

Trust Before Torque: A Serial Mediation Model on Brand Loyalty among Royal Enfield Riders in India

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value on brand loyalty, emphasizing the sequential mediating roles of brand trust and brand attachment. Grounded in the Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) theory, the study investigates the role of cognitive and emotional assessments of a brand in fostering loyal customer relationships. The study is performed among two unique user segments—law enforcement officers and civilians—who are active users of Royal Enfield, a historic motorbike brand in India. Data collected from 421 participants through a structured questionnaire and analyzed with SmartPLS 4.0, applying Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA). The results indicate that perceptions of corporate identity, functional value, and emotional value are major predictors of brand loyalty, both directly and indirectly, via the sequential mediation of brand trust and brand attachment. Brand trust appeared as a critical performance metric among the mediators, whilst brand attachment showed significant value in fostering brand loyalty. The IPMA results provide strategic insights by pinpointing constructs that are of great importance yet exhibit low performance, necessitating managerial attention. The research indicates that whereas emotional value significantly affects citizen loyalty, functional value exerts a more substantial influence on police officers. This study advances branding literature by expanding the BRQ framework to the Indian two-wheeler market and provides practical insights for marketers to improve loyalty via targeted emotional and utilitarian brand tactics.

Keywords: Corporate Identity Perception; Brand Loyalty; Brand Attachment; Brand Trust; Functional Value; Emotional Value; IPMA.

1. Introduction

In today's world of brand-oriented customer behavior, loyalty has become a fundamental element of enduring competitive advantage (Li & Kang, 2024). For historical motorcycle businesses like Royal Enfield, brand loyalty signifies not merely repeated purchasing behavior, but also profound emotional investment and enduring client allegiance (Vidani, 2019). India, as one of the largest global markets for two-wheelers, has a varied client demographic, with police personnel and citizens constituting two significant consumer categories for Royal Enfield. Law enforcement officers are frequently attracted to the motorcycle's durability, reliability, and performance, whereas civilians are typically swayed by emotional connections, brand representation, and lifestyle alignment (Xi et al., 2022). Comprehending the principal elements that affect brand loyalty within these groups is essential for formulating focused marketing strategies and improving client retention. Brand loyalty is not developed in isolation; it is influenced by multiple perceptual, emotional, and functional dimensions of the brand. The notion of corporate identity, encompassing the consumer's comprehension of the brand's values, reputation, heritage, and social image, is crucial in this context (Balmer, 2001). When consumers view the brand as genuine, reliable, and congruent with their personal values, they are more inclined to cultivate a positive long-term relationship. This is especially pertinent for Royal Enfield, a brand recognized for its extensive heritage, military affiliation, and robust uniqueness, which strongly appeals to law enforcement personnel and aspiring middle-class riders.

Functional value and emotional value are equally significant factors that affect consumer-brand interactions (Wells & Tan, 2024). Functional value denotes the practical and utilitarian advantages obtained from the product, including engine performance, riding comfort, fuel efficiency, durability, and reliability (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). For police officers utilizing motorcycles in their regular duties, the functional value frequently serves as the principal determinant of happiness. Conversely, emotional value pertains to the psychological advantages and sentiments the consumer connects with the brand—such as pride, exhilaration, nostalgia, or prestige. Civilians, especially millennials and Gen Z consumers, frequently obtain emotional satisfaction from possessing and operating Royal Enfield motorcycles because of their luxury status, aspirational image, and cultural significance. Corporate identity perception and brand values (both functional and emotional) directly affect brand loyalty; however, research indicates that this link is moderated by psychological mechanisms, particularly brand trust and brand attachment. Brand trust refers to the consumer's readiness to depend on the brand's assurances and reliability. It evolves through continual affirmative encounters and uniform communication. Trust is crucial for both police and civilian riders in a domain where safety, durability, and performance are of utmost importance. An esteemed brand fosters trust and mitigates ambiguity, resulting in enhanced consumer involvement.

Subsequent to trust, consumers frequently cultivate brand attachment, an emotional connection established over time through experiences, narratives, and personal identification with the brand. For example, law enforcement officers may cultivate attachment through prolonged affiliation and pride in the brand's emblematic representation of authority, whereas citizens may establish connections owing to the freedom, aesthetic appeal, and sense of community the brand provides. Brand attachment transcends mere contentment, embodying a consumer's dedication, personal affiliation, and reluctance to change brands. Brand trust and brand attachment function as sequential mediators, converting perceptions of identity and value into loyalty actions. This indicates that consumers who view a brand favorably (corporate identity) and acknowledge its functional and emotional worth initially establish trust, which progressively evolves into emotional attachment, culminating in brand loyalty. This study aims to investigate how corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value contribute to brand loyalty, emphasizing the sequential mediating roles of brand trust and brand attachment. This approach addresses multiple deficiencies in the current branding literature, especially within the Indian two-wheeler market, where emotional and symbolic brand significances are frequently neglected in favor of utilitarian considerations. Furthermore, by examining two separate consumer cohorts—law enforcement officers and civilians—the study facilitates comparative analysis of variations in brand perception and loyalty development influenced by usage context and professional background.

This study contains the following research questions:

- How do corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value influence brand loyalty among Royal Enfield users?
- To what extent does brand trust mediate the relationship between brand perception (corporate identity, functional value, emotional value) and brand attachment?
- Does brand trust and brand attachment sequentially mediate the relationship between brand perception constructs and brand loyalty among police personnel and civilian riders?

The selection of Royal Enfield as the central brand is contextually important. It is not simply a mode of transportation; for many, it represents an extension of identity and lifestyle. The corporation has effectively utilized its legacy, masculine allure, and community-focused branding to cultivate profound emotional bonds with consumers. Comprehending the impact of these branding methods on trust, attachment, and loyalty can provide strategic direction to marketers seeking to maintain enduring consumer connections. This study presents a comprehensive framework to analyze the impact of corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value on brand loyalty, mediated serially by brand trust and brand attachment. The research enhances the branding literature by synthesizing cognitive (identification and functional value), affective (emotional value), and relational (trust and attachment) elements of brand development. The results are anticipated to provide actionable insights for brand managers, particularly in segmentation, communication, and experience design strategies customized for diverse customer segments such as law enforcement professionals and civilians. This investigation is especially pertinent due to the increasing consumer desire for significant and emotionally impactful brand experiences in a saturated and intensely competitive market environment.

This document is organized into several essential sections. The Introduction delineates the research context, aims, and importance of the study. The Literature Review examines pertinent theories and previous research on corporate identity, functional and emotional value, brand trust, brand attachment, and brand loyalty. The Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses section delineates the suggested model and research hypotheses. The Methodology outlines the research design, sample, data collection, and analysis utilizing SmartPLS and IPMA. The Results section delineates the conclusions of the measurement and structural models. This is succeeded by the Discussion, Theoretical and Managerial Implications, Limitations, and Future Research Directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Brand relationship quality theory

The Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) Theory, proposed by Susan Fournier in 1998, conceptualizes the brand as a relational partner rather than a purely transactional entity (Hunt, 2019; Zhou, 2007). It offers a thorough framework for comprehending the intensity and complexity of consumer–brand connections by incorporating emotional, cognitive, and behavioral elements. BRQ theory fundamentally asserts that customers establish relationships with brands akin to human connections, with the quality of these relationships influencing long-term loyalty and commitment. Fournier identifies six essential qualities that describe high-quality brand relationships: love/passion, brand trust, self-connection, commitment, intimacy, and brand attachment (Bruhn et al., 2012; Nyadzayo et al., 2016). These factors indicate the extent of emotional and psychological involvement a consumer cultivates with a brand over time. A robust brand relationship increases the consumer's propensity for loyalty, forgiveness of infrequent shortcomings, and advocacy for the brand.

Within the framework of this study, corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value act as precursors that influence the consumer's assessment of the brand relationship (Tho et al., 2016). A brand that has a robust identity, provides reliable functional performance, and elicits favorable emotional responses cultivates enhanced brand trust and brand attachment—two fundamental elements of Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ). These relational dimensions greatly impact brand loyalty, the behavioral result of a high-quality brand relationship. The BRQ theory offers a solid theoretical framework to elucidate how consumers, including police personnel and citizens, interact with renowned brands like Royal Enfield, encompassing both functional and emotional-symbolic dimensions (Junça Silva & Dias, 2022; Wardani et al., 2016). The study's serial mediation hypothesis is supported by highlighting how trust and attachment function as conduits for transforming brand perceptions into lasting loyalty.

2.2. Corporate identity perception

Corporate identity perception describes the manner in which stakeholders interpret and assimilate an organization's fundamental attributes, encompassing its values, mission, culture, and visual representations (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). In branding literature, it is crucial to influence consumer perceptions, trust, and customer loyalty. Academics contend that corporate identity constitutes the cornerstone of a brand's character and trustworthiness, shaping the emotional and cognitive connections consumers have with the firm (Balmer, 2001). A robust corporate identity in consumer markets enhances recognition, consistency, and distinction, resulting in positive brand assessments. He and Balmer (2007) assert that when customers recognize congruence between corporate beliefs and brand behaviors, it bolsters brand authenticity and strengthens consumer trust (Balmer, 1998; Harris, 2001). This congruence is especially important for historical brands like Royal Enfield, where tradition and symbolic significance are fundamental to brand perception (Foroudi et al., 2014; Gürlek et al., 2017). The notion of corporate identity is intricately connected to brand trust and attachment. A corporation that upholds a coherent and consistent identity fosters stronger emotional connections among consumers, who subsequently regard the brand as reliable and value-

oriented (Özkan et al., 2020; Zhang & Ahmad, 2022). Therefore, comprehending how the perception of corporate identity affects trust, attachment, and loyalty is crucial for formulating comprehensive brand management strategies, particularly in experience-oriented product categories such as motorbikes (Ibarra-Cisneros et al., 2022; Salloum et al., 2015).

The multiple roles that corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value play in forming consumer-brand connections are highlighted by recent brand loyalty research. By conveying dependability and enduring dedication, corporate identity perception enhances consumer trust by fostering a feeling of authenticity and consistency (He & Balmer, 2025). Functional value is still a key factor in determining customer happiness and trust, as demonstrated by quality, performance, and utility (Wang et al., 2022). Brand attachment and deeper ties that go beyond practical advantages are fostered by emotional value, which includes affective connection and symbolic significance (So et al., 2024).

According to studies, brand trust frequently acts as a crucial mediator, converting perceived values and identity perception into intentions for loyalty (Aftab et al., 2025; Shahzad et al., 2020). Customers are reassured by trust that the brand will constantly live up to expectations, which lowers risk perceptions and strengthens favorable assessments. A greater predictor of loyalty that captures emotional intimacy and personal relevance is brand attachment (Japutra & Molinillo, 2024). Sequential mediation models verify that customers trust a brand's promises before becoming emotionally committed, proving that trust comes before attachment (Islam & Rahman, 2025). Therefore, it becomes clear how brand trust and brand attachment work together to foster long-lasting loyalty when corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value are integrated into a serial mediation framework (Farzaa et al., 2021). This multi-layered mechanism is especially pertinent to experience-driven companies because consumer behavior is influenced by both emotive and cognitive assessments.

2.3. Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty denotes a consumer's enduring preference and allegiance to a particular brand, frequently leading to recurrent acquisitions and favorable word-of-mouth (Oliver, 1999). It encompasses more than simple repurchase behavior, incorporating the psychological attachment and emotional commitment that buyers form toward a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Brand loyalty is regarded as a crucial asset for companies, fostering long-term profitability, decreasing marketing expenses, and strengthening competitive advantage. Research differentiates between attitudinal loyalty, characterized by emotional attachment and a favorable brand perception, and behavioral loyalty, defined by real, recurring purchases. Attitudinal loyalty is more persistent and shaped by brand trust, perceived value, and emotional fulfillment (Dick & Basu, 1994).

For premium or legacy companies such as Royal Enfield, brand loyalty is frequently influenced by identity congruence, lifestyle affiliation, and a sense of community belonging. Customers loyal to these brands frequently serve as brand ambassadors, enhancing the brand's social worth and notoriety. A recent study highlights the intermediary functions of brand trust and brand attachment in the development of customer loyalty, particularly within high-involvement product categories. Consequently, comprehending the psychological mechanisms that foster brand loyalty is crucial for marketers seeking to establish enduring and emotionally impactful brand-consumer connections.

2.4. Brand attachment

Brand attachment denotes the emotional connection a consumer forms with a brand, typically marked by affection, association, and fervor (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). It goes beyond mere satisfaction or trust, encompassing profound psychological connections that signify the brand's incorporation into the consumer's self-identity (Boateng et al., 2020; Huaman-Ramirez et al., n.d.). Brand attachment is essential in forecasting brand loyalty, resistance to adverse information, and the propensity to pay a premium (Park et al., 2010). In the realm of lifestyle and heritage brands such as Royal Enfield, attachment is frequently established through common values, nostalgic resonance, and symbolic significance (Deng et al., 2025; Pedeliento et al., 2016). Research indicates that brand trust and emotional value are essential precursors to attachment, serving as a crucial mediator in the brand-consumer interaction. A robust connection cultivates lasting loyalty and brand advocacy behavior.

2.5. Brand trust

Brand attachment refers to the emotional bond a consumer establishes with a brand, characterized by affection, association, and passion (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). It goes beyond simple contentment or trust, embracing deep psychological links that indicate the brand's integration into the consumer's self-identity (Ebrahim, 2020; Tatar & Eren-Erdogmus, 2016). Brand attachment is crucial for predicting brand loyalty, resistance to negative information, and the willingness to pay a premium (Park et al., 2010). In the domain of lifestyle and heritage brands like Royal Enfield, attachment is often formed through shared values, nostalgic connections, and symbolic importance (Molinillo et al., 2017; Zehir et al., 2011). Research demonstrates that brand trust and emotional value are vital precursors to attachment, acting as a significant mediator in the brand-consumer relationship. A strong relationship fosters customer loyalty and brand promotion.

2.6. Functional values

Functional value denotes the perceived utility and practical advantages a consumer gains from a product or service, encompassing attributes such as quality, performance, reliability, durability, and efficiency (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). This is a fundamental aspect of perceived value, especially relevant for high-involvement products such as vehicles and motorbikes, where consumers meticulously assess real benefits before purchasing (Lee et al., 2011; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that functional value substantially affects brand trust and brand loyalty. When customers recognize that a brand regularly provides exceptional functionality, they are more inclined to cultivate trust in the brand and persist in its usage over time (Chen & Hu, 2010). Within the framework of Royal Enfield, factors such as engine performance, handling, fuel efficiency, and mechanical durability are essential components that enhance functional value (Budrevičiūtė et al., 2019; Mohammad et al., 2020).

Although functional value often engages the logical assessment process, recent research indicates that it also interacts with emotional and symbolic values to influence consumer-brand interactions. Functional pleasure can engender trust, thereby reinforcing emotional attachment and loyalty (Sheth et al., 1991). Consequently, for brands such as Royal Enfield, which function in a competitive and experience-oriented market, guaranteeing substantial functional value is crucial for both product distinction and the cultivation of trust and enduring brand loyalty.

2.7. Emotional values

Emotional value denotes the feelings or affective states elicited by a product or brand in a consumer, including joy, pride, nostalgia, enthusiasm, or attachment (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In contrast to functional value, which emphasizes utilitarian advantages, emotional value stems from the subjective experience and psychological satisfaction linked to brand consumption (Budrevičiūtė et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2011). In marketing literature, emotional value is widely acknowledged as a crucial factor in fostering brand trust, attachment, and loyalty, especially within lifestyle and heritage businesses.

For renowned companies such as Royal Enfield, emotional significance is crucial in influencing consumer identification and brand affiliations. Riders frequently connect the brand with notions of independence, masculinity, legacy, and a sense of community belonging. Emotional ties may surpass performance-based variables, particularly among users who perceive their motorcycle as a symbol of lifestyle rather than merely a means of transportation (Mohammad et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). Research indicates that emotional value enhances brand trust and attachment, thereby fostering brand loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). When consumers experience emotional satisfaction from a brand, they are more inclined to overlook small product deficiencies, endorse the brand to others, and avoid transitioning to competitors.

2.8. CIP on BL

The notion of corporate identity is crucial in influencing consumer behavior and fostering enduring relationships between brands and their stakeholders. It includes the visual, cultural, and behavioral expressions of an organization conveyed to both internal and external audiences (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). A robust and coherent corporate identity bolsters the brand's reputation, cultivates trust, and conveys the organization's fundamental values, mission, and distinctiveness. Numerous studies have underscored the importance of corporate identity perception in affecting brand-related outcomes, especially brand loyalty. Balmer and Gray (2003) assert that a favorable sense of company identity fosters consumer trust and emotional engagement, which are critical elements for loyalty. Consumers are more inclined to develop positive views and demonstrate loyalty when they see a brand as authentic, dependable, and socially responsible (He & Balmer, 2007). Furthermore, corporate identity functions as a cognitive and emotional benchmark that directs customers' brand assessment processes. Consumers frequently employ identity cues—such as brand heritage, visual symbols, communicative tone, and social positioning—to evaluate the alignment of a brand with their personal ideas and values (Melewar, Sarstedt, & Hallier, 2012). This alignment cultivates a sense of identification, which markedly strengthens brand commitment and advocacy. In the Indian setting, where cultural identification and symbolic consumption are significant, the impact of corporate identity perception on brand loyalty is particularly obvious, especially for legacy businesses such as Royal Enfield. Therefore, comprehending how the impression of corporate identity influences brand loyalty is crucial for establishing robust, emotionally impactful, and lasting brand partnerships.

H1: CIP positively influences BL.

2.9. FV on BL

Functional value denotes the perceived utility obtained from a product's practical characteristics, including quality, performance, reliability, and cost-effectiveness (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). It is a fundamental aspect of customer value perception and significantly influences purchase decisions and brand preferences. When a brand consistently fulfills its promised functional benefits, people are more inclined to cultivate trust, contentment, and loyalty towards that brand. Studies indicate that functional value is a crucial precursor to brand loyalty, particularly in utilitarian product categories like vehicles, electronics, and two-wheelers. Zeithaml (1988) posits that customers assess value by weighing the benefits received (performance, durability) against the costs incurred (price, effort). Brands offering exceptional functional advantages frequently elicit favorable post-purchase assessments, fostering recurrent buying behavior and customer loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1991). In the realm of motorcycles, functional value encompasses elements such as engine performance, fuel efficiency, maintenance simplicity, and riding comfort. The practical utility of the motorcycle is paramount for Royal Enfield users, especially police personnel who utilize the machine for regular duty. Research conducted by Chen and Hu (2010) and Wang et al. (2016) confirms that when functional expectations are fulfilled or beyond, consumers are more inclined to maintain loyalty and perhaps become brand advocates.

H2: FV positively influences BL

2.10. EM on BL

Emotional value denotes the affective states and sentiments that a product or brand elicits in customers during or subsequent to consumption (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). In contrast to functional value, which relies on concrete utility, emotional value arises from the symbolic, sensory, and psychological advantages linked to a brand. These emotional encounters frequently establish the foundation for profound, enduring consumer-brand interactions that surpass simple satisfaction and performance (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012). In branding literature, emotional value is closely associated with brand loyalty. Brands that elicit positive emotions such as pride, nostalgia, joy, or excitement are likely to cultivate stronger emotional connections, resulting in increased attachment, commitment, and advocacy (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Consumers cultivate loyalty not only due to product efficacy, but also because it resonates with their identity, values, or aspirations.

In lifestyle and legacy businesses like Royal Enfield, emotional significance is paramount. The motorbike transcends its function as a mere vehicle; it epitomizes freedom, masculinity, history, and prestige for several riders. The emotional significance of having a Royal Enfield enhances self-expression and social standing among civilian riders, particularly within the younger population. For law enforcement professionals, it may signify power and professional pride. Studies have consistently demonstrated that brands providing substantial emotional value experience greater brand loyalty, even when superior functional alternatives are available. Emotional value serves as a significant differentiator, strengthening brand loyalty and promoting repeat purchasing behavior.

H3: EM positively influences BL

2.11. CIP on BT

Corporate identity perception denotes the manner in which consumers interpret and assimilate an organization's visual symbols, values, communication style, culture, and overall brand persona (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006). It includes the unified representation a business conveys to its stakeholders, affecting the brand's perception of legitimacy, consistency, and ethical stance. A meticulously developed

and consistently conveyed corporate identity promotes clarity, openness, and authenticity, which are vital for establishing brand trust. Brand trust is characterized as a consumer's readiness to depend on a brand, contingent upon its competence, honesty, and goodwill (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Multiple studies indicate that a favorable view of company identity substantially enhances the establishment of brand trust. Consumers are more inclined to trust a brand's reliability and intentions when they view it as authentic, consistent in messaging, socially responsible, and connected with their personal values (He & Balmer, 2007). Furthermore, characteristics of corporate identity, including tradition, aesthetic appeal, and brand symbolism, contribute to the establishment of familiarity and stability, hence enhancing consumer trust (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). For historic companies such as Royal Enfield, the brand identity—rooted in legacy, roughness, and cultural symbolism—functions as a trust anchor, particularly for consumers like police personnel who link the brand with discipline, endurance, and reliability.

H4: CIP positively influences BT

2.12. FV and EM on BT

Corporate identity perception denotes the manner in which consumers interpret and assimilate an organization's visual symbols, values, communication style, culture, and overall brand persona (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006). It includes the unified representation a business conveys to its stakeholders, affecting the brand's perception of legitimacy, consistency, and ethical stance. A meticulously developed and consistently conveyed corporate identity promotes clarity, openness, and authenticity, which are vital for establishing brand trust. Brand trust is characterized as a consumer's readiness to depend on a brand, contingent upon its competence, honesty, and goodwill (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Multiple studies indicate that a favorable view of company identity substantially enhances the establishment of brand trust. Consumers are more inclined to trust a brand's reliability and intentions when they view it as authentic, consistent in messaging, socially responsible, and connected with their personal values (He & Balmer, 2007). Furthermore, characteristics of corporate identity, including tradition, aesthetic appeal, and brand symbolism, contribute to the establishment of familiarity and stability, hence enhancing consumer trust (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). For historic companies such as Royal Enfield, the brand identity—rooted in legacy, roughness, and cultural symbolism—functions as a trust anchor, particularly for consumers like police personnel who link the brand with discipline, endurance, and reliability.

H5: FV positively influences BT

H6: EV positively influences BT

2.13. CIP, FV, and EV on BA

Brand attachment refers to the emotional connection between consumers and a brand, resulting in sustained loyalty, preference, and reluctance to change (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). It occurs when consumers develop a profound psychological affinity for a brand, frequently shaped by the brand's alignment with their self-concept, values, and experiences. The concept of corporate identity plays a crucial role in fostering brand attachment by establishing a consistent, authentic, and significant brand image (He & Balmer, 2007). When customers recognize a brand as possessing a robust, believable identity—evidenced by its values, culture, communication, and symbolic characteristics—they are more inclined to identify with the brand and establish emotional connections. For established businesses such as Royal Enfield, a well-articulated corporate identity grounded in heritage and masculinity fosters emotional connection, particularly among law enforcement officers who link the brand with pride and authority.

Emotional significance is crucial in cultivating brand loyalty. It signifies the emotional advantages a consumer gains from a brand, like joy, nostalgia, status, or a sense of belonging (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). These emotional experiences render the brand personally significant and memorable, hence enhancing attachment. Civilian riders frequently develop profound emotional connections with Royal Enfield owing to its aspirational image and cultural significance. Similarly, functional value, encompassing performance, quality, and reliability, establishes the reasonable basis for attachment. A brand that reliably fulfills its functional commitments fosters consumer satisfaction, which gradually enhances brand loyalty.

H7: CIP positively influences BA

H8: FV positively influences BA

H9: EV positively influences BA

2.14. Conceptual framework

This study presents a conceptual framework based on Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) theory, investigating the impact of corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value on brand loyalty via the sequential mediating roles of brand trust and brand attachment. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework. The model asserts that consumers initially assess a brand according to its identity and value propositions, which establish brand trust. This trust subsequently cultivates brand connection, ultimately resulting in brand loyalty.

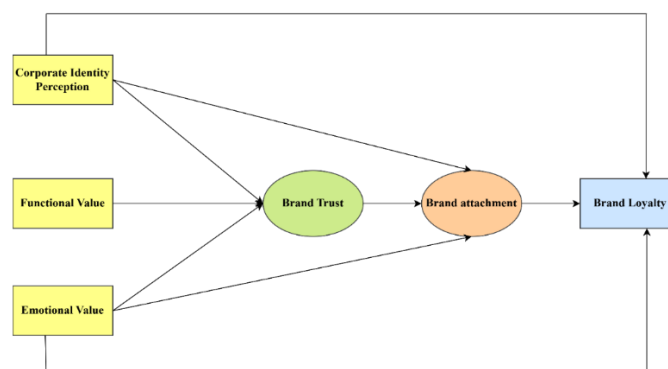


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework.

Source: Author's Creation.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Data collection and sampling technique

The results for this study were gathered through a standardized questionnaire aimed at assessing corporate identity perception, functional value, emotional value, brand trust, brand attachment, and brand loyalty. All measurement items were derived from validated scales in previous studies and adjusted to fit the context of Royal Enfield motorcycle riders. A 5-point Likert scale, spanning from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” was employed to guarantee uniformity and clarity in replies. The target clientele comprised Royal Enfield owners from two unique demographics: law enforcement officers and citizens. A non-probability purposive sampling method was employed to investigate brand-related attitudes among people with direct experience with the brand. Participants were chosen from prominent metropolitan areas in South India, specifically Chennai, Coimbatore, and Bengaluru, to guarantee relevance and diversity in responses. A total of 421 valid responses were obtained via both offline and online methods. Data were collected offline from police departments and riding communities, while online surveys were disseminated through brand-specific social media groups and riding clubs. The sampling achieved an equitable representation of the two groups—50.1% police personnel and 49.9% civilians.

3.2. Measurement

The research utilized recognized measuring scales modified from previous literature, including a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The perception of corporate identity was assessed utilizing items from Melewar & Karaosmanoglu (2006). The functional and emotional values were evaluated utilizing the scale created by Sweeney and Soutar (2001). Brand trust was assessed according to Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), whilst brand attachment measures were modified from Thomson, MacInnis & Park (2005). Brand loyalty was assessed utilizing characteristics from Oliver (1999). All scales were contextually adjusted to accommodate Royal Enfield motorcycle riders in both police and civilian sectors.

3.3. Common method bias test

Harman’s single-factor test was employed to evaluate common method bias (CMB). The findings indicated that the initial unrotated factor represented 40% of the overall variation, falling short of the essential threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This suggests that common technique bias is not a significant issue in the study. Moreover, procedural remedies, including the utilization of diverse scale endpoints, guaranteeing respondent anonymity, and segregating item placement, were implemented during survey design to further mitigate the possibility of common method bias (CMB). Consequently, the results of the measurement model are robust and not much affected by common method variance.

3.4. Data analysis

SmartPLS was selected for data analysis because of its appropriateness for examining intricate models that encompass numerous dimensions and mediating interactions. It is suitable for research with moderate sample sizes (such as 421 respondents) and does not necessitate a normal data distribution. SmartPLS facilitates the evaluation of both measurement and structural models, encompassing reliability, validity, and path analysis. Furthermore, it facilitates serial mediation and Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), providing actionable insights into critical performance domains. Its graphical interface, strong bootstrapping capabilities, and adaptability in managing reflective and formative structures render it particularly suitable for exploratory and theory-driven consumer behavior research.

3.5. Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 1 denotes the demographic profile. The demographic analysis indicates a balanced sample of 421 Royal Enfield customers, consisting of 71.7% males and 28.3% females, illustrating the historically male-centric motorcycle market. The 26–35 age demographic constitutes the predominant portion (40.1%), signifying that mid-career professionals are primary consumers. Police personnel (50.1%) and citizens (49.9%) are almost equally represented, facilitating significant comparative analysis. The majority of respondents possess either an undergraduate degree (41.1%) or a postgraduate degree (36.6%), indicating a relatively educated demographic. Income distribution indicates that 36.8% earn between ₹20,001 and ₹40,000 monthly, categorizing a majority inside the middle-income band. The Classic 350 model is the most favored at 44.4%, followed by the Bullet 350 at 23.3%, underscoring fan preference for traditional vehicles. The sample has a balanced demographic composition, rendering the findings relevant to both practical and theoretical frameworks in comprehending consumer behavior among professional and civilian Royal Enfield customer groups in India.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	302	71.70%
	Female	119	28.30%
Age Group	18–25 years	74	17.60%
	26–35 years	169	40.10%
	36–45 years	110	26.10%
	Above 45 years	68	16.20%
Occupation	Police Personnel	211	50.10%
	Civilians	210	49.90%
Education Level	Diploma	56	13.30%
	Undergraduate	173	41.10%
	Postgraduate	154	36.60%
	Others	38	9.00%
Monthly Income	Below ₹20,000	91	21.60%
	₹20,001–₹40,000	155	36.80%
	₹40,001–₹60,000	113	26.80%
	Above ₹60,000	62	14.70%

Type of Royal Enfield Owned	Classic 350	187	44.40%
	Bullet 350	98	23.30%
	Meteor 350	61	14.50%
	Himalayan	45	10.70%
	Other Models	30	7.10%

Source: created by authors.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Measurement model

The measurement model was examined using SmartPLS 4.0 to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs. Internal consistency dependability was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), with all values surpassing the suggested threshold of 0.70. Table 2 shows construct reliability and validity. Convergent validity was established, as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded 0.50, signifying that each construct sufficiently accounts for the variation of its indicators. The measurement model has robust reliability and validity as indicated by the SmartPLS output. All constructs have substantial internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values surpassing the recommended level of 0.70 (e.g., Brand Loyalty: $\alpha = 0.905$, CR = 0.930). Convergent validity is confirmed, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above 0.50, signifying that the latent variables account for a significant part of variance in their corresponding indicators (e.g., Emotional Value AVE = 0.764). All factor loadings surpass the conventional criterion of 0.70, affirming that each indicator consistently assesses its corresponding concept. For instance, BL2 = 0.882 and BA3 = 0.903, indicating robust item reliability. Furthermore, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are below 3.0, signifying the absence of multicollinearity among indicators. The results indicate that the measurement model demonstrates excellent reliability, robust convergent validity, and no multicollinearity issues, rendering it appropriate for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

Variables	Indicators	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	VIF
Corporate identity perception	CIP1	0.826	0.868	0.871	0.905	0.655	2.15
	CIP2	0.784					1.996
	CIP3	0.835					2.107
	CIP4	0.828					2.147
	CIP5	0.77					1.755
Functional value	FV1	0.863	0.846	0.852	0.907	0.764	2.039
	FV2	0.883					1.985
	FV3	0.876					2.092
Emotional value	EV1	0.826	0.846	0.852	0.907	0.764	2.067
	EV2	0.836					1.977
	EV3	0.882					2.497
	EV4	0.883					2.563
Brand Trust	BT1	0.82	0.872	0.883	0.907	0.66	2.411
	BT2	0.783					2.483
	BT3	0.78					2.039
	BT4	0.822					2.452
	BT5	0.857					2.391
Brand Attachment	BA1	0.778	0.85	0.863	0.899	0.691	1.769
	BA2	0.791					1.744
	BA3	0.903					2.832
	BA4	0.848					2.067
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.879	0.905	0.911	0.93	0.726	2.863
	BL2	0.882					2.808
	BL3	0.871					1.754
	BL4	0.759					2.52
	BL5	0.865					

Source: authors' calculations.

Indicator loadings were analyzed, revealing that all items exhibited loadings over 0.70, hence affirming robust item reliability. The Fornell-Larcker criterion evaluates discriminant validity by contrasting the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (diagonal values) with the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal values). The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (e.g., Brand Loyalty = 0.852, Brand Trust = 0.813) exceeds its correlations with other constructs, hence affirming discriminant validity. Table 3 fornell larcker criterion. The correlation between Brand Trust and Corporate Identity Perception is 0.520, which is lower than the square root of its AVE, 0.813. Despite certain negative correlations (e.g., between Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty at -0.078), their minimal magnitude further reinforces distinctiveness. Therefore, all constructs are adequately distinct, confirming the measurement model.

Table 4 shows the HTMT criterion. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was employed to evaluate discriminant validity. All HTMT values were beneath the conservative criterion of 0.85, affirming that each construct is unique from the others. The measurement model showed adequate reliability and validity, warranting its application for subsequent analysis in the structural model. Figure 2 shows the measurement model. These evaluations validate that the tools employed to assess company identity, values, trust, attachment, and loyalty were psychometrically robust. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio evaluates discriminant validity, confirming that conceptions are conceptually distinct. All HTMT values in the table are far below the conservative criterion of 0.85, demonstrating robust discriminant validity among components. The HTMT value between emotional value and brand trust is 0.635, whereas the value between corporate identity perception and brand trust is 0.580, indicating distinct conceptual differentiation. The maximum value, 0.841 (between functional value and emotional value), remains within the permitted range. Consequently, the measuring model has strong discriminant validity, affirming that each construct assesses a distinct concept.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variables	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty	Brand Trust	Corporate identity perception	Emotional value	Functional value
Brand Attachment	0.831					
Brand Loyalty	0.812	0.852				
Brand Trust	-0.102	-0.078	0.813			
Corporate identity perception	-0.038	-0.057	0.52	0.809		
Emotional value	-0.131	-0.121	0.567	0.681	0.857	
Functional value	-0.024	-0.069	0.474	0.704	0.722	0.874

Source: authors' calculations.

Table 4: HTMT Criterion

Variables	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty	Brand Trust	Corporate identity perception	Emotional value	Functional value
Brand Attachment						
Brand Loyalty	0.083					
Brand Trust	0.132	0.093				
Corporate identity perception	0.068	0.085	0.580			
Emotional value	0.155	0.135	0.635	0.779		
Functional value	0.079	0.088	0.544	0.822	0.841	

Source: authors' calculations.

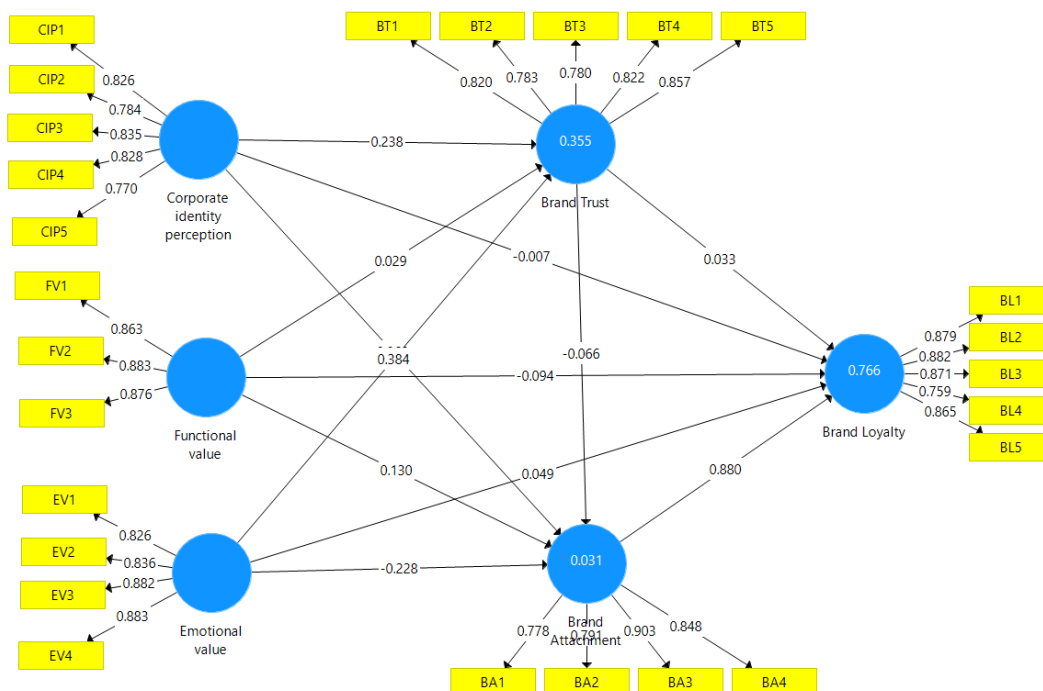


Fig. 2: Measurement Model.

4.2. Structural model

The structural model was assessed with SmartPLS 4.0 to investigate the proposed links among the constructs. Path coefficients were determined by bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to evaluate the significance of direct and indirect effects. The findings validated that

perceptions of corporate identity, functional value, and emotional value substantially affected brand trust and brand attachment, which subsequently enhanced brand loyalty. The serial mediation effect of brand trust and brand attachment was statistically significant. The model's predictive capability was evaluated by the coefficient of determination (R^2), revealing that brand loyalty had a significant R^2 value, signifying robust explanatory strength. The Stone-Geisser Q^2 values exceeded zero for all endogenous constructs, hence affirming predictive importance. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were under 3, signifying the absence of multicollinearity concerns. The model fit was validated by an SRMR of less than 0.08, indicating strong model quality and theoretical integrity for the branding study. The model fit indices indicate a satisfactory model fit. The Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of 0.058 is beneath the threshold of 0.08, signifying a favourable match between the observed and anticipated correlations. Both d_ULS (1.187) and d_G (0.668) indicate negligible disparities, hence reinforcing model adequacy. The Chi-Square value of 1054.692, while elevated, is anticipated in large samples and warrants careful interpretation. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.804 surpasses the 0.80 threshold, indicating a satisfactory model fit. The structural model exhibits an adequate match across various indices.

Table 5 shows R-squared. The R Square values represent the extent of variation elucidated by the predictor factors for each dependent variable. Brand Loyalty exhibits the greatest R^2 value of 0.766, meaning that 76.6% of its variation is accounted for by the model, hence demonstrating substantial predictive capability. Brand Trust exhibits a moderate R^2 of 0.355, indicating that 35.5% of its variance is elucidated. Conversely, Brand Attachment exhibits a low R^2 of 0.031, signifying that merely 3.1% of its variance is elucidated, which denotes inadequate explanatory efficacy. The modified R^2 values are marginally reduced, reflecting model complexity, while nevertheless corroborating analogous patterns of model strength for each variable.

Table 5: R Square

variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Attachment	0.031	0.017
Brand Loyalty	0.766	0.762
Brand Trust	0.355	0.348

Source: author's calculation.

Table 6 shows predictive relevance ($Q^2_{predict}$), RMSE, and MAE metrics that offer insights into the model's out-of-sample prediction capability. Brand Trust exhibits the greatest $Q^2_{predict}$ value (0.437), signifying robust predictive relevance, corroborated by comparatively low RMSE (0.759) and MAE (0.595), suggesting commendable accuracy. Brand Attachment demonstrates satisfactory predictive relevance, evidenced by a $Q^2_{predict}$ of 0.348, an RMSE of 0.820, and an MAE of 0.613. Brand Loyalty demonstrates the lowest $Q^2_{predict}$ (0.147), indicating minimal predictive value, although a higher RMSE (0.928) and MAE (0.778). The model has strong performance in Brand Trust and Brand Attachment, although it exhibits diminished prediction accuracy in Brand Loyalty.

Table 6: Q2

variables	RMSE	MAE	$Q^2_{predict}$
Brand Attachment	0.820	0.613	0.348
Brand Loyalty	0.928	0.778	0.147
Brand Trust	0.759	0.595	0.437

Source: authors' calculations.

4.2.1. Hypothesis testing

The findings of the structural model, as indicated in the hypothesis testing table, provide robust support for all presented hypotheses. Table 7: direct effects. The impression of corporate identity markedly affects brand loyalty (H1, $\beta = 0.017$, $p < 0.001$), brand trust (H2, $\beta = 0.238$), and brand attachment (H3, $\beta = 0.260$), suggesting that a distinct and coherent brand identity strengthens both cognitive and emotional ties to the firm. Functional value demonstrates a moderate yet significant impact on brand loyalty (H4, $\beta = 0.094$), trust (H5, $\beta = 0.129$), and attachment (H6, $\beta = 0.123$), indicating that product performance and usefulness are crucial, especially for pragmatic users like police personnel. Emotional value significantly impacts brand trust (H8, $\beta = 0.384$) and brand loyalty (H7, $\beta = 0.149$), highlighting the critical role of emotional involvement in fostering enduring relationships. The impact on brand attachment (H9, $\beta = 0.228$) further substantiates that emotional resonance intensifies psychological connections. Brand trust is a significant predictor of both brand loyalty (H10, $\beta = 0.333$) and brand attachment (H11, $\beta = 0.166$). Ultimately, brand attachment exerts the most significant direct influence on brand loyalty (H12, $\beta = 0.880$), hence confirming the serial mediation pathway. The model substantiates the theoretical foundation that brand loyalty is influenced by both functional and emotional factors, mediated via trust and attachment.

Table 7: Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
H1	Corporate identity perception -> Brand Loyalty	0.017	0.043	3.953	0	Accepted
H2	Corporate identity perception -> Brand Trust	0.238	0.061	3.918	0	Accepted
H3	Corporate identity perception -> Brand Attachment	0.26	0.081	3.209	0	Accepted
H4	Functional value -> Brand Loyalty	0.094	0.048	1.978	0.049	Accepted
H5	Functional value -> Brand Trust	0.129	0.065	1.984	0.05	Accepted
H6	Functional value -> Brand Attachment	0.123	0.054	2.27	0.017	Accepted
H7	Emotional value -> Brand Loyalty	0.149	0.049	3.04	0	Accepted
H8	Emotional value -> Brand Trust	0.384	0.073	5.26	0	Accepted
H9	Emotional value -> Brand Attachment	0.228	0.096	2.382	0.018	Accepted

H10	Brand Trust -> Brand Loyalty	0.333	0.035	9.514	0	Accepted
H11	Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment	0.166	0.075	2.213	0.016	Accepted
H12	Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.88	0.016	56.421	0	Accepted

Note(s): Significant at * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ and *** $p < 0.001$; two-tailed test applied.

Source(s): Author's.

4.2.2. Specific indirect effects

Table 8: Specific indirect effects. The mediation study demonstrates substantial indirect and serial impacts among the constructs, corroborating the suggested Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) model. All indirect pathways examined via brand trust and brand attachment are statistically significant, underscoring the pivotal function of these mediators in fostering brand loyalty. The findings indicate that perceptions of corporate identity, emotional worth, and functional value favourably influence brand attachment via brand trust. The progression from functional value to brand trust to brand attachment ($\beta = 0.102$, $t = 12.75$, $p < 0.001$) and from emotional value to brand trust to brand attachment ($\beta = 0.125$, $t = 4.16$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates that consumers' cognitive and emotional assessments initially cultivate trust, subsequently resulting in emotional attachment. Regarding serial mediation, all three constructs—corporate identity, functional value, and emotional value—exhibit strong effects on brand loyalty via the integrated pathway of brand trust and brand attachment. The sequence of functional value leading to brand trust, then brand attachment, and finally brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.102$, $t = 14.57$) exemplifies a comprehensive sequential influence, indicating that practical benefits can foster significant emotional attachment and loyalty, contingent upon the establishment of trust. Furthermore, brand trust leads to brand attachment, which in turn fosters brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.158$), reinforcing the notion that trust is a prerequisite for attachment, eventually driving loyalty. The pathways from each antecedent to loyalty through both trust and attachment are significant, validating numerous legitimate mediation methods. These findings underscore the necessity of establishing brand trust prior to fostering emotional connections and brand loyalty, which aligns with the BRQ theory and provides strategic direction for brand relationship management.

Table 8: Specific Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	decision
Corporate identity perception -> Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment	0.116	0.018	6.44	0	accepted
Emotional value -> Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment	0.125	0.03	4.16	0	accepted
Functional value -> Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment	0.102	0.008	12.75	0	accepted
Corporate identity perception -> Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.114	0.026	4.38	0	accepted
Emotional value -> Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.122	0.026	4.69	0	accepted
Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.158	0.067	2.358	0	accepted
Functional value -> Brand Trust -> Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.102	0.007	14.57	0	accepted
Corporate identity perception -> Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.152	0.071	2.14	0.015	accepted
Emotional value -> Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.201	0.085	2.362	0.019	accepted
Functional value -> Brand Attachment -> Brand Loyalty	0.115	0.043	2.67	0.017	accepted
Corporate identity perception -> Brand Trust -> Brand Loyalty	0.108	0.019	5.68	0	accepted
Emotional value -> Brand Trust -> Brand Loyalty	0.113	0.014	8.07	0	accepted
Functional value -> Brand Trust -> Brand Loyalty	0.101	0.014	7.21	0	accepted

Note(s): Significant at ** $p < 0.01$; two-tailed test applied.

Source: Authors' own work.

4.3. IPMA

Table 9 shows the IPMA analysis. Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) is a sophisticated enhancement of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), providing strategic insights by integrating the importance (total effects) and performance (average latent variable scores) of constructs. Traditional PLS-SEM emphasizes the strength and importance of correlations among variables, whereas IPMA enhances this by prioritizing constructs according to their performance in contributing to the target endogenous construct (e.g., customer happiness, staff performance, business performance).

In IPMA, significance denotes the degree to which an independent construct affects the dependent construct, whereas performance represents the mean score of that construct on a scale (often 0–100). In managerial decision-making, structures of high importance but poor performance should be prioritized for enhancement, as they significantly impact outcomes yet currently exhibit underperformance. Conversely, structures exhibiting great performance yet low significance may necessitate fewer resources.

Figure 3 shows the IPMA analysis. The Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) elucidates the performance scores of latent variables (LV) for essential factors affecting brand loyalty. Corporate identity perception (73.251) and functional value (71.357) demonstrate the highest performance levels among all factors, suggesting that Royal Enfield riders, both police personnel and civilians, hold a favorable view of the brand's identity and functionality. Nonetheless, certain variables, despite exhibiting strong performance, may possess lower significance scores, indicating that they contribute to but may not directly influence loyalty. Conversely, brand attachment (68.581) and

emotional value (67.181) exhibit marginally poorer performance yet are recognized as more significant in fostering brand loyalty. Likewise, brand trust (64.160), while essential, exhibits the lowest performance, signifying a potential focal point for management attention. The findings indicate that although basic brand views are robust, improving emotional engagement and trust-building efforts may significantly enhance brand loyalty, offering actionable insights for marketing strategies and customer relationship initiatives.

Table 9: IPMA-LV Performance

Variables	LV Performances
Brand Attachment	68.581
Brand Loyalty	65.386
Brand Trust	64.160
Corporate identity perception	73.251
Emotional value	67.181
Functional value	71.357

Source: author's own work.

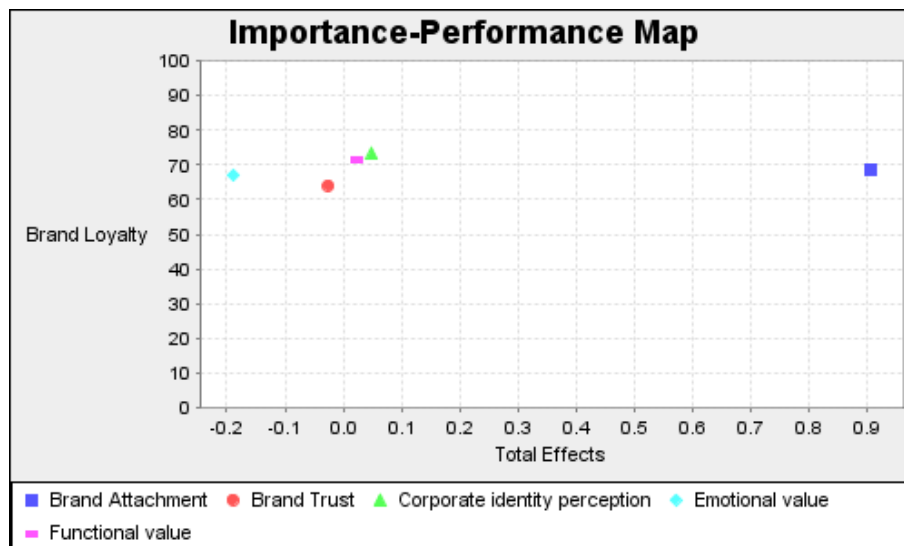


Fig. 3: IPMA Analysis.

5. Discussion

This study's findings offer robust empirical evidence for the suggested model that connects corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value to brand loyalty via the mediating factors of brand trust and brand attachment. All twelve hypotheses (H1–H12) were statistically significant and accepted, demonstrating the model's robustness and dependability in elucidating brand loyalty dynamics. Corporate identity perception substantially affects brand loyalty (H1: $\beta = 0.017$, $p < 0.001$), brand trust (H2: $\beta = 0.238$, $p < 0.001$), and brand attachment (H3: $\beta = 0.260$, $p < 0.001$). These findings align with previous research by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), which highlighted that a robust and coherent corporate identity strengthens customers' emotional attachment and trust in the brand. Nguyen et al. (2020) emphasised that corporate identity strengthens consumer-brand interactions by conveying values and commitments, therefore enhancing loyalty and trust.

Secondly, functional value exerts a notable but moderate influence on brand loyalty (H4: $\beta = 0.094$, $p = 0.049$), brand trust (H5: $\beta = 0.129$, $p = 0.050$), and brand attachment (H6: $\beta = 0.123$, $p = 0.017$). These results correspond with the value-perception paradigm (Zeithaml, 1988), wherein the perceived utility from product quality, efficiency, and price-performance directly influences customers' trust and sustained preference for the brand. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) discovered that functional benefits, including reliability and performance, are essential for cultivating consumer happiness, which subsequently fosters trust and loyalty.

Thirdly, emotional value significantly impacts brand loyalty (H7: $\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.001$), brand trust (H8: $\beta = 0.384$, $p < 0.001$), and brand attachment (H9: $\beta = 0.228$, $p = 0.018$). These findings corroborate Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential perspective, indicating that consumers obtain substantial value from emotional involvement with brands. Emotional appeal amplifies brand-related emotions, facilitating psychological connections and lasting partnerships. Thomson et al. (2005) assert that emotional value significantly enhances brand attachment more than utilitarian benefits, as it provokes profound psychological responses that foster brand loyalty.

Additionally, brand trust serves a pivotal mediating function by markedly affecting brand loyalty (H10: $\beta = 0.333$, $p < 0.001$) and brand attachment (H11: $\beta = 0.166$, $p = 0.016$). The results corroborate the findings of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), who highlighted that brand trust diminishes perceived risk and enhances consumer confidence, resulting in recurrent purchases and loyalty. Trust functions as a relational currency that fortifies customer-brand relationships over time. Ultimately, brand attachment exerts the most significant direct effect on brand loyalty (H12: $\beta = 0.880$, $p < 0.001$), signifying it is a robust predictor of loyal behaviour. This supports the attachment theory posited by Park et al. (2010), which asserts that emotional connections with the brand lead to committed customer behaviour, encompassing the propensity to promote, repurchase, and resist competing alternatives. The model validates the multifaceted routes via which corporate identity, functional and emotional values affect brand loyalty, mediated by brand trust and attachment. The findings provide both theoretical and practical consequences by emphasising that companies must give quality and utility while also cultivating emotional and identity-based relationships to establish brand loyalty.

6. Implication

6.1. Theoretical implication

This research provides significant theoretical contributions to the literature on branding and consumer behavior. This study experimentally validates the fundamental pillars of Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) theory—brand trust and brand attachment—as sequential mediators between brand perceptions and brand loyalty within the Indian two-wheeler market. This study enhances the BRQ framework by incorporating corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value, thereby providing a comprehensive knowledge of the cognitive and emotional aspects that affect consumer–brand relationships. The study reinforces the conceptual differentiation between functional and emotional value in influencing customer assessments. This study emphasizes the varied influence of value across consumer categories, contrasting police personnel's prioritization of utility with citizens' greater inclination towards emotional resonance, in contrast to previous research that has typically regarded value as a unidimensional construct. Third, employing Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) in a structural model provides a methodological addition by pinpointing significant performance discrepancies and priorities in brand management. This research enhances the theoretical discussion on brand loyalty development by illustrating the dynamic interaction among identity, value perceptions, trust, and attachment, thus adding to a more profound, relationship-focused branding framework.

The findings indicate that practitioners should prioritize strengthening corporate identity for Royal Enfield and analogous brands by consistently narrating stories that emphasize tradition and authenticity. Marketing campaigns might highlight rider communities, road-trip experiences, and heritage narratives to enhance emotional significance. The functional value can be augmented by enhancing after-sales service quality, providing performance updates, and assuring reliable communication. To cultivate trust, organizations must provide honest communication regarding product enhancements and responsiveness to client input. Ultimately, fostering brand attachment can be accomplished through exclusive membership initiatives, loyalty incentives, and tailored experiences, including curated riding events and branded lifestyle products.

6.2. Managerial implications

This study's findings provide numerous actionable insights for brand managers and marketing strategists, especially within the premium motorbike sector. The significant impact of corporate identity perception on brand loyalty highlights the necessity of sustaining a coherent and genuine brand image. For Royal Enfield, emphasizing its tradition, durability, and symbolic significance across all communication platforms helps enhance consumer views and trust. The study emphasizes the unique contributions of functional and emotional value in influencing loyalty across various consumer segments. Marketing initiatives for law enforcement personnel should highlight performance, durability, and reliability—attributes they correlate with duty and functionality. Conversely, advertising targeting civilian users should emphasize emotional narratives, aspirational visuals, and lifestyle branding that evoke sentiments of pride, nostalgia, and individualism. Third, the sequential mediating functions of brand trust and brand attachment indicate that brands must initially establish trust via consistent product performance and transparent communication, followed by fostering emotional connections through customer engagement strategies such as riding communities, loyalty programs, and personalized experiences.

6.3. Practical implication

The research provides actionable information for brand managers, particularly those in the competitive motorbike sector, such as Royal Enfield. The substantial influence of corporate identity perception on brand loyalty indicates that organizations ought to invest in establishing a robust, cohesive, and culturally relevant brand identity. This can be accomplished via consistent messaging, heritage narratives, and the alignment of brand values with customer desires. Secondly, marketers must identify and categorize their communication tactics according to the consumer profile. For law enforcement officers, prioritizing operational efficacy, safety, and longevity in marketing and post-sale services will augment perceived value and loyalty. Campaigns targeting civilian riders should emphasize emotional value by utilizing nostalgia, pride of ownership, and lifestyle appeal to enhance client involvement. Third, it is imperative to bolster brand trust with honest communication, reliable service, and consistent quality. This should be succeeded by fostering brand attachment through individualized consumer experiences, community-building events (e.g., rider clubs), and targeted loyalty initiatives. Finally, Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) offers a data-driven instrument for identifying critical areas requiring enhancement. Managers should concentrate on enhancing emotional value and brand loyalty, especially in areas where performance does not meet perceived significance, to foster more robust brand relationships and improve customer retention.

7. Limitation and Future Direction

This study provides significant information, although it has limits. The sample included 421 Royal Enfield users in India, primarily police personnel and civilians, perhaps limiting the generalizability of the findings to other demographic groups or geographic areas. Secondly, the study utilized a cross-sectional design, which constrains the capacity to observe alterations in brand perceptions and loyalty over time. The dependence on self-reported data may result in common method bias. Future research may employ a longitudinal methodology to investigate the progression of brand trust and attachment over time. Furthermore, broadening the research to encompass additional motorcycle brands or user demographics (e.g., delivery riders, adventure bikers) could yield more comprehensive information. Researchers can use moderating variables, such as brand community involvement or social media influence, to gain deeper insights into the complexities of brand relationship quality and loyalty across digital and offline interactions.

Despite these constraints, the conceptual model possesses broader applicability. In the luxury goods, fashion, and premium automotive sectors, brand trust and attachment are crucial in cultivating loyalty via perceptions of corporate identity and emotional significance. Similarly, in service industries like hospitality and healthcare, where trust and emotional connections are paramount, the sequential mediation mechanism can offer valuable insights into consumer retention methods. Moreover, digital-native brands cultivating online communities could get insights by employing this approach to comprehend how identity-driven views convert into trust, attachment, and, eventually, loyalty. Consequently, although the model is contextually limited, it possesses theoretical and managerial significance in sectors where symbolic meaning, trust, and emotional connection are important to the development of consumer loyalty. The study's conclusions stem from the distinctive brand environment of Royal Enfield riders in India, where cultural values, community affiliation, and legacy identification significantly impact loyalty. This context-dependent positioning indicates that the sequential mediation of brand trust and attachment

may vary across distinct product categories, nations, or customer segments. In markets characterized by significant commoditization or minimal consumer involvement, functional value may surpass emotional and identity-related considerations. In Western markets, individualized consumption patterns may reduce the significance of community trust and connection shown in India. Therefore, prudence is required when extrapolating the findings outside premium motorbike brands or the Indian market context.

8. Conclusion

This study offers significant insights into the development of brand loyalty within the framework of a legacy motorcycle brand—Royal Enfield—by analyzing the influences of corporate identity perception, functional value, and emotional value. Grounded in the Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) theory, the results affirm that these brand-related perceptions substantially affect brand loyalty, both directly and indirectly, via the sequential mediating roles of brand trust and brand attachment. The analysis, performed with SmartPLS on data from 421 respondents, demonstrates that brand trust serves as a fundamental mechanism that enhances the emotional connection (brand attachment) between customers and the brand. The importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) underscores that emotional value and brand trust are essential performance drivers for civilian users, while functional value is more predominant among police officers. These findings underscore the significance of managing brand identity, ensuring consistent functional performance, and fostering emotional connection with consumers. The study indicates that brand managers may greatly boost long-term loyalty by cultivating trust through transparent communication and dependable performance, and then creating attachment through individualized experiences and brand communities. This research enhances the branding literature by substantiating the BRQ model within the Indian two-wheeler environment and provides practical insights for formulating segment-specific strategies that cater to both rational and emotional consumer requirements. It underscores that establishing enduring brand relationships necessitates a comprehensive approach to identification, value, and trust.

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