

# Increasing Customer Brand Loyalty for Hospitality Organizations Practicing Sustainable Marketing: A Case Study of Café Javas, Uganda

Dr. Florence Muheebwa Prescah<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Uganda Martyrs University, Latitude:0.003611; Longitude:32.014444, Nkozi, Uganda

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\*Corresponding author: Dr. Florence Muheebwa Prescah

Uganda Martyrs University, Latitude:0.003611; Longitude:32.014444, Nkozi, Uganda

## Abstract

## Original Research Article

The purpose of this research is to discover the effect of sustainable marketing of hospitality services on consumers' attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty. Additionally, this research also aims to discover the mediating effect of brand trust and brand affect on this relationship. A combination of descriptive and causal research was used, for which data was collected from 582 respondents and processed using structural equation modeling to establish multivariate relationships. The process method was used to approximate mediation effects. A reasonably valuable insight that arose is the significant role that brand trust and brand affect play in engendering attitudinal and behavioral brand loyalty among consumers, for hospitality organizations adopting sustainable marketing practices. Findings revealed that sustainable marketing practices result in enhanced brand trust, which further translates into higher levels of brand affect, thereby leading to attitudinal brand loyalty and further resulting in behavioral brand loyalty. This study also highlights the importance of brand affect in developing enduring behavioral brand loyalty. Research limitations/implications – Consumers today are changing their consumption habits, preferring to satisfy ideological and symbolic needs rather than just rational needs. So, hospitality marketers practicing sustainable marketing should aim to leverage brand trust and brand affect to ensure lasting behavioral brand loyalty. The examination of the effect of sustainable marketing practices on brand-related variables in hospitality organizations has contributed to a better understanding of the mechanism that underlines the operation of emotion-based enduring loyalty. The vast majority of studies that provided insights about sustainable marketing practices and consumer behavior thereof were dominated by European and American perspectives and very few studies exist with a focus on developing economies such as Uganda.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Marketing, Attitudinal Brand Loyalty, Behavioral Brand Loyalty, Brand Trust and Brand Affect.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing stimulates economic development and promotes the living standards of people (Rangaswamy *et al.*, 2020; Borland and Paliwoda, 2011). Yet, owing to its intense profit-oriented nature of operation, marketing has been severely criticized for some time now. Critics have even termed marketers as “sightless psychopaths of market forces, gripped in the thrall of market capitalism with no overall vision of what they are trying to achieve” (Borland and Paliwoda, 2011). Over the years, marketing has been criticized for using devious methods to fuel consumers' desires by propelling them toward profligate consumption, harming consumers by charging unnaturally high prices and by engendering “pester power.” In addition to all the criticisms heaped on marketing, it has also been accused of causing environmental degradation, trivializing and destruction of culture and social environment (Kotler and

Armstrong, 2011). Criticisms notwithstanding, there is evidence of firms increasingly adopting sustainable marketing practices over the years (Kemper and Ballantine, 2019; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2021), leading to “radical changes in the way we live, produce, market and consume” (Peattie, 2001). A strong advocate of sustainability in business has been Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever (Stern, 2011) when he states that: [. . .] our activities are to double our business, but to do that while reducing our environmental impact and footprint on the road to well-being doesn't go via reduced consumption. It has to be done via more responsible consumption. There is evidence of substantial research which indicates that there exists the potential for marketers to practise sustainable marketing (Bellini *et al.*, 2021; Paulsson and Ursing, 2021) and thus influence a sustainable lifestyle (Peattie and Peattie, 2009; Chou *et al.*, 2020; Ha *et al.*, 2021). There exists evidence indicating an increase in

consumer's acknowledgement for sustainability issues (Kim *et al.*, 2015), enhanced consumer awareness toward the notion that "individual consumption fosters organizational production, creating an ongoing cycle of appetite, simultaneously voracious and insatiable" (Joy *et al.*, 2012). Further, as per studies by Wang and Wu (2016) and Kanchanapibul *et al.*, (2014), sustainable consumption is correlated more with emotion than with cognition. Consistent with this finding, there exist a number of studies which focus on adoption of sustainable consumption behavior following an emotional decision (Meneses, 2010; Harth *et al.*, 2013; Pelozo *et al.*, 2013; Antonetti and Maklan, 2014). Keeping in mind the importance of sustainable marketing, studies have endeavored to understand how consumers embrace the sustainability practices of firms (Guzman Rincon *et al.*, 2021). There exists limited empirical evidence of environmentally responsible products motivating and influencing consumers' buying behavior and providing plethora of opportunities for marketers (Hesse *et al.*, 2022; Kumar and Sadarangani, 2018). Hence, there lies the imperative for scholars to understand what motivates consumers to purchase and continue being loyal to brands of firms practising sustainable marketing (Buerke *et al.*, 2017; Cheng, 2020). The overarching question that arises here is, will consumers prefer being loyal to brands practising sustainable marketing? A perpetual concern of marketers has been to sustain loyalty of customers and to understand the sources of the same (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, despite the universal faith in the advantages of loyalty, still the scope for defining and measuring loyalty, particularly for hospitality services is limited (Trivedi, 2018). Research over the years has identified brand trust and brand affect as antecedents of brand loyalty (Setyawan and Kussudiyarsana, 2015; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Sondoh *et al.*, 2007) which have been extensively studied but not for brands practising sustainable marketing. Examining the impact of sustainable marketing within these dimensions demonstrates the importance of considering specific enabling factors (brand trust, brand affect, attitudinal loyalty) to enhance the predictive power of the basic model and achieve the desired outcomes (i.e. behavioral loyalty). Additionally, this study considers attitudinal loyalty as an antecedent of behavioral loyalty. It is proposed on the assumption that such consumers are committed toward the brand (Panda *et al.*, 2020), in addition to being trustworthy and affectionate. The study highlights the significance of the emotional aspect and how it is affected by sustainable marketing practices. Studies show that trust is a primary consideration while assessing product information pertaining to sustainable practices to be true and fair (Cooley, 2021). Activities creating a sense of trust help in engendering a positive attitude toward a brand (Kong *et al.*, 2021). These findings set the tone for the present study. The model is developed using cognitive affective behavior model (C-A-B) to examine the impact of firms' sustainable marketing practices on consumers' brand loyalty. The C-A-B model is essential to derive a series of perceptual

attitudes that can recognize consumers' decision-making and marketing intention (Gursoy *et al.*, 2019). Research lacks a holistic framework investigating how brand loyalty can be engendered for sustainable products and this study is an attempt in that direction. We contribute to the existing body of knowledge by pursuing a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the determinants of the path that lead from sustainable marketing practices of firms to brand loyalty, by studying the variables that mediate the said relationship. Thus, the present research study is a cogent effort to explore the impact of sustainable marketing practices of firms on consumers' brand loyalty, including attitudinal and behavioral components. Although studies have focused on how sustainable marketing practices leads to loyalty (Noh and Johnson, 2019; Tanveer *et al.*, 2021), a vacuum remains to explore the role of emotions in the behavior of consumer. With a focus on exploring the role of brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty, the study lays down the path from sustainability to behavioral loyalty.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

### 2.1 Sustainable marketing practices

A prevailing issue commanding substantial interest today is sustainability (Peterson *et al.*, 2021; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2021). In 2002, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development defined sustainability as "the consumption of goods and services that meet basic needs and quality of life without jeopardizing the needs of future generations." In a nutshell, sustainable marketing practices essentially focus on three facets of sustainable development including "economic," "social" and "environmental" (Martin and Schouten, 2014; Sun *et al.*, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2015) and include activities which aim to balance the goals for the economy, environment and society for long-term development (Sun *et al.*, 2014). These three dimensions were subsequently refined to reflect a firm's marketing efforts where the environmental dimension prescribed that firms establish an eco-friendly image and exhibit efforts to ensure environmental protection (Kim *et al.*, 2015; Loebler, 2017), the economic dimension required firms to achieve long- and short-term goals to enhance financial performance by acquiring a competitive edge and by distributing profits fairly (Slawinsk and Bansal, 2015). The social dimension encouraged firms to enhance social and human well-being (Kim *et al.*, 2015; Shin and Thai, 2015; Sun *et al.*, 2016). Hence, sustainable marketing encompasses enduring practices adopted by the organizations which include caring for the environment, not only for the current generation but also for future generations and committed to ensuring a better quality of life for all. There is evidence of increasing resentment toward unsustainable marketing practices (Cohen, 2011) and this led to several studies being conducted globally which indicate that customers are increasingly inclined to prefer brands that are environmentally and socially

responsible and thus sustainable (Gordon *et al.*, 2011; Kumar *et al.*, 2020). The important role that marketing plays in economic development around the world cannot be denied (Fisk, 2001), and if harnessed responsibly with sustainable marketing activities (Dang *et al.*, 2020), can encourage consumers to reuse, recycle products, eat healthy and save energy. There is no denying that customers do aspire for a better quality of life which does not result in environmental degradation and are keen to leave a better environment for future generations (Kessous *et al.*, 2016; Quoquab *et al.*, 2019). There exists extant literature on consumers' preference for products with sustainability attributes, only if its other more important elements like quality and taste are present and meet customer expectations (Jägel *et al.*, 2012; Lim *et al.*, 2014). Thus, marketing may not necessarily be an antithesis to sustainability, but to effectively use it as a vehicle for adopting sustainable practices, there is an urgent need to determine how sustainability and marketing can work in harmony to promote behavioral changes (Rettie *et al.*, 2012; Thogersen and Zhou, 2012). A significant behavioral change that could positively impact firms' adopting sustainable marketing is to foster enduring brand loyalty for sustainable products (Lai *et al.*, 2019).

## 2.2 Brand loyalty

The existential imperative of brand loyalty has been recognized in marketing literature for more than five decades now (Howard and Sheth, 1969). As defined by Oliver (1999): [ . . . ] brand loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repurchase a preferred product or service consistently in the future, resulting in repetitive behavior with situational influences and competitive marketing moves having little or no influence. The concept of brand loyalty is complex in nature as it encompasses cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions (Dapena-Baron *et al.*, 2020). Attitudinal loyalty for a brand result in behavioral loyalty for the same (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007). Enduring brand loyalty endows firms with customers having a high lifetime value, the leverage to avail of marketing advantages including reduced marketing costs, signing on more new customers and greater trade dominance (Aaker, 1991, 1996). Some other significant advantages that customer loyalty bestows upon brands include favorable word of mouth (Dick and Basu, 1994) and a higher resistance among loyal customers to competitor strategies (Reichheld and Schefter, 2001). There is increasing evidence of brand loyal customers willing to pay more for the said brand, because they perceive some unique value as compared to that being offered by a competing brand (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978). There is certainly an affirmation of changing consumer preferences toward quality products consistent with environmental (Shanahan *et al.*, 2019) and societal values (Chang and Fong, 2010; Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). In addition, research further validates a significant correlation between sustainability attitudes and brand loyalty (Kuchinka *et al.*, 2018). Hence, a brand

that adopts sustainable marketing practices is more likely to enjoy a higher loyalty quotient than other brands (Mandhachitara and Poolthong, 2011; Molinillo *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1. Sustainable marketing practices significantly impact behavioral brand loyalty of customers.
- H2. Sustainable marketing practices significantly impact attitudinal brand loyalty of customers.
- H3. Attitudinal brand loyalty significantly impacts behavioral brand loyalty of customers.

## 2.3 Brand trust

According to Hiscock (2001), the true goal of marketing is to build an emotional connection between the customer and the brand, a relationship that is initiated and further strengthened by trust. Companies focus a great deal of their efforts in developing brand trust, which imparts brands with a sustainable competitive advantage, thus boosting the overall performance of the organization in the long run (Ha, 2004). Morgan and Hunt (1994) described trust as a concept that occurs whenever one entity has conviction in the reliability and integrity of another entity and further stated in their findings that trust eventually leads to commitment and loyalty. Johnson and Grayson (2005) characterized trust as "an emotional bond among participants in the relationship" and further elaborated these emotional bonds deepen, trust may extend beyond what is defensible by available knowledge. Emotional bonds between the truster and trustee enable the making of this emotional investment and thus showing confidence in the intrinsic value of the reciprocal relationships. This confidence is reflected in the customer's repurchase intention that ultimately results in brand loyalty (Delgado-Ballester *et al.*, 2003; Chinomona, 2016; Gupta *et al.*, 2017). Johnson-George and Swap (1982) describe this psychological state as a trustee's benevolence toward the truster. Brand trust is crucial for a long-term sustainable consumer brand relationship, according to the "commitment-trust theory" of Morgan and Hunt (1994). Inherently, consumers aim to mitigate the risks implicit in a brand by searching for a reliable brand to buy (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 1999). Hence, brand trust is directly linked to both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). The growth of a brand using sustainable marketing practices has a positive impact on brand trust (Barnes, 2011). In one study, 53% of customers surveyed suggest that every brand has a responsibility to be involved genuinely in a social issue, not merely for brand promotion (Carter, 2021). An organization's sustainable marketing practices foster brand trust; in return, an organization gains competitive advantages based on brand loyalty (Hesse *et al.*, 2022; Jung *et al.*, 2020). Brand trust acts as a mediating variable between social responsibility and brand loyalty and has a direct relationship with brand loyalty (Khan and Fatma, 2019). Thus, the study posits that:

H4. Sustainable marketing practices of organizations have a significant impact on brand trust.

H5. Brand trust significantly impacts behavioral brand loyalty.

#### 2.4 Brand affect

Affective or emotional responses of consumers to brands are of primary interest to marketers. The study of brand affect and its role in marketing has experienced considerable growth since the early 1980s (Erevelles, 1998; Agarwal and Malhotra, 2005). Brand affect is “a brand’s potential to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its use” (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Several studies have propounded the notion that affect acts as a primary predictor of the behavior of consumers (Erevelles, 1998). The “affect referral hypothesis” elucidates that while choosing between brands, often, consumers do not go through a process whereby they necessarily always assess the attributes of the brand to make a choice, instead they choose that brand for which their retrieved affect is positive (Wright, 1975). Brand affect is a significant determinant of behavioral and attitudinal loyalty, and brands that make consumers happy and joyful lead to the formation of strong and enduring behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Matzler *et al.*, 2007). Thus, brand affect plays a significant role in ensuring brand loyalty (Soedarto *et al.*, 2019; Kefi and Maar, 2020; Jahangir *et al.*, 2009; Taylor *et al.*, 2004). Customer satisfaction and brand reputation which constitute brand affect are impacted by the social responsibility activities of an organization (Crespo and del Bosque, 2005), especially sustainable marketing practices. The customer is likely to develop emotional feelings for a brand that demonstrates responsibility toward the environment and society (Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Hence, marketers must exhibit sustainable behavior (Oliveira and Sullivan, 2015), as this acts as a foundation stone for a loyal customer base. Based upon these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6. Sustainable marketing practices of organizations have a significant impact on brand affect of consumers.

H8. Brand affect leads to behavioral brand loyalty.

H9. Brand affect leads to attitudinal brand loyalty.

Given the fact that brand affect is much more impulsive, instantaneous and realized with far less evaluation, trust toward the brand encompasses a well-considered and a well-designed process (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Although these two concepts are closely related to each other, brand trust has been among the key variables influencing brand affect (Matzler *et al.*, 2007). Product attributes including quality and uniqueness influence the relationship between brand trust and brand affect (Matzler *et al.*, 2007) and there exists a positive relationship between the two variables (Gecti and Zengin, 2013). In summary, brand trust significantly and positively impacts brand affect (Esch *et*

*al.*, 2006; Zboja and Voorhee, 2006; Ahmad Mabkhot and Shaari, 2017). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7. Brand trust leads to brand affect.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research model

This section explains the framework of the study based on CAB model, as shown in Figure 1. It attempts to explore the relationship between brands practising sustainable marketing and behavioral loyalty, with the mediating effect of brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty. The research model in Figure 1 depicts the serial mediation relationship in which sustainable marketing is modeled as impacting behavioral loyalty through nine pathways. Arrows in the figure display the paths of the tested model.

The present research incorporates a response hierarchical model, namely, “cognitive-affect-behavior” model (Holbrook, 1986) to understand the path taken by sustainable marketing resulting in behavioral brand loyalty. According to the model, consumer decision-making begins with “cognition,” which encompasses beliefs, opinions, perceptions and attitudes that individual has about a given brand that practises sustainable marketing. It is an essential cognitive component as a sustainably conscious customer would prefer to buy products from a brand whose attitude, beliefs and values are toward preserving the environment (Zhang *et al.*, 2021).

This eventually leads to a better quality of life for all. This is followed by “affect,” which refers to the emotions or feelings that consumers develop for a particular brand. Brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty all justify the “affective” component in understanding consumers’ decision-making behavior toward sustainable products as these variables describe the hospitality organization’s relationship with its consumers based on emotions, feelings, trust, affection and preference. Previous literature also supported that trust has an affective component (McAllister, 1995; Morrow *et al.*, 2004; Johnson and Grayson, 2005; Ranganathan *et al.*, 2013; Punyatoya, 2018).

These two steps result in “behavior,” which is generally the actual action (Babin and Harris, 2010; Hu and Tsai, 2009; Solomon, 2011) and is manifested as behavioral loyalty. Oliver’s (1999) findings supported this, indicating that the cognitive and affective aspects result in a commitment toward the brand. Extant literature on sustainable marketing has elaborated upon on how anticipated emotions (affect) are intimately linked to one’s pro-sustainable decision-making and behavior (Jung *et al.*, 2020; Oe and Yamaoka, 2022; Kumar *et al.*, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2013). In a nutshell, cognition impacts affect which, in turn, leads to behavior. Thus, emotion mediates the relationship between cognition and behavior. The present study

follows the standardized format of CAB, based on the suggestions given by Liu *et al.*, (2017): The above hierarchy has been used in consumer behavior research, including studies pertaining to loyalty. Previous studies which investigated the effect of cognitive and affective

elements on sustainable consumption supported that feelings influenced consumers more than attitudes. Therefore, in this study cognition leads to affect, with the latter impacting behavior.

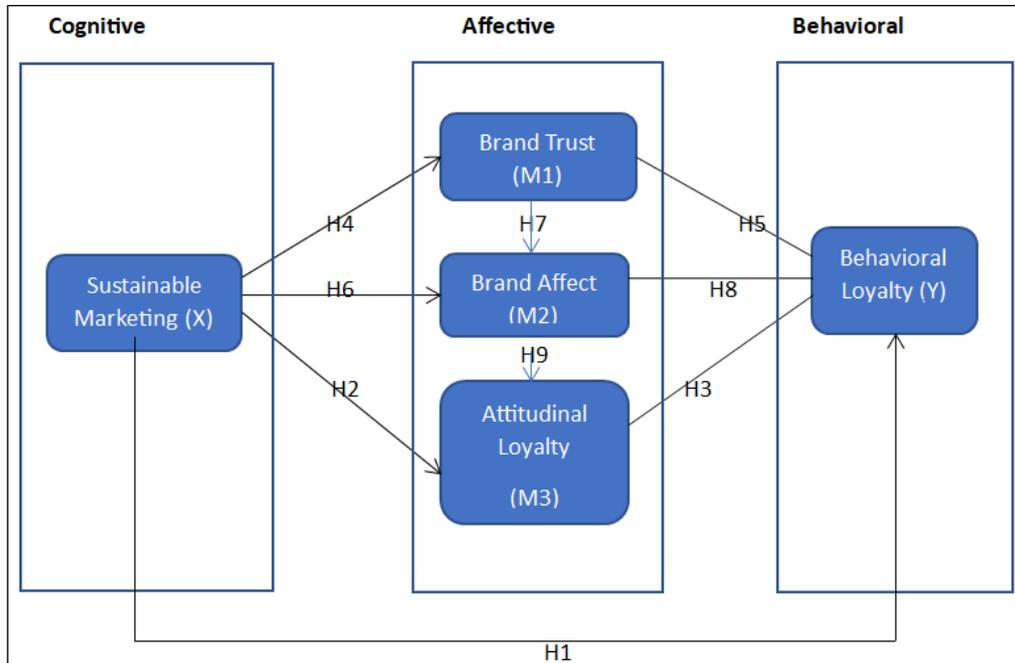


Figure 1: Research Model

3.2 Data collection and measurement statements

Sustainable marketing has been explored extensively in the developed economies and hence there exists a need for similar studies in emerging economies like Uganda as it is one of the most rapidly expanding economies with lucrative growth markets (Fatma *et al.*, 2016; Ertz *et al.*, 2016; Leonidou *et al.*, 2011; Szabo and Webster, 2020). The survey method was used to collect data from the respondents who included consumers of personal care products. The personal care market in Uganda is characterized by frequent sales promotion, close price bands and high-decibel advertising and offers consumers a plethora of choice (Kataria and Saini, 2019). Respondents who indicated that they had purchased personal care products in the preceding month were identified as potential respondents for the study. Prior to the collection of data, a pilot test was conducted with 60 respondents to identify specific personal care products to be used for the study. Respondents were asked to recall their latest purchase of a personal care product and thereafter respond to the nine-item inventory suggested by Zaichkowsky (1994). The mean score of product categories varied from 1 to 6.6 on a seven-point differential scale. Personal care products like toothpaste, bathing soap, shampoo and hair oil categories had a mean score of less than 3 and were thus identified for this study. These products have been in the Indian market for decades and a study of the same would ensure that customers appreciate and discriminate between the various brands of personal care products because of easy

familiarity and thereby able to express their loyalty based on their concern for sustainable marketing practices of firms. The reliability value for a pretest was 0.853, which was higher than the prescribed limit of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1982) and thus considered acceptable. Data was collected using the mall intercept method (Bush and Hair, 1985). This method was found suitable for various reasons including accessibility, face-to-face interaction, budget constraint and quality response. The survey was conducted in four Indian cities, namely, Delhi, Noida, Gurugram and Ghaziabad, with a population of 30 million, 2 million, 1 million and 8 million, respectively. The questionnaires were circulated in the popular malls and shopping centers where average shopper footfall is more than 5,000 per day. The sample population for the proposed investigation was Café Javas consumers, familiar with the chosen hospitality who had made buying decisions for the same in the recent past. Each respondent was asked to fill up the questionnaire taking the recent product and brand purchase into consideration. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 582 questionnaires, that is, 83.14% responses were found to be fit for further analysis. Table 1 provides a detailed description of the respondents.

The questionnaire was designed using standardized measurement scales. The constructs and their measurement instruments used in this study were adapted from their original sources and modified according to the objectives of the study. The research

items of each construct were adapted from previous studies, where items were derived from Quoquab *et al.*, (2019) for sustainable marketing, Chaudhari and Holbrook (2001) for brand loyalty and Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, (2002) for brand trust.

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Data was analyzed for assessment of psychometric properties using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), followed by Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS method for mediation analysis. SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 20.0 were used to analyze the data.

#### 4.1 Measurement model evaluation

As a single respondent fills out the data for all the constructs, it may result in biasness in the data (Rodríguez-Pinto *et al.*, 2011). For addressing this statistical anomaly, Harman single factor test, accompanied by CFA, was used for assessing the biasness in the data (Craighead *et al.*, 2011). The variance explained by a single factor accounted for 34.746% (less than 50%), thus ensuring that data is bias free. The chi-square difference is also significant and other fit indices differences are also more than the cut-off difference criterion of 0.001 (Byrne, 2013).

**Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents (N=582)**

Descriptors	(%)
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	52
Male	49
<b>Employment status</b>	
Paid employment	63
Self-employed	37
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married	57
Unmarried	43
<b>Age group</b>	
22-35	57
36-49	33
Above 49	10
<b>Education</b>	
Undergraduate	21
Graduate	36
Postgraduate	37
Other	6

Thus, it is concluded that the data is free from any bias.

Research items are subject to a widely used validation method to determine their validity, reliability and unidimensionality (Hayes, 2012). The initial measurement model is an adequate fit with chi-square test value ( $\chi^2 = 1113.886$  with  $df = 474$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.35$ ) which is less than the threshold limit of 4 (Hair *et al.*, 2012). The “goodness of fit” [goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.891, incremental fit index = 0.942, normed fit index = 0.966, comparative fit index = 0.966] and “badness of fit” indices [root mean square residual = 0.090, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.048] are also well within the range. It is therefore inferred that the data fits well with the model. Hence, the psychometric properties of the model are suitable for interpretation.

The value of Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is higher than threshold limit of 0.70 (Table 2) (Hair *et al.*, 2012). The composite reliabilities and average variance explained (AVE) show values above the thresholds of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Table 2) (Hair *et al.*, 2012). The coefficients for all the constructs exhibit sufficient convergent validity. A comparison of shared variance among factors with square root of average variance extracted of each construct is required for ensuring discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), The square root of average variance explained (diagonal values) must be more than the correlation between the constructs (nondiagonal values) (Kesharwani and Tiwari, 2011).

**Table 2: Pairwise construct comparison measurement index (discriminant validity)**

Constructs	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	CR	AVE	QL	AL	BL	E	FG	BA
BT	5.30	1.23	0.946	0.947	0.782	-	-	-	-	-	-
QL	5.20	1.33	0.950	0.950	0.761	0.872	-	-	-	-	-
AL	5.17	1.41	0.955	0.956	0.844	0.299	0.840	-	-	-	-
BL	4.95	1.58	0.960	0.961	0.830	0.305	0.444	0.911	-	-	-
E	5.15	1.34	0.934	0.935	0.706	0.709	0.183	0.164	0.884	-	-
FG	5.31	1.45	0.872	0.873	0.632	0.599	0.350	0.228	0.562	0.919	-
BA	4.34	1.76	0.889	0.895	0.742	0.079	0.292	0.349	0.066	0.036	0.861

The distinctiveness of all seven latent variables is as indicated in Table 2. Finally, we measured their skewness and kurtosis to test the distribution of items. The skewness and kurtosis value range from -0.080 to -1.459 and -1.396 to 1.023, respectively (West *et al.*, 1995) indicating that all the items have normal distribution.

**4.2 Structural model**

**4.2.1 Main effects.**

The structural model was tested after estimation of psychometric properties. The hypothesized structural key model statistics – CMIN – (x 2)=1179.830, df=483, x 2/df = 2.443, goodness of fit indices GFI = 0.886, adjusted goodness of fit index =0.867) and badness of fit indices (standardized root mean square residual = 0.138, RMSEA =0.049) are significant based on their standard values for acceptance (Hair *et al.*, 2012). Empirical evidence supports all hypothesized relationships, except H6 as shown in Table 3. The empirical evidence does not support the relationship between sustainable marketing practices and brand affect (H6; b = 0.028, p = 0.678), but brand trust significantly impacts brand affect (H7; b = 0.519, p > 0.001). This implies that only when the brand is able to meet customer’s expectations, it leads to a sense of confidence in them. This, in turn, may influence their feelings like happiness, pleasure and joy, toward the brand (Matzler *et al.*, 2007). Thus, we can infer that brand trust leads to brand affect in the consumer over a

period of time (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Sung and Kim, 2010). Risk perception in the event of purchasing personal care products is rare, hence developing brand affect may take some time (Mishra *et al.*, 2016). Sustainable marketing practices may not directly influence brand affect (H6), but they do influence brand affect through brand trust in an indirect fashion (H4; b = 0.481, p > 0.001; H7; b = 0.519, p > 0.001), which further impacts attitudinal and behavioral loyalty in that order (H9; b = 0.511, p > 0.001; H3; b = 0.692, p > 0.001) (Table 3). These significant path coefficients depict that sustainable marketing practices indirectly influence brand loyalty through brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty, in that order. The results of the mediations are as indicated in Figure 2 below.

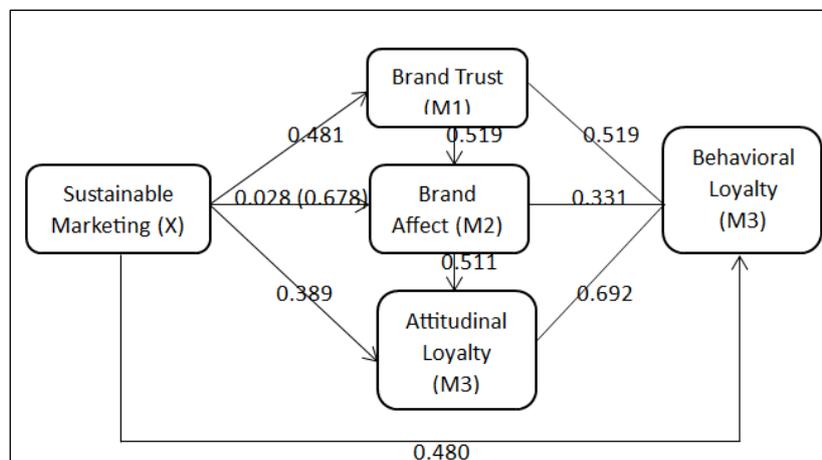
**4.2.2 Mediation effects**

Preacher and Hayes’ (2004) analytical approach was used to test the indirect effect of sustainable marketing on behavioral loyalty mediated by brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty (mediators). The bootstrapping procedure used “PROCESS Marco 2.16.2” (Hayes, 2017) in SPSS 23.0. Hayes’ (2013) method was adopted because of its technical superiority over other methods such as that of Baron and Kenny (1986) and Sobel’s (1982) test (Van Jaarsveld *et al.*, 2010). This method allows the indirect effect of each mediator to be isolated.

**Table 3: Result of hypotheses testing**

S/N	Relationships	Path estimates	t-statistics	Outcome
H1	SM → BL	0.480***	8.521	Supported
H2	SM → AL	0.389***	8.887	Supported
H3	AL → BL	0.692***	15.519	Supported
H4	SM → BT	0.481***	9.700	Supported
H5	BT → BL	0.519***	121.647	Supported
H6	SM → BA	0.028(0.678)	0.415	Not Supported
H7	BT → BA	0.519***	17.797	Supported
H8	BA → BL	0.331***	9.598	Supported
H9	BA → AL	0.511***	9.225	Supported

Note: \*\*\*p > 0.001



**Figure 2: Hypotheses results**

Further, this approach enables examination of “the indirect effect passing through all these mediators in a series” (Van Jaarsveld *et al.*, 2010). Hayes’ mediation approach “directly tests the indirect effect between the independent and the dependent variables through the mediator via a bootstrapping procedure, addressing some weaknesses associated with the Sobel test” (Van Jaarsveld *et al.*, 2010; Edwards and Lambert, 2007). The bootstrap resampling method has less assumptions than the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach, gives tests of significance in small samples and is widely accepted among researchers (Gardner *et al.*, 2011).

Table 4 summarizes the result. Based on 5,000 subsamples and 582 cases, the findings indicate that 95% confidence intervals do not contain zero for any indirect effect, supporting the proposed design (Tergrag *et al.*, 2016). Table 4 enumerates the results of indirect effect

of sustainable marketing on brand loyalty through brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty in serial, with brand trust and affect as influencing attitudinal loyalty, which further impacts behavioral loyalty. As depicted in Table 4, this indirect effect, that is, SM→BT→BA→AL→BL (0.0129), is positive because the confidence interval is above zero (0.0060–0.0222). Brand trust leads to higher brand affect (0.4436) and this enhanced brand affect results in higher attitudinal loyalty (0.1464), which further results in enhanced behavioral loyalty (0.4145) (Table 5). These findings support the serial hypothesis. In summary, the findings from the serial mediation analysis show that sustainable marketing practices result in enhanced brand trust, which in turn is associated with higher levels of brand affect for personal care products, leading to attitudinal loyalty, thereby resulting in behavioral or purchase loyalty.

**Table 4: Indirect effect**

Indirect effect	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
SM→BT→BL	0.0791	0.0304	0.0227	0.1417
SM→AL→BL	0.0786	0.0230	0.0365	0.1266
SM→BT→BA→BL	0.0392	0.0105	0.0207	0.0607
SM→BT→AL→BL	0.0811	0.0194	0.0471	0.1228
SM→BA→AL→BL	-0.0113	0.0054	-0.0237	-0.0019
SM→BT→BA→AL→BL	0.0129	0.0041	0.0060	0.0222
Total effect	0.4796	0.0563	0.3690	0.5902
Direct effect	0.2340	0.0525	0.1310	0.3370
Total indirect effect	0.2456	0.0436	0.1609	0.3315

**Table 5: Regression coefficients, standard errors and model summary information for the serial multiple mediator model**

Antecedents	Coefficient	M1(BT) SE	p-value	Coefficient	M2(BA) SE	p-value	Coefficient	M3(AL) SE	p-value	Coefficient	Y(BL) SE	p-value
SM (X)	0.4807	0.0496	<0.001	-0.1855	0.0680	0.066	0.1895	0.0390	<0.001	0.2340	0.0525	<0.001
M1 (BT)	-	-	-	-0.4436	0.0528	<0.001	0.4073	0.0319	<0.001	0.1646	0.0476	<0.001
M2 (BA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1464	0.0237	<0.001	0.1836	0.0322	<0.001
M3 (AL)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4145	0.0548	<0.001
Constant	2.8435	0.2471	<0.001	2.9513	0.3485	<0.001	1.6341	0.2106	<0.001	-0.0292	0.2915	0.9204
		R <sup>2</sup> =0.1394 F(1,580)=93.93, p=<0.001			R <sup>2</sup> =0.1087 F(2,579)=35.3230, p=<0.001			R <sup>2</sup> =0.4097 F(3,578)=133.7452, p=<0.001			R <sup>2</sup> =0.3741 F(4,577)=86.22, p=<0.001	

**Notes:** SM(X)=sustainablemarketing; BT=brandtrust(M1); BA=brandaffect(M2); AL=attitudinalloyalty(M3); BL=behavioralloyalty (Y)

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand the loyalty that consumers exhibit toward hospitality organizations practicing sustainable marketing by exploring the path that may lead to enduring attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. To empirically validate the proposed conceptual model, we tested nine hypotheses, out of which eight were supported. H6, which explores the relationship between sustainable marketing and brand affect, is not supported. The possible explanation for this can be attributed to the fact that sustainable marketing practices need to be understood at a cognitive level first. Cognition results in emotion. Hospitality marketer needs to create awareness and impart knowledge to the customer to generate an affective response. The Colgate Super Bowl 2016 commercial “Every Drop Counts,” for example, urge audiences to turn off the taps while brushing to save massive amounts of water annually is an influential and effective 30-s video. The said example also portrays the dominant role cognitive abilities play in engendering affection or emotions. Thus, affection is the result of a close and favorable relationship with the brand. It is not a spontaneous process, rather a well-thought out mechanism based on brand trust that is carefully nurtured over a period of time (Kataria *et al.*, 2021). H4, which explores the relationship of sustainable marketing with brand trust, and H7, which examines the relationship of brand trust with brand affect, are supported empirically.

This study further explores the mediating role of brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty in the relationship between sustainable marketing and behavioral loyalty. Brand trust strengthens the relationship between a brand and its consumers. A firm engaged in marketing sustainable products may conclude that brand affect is a function of brand trust, which can have a short-term (direct effect) as well as a long-term (chain effect) effect in shaping brand loyalty. Brand trust is a cognitive variable which evokes an emotional response. Trust in a brand is likely to make the customer develop an emotional connection with the said brand, which may further result in attitudinal loyalty and intention to purchase the brand.

The empirical findings support the relationship between sustainable marketing and behavioral loyalty and reinforce the notion that brand loyalty is a relational market-based resource from which sustainable resource-based competitive advantages will result. The same chain effect also gives an opportunity to the marketer to connect with customers via multiple touch points through their integrated marketing communication efforts.

The study paves the path for understanding the relationship between sustainable marketing and brand loyalty. We observed that hospitality organizations’

sustainable marketing practices foster behavioral brand loyalty, which is coherent with the findings of Lee (2014) and Kuchinka *et al.*, (2018), supporting organizations’ socially responsible marketing efforts in enhancing brand loyalty. The study also seeks to understand the path that firms practicing sustainable marketing adopt to achieve behavioral brand loyalty, which includes strengthening brand trust, developing brand affect and further establishing attitudinal loyalty for the said brand. Hoffman (2018) highlights the importance of sustainability when he states that “more than 90 percent of CEOs state that sustainability is important to their company’s success.”

The present research focuses on the emotional aspect of a person being a dominant factor in making him/her loyal toward a sustainable brand. No matter how innovative or technologically advanced a product is, it will all be in vain if the product is not able to generate a strong emotional response from the consumer (Lein, 2018). The study emphasizes the critical roles essayed by brand trust, brand affect and attitudinal loyalty, wherein trust in the brand results in the consumer developing an emotional connect with the brand, which further engenders attitudinal loyalty toward the brand, culminating in behavioral loyalty.

The findings of this study are in congruence with the study of Molinillo *et al.*, (2017) which concluded that brands practising sustainable marketing inspire trust. However, based on the empirical evidence of this study, we conclude that such brands are not likely to directly evoke emotional feelings in consumers. The sustainable marketing practices of firms lead to consumers first developing trust in the brand which then results in development of an emotional connect with the said brand.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

The present study outlines the path from sustainable marketing to brand loyalty. A few studies refer to sustainable marketing as an antecedent of loyalty (Jung *et al.*, 2020; Tanveer *et al.*, 2021). A majority of the modern-era consumer goods can hardly be considered unique or indispensable, which make it difficult for the consumer to distinguish them based on core functionality (Platania *et al.*, 2019). Thus, consumers make their purchase decisions based on hedonistic rather than mere rational needs (Magnano *et al.*, 2017), which is largely congruent with the findings of this study.

This study highlights the significance of emotion in building loyalty for sustainable brands. The presence of an emotional aspect in a brand makes it more attractive and at the same time helps to distinguish it from other brands (Roach, 2014). A consistent

repurchase behavior arises out of the strong emotional message communicated by the brand (Kim *et al.*, 2020). The core premise is straightforward and intuitive: emotions drive an individual to action (including purchase). Zaltman (2003) and Magnano *et al.*, (2017) summarized that just 5% of the purchase decisions contribute to rational and conscious mechanisms (Zaltman, 2003; Magnano *et al.*, 2017). The present research fills this void by identifying the emotional path to be followed by a sustainable brand to build and maintain a loyal customer base.

Attitude theory posits that behavior includes both cognitive and affective components (Kuo *et al.*, 2021). However, many studies investigating the impact of sustainable marketing practices on consumers' brand loyalty neglected affective aspects and instead emphasized solely on the cognitive aspect (Liu *et al.*, 2017; Bamberg and Moser, 2007; Chan and Lau, 2000; do Paço *et al.*, 2013; Kim and Choi, 2005; Mostafa, 2007; Pagiaslis and Krontalis, 2014).

The current study establishes that affective measures are more important than cognitive predispositions in promoting sustainable consumption behavior (Smith and Powlson, 2007). Based on the statistical findings, sustainable marketing practices, via affective components, are more strongly correlated with behavioral brand loyalty, with a further commitment to purchase sustainable products. Our findings also find support in literature by Kumar *et al.*, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2020; Lim, 2017 and Oe and Yamaoka, 2022.

The study concludes that sustainable marketing (cognitive attribute) does not directly impact brand affect (one of three affective attribute). However, the serial mediation path shows that if brand trust once developed will result in sustainable marketing practices impacting brand affect. Hence, for sustainable products, researchers may explore the role of brand trust in enhancing the relationship between cognitive learning and emotions, leading to a positive behavioral outcome (loyalty).

Beyond the stated theoretical implications, this study offers a number of implications for marketing practitioners who wish to practise sustainable marketing. Marketers must capitalize on the equity that sustainable marketing generates in creating the desired attitudinal and thereafter behavioral loyalty toward the brand. Consumers today are more favorably inclined toward brands driven by a social cause and sustainable practices by firms are being increasingly demanded by consumers in all markets (Cherian and Jacob, 2012). One way of exhibiting a brand's social, environmental and community consciousness is to be seen as a sustainable marketer (Grubor and Milovanov, 2017). Sustainability seeks to address a number of sensitive, intricate and significant issues about which consumers are concerned (Veldwijk, 2020). Therefore, to build a loyal customer base, brands should turn their attention toward

practising sustainable marketing. L'Oréal has emphasized on the sustainability issue by creating a "dedicated hub," encouraging their existing and potential consumers to browse through brand's upcoming or latest sustainability campaigns and initiatives (Earnest-Jones, 2019). *Ceteris paribus*, these initiatives would act as a differentiator and give firms practising sustainable marketing a competitive advantage (Beckford *et al.*, 2010). Marketers of personal care products who practice sustainable marketing and try to achieve brand loyalty by merely forging an emotional connect with consumers may not be successful. Such efforts would yield positive results only if brand trust and attitudinal brand loyalty are leveraged to impact behavioral brand loyalty. Marketers may adopt appropriate marketing communication strategies that augment trust in their target customers as trust has a strong and favorable impact on actual purchase. For example, brands can opt for certification or a label clearly visible on product's packing. This strategy helps in communicating the "eco-credentials" of the brand (Upton, 2016), which adds to the trust toward the company. Therefore, by triggering trust among potential customers, marketers may succeed in acquiring them, making existing customers buy frequently and convincing other potential customers. This approach would save time and financial resources of firms and be more enduring. Further, governments should develop sustainable policies such as providing marketing incentives to the manufacturers of sustainable products, encouraging the public to engage with such brands and buy sustainable products.

## 7. Limitations and scope for future research

This study has some limitations related to generalizability, despite its theoretical contributions and managerial implications. The present study is focused on only one product category, that is, hospitality services, and respondents were chosen from only one country (Uganda), resulting in context limitation, thus impeding generalizability of the findings to other product categories and other countries. In the future, researchers can validate the study for other product categories and do a comparative analysis by conducting a cross cultural study that would aid in generalizing results.

The present research highlights the sustainable "marketing" role in generating emotional response and loyalty from consumers. According to extant literature, emotion-driven sustainable consumption remains scarce in scholarship and thus demands further investigation. Different emotions like pride, guilt, anger and respect and their impact on affecting sustainable consumption choices can be further introspected for a comprehensive study.

Future research can reverse the role and explore how sustainable "consumption" generates positive emotional response amongst individuals consuming "environment friendly" products. Being a quantitative research, the findings are based on the data collected

from a close-ended questionnaire. Because no quantitative tool (e.g. questionnaire) can measure the latent or deep concerns of human beings, future research can incorporate qualitative aspect(s), especially in exploring the emotional response toward a sustainable brand or product.

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