

THE EFFECT OF CONSERVATISM-AUTONOMY CULTURAL VALUES ON UNIVERSITY AWARENESS, IMAGE, AND STUDENT LOYALTY: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at the cultural effect on brand management and customer loyalty. Brand management further consists of Brand image and brand awareness. Moreover, conservatism as a major theme of culture is considered. The study was empirical in nature. The interviews were conducted from students and faculty of two universities. The study addressed brand image, brand awareness and customer loyalty in cultural context. The respondents were asked about the cultural effect on the relationship of brand management and customer loyalty. The awareness and image may be made in accordance with cultural theme conservatism of people of Pakistan to increase customer loyalty. All the themes of conservatism-autonomy, awareness, image, bond, active passions, hobby, and loyalty reflected trustworthiness and rigor. The current research findings help universities to manage their branding coherent with cultural values. The study may be used in future in other industries and sectors with non-student samples. The result shows that theme of conservatism effecting relation of awareness and image with student loyalty. New themes bond (association), active passions, and hobby emerged.

Keywords: Brand awareness, brand image, customer loyalty, culture and conservatism/autonomy

INTRODUCTION

Most of the companies worldwide focus upon customer loyalty (Ahmad, 2025). Managers acknowledge the importance of customer loyalty for organization (Mandung, 2025). Its importance is highly recognized by firms all around the world. Similarly, the relationship of a firm and its customers reflects in organizational performance (Tan et al., 2025). Committed and consistent customers rebuy and recommend the product or a service, manifested in the form of customer patronization and loyalty (Aksoy, 2013). The research article finds the effect of culture in relation to brand management and customer loyalty. It answers the question that what is the effect of culture in the relation of awareness, image, and customer loyalty? Similarly, it takes the

interpretive (Wells & Giacco, 2025) stance and goes for fine understanding of various concepts like brand awareness, brand image, customer loyalty and culture along with their relationship with respect to conservatism as cultural aspect. The study raises new question branding be made in coherence with awareness and image to improvise customer loyalty? The cultural knowledge helps in the development of a brand (Kuang-Ying Loo & Hackley, 2013; Li, 2021; Purwanto et al., 2025). Moreover, a lot of quantitative work has been done about this topic but little focus is made qualitatively on this phenomenon (Kuang-Ying Loo & Hackley, 2013; Purwanto et al., 2025). The study tries to explore the formal curiosity about the fine and minute relationships of cultural aspects

while tailoring brand strategy in accordance with culture to increase customer loyalty. The research methodology covers a qualitative interview (Kahlke et al., 2025) based study. The sample will be individual students of Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Masters in Business Administration (MBA) those who want to carry on their higher education in the same universities like Bahria University Islamabad and Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology Islamabad with specific focus on Business Administration departments and their faculty members respectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is the cultural effect in the relationship of awareness, image and customer loyalty?

Recent studies (Hussey & Duncombe, 1999) in qualitative research provide a detailed description of “Whys” about consumer behavior related to consumer and brand relationship instead of its limited previous focus on the utility of brands. It states that the shift has occurred from quantitative to qualitative ontological understanding of consumer actions with respect to buying of brands in more depth and broad manner to an overall qualitative picture of the consumer and brand relationship from simple usage and functioning of brands. Moreover, qualitative studies often play its part directly by analyzing the “common sense” in fine description about a certain phenomenon. The knowledge about the culture supports in the development of a brand and its sustainability (Kuang-Ying Loo & Hackley, 2013). It states that an idea about cultural values being necessary to launch the brand and further build consumer-brand relationship. Moreover, Aaker (1996) asserts the role of cultural values perspective in creation of brand awareness and customer loyalty. It can be achieved through brand strategy based upon cultural knowledge. In addition to this, knowing host culture well collaborate with the basic tenets of branding (Kuang-Ying Loo & Hackley, 2013).

Customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993) concept adopted because this lens helps in the development of an understanding about theoretical enhancements and practical managerial implications with respect to consumer behavior. CBBE can be defined as “The differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand”. Brand knowledge

composed of themes brand awareness and brand image. CBBE model incorporates loyalty as one of its multiple facets (Keller et al., 2011). Similarly, marketing asserts the importance of loyalty from its understanding to its creations. Repeat purchase, patronization and recommendation to others a brand, manifested and saturated in the form of customer loyalty (McAlexander et al., 2003). It states that loyalty manifested in the form of repeat purchase of a brand. Repeat purchase also shows positive attitude and positive perception of customer towards the brand. Various contexts as personality, economy of a region, natural settings, and social background create loyalty (Hatem Falih et al., 2025). Contrary to the concept of building and sustaining loyalty, the loyalty has been deteriorating among customers (Bennett & Rundel-Thiele, 2005; Dekimpe et al., 1997; Kapferer, 2005). Moreover, Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) explained that loyalty can be defined through three approaches:

- a) Behavioral (it shows consistent and repetition of purchase a product or service)
- b) Attitudinal (it reflects the emotional and psychological attachment of customers with the firm)
- c) Composite (It shows the combination of behavioral and attitudinal customer preferences to repeatedly purchasing and their anticipation not to switch to other brands)

According to Oliver (1999) customer's loyalty is “a deep held commitment to rebuy or patronize preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and making efforts that have the potential to cause switching behavior”. Customer loyalty is one of the most powerful weapons an organization has in its strategic arsenal. Consumer loyalty explained as repeat purchase of a brand even the presence of marketing by other brands (Oliver, 1999). It states that customer loyalty is the repeat purchase of a brand by customer even if he or she is forced either by advertisement or by the presence of similar brands in the market; even then, customer is reluctant to buy the same brand or brand set again and again.

However, the Rosenberg and Czepiel (1984) critic that customer loyalty declines in the presence of other products in a country. The opposite view states that having an option of other products or

services in the market, limits the scope of customer loyalty. But still, Consumer loyalty is important feature for organizational achievement and revenue. Those who are loyal consumers try to buy product and services more often. So a lot of focus is made on enhancement of loyalty (Divett et al., 2003). Yet loyalty has been an important concept to further explore (Etemad-Sajadi & Rizzuto, 2013).

At present the globalization has caused to generate interest to study that how cultural variations reflected in managerial decision making, management actions, and the results of those decisions and acts. The business decisions, actions, and their relative consequences proven to be important features to catch attention of researcher in the past up till now (Zuluaga & Acosta, 2025). Moreover, business decisions have been subject to cultural orientation of the people of host country (Brewer & Venaik, 2012). It may be said that branding has been adapted in coherence with culture of the country. Similarly, variation in perception of customers could be considered if one wants to find out the solution about brand management in cross cultural context. Also managers not foreseeing the role of cultural values in business decision making account for business decline. It necessitates to incorporate culture of host country to develop business strategy (Etemad-Sajadi & Rizzuto, 2013). It might be said that culture of the people of certain area or country be considered in order to effectively achieve the business objectives along with such strategy development which entails cultural aspects into itself for ultimate success of business into a country. Similarly, differences in thinking may be considered if one wants to find out the solution about brand management in cross cultural context..

As Groeschl and Doherty (2000) say that Culture is very vast term and difficult to define. Many researchers have tried to define this term and draw its boundaries. Two important and fundamental studies have been done by Hofstede and Schwartz in the last twenty years (Steenkamp, 2017; Yeganeh, 2025). Initially it seems that the definitions and the concepts are different in various studies but a closer look derives the meaning that most of them have similar content. While studying culture Hofstede (2011) defines it as "The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or

category of people than that of others". It states that people from different regions understand the reality in their own contexts and with their own lens of perception. Moreover, the concept of culture understood in anthropology for tribal context, in political science for nations, and in organizations for management. Hofstede cultural orientations have been power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long term versus short term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Yeganeh, 2025).

The critique of cultural orientations has been that they do not exist tangibly but they are constructs of our minds (Shaver & Wrightsman, 1991). They should not be made concrete or real. They have been too ambiguous (Yeganeh, 2025). Therefore, the constructs based upon these themes will be too complex and difficult to understand if they are extended from six themes to more themes.

Another major work about culture is that of Schwartz who basis his study upon decisive study about human values and provides rigor yet not so popular marketing (Yeganeh, 2025). Schwartz (1992) explains three grounded societal debates:

- a) Relations between individuals and group;
- b) Assuring responsible social behavior and
- c) The role of human kind in the natural and social world

It results into three distinct concepts of culture like first one as conservatism versus autonomy. In conservatism the person is seen as an individual who part and parcel of collectivity. Focus is upon status quo, propriety and keeping oneself away from that which can damage the bondage of the group (Su et al., 2025). Whereas, autonomy describes those cultures in which an individual is having freedom and liberty within a group, can perceive things in his own context and he can express his own views in his own manner. Further it comprises of two types. First is intellectual autonomy, which means thinking process and ideas of an individual are based upon his own view and they lead in their own scholarly manner. Second type is affective autonomy that is about feelings, emotions and the right of the person to follow his own positive experiences. In view of Steenkamp (2001) the second theme focuses upon hierarchy versus egalitarianism. Hierarchy means the assignment unchangeable roles and allocation of resources to fulfill those roles. Whereas, in

egalitarian cultures (Jung & Clifford, 2025), people are made aware of common interests in certain work and they are provoked to follow with their free will and wish to get the share in common benefits. This stresses upon the transcendence of personal interests. Moreover, Steenkamp (2001) says that another theme is mastery versus harmony. Mastery explained as to get the skills and knowledge to master and then change the scenario according to their will, lead to assertion of control. Whereas, harmony means to accept the scenario as it is and also to keep that in its original form instead of changing it.

Steenkamp (2001) said that Hofstede cultural values and concepts have been debatable. Similarly, the cultural values have generalization issues. Furthermore, the study respondents had been employees of IBM being expatriates from United States of America to other countries who filled the questionnaire. Moreover, the focus of Hofstede study was upon employees that may not generalize to consumers, which is also the major concept in the form of customer/ consumer loyalty in our assumption and context. Thus in the light of both the dominant perspectives of Hofstede, its critique and Schwartz work, the focus will be to use the work of Schwartz in our study with reference to culture based theme-conservatism versus autonomy. The effect of conservatism versus autonomy on brand management and customer loyalty was focused in current research.

American Marketing Association (AMA) in 1960 defines a brand as a “name, logo, symbol, sign or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Avis & Henderson, 2022). Moreover, according to American Marketing Association (AMA) the modified definition is “A brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”. The modification in the new definition about brand is “any other feature” to allow adding intangibles into this definition (Wood, 2000). Also Hakala et al. (2012) while defining a brand say “A brand covers additional aspects and features in products or services which others simple products or services do not have, while fulfilling the same needs of customers”. Branding is not only popular today but it was famous in ancient times as well. Branding has been typical practice from ancient times when

craftsmen mark their goods and artists sign their produce so that their products can be differentiated from that of other producers (Petty, 2025). It may be said that the art of making brands is known as branding. This may be popular not only now a day, but in historical times it was popular when people used to live like nomads and mark (brand) their animals with hot iron on their skins, sign their artistic work, to be identified as separate and distinguished entity than that of others. Later, the term of brand equity was coined with reference to branding.

Brand equity conceptualized as perceived value or attached value with a brand by the Customers (Hakala et al., 2012). It may be said that value includes all the benefits a brand brings to a customer. It may be further said that benefits may be about the perception with respect to brand's reliability, durability and satisfaction. Similarly, the strength of a brand situates in the experiential knowledge of customers about that brand. It may be said that favorable attitude towards the brand has its basis in the minds of actual or potential customers when they personally use the brand and experience the value (benefits) related to brand or when they listen these benefits from others about the brand. Moreover, brand equity results from brand knowledge of customers got through branding. Brand awareness and image combines to form brand knowledge (Keller et al., 2011; Shakerian et al., 2025).

Kim (2012) described brand awareness occurs when the customer recall the brand after seeing name, slogan, logo, mascots of the brand and associate a product with that brand. It may be said that brand awareness is the mental ability of the customers to remember and recall the brand when they come across certain stimuli in terms of brand name, logo, shape, or design that differentiates a relates the product to a certain brand and differentiates the product from other brands. It might also involve recall of customers to link those products or services to certain brand. Furthermore, Kim (2012) claims that brand awareness being a name about brand in customer mind and recalling that brand name from memory. It may reflect the retrieval of brand name from memory to conscious state when an individual sees certain brand. It may also be stated as recall of brand from long term memory of one's mind..

Reynolds (1965) states that an image has been a structure in mind developed with the help of

cognitive process of filtering the irrelevant stimulus and focusing on a particular stimulus forming an impression and these impressions being developed, organized, riposted in memory, and then recalled for further usage. Similarly, Kim (2012) states that brand image refer to the feelings in the minds of customers when they come across the brand. Brand image give meanings to the brand in customer mind which are related to their psychological and social needs by certain map or schema development. It might be said that brand image is certain picture in minds of customers as per their social and psychological sense of deprivation about certain products or services. Kotler and Keller (2006) brand image being a customer's set of beliefs held about a particular brand. Aaker (1991) says about brand image that "a set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way". In relation to previous content, Aaker (1991) again says that brand image refers to a set of associations, typically assimilated in some useful mode. Also, Biel (1992), defines brand image as "a cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to the brand name". An image of brand formed through marketing efforts develop strong, favorable, and unique associations considered to be valuable by customers ultimately makes buying decision easier for customer and further develop customer loyalty (Brown & Carpenter, 2000). It may be said that a brand image is basically the number of benefits an individual attach with the brand either in reality or just perception. Furthermore, these associated benefits perceived may be strong, unique and favorable. These may not change by external forces and influences like advertisement and promised claims by new brands in comparison with their already held successful brands.

According to Hsieh (2004), brand image benefits the organization through customer patronization of brand through identify and matching their needs with the benefits the brand provides to them, and distinguishes that bundle of benefits from other brand offers. Building strong brand image holds a key position in marketing project (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Brand image accrue many benefits for the organization including positive recommendations, increased market share and position, and betterment in good will of the organization (Park et al., 1986). Empirical findings claim brand image result into loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Biel, 1992; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000;

Keller, 1993; Koo, 2003). It may be said that if the customers are having unique, strong and favorable view about brand, consequently, it brings loyalty of customers. Yet, brands may be perceived differently depending upon culture in different parts of the world.

Kim (2012) says perception about a brand varies with changes in cultures from one to another. Image and symbolic understanding assigned to a brand adapted through local culture while economic and social position of a brand depends upon collective thought about brand. It states that certain brands considered more valuable than others based upon different cultural contexts of customers. It states that different regions of the world have differing thoughts about the same brand. However, it may further be said that image and symbol attached with brand may be studied under local culture or sub cultures, whereas, economic and social values may be studied under collective thoughts in culture. It may be said that economic values (like distribution of wealth, buying behavior, income levels of customers, price sensitiveness of markets) and social values (like ethics, norms, trends, life style, brand knowledge, inter and intra-group relationships, friends and family-tiers) are seen holistically in culture or simply these may be addressed through conservatism theme of culture.

Previous work has emphasized upon the importance and association of brand with customers (P. Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013). It states that the study area that is consumers, brands and their interactions has been of great importance to the researchers. In more globalized world, customers are quite different in their needs and understanding about the products and services. It may be said that they have different views and perceptions in understanding about different products or services as well as this behavior is also illustrated with respect to their needs. People across the world may have different culture and this variation reflected onto their buying behavior. Most studies show (Li, 2021; Triana, 2019) the effect of culture on perceptions, which depicts that market offerings be adapted to the environment of customers as well as according to their local needs. It may be said that it reflects the need for brand management according to the culture and environment of the customers. Effect of cultural theme conservatism on brand knowledge (brand awareness and brand image) and customer loyalty

addressed. Aaker and Keller assert states that concepts effecting customer loyalty with a brand differ from one culture to another (Chen et al., 2012). It may be said that the themes of brand image and brand awareness have relationship with customer loyalty. Moreover, it states that the relationship of brand knowledge and customer loyalty deeply embedded in culture (conservatism).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Much of the research regarding the selection of university by the students for getting higher education in a specific university is done with respect to universities of United States of America and United Kingdom only (Shah et al., 2013). It may be said that there is knowledge gap with respect to research work on the choice of students for the selection of university concerned for getting higher education in Pakistan. Research methodology follows Phenomenology – referred to the study of the subjective experiences of others (Kaluarachchi, 2025). Further, data collection was followed by the interviews of the students in two different federal universities in Islamabad. The interviews were conversation based and formalized. These were individual based face to face interviews (Kahlke et al., 2025).

The notes were taken along with audio tape recording with prior permission of the interviewee. The effect of conservatism on brand management and customer loyalty depicted in interview based questions in the study. The distractions in the interview were also considered. The sample size (Lim, 2025) subject to theoretical saturation consisted of twelve students of Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and Ph.D (Doctor of Philosophy); those who wanted to carry on their higher education in the same university again with specific focus on Business Administration departments. The software NVivo was used in the study. Student based sample taken from two universities in capital city of Islamabad Pakistan as it has residents from all provinces of Pakistan (Hakala et al., 2012). So, it may provide an added advantage in the ease of conducting interview from students belonging to different provinces in same vicinity making current research more generalized to the whole of the country. Further, data analysis in the Software NVivo revealed following themes from the interview of the respondents.

Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis helps in understanding the emerging themes from the phenomenon under study as described below,

First Theme - Blend of autonomy-conservatism

From most of the respondent answers it was revealed that getting admission in the university for higher education was partly due to influence of family, friend and peers and partly because of their autonomous decisions and in align with previous research (Javaid et al., 2025). Respondents were neither solely autonomous in their decisions of getting admission for the first time or again in the university nor they were conservative totally. However, family influence was found to be playing partial part in their decision of getting admission in both universities, this finding in alignment with previous work (Biagiotti & Morina, 2025). As one of our respondent says that,

“At the time of taking admission in BBA my maternal uncle, he was a lecturer over there, he knew the environment–influence not in a sense that I came over here because I was influenced to join this university but obviously whenever you take a decision~ you have to select a professional organization or an academic institute, you need to have some support for~ so my uncle was already over here~he knew what kind of environment? What kind of faculty we have over here~ it was bounded decision; he supported me~ what sought of feedback I got from him, so I was satisfied with that”.

It may be said that respondent is reluctant towards particular university partly because of support or influence by a family member. Another respondent says that,

“It was my autonomous decision but my friends had a say in that~actually my friends had a say in influencing me but decision was solely mine, they just give their input”.

It may be said that awareness of family members about the brand also plays a part in development of conservative thoughts of the students. Yet, there is mix approach towards the selection of university while getting admission over their either for the first time or repeatedly.

Second theme - Brand image and awareness based loyalty

Another theme emerged from the answers of the respondents is branding. So for our units of

analyses were universities so many students responded in favor of various characteristics of university to get admission again in the same university. Like one of the respondent answered,

"I wish to start my MBA due to reasons that the management of the university-how their relation with the student, the teachers-which kind of teachers teaching here in this university, how is their environment and what facilities they are providing to the students".

Another interviewee reflects his thoughts as,

"MBA in this university you know one of the top, it was one of the top in all the Asian universities, plus the teachers-faculty here is pretty good, they all are basically Ph.D'- they do have knowledge and what you require in MBA is you know to study from professional persons-from someone who can actually teach you".

It may be said that the characteristics like good name, good qualification of the faculty, their knowledge and their professionalism make up the brand image and awareness in the mind of the students and in coherence with previous works (Luque-Martínez et al., 2025; Suriadi et al., 2025). Literature also reveals that brand awareness and brand image collectively makes up the brand management which results into loyalty of the students towards the university (Hakala et al., 2012).

Another respondent reveals that,

"There are numerous reasons to get admission again in this university like the faculty, like the education provided, the facilities, staff they provide to the students, and the extracurricular activities"

Chen et al. (2012) say that brand image has both tangible and intangible associations for customer loyalty. It may be said that loyalty of the students towards the university is based upon the faculty, the education they provide to the students, working staff inside the university, and the extracurricular facilities they provide to the students play important role in the development of loyalty of the students towards the university.

Subtheme - Bond (Association) based branding

Another theme emerged out of the interviews is that of bond between the student and the institute. One of the interviewee describes that

"Well you know that it is basically a bond-a bond between a student and institution, if

someone comes to university for a degree suppose four years in an institution, then it should be worth it, I am paying some amount so I want some value in return, they should hire more faculty and they should focus on learning and that is basically missing in the university".

It may be said that the branding of the university be based upon development of bond between students and the university so that the students get admission again in the same university to pursue their higher education, being in harmony with previous study (Gibbs et al., 2025). Further it may be said that the basic material for strong bondage between university and students is the faculty. So it may also be said that if the faculty provides learning to the students then it may result into strong bond between students and the university concerned. Aaker (1991) says about brand image that "a set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way".

Biel (1992) refers brand image to a set of characteristics and associations which customer s hold about brand. Bond may also be described as a sense of association and connection between two things. So the bond in university student association is the image of the university in the minds of students regarding faculty, staff, facilities, environment and return value in the form of learning of the students.

Third theme - Active passions

The 'active passion' is the theme which describes that what are those facets which compel an individual to be part of some entity like university in current research scenario (Gomart & Hennion, 1999). In view of active passion to be part and parcel of some organization or to have association with certain phenomenon, like one of our respondents says that,

"I took admission in BBA at Bahria was basically, at the time I got my A-Levels result, in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Bahria was the 'most you can say known' and recommended university for management sciences".

It may be said that to be the part of famous university may be the active passion to join that particular university, thus in conformity with previous study (Zhang et al., 2025). Moreover, it may be said that students feel an inner state of

deprivation to get admission in the well-known university to further their education. These facets may be the name, logo, faculty, environment and extracurricular activities in the universities. The awareness about the university also reveals the active passion. Similarly, in this case the sub theme is 'top of the mind awareness'—the first brand which comes in the mind of customer about any product category shows the top of mind awareness. Kim (2012) says awareness depicts presence of brand name in customer memory and recall of that brand name into conscious mind.

Fourth theme - Hobby

Another theme which emerged from the data is that of teaching a hobby. When teachers belong to self-actualization phase of their life and they don't bother about money than they focus on teaching with heart to the students as their hobby and not just as a matter of earning money to fulfill their basic needs, in alignment with previous study (Dhaliwal et al., 2025). One of the interviewee says that,

"Let's talk about Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid, there are teachers some of them are at self-actualization phase, some of them still fall in the need phase, a person who is in that phase where he cannot fulfill his needs, he is supposed to just come and be cranky, finish all the work and go home just to take the money—a person who is developed, such people when they come to teach they are like they don't need money from teaching, they want to teach like hobby, they are done with the money part, now they want to teach as hobby. Teaching someone with all your heart as hobby is different".

It may be said that those teachers who have earned much in their life span and have reached at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs which has following stages like Physiological needs (hunger, thirst and sex based needs), Safety needs (Shelter and clothing), Social needs (family, friends, associations), Self-esteem (self-respect, honor and dignity) and self-actualization (to know about one's own self abilities based on wisdom) (Cao et al., 2013). Self-actualized teachers teach their students as hobby and not for the sake of money only. Those who are at the basic level of needs try to teach for the sake of money to fulfill their physical needs. It

may further be said that those who teach as a hobby are might be good teachers.

Fifth theme - Loyalty

Loyalty refers to recurring buying conduct and an optimistic mind-set towards such conduct (Ahmad, 2025; McAlexander et al., 2003). It states that loyalty explained as repetition of purchase, and positive feeling about brand.

"It's of both things, my mindset as well as what I have experienced, what I have gained from them, its mindset exactly, I do not like changing organizations even if you are said professionally as well, so I...it's not about what I am getting highly paid, I am getting promoted, if I am satisfied with my job...job description and I am being recognized for the services I am rendering over there so I am fine with that organization, I would never leave it, so same goes for educational institution".

Thus a theme of loyalty of customers emerged in the form of loyalty of students towards the university, being in collaboration with previous study (Ngala et al., 2025). Moreover, most of the respondents believed that the satisfaction with one university makes an attitude of loyalty towards joining the same university for further education. The results being in coherence with previous study (Amiri et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The brand awareness and brand image be made in accordance with the cultural theme conservatism versus autonomy in Pakistan. Similarly, the theme of bond plays a pivotal role in development of loyalty of students towards the university. The bond is made strong by the faculty (teachers) of the university. Moreover, the active passions also play important role in development and reinforcement of loyalty of students. Active passions transform the state of curiosity to know about something or to have knowledge compels students to get admission in a well reputed university for the first time as well as for continuance of higher education from the same university again. In Pakistan most of the decisions regarding university choice of students is based upon their Semi conservatism decision with their family members, friends, peer groups, faculty members and class fellows as well as semi-autonomous in nature. Students in two federal universities of Islamabad became loyal to their respective universities' higher education program

by the influence of partly conservative and partly autonomous decision. Either first doing first degree or the second degree again from the same university they do not take decision in isolation but combine through consultation with others and also include own awareness and image of the university. Their decisions taken by them neither totally autonomous nor conservative but based upon blend or mix approach. Therefore, the relationship of brand management and customer loyalty is affected by culture (conservatism) of the customers. It is further said that higher education belongs to services and mostly comprises of interpersonal relationships, their multifaceted, variant, and customization nature more intense than other forms of services. Previous studies (Chigora & Zvavahera, 2015; Sokołowska et al., 2022) also support the findings of current research that cultural phenomenon effect student repeat selection of university subject to their cultural constraints. Moreover, such classical models revealed the participation and progress of students in higher education (Shah et al., 2013). It may be said that the classical models also emphasized upon the loyalty of the students based upon the choice of students reflected by social, cultural, economic, ethical facets to further their studies from the same or any other university.

New themes namely bond, active passions, and hobby add to the existing literature about university branding. Active passions relates to becoming part and parcel of an organization just like universities in current research case. Theme hobby reflects that when teachers belong to self-actualization phase of their life and they don't bother about money than they focus on teaching with heart to the students as their hobby and not just as a matter of earning money to fulfill their basic needs. Furthermore, another theme bond emerged which shows that the basic material for strong bond between university and students has been the faculty.

The conservatism as cultural aspect has effect on the relationship of brand management and customer loyalty with respect to Pakistani students. In this manner the customers will be more loyal with the firm and they will not switch to the brands of other firms. The results also show that the students of Bahria University were more reluctant to continuing M.B.A program from the same University. Most of the respondents were loyal because their parents were having Naval

background and they developed consent with their parents as well as most of their class fellows of BBA had also similar background so as part of big group, a consent was developed to continue future higher studies in Bahria.

Results were midway in Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences, and Technology (FUUAST), Islamabad, Pakistan. Since, FUUAST being Government University and having relatively less facilities as compared to Bahria University, most of the students of BBA were of the conservative consent to take admission in some other private university in order to have more grooming and skill development due to overall big group collective consent. Their parents were also ready to pay two to three times more fee for MBA since it comprised of not more than one and half year. Therefore, a collectivity in decision had been developed to get higher education from another institution. Therefore, the students of FUUAST were found less loyal to FUUAST. Although recent efforts which were illustrated by the students during their interviews that now a much focus on the improvement of quality and lecture style of faculty has changed so the shift in perception had been developing to continue the same university to get education of MBA in FUUAST Islamabad.

Limitations and future study

The research conducted in two universities of Islamabad only. Future study on same themes can be done in other universities of Pakistan in provincial capitals like Lahore, Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar. Moreover, other aspects of culture like hierarchy versus egalitarianism, mastery versus harmony and brand recognition may be studied. Further research may include other methods such as case study, observation, and triangulation to expand the scope of study.

Theoretical and practical implications

The current research adds to the generalizability of cultural theory of Schwartz and its effects on brand management. The current research provides a blend of cultural theory and brand equity theory with the emergence of five basic themes of blend of autonomy-conservatism, brand image and awareness based loyalty, bond (association) based branding, active passions, hobby, and loyalty.

Practitioners and managers may follow apply the themes of autonomy-conservatism, brand image and awareness based loyalty, bond (association)

based branding, active passions, hobby, and to collectively form customer loyalty in their organizations.

Conclusion

The current research concludes that cultural has an effect on the relation of brand awareness, brand image, and customer loyalty. In the same vein, conservatism influences the relation of brand awareness, brand image, and student loyalty in Pakistan. Themes blend of autonomy-conservatism, brand image and awareness based loyalty, and loyalty found important. Similarly, three new themes bond (association) based branding, active passions, and hobby emerged through current research. The current research provided a deep insight about cultural theory and brand theory with utilization of phenomenological approach as qualitative research method. Future studies may be conducted on themes blend of autonomy-conservatism, brand image and awareness based loyalty, bond (association) based branding, active passions, hobby, and loyalty using mixed methods triangulation approach.

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