

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL BRAND MANAGEMENT, CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION: MEDIATED ROLE OF BRAND PRIDE

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Abstract

As markets become more globalized, internal brand management (IBM) has become a strategic necessity for businesses that want to have their employees on the same page and get their consumers more involved. This research investigates the influence of IBM on consumer engagement with brands (CEB) and consumer purchase intention (CPI), emphasizing the mediating function of brand pride (BP). Utilizing data gathered via a time-lagged survey design from 386 employees and 386 consumers in three Pakistani cities—Peshawar, Mardan, and Islamabad—this study conceptualizes IBM through three dimensions: brand communication, brand identity, and brand leadership. Structural equation modelling (SEM) is utilized to evaluate the proposed correlations. The results show that IBM has a big effect on both staff brand pride, consumer engagement and consumer purchase intention. Brand pride is an important mediator between IBM-CPI and IBM-CEB relationship. The research enhances branding literature by incorporating affective employee-based characteristics into consumer outcome models, therefore underscoring IBM's strategic significance in enhancing external brand performance through internal alignment. The implications for global brand management methods are examined, especially within culturally varied and emerging market environments.

INTRODUCTION

In today's challenging and dynamic business environment, brand management has emerged as a foundation for organizational success, influencing critical performance metrics such as revenue growth, consumer satisfaction, and employee efficiency. Internal brand management is a key part of establishing an organization's brand identity and getting its stakeholders to feel emotionally connected to it (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Foundational scholars like (Sarkhedi, B. 2026) focused on brand equity and how consumers see things, while the latest studies focus on the important internal processes, especially in service-driven industries.

This competitive market situation encourages businesses to rely on intangible assets, such as their employees (HR) and the marketing department, which needs to work collaboratively to improve brand value and employee and consumer engagement (Bakshi et al., 2025). HR and marketing have their own distinct goals, but they

complement to each other. The fact that employees are becoming more recognized as brand ambassadors and the effect of company culture on brand identification have led to a shift towards more integrated HR–marketing strategies. (Bakshi et al., 2025)

In today's increasingly competitive business environment, building and sustaining strong brands has become a strategic imperative for organizations. Although the traditional focus of branding has been on external communication, studies are focusing on internal branding strategies, i.e., strategies geared towards employees who act as ambassadors of the brand in their views (Gorbatov et al., 2021). Internal brand management is the process that ensures employees' behaviors are aligned with brand values and promises, thereby providing a stable brand experience for consumers (Peltola, 2023). This in-house strategy of brand building acknowledges employees as important agents who can make a great impact on consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and eventually brand success. Companies are adopting internal branding frameworks in order to develop employee loyalty, consistency of values, and brand conjuring conduct. Nevertheless, little is known about how these strategies influence consumer reactions psychologically. Conventional research has largely focused on employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, brand commitment, and performance (Afshardoost et al., 2023), without addressing the underlying relational and identity-based processes that link internal brand management to consumer outcomes such as engagement and purchase intention.

Brand pride-emotional attitude which is a response to the positive judgment that one made about their relationship with the brand has also been capturing a momentum in the latest branding literature. Pride in employees in their association with a brand leads to discretionary behaviors, positively correlated with brand advocacy (employees themselves advertising the brand to outside actors on a voluntary basis), when employees feel pride in their association with a brand (Helm et al., 2016). Brand advocacy is a valid and effective means of communication that

have a profound influence on the trustworthiness and readiness of consumers to interact with or buy a brand (Sirianni et al., 2013).

Although there has been more appreciation of these internal processes, an integrated model which incorporates internal brand management, Relation Identity Orientation, brand pride and brand advocacy and consumer outcome is not yet available. Although other scholars have proposed integrative methods that combine internal branding and external measures of performance (Gorbatov et al., 2021; Benraiss-Noailles & Viot, 2021), the current body of knowledge is still inadequate to cover the intermediary use of employee identity and affective constructs in consumer behavior. Also, the majority of studies in this area have been performed in the Western environment and hence the findings cannot be generalized to other cultural and organizational backgrounds. In developing countries, particularly in South Asia, the internal branding concept is a relatively new phenomenon and its effect on the behaviour of the employees and consumers has not been explored closely (Magano et al., 2026). Researching such associations on different levels is so much more than just proving the validity of existing concepts, but also a part of creating culturally responsive branding strategies.

Moreover, with changing consumer needs and increasing competition, organizations have to capitalize on all opportunities to establish a high level of emotional bonding between the employees, brands and consumers. When properly applied, internal brand management may be a strong instrument in the creation of these relationships. Nevertheless, in order to achieve its full potential, it is important to unravel the psychological channels it acts through, i.e. Relation Identity Orientation, brand pride, etc. It is these mechanisms that allow brand managers to develop more targeted interventions that not only increase employee activity but also translate to give positive consumer outcomes.

Branding has been considered as one of the pillars of business strategy, which has been a major source of competitive advantage and consumer loyalty. Branding efforts have traditionally focused on

external communications such as advertisement, promotional activities and packaging to build brand awareness and consumer perceptions (Catherine, Kiruthiga & Gabriel, 2024). Nevertheless, the current trends in brand management research have made the focus inward with special attention paid to the importance of employees in fulfilling brand promises and building a healthy relationship with the consumer. This paradigm shift, Internal Brand Management, acknowledges employees not only as the members of the organization, but also as brand ambassadors with the ability of influencing the consumer experience and brand success substantially, due to their behavior and attitudes (Barros-Arrieta & Garcia-Cali, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal Brand Management

To build a strong organizational culture aligned with the brand's values and identity, the brand should be managed internally across all areas. Internal brand management is most effective when the staff is determined to deliver consumers a consistent experience that meets the brand promise. Recent years have witnessed an increased focus on internal branding as an important success factor for an organization (Zhang & Xu, 2021). Internal branding is crucial in operationalizing a brand orientation so that employees are prepared to deliver the brand promise, which is critical to implementing effective brand-building activities (Kaur et al., 2020). Furthermore, Thomson et al. (1999) argue that the importance of emotions in determining consumer behavior in the external market has not been a new development among marketing professionals, but it is also important to note that internal staff are motivated by the same mix of knowledge and emotions. Internal branding theory emphasizes the significance of focusing on internal workers because only when employees of service organizations assume a consumer-oriented relationship orientation can consumer loyalty be achieved in external markets (Eid et al., 2019). Similarly, (Cerqueira, 2024) provides further insight into this idea, indicating that the more service providers internalize the

concept and service values, the more likely and consistent they are to perform. Clarity of brand identity and positioning is also important in directing employee behaviors, as it helps ensure alignment with a central brand strategy (Berry, 2000). According to (Hsu et al., 2024), internal marketing must come first, followed by external marketing, as promoting high-quality service and expecting workers to deliver it is absurd. On the same note, (Barros-Arrieta and Garcia-Cali 2021) emphasize the significance of involving employees in brand experiences because they, just like the consumers, desire to feel associated with the brand. As (Paliszkowicz & Cusumano 2023) remind us, employees tend to be the first brand consumers of their employer. The main internal brand activities identified by previous research and considered important elements of effective internal branding include internal brand identity, internal brand communication, and internal brand leadership (Zhang & Xu, 2021). Such actions play a critical role in establishing a good relationship between employees and the brand, enabling them to act as real representatives of the brand in their dealings with consumers. A variety of employee-related outputs, which are positively affected by internal branding, have also been indicated in the literature, such as a greater level of employee engagement (Ahmad et al., 2014; Park et al., 2014; Salameh et al., 2016), a higher intention to remain in the organization (Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013), quality commitment, identification, and loyalty (Muhammad et al., 2021; Muhammad et al., 2021; Piehler, In addition, internal branding has been connected with brand performance (Tuominen et al., 2016), perceived person-organization fit (Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013), and improved consumer-based brand equity (Hasni et al., 2018). It has also been demonstrated that internal branding has positive effects on the consumer perception of the company, purchase intention, and brand experience (Ahmad et al., 2014). Based on these

Brand Pride

Brand pride is a very emotional phenomenon that occurs when the consumer becomes highly

attached to the brand. It extends the concept of brand loyalty to include aspects of identity, belonging, and self-fulfillment by being associated with the brand (Zarantonello et al., 2020). Brand pride has recently gained increasing academic and business interest owing to the considerable implications it has for brand management and brand marketing strategies (Grzeskowiak & Sirgy, 2021). In today's competitive consumer world, brand pride is a crucial concept in developing a relationship with consumers.

Brand pride is developed from various important factors. Brand identification is one of the major antecedents. As consumers tend to view a brand as part of their self-image, their level of pride in its association rises (Tuskej et al., 2022). Moreover, brand engagement, such as brand community and event engagement, when at high levels, may improve consumers' emotional attachment and spark brand pride (Iglesias et al., 2020). Brand authenticity is another very important factor. Consumers would feel proud of a brand that does not make false promises and consistently upholds its core values (Morhart et al., 2020).

Brand pride has serious implications that have far reaching effects. It is also highly connected with a rise in brand loyalty because individuals being proud of their belonging to a brand are more prone to keeping long-term relations and showcasing repeat buying patterns (Zarantonello et al., 2020). Moreover, positive advocacy through the word-of-mouth is frequently motivated by brand pride where consumers willingly spread the brand among their social circles (Grzeskowiak & Sirgy, 2021). In addition to loyalty and advocacy, brand pride also causes the upgrading of consumer lifetime value and emotional ties towards the brand, as well as the emotional connection with the brand (Iglesias et al., 2020).

Consumer Purchase Intentions

The intention to buy is an important principle in how people act as consumers. It means how likely or willing a consumer is to buy anything. Blackwell et al. (2001) suggest that it is "what we expect we will buy," which demonstrates how eager the buyer is to acquire anything. Prakash et al. (2021) and

Karemani & Memeti (2023) assert that a heightened intention to purchase correlates with an increased likelihood of the client completing the transaction. Companies need to know why people want to buy something because it helps them understand how different things affect people's decisions, which has a direct effect on sales and market success (Doniec et al., 2020).

Internal brand management is a key factor that affects people's willingness to buy something. It includes the steps and strategies a company does to make sure its employees understand, accept, and show the brand's core values (Tseng & Wang, 2023). Internal brand management is very important because employees are the brand's main advocates and can change how consumer think and act. When employees are in line with the brand's values and identity, their actions and attitudes can have a big impact on how consumer feel about the brand and whether or not they want to buy from it (Koo & Curtis, 2020). An internal brand management plan that works well makes sure that employees always keep the brand promise, which builds trust, loyalty, and the desire to buy.

Research indicates that employees who align with the brand's values profoundly influence consumer perceptions and behaviours (Dam, 2023). When employees believe in the company's goals and values, they are more likely to make consumers happy. This develops trust and makes consumer more likely to buy from the firm again. A study by (Joglekar and Tan, 2022) found that employees who feel linked to the brand assist keep consumer coming back by making them feel emotionally attached to the company. This helps the firm seem more trustworthy, which makes clients more willing to buy from it. If you want consumer to buy something, it's very crucial that your employees' personal values mirror the brand's values. Involving the staff is another important part of managing a brand within a firm. This has a direct effect on the quality of consumer service and satisfaction, both of which are important for making people to want to buy something (Khairy et al., 2023). People that are engaged at work care about their job and the company and want to assist

the brand do well. When employees are engaged, they tend to deliver better consumer service. This makes consumer feel better about the firm and makes them more inclined to buy something. Employees who are more involved are more likely to say good things about the brand. This makes consumer more inclined to think good things about the company and buy something (Špoljarić & Tkalac Verčič, 2022). Saks (2006) discovered that engaged employees have a direct impact on how happy consumers are, which makes more people desire to buy products.

Internal brand management also ensures sure that all employees deliver the same brand message to all of their consumers. This is vital for developing trust and loyalty (Koo & Curtis, 2020). Clients can get a consistent picture of the organisation when the messaging is the same across many platforms. When employees consistently communicate the brand's values and identity, it enhances the whole consumer experience, hence increasing the likelihood of purchases (Huo et al., 2022). Eibeck et al. (2024) emphasised the significance of consistent marketing messaging in establishing brand equity and influencing consumer behaviour. consumer are more likely to trust and buy from businesses that give them the same experience in-store, online, and through consumer service. It is crucial to have internal brand management standards that make sure all employees offer the same message every time. This will help build consumer trust and encourage people to buy (Nosi et al., 2022).

Internal brand management also makes ensuring that all employees give the same brand message to all of their consumer This is very important for building trust and loyalty (Koo & Curtis, 2020). When the same message is carried out through several various channels, clients can get a better idea of what the business is all about. When staff consistently communicate the brand's values and identity, it improves the whole consumer experience, hence boosting the likelihood of sales (Huo et al., 2022). Eibeck et al. (2024) stressed how important it is to have consistent marketing messaging in order to affect how consumer act and establish brand equity. People are more likely to

trust and buy from firms that give them the same experience in person, online, and over the phone. It is highly important to establish internal brand management rules that make sure all employees say the same thing every time (Nosi et al., 2022). This will assist clients trust you and get them to buy.

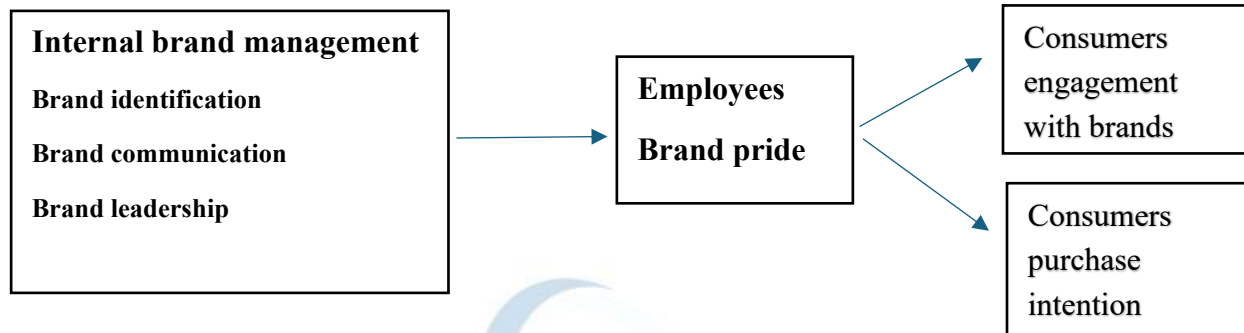
Consumer Engagement with Brands

Consumer engagement is a positive and fulfilling motivational state that comes as a conclusion of positive experiences with the sales representatives. It involves the distribution of emotional, thinking and behavioral resources during the engagements, activities and relations with the brand sales people. One of the most noticeable results of these is the modernization of communities and the simplification of tasks. The contemporary modernization of communities, and the ease of work are among the most obvious outcomes of them. The consumer engagement with a brand is a complex concept that goes beyond mere transactions in describing the level to which consumers are included, related as well as committed to their relationships with a brand (Pigeon et al., 2017). This idea also involves a more serious and profound level of engagement where the consumers not only buy the products but engage in the activities of the brand, get emotionally attached and develop a connection with the business across time (Wang and Lee, 2020). It is a continuous communication between the brand and the consumer, where both parties undergo some activities that lead to a long-term relationship. This interaction is both mental and emotional in nature and consists of shared devotion which leads to a stronger and stable relationship with the brand. Consumer engagement to a brand may have many forms, and each of them is an important part of the overall consumer experience, which helps a brand to be successful in the long term (Ting, Abbasi & Ahmed, 2021).

Active brand interactions are one of the most obvious forms in which consumer engagement can be carried out. Consumers that are engaged actively pursue ways of engaging in brand related

activities. They can be in the form of attending the events of the brand, taking part in online surveys or contests, or engaging with the content of the brand on social media (Behnam et al., 2021). These consumers can be willing to provide feedback, reviews and suggestions to the brand and this gives useful information about their preferences and perceptions. Such interactions

show that the consumer is not merely inactive consumer of what the brand is offering but actively contributing to the creation and formation of the identity of the brand. Through such engagements, the consumers also strengthen their emotional and psychological attachment to the brand, thereby boosting their loyalty and attachment to the brand (Wang & Lee, 2020).



H₁. Internal brand management is positively related to consumer purchase intention

H₂. Internal brand management is positively related to consumer engagement with brands

H₃: Brand Pride Mediates the relationship between Internal Brand Management and Consumer Purchase Intention

H₄. Brand Pride Mediates the relationship between Internal Brand Management and Consumer Engagement with Brands

consumer engagement, are measurable variables that do not exist depending on personal interpretation. The established measurement scales operationalize these constructs permitting the collection of objective data and testing of the hypotheses.

Research Method

The investigation strategy is survey-based empirical research (Bryman & Bell, 2015) by which survey as a method is useful in assessing employees' outlook regarding brand management and brand pride inside corporations and consumer purchase intention and consumer engagement with brands through consumer preferences. A structured questionnaire adapted from existing scales in the literature were used to ascertain validity and reliability.

Population

The research population comprises employees from several branded organisations situated in Peshawar, Mardan, and Islamabad, Pakistan. These cities were chosen because they are economically important and have a wide range of businesses, which allows for a representative cross-section of brand-driven enterprises.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current research is well-established on the positivist research philosophy because its main goal is to test observable relationship between well-defined constructs on the basis of empirical data and statistical analysis.

Positivism has the assumption that the reality is objective, stable and not dependent on the researcher, phenomena can be measured, explained and predicted by means of systematic observation and quantitative techniques. In that sense, the research assumes that critical constructs, namely, internal brand management, relational identity orientation, brand pride, employee brand advocacy, consumer purchase intention, and

Sample Size and Sample Size Determination Technique

Respondents were chosen through a non-probability convenience sampling method, which means that they were chosen on the basis of availability (Etikan et al., 2016). In this case, the

respondents who were directly involved in brand-related activities like marketing, sales, and consumer service. And the consumers of those brands. This study utilised a sample of 385 employees and 385 consumers, determined by the Cochran's formula.

To ensure an adequate and statistically reliable sample size, (Cochran's 1977) formula for determining sample size in large or unknown populations is applied:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5}{(0.05)^2} = 385$$

Where:

- $Z = 1.96$ corresponds to the 95% confidence level
- $p = 0.5$ assumes maximum variability
- $e = 0.05$ is the margin of error

Based on this calculation, a sample size of 385 respondents are selected for both employees and consumers. This number is sufficient to achieve the desired confidence level and precision for hypothesis testing and mediation analysis.

Data Collection

To attain the objective of the research, the researcher formulated right instruments to gather pertinent data to be further analyzed. The questionnaire is selected as the main data collecting tool because it is one of the most acceptable tools in the quantitative research and includes well-organized questions concerning the study variables. In this study, specific questionnaires were designed to fit the goals and hypotheses of study. The questionnaires were formulated to record information on each of the main constructs, which were internal brand management, brand pride, as well as consumer purchase intention and engagement.

Variables Measurement

Methods were meticulously designed to ensure measures of the variables were taken from validated instruments reported in literature, including Likert scales. Internal brand management (IBM) was assessed using a scale adopted from Rose Du Preez, Michael Thomas

Bendixen, (2015), which was adapted from Burmann et al (2009), including dimensions of brand identification, brand communication, brand leadership.

Brand identification, brand communication, and brand leadership were measured using a seven-item scale developed by Rose Du Preez, Michael Thomas Bendixen, (2015). Brand identification was assessed with items such as "The description of our brand identity is understandable," while brand communication was measured with items like "I feel well informed by our headquarters about our brand." Brand leadership included items such as "When I see advertising for our brand, I am proud to be working for this brand." All items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Brand pride (BP) was measured using a scale adapted from Helm, Renk, and Mishra (2016), which evaluates the extent to which employees feel pride in associating themselves with the brand. I feel proud when others notice that I work for the

brand I work for. Responses were collected on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Consumer purchase intention (CPI) was measured using scale of Spears & Singh, 2004; Dodds, Monroe & Grewal. Assessed using multidimensional scale that measure consumer intention of purchasing the brand. Sample items include "I will purchase this brand's product immediately." Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Consumer engagement with brands (CPI) was measured using scale of Hollebeek & Sprott et al., (2022); Assessed using multidimensional scale that measure Consumer engagement brand. Sample items include "This brand symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside." Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Statistical Tools and Techniques Used For Data Analysis

The data analysis in this research study is done using structural equation modelling (SEM). Brand advocacy, consumer engagement, and purchase intention are some of the components that is measured using structural equation modelling (SEM). The first step was to use a battery of tests to determine how trustworthy and accurate the constructions were. To determine internal consistency, researchers employ Cronbach's alpha, with a value over 0.7 indicating satisfactory dependability (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). To further confirm the constructs' convergent validity, we computed its composite reliability (rho_a and rho_c) and its average variance extracted (AVE). AVE values above 0.5 were deemed satisfactory (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), and the constructs explained their indicators adequately.

Findings & Discussion

Measurement Model (LOC)

Factor Loadings

Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 1. Factor Loadings, VIF, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings (FL)	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho _a)	Composite reliability (rho _c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BC	BC1	0.85	2.63	0.84	0.84	0.89	0.67
	BC2	0.84	2.61				
	BC3	0.81	1.77				
	BC4	0.78	1.75				
BI	BI1	0.67	1.69	0.90	0.91	0.92	0.60
	BI2	0.71	1.83				
	BI3	0.83	2.99				
	BI4	0.86	3.51				
	BI5	0.81	2.29				
	BI6	0.78	2.16				
	BI7	0.74	1.78				
	BI8	0.75	1.83				
BL	BL1	0.92	3.24	0.92	0.92	0.95	0.85
	BL2	0.92	3.10				
	BL3	0.93	3.21				

BP	BP1	0.71	1.95				
	BP2	0.82	2.45				
	BP3	0.84	9.07	0.86	0.87	0.90	0.64
	BP4	0.84	8.54				
	BP5	0.77	1.58				
CEB	CEB1	0.66	1.75				
	CEB2	0.72	1.70				
	CEB3	0.67	2.02				
	CEB4	0.65	2.01				
	CEB5	0.71	1.96	0.85	0.86	0.89	0.49
	CEB6	0.72	1.80				
	CEB7	0.73	1.85				
	CEB8	0.74	1.79				
CPI	CPI1	0.85	2.32				
	CPI2	0.83	2.72				
	CPI3	0.85	2.45	0.82	0.85	0.88	0.59
	CPI4	0.72	2.06				
	CPI5	0.54	1.19				

Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Most indicators have factor loadings above the traditional 0.70 threshold, indicating a strong relationship with their corresponding constructs. Some load with high intensity (more than 0.80 and even higher, 0.90), especially in constructs such as BL, BI, BC, and BP. This means these indicators are highly representative of the latent

constructs they are meant to represent. Overall, the measurement items are strong and sound measures of their constructs.

Few products fall in the range of 0.60-0.69. They are acceptable because the Composite reliability values are high, the AVE values are mostly satisfactory, and the constructs are theory-based and conceptually sound.

Discriminant Validity

HTMT

Table 2. HTMT Matrix

	BC	BI	BL	BP	CEB	CPI
BC						
BI	0.83					
BL	0.72	0.77				
BP	0.28	0.38	0.27			
CEB	0.41	0.50	0.32	0.54		
CPI	0.38	0.46	0.35	0.64	0.57	

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) was also used to test discriminant validity. Value of all HTMT

was lower than the recommended level of 0.90 and the maximum value fell within acceptable range.

Even though there were established pairs with fairly strong relationships, they did not go beyond conservative levels, which shows that the constructs are empirically discrete. In general, the findings have a solid indication of discriminant validity and indicate that the latent variables represent conceptually distinct issues of the model.

The table shows the values of the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) that was employed to evaluate the discriminant validity between the constructs (BC, BI, BL, BP, CEB, CPI). Constructs are considered empirically different when

estimated using HTMT to assess the actual correlation between constructs. It is now thought to be the strictest and most sensitive measure of assessing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations confirms discriminant validity among constructs. All inter-construct HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.85, with the highest observed between BP and CPI (HTMT = 0.647), suggesting that the constructs are empirically distinct. These results provide confidence that each construct captures a unique conceptual domain within the proposed model.

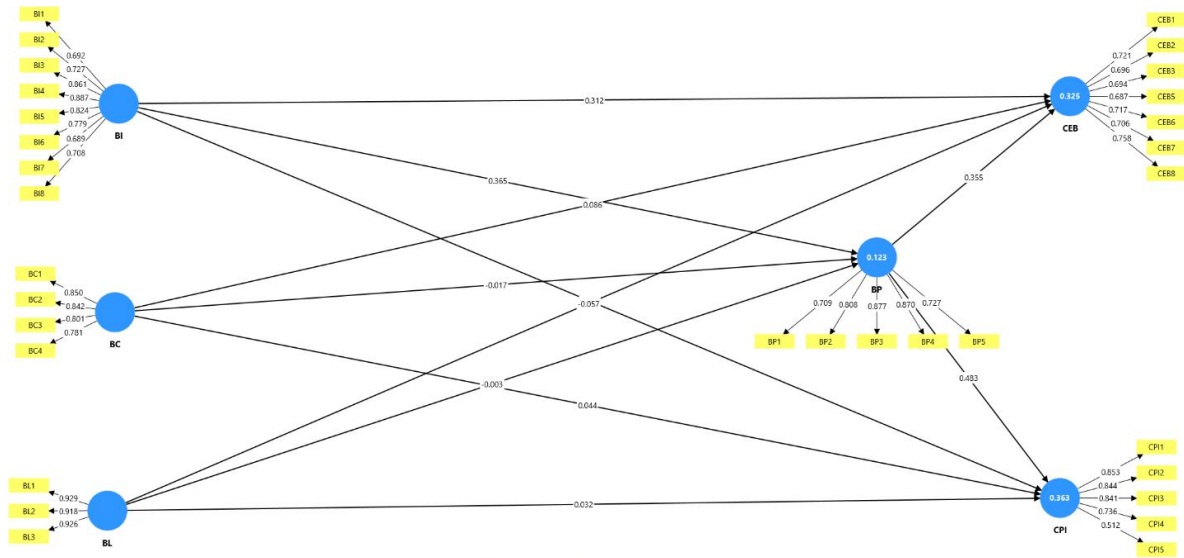
Fornell and Larcker Criterion

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	BC	BI	BL	BP	CEB	CPI
BC	0.82					
BI	0.73	0.77				
BL	0.63	0.70	0.92			
BP	0.24	0.35	0.24	0.80		
CEB	0.34	0.43	0.28	0.46	0.70	
CPI	0.31	0.39	0.30	0.56	0.43	0.77

In structural equation modelling, the Fornell-Larcker criteria are used to quantify discriminant validity. It checks whether the model's constructs are indeed distinct from one another. Each construct's square root of its AVE (shown by the diagonal of the matrix) ought to exceed its correlations with other constructs (shown by the cells off-diagonal) in terms of size. Assuming this holds, we may say that the construct has discriminant validity as its indicators differ from those of the other constructs to a greater extent.

To ascertain discriminant validity, Fornell-Larcker was employed. All of the constructs' square roots of their AVE values were greater than their inter-construct correlations; this indicates that the constructions' indicators had a higher degree of predictability than those of the other constructs in the model. Though there were also pairs of constructs that had relatively high associations, they were still lower than respective square root of AVEs. In general, the findings are in line with sufficient discriminant validity.



Measurement Model (HOC)

Table 1

HOC	LOC	Redundancy Analysis (Path Coefficient)	VIF	Outer Weights	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P-Values	Outer Loadings
IBM	BC	0.894	2.325	0.652	5.431	0.000	0.963
	BI	0.918	2.735	0.302	2.288	0.011	0.877
	BL	0.831	2.235	0.137	1.218	0.112	0.782

A higher-order construct (HOC) model was specified for Integrated Brand Management (IBM), composed of Brand Commitment (BC), Brand identification (BI), and Brand Leadership (BL). Redundancy analysis confirmed the construct's adequacy. Outer weights for BC (0.652, $p < 0.05$) BI (0.302, $p < 0.00$) and BL

(0.137, $p = 0.00$) were statistically significant. All outer loadings exceeded 0.70, and multicollinearity was not a concern, as all VIF values remained below 5. These results affirm the reflective-formative structure of the higher-order construct and its theoretical integrity.

Structural Model

Model Predictive Capability

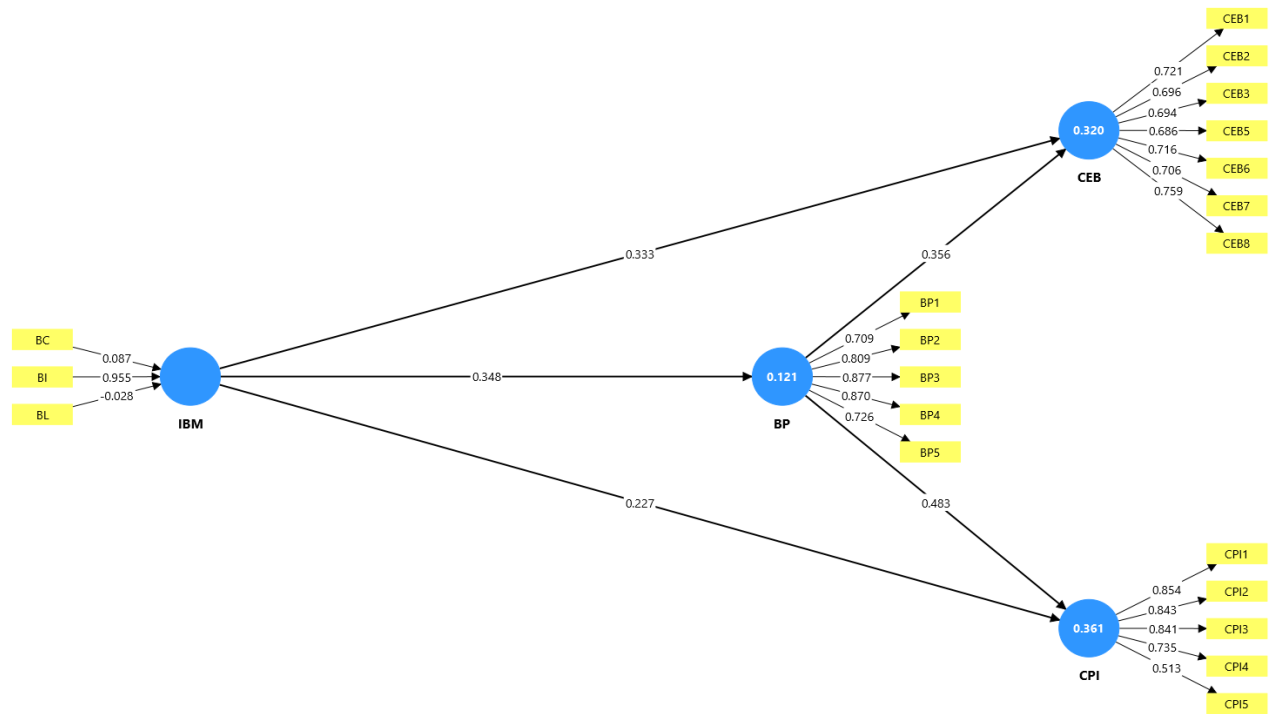
Endogenous Constructs	R-square	Q ² predict
BP	0.09	0.29
CEB	0.17	0.04
CPI	0.08	0.04

Predictive Relevance (Q²) All values are positive (> 0), confirming the model has predictive relevance for every endogenous construct. No Q² is negative or zero, so the structural model outperforms a naive mean-based prediction.

Predictive strength is mostly small ($Q^2 < 0.25$), except for BP (medium at 0.29). This supports the model's ability to generate predictions for new data, even if explanatory power is modest.

Predictive relevance of the structural model was evaluated using the blindfolding procedure to obtain Q^2 values, alongside R^2 for explanatory power. All endogenous constructs exhibited $Q^2 > 0$ (ranging from 0.04 to 0.29, confirming predictive relevance, with Brand Pride showing medium predictive relevance ($Q^2 = 0.29$) and

others small. R^2 values were generally weak (0.08–0.17 for most constructs). These results indicate that while the model explains limited variance in several outcomes (typical for perceptual-behavioral chains in branding research), it possesses basic out-of-sample predictive capability across all dependent constructs.



Path Analysis

Paths	Coefficients	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Status
BP → CEB	0.356	6.682	0.000	Significant
BP → CPI	0.483	10.702	0.000	Significant
IBM → BP	0.348	7.953	0.000	Significant
IBM → CEB	0.333	6.743	0.000	Significant
IBM → CPI	0.227	4.966	0.000	Significant

The hypothesized relationships are supported by the path coefficients in the table. IBM significantly influences BP ($\beta = 0.348$, $t = 7.953$, $p < 0.001$), while BP exerts a substantial effect on CPI ($\beta = 0.483$, $t = 10.702$, $p < 0.001$). IBM also demonstrates a significant direct effect on CEB ($\beta = 0.333$, $t = 6.743$, $p < 0.001$) and on CPI ($\beta = 0.227$, $t = 4.966$, $p < 0.001$). These relationships are statistically and practically significant and show

that brand pride is one of the important mechanisms by which the use of integrated brand management strategies can impact consumers' responses. These relationships are both statistically and practically significant, confirming that brand pride is a key mechanism through which integrated brand management strategies influence consumer engagement with brands and consumer intentions.

Mediation Analysis

Indirect Path(s)	Coefficients	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	CI 95%	
				LLC	ULC
IBM -> BP -> CEB	0.124	5.193	0.000	0.087	0.164
IBM -> BP -> CPI	0.168	6.576	0.000	0.126	0.210

The mediation analysis reveals a statistically significant indirect effect of IBM and CEB and the mediating role of BP in the relationship between IBM and CPI are significant. The indirect effect of IBM on CEB through BP was significant ($\beta = 0.124$, $t = 5.193$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.087, 0.164]), as was the indirect effect of IBM on CPI through BP ($\beta = 0.168$, $t = 6.576$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.126, 0.210]); since both bias-corrected confidence intervals exclude zero, both mediated pathways can be considered statistically robust. The results show that BP is a relevant tool which IBM can use to have an influence on CEB and CPI, and that the indirect influence on CPI is slightly stronger than on CEB. This confirms the theoretical hypothesis that at least partly, IBM works by influencing the BP, which then leads to increased CEB and CPI.

Discussion

The findings of this research provide empirical support for the theoretical proposition that internal brand management exerts a significant influence on consumer behaviour, specifically consumer purchase intention, via the affective construct of brand pride. As hypothesized, all direct paths were significant: IBM significantly predicted brand pride ($\beta = 0.348$, $p < 0.001$), brand pride significantly predicted CPI ($\beta = 0.483$, $p < 0.001$), and brand pride significantly predicted CEB ($\beta = 0.356$, $p < 0.001$).

These findings align with prior research by Afshardoost et al. (2023) and Boukis & Christodoulides (2020), which emphasize the importance of aligning employee perceptions and behaviours with brand identity to deliver superior consumer experiences.

The mediation effect found in this study reveals that brand pride serves as an emotional conduit that links internal strategic processes to external consumer intentions. This is consistent with the

idea that emotional bonding—between employees and the brand—translates into brand-supportive behavior, which in turn positively influences consumer (Zarantonello et al., 2020). It underscores the notion that consumer not only evaluate brands based on products or services but also draw cues from the emotional and behavioral signals emitted by brand-aligned employees. Moreover, the data show that IBM contributes moderately to consumer engagement compared to brand pride and CPI, suggesting that employee-centric branding strategies can significantly shape consumer decision-making. These results resonate with service-dominant logic theories, which recognize employees as integral co-creators of brand value (Chari et al., 2022; Gorbato et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This study reinforces the pivotal role of internal brand management as a strategic tool not only for enhancing employee engagement but also for influencing consumer purchase behavior. The research confirms that effective internal branding—manifested through brand communication, leadership, and identification—cultivates brand pride among employees. This emotional state, in turn, positively influences how consumers perceive the brand and their intent to purchase. By establishing the mediating role of brand pride, this research bridges internal branding literature with consumer behavior, offering a more holistic view of brand value creation.

Recommendations and Implications

The study enriches brand management literature by empirically validating brand pride as a mediator in the IBM-CPI and IBM-CEB relationships. It responds to prior calls for multidimensional assessments of IBM, clarifying the mechanisms through which internal branding shapes external

outcomes. The findings advance understanding of the affective dimensions of employee-brand relationships and their consumer-facing consequences. Organizations should prioritize internal brand communication and leadership development to instil pride among employees, which directly enhances consumer loyalty. HR and brand managers must view employees as internal consumers and tailor brand-building programs that foster emotional attachment, not just task alignment. Training programs should emphasize the brand's purpose, values, and identity so employees can serve as authentic brand ambassadors, especially in service-driven sectors.

Study Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. However, the sample was limited to three cities in Pakistan. Cultural and contextual factors may limit generalizability to other regions or industries. It may even be useful to include moderating variables like employee tenure culture or employee motivation for a better and deeper understanding of the IBM-BP-CEB-CPI relationships. Other affective mediators (e.g., brand commitment, brand love) were not tested, which could further enrich understanding of the IBM-to-CPI and IBM-to-CEB pathway. Sector-specific branding strategies may interact with IBM practices, and future studies could explore this dimension through multi-group analysis.

Implications

This study significantly elucidates consequences for theory and practice, fostering organisations that aspire to achieve IBM and aim to cultivate brand pride (BP) and enhance consumer engagement with brands (CEB) and consumer purchasing intentions (CPI). From a theoretical standpoint, our study enhances the existing literature by validating that IBM is a significant factor influencing staff and consumer purchase intention. Prior research has underscored internal branding as a significant field of study (e.g., Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). This work illustrates how IBM fosters staff brand pride and impacts employee-consumer interactions. Furthermore,

the study employs social exchange theory (SET) to illustrate employee responses to effectively implemented branding initiatives. As a result, employees would return the favour by taking more pleasure in their brand, which would in turn lead to robust consumer purchase intention (Blau, 1964).

This study examines internal branding from a pragmatic standpoint, emphasising its strategic significance for organisations seeking to achieve sustained competitive advantage. Structured IBM initiatives creatively implemented within an organisation (e.g., brand education programs, internal communication channels, and programs set by senior management consumer engagement with brands to align the brand within the organisation) identify with the employees and direct their connection to the brand (King & Grace, 2008). Employee-brand implicitness results in elevated consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty, establishing a cycle characterised by significant implicit branding (Morhart, 2009). The study's findings indicate that firms ought to monitor employee brand pride, a significant yet frequently neglected source of input, in conjunction with consumer purchase intention, as the two are intricately connected.

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