

Exploring the Role of Brand Hate in Mediating the Impact of Deficit Value on Consumer Behaviors in the Apparel Industry

Muhammad Awas Khalid ^a Iftikhar Ahmad ^b Rida Tariq ^c Kamran Inayat ^d Muhammad Umair ^e

Abstract: In the dynamic context of contemporary branding, consumer–brand interactions have undergone substantial transformation. Recognizing the strategic relevance of this phenomenon, the present investigation aims to elucidate the impact of deficit value on consumer behaviors—specifically, brand switching, brand avoidance, brand retaliation, and complaining—while positioning brand hate as the focal mediating construct. Employing a quantitative, deductive methodological framework, the research targets the apparel sector of Pakistan. Data were garnered via a structured online survey, comprising a 30-item instrument, which was disseminated to participants through a convenience sampling technique. Out of 500 questionnaires distributed, 327 were returned, culminating in 301 valid responses that comprised the final sample. Analytical rigor was maintained through Structural Equation Modeling—Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) as executed within Smart PLS 4.0. The statistical inquiry confirmed all articulated hypotheses, thereby contributing refined understanding of the intricate mechanisms that govern consumer conduct. Interpretation of the hypothesis-testing outputs reveals that deficit value exerts a decisive influence on the four examined behaviors, with brand hate serving a crucial mediating function in each of the identified pathways. Awareness of deficit value’s negative influence on brand perception and resulting consumer actions empowers marketers to formulate counteractive strategies that preserve and enhance brand equity. Through careful analysis of these interrelated dynamics, practitioners can design interventions that diminish the probability of harmful consumer choices and promote enduring brand allegiance.

Keywords: Deficit Value, Consumer Behaviors, Brand Switching, Brand Avoidance, Brand Retaliation, Brand Hate, Complaining, Apparel Industry

Introduction

For practitioners, a precise mapping of the conditions that give rise to brand hate and that subsequently amplify its intensity is not merely advisable; it is essential. Organizations that arrive at such insight stand to mitigate the corresponding risks and, in some instances, to restructure the basis of brand loyalty itself. Abbas et al., (2023) found out that Consumer behavior creation and escalation are vital factors that are processed into four points from a deficit value that refers to the difference between a consumer’s perceived worth before buying to the expected worth of acquiring the service or product. These four consumer reactions encompassing actions such as brand switching, brand avoidance, brand retaliation, and expressing dissatisfaction, are of utmost importance. According to Xin & Lopez., (2023) the differences among the consumer’s perceived worth and acquired service or product encounter value development and predomination. Therefore, a difference in traditional value will affect the purchase. The fourth path, involving the predicted value of the product and the actual value, represents a critical incident that influences customer behaviors. Brand deficit reflects the consumer’s perception gap between his or her

^a Assistant Director ORIC, National College of Business Administration and Economics, Lahore, Multan Sub-Campus, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: awaishkhalid@ncbae.edu.pk

^b Visiting Lecturer, Department of Management Sciences, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES Islamabad, Multan Campus, Punjab, Pakistan.

^c Student, Department of Business Administration, National College of Business Administration and Economics, Lahore, Multan Sub-Campus, Punjab, Pakistan.

^d Student, Department of Business Administration, National College of Business Administration and Economics, Lahore, Multan Sub-Campus, Punjab, Pakistan.

^e PhD Scholar, Department of Business Administration, National College of Business Administration and Economics, Lahore, Multan Sub-Campus, Punjab, Pakistan.

expectation of using the brand and its experience (Roy et al., [2022](#)). A significant gap between expectation and concomitant experience can lead to the consumer's adverse consideration and feeling (Sharma Jain & Behl, [2022](#)). Thus, understanding the perception of consumers' relationships with the brand by Deficit value is vital to marketers seeking to create positive consumer experiences and avoid brand hate.

Brand hatred results in several responses including its behavior in the market. The relationship between consumer-brand brand hatred and switching behavior has various implications depending on the context of the consumer ([Attig et al., 2023](#)). It is important to note that brand hatred is not just one feeling but activates a domino effect affecting the path the brand will take in the market. The brand switching is more than a single transaction of purchase; rather, it is a complete shift in the purchasing intention of the consumer (Liao et al., [2023](#)). Brand hatred results in the loss of consumers due to the acquisition cost it takes to get new consumers that are substantially higher than retaining existing ones (Haase et al., [2022](#)). Brand avoidance is intended behavior by consumers to socially distance themselves from brands or their associated services, products, or communications (Liao et al., [2023](#)). That means the behavioral intention to avoid the brand as those emotional and direct experiences generate negative affect for the brand (Sabog et al., [2023](#)). Brand retaliation refers to the various ways in which disappointed customers show their dissatisfaction, such as negative word-of-mouth, scathing reviews on social media, or even coordinated boycotts (Noor et al., [2022](#)). When consumers perceive a brand's wrongdoing, they frequently feel an urge to express their grievances, and how they do so can have substantial repercussions for the brand (Woodside et al., [2023](#)).

Complaints can take many forms, each with its own set of implications. Firstly, many consumers frequently lodge direct complaints about the brand (Costa & Azevedo, [2023](#)). Reports to a consumer protection authority might prompt an investigation and legal action, with devastating consequences for the business. In a general sense, this underscores the importance of not only adhering to the existing industry norms but also taking part in open and honest business activities.

The topic of brand hate has been a significant subject of study in the dynamic field of consumer behavior. Currently, companies are actively working to build strong relationships with their consumers. In stark contrast to the conventional sentiment of loyalty, brand hate, an emerging and potent emotion, is gaining attention. The emotional reactions elicited by brands now play a pivotal role in shaping consumer-firm relationships and, even more so, in triggering consumer disengagement. Research is coalescing around the view that a cluster of phenomena—including adverse customer interactions, misleading promotional practices, unmet value propositions, persistent rumour cultures, antagonistic brand personas, and virulent negative word of mouth—can cumulatively cultivate what scholars term brand hate (Zhang et al., [2020](#)). Yet, a detailed and methodologically rigorous inquiry into the mechanics by which unmet value perceptions foster brand hate, as well as the subsequent, diverse ramifications of that hate, remains underdeveloped.

Literature Review

Unmet Value and Brand Hate

Grounded in consumer behaviour and marketing, the deficit value construct, more formally packaged as the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm, has been examined across a substantial body of empirical inquiry. Deficit value manifests as the subjective gap between the benchmarks consumers believe a product or service should satisfy and the actual performance they encounter. Brand hate might be conceptualized as a strong, emotion-driven negative reaction towards a particular brand, generating feelings of repulsion or abhorrence (Kucuk & Kucuk, [2019](#)). The review of this literature suggests the flowing hypothesis:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between Deficit Value and Brand Hate.

Brand Hate and Brand Switching

According to Attig et al., ([2023](#)) as well as Aziz & Rahman ([2022](#)) build their research on the fact that individuals often find it challenging to meet their expectations or personal culture when exposed to a given brand.

This creates a feeling of dissatisfaction and the need to explore new and existing possibilities. Although no factor can ensure the complete absence of such a trend, research by Husnain et al., (2022) shows that this is an important parameter for brand evaluation as switching the brand tends to impact the company's financial performance hence its sales and market share. It is an important aspect when measuring customer loyalty. If consumers switch brands, it can adversely impact a company's financial performance as well as its brand deterioration and market share (Kesse et al., 2021). Therefore, brand switching is a behavior that a company should avoid (Pinto & Brandão, 2021). The relationship between brand hate and brand switching is a common topic in consumer behavior and brand management. Brand hate is expressed through strong negative feelings and slights for a given brand and often results in brand replacement, a significant consumer response (Noor et al., 2022).

H₂: There is a significant relationship between Brand Hate and Brand Switching.

Brand Hate and Brand Avoidance

Brand avoidance is one of the adverse effects of brand hatred that, according to (Roy et al., 2022). refers to customers making a conscious choice to completely avoid or not to associate with the brand in any way. This literature review aims to closely examine the body of work that illustrates the relationship between these two concepts. Brand avoidance is an illustration of a negative outcome resulting from brand hate. It could involve refusing to purchase a product and avoiding it altogether (Fetscherin et al., 2023). Avoidant behaviors might include avoidance of searching using that brand's goods or services or avoiding clicking on that brand's advertising, agonized looking away from a brand's point of purchase, unsubscribing from its blog, or avoiding following the account on social media (Kuanr et al., 2022).

As Mostert & Naude (2022) suggested angry customers are lost opportunities for sales and opportunities to interact with potential and current consumers. It has an instantaneous impact on brand revenues and profitability. This diminish in engagement might have long-term ramifications if a brand finds it difficult to establish lasting relationships with consumers (Liao et al., 2023).

Brand avoidance affects not only the conduct of individual consumers but also the brand's market prevalence at a larger scale (Honarmand et al., 2020). As a result, the brand is often unable to reach and maintain its consumer base, which can result in a decline in its market share and a loss of its competitive edge (Sabog et al., 2023). In a competitive market with many alternatives, ineffective market interaction can place a brand behind rivals who are more flexible and consumer-focused

H₃: There is a significant relationship between Brand Hate and Brand Avoidance.

Brand Hate and Brand Retaliation

There are various consequences of brand hate, brand retaliation is one of them (Zhang et al., 2022). The current review examines relevant research. It is defined as any aggressive action taken against the brand with whom the customer had a bad experience in the past (Jabeen et al., 2022). As further described by Noor et al., (2022), an angry customer is not just a customer who will shout and yell out his feelings of hatred, criticism, and rage at the same store where he bought. This person will head straight toward the various online forums and portals where an immense number of potential and existing customers will see the angry words (Jacobs & Liebrecht, 2023). Brand retaliation comes in various ways. It may even reach a point when some angry customers will go to the extent of making financial sacrifices against the brand as revenge and cause unimaginable damage to the brand (Jabeen et al., 2022). These actions will all negatively impact the reputation the brand has built over the years, and the dislike will be seen in the public domain, influencing the opinions of prospective consumers and their willingness to interact with the brand (Jabeen et al., 2022).

H₄: There is a significant relationship between Brand Hate and Brand Retaliation.

Brand Hate and Complaining

Complaining Behavior makes communication possible between consumers and businesses when the customer is not satisfied they have negative feedback (Bayarassou et al., 2020). Critics' feedback can be

provided to the company, or online reviews in social media. Complaint is a symptom of dissatisfaction, an interesting topic in the field of brand management and consumer behavior research (Jacobs & Liebrecht, 2023). A large body of research suggests the existence of a robust relationship between brand hate and the propensity to voice concerns and complaints about the brand. Consumers who experience strong negative emotions and hatred towards a brand are likely to be driven by compensatory motivation to express their dissatisfaction in one method or another (Woodside et al., 2023). Specifically, complaints may take different forms, including direct communication with the brand to resolve issues, submission of complaints to consumer protection organizations, or sharing experiences on social media (Jacobs & Liebrecht, 2023).

In other words, consumers are motivated to complain using a variety of methods, including actuating channels depending on their feelings of anger (Zhang et al., 2020). Scientists have explored the phenomenon of brand animosity as an emotional state and how negative feelings motivate consumers to act, usually meant to blame the brand for its transgressions (Noor et al., 2022). Hence it can be hypothesized that

H₅: There is a significant relationship between Brand Hate and Complaining.

Brand Hate as a Mediator

Mediation between Deficit Value and Brand Avoidance

The deficit value is defined as a further value perceptual dividing expectation and the brand's real value offering (Guerra et al., 2023). It is a cause that instigates other adverse emotions in the customer and further results in brand hatred (Singh, 2023). When an individual perceives that there is less value in a brand, the shortage must be replenished to balance the success around the information available (Günaydin & Yıldız, 2021). This study precisely quantifies the relationship between the magnitude of the deficit value and the intensity of brand hatred while accurately predicting its possible consequences. Brand haters, as a result of the spawned deficit value, not only feel dissatisfied but also develop hostility. As described by Pinto & Brandão, (2021), brand avoidance occurs when a customer seeks other possibilities available on the market to avoid association with a specific brand and express discontent by representing another brand. Therefore, brand avoidance is a choice made by customers to cease any association, aversion, and engagement with a company's brand (Honarmand et al., 2020). Brand avoidance is a negative impact of brand hate.

The linkage between brand hate and brand avoidance has been a central area of interest in the field of consumer behavior and brand management (Sabog et al., 2023). Brand antipathy refers to the state of utter dislike that drives one to despise or hate a brand, and it is typically associated with consumers avoiding the brand (Jabeen et al., 2022). When hate is driven towards a brand, consumers will go out of their way to avoid the brand altogether. The intensity of the emotional reaction could include feelings of anger, disappointment, frustration, and, in the worst situation, disgust (Zhang et al., 2020). Avoiding the company or its products is meant to shield oneself from the negative encounters and feelings associated with it (Costa & Azevedo, 2023).

H₆: Brand Hate mediates the relationship between Deficit Value and Brand Avoidance.

Mediation between Deficit Value and Brand Retaliation

Brand hate can lead to several consequences, with brand retaliation being a notable one (Zhang et al., 2022). Brand Retaliation is a violent and structured hostile reaction by the customer towards a brand following bad experiences with the brand due to deep hatred of this brand (Noor et al., 2022). It may reach the brand through a variety of channels and influence mechanisms, having a long-term and crucial effect on the brand and its trustworthiness in the market (Aziz & Rahman, 2022). This type of storytelling, characterized by an emphasis on personal story-telling and feelings, might infiltrate beyond its initial boundary and reach a larger audience (Madadi et al., 2021). Adverse word-of-mouth may influence the public perception of a brand and set off a snowball impact, causing an increasing number of people to publish their bad tales (Jacobs & Liebrecht, 2023). When protest petitions gain strength, they pressure the brand to try to resolve some of the mentioned issues (Attiq et al., 2023). The deficit value, which refers to

the perceived difference between consumer expectations and the actual brand experience, is recognized as an important factor leading to negative consumer emotions and, consequently, brand hate (Chawla & Kumar, 2022). Fahmi & Zaki, (2018) referred such a consumer, hate agent, one that is most likely to hate a brand, unrequited and disappointed in anticipation because the brand does not meet their expectation. Additionally, such social media as protest petitions can doom the correspondence to remain in the system. Hence, it has the opportunity to influence the subsequent attitude of potential customers. In the most negative cases, brand response can lead to organized boycotts. Such campaigns are extremely dangerous because they increase market demand and allow the existing problem to gain even more exposure. Boycotts harm the brand's sales and financial statements but damage the company's image with the consumers (Noor et al., 2022)

H₇: Brand Hate mediates the relationship between Deficit Value and Brand Retaliation.

Mediation between Deficit Value and Brand Switching

Many studies have also concurred that brand aversion is closely associated with a high likelihood of turning to an alternative brand. The research by Liao et al. (2023) found that consumers who declared high aversion to a brand exhibit a much higher predisposition to turn to alternative brands as they aspire to “do whatever it takes to steer clear” of any association with the brand they despise. Emotionally-driven consumers seek and choose alternative brands and products to reconcile their undesirable experiences (Sabog et al., 2023). The research by Kim & Peterson, (2017) focused on the emotional components of aversion and their impact on brand-switching behavior. The decision to switch brands due to a strong dislike of a particular brand also has significant implications for businesses. Such behavior entails declining consumer loyalty, which, in turn, may drive a decline in a brand's market share (Kuanr et al., 2022). It seems most likely that this type of relationship between deficit value and brand hate determines that there is a critical influence of the former on the creation of an aversive attitude towards the brand itself (Ong & Vila-Lopez, 2023). The research by Sharma et al., (2022) discovered that brand hate substantially influences brand-switching in cases where consumers have plenty of comparable alternatives. From above literature it can be hypothesized that

H₈: Brand Hate mediates the relationship between Deficit Value and Brand Switching.

Mediation between Deficit Value and Complaining

Social network presence becomes a potent and immediate means to publicly voice one's complaints or dissatisfaction, reaching a large and often global audience. A single negative post or tweet can become extremely popular and “go viral,” attracting the attention of media, high-profile individuals, and the general public (Roy et al., 2022). The arrival of instant communication services signifies that proficient complaint treatment is increasingly becoming essential (ŞIRZAD, 2022). Brands are required to handle complaints more transparently than ever before to show their commitment to prioritizing good behavior and ensuring customer satisfaction (Kamboj & Sharma, 2023). One more factor to consider here is that competent treatment also eliminates the likelihood of disgruntled.

Ultimately, dissatisfaction, as a natural reaction to negative biases about a brand, has become an important aspect of brand-customer interaction in the modern era (Costa & Azevedo, 2023). In conclusion, the reviewed articles articulate a strong positive correlation between brand hate and complaining, and therefore, brand hate is a critical factor in inspiring customers to express their pain points and seek redress. This knowledge is an important framework for restoring the brand.

H₉: Brand Hate mediates the relationship between Deficit Value and Complaining.

Underpinned Theory – Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory

The notion of expectation and its confirmation Customer satisfaction was theorized by (Oliver, 1980) as a function of how a consumer constructs expectations prior to purchasing a product or service, and assesses the product's subsequent performance and performance against his expectations in an evaluative format. The consumer will then consider the level of performance or accomplishment of the product or service.

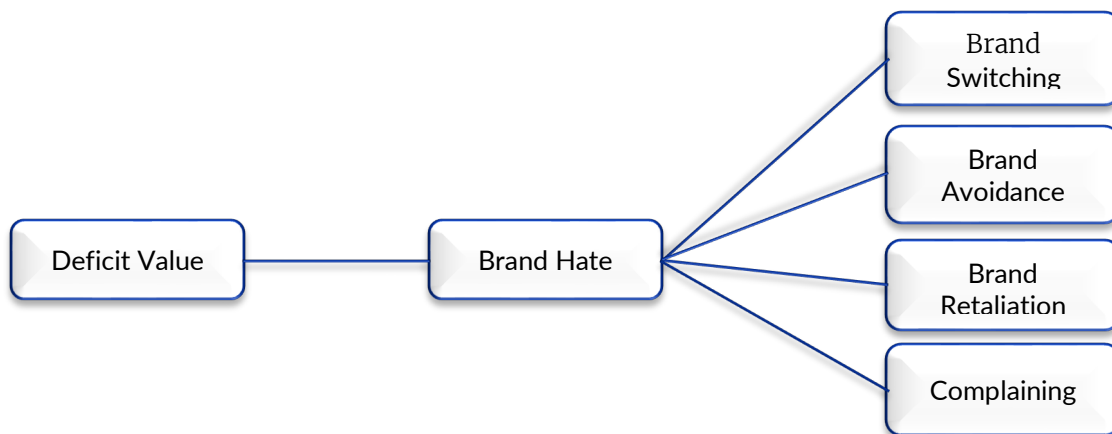
The theoretical framework proposes that customers build their expectations based on a combination of prior experiences, advertising, word-of-mouth communication, and any other relevant sources of information that are available to them at the time. Once the buyer receives the goods and uses them, the experience will be evaluated. The consumers' assessment will contrast their own thoughts to the things before they get. For this study, the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory relates to a deficit value, which is an indication of disconfirmation.

In this study, the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory aligned well with deficit value, a sign of disconfirmation. When consumers experience negative disconfirmation in value perception, they may feel dissatisfied and develop brand antipathy. This framework allows for systematic analysis of consumer brand perceptions and responses.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Methodology and Data Collection

In this investigation, quantitative research was employed due to its structured method for gathering and analyzing numerical information (Payne & Wansink, 2011). The method's rigor provides a means to assess relationships among the key variables—deficit value, brand hate, and consumer actions such as brand switching, brand avoidance, and complaining—while minimizing bias and maximizing accuracy. Correlational research was chosen as the principal methodological design for several compelling reasons (Curtis et al., 2016). This approach excels at elucidating links among variables, thereby dovetailing with the study's objective to delineate how the independent constructs articulate with and influence the dependent outcomes (Thompson et al., 2005).

The sampling technique selected for this research is convenient non-probability sampling, considering several crucial factors embraced in this context. Data is collected from apparel consumers through self-administered questionnaires. To secure a strong sample sufficient to yield statistically relevant findings, reliability, and generalizability, the researcher needs to have a large enough sample size (HR & Aithal, 2022). According to Bhardwaj, (2019), an ideal way of selecting a sample size is based on the number of indicators present in the study model. Since our target study primarily focuses on reflective indicators, which are 30, the minimum sample size should be calculated as ten times the number of reflective indicators, which will be $30 \times 10 = 300$. It is appropriate to increase this number to improve the statistical power of our analysis and therefore settled on a sample size of 301 finalized responses. Statistical analyses, including SEM-PLS, understudy correlations and mediation effect were conducted to examine the relationships between deficit value, brand switching, brand avoidance, brand retaliation and complaining with a mediating role of brand hate (Curtis et al., 2016).

Measurement Scale

The questionnaire is the selected research instrument for the current study. The questionnaire is a highly used form of research instrument for systematically collecting data from a diverse and representative

sample in a standardized form in the research community (Sandiford & Ap, 2003). For this research, the survey consists of various distinct sections focusing on the valuation of concepts such as deficit value, brand hate, and the potentials such as brand switching, brand retaliation, brand avoidance, along complaining that occurs from them. The constructs or variables being studied were measured using scales that were improved based on previous research and customized to fit our unique population. A 5-point Likert Scale was used in this study to collect the responses.

Table 1

Research Instrument/Measures

Construct	Code	Items	Adapted From
Deficit Value	DV1	The quality of the above mentioned brand is low in comparison with the price.	(Zarantonello et al., 2016), (Thomson et al., 2012), and (Hegner et al., 2017)
	DV2	The above mentioned brand is not familiar to me.	
	DV3	The quality of product is not as good as my expectation.	
	DV4	The packaging of the above mentioned brand is aesthetically insufficient.	
	DV5	The above mentioned brand is deficient in terms of the value linked with it.	
Brand Hate	BH 1	I am disgusted by the above mentioned Brand.	(Hegner et al., 2017)
	BH 2	I don't tolerate the above mentioned brand and its company.	
	BH 3	The world would be better place without the above mentioned brand.	
	BH 4	I am totally angry about the above mentioned brand.	
	BH 5	The above mentioned Brand is awful	
Brand Avoidance	BA1	I refrain from buying the above mentioned brand's products or using its services.	(Hegner et al., 2017)
	BA2	I avoid buying the above mentioned brand's products/using its services.	
	BA3	I discourage friends and relatives to buy the above mentioned Brand.	
	BA4	I say negative things about the above mentioned Brand to others.	
	BA5	I recommend not to buy the above mentioned Brand to someone who seeks my advice.	
Brand Switching	BS1	I buy the above mentioned brand less frequently than before.	(Fetscherin, 2019)
	BS2	I stop buying the above mentioned Brand and I will not buy it anymore.	
	BS3	I switched to a competing brand.	
	BS4	I do not purchase products of the above mentioned brand anymore.	
	BS 5	I reject services/products of the above mentioned brand.	
Brand Retaliation	BR1	I hate the above mentioned brand	(Hollebeek and Chen, 2014)
	BR2	I join in anti-fan group of the above mentioned brand.	
	BR3	I have deliberately bent or broken the policies of the above mentioned brand.	
	BR4	I have showed signs of impatience and frustration to someone from the above mentioned brand.	

Construct	Code	Items	Adapted From
Complaining	C1	I complained to the above mentioned brand to give a hard time to the representatives of the company.	(Fetscherin, 2019)
	C2	I complained that the above mentioned brand is unpleasant with the customers.	
	C3	I complained to the above mentioned brand to make someone pay a fine from the organization.	
	C4	I complained to law enforcement about the above mentioned Brand.	
	C5	I complained to external agencies (e.g., consumer unions) about the above mentioned Brand.	
	C6	I became involved in organizations or clubs united against the above mentioned Brand.	

Statistical Analysis

Response Rate

Based on the survey questions, we allow the respondent to express their viewpoints. Consequently, people can easily relate their experiences when answering the questionnaire. Through this approach, we compile exact and correct data for our study, therefore supporting the major premise of the study. Of the 500 online survey questionnaires sent to participants, 327 (65.4%) were returned. After screening improperly filled questionnaires, a finalized sample of responses numbered 301 was considered for statistical analysis.

Table 2

Response Rate

	Circulated	Percentage
Total circulated	500	100%
Received	327	65.4%
Finalized	301	60.2%

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the study participants reveals a diverse representation across age groups, gender, income levels, and educational backgrounds. The age distribution shows a concentration in the middle age ranges, with 39% of respondents falling between 41–50 years old, followed by 27.9% in the 31–40 age bracket. The younger cohort of 21–30 years comprised 23.5% of the sample, while those aged 51–60 represented 9.6%. Gender distribution was notably skewed, with females constituting nearly three-quarters (74%) of the respondents, compared to 26% male participants.

Regarding income levels, most respondents (50.2%) reported earnings between 40,000 to 60,000 PKR, closely followed by 47% in the 61,000 to 80,000 PKR range. Only a small fraction (2.8%) reported incomes of 81,000 PKR and above. In terms of participants' education, the sample was predominantly composed of undergraduates (41.2%), with graduates making up 22.5% of the respondents. Postgraduate consumers represented a smaller portion at 26.3% of the total sample.

Table 3

Demographic Analysis

Characteristics	Qty.	Percentage
Age of Respondents		
21–30		23.50%
31–40		27.90%
41–50		39.0%
51–60		9.60%

Gender	
Male	42.7%
Female	57.3%
Income Level (PKR)	
40,000 to 60,000	50.20%
61,000 to 80,000	47.0%
81,000 and above	2.80%
Education Level	
Undergraduate	41.20%
Graduate	32.50%
Postgraduate	26.30%

Measurement Model

Figure 2
Structural Model

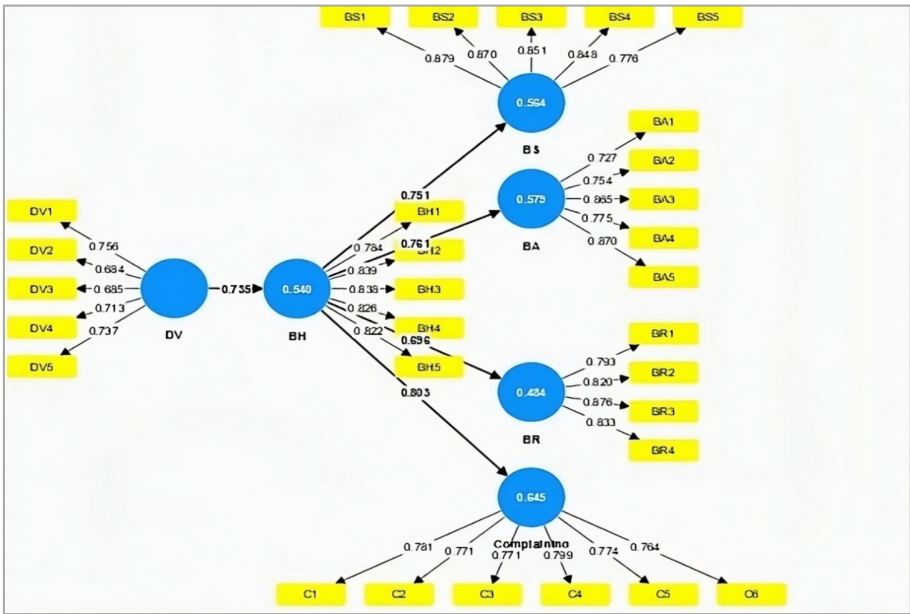
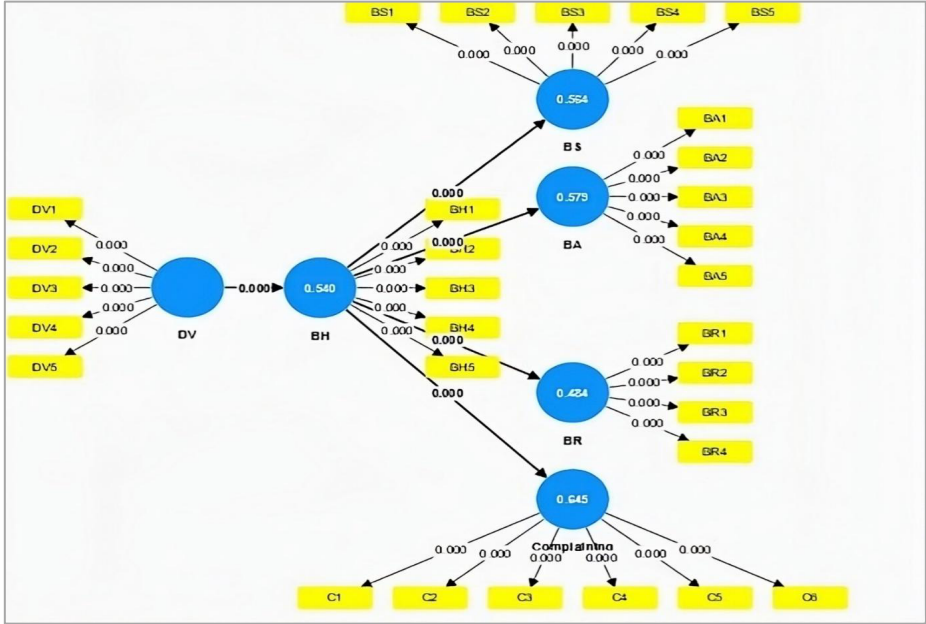


Figure 3
Measurement Model



Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The table consists of reliability and validity measures. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis provides a laborious framework to establish the reliability of constructs and to validate their accuracy. This study employed PLS-SEM to thoroughly evaluate important metrics including Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (rh_a) and (rh_c), and average variance extracted (AVE), in addition to the Fornell Larcker criteria, HTMT ratio, and VIF. As indicated by the dataset, each variable exceeded this threshold. Cronbach's α values were 0.858 for brand avoidance, 0.880 for brand hate, 0.851 for brand retaliation, 0.900 for brand switching, 0.869 for Complaining, and 0.762 for deficit value, suggesting excellent internal consistency (Hajjar, 2018). Similarly, CR values were 0.898 for brand avoidance, 0.912 for brand hate, 0.899 for brand retaliation, 0.926 for brand switching, 0.901 for Complaining, and 0.840 for deficit value. As indicated in Table 2, each construct enjoyed a Cronbach's α and CR score over 0.7, representing extraordinary internal consistency.

Convergent validity is another measure evaluated, assessed by the outer loading of each construct as well as by the AVE. The AVE values are 0.640 for brand avoidance, 0.676 for brand hate, 0.691 for brand retaliation, 0.715 for brand switching, 0.603 for Complaining, and 0.510 for deficit value correspondingly. This data does not only meet but also beat the 0.5 criterion for AVE, so establishing convergent validity (Alarcón et al., 2015). Factor loading additionally explains the percentage of variance related to each variable inside a single factor. Following the requirements of SEM, factor loadings above 0.7 are sturdily welcomed. Table 2 verifies that all variables satisfied this condition, further validating the model's convergent validity.

Table 4

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's alpha
Brand Avoidance	BA1	0.727	0.898	0.640	0.858
	BA2	0.754			
	BA3	0.865			
	BA4	0.775			
	BA5	0.870			
Brand Hate	BH1	0.784	0.912	0.676	0.880
	BH2	0.839			
	BH3	0.838			
	BH4	0.826			
	BH5	0.822			
Brand Retaliation	BR1	0.793	0.899	0.691	0.851
	BR2	0.820			
	BR3	0.876			
	BR4	0.833			
Brand Switching	BS1	0.833	0.926	0.715	0.900
	BS2	0.870			
	BS3	0.851			
	BS4	0.848			
	BS5	0.776			
Complaining	C1	0.781	0.901	0.603	0.869
	C2	0.771			
	C3	0.771			
	C4	0.799			
	C5	0.774			
	C6	0.764			
Deficit Value	DV1	0.756	0.840	0.510	0.762
	DV2	0.684			
	DV3	0.685			
	DV4	0.713			
	DV5	0.737			

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is verified using the Fornell and Larcker criterion, which assures that each variable is distinctively different from all others within the same construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). A severe criterion demands that the square root of the AVE must exceed the correlation values across challenging variables (Henseler et al., 2015). As Table 3 shows, the discriminant validity of each variable surpassed 0.7, so achieving the stated conditions. Moreover, this study applied the Fornell–Larcker criterion to analyze the similarity of latent components (Hair et al., 2013). With a conventional Fornell–Larcker criterion range between -1 and 1, the study validated discriminant validity for all variables, as demonstrated in Table 4. These Fornell–Larcker criterion ratios are all smaller than 0.85, according to recommended practices for discriminant validity.

Table 5
Fornell–Larcker criterion

Constructs	Brand Avoidance	Brand Hate	Brand Retaliation	Brand Switching	Complaining	Deficit Value
Brand Avoidance	0.800					
Brand Hate	0.761	0.822				
Brand Retaliation	0.707	0.696	0.831			
Brand Switching	0.865	0.751	0.755	0.846		
Complaining	0.782	0.803	0.784	0.786	0.777	
Deficit Value	0.686	0.735	0.648	0.708	0.718	0.716

Hypothesis Testing

Partial least square–structural equation modeling (PLS–SEM) is an analytical method to examine complex interactions among variables within a certain theoretical background. This advanced regression analysis method combine confirmatory factor analysis with multiple linear regression to simultaneously use both measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2011). Our study utilized the specialized statistical program Smart-PLS to thoroughly evaluate these models. The choice to use PLS SEM as the critical approach in this inquiry is not random. It is based on its widespread use and proven effectiveness in existing research (Hair et al., 2017). SEM surpasses traditional statistical approaches by improving the effectiveness of analysis.

Table 6
Hypothesis Testing

Relationships	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Result
Direct Relationships						
DV -> BH	0.735	0.737	0.027	27.519	0.000	Accepted
BH -> BS	0.751	0.752	0.028	26.987	0.000	Accepted
BH -> BA	0.761	0.762	0.027	27.760	0.000	Accepted
BH -> BR	0.696	0.697	0.030	23.145	0.000	Accepted
BH -> C	0.803	0.805	0.023	35.048	0.000	Accepted
Mediation Analysis						
DV -> BH -> BA	0.559	0.562	0.033	17.027	0.000	Accepted
DV -> BH -> BR	0.511	0.514	0.033	15.311	0.000	Accepted
DV -> BH -> BS	0.552	0.555	0.034	16.353	0.000	Accepted
DV -> BH -> C	0.590	0.593	0.031	18.984	0.000	Accepted

Results Discussion

- ****Hypothesis 1 (DV --> BH):**** T statistics (|Obs/Stdev|): 27.519, P-value: 0.000. These results show a strong, positive link between Deficit Value (DV) and Brand Hate (BH), meaning the negative value the brand creates is the main reason people start to hate the brand, a conclusion that lines up with earlier work by Nguyen (2021).

- ****Hypothesis 2 (BH --> BS):**** T statistics ($|Obs/Stdev|$): 26.987, P-value: 0.000. These numbers back up the idea that Brand Hate (BH) drives Brand Switching (BS). When people dislike a brand because of a bad past experience, they are much more likely to jump to a competing brand, a point also made by Enginkaya & Pinarbasi (2019).
- ****Hypothesis 3 (BH --> BA):**** T statistics ($|Obs/Stdev|$): 27.760, P-value: 0.000. The data confirm that Brand Hate (BH) strongly leads to Brand Avoidance (BA). When people feel hate toward a brand, they naturally avoid it altogether, a pattern described by Honarmand et al., (2020).
- ****Hypothesis 4 (BH --> BR):**** T statistics ($|Obs/Stdev|$): 23.145, P-value: 0.000. These findings show that Brand Hate (BH) is also a strong trigger for Brand Retaliation (BR). People may actively try to harm a brand they hate, a behavior studied by Noor et al., 2022
- **Hypothesis 5 (BH -> C):** The T statistic reached 35.048 and the P value is 0.000. This tells us there is a strong, positive link between Brand Hate (BH) and Complaining. In other words, the angrier a customer feels about a brand, the more outspoken they are about their bad experience. Stepping back, it simply confirms that people who truly dislike a brand aren't shy about telling the world why (Nin NGUYEN, 2021).
- **Hypothesis 6:** testing the pathway DV leading to BH leading to BA gives us a T statistic of 17.027 and a p-value of 0.000. These numbers affirm that the negative view of a brand's value creates Brand Hate, which then drives consumers to avoid that brand, matching the picture Demirağ & Çavuşoğlu (2020), sketched in 2020. Hypothesis 7 shows the same DV to BH to BR flow, giving a T statistic of 15.311 and the same p-value of 0.000. With these results we can say that when consumers think a brand lacks value, the resulting Brand Hate then turns into acts of Brand Retaliation, a process Jabeen et al., 2022 confirmed in 2022. Hypothesis 8, testing the DV leading to BH leading to BS, gives a T statistic of 16.353 and keeps the p value at 0.000. Here the negative value judgment pushes consumers, through Brand Hate, to pick a different brand, a point Costa & Azevedo laid out in 2023. Last, Hypothesis 9, which carries the same DV to BH to C thread, gives a T statistic of 18.984 and keeps the p-value at 0.000, indicating the process stays strong when we look at consumers' overall commitment shifts.

The results make it clear that Brand Hate (BH) steps in between Deficit Value (DV) and Complaining. So, when shoppers judge a brand as falling short in value, that judgment can spark Brand Hate, and that Hate pushes them to voice their complaints. These results back up what Nin Nguyen found in 2021.

Conclusion

This research strongly illustrates how a shortage in brand value twists consumer feelings and actions. The results outline how missing value, brewing Brand Hate, and other negative responses connect in a detailed way. These insights are useful for researchers and anyone trying to handle brands in the real world. The results consistently demonstrated that deficit value is a powerful predictor of brand hate, which in turn leads to a range of adverse consumer behaviors. Specifically, brand hate was found to directly influence brand switching, avoidance, retaliation, and complaining behaviors. These relationships underscore the critical importance of maintaining and delivering on brand promises to prevent the development of negative consumer sentiments.

Moreover, the study also established brand hate as a crucial mediating factor between deficit value and negative consumer responses. This mediation effect highlights the psychological process through which perceived value deficits translate into actionable behaviors, emphasizing the need for brands to address not only functional aspects but also emotional connections with consumers.

Limitations and Future Directions

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The research focused primarily on deficit value and its impact on consumer behavior within a specific context, and further research is needed to explore additional factors and variables that may influence these relationships. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies. Self-reported data often suffer from social desirability bias, where respondents may provide answers, they believe are more socially acceptable rather than being entirely truthful. This can lead to skewed results that do not accurately reflect

actual behaviors or attitudes. Moreover, the context-specific nature of the study means that the findings may not be generalizable to other geographical landscapes or populations. It would be beneficial to conduct studies across diverse settings and include a variety of demographic groups to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, the study did not account for potential moderating or mediating variables influencing the relationship between deficit value and consumer behavior. Future research should aim to incorporate these additional factors such as gender to provide a more nuanced and holistic view of the research dynamics.

Practical/Managerial Implication

Brands should consistently evaluate and improve the worth they offer to consumers. Enhancing product quality, enhancing customer service, and maintaining consistent delivery of brand promises are the means to do this. Consistently collect consumer feedback to discover any areas where customers feel that the value provided is lacking, and swiftly resolve these issues to prevent the development of negative sentiment towards the brand. Promote open and truthful communication in all marketing and advertising endeavors. Develop and establish resilient methods to effectively manage client concerns. Timely and compassionate reactions to complaints can alleviate unpleasant feelings and prevent the situation from escalating into strong animosity against the company. Provide comprehensive training to customer support staff to enhance their ability to properly handle complaints and successfully transform unfavorable experiences into good outcomes. Encourage innovation and flexibility to react to changes in customer preferences and lessen the possibility of perceived value deficiencies.

Theoretical Implications

This research extends ECT by underscoring the significant role of deficit value in consumer dissatisfaction and subsequent negative behaviors such as brand switching, avoidance, retaliation, and Complaining. It underscores that unmet expectations (deficit value) not only lead to dissatisfaction but also elicit strong negative emotions, particularly brand hatred, which mediate these behaviors. The study introduces brand hatred as a critical mediator in the relationship between deficit value and adverse consumer behaviors. This provides a deeper comprehension of the affective pathways through which unmet expectations translate into negative consumer actions. It suggests that brand hatred intensifies the negative impact of disconfirmation on consumer behavior, thereby enriching the ECT framework.

Understanding that deficit value leads to brand hatred, which motivates negative actions, brands can develop targeted interventions to manage expectations and emotional responses more effectively.

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