Does Brand Betrayal Indeed Incite Brand Hate? A Moderated Mediation Model of Past Experience and Perceived Deception

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Abstract

This study investigates whether brand betrayal, caused primarily by deceptive brand communication, incites brand hate among consumers. We performed PLS-based structural equation modeling, using SmartPLS on a dataset comprising 450 respondents selected through Mall Intercept sampling to corroborate the hypothesized relationships between the subject constructs. A significant mediating effect of perceived deception in the swelling of brand hate attributable to brand betrayal has been empirically substantiated. A moderation analysis reveals that the relationship between brand betrayal and perceived deception and the association between perceived deception and brand hate become more robust due to the crossover of negativity accumulated through past experiences. The paper offers rich contributions in enhancing our understanding of betrayal $\rightarrow$ deception, $\rightarrow$ hate serial links in the brand, and in the general context. This study's findings expand the exiguous theoretical and empirical evidence on brand hate and offer helpful advice to marketers on how to truncate brand hate to avoid its negative implications. It is a pioneering study investigating the antecedents and contextual contingencies of brand hate in a South Asian geographical context.

Keywords: Deceptive communication, brand betrayal, perceived deception, brand hate, past experience, word-of-mouth effects.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

The contemporary brand market is quite tricky, as customers progressively connect to the brands primarily because of their perceived value, and the role of communication is deemed cardinal to value creation and enhancement (Pinto & Brandão, 2020). Besides providing quality, brands need to care about the respect, trust, and self-esteem of customers, and again, brand communications have a significant role to play here as well (Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016). Modern-age customers believe that brand value profoundly depends on brand (truthful) behavior (Curina, Francioni, Hegner, & Cioppi, 2020). Sublime brands are more considerate and conscientious in customer communication, with an earnest realization of the detrimental effects of deceptive communications (Noor, Mansoor, & Rabbani, 2021). Shady brands are less attractive to customers. Neglecting integrity in communication could lead brands to face aversive consequences, such as dissatisfaction, mistrust, and customer disloyalty (Yaqub, Azhar, Hameed, & Murad, 2022). Consequently, brands strive to ensure communication virtuosity to avoid adverse word-of-mouth effects (Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Fetscherin, 2018).

Brand communication significantly influences the brand personality (Curina, Francioni, Cioppi, & Savelli, 2021). Customers strongly connected with a brand are more receptive and discerning toward their communications. Many brands use email and short message service marketing through various mobile phone operators to communicate their offers and (sales) promotions (Curina et al., 2021). The information shared through these channels is nifty for customers who wish to stay abreast of any value-maximizing overtures (Platania, Morando, & Santisi, 2017). However, deceit or misrepresentation in such communication could hamper consumer trust in the brand (Kucuk, 2018). Accordingly, while communicating with customers, responsible brands spare no effort to ensure the authenticity of the information (Delzen, 2014). For example, Starbucks in the USA is best known as a brand that shares trustworthy information with customers through email marketing (Jabeen, Kaur, Talwar, Malodia, & Dhir, 2022). Due to its increasing instrumentality in affecting consumers' emotions, attitudes, and preferences, (deceitful/trustworthy) communication has attracted significant attention both from academics and practitioners (Rasouli, Rasoolimanesh, Alimohammadirokni, & Momayez, 2025; Tolunay & Veloutsou, 2025).

1.2 Problem Statement & Research Gaps

Deceptive communication can evoke unpleasant emotions that can sometimes go as far as inciting brand hate. Brand hate is an emerging research topic in consumer behavior literature, which has been neglected despite its pronounced adverse effects on marketers'

efforts to realize desirable consumer outcomes successfully. Although recent studies (e.g., Bayarassou, Becheur, & Valette-Florence, 2020; Fetscherin, 2019; Rasouli et al., 2022; Rodrigues, Brandão, & Rodrigues, 2021) have revealed a few critical antecedents of brand hate, research in this domain remains quite deficient. Hegner, Fetscherin, and Van Delzen (2017) contend that brand betrayal is a critical challenge for successful branding because of its agency in adverse consequences; brand hate could be one of them. Kucuk (2019) points out that brand betrayals should be avoided to sustain competitive advantage through consumer retention. The primary aim of this research is to examine the (direct and indirect) effects of brand betrayal on inciting brand hate while employing perceived deception as the critical mediating condition under varying permutations of past experiences. Putting it differently, the study seeks to answer the following research questions;

> ➢ RQ1: Does brand betrayal directly affect perceived deception? Does perceived deception directly impact brand hate?
> ➢ RQ2: Does brand deception mediate the linkage between brand betrayal and brand hate?
> ➢ RQ3: Does past experience moderate the brand betrayal-perceived deception linkage? The perceived deception-brand hate linkage?

Besides the direct and mediating effects, the dual moderating effect of past experience on the relationships between brand betrayal-deceptive communication and deceptive communication-brand hate has been investigated to bridge the research gaps identified by (Rasouli, Rasoolimanesh, Rahmani, Momayez, & Torabi, 2022; Yadav & Chakrabarti, 2022b). As such, this study's main objective and critical contribution is to empirically substantiate the mediating role of perceived deception in explaining causal interactions and relationships among brand betrayal, perceived deception, and brand hate while considering the contingency effects of past experience. The research question is apposite because brand betrayal may not incite brand hate if it is not perceived/realized/registered by the consumer, especially when the past experience is dissonant.

1.3 Desired Contributions

The contributions of this research are manifold. First, the body of knowledge encompassing brand hate in specific and consumer behavior, in general, will be supplemented, as no studies have explained the moderating effect of past experience in causing specific antecedents to affect brand hate. Similarly, prior research on brand hate does not discuss the mediating effect of perceived deception (Aziz & Rahman, 2022b; Noor et al., 2021; Yadav & Chakrabarti, 2022b; Zhang & Laroche, 2020) on the betrayal-brand hate linkage. In addition, it is one of the few studies to investigate causal interactions among distinct but complementary concepts in this domain. Another contribution stems from using South Asian data, which would invigorate the generalizability of etic theories coined by the West to other regional and cultural contexts. Finally, insights gained through this study could encourage those responsible for brand communications with consumers to integrate ethics

and responsibility adequately in their promotions to avoid adverse effects such as brand betrayal and brand hate, which could undermine heartfelt marketing efforts to mature consumer trust, loyalty, and retention.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section presents a review of the literature. Sections three, four, and five describe the methodology, results, and subsequent discussion. The final section concludes by outlining the theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and avenues for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Underpinning Theories

The two underpinning theories enkindling our conceptual model (i.e., Cognitive Dissonance Theory and Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory) might be particularly relevant, as they directly address the psychological discomfort and dissatisfaction arising from perceived deception, which could lead to brand hate. The choice of theory would depend on the specific focus of this study and the nature of the relationships you aim to explore.

2.1.1 Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT)

According to the cognitive dissonance theory, people who have two or more opposing "attitudes, actions, or beliefs feel psychologically uncomfortable" (dissonance). In the context of brand betrayal, when a brand acts in a way that contradicts a customer's positive expectations or experiences, it creates dissonance.

Perceived deception by a brand can lead to cognitive dissonance, which consumers resolve by developing negative attitudes, such as brand hate. Past positive experiences might reduce the intensity of this dissonance, moderating the relationship.

2.1.2 Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

EDT explains how customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction results from the comparison between expectations and actual performance. When a brand fails to meet expectations, it leads to dissatisfaction, which can manifest as brand betrayal and hate.

If customers perceive deception (disconfirmation of expectations), this could lead to brand hate. Past experience might moderate this effect, as customers with positive prior experiences may have higher tolerance or lower expectations.

The brands are expected to satisfy or, even better, delight consumers; a failure to do so may lead to emotions like brand hate that may consequently trigger brand switching (Aziz & Rahman, 2022b). Several earlier studies have highlighted brand hate as a significant challenge for brands to keep the market intact (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Simultaneously, brands with negative perceptions can lose their brand positioning in the market (Noor et al., 2021). Low attention paid to the aftermath of consumers' vexatious experiences is one of the fundamental reasons for brand hate (Curina et al., 2020). Brand hate is more probable when consumers are not treated positively, carefully, or virtuously by the brands during

the purchasing process (Curina et al., 2020). The decline of brands in the market is imminent when consumers have negative perceptions and elicit negative word-of-mouth about those brands (Hegner et al., 2017). Although the issue of brand hate is gaining research attention, it must be addressed directly from the perspective of perceived deception and brand betrayal (Rasouli et al., 2022). Theoretically, this study is critical for enriching the scholarly discourse on brand hate because brand betrayal and perceived deception of brands have yet to be explicitly discussed as antecedents of brand hate in earlier research.

2.2 Hypotheses of Study

2.2.1 The Direct Effects Hypotheses

2.2.1.1 Brand Betrayal & Perceived Deception

Brand betrayal crops up when brands do not provide quality and value to consumers according to their requirements, as proclaimed by (Porcu, del Barrio-García, Kitchen, & Tourky, 2020). Perceived deception becomes more relevant when consumers are highly involved in purchasing (Pinto & Brandão, 2020). Modern consumers are mature, well educated, and vary in value propositions during pre- and post-purchase evaluations (Curina et al., 2020). Hence, affirmative post-purchase and consumption appraisal are vital to avert dysfunctions such as brand hate (Zhang & Laroche, 2020). Customers do not encourage brands with a higher perception of deceptive communication (Noor et al., 2021).

Similarly, if the brands are greenwashing, but in reality, the products are not in accordance with sustainability norms, the perceived image of such brands is shallow (Nnindini & Dankwah, 2024; Soleimani, Dana, Salamzadeh, Bouzari, & Ebrahimi, 2022). The brand-switching trend is typical for American consumers when little attention is paid to sustainable norms and requirements (Rasouli et al., 2022). Furthermore, consumers feel low when brands do not recycle to ensure environmental sustainability (Gabelloni et al., 2022). European adolescent customers are motivated to purchase brands that strive to improve their quality of life (Bayarassou, Becheur, & Valette-Florence, 2020). A symbiotic relationship between brands and consumers works when consumers perceive no betrayal (Pinto & Brandão, 2020). Educated consumers do not primarily rely on brands perceived to be deceiving consumers in any form (Yadav & Chakrabarti, 2022b). Consumers' tolerance of brand betrayal may vary, but each one perceives to have been cheated and deceived by such acts of betrayal and ventilates it in the form of some private or public action at some time (Rodrigues, Brandão, & Rodrigues, 2021). Based on the above discussion, we hypothesize the following.

> ➢ H1: Brand betrayal and perceived deception have a significant and positive association.

2.2.1.2 Perceived deception & brand hate

Brand hate challenges consumers and brands alike (Porcu et al., 2020). Brand hate evolves gradually as adverse perceptions, such as perceived deception, take time to develop in consumers, leaving some possibilities for marketers to win back (Pinto & Brandão, 2020). Ensuring consumer consent is a challenge for brands as it is a critical precondition for averting brand switching (Aziz & Rahman, 2022a). Yadav and Chakrabarti (2022a) found that American brands are generally keen to develop long-term relationships with consumers and are profoundly aware of the impediments caused by perceived deception in successfully materializing such goals.

(Kucuk, 2021) finds that brand switching exacerbates shoe brands' perceptions of deceiving consumers through unethical marketing and product quality deception. Consumers mostly hate brands that fail to deliver what is proclaimed, leading to a swelling of brand hate (Gabelloni et al., 2022). Consequently, brands' marketing/promotion functions should effectively neutralize consumers' inadvertent perceptions of deceitfulness (Noor et al., 2021). Perceived brand deception is unacceptable to consumers (Aziz & Rahman, 2022b; Zhang & Laroche, 2020). There might be disparate tolerance for it, but deceiving consumers beyond the threshold foments brand hate (Bayarassou et al., 2020; Rasouli et al., 2025; Rodrigues et al., 2021). Following these assertions from the literature, we hypothesize the following.

> ➢ H2: A significant and positive association exists between perceived deception and brand hate.

2.2.2 The Mediation Effects Hypothesis

Every brand has a different persona that reflects the attitude and behavior of the brand toward consumers (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). Top-rated auto brands like BMW, Mercedes, and Toyota are better known for their integrity and have little tolerance for miscommunication with their clients (Curina et al., 2021). Information sharing without brand deception is a critical source of credible consumer communication (Nawaz, Jiang, Alam, & Nawaz, 2020). Indeed, a brand's communication significantly impacts consumers' buying behavior because it critically recognizes marketing campaigns (Kent & Boatwright, 2018).

In contemporary markets, the completeness of brands is based substantially on marketers' communication and information-sharing abilities to influence consumers' perceptions favorably (Curina et al., 2021). Brands that lack consistency in actualizing value propositions, which include messaging, are perceived as betraying brands by consumers (Platania et al., 2017). On the other hand, brands that share authentic real-time information about products and promotions evoke sublime perceptions among consumers, which are instrumental in alleviating the adoption and diffusion of such brands (Delzen, 2014).

Rasouli et al. (2022; 2025) pointed out that brands should communicate honestly with consumers, as perceived deception negatively influences consumers' trust-inspired

loyalties. Zarantonello et al. (2018) point out that brands' perceived deception is unacceptable to customers. Aziz and Rahman (2022b) contended that the perceived deception of brands is not desirable for brands and would create an opportunity for competitors to benefit from it by sharing brand realities with consumers that could subsequently promote brand hate. Fetscherin (2019) contends that brand management should be watchful of inauspicious notions, such as perceived deception, that could aggravate brand hate among consumers. Based on these insights from the literature, we hypothesize the following.

> ➢ H3. Perceived deception mediates the relationship between brand betrayal and brand hate.

2.2.3 The Moderating Effects Hypotheses

2.1.3.1 Past Experience as a Moderator of Brand Betrayal – Perceived Deception Link

Successive interaction between brands and customers is based on customer experience (Barcellos, Aguiar, Ferreira, & Vieira, 2009). Customers who remain loyal to brands are influenced by their past pleasant experiences (Suk & Lee, 2013). In their past experiences, customers spawned word-of-mouth, and brands perceived to have been betraying consumers with deceptive prices and quality received adverse word-of-mouth effects (Aw, 2020). Many brands in the United States have received brand hate due to adverse word-of-mouth publicity emanating from customers' negative experiences and continuous brand betrayal (Khoi, Tuu, & Olsen, 2018). Based on their dissonant past experiences, customers tend to utilize the opportunity of web rooming to resolve any discrepancies. They may feel betrayed by digital or social media communications. (A. Purwanto, Haque, Sunarsi, & Asbari, 2021).

The role of candid brand management is essential to amplify positive word-of-mouth effects by enhancing the quality of customer experience(s), and tapering brand betrayal could prove to be instrumental in materializing this objective and reducing brand hate (Agarwal, Chahar, & Bhati, 2021). Starbucks failed in China in its early internationalization phase because of adverse word-of-mouth effects resulting from lousy customer experiences caused by feelings of brand betrayal followed by brand hate (Esmaeilzadeh, 2020). Even loyal consumers refrain from repeating brands if they sense deception in past encounters (K. Lee, 2014). The negative experience of consumers has a significant role in brand shifting by consumers based on perceived deception (A. Purwanto, Ardiyanto, & Sudargini, 2021). Inspired by these findings, we hypothesize that reckoning past experience is a critical contingency.

> ➢ H4(a): Past experience moderates the relationship between brand betrayal and Perceived deception.

2.2.3.1 Past Experience as a Moderator of Perceived Deception-Brand Hate Link

Consumers' perceived deception about brands restricts them from (re)purchasing that brand (Lim et al., 2020). According to Lim et al. (2020), modern customers are mature and more sensitive to brands and their marketing efforts because of their improved sense of judgment. Customers' perceptions and past experiences serve as the foundation for brand interactions with consumers alongside purchasing, with adverse perceptions such as deceitful behaviors causing partial or complete defections primarily inspired by brand hate (H. Purwanto et al., 2020). Consumers' positive prior experiences are essential for brands, as they facilitate the development of long-term relationships. Brand managers are responsible for ensuring that consumers receive proper merchandise and services to promote long-term brand growth by avoiding perceived deception in the consumer (Y. Y. Lee, Gan, & Liew, 2023). The modern-day market exhibits profound competitiveness, and buyers' choices depend heavily on their past experience (Jain & Shankar, 2021).

Experiencing consistent buyer satisfaction is undoubtedly essential for brand adoption, but perceived deception can impede it. When not handled well while buying a product, even the store's most devoted customers avoid (re) visiting, and an emergent sense of brand hate devastates the consumers' experience (Khan, Akhtar, Ansari, & Dhamija, 2020; Rasouli et al., 2025). Modern consumers are educated and can switch brands when brand hate is developed based on perceived deception in past exchange episodes (Shankar & Jain, 2021). Buyers' bad brand experiences augment the adverse impact of perceived deception in inciting brand hate, which eventually counts upon consumer retention (H. Purwanto et al., 2020). Consistent with the above discourse, we develop the following hypothesis about the contextuality of past experiences.

> ➢ H4(b). Past experience significantly moderates the relationship between perceived deception and brand hate.

2.4 The Theoretical Model

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model. It has been hypothesized that (perceived) brand betrayal aggravates perceived deception and eventually swells the brand hate. However, both hypothesized cause-and-effect relationships are moderated by consumers' past experiences. As such, brand betrayal is the exogenous construct (the antecedent), perceived deception is the mediator, brand hate is the endogenous construct (the outcome), and we have one critical moderating condition: past experience.
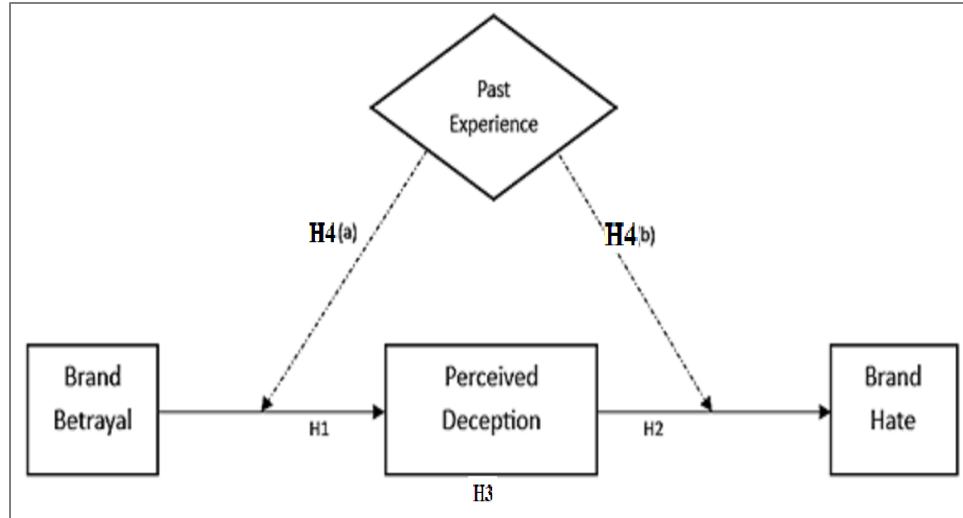
Figure 1: Study Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Measurement Model

The structured instrument used for the survey comprised scales adapted from previous studies. The focal construct (brand hate) was measured using six items, adapted from Rodrigues et al., 2021). The exogenous construct (brand betrayal) was measured through six items, adapting the scale from Lee et al. (2020). The mediator (i.e., perceived deception) and the moderator (i.e., past experience) were measured through six and five indicators subsequently by adapting the scales from Scholl & O'Hair (2005) and Zarantonello & Schmitt (2010) respectively. Responses to the 23 items constituting various scales were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale format. The measurement scales for all these constructs are presented in Table 5 and included in the Appendix.

3.2 Sampling & Data Collection

The sample population of this study consisted of customers of different brands. Using the a priori method (Soper, 2020), we determine the sample size for the structural model. The minimum sample size deemed appropriate was 239, setting a medium effect size of 0.3 (Cohen, 1992), with a targeting statistical power (0.80) and significance level (0.01) in a four latent variables solution calibrated through 23 items. Thus, the ultimate sample size (n=450) significantly exceeded the required minimum of 239, which is essential for reducing the margin of error and bias, leading to higher accuracy in estimation. (Gumpili & Das, 2022).

The mall intercept sampling technique was employed to determine the sample and gather data from the informants in this study. The researchers utilized structured questionnaires to collect data from 450 respondents across diverse brand outlets in three cities of Pakistan: Lahore, Multan, and Bahawalpur. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity, and their consent was obtained for data collection. Students from local educational institutions in each city conducted fieldwork for over one month. A total of 465 questionnaires were returned. After filtration checks, 450 data points were retained for further analysis. Table A-2 (Appendix) illustrates the salient characteristics of various sample elements.

3.3 Analytical Strategy

The measurement and structural model were analyzed using a PLS-based structural equation modeling (SEM) technique using SmartPLS 3.0. PLS-SEM is a suitable instrument for simultaneously analyzing multiple regression equations. The reliability and (convergent and discriminant) validity of the measurement model, along with the relevant statistics to assess the structural model's hypothesized main, mediating, and moderating effects, were obtained and evaluated by framing PLS Algorithms and Bootstrapping following (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2023). Additionally, PLS blindfolding calculations were used to determine the predictive relevance of the test.

This study utilized PLS-SEM instead of CB-SEM since PLS-SEM is more suitable for prediction-oriented research, particularly when handling complex models that include moderating effects like perceived deception and past experience. In contrast, while CB-SEM is more appropriate for theory validation and necessitates large samples and multivariate normality, PLS-SEM excels in exploratory research and accommodates smaller sample sizes. Moreover, latent variable scores can be estimated using PLS-SEM, which provides the advantage of employing this technique in studies aimed at exploring relationships rather than solely confirming a theoretical model. Therefore, due to these benefits, PLS-SEM has been identified as the best option for obtaining robust and reliable results. The following sections provide a comprehensive analysis of the current study and the findings that emerged from it.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Profile

The majority of respondents were male (63%), aged less than 25 years (41%), and in the monthly income bracket of 50–75 K PKR (40%). A detailed overview of the respondents' profiles is provided in Table A-1 in the Appendix.

4.2 Assessment of the Measurement Model

Evaluating an auxiliary model involves analyzing its reliability and validity, typically assessed by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency (i.e., construct reliability), and both convergent and discriminant validity. The statistics in Table 1 demonstrate a

strong alignment of the measurement model with all the required acceptability criteria thresholds.

4.2.1 Reliability and (Convergent) Validity

The assessment of indicator reliability involves scrutinizing standardized factor loadings against an acceptable threshold of ≥ 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All individual indicators were found to be reliable, as their standardized factor loadings fell from 0.75 to 0.80. The t-values for all loadings were also significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating adequate item reliability (Sanchez-Franco & Roldán, 2010). (Internal consistency) reliability at the construct level was assessed by examining Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (C.R), with a threshold score of ≥ 0.70. Both α and C.R. indices falling in the ranges of 0.95 - 0.98 and 0.84 - 0.91 subsequently showed acceptable internal consistency reliability.

An estimation of convergent validity is generally obtained through the average variance extracted (AVE), which reflects the enormity of a construct in explaining the variance of its indicators. Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend a reference value of ≥ 0.50 for this index. In this study, all AVE values range from 0.81 to 0.89, suggesting that each construct had sufficient convergent validity. Table 1 and Figure 1 contain the relevant statistics signifying (convergent) validity and reliability.

Table 1: Assessment of the Measurement Model

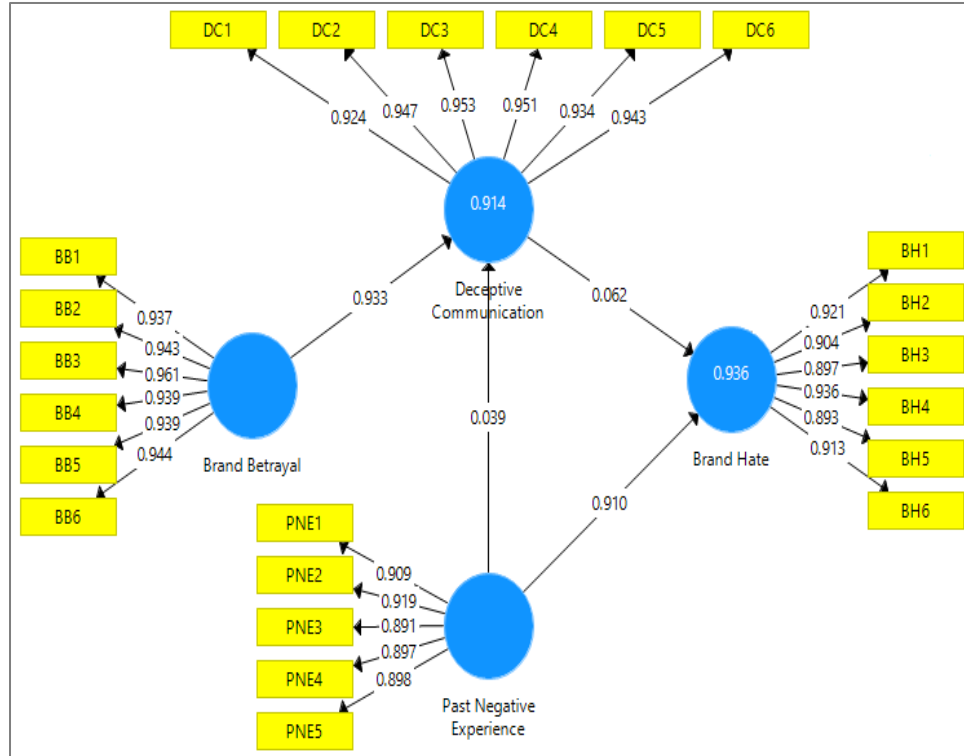| Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Brand Betrayal	BB1	0.937	0.976	0.976	0.980	0.891
	BB2	0.943				
	BB3	0.961				
	BB4	0.939				
	BB5	0.939				
	BB6	0.944				
Brand Hate	BH1	0.921	0.959	0.959	0.967	0.829
	BH2	0.904				
	BH3	0.897				
	BH4	0.936				
	BH5	0.893				
	BH6	0.913				
Perceived deception	DC1	0.924	0.975	0.975	0.979	0.888
	DC2	0.947				
	DC3	0.953				
	DC4	0.951				
	DC5	0.934				
	DC6	0.943				
Past Experience	PNE1	0.909	0.943	0.943	0.957	0.815
	PNE2	0.919				
	PNE3	0.891				
	PNE4	0.897				
	PNE5	0.898				

Figure 1: The Measurement Model

4.2.2 Discriminant Validity

Finally, discriminant validity was assessed using the F-L criterion and HTMT scores. According to the F-L criterion, the square root of each construct's AVE must exceed the square of its correlations with other constructs in the research model. Additionally, the HTMT scores should be less than 0.85. Both criteria were met. The relevant statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table2: Discriminant Validity - HTMT

	Brand Betrayal	Brand Hate	Perceived Deception	Past Experience
Brand Betrayal	-			
Brand Hate	0.623	-		
Perceived deception	0.598	0.622	-	
Past Experience	0.518	0.616	0.614	-

4.3 Assessment of the Structural Model

4.3.1. Model's Goodness-of- fit, Explanatory and Predictive Power

The SRMR suggested by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) has been utilized to assess the model's goodness of fit, and its value of 0.068, being less than 0.08, indicates a decent fit according to Hair Jr et al. (2023). The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.963 illustrates the substantial explanatory power of the model (Chin, 1998; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019; Shmueli & Koppius, 2011). The effect of brand betrayal on perceived deception, as reflected by the f^2 values, was significant at 0.44, while the impact of perceived deception on brand hate was also strong at 0.69. Finally, the Q^2 values being greater than zero confirmed that the framework has strong predictive relevance.

4.3.2 Direct & Mediating Effects

According to the results presented in Table 3, H1 was significant ($\beta = 0.412$, t = 4.161, and p < 0.000), indicating a significant and positive relationship between brand betrayal and perceived deception. Additionally, the results support H2 ($\beta = 0.251$, t = 4.826, and p < 0.000), confirming a significant positive relationship between perceived deception and brand hate. The results also demonstrated that perceived deception significantly and positively mediated the relationship between beard betrayal and brand hate ($\beta = 0.058$, t = 2.001, and p < 0.043), corroborating H3.

Table 3: Structural Model Results

H	Paths	β	*t-values*	*p-values*	*Result*
1	Brand Betrayal → Perceived deception	0.412	4.161	0.000	Supported
2	Perceived Deception → Brand Hate	0.251	4.826	0.000	Supported
3	Brand Betrayal -> Perceived Deception -> Brand Hate	0.058	2.001	0.043	Supported
4a	Moderating Effect 1 -> Perceived Deception	0.207	5.594	0.000	Supported
4b	Moderating Effect 2 -> Brand Hate	0.147	3.585	0.000	Supported

4.3.3 The Moderating Effects

The results presented in Table 3 and shown in Figure 2 indicate that past experience significantly and positively moderates the relationship between brand betrayal and

perceived deception ($\beta = 0.207$, t = 5.594, and p < 0.000). Therefore, H4(a) is empirically substantiated.

Figure 2: Moderation Effect of Past Experience (Brand Betrayal-Perceived Deception Linkage)

Similarly, the results presented in Table 3 and Figure 3 show that past experience significantly and positively moderates the relationship between perceived deception and brand hate ($\beta = 0.147$, t = 3.585, and p < 0.000). Therefore, H4(b) was empirically substantiated.
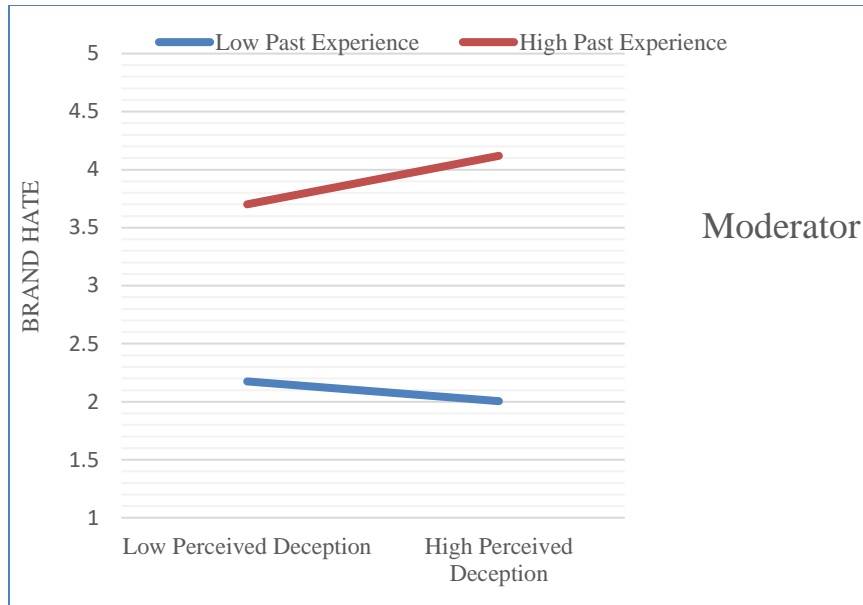
91

Figure 3: Moderation Effect of Past Experiences (Perceived Deception-Brand Hate Linkage)

5. Discussion

Regarding RQ1, empirical support for H1 confirms that brand betrayal significantly affects perceived deception. Similarly, the confirmation of H2 affirms that the impact of perceived deception is significant on brand hate. These results align with those of previous studies. Jabeen (2024) and Jabeen et al. (2022) also concluded that customers perceive brand betrayals negatively. Fetscherin (2019) Sayin & Gurhan Canli (2024) and Walter et al. (2023) also contend that brands should avoid gimmicks perceived as betrayals, which may trigger leapfrogging, negative attitudes towards word of mouth, and reduced profitability. Kucuk (2019) and Tolunay & Veloutsou (2025) also concluded that customers hate brands when they contemplate betrayals regarding communication about the quality of products and services.

Regarding RQ2, the empirical support for H3 confirms the significant mediating effects of perceived deception on the relationship between brand betrayal and brand hate. This study's conceptualization and empirical substantiation of this mediation effect are important because earlier studies neglected such causal relationships. However, the findings are consistent with some earlier studies discussing perceived deception's role in causing negative perceptions, predispositions, and actions (Curina et al., 2020; Pinto & Brandão, 2020; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Aziz and Rahman (2022b) demonstrated that a brand should avoid perceived deception because it can damage its personality. Moreover,

Zarantonello et al. (2018) concluded that perceived deception may engender adverse word-of-mouth effects that could undermine consumer trust in the brand.

Regarding RQ3, findings on H4(a) demonstrate that past experience significantly moderates the relationship between brand betrayal and perceived deception, highlighting that consumers with negative past experiences are more prone to perceive deception from any acts of the brands that may be tantamount to betrayal and vice versa. The introduction of moderating relationships in the brand hate model must be addressed in earlier studies. However, some studies have reported results that support the findings (Fetscherin, 2019; Rodrigues et al., 2021). (Pinto & Brandão, 2020) found that a negative customer experience is a hurdle in brand personality development. When consumers experience negativity attributable to a brand's perceived deception, the personality of these brands is damaged because of their lousy experience with them (Hegner et al., 2017). Rasouli et al. (2022) found that many successful brands failed because of misrepresentation or deceptive information about products and services shared through social media platforms. (Kucuk, 2018) found that brands that were greenwashing through advertising but had products or services that were not sustainable faced market failures. A brand must avoid greenwashing if its products and services are unsustainable (Kucuk, 2018; Nnindini & Dankwah, 2024).

Lastly, the empirical support for H4(b) shows that the association between perceived deception and brand hate is also significantly moderated by past experience, meaning that consumers with adverse past experiences are more prone to experience brand hate when they perceive themselves to have been deceived, and vice versa. Marketing literature has never seen the introduction of such a moderating relationship in the context of brand hatred. However, some studies (Bryson & Atwal, 2018; Hegner et al., 2017; Kucuk, 2019) have shown comparable outcomes, reinforcing the findings of this study. For example, (Rasouli et al., 2022) found that a significant barrier to a brand's personality growth is a negative customer experience. Because of customers' negative experiences, brands' personalities are harmed when they engage in harmful and dishonest communication with the public (Yadav & Chakrabarti, 2022b). Many popular brands must be more accurate when information about a product or service is disseminated on social media (Curina et al., 2020). Several brands falsely claim that supporting environmental sustainability in their advertising has failed miserably in the market (Curina et al., 2021; Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017). The common ideals brands have for the growth of their commodities serve as the foundation for brands' durability and their advertising activity (Zhang & Laroche, 2020).

6. Conclusion

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical implications of this research could enhance the discourse surrounding the dynamics of brand hate developed from previous studies. Exploring new aspects outlined in our model may profoundly enhance our understanding of brand hate based on

contemporary research. Specifically, this study provided empirical evidence for two under-researched relationships. First, it was found that brand betrayal positively impacts customers' perceived deception. Second, it found that perceived deception significantly affects brand hate. Furthermore, this study introduced and confirmed the mediating role of perceived deception between brand betrayal and brand hate. Although earlier studies have discussed brand hate along with mediation and moderation effects, including those hypothesized in our model, they have not yet been investigated integratively. By introducing past experiences as a critical moderating factor between brand betrayal and perceived deception, as well as the perceived deception-brand hate relationship, this research has pioneered a new avenue of discussion. Through these findings, the study has solidified the foundations of the two underlying frameworks. Cognitive dissonance theory posits that people experience psychological discomfort (dissonance) when holding two conflicting attitudes, beliefs, or actions. Brand betrayal occurs in the context of the dissonance between a brand's actions and a consumer's previous positive expectations or experiences. This inconsistency compels consumers to reconcile the differences between brand perception and their emotional response or alleviate discomfort by evoking deeper emotions such as brand hate. Expectation disconfirmation theory (EDT) suggests that customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction stems from comparing customer expectations and brand performance. When a brand falls short, customers may feel dissatisfaction, which can escalate to brand betrayal or hatred, mainly if the deception is apparent or the failure is intentional. The final contribution of this study is grounded in its use of South Asian data, which could help bolster the generalizability of the etic theory developed in the West to other geographical or cultural contexts.

6.2 Managerial Implications

This research shows that brand hate can be reduced when brands are aware of the accumulated perceptions of deceitfulness among their customers, which may stem from intentional or unintentional exaggerative claims, misrepresentations, or greenwashing. Responsible brands should avoid claiming false product traits, features, or utilities. Additionally, the design and management of integrated marketing communications should avoid deceptive design, illustration, framing, encoding, and message placement. Customers' perceptions of deception regarding the brand message can undermine positive brand effects, diminishing customer purchasing intentions and retention. Furthermore, greenwashing must be avoided. In this Silicon Age, characterized by rapid information sharing among customers through social media platforms, the role of brand management in identifying and intervening promptly in response to negative brand perceptions has become increasingly critical. Brand managers should emphasize effective communication and exceptional services devoid of elements that could lead to customer distrust to enhance customer satisfaction, retention, and referrals.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study has several limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, it relies on the dependent variable of brand hate associated with human emotions. Therefore, future research should explore other aspects of customers' emotions that might intensify brand hate. Second, this study included perceived deception as the only mediator; future studies should consider incorporating additional mediators to understand mediation effects better. Furthermore, this study utilized cross-sectional data, while longitudinal or experimental methodologies could offer a more comprehensive understanding of causal relationships over time. To enhance the quality of the findings in the future, this study suggests multimethod quantitative research with a longitudinal perspective. Lastly, the research depended on self-report measures, which were susceptible to common methods and nonresponse biases. Subsequent investigations should consider including objective metrics or various data sources to improve the reliability of the results. Future studies could also refine the explanatory model of this phenomenon by integrating more constructs as antecedents, mediators, and moderating variables. Other constructs that could enrich the understanding of brand hate include consumer trust repair, brand attachment, and cognitive dissonance. Additionally, in terms of theory, attachment theory, and expectancy violation theory could work together to enhance the understanding of brand betrayal and its consequences.

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Appendix

A-1 The Sample Profile

Characteristic	Categories	No.	%
Gender	Male	284	63.11%
	Female	166	38.89%
Age	< 25	186	41.33%
	25-30	141	31.33%
	30-35	87	19.33%
	35 above	36	8.01%
Monthly Income (PKR)	Less than 50K	89	19.77%
	50-75K	181	40.22%
	75-100K	109	24.22%
	More than 100K	71	15.77%

A-2 The Measurement Scale Items

Constructs	Measurement Scale
Past Experience	I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.
	This brand is not action oriented.
	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand.
	This brand does not make me think
	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.
Brand Hate	I am angry with Brand X.
	I am annoyed with Brand X.
	I am disgusted with Brand X.
	I am mad at Brand X.
	I am aggravated with Brand X.
	I do not use Brand X to order products and services.
Brand Betrayal	I felt cheated by the brand.
	I felt betrayed by the brand.
	I felt lied to by the brand.
	The brand intended to take advantage of me.
	The brand tried to abuse me.
	The brand intended to deceive me.
Perceived Deception	Despite my best intentions, I sometimes realized that I am deceived by brand.
	I have caught brands being untruthful without intending to be.
	For brands, a deception is an acceptable form of communication.
	My moral stance tells me that deception by brands is never okay.
	Deceiving someone else is seldom justified.
	I know brands that use deception in many circumstances.