



The Mediating Role of Brand Trust in The Relationship Between Brand Authenticity and Brand Loyalty: A survey study on customers of Baghdad Soft Drinks Company

Yasir Adil Mahmood Alkhafagi

الدور الوسيط للثقة بالعلامة في العلاقة بين أصالة العلامة والولاء للعلامة: دراسة استطلاعية على زبائن شركة بغداد للمشروبات الغازية

ياسر عادل محمود الخفاجي

yasir.adil@mtu.edu.iq , info@tcm.mtu.edu.iq

Technical College of Management -Baghdad, Middle Technical University, Iraq

الكلية التقنية الإدارية- بغداد، الجامعة التقنية الوسطى، العراق



Article information

Article history: DD/MM/YY

Received: 20/8/2024

Accepted : 25/9/2024

Available online:5/12/2024

Keywords: Brand Authenticity, Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Continuity, Integrity, Originality, Credibility

تاريخ الاستلام: 2024/8/20

تاريخ قبول النشر: 2024/9/25

تاريخ النشر: 2024/12/5

الكلمات المفتاحية: أصالة العلامة، الثقة بالعلامة، الولاء للعلامة، الاستمرارية، النزاهة، الأصالة، المصداقية

Abstract

This study aims to know the nature of the relationship between the three research variables, which are "brand authenticity", "brand trust", and "brand loyalty". In addition to knowing the role of "brand trust" as a mediating variable in the relationship between "brand authenticity" and "brand loyalty". These relationships were tested through a survey conducted using an electronic questionnaire published on social media targeting customers of the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company. The number of respondents to the questionnaire was (236) observations. SPSS V.23 and AMOS V.23 programs were used to analyze the data statistically. The study reached a set of conclusions, the most important of which is the positive role of "brand trust" as a mediator in the relationship between "brand authenticity" and "brand loyalty".

Citation: Alkhafagi, Yasir Adil Mahmood. (2024). The Mediating Role of Brand Trust in The Relationship Between Brand Authenticity and Brand Loyalty: A survey study on customers of Baghdad Soft Drinks Company, *Iraqi Journal for Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 20 (82), 130-145.

الاقتباس: الخفاجي، ياسر عادل محمود. (2024). الدور الوسيط للثقة بالعلامة في العلاقة بين أصالة العلامة والولاء للعلامة: دراسة استطلاعية على زبائن شركة بغداد للمشروبات الغازية، *المجلة العراقية للعلوم الإدارية*، المجلد 20 (82)، 130-145.

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة طبيعة العلاقة بين متغيرات البحث الثلاثة وهي "أصالة العلامة" و"الثقة بالعلامة" و"الولاء للعلامة". بالإضافة إلى معرفة دور "الثقة بالعلامة" كمتغير يتوسط العلاقة بين "أصالة العلامة" و"الولاء للعلامة". وقد تم اختبار هذه العلاقات من خلال استطلاع تم إجراؤه باستخدام استبانة إلكترونية تم نشرها في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تستهدف زبائن شركة بغداد للمشروبات الغازية. وقد بلغ عدد المستجيبين للاستبانة (236) مشاهدة. وقد تم استخدام برنامجي SPSS V.23 و AMOS V.23 لتحليل البيانات إحصائياً. وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات كان أهمها هو وجود دور معنوي إيجابي لـ "الثقة بالعلامة" كمتغير يتوسط العلاقة بين "أصالة العلامة" و"الولاء للعلامة".

1. Introduction

Brand authenticity is part of the unique identity of the brand, an important element in its success, and a necessary thing in increasing its value. Therefore, organizations must be aware of the importance of building and creating an authentic brand (S. H. Kim *et al.*, 2021: 1). The brand trust is an indicator of the degree of reliability that the customer has in his mind towards the brand. Brand trust has become one of the challenges facing organizations at the present time due to the professionalism of the methods used in deception, fraud and exaggeration, as well as the spread of the culture of ridicule among customers in the modern era (Napoli *et al.*, 2014: 13). Brand loyalty is a competitive weapon for organizations. It reduces marketing costs and efforts, increases sales rates, and increases the positive impact of word of mouth and electronic word of mouth. In general, brand loyalty is one of the factors that reduces the probability of failure and increases the probability of success (Al-alak, 2014: 348). The authenticity of the brand often stimulates customers' positive emotions towards the brand, which results in the brand directly gaining customer trust (Chen & Lee, 2021: 55). This result was similar to the findings of (Schallehn *et al.*, 2014: 196), in which the relationship between brand authenticity and brand trust was tested in fast food and beer brands. According to (Harjadi *et al.*, 2023: 484), the authenticity of the brand reaches loyalty to the brand through love for the brand, therefore it can be said that love for the brand is a natural result of customers' trust in the brand. According to (Hidayat & Setiawati, 2021: 40), the authenticity of the brand has a positive and decisive role in the customer's decision to be loyal. Trust in the brand is the customer's desire to rely on the brand's promises, and the customer who trusts the brand is motivated to show consistent purchasing behavior for the preferred brand, and therefore does not try to buy from a competing brand, and thus the customer reaches the stage of loyalty to the brand (Atulkar, 2020: 562). Trust in the brand is an important factor in determining loyalty to the brand, as it forms valuable relationships between organizations and customers. Trust in the brand affects purchase and loyalty, and is necessary for building strong relationships with customers, as trust drives loyalty to the brand and thus creates a high-value exchange relationship (Kwon *et al.*, 2020: 2). Trust in the brand is a precedent for building and maintaining loyal relationships with customers. When the customer realizes that the organization cares about his needs and benefits, trust in the relationship will be strengthened, and this in turn leads to achieving loyalty to the brand (Zeren & Kara, 2021: 3). According to (S. H. Kim *et al.*, 2021: 17), customers of Korean coffee shops are likely to consider the authentic brand to be more reliable and credible, which prompts them to be loyal to the brand. In light of marketing deception methods, doubt has begun to creep into the minds of customers, making the authenticity of the brand the effective solution to reassure customers. Since an authentic brand is committed to fulfilling its promises, customers trust the brand that performs as promised (Portal *et al.*, 2019: 2). According to (Lee & Chung, 2020: 619), brand trust positively supports the relationship between brand authenticity and brand loyalty.

This study was conducted on a random sample of customers of the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company. The questionnaire was organized electronically and distributed in multiple groups on Facebook. This company was chosen because it is considered one of the successful

companies in Iraq and because its products enjoy wide spread in the Iraqi market. Therefore, the research questions can be formulated as follows:

- What is the level of brand authenticity provided by Baghdad Soft Drinks Company?
- What is the level of brand trust of Baghdad Soft Drinks Company?
- What is the level of brand loyalty enjoyed by Baghdad Soft Drinks Company?
- What is the effect of brand authenticity on brand loyalty in Baghdad Soft Drinks Company?
- What is the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between brand authenticity and brand loyalty in Baghdad Soft Drinks Company?

In addition to the first section devoted to the introduction, the research consists of four other sections. The second section presents a review of the literature on brand authenticity, brand trust, and brand loyalty. The third section presents the methodology, which includes measures, hypotheses, sample, validity test, and reliability test. The fourth section is devoted to presenting and discussing the results, and testing the hypotheses. The fifth section is devoted to conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1.Brand Authenticity

Initially, the term “authenticity” referred to refusing to be led by external motivational motives and working to resist their various forms, and the meaning of the word then came to be synonymous with honesty and sincerity (Södergren, 2021: 646). Consequently, the meaning of authenticity shifted from the image of breaking the law to honesty, responsibility, and integrity (Botterill, 2007: 108). At the level of personal behavior, authenticity has come to refer to revealing oneself in all frankness and clarity, far from lying about the individual's true nature. Therefore, authenticity has become a moral virtue that every contemporary person must possess, and it has become a hot topic in society, whether at the level of political, economic, social, or personal relations (Lee & Chung, 2020: 618). (Wagner, 2010: 5) considered authenticity to be one of the important new indicators of quality, as it expresses the extent of the reliability of the entity providing the products. According to (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009: 279), authenticity seeks stable values related to social and ethical issues. Therefore, in the modern marketing environment, authenticity should be understood as a broad and deep concept and not a simple or superficial concept. Brands can gain authenticity by adhering to long-standing traditions, professionalism in manufacturing and service delivery, excellence in quality, and not rushing to indulge in modern industrial features (Michael B. Beverlaand, 2005: 1025). Brands have remained true to their original design, evolving but slowly, stemming from a belief that radical changes may upset and confuse customers. In a related context, the authenticity of the brand is characterized by adherence to history, heritage, customs and traditional beliefs, as this strengthens customers' sense of the authenticity of the brand (Napoli *et al.*, 2014: 4). Brand authenticity refers to the stability, consistency, uniqueness, and ability of the brand to fulfill its promises and to be natural and not artificial (Fritz *et al.*, 2017: 7). Brand authenticity has been defined as “an expression of how sincere and honest the brand is towards itself and its customers and working to support customers to be true to themselves” (Morhart *et al.*, 2015: 7). Passion for products, concern

for reputation, and the pursuit of brilliance, preferring that over commercial motives, is what leads to the authenticity of the brand (Oh *et al.*, 2019: 3). According to (Campagna *et al.*, 2023: 138), brand authenticity is the true, unique brand that is committed to honesty and transparency with customers, and has the ability to continue and survive despite the challenges of time and trends.

From the above, it can be said that achieving the authenticity of the brand requires the brand's managers to possess a lofty moral belief that seeks to create the impression among customers that this brand has a great status. In this research, the scale developed by (Portal *et al.*, 2019: 8) was adopted, as it is a reputable study, in addition to its suitability to the circumstances of this study, and these dimensions are:

- **Continuity:** this dimension indicates the immortality of the brand and the ability to overcome obstacles and challenges, and this requires that the brand have a vision and goals that it seeks to achieve in the long term (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012: 570). Therefore, continuity is an indicator that the brand has sufficient flexibility to adapt to uncertainty (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2022: 3), so the continuity of the brand is a promise to customers that it will exist in the future (Kumail *et al.*, 2022: 341).
- **Integrity:** this dimension reflects the sense of responsibility and moral purity of the brand, as integrity is an expression of virtue (Kumar & Kaushik, 2022: 27). According to (Morhart *et al.*, 2015: 7), a brand achieves integrity when it has wholesome values that prevent any deceptive and fraudulent methods in dealing with customers. Integrity is tested through consistent and fair behavior driven by the brand's virtuous intentions, which demonstrates its moral purity (Portal *et al.*, 2019: 4).
- **Originality:** This dimension refers to innovation and uniqueness and is an assessment of the extent to which the brand is natural (Portal *et al.*, 2019: 4). The originality is a concept that contradicts tradition; therefore, the originality of the brand necessitates the creation and use of new methods to understand the changing market (Penz & Stöttinger, 2008: 149). Rather, originality goes further than that, as the brand must be difficult to imitate by competitors (Lee & Chung, 2020: 623).
- **Credibility:** This dimension refers to the brand's ability to deliver on promises repeatedly, and for this to be achieved, the brand's values must be an integral part of its actions and practices (Portal *et al.*, 2019: 4). Enhancing the brand's credibility with customers requires organizations to adhere to ethics and social responsibility in their strategic decisions (Wang *et al.*, 2021: 2).

2.2.Brand Trust

The concept of brand trust relates to the nature of the relationship between the brand and customers. The more customers trust the quality and trustworthiness of the products or services, the greater the level of trust in the brand (DAM, 2020: 940). Trust in a brand is a positive expectation formed in the customer's mind that the brand will not act opportunistically. Therefore, brand trust is an expression of the customer's trust in the words that come from the brand (Khadim *et al.*, 2018: 3). Brand trust gives customers the perception that the potential risks of choosing or purchasing a particular brand are lower (Atulkar, 2020: 562). Brand trust is the perception of reliability that arises in the customer's psyche as a result of repeated positive experiences with the brand. As a result of transactions

and interactions, the customer finds that the benefits achieved from the brand exceed his expectations, therefore the customer is satisfied with the brand every time (Haudi *et al.*, 2022: 963). Building brand trust does not necessarily have to be through the customer's direct experience, but rather it may be through indirect communication through advertising, word of mouth, and the brand's reputation (Kwon *et al.*, 2020: 6). The importance of brand trust lies in maintaining the relationship between seller and buyer, as a trustworthy brand continues to have a close relationship with its customers even if it goes through crises. A customer who trusts a particular brand will be certain that it will overcome this crisis and emerge victorious in the end (Munuera-Aleman *et al.*, 2003: 11).

(Moorman *et al.*, 1992: 315) defined brand trust as "the customer's belief in the brand's ability to perform its stated function". It has also been defined as "the extent to which the buyer trusts the seller in providing the promised products or services" (Agustin & Singh, 2005: 97). Brand trust is an acknowledgment by the customer that the brand is capable of creating and providing value (Kwon *et al.*, 2020: 6). Brand trust can be represented as a journey between the customer and the brand. This journey depends on the customer's learning and perception abilities that increase over time. Accordingly, brand trust is embodied in the total knowledge and experience that the customer acquires through the relationship with the brand. Building strong relationships with customers is vital for brands due to the cumulative effect on customer perception that leads to loyalty (Husain *et al.*, 2022: 4). Brand trust reduces the state of uncertainty that the customer may feel, as trust is the only certain element in the midst of uncertainty. Therefore, brand trust provides a commercial exchange based on the customer's faith in a partner worthy of faith (Benhardy *et al.*, 2020: 3426).

2.3.Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty represents a measure of the extent of customer attachment and adherence to the brand (Atulkar, 2020: 562). Brand loyalty has a positive impact on business performance in light of intense competition (Subastiyanti & Sutedjo, 2022: 163). Without loyalty, a brand becomes very weak and can easily be replaced by other brands. When brand loyalty increases, customer groups' exposure to competitor attacks can be reduced (Puspaningrum, 2020: 953). Competition has highlighted the importance of brand loyalty because the cost of acquiring new customers is higher than the cost of retaining existing customers (Kumar *et al.*, 2011: 159). Brand loyalty is the commitment of customers to repurchase the products or services of a particular organization (Cengiz & Akdemir-Cengiz, 2016: 415). Brand loyalty makes customers rush to buy the product or service beyond low sensitivity to price (Bilgin, 2018: 133). Reaching a state of loyalty to the brand prompts customers to recommend others to buy the brand and encourage them to purchase (Azad & Safaei, 2012: 1234). Brand loyalty consists of two dimensions: the first is behavioral, which leads to profits and increased market share, and the second is attitudinal, which leads to the formation of a positive impression about the brand and price (J. Kim *et al.*, 2020: 6). Brand loyalty is an emotion of love that arises between the customer and the brand, so an organization that can reach this state will have a crowd of fans (Huang, 2017: 4). Brand loyalty is a behavioral response stemming from a non-random psychological bias towards a particular brand. Therefore, loyalty makes customers adhere to buying the brand even if there

are other brands that offer the same benefits at a lower price, because their experience with the brand makes them feel comfortable and satisfied (Kwan Soo Shin *et al.*, 2019: 3). Loyalty to the brand reduces organizations' dependence on advertising, as organizations that have loyal customers will spend less money on advertising, in addition to the fact that loyal customers will be a marketing tool that speaks positively about the brand to everyone (Kim *et al.*, 2018: 22). Extreme dedication and a high sense of belonging to the brand is the essence of brand loyalty, which is the goal of every business organization that wants to continue growing and achieving profits (Shabbir *et al.*, 2017: 417). It can be said that loyalty to the brand is similar to loyalty to football clubs, as loyal fans continue to support the team they love even if the results of this team are disappointing.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research problem:

The research problem focuses on the following:

- The presence of great competition in the soft drinks market, especially since the competing companies are local and foreign companies.
- Lack of knowledge of the nature of the relationship between research variables in the Iraqi environment.

3.2. Importance of research:

The importance of the research is highlighted in the fact that it studies contemporary and important concepts in the world of marketing, but this time in the Iraqi environment, specifically in a market characterized by fierce competition. Therefore, this research can be considered as market research that the marketing departments in industrial companies in Iraq can benefit from. In addition to the scientific contribution that can benefit researchers in this field, which represents the scientific addition provided by this research.

3.3. Research objectives:

The research objectives are summarized as follows:

- Determining the authenticity level of the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company brand.
- Determining the level of trust in the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company brand.
- Determining the level of loyalty to the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company brand.
- Determine the level and direction of the relationship between the research variables.
- To identify the role of “brand trust” as a variable mediating the relationship between “brand authenticity” and “brand loyalty”.

3.4. Measures

A five-point “Likert” scale was chosen: “5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree.” The level of the three variables was measured through three scales shown in Table (1)

Table (1) Scale of research

No.	Variables	The origin of the scale used	Number of statements
1	Brand Authenticity	(Portal <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	17
2	Brand Trust	(Becerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013)	5
3	Brand Loyalty	(Khan & Khan, 2017)	6

3.5.Hypotheses research

Figure (1) displays the research model that explains the research hypotheses. The first hypothesis tests the correlation between “brand authenticity” and “brand trust”. The second hypothesis tests the correlation between “brand trust” and “brand loyalty”. The third hypothesis tests the correlation between “brand authenticity” and “brand loyalty”, while the fourth hypothesis tests the correlation between “brand authenticity” and “brand loyalty” through “brand trust”.

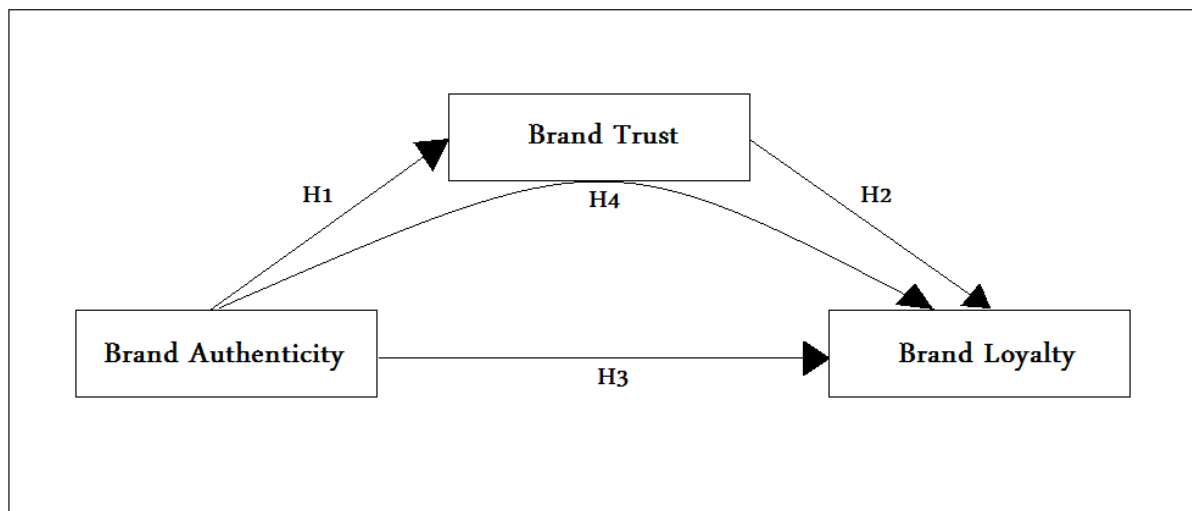


Figure (1) Research model

3.6.Sample

The survey targeted customers of the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company. An electronic questionnaire was published on social media, specifically the relevant pages. (236) responses were received from customers. Table (2) shows some personal data of the survey respondents in this study.

Table (2) Personal data of survey individuals

Basis of classification		Number of individuals	Percent
Gender	Male	97	41%
	Female	139	59%
Basis of classification		Number of individuals	Percent
Age	Less than “25”	156	66%
	From “25” to “40”	54	23%
	More than “40”	26	11%

3.7. The scale tests

3.7.1. Validity test:

First, the quality of the measure should be confirmed, so the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests were performed. SPSS V.23 extracted the required results in Table (3).

Table (3) KMO and Bartlett's tests

Variables	KMO test	Bartlett's test		
		Chi-Square	Df	Sig
Brand Authenticity	0.894	1586.876	136	0.001
Brand Trust	0.831	744.132	10	0.001
Brand Loyalty	0.893	853.307	15	0.001

It is clear from Table (3) that the value of (KMO) for the independent and dependent variable is higher than (0.05), in addition to Bartlett's test of significance with a value of (0.001), which is less than (0.05). Therefore, it can be said that the quality of the scale is achieved (Kaiser & Rice, 1974: 3).

3.7.2. Reliability tests

According to (Butts & Michels, 2006: 205), when the "Cronbach's alpha" coefficient is greater than 70%, the reliability of the scale is achieved in administrative research. Table (4) shows the results of this test.

Table (4) Test of reliability

Variables	Statements questionnaire (from- to)	Alpha-Cronbach
Brand Authenticity	(1-17)	0.89
Brand Trust	(18-22)	0.87
Brand Loyalty	(23-28)	0.90
All Questionnaire	(1-28)	0.94

According to the results of Table (4), it is clear that the reliability of the scale has been achieved, as all Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the minimum acceptable limit (0.70). In addition, most of the values are high values approaching (1.00), and this indicates that the amount of change in the answers of the sample members would be very small, if the researcher redistributed the questionnaire to them.

4. Results

4.1. View sample answers: The mean of the individuals' answers was calculated in addition to the standard deviation, which shows the extent of dispersion in the individuals' answers, as well as the coefficient of variation resulting from dividing the standard deviation by the mean. Table (5) shows the answers of individuals responding to the survey

Table (5) The answers

Variables	Statements	Mean	S. D	C.V (%)
Brand Authenticity	(1-17)	3.804	0.565	14.8
<i>Continuity</i>	(1-5)	3.748	0.729	19.4
	1	3.512	1.077	30.6
	2	3.783	0.936	24.7
	3*	3.822	0.950	24.8
	4	3.661	0.951	25.9
	5	3.961	0.919	23.2
<i>Integrity</i>	(6-9)	3.806	0.638	16.7
	6*	3.792	0.905	23.8
	7*	4.152	0.821	19.7
	8	3.508	0.991	28.2
	9	3.771	0.884	23.4
<i>Originality</i>	(10-13)	3.772	0.670	17.7
	10	3.822	0.856	22.3
	11*	3.792	0.960	25.3
	12	3.529	1.033	29.2
	13	3.944	0.875	22.1
<i>Credibility</i>	(14-17)	3.904	0.678	17.3
	14	3.961	0.837	21.1
	15*	4.063	0.825	20.3
	16*	3.830	0.873	22.7
	17	3.762	1.164	30.9
Brand Trust	(18-22)	3.711	0.850	22.9
	18	3.622	1.143	31.5
	19	3.546	1.134	31.9
	20	3.538	1.057	29.8
	21	3.745	0.905	24.1
	22	4.101	0.939	22.8
Brand Loyalty	(23-28)	3.786	0.855	22.5
	23	3.822	0.895	23.4
	24	3.758	1.086	28.8
	25	3.817	1.013	26.5
	26	3.847	0.981	25.5
	27	3.665	1.072	29.2
	28	3.809	1.141	29.9

(*) It means that the question is reversed

Regarding “brand authenticity,” it is clear from the results of Table (5) that all items obtained high numbers with regard to the mean. This indicates that the “brand authenticity” of Baghdad Soft Drinks Company is at a high level. Baghdad Soft Drinks Company is interested in the continuity of its brand by exploiting what has been achieved in the past to support the future, as well as a clear approach committed to loyalty to customers. The company wants to maintain its integrity by giving back to customers, taking care of them, adhering to ethical values, and not resorting to incorrect actions that would tarnish the integrity of the brand. The company also cares about the originality of its brand by trying to distinguish itself from other competing brands. Therefore, the company pays great attention to continuously developing its products through the elements of innovation and creativity. The company also cares to have high credibility with customers, so the company stays away from the policy of preferring profits at the expense of quality. Rather, it always seeks to

present its products in the best possible way through good taste, beautiful packaging, appropriate prices, constant availability, and real gift offers.

Regarding “brand trust,” it is clear from the results of Table (5) that all items obtained high numbers in relation to the mean. This indicates that the “brand trust” of Baghdad Soft Drinks Company is at a high level. This indicates that Baghdad Soft Drinks Company is constantly keen to ensure that its brand is trustworthy and safe in terms of taking into consideration the safety of customers, honest in terms of fulfilling promises to customers, and very reliable, meaning it can be trusted by customers. Therefore, the company's efforts succeeded in this aspect, as evidenced by the answers of individuals responding to the survey.

Regarding "brand loyalty," the results shown in Table (5) clearly indicate that all the items scored high numbers in comparison to the mean. This suggests that the "brand loyalty" of Baghdad Soft Drinks Company is at a remarkably high level. The data reveals that the company has successfully cultivated a base of devoted customers who are deeply loyal to its brand. These customers consistently prefer the Baghdad brand over competing brands, and they are even willing to abstain from purchasing rival brands if the Baghdad brand is unavailable. Building such strong brand loyalty has significant implications. It makes customers receptive to buying additional products from the same brand, as they trust the quality and value it represents. Moreover, these loyal customers are willing to pay a slightly higher price for the Baghdad brand compared to competing alternatives, demonstrating their unwavering preference. Furthermore, the high level of brand loyalty indicates that Baghdad Soft Drinks Company's customers are inclined to continue purchasing the brand, as they find the products consistently satisfactory. Additionally, these loyal patrons are likely to actively recommend the brand to others, further bolstering the company's reputation and customer base. Overall, the findings paint a picture of a company that has effectively forged a strong, lasting connection with its customers, who have become ardent advocates of the Baghdad Soft Drinks Company brand.

4.2.hypothesis tests

Table (6) shows the correlation matrix between the three research variables, which are “brand authenticity”, “brand trust,” and “brand loyalty”.

Table (6) The main correlation matrix

	Brand Authenticity	Brand Trust	Brand Loyalty
Brand Authenticity	1	0.692**	0.695**
Brand Trust	0.692**	1	0.723**
Brand Loyalty	0.695**	0.723**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to the results of Table (6), all correlation coefficients are significant, as the correlation coefficient between “brand authenticity” and “brand trust” reached (0.692). In addition, the correlation coefficient between “brand trust” and “brand loyalty” reached (0.723). Also, the correlation coefficient between “brand authenticity” and “brand loyalty”

reached (0.695). Table (7) shows the correlation matrix between the dimensions of “brand authenticity” and both “brand trust” and “brand loyalty”.

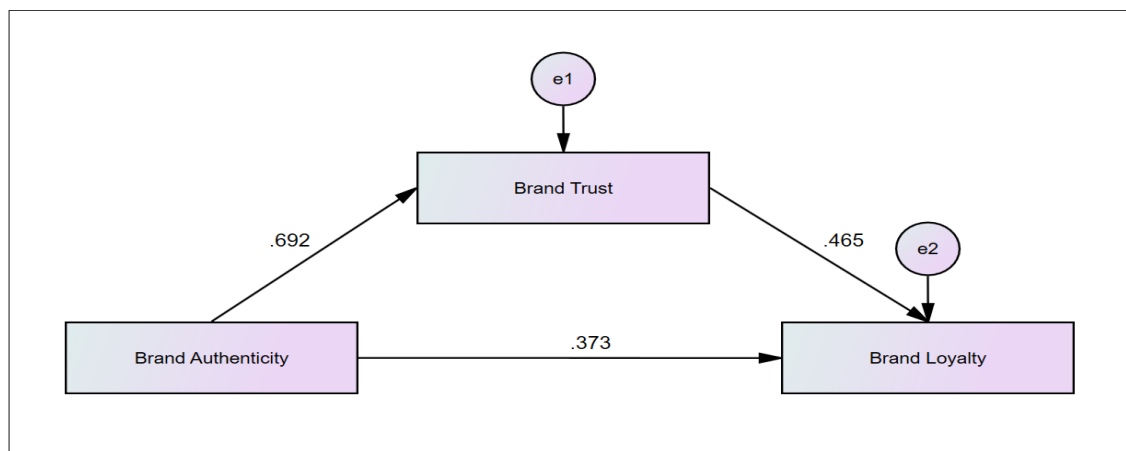
Table (7) Correlation submatrix

	Brand Trust	Brand Loyalty
<i>Continuity</i>	0.557**	0.643**
<i>Integrity</i>	0.534**	0.518**
<i>Originality</i>	0.532**	0.522**
<i>Credibility</i>	0.676**	0.595**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to the results of Table (7), all correlation coefficients are significant and positive between the dimensions of “brand authenticity” and both “brand trust” and “brand loyalty”. Therefore, the first, second, and third hypothesis have been answered in this section. Figure (2) shows the significance test of “brand trust” as a mediating variable between “brand authenticity” and “brand loyalty”. The AMOS program was used in this step.

Figure (2) Testing the significance of the mediating variable



According to Figure (2), it becomes clear to us that the value of the direct correlation between “brand authenticity” and “brand loyalty” after entering the mediating variable “brand trust” decreased from (0.695) to (0.373). This indicates the presence of a significant indirect effect of the mediating variable in the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, and because of this indirect effect, the value of the direct effect has decreased. Table (8) shows the results of the “brand trust” mediation test, whether it is partial or total mediation.

Table (8) Path analysis

Path	Model estimates				Model fit indices			
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	CMIN	NFI	IFI	CFI
M <--- X	1.040	0.071	14.698	***	0.001	1.000	1.000	1.000
Y <--- X	0.564	0.087	6.490	***				
Y <--- M	0.468	0.058	8.090	***				

The AMOS program was used to extract the results of Table (8) for the indirect path analysis of the fourth research hypothesis. The value of (C.R) is the result of dividing the estimate by the standard error, and when the value of (C.R) is greater than (1.964), this means that the mediation is partial. Therefore, the independent variable continues to have a direct effect on the dependent variable despite the presence of the mediating variable, and this is confirmed by the value of (P), which amounts to (0.001). As for the most important model fit indicators, which are (CMIN, NFI, IFI, CFI), the closer (CMIN) is to zero, the better the model fit. As for (NFI, IFI, CFI), the closer the value of each of them is to (1.000) The better the model fit.

5. Conclusion

The results that were presented and discussed in the previous part concluded that Baghdad Soft Drinks Company possesses a high level of “brand authenticity” through the four dimensions that were studied, which include (continuity, authenticity, integrity and reliability). In addition, the company also has a high level of “brand trust” and “brand loyalty”. It was also shown that there was a positive effect of “brand authenticity” on both “brand trust” and “brand loyalty,” meaning that the company’s efforts that were made to build “brand authenticity” were reflected positively in increasing both “brand trust” and “brand Loyalty”. In addition to the presence of a positive effect of “brand trust” on “brand loyalty”, that is, if a brand is trustworthy, this will be reflected positively in “brand loyalty”. The research also concluded the positive role of “brand trust” as a mediator in the relationship between “brand authenticity” and “brand loyalty”. Therefore, Baghdad Soft Drinks Company will be able to raise the level of “brand loyalty” by investing the efforts made in “brand authenticity” and directing them towards building “brand trust,” as it will increase the effect of “brand authenticity” on “brand loyalty”. Therefore, Baghdad Soft Drinks Company will be able to raise the level of “brand loyalty” by focusing on the positive effect of “brand authenticity” on “brand trust”, which will subsequently increase the effect of “brand authenticity” on “brand loyalty”.

References:

- 1- Agustin, C., & Singh, J. (2005). Curvilinear effects of consumer loyalty determinants in relational exchanges. In *Journal of Marketing Research* 42(1), 96-108.
- 2- Al-alak, B. A. (2014). Impact of marketing activities on relationship quality in the Malaysian banking sector. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(3), 347- 356.
- 3- Atulkar, S. (2020). Brand trust and brand loyalty in mall shoppers. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 38(5), 559-572.

- 4- Azad, N., & Safaei, M. (2012). The impact of brand value on brand selection: Case study of mobile phone selection. *Management Science Letters*, 2(4), 1233-1238.
- 5- Becerra, E. P., & Badrinarayanan, V. (2013). The influence of brand trust and brand identification on brand evangelism. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 22(5), 371-383.
- 6- Benhardy, K. A., Hardiyansyah, Putranto, A., & Ronadi, M. (2020). Brand image and price perceptions impact on purchase intentions: Mediating brand trust. *Management Science Letters*, 10(14), 3425-3432.
- 7- Bilgin, Y. (2018). The effect of social media marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, 6(1), 128-148.
- 8- Botterill, J. (2007). Cowboys, outlaws and artists: The rhetoric of authenticity and contemporary jeans and sneaker advertisements. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7(1), 105-125.
- 9- Bruhn, M., Schoenmüller, V., Schäfer, D., & Heinrich, D. (2012). Brand authenticity: Towards a deeper understanding of its conceptualization and measurement. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 40, 567-576.
- 10- Butts, M. M., & Michels, L. C. (2006). The sources of four commonly reported cutoff criteria: What did they really say? *Organizational Research Methods*, 9(2), 202-220.
- 11- Campagna, C. L., Donthu, N., & Yoo, B. (2023). Brand authenticity: literature review, comprehensive definition, and an amalgamated scale. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 31(2), 129-145.
- 12- Carroll, G. R., & Wheaton, D. R. (2009). The organizational construction of authenticity: An examination of contemporary food and dining in the U.S. In *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 29, 255-282.
- 13- Cengiz, H., & Akdemir-Cengiz, H. (2016). Review of Brand Loyalty Literature: 2001 – 2015. *Journal of Research in Marketing*, 6(1), 407-434.
- 14- Chen, X., & Lee, G. (2021). How does brand legitimacy shapes brand authenticity and tourism destination loyalty: Focus on cultural heritage tourism. *Global Business and Finance Review*, 26(1), 53-67.
- 15- DAM, T. C. (2020). Influence of Brand Trust, Perceived Value on Brand Preference and Purchase Intention. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 7(10), 934-947.
- 16- Fritz, K., Schoenmueller, V., & Bruhn, M. (2017). Authenticity in branding – exploring antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 324-348.
- 17- Harjadi, D., Fatmasari, D., & Hidayat, A. (2023). Consumer identification in cigarette industry: Brand authenticity, brand identification, brand experience, brand loyalty and brand love. *Uncertain Supply Chain Management*, 11(2), 481-488.
- 18- Haudi, Handayani, W., Musnaini, Suyoto, Y. T., Prasetyo, T., Pital-Oka, E., Wijoyo, H., Yonata, H., Koho, I. R., & Cahyono, Y. (2022). The effect of social media marketing on brand trust, brand equity and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 6(3), 961-972.
- 19- Hidayat, S., & Setiawati, F. A. (2021). Brand Authenticity as a Mediator of Relationship Between Self-Congruity and Consumer Loyalty. *Psychological Research and Intervention*, 4(1), 35-42.

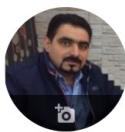
- 20- Huang, C. C. (2017). The impacts of brand experiences on brand loyalty: mediators of brand love and trust. *Management Decision*, 55(5), 915-934.
- 21- Husain, R., Paul, J., & Koles, B. (2022). The role of brand experience, brand resonance and brand trust in luxury consumption. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 66, 1-16.
- 22- Kaiser, H. F., & Rice, J. (1974). Little Jiffy, Mark Iv. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 34(1), 111-117.
- 23- Khadim, R. A., Hanan, M. A., Arshad, A., Saleem, N., & Khadim, N. A. (2018). Revisiting antecedents of brand loyalty: Impact of perceived social media communication with brand trust and brand equity as mediators. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 17(1), 1-13.
- 24- Khan, S., & Khan, B. M. (2017). Measuring brand equity of foreign fashion apparels in the Indian market. *Journal for Global Business Advancement*, 10(1), 26-42.
- 25- Kim, J., Lee, H., & Lee, J. (2020). Smartphone preferences and brand loyalty: A discrete choice model reflecting the reference point and peer effect. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 52, 1-9.
- 26- Kim, S. H., Kim, M., Holland, S., & Townsend, K. M. (2021). Consumer-Based Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust in Brand Loyalty in The Korean Coffee Shop Market. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 45(3), 423-446.
- 27- Kim, S. (Sam), Choe, J. Y. (Jacey), & Petrick, J. F. (2018). The effect of celebrity on brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty, and destination attachment to a literary festival. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 9, 320-329.
- 28- Kumail, T., Qeed, M. A. Al, Aburumman, A., Abbas, S. M., & Sadiq, F. (2022). How Destination Brand Equity and Destination Brand Authenticity Influence Destination Visit Intention: Evidence from the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 28(3), 332-358.
- 29- Kumar, V., Batista, L., & Maull, R. (2011). The Impact of Operations Performance on Customer Loyalty. *Service Science*, 3(2), 158-171.
- 30- Kumar, V., & Kaushik, A. K. (2022). Engaging customers through brand authenticity perceptions: The moderating role of self-congruence. *Journal of Business Research*, 138, 26-37.
- 31- Kwan Soo Shin, S., Amenuvor, F. E., Basilisco, R., & Owusu-Antwi, K. (2019). Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty: A Moderation and Mediation Perspective. *Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology*, 38(4), 1-17.
- 32- Kwon, J. H., Jung, S. H., Choi, H. J., & Kim, J. (2020). Antecedent factors that affect restaurant brand trust and brand loyalty: focusing on US and Korean consumers. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 30(7), 990-1015.
- 33- Lee, J., & Chung, L. (2020). Effects of perceived brand authenticity in health functional food consumers. *British Food Journal*, 122(2), 617-634.
- 34- Michael B. Beverlaand. (2005). Crafting Brand Authenticity: The Case of Luxury Wines. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(5), 1003-1029.
- 35- Moorman, C., Zaltman, G., & Deshpande, R. (1992). Relationships between Providers and Users of Market Research: The Dynamics of Trust within and between Organizations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29(3), 314-328.

- 36- Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F., & Grohmann, B. (2015). Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 25*(2), 200-2018.
- 37- Munuera-Aleman, J. L., Delgado-Ballester, E., & Yague-Guillen, M. J. (2003). Development and Validation of a Brand Trust Scale. *International Journal of Market Research, 45*(1), 35-54.
- 38- Napoli, J., Dickinson, S. J., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(6), 1090-1098.
- 39- Oh, H., Prado, P. H. M., Korelo, J. C., & Frizzo, F. (2019). The effect of brand authenticity on consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Product and Brand Management, 28*(2), 231-241.
- 40- Penz, E., & Stöttinger, B. (2008). Original brands and counterfeit brands—do they have anything in common? *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 7*(2), 146-163.
- 41- Portal, S., Abratt, R., & Bendixen, M. (2019). The role of brand authenticity in developing brand trust. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 27*(8), 714-729.
- 42- Puspaningrum, A. (2020). Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty: The Role of Brand Trust. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business, 7*(12), 951-958.
- 43- Rodrigues, P., Pinto Borges, A., & Sousa, A. (2022). Authenticity as an antecedent of brand image in a positive emotional consumer relationship: the case of craft beer brands. *EuroMed Journal of Business, 17*(4), 634-651.
- 44- Schallehn, M., Burmann, C., & Riley, N. (2014). Brand authenticity: Model development and empirical testing. *Journal of Product and Brand Management, 23*(3), 192-199.
- 45- Shabbir, M. Q., Khan, A. A., & Khan, S. R. (2017). Brand Loyalty Brand Image and Brand Equity: The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness. In *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies, 19*(2), 416-423.
- 46- Södergren, J. (2021). Brand authenticity: 25 Years of research. *International Journal of Consumer Studies, 45*(4), 645-663.
- 47- Subastiyanti, M. A., & Sutedjo, B. (2022). The influence of brand image, brand awareness and brand trust on brand loyalty (study on students using Wardah cosmetics). In *JIM UPB Journal of Management Studies Program Universitas Putera Batam, 10*(2), 163-170.
- 48- Wagner, B. (2010). Authenticity: What consumers really want-james H. gilmore and B. joseph pine II. *International Journal of Market Research, 52*(4), 547-549.
- 49- Wang, S., Liao, Y. K., Wu, W. Y., & Lê, H. B. K. (2021). Hypothesis the role of corporate social responsibility perceptions in brand equity, brand credibility, brand reputation, and purchase intentions. *Sustainability (Switzerland), 13*(21), 1-19.
- 50- Zeren, D., & Kara, A. (2021). Effects of brand heritage on intentions to buy of airline services: The mediating roles of brand trust and brand loyalty. *Sustainability (Switzerland), 13*(1), 1-15.

Appendix: The questionnaire

Brand Authenticity						
• Continuity						
No.	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	A brand with history					
2	The brand is consistent over time					
3	The brand does not stay true to itself *					
4	The brand offers continuity					
5	The brand has a clear concept that it pursues					
• Integrity						
6	The brand does not give back to its consumers*					
7	The brand has no moral principles*					
8	The brand is true to a set of moral values					
9	The brand cares about its consumers					
• Originality						
10	The brand clearly distinguishes itself from other brands					
11	The brand does not stand out from other brands*					
12	I think the brand is unique					
13	The brand makes a genuine impression					
• Credibility						
14	The brand will not betray me					
15	The brand is dishonest*					
16	My experience of the brand has shown me that it does not keep its promises*					
17	The brand's promises are credible					
Brand Trust						
18	I trust the brand					
19	I rely on the brand					
20	The brand is trustworthy					
21	The brand is safe					
22	The brand is honest					
Brand Loyalty						
23	I would not buy other brands, if X is available at the store					
24	I consider myself to be loyal to X					
25	I would like to buy another product of the same brand next time					
26	I will keep on buying X as long as it provides me satisfied products					
27	I am still willing to buy X even if its price is a little higher than that of its competitors					
28	I would love to recommend X to my friends					

(*) It means that the question is reversed



نبذة عن الباحث: حاصل على لقب مدرس دكتور، حاصل على شهادة دكتوراه فلسفة في إدارة الاعمال/ كلية الإدارة والاقتصاد/ جامعة بغداد. ومختص في مجال إدارة التسويق، ولديه عدد من البحوث المنشورة في مجال التسويق والأداء الوظيفي.

About the researcher: He holds the title of Lecturer Doctor, holds a PhD in Business Administration/College of Administration and Economics/University of Baghdad. He is specialized in the field of marketing management, and has a number of published research papers in the field of marketing and job performance.