectiveness), Imagery (meeting psychology and social needs), Judgments (Evaluation), feelings (Emotions) and resonance (Association) and this was also proved by (Yoo & Donthu, 2001) who confirmed the nominal relationship existed among the brand knowledge, corporate image, brand extension, brand image, perceived quality, brand awareness and brand performance which coincide with the dimension as prescribed by (Aaker, 1997).

2.2 Literature Background

2.2.1. Brand Awareness and Consumer Buying Behavior

Jeyalakshmi et al., (2020) confirmed that the brand awareness strongly influenced the buying behavior through the brand image and this image should be sustained through innovative policies and strategies by the marketer and in particular, (Chen, 2024) underlined that marketing efforts should be mainly focused on the age groups so that purchase intention through brand consciousness could be attained. (Hameed et al., 2023) emphasized that this brand awareness could have a positive impact on consumer buying behavior and purchase intention if it is done through the celebrity and (Unnava & Aravindakshan, 2021) also substantiated that content posted on the social media platforms has a better impact on customer engagement in purchasing behavior. Brand awareness has significantly influenced buying behavior and, to confirm the same in this research, the following alternative hypothesis was framed.

H₁ Brand Awareness positively influencing the Consumer Buying Behavior in FMCG sector.

2.2.2. Brand Salience and Consumer Buying Behavior

Ngo et al., (2021) found that it was the brand salience dimensions such as prominence and distinctiveness to differentiate the brands, thereby having a profound impact on the consumer buying behavior. (Jan & Jan, 2018) highlighted that the memory-based tasks such as memory and attention induce the point of purchase in the customer mindset. (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004) proved that brand salience is an important parameter that has to be evaluated during brand choice and buying behavior. (Lamlo & Selamat, 2020) identified that brand salience is very important in predicting the customers' brand loyalty. Knowing the importance of brand salience in the consumer buying behavior, the under-mentioned alternative hypothesis was framed

H₂ Brand Salience positively influencing the Consumer Buying Behavior in FMCG sector.

2.2.3. Brand equity and Consumer Buying Behavior

Measuring the brand equity is inevitable for the marketers and (Ahada et al., 2025; (Akhtar et al., 2016) found that it is the brand equity that shapes and influences the consumer purchasing decisions, and investment in this parameter benefits the marketer in earning new customers and keeping existing customers. (Saxena & Kumar, 2023) pointed out that those consumers who have more commitment to the brand and product will have superior brand loyalty and involvement in their purchase. (Sohaib et al., 2023) entrusted that those customers who have the brand love through their experience should have the brand equity and marketers need to boost this brand equity through attractive marketing strategies. To identify the impact of the brand equity here, the following alternative hypothesis was framed.

H₃ Brand equity positively influencing the Consumer Buying Behavior in FMCG sector

2.2.4 Brand Identity and the consumer behavior

Acar et al. (2024) informed that there should be a synergy among the brand identity, life style congruence, along with satisfaction to have a mentality of repurchases intentions since it is the brand identity that enables every customer to distinguish the products in the market. Hence, (Shams et al., 2024) stressed that it is mandatory for the marketers to improve the brand identity through various digital communications, which will have a positive result in the sales strategy. (Naeini et al., 2017) instructed that marketers need to focus on the brand identity as this significantly impacts equity mentality and loyalty through trust and perceived quality in this competitive edge. They should use brands not only for awareness but mainly for identity. Here, the impact of brand identity on consumer buying behavior was verified through the following hypothesis.

H₄ Brand identity positively influencing the Consumer Buying Behavior in FMCG sector.

2.2.5. Consumer buying behavior and Loyalty

Ali & Mehmood (2023) clearly highlighted that studying consumer deeds is a forerunner for keeping the loyalty in the FMCG sector and (Lunawat & Antony (2024) explained that switching cost could be reduced through the brand performance and this influencing the consumer brand loyalty. In fact, the switching mentality among the consumers could be eliminated only through the trust and brand reputation (Mahato & Ranawat, 2024) and this brand reputation and trust through product quality, price and promotions definitely inducing the repeat purchase behavior among the customers (Chauhan, 2018). Here, the relationship between the consumer buying behavior and the consumer brand loyalty is verified through the following hypothesis.

H₅ There is a positive relationship between the consumer buying behavior and consumer loyalty.

2.2.6. Research gap

Many earlier researches were available in the FMCG domain attempted with various factors and models. Obviously, researchers have attempted to study the consumer buying behavior and their loyalty in this sector. But it is noticed that no one research has used the brand identity and the brand equity simultaneously as a mediator amid the consumer buying behavior and the consumer loyalty in this sector and this is the unique attempt tried by the researcher of this study with the following hypothesis.

H₆ Brand equity positively mediates Consumer Buying Behavior in FMCG sector.

H₇ Brand identity positively mediates Consumer Buying Behavior in FMCG sector.

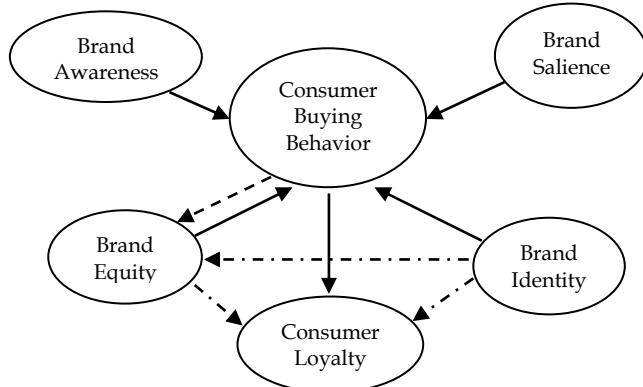
H₈ Brand equity positively mediates Consumer Buying Behavior in FMCG sector through brand identity.

2.2.7. Conceptual Model

The theoretical model of this research is as follows:

Figure 1.

Theoretical Model



Source: Own elaboration.

2.2.8. Objectives of the study

Based on the conceptual model and the factors considered, the following objectives were framed.

1. To investigate the relationship amid the demographic variables and the factors under consumer buying behavior and consumer loyalty.
2. To analyze the alliance among the constructs that affecting the consumer buying behavior and the consumer loyalty.
3. To examine the cycling periodicities of the independent factors with the dependent one through spectral analysis.

3. Research Methodology

This research actually investigates the consumer buying behavior among the customers who were preferring the FMCG product and the study area is Tamil Nadu in India. Normally, all the areas now covered with the increase in the usage of FMCG products, there are more chances to analyze the performance of brand identity and equity with consumer buying behavior. Since the population is unknown, this study mainly depended on convenience sampling, a frequently applied technique, and the target respondents were approached directly and through e-mail from the retail outlet. Totally, 485 valid questionnaires were received.

This self-administered questionnaire has 5 dimensions (4 independent and 1 dependent construct). Total number of items in all the factors taken together was 20. The data received for all the variables were measured through a five-point Likert Scale ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Prior to the actual survey, a pilot study was conducted by contacting the 50 local customers to check the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, and Cranach's Alpha values were found to be 0.834, which was within the prescribed limit. The result obtained through various statistical tools was discussed in the underlying sections.

3.1 Socio-Demographic Factors

In this section, respondent's socio-demographic variables were analyzed and the result is given in Table 1 below:

Table 1.

Customers' Demographic Profile

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n=485)	%
01.	Gender	Male	192	39.59
		Female	293	60.41
02.	Age	Up to 25 years	63	12.99
		21- 50 years	202	41.65
		41-50 years	193	39.79
		Above 50 years	27	5.57
03.	Marital Status	Married	397	81.86
		Unmarried	81	16.70
		Divorcee	3	0.62
		Widower	4	0.82
04.	Acquired Academic Qualification	Uneducated	14	2.89
		Primary level	33	6.80
		Secondary & Higher Secondary level	132	27.22
		Under Graduate	232	47.83
		Post Graduate	64	13.20
		Others	10	2.06

	Monthly Income	No income	32	6.60
		Up to Rs.25000/=	224	46.19
05.		Rs.25001/= to Rs.50000/=	143	29.48
		> Rs.50000/=	86	17.73
	Profession	Student	17	3.51
06.		Public sector	97	20.00
		Private sector	143	29.48
		Business	42	8.66
		Agriculture	171	35.26
		House Wife	15	3.09
07.	Where you are purchasing the FMCG products in your area	Local Kirana Store	341	70.31
		Super Market	112	23.09
		Shopping mall	11	2.27
		Other outlet	21	4.33

Source: Own elaboration.

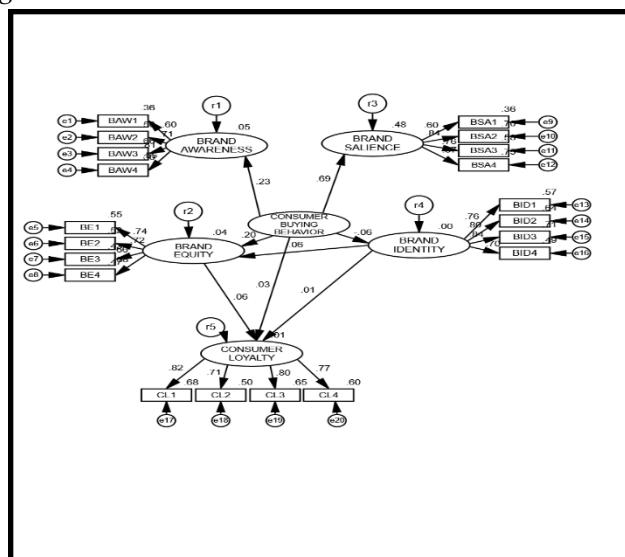
This study has more female respondents than male (60.41%) and most of the customers were found with an age ranging between 21 and 50 years (41.65%). It is seen that a maximum of 397 respondents with 81.86 percent were found married and 47.83 percent of the customers have acquired an undergraduate degree. Near about 46.19 percent of the customers have the monthly income of Rs.25000/= and most of them are having agriculture as their profession since it is a rural area. 70.31 percent of the customers have consented that they were purchasing the FMCG products only through the local Kirana store.

3.2. Structural Equation Modeling

We could analyze any complex relationship through structural equation modeling since it is a multivariate data statistical tool and found more precise in the statistical concept. Through structural equation modeling, the path analysis was visualized and detailed in figure 2 and the goodness of fit indices for this model is given in Table 2 below.

Figure 2.

Structural Equation Modeling



Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2.*Estimated statistics for Model fit*

Indices	Value
Degree of freedom (<i>df</i>)	163
Chi-Square Value	1.868**
RMSEA	0.042
SRMR	0.0419
GFI	0.942
CFI	0.962
TLI	0.956
IFI	0.962
AGFI	0.925

** significance at 1% level

Source: Own elaboration.

From the above, the value of Chi-Square (1.868) confirmed the fit of samples and the covariance matrix followed by the RMSEA value (0.042); GFI (0.942); AGFI (0.925) and CFI (0.962) confirmed the goodness of fit of the model. Also, the RMSEA value confirmed the minimal discrepancy between the hypothesized model and the population covariance matrix of the study, and the IFI (0.962) confirmed the fitness of the model with good data. The data was further analyzed for the reliability and validity through composite reliability and average variance extracted and the result revealed is tabulated in Table 3 & 4 below:

Table 3.*Reliability and Validity*

Variables	Factor Loading	R ²	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Awareness					
BAW1	0.603	0.36			
BAW2	0.709	0.50	0.46	0.77	0.769
BAW3	0.815	0.66			
BAW4	0.540	0.29			
Brand Equity					
BE1	0.743	0.55	0.49	0.80	0.790
BE2	0.721	0.52			
BE3	0.656	0.43			
BE4	0.685	0.47			
Brand Salience					
BSA1	0.598	0.36	0.60	0.85	0.847
BSA2	0.835	0.70			
BSA3	0.763	0.58			
BSA4	0.865	0.75			
Brand Identity					
BID1	0.755	0.57	0.60	0.86	0.856
BID2	0.800	0.64			
BID3	0.840	0.71			
BID4	0.698	0.49			
Consumer Loyalty					
CL1	0.825	0.68	0.61	0.86	0.857
CL3	0.709	0.50			
CL3	0.804	0.65			
CL4	0.774	0.60			

Source: Author and SPSS

Table 4.*Discriminant Validity*

Constructs	F ₁	F ₂	F ₃	F ₄	F ₅
Brand Awareness	0.678				
Brand Equity	0.012	0.700			
Brand Salience	0.192	0.327	0.775		
Brand Identity	0.229	0.144	0.228	0.775	
Consumer Loyalty	0.227	0.254	0.123	0.314	0.781

Source: Author and SPSS

Hair et al., (2009) in (Cheung et al., 2023) underlined that only the factors having the loading value of 0.5 are accepted for calculating the reliability and validity. In this study, all the factors have the value above 0.5 and hence all were accepted hypothetically. When discussing the average variance extracted (AVE), the value should be more than 0.5, but here, factors such as "Brand Awareness" and "Brand Equity" have the values (0.46) and (0.49) respectively.

Despite these factors being accepted for validity as their composite reliability have values above 0.70 as directed by (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) in (Safiih and Azreen, 2016). The discriminant validity results were also found to be within the threshold limit prescribed in the earlier research. As the next step, path analysis was and result is given in Table 5 below.

Table 5.*Path Analysis*

Tag	Critical Path	Estimate	CR	Decision
H ₁	Brand Awareness → Consumer Buying Behavior	1.602	4.081**	Supported
H ₂	Brand Equity → Consumer Buying Behavior	0.042	4.387**	Supported
H ₃	Brand Salience → Consumer Buying Behavior	3.676	6.245**	Supported
H ₄	Brand Identity → Consumer Buying Behavior	-0.452	-0.757	Rejected
H ₅	Consumer Buying Behavior → Consumer Loyalty	0.252	0.442	Rejected
H ₆	Consumer Buying Behavior → Consumer Loyalty (Mediating through Brand Equity)	0.187	2.163*	Supported
H ₇	Consumer Buying Behavior → Consumer Loyalty (Mediating through Brand Identity)	0.011	0.834	Rejected
H ₈	Consumer Buying Behavior → Consumer Loyalty (Mediating through Brand Identity and Brand Equity)	1.272	1.953*	Supported

Source: SPSS (*- 5% level of significance; **-1% level of significance; CR≥ 1.96 supported)

From the above table, it is seen that the critical ratio value for the Brand awareness (4.081); Brand equity (4.387); Brand Salience (6.245) was found to be more than the threshold limit (i.e.) 1.96 and confirmed noteworthy relationship amid the constructs and the consumer buying behavior.

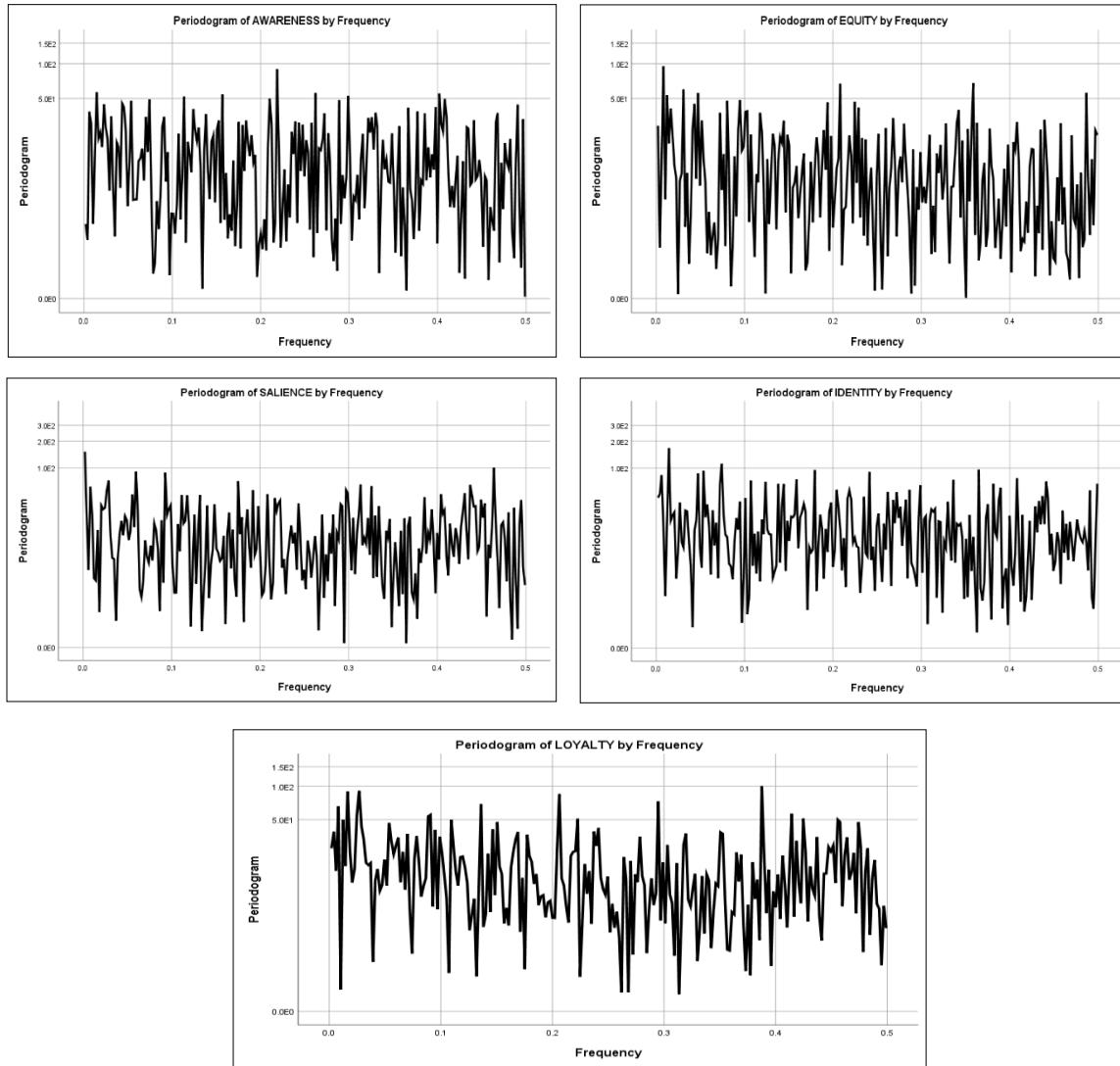
Also, there witnessed a significant association between consumer buying behavior and consumer loyalty through brand equity and brand identity as the values are statistically significant at a 5% level of significance. Hence, the hypotheses H₁, H₂, H₃, H₆, and H₈ were accepted.

3.3. Spectral Analysis

This is the technique used to find the existing periodicities in business through the survey indicators and offer insights for the organization better performance. Here, brand awareness, equity, salience and identity were taken as indicator for the consumer buying behavior and the consumer loyalty and attempted to find its effect on customer deeds and loyalty over a long period.

Figure 3.

Spectral Analysis



Source: Own elaboration.

The model Description is given in Table 6 below

Table 6.*Spectral Analysis Model Description*

Model Description							
Model Name	MOD_3						
Analysis Type	Univariate						
Series Name	1	Brand Awareness					
	2	Brand Equity					
	3	Brand Salience					
	4	Brand Identity					
	5	Consumer Loyalty					
Range of Values	Reduced by Centering at Zero						
	Tukey-Hamming						
Periodogram Smoothing	Spectral Window	5					
	Window Span	2.239					
	Weight Value	W(-2)	2.240				
		W(-1)	2.240				
		W(0)	2.240				
		W(1)	2.240				
		W(2)	2.239				

Applying the model specifications from MOD_3

Source: SPSS.

Each independent factor was analyzed individually so as to classify its periodic patterns, frequency and even their mode of cycle of influencing the consumer. In this model, the Tukey-Hamming spectral method was applied to avoid sharp discontinuities. The weight of factors showed an equal and smooth estimate (2.239 to 2.240) and confirmed the smoothness in the frequency distribution and stable representation of periodicities.

Also, the plot inferred that consumers' brand awareness found volatile and sensitive and fluctuates quickly because of the frequent promotions given by the marketer. It is the brand equity, which is more stable, that reflects the long-term consumer attachment with superior loyalty. Regarding the consumers' brand salience towards the FMCG product, marketers witnessed short-term and less consistent responses.

And there was no long-cycle impact of this on consumer behavior and loyalty but the brand identity found controversy with the brand salience regarding the FMCG as it has a sustained influence on consumer behavior and loyalty but with some frequent fluctuations. It is very interesting to see that despite short-term impact of brand salience, loyalty found persisting for a long duration and reducing sensitivity towards sales promotions and short-term activities, and it was mainly because of the consumer's brand identity. Overall, consumer loyalty found stabilized in the FMCG sector.

3.4. Compare mean analysis

In order to find the connection amid the socio-demographic factors and independent factors under consumer buying behavior in FMCG sector and loyalty, compare mean test was carried out and the result revealed is given in Table 7 below.

Table 7.

Compare Mean Analysis					
Demographic Factors	Brand Awareness	Brand Equity	Brand Salience	Brand Identity	Brand Loyalty
Paired Sample "t" test					
Gender	95.964**	68.778**	93.686**	68.512**	74.441**
One way ANOVA					
Age	1.842	2.851*	1.262	1.838	1.255*
Marital Status	0.603	1.846	0.178	0.960	0.525
Academic Qualification	2.735*	2.493*	2.208*	1.912	1.097*
Monthly Income	1.431**	0.959*	0.723	1.289**	0.307
Profession	1.219*	1.378	0.948*	1.536	1.835
Purchasing Outlet for FMCG product	2.526	0.616	4.016*	2.116*	1.843

Source: Author

From the above result, it is found that there was a significant association existing between the gender and all the factors that influencing consumer buying behavior and loyalty at 1% level of significance.

The one-way ANOVA result showed a noteworthy relationship between academic qualification and all the factors and loyalty except for the brand identity followed by monthly income with brand awareness, brand equity, and brand identity along with the age and brand equity, brand loyalty at a 5% level of significance.

There also witnessed a significant association between the outlet of purchasing the FMCG product and the brand salience and identity. Also, consumers' profession positively related with brand awareness and brand salience. But no significant association was found between the marital status of the consumer and all the factors under consumer buying behavior and consumer loyalty.

4. Discussion

Customers are the most important human resource for marketers, and they have to plan a strategy to earn their retention and loyalty. These are possible only when they create brand value for their products through social relationships and commitment. Large companies now have their major investment only in maintaining the brand and brand equity (Mohan & Sequeira, 2016-a) and brand salience (Washington et al., 2024), and FMCG is one such company where there were earlier results about consumer buying behavior and consumer loyalty but there was a least study brand identity and brand equity performance as a mediator among these factors.

Hence the researcher attempted the same in the FMCG sector, while doing so, various inevitable parameters such as brand awareness, brand salience, and brand identity were also considered to determine the impact of consumer buying behavior.

Initially, the conceptual model goodness of fit was confirmed. Next, the planned hypotheses were tested through the path analysis. First, the impact of brand awareness on consumer buying behavior was studied, and the results of the study showed the positive impact of former with the latter, and this result was corroborated with the outcome of (Nbsaiya et al., 2024), who confirmed the positive impact of brand awareness on consumer buying behavior. But found against the results of (Utama & Ambarwati, 2022), who highlighted the negative impact of brand awareness on the customer repurchase intent. Regarding the impact of brand equity on consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector, it has also significantly and positively influenced consumer buying behavior as rightly told by (Nbsaiya & Kumar, 2023; Koapaha & Tumiwa, 2016).

Brand salience is the most important factor that creates brand equity among the consumers, particularly in the FMCG sector. This study result showed that there is a strong and positive association between this one and consumer buying behavior, but this result found controversy with the outcome of (Usha, 2019) emphasized the negative salient on the brand relationship which significantly impacts the consumers' future purchase intention but found parallel with the result of (Menon, 2020) who underlined the positive relationship between the brand salience and the consumer purchase intention in the skincare products.

Regarding the impact of the FMCG's brand identity on the consumer buying behavior, this study result has not found any significant association between the brand name and the consumer buying behavior, which was not found parallel with the outcome of (Shakeel & Nedumaran, 2024; Bulle, 2020) who have identified the positive impact of brand identity and brand name on the consumer buying behavior and therefore, the hypothesis H_4 was rejected.

On the other hand, the spectral analysis result proved the strong impact of brand equity and brand identity has a long-term and sustained impact on consumer buying behavior, which enhanced the loyalty among the customers in the FMCG sector. Brand awareness and the salience found less consistent and frequent fluctuations in the impact. Taking into consideration, the above findings have paved the way to accept the alternative hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 . When discussing the direct impact of the consumer buying behavior on consumer loyalty, there was no noteworthy direct association that existed between these factors, and this led to the rejection of the hypothesis H_5 .

The main part of this research is to understand the mediating role of brand equity and the brand identity between consumer buying behavior and consumer loyalty. The result of this study showed that brand identity as a sole factor did not mediate the factors, which was against the results of (Jiang et al., 2023), who revealed the positive role of emotional marketing, but when combined with brand equity, it has a significant positive role.

Also, brand equity significantly and positively mediates consumer buying behavior and consumer loyalty, which corroborated the outcome of (Raut et al., 2019) who identified the role of brand equity in brand trust and brand satisfaction in the mobile industry. These results lead to the acceptance of alternative hypotheses H_6 & H_8 and rejection of H_7 . Also, there witnessed a strong relationship amid the socio-demographic factors and the consumer buying behavior factors and consumer loyalty.

5. Managerial Implications

It is quite clear that those brands which have good value and reputation could be placed in the mindset of the customers and, creating identity through awareness alone, yield brand salience and equity. Here, the third step of the consumer buying process should be recalled where the consumer will evaluate the alternatives available in the market and, for this evaluation, brand recalling is very important. This is mostly applicable to FMCG sector, where more homogeneous products are available and dissatisfaction with the products may lead to consumer erosion.

This is a topic preferably with the rural customers due to the reason that those people have not giving importance to the branded item and purchasing any available product in the market to fulfill their immediate need. Hence there is a copious chance to check their brand awareness and their reaction through brand equity, brand salience, and brand identity in the buying behavior.

Particularly, researcher(s) conducted the spectral analysis here to find the impact of these independent factors on the dependent (Consumer Buying behavior and Consumer Loyalty) and revealed that marketers' continuous promotions created brand awareness but it was having a short periodicity and in turn makes the salience weakly.

On the other hand, brand identity and brand equity have a significant impact on consumer buying behavior and loyalty, and this showed that those customers who have purchased and used the products have a repurchase intention because of its unique value proposition. Hence marketer should establish the brand identity among the rural customers through various promotional activities, and try to create the brand equity among them as these two parameter have a good impact on their buying process.

6. Limitations and extent of further research

This study is a specific context-oriented, where the rural customers alone were interviewed and hence the outcome could not be generalized to all the FMCG customers since every customer in various geographic regions has different brand perceptions. Although the sample size is found adequate (485), the application of non probability sampling technique and survey in a single geographic area setting limit in the validity of results. Further research ideas, if any, may be conducted by considering a large sample size along with cross-sectional study with other geographical locations through the application of other tools, so that the defined result will be expected, which will give good insight to the readers.

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