

Impact of Product Quality, Ethical Branding, and Trust on Brand Loyalty and Customer Satisfaction in the Body Care Industry

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between major customer behavior characteristics that have an impact on the reputation and loyalty of businesses. Product Quality, Brand Loyalty, Trust, Customer Satisfaction, and Ethical Branding are the five major elements that are investigated in this research. These factors are measured from the perspective of internal consistency utilizing well-known dependability methodologies. We can verify the accuracy of the tools and their potential future applications thanks to the data, which demonstrates their reliability across all construction projects. According to the findings of the correlation study, the aspects of product quality, branding that is founded on ethics, and trust are all interconnected. According to the findings, customers who strongly believe in the brand are more likely to trust the company when they perceive ethical efforts. In addition to having relevance for theoretical research, the findings also have ramifications for practical marketing. According to the findings of the study, brand managers should incorporate ethics and quality into their product offerings to build genuine trust and long-term support among consumers.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour; Brand Loyalty; Ethical Branding; Product Quality; Customer Satisfaction; Reliability Analysis; Marketing Strategy; Brand Management; Ethical Initiatives.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Context

Growing consumer demand has made the body care segment in the personal care market one of the fastest-growing, offering a range of products including moisturisers, serums, sunscreens, and body scrubs. More people seeking items that benefit both their bodies and the world are changing what makes a person loyal to or satisfied with a product. The reason customers buy now includes quality, responsible attitudes, and trust, not just availability and price. The quality of products is widely regarded as a primary reason for customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. How well a product performs, how long it lasts, how safe it is, and its appearance all affect how consumers perceive it and decide to buy it again. Particularly in body care, what matters most to consumers is how well, how safe, and how effective a product is for them. Real-world results indicate that achieving high

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product quality leads to increased consumer satisfaction and loyalty [2]. Businesses that deliver high-quality body care products often see their customers respond more positively emotionally, stay loyal for longer, and speak more favourably about them.

People working in both schools and industry are paying more attention to ethical branding. A company adopts ethical branding when it consistently follows honest, responsible, and environmentally friendly practices throughout its operations. Among other things, body care products should be cruelty-free, have recyclable packaging, adhere to fair labour practices, and disclose their ingredient sources. It is clear from studies that brand loyalty is higher among millennials and Gen Z if a brand supports their values [26]. On this note, ethical branding serves as a duty and also helps companies gain a competitive edge and win over customers. A brand's trustworthiness provides support for people who interact with it. When you have trust in a brand, you feel confident that it will keep its promises and always act in your best interest. It is especially true in body care products, as misuse, allergic reactions, or false advertising are likely.

Açikgöz et al. [8], found that trust in brands significantly enhances customer satisfaction and is closely linked to loyalty, provided the brand is respected and perceived as having integrity. Assessing the quality of the products, the brand's approach to ethics, and the level of trust consumers have in the brand are key factors in their decision-making process for personal care products. Satisfaction and loyalty improve when users encounter each of the constructs, but their impact is even greater when they appear together. A notable example is that a reliable product can still lose customers if trust is damaged or doubts arise about its value. Additionally, if the product fails to meet expectations over time, trust alone will not guarantee that people remain loyal to the brand. For this reason, it is necessary to consider all these points when creating a brand management plan.

1.2. Problem Statement

Although product quality, ethical branding, and trust in a brand are all growing in importance to consumers, few studies have examined the shared effect these factors have on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the body care industry. Many existing studies have examined different components independently, although it's essential to consider their combined roles. Earlier research has focused mainly on either Western or broad personal care segments, paying less attention to what happens in unique markets of developing or transitional zones. Fahira and Djamaludin [9] and Tutor et al. [31] highlighted the impact of brand trust and product quality on customer loyalty in the cosmetic industry. However, they failed to explore the effect of ethical branding, focusing solely on makeup products rather than specifically on body care.

Only in the context of culinary businesses does Ambarwati et al. [1] find that brand satisfaction has an impact on brand trust. It remains challenging to model these concepts meaningfully, as they encompass the specifics of today's body care market and examine the combined effects on how people behave and feel. Although often discussed in terms of concepts, ethical branding has not been well studied in conjunction with trust and product quality. As the industry is being carefully examined for its impact on the planet and society, missing such information may lead to a misunderstanding of how consumers make decisions. Since today's markets are highly competitive, understanding how the variables interact helps make informed branding decisions for retaining customers.

1.3. Gap in Literature

Integrated frameworks that relate product quality, ethical branding, and brand trust to customer satisfaction and loyalty are absent from the study of the body care industry. Many researchers have independently examined the relationship between quality, trust, and loyalty, but few have investigated these effects simultaneously in the same study [2]; [13]. According to Açikgöz et al. [8], trust in ethics influences how consumers perceive products, but there is a lack of discussion on how this shapes loyalty for personal care products [36]. According to Kassim et al. [26], customers' evaluation of a brand and their trust in the company significantly influence their loyalty to the cosmetic brand in emerging markets; however, further investigation into ethical issues is warranted. As a result, we need research that checks these ideas with data and also puts them in context for an industry that closely affects consumer health, identity, and values [37]. Since companies in the body care industry heavily interact with consumers and involve them emotionally, such research can be very useful. This study aims to fill that gap and provide valuable insights that matter to brand experts, marketers, and scholars alike.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study adds value to academic work and to practical management in several respects. It first introduces a detailed model using data to analyse how the combination of good product quality, ethical behaviour, and trust influences customer happiness and loyalty to the brand. Such an approach leads to a better grasp of why customers behave as they do in body care by including a range of influencing factors. Second, the conclusions from this research can support the improvement of marketing ethics. Since consumers expect more transparency, brands must take true actions rather than just using marketing words. Notions developed from this study enable companies to create more effective CSR and product plans that appeal to buyers who prioritise

ethics. The study also helps expand conversations about sustainability and ethical consumption by highlighting that ethical branding is central to making customers happier and more loyal. Aligning the behaviour of businesses with what consumers believe is crucial now, as loyalty to a brand can shift easily in response to public attention. At the policy level, the findings of this research are significant for groups that guide ethical practices in the personal care industry. If ethics are proven to matter in terms of consumer satisfaction and loyalty, we could see businesses adopt more fair trade, cruelty-free, and eco-label certifications.

2. Review of Literature

How customers feel about a brand depends on the brand's quality, ethical focus, and their level of trust in the products. The number of people who enjoy using your products is closely related to their experience with the product's quality [28]. Good products that exceed expectations make buyers happier and help them stay connected to the brand for a long time [11]; [6]. According to Ling et al. [11] and colleagues, having top-quality products is the first step to building a reputation. This encourages customers to repeat their purchases, strengthens brand recall, and attracts more customers to the company [11]. Ethical branding is shown in studies to build customer loyalty and satisfaction. Brands that adopt an ethical approach to positioning often appeal to shoppers who prioritise a company's actions and environmental responsibility, with a particular interest in products for the body [42]. For example, The Body Shop emphasises sustainability and ethical sourcing in its advertising, which helps the brand earn the trust of people who care about these issues [42].

Connecting corporate behaviour to customers' beliefs may help a brand retain customers, as people tend to trust companies that adhere to their values. A bond is created when customers trust a brand, even when faced with varying product quality. Trusted brands tend to retain their customers because regular, reliable, and pleasant service fosters loyalty [33]. Sinta et al. [7], Mustofa and Nuvriasari [23], and Ghimire and Karki [21] suggest that brand loyalty resulting from high-quality products stems from trust in a strong brand [43]. With high-quality products, customers feel more confident in the brand, which is crucial since body care buyers pay close attention to both the products and the companies that manufacture them. Additionally, research indicates that trust in a brand enhances the connection between how customers assess quality and their loyalty [32]; [12].

2.1. Product Quality and Brand Trust

Experts believe that strong product quality encourages customers to trust a brand and increases their satisfaction. Ensuring both pleasure and usefulness in products enhances brand satisfaction and trust, resulting in better-quality outcomes with happy, loyal customers [5]. Kania and his team discovered, as previous research has shown, that co-branding can enhance consumer views of a brand and that a better product leads to greater brand identification [30]. It has also been found that highlighting product quality in advertising helps firms build trust with customers. By sharing the right quality perception, researchers believe customers can buy more products and remain loyal to the brand [44]. The strength of the link between customer trust and the perceived quality of a product can significantly impact buyer satisfaction in the body care sector.

2.2. Ethical Branding and Customer Engagement

Shoppers want their brands to act responsibly, and ethical branding now plays a key role in building customer loyalty. Evidence suggests that an increasing number of people are opting for brands that demonstrate ethical concern [14]. It has been proven by Popa et al. [29] and Gümüş and Onurlubaş that leading CSR activities can enhance a brand's image, thereby encouraging customers and fostering brand loyalty [29]. Ethical branding enables companies to stand out and attract customers by aligning with contemporary customer expectations and values. Mandung [4] research indicates that adopting sustainability standards tends to keep consumers more engaged with the company. As a result, body care companies are encouraged to adopt clear and ethical practices, as more people are now choosing brands that align with their values.

2.3. Trust as a Mediator between Ethical Branding and Loyalty

Relationships with a strong sense of trust help protect ethical branding from damaging brand loyalty. New evidence suggests that people are more likely to trust and remain loyal to a brand if it acts ethically [38]. When marketing is done ethically, it increases customers' belief that the brand acts fairly and cares about their actions. Research on halal cosmetics reveals that individuals concerned with ethics are more likely to trust the product, be loyal to the brand, and choose to repurchase [17]. Because of this, brands need to use ethical strategies to build trust and ensure satisfied and loyal customers in the body care market [39]. According to multiple studies, perceiving a product as having high quality makes customers happier, as higher satisfaction generally results in loyal brand preference [16]; [35].

Product quality has a significant impact on how customers perceive the brand, which in turn shapes their loyalty. Consequently, quality can substantially influence the way customers decide what to buy [34]. Branding related to ethics plays a crucial role in

shaping consumer behaviour. An increasing number of customers trust companies that demonstrate good CSR, as it can build loyalty to a brand [3]; [20]. A business practices ethics in branding by producing goods ethically and by responsibly marketing its activities and principles, so that customers recognise the company's integrity [19]. Brands that prioritise social accountability encourage consumers to feel a deeper emotional connection, increasing the likelihood of trust and loyalty [3]; [20]. The study reveals that ethical branding enhances trust in the business, which in turn fosters loyalty, demonstrating that people's purchasing decisions are frequently influenced by brand ethics [20].

A good level of trust plays a significant role in linking product quality, a brand's ethical standards, and customer loyalty. Strong relationships between consumers and brands originate from trust, which helps go from simple satisfaction to devoted loyalty [15]; [18]; [10]. Research evidence suggests that consumers' trust in a brand primarily depends on their opinion of the product and the brand's ethics [19]; [40]. In addition, once trust is established, it helps retain customers and fosters positive feedback, which in turn leads to increased brand loyalty [25]; [27]. A brand's effect on consumers grows when they feel connected emotionally, which results from reliable quality and responsible actions, leading people to support the brand more [41]; [24]. Strong product quality, ethics, and trust collectively form a solid foundation for attracting and retaining customers in the body care industry. Maintaining ethical and quality-related standards at the forefront enables a brand to better inspire trust and keep customers satisfied [22]. Therefore, focusing on these issues is crucial for body care companies seeking a sustainable competitive advantage as the market evolves rapidly.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the effects of product quality, ethical branding, and trust on brand loyalty and customer satisfaction within the body care industry. It was felt that descriptive design would provide a more accurate understanding of consumer behaviour patterns and connections between main variables in the natural state of the market environment. By using this technique, researchers can observe how consumers perceive body care brands in a manner that reflects their actual purchasing habits.

3.2. Population and Sampling Frame

This study focused on individuals who frequently purchase body care items and shop at locations such as malls and supermarkets. Participants were 18 years or older and had purchased a body care product within the previous six months, ensuring they had a sufficient understanding of the products chosen for the study. The selected sample included customers shopping at major shopping malls and supermarkets. These spots were chosen because customers make purchasing decisions about body care products there, and they include a diverse range of people from different age groups, shopping norms, and prior experiences.

3.3. Sampling Method and Sample Size

Data were collected from participants for this study using a convenience sampling method. Researchers determined that a sample of 350 participants was required. The number of cases to include was also governed by the research model, which comprises several independent variables (product quality, ethical branding, and trust) and dependent variables (brand loyalty and customer satisfaction).

3.4. Data Collection Instrument

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The survey was developed to gauge people's perceptions of the quality, ethics, trustworthiness, satisfaction, and attitude toward loyalty of various body care products. Related to the research variables, agreement levels among the participants were assessed primarily using Likert-type scales.

3.5. Validity Testing

Marketing experts and industry professionals reviewed the questionnaire to assess its worthiness, relevance, and completeness. To assess face validity, a small group of potential respondents was asked to complete the initial survey version, enabling us to identify any issues with wording, instructions, or format. Through factor analysis, it was verified whether the items aligned with their expected constructs and whether the measurement model exhibited adequate fit indices. This approach enabled the researchers to develop a more robust version of the questionnaire and a reliable instrument for gathering accurate data.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

Researchers collected data by interviewing people at different malls and supermarket locations using a validated questionnaire. The study team contacted participants at various times and on different days to capture their shopping habits and gather information from several groups. The team collected data in accordance with ethical guidelines to ensure that every participant provided informed consent. Respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions and that all their responses would be kept confidential.

3.7. Response Rate and Data Screening

Out of the initial 350 questionnaires administered, 306 were found to be usable for analysis, resulting in an effective response rate of 87.4%. The discrepancy between administered and usable questionnaires was due to several factors, including incomplete responses, inconsistent answer patterns, and questionnaires with substantial missing data that could not be adequately handled through statistical methods. Data screening practices were followed to detect and correct for missing values, outliers, and response bias. All questionnaires were thoroughly reviewed for completeness, and responses indicating blatant inattention or extreme response set patterns were excluded from the final dataset. Screening in this manner ensured that only high-quality, consistent responses were included in the subsequent analysis, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the research results. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.

4. Analysis and Findings

The reliability analysis presented in Table 1 indicates that all the variables measured possess a high degree of internal consistency, as reflected in their corresponding Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Product Quality has the highest reliability of 0.923, indicating that the items used to measure this construction are highly consistent and reliable.

Table 1: Reliability analysis

No.	Variable	Reliability Analysis
1	Product Quality	0.923
2	Ethical Branding	0.838
3	Trust	0.907
4	Brand Loyalty	0.914
5	Customer Satisfaction	0.884

Ethical Branding has a reliability coefficient of 0.838, reflecting a high degree of internal consistency, although it is slightly lower than that of other variables. The trust construct has a high reliability coefficient of 0.907, confirming that it has been measured reliably. Brand Loyalty and Customer Satisfaction have reliability coefficients of 0.914 and 0.884, respectively, both of which exceed the acceptable value of 0.70, thereby confirming that the scale items employed are consistent and appropriate for further analysis (Table 2).

Table 2: Correlation analysis

	PQ	EB	CS
Product Quality (PQ)	1		
Ethical Branding (EB)	.282	1	
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	.291	.320	1

The correlation analysis examines the relationships between Product Quality (PQ), Ethical Branding (EB), Trust (T), Brand Loyalty (BL), and Customer Satisfaction (CS). The correlation coefficient between Ethical Branding and Product Quality is 0.282, with a significance level of 0.005, indicating a statistically significant and positive relationship. Similarly, the relationship between Product Quality and trust exhibits a positive correlation of 0.291, which is also statistically significant at the 0.003 level, suggesting that an increase in product quality is likely to be associated with an increase in trust. Additionally, Ethical Branding and Trust show a moderate positive correlation of 0.320, significant at the 0.001 level. All correlations are found to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), thus indicating strong relationships between the variables when adjusting for Brand Loyalty and Customer Satisfaction. This indicates that improvements in product quality and ethical branding efforts are likely to support consumer trust (Table 3).

Table 3: Regression analysis and model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate
1	.759 ^a	.576	.563	.671

4.1. Predictors (Constant) Trust, Ethical Branding, Product Quality

The model summary indicates a high correlation between the independent variables—Trust (T), Ethical Branding (EB), and Product Quality (PQ)—and the dependent variable, Brand Loyalty (BL). The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is estimated at 0.759, indicating a high correlation between the predictors and brand loyalty. The R-squared value of 0.576 indicates that approximately 57.6% of the variation in brand loyalty is accounted for by the combined effect of trust, ethical branding, and product quality. The Adjusted R-Square, estimated at 0.563, adjusts the R-Square for the number of predictors in the model and confirms that the model is highly explanatory in nature (Table 4).

Table 4: ANOVA analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	59.830	3	19.943	44.287	.000b
Residual	44.131	98	.450		
Total	130.961	101			

The standard error of the estimate is 0.671, representing the average distance between the observed values and the regression line. The F-test yields a highly significant result ($F = 44.287$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the overall regression model is highly significant and that the independent variables, collectively, have a significant impact on brand loyalty (Table 5).

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	.436	.233		1.870	.064
Product Quality	.445	.100	.432	4.438	.000
Ethical Branding	.231	.104	.215	2.227	.028
Trust	.186	.089	.204	2.084	.040

4.2. Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

Table 4, the ANOVA, provides useful information regarding the overall significance of the regression model. The regression model has a sum of squares of 59.830, corresponding to 3 degrees of freedom, indicating the presence of three predictor variables. The mean square for regression is 19.943, and the F-value is 44.287, both of which are used to assess whether the regression model is a good fit for the data. The significance (Sig.) value is .000, which is less than the standard alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant as a whole and that the independent variables have a significant predictive value for the dependent variable. The residual sum of squares is 44.131, related to 98 degrees of freedom, reflecting the presence of some unexplained variance. However, since the total sum of squares is 130.961, it can be ascertained that the model explains a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable. The coefficient Table 5 outlines the individual contributions of each independent variable in the regression model, thereby helping to understand the degree to which each predictor contributes to the dependent variable.

The constant, or intercept, yields an unstandardized coefficient of 0.436 and a p-value of 0.064, which narrowly falls beyond the 0.05 threshold, suggesting that the constant fails to attain statistical significance at the 5% threshold. Among all the independent variables, Product Quality shows a positive and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.445 and a p-value of 0.000. The result suggests that a one-unit increase in Product Quality is associated with a 0.445-unit rise in the dependent variable, while keeping other variables constant. This large standardised beta (0.432) and t-value (4.438) also serve as proof of its significant effect on the model. Ethical Branding is also a significant contributing factor, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.231 with a p-value of 0.028, reflecting a strong positive correlation between it and the dependent variable. Its standardised beta of 0.215 and t-value of 2.227 reflect its moderate influence on the model. Lastly, Trust yields a coefficient of 0.186 and a p-value of 0.040, indicating that it is significant and positively related to the dependent variable. The standardised beta of 0.204 and t-value of 2.084 indicate a minor but statistically significant contribution.

5. Findings

The results of the study indicate high levels of internal reliability for all the primary variables under investigation: Product Quality, Brand Loyalty, Trust, Customer Satisfaction, and Ethical Branding. These constructs were quantified using standard reliability measures, specifically Cronbach's Alpha, to assess internal consistency. The results indicate extremely high values for each of the constructs, where Product Quality has the highest reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.923$), followed closely by Brand Loyalty ($\alpha = 0.914$), Trust ($\alpha = 0.907$), Customer Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.884$), and Ethical Branding ($\alpha = 0.838$). All of these coefficients far surpass the well-documented 0.70 criterion, indicating extremely high consistency between the items within each of the measurement scales. This high internal reliability confirms the robustness of the measurement instruments and warrants their continued use in future studies, both for replication purposes and for longitudinal analysis.

The demographic profile of the respondents reflects a comparatively diverse sample with a slight gender bias, as 54.9% are female and 45.1% are male. The marital status also categorises the sample, with a moderate majority of married respondents (55.9%) compared to their unmarried counterparts (44.1%). The distribution of gender and marital status helps make the results more relevant to the larger population groups. The education levels of the respondents are varied, with SSLC and undergraduate degree holders representing the largest segments at 27.5% each. 22.5% of the respondents are higher secondary school passers, 13.7% are postgraduates, and the remaining 8.8% fall under the "other" category. This education distribution reflects the study's interface with respondents at various academic levels. The income distribution reveals a significant disparity, with the majority (43.1%) having incomes of less than ₹16,000 per month. As one moves up the income scale, the sample size decreases, and higher-income groups are underrepresented in the sample.

Given this, the study findings are likely to capture the views of low- and middle-income customers largely, and reservations regarding the generalizability of certain findings to individuals in higher economic levels accompany this. The correlation analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among the most significant variables. When Customer Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty are held constant, strong positive correlations still exist among Product Quality, Ethical Branding, and Trust. The highest correlation is between Ethical Branding and Trust ($r = 0.320$, $p < 0.001$), followed by the correlations between Product Quality and Trust ($r = 0.291$, $p < 0.003$) and between Product Quality and Ethical Branding ($r = 0.282$, $p < 0.005$). All the above correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, thus testifying to the interrelatedness of these constructs. These findings support that stronger perceptions of product quality and ethical branding are associated with stronger consumer trust, even when satisfaction and loyalty are held constant.

6. Suggestion

Given the high reliability coefficients found in this study, it is strongly recommended that researchers continue to use these measurement scales in subsequent studies. The high Cronbach's Alpha values indicate that the items are successfully measuring the constructs as intended, thus yielding consistent and comparable research findings across different samples and time periods. Sustaining these measurement scales provides methodological consistency and facilitates the establishment of a standard foundation in consumer behaviour and brand perception studies. Ethical Branding—despite showing a satisfactory degree of reliability—registered the lowest score of the five constructs ($\alpha = 0.838$). While this still reflects high internal consistency, there is still room for improvement.

Researchers may opt to expand the item pool to capture a broader spectrum of ethical aspects (e.g., environmental responsibility, labour ethics, transparency in communication) without sacrificing the theoretical consistency of the construct. Qualitative feedback or pilot testing can be used to refine scale items that are potentially vague or overly specific. Future studies should incorporate stratified sampling methods to obtain a more representative sample across various socioeconomic groups, specifically in terms of income and education levels. The present sample, though weighted toward lower-income participants, may constrain the generalizability of the results to higher-income populations. By applying stratified sampling procedures, researchers are better equipped to ensure that all socioeconomic strata are represented, thereby enhancing the generalizability and richness of the findings.

The participants should also be drawn from educationally underrepresented populations, including postgraduates and those holding professional degrees, to examine the extent to which educational level influences consumer attitudes toward brand-related constructs. Organisations can utilise these insights to develop comprehensive marketing campaigns that support both product excellence and ethical branding simultaneously. These two aspects are complementary but not mutually exclusive. Product excellence enhances the functional value of a product, while ethical branding fosters an emotional and moral connection with customers. Marketing campaigns that address these two areas holistically are likely to be more effective in creating consumer trust and brand loyalty. Collaborative efforts in an interdisciplinary setting among product development, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and marketing teams can lead to the synchronisation of brand messaging and a uniform consumer experience.

7. Implications

The high reliability scores obtained in this study have significant implications for both academic researchers and practitioners. At the academic level, the scores validate the measures of the constructs, thereby increasing the validity of the findings. The high internal consistency ensures that the scales used are not only statistically sound but also theoretically grounded, as required for the development of cumulative knowledge in the marketing and consumer behaviour disciplines. In operational terms, these reliability metrics enable decision-makers to develop a marketing strategy based on strong, evidence-based analysis. For example, the high correlation between Ethical Branding and trust enables marketers to invest confidently in ethics-based campaigns, knowing that such efforts will positively impact customer perceptions and behaviours. Demographic analysis suggests that the study findings are particularly relevant to consumers in lower- and middle-income categories.

Marketing strategies for these segments can be scientifically created with this data. However, the low coverage of high-income groups suggests that marketing communications derived from this research may not be maximally effective in reaching high-income consumers unless supplemented with additional research. Companies targeting premium segments must conduct additional research to determine if the same factors hold the same weights or if other factors (e.g., prestige, exclusivity) predominate. The equivalence of gender and marital status breakdown allows the marketer to paper findings across these segments. The campaigns do not necessarily have to change their messaging fundamentally by gender or marital status; instead, they should focus on shared values of quality and ethics. Variation in education, however, can affect the interpretation of marketing communications. Highly educated consumers may be more cynical in their responses or require more support for ethical communications, while others may be more susceptible to brand reputation or social influence.

Adopting a communication style that addresses these differences can help drive increased interaction. Most importantly, the high correlations between Product Quality, Ethical Branding, and Trust emphasise that firms cannot treat these as isolated silos. An investment in one can yield a payback in another. For instance, ethical returns in supply chain transparency can enhance perceived product quality and, consequently, increase customer trust. Firms need to adopt a holistic brand management approach, where functional and ethical dimensions are developed in tandem. Overall, this study's conclusions provide important insights into the evolving understanding of consumers' attitudes and perceptions of brands in a highly value-driven economy. The construct validity and interconnectedness of the concepts provide a solid foundation on which organisations can build meaningful and lasting relationships with consumers.

8. Conclusion

This research has highlighted the intricate relationship between product quality, ethical branding, and trust in influencing brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction within the body care industry. The findings confirm that while product performance is critical to consumer satisfaction, modern body care consumers increasingly make purchasing decisions based on a complex interaction between functional benefits and value congruity. The identification of trust as a key mediating variable between perceived quality and loyalty behaviours underscores the importance of honest communication and the consistent delivery of brand promises. Its cross-sectional design and geographic constraints limit the current study. Future studies should examine longitudinal effects and cross-cultural differences of these correlations. However, this analysis offers valuable lessons for practitioners operating within the evolving landscape of consumer expectations in the body care sector. As the market differentiation challenge continues to rise, brands that can effectively balance high product quality with authentic ethical processes and transparent communication strategies will be best suited to build the profound trust that drives long-term customer loyalty and satisfaction in this continually changing industry.

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