

Wellness and Wonder: How Service Attributes Inspire Brand Love through Customer

Well-Being?

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Abstract

The hospitality industry, in recent years, has witnessed significant market competition, making it imperative for the businesses to focus on enhancing customer experience to craft brand love. The current study investigated the impact of tangible and intangible service attributes on brand love through the mediating role of customer well-being in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. The study adopted the “Brand Resonance Model” as a primary path to investigate the role of service attributes in creating customer well-being and consequently, love for the brands in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire from a total of 480 respondents randomly, who often visit four-star and five-star hotels in Pakistan. The study used structural equation modelling utilizing Smart PLS 4.0 to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings suggest that the tangible and intangible service attributes have a positive impact on customer well-being. A significantly positive impact was observed for customer well-being on brand love. Moreover, there is a mediating impact of customer well-being on the relationship between service attributes and brand love which indicates the importance of customer well-being while creating passionate feelings of the consumers for brands in the hospitality industry. The study results are significant for the hotel industry in Pakistan and businesses should prioritize improving the service attributes and customer well-being strategies as they play important role in crafting love for their brands.

Keywords: Service Attributes, Well-being, Brand Love, Hospitality.

Introduction

The hospitality industry, marked by its intangible nature, relies heavily on the creation of memorable experiences, and emotional connection between the service providers and its customers (Le et al., 2021). The recent years have seen intense competition between the hospitality industry businesses calling them for focusing on customers to increase brand love (Basari & Shamsudin, 2020). There has been a growing recognition of the importance of brand love in the hospitality industry as brand love is created by satisfied customers which become loyal customers to the brand (Gumparthi & Patra, 2020). Brands that successfully evoke positive emotions and resonate with customers tend to foster brand love that serves as a powerful driver of customer satisfaction, and advocacy (Rodrigues, 2018). Brand love refers to the emotional attachment and deep affection that consumers develop towards a particular brand and is a powerful force that drives consumer loyalty, advocacy, and ultimately, business success

(Gumparthi & Patra, 2020). It is an affection and attachment of the customers that develops a more emotional connection of the customers towards a brand (Palusuk et al., 2019). Different factors have been identified in the research that impact the brand love including personal interaction, information seeking and brand value (Junaid, Hussain, Asghar, et al., 2020), e-word of mouth (Bilal et al., 2022), brand authenticity including existential and intrapersonal authenticity (Mody & Hanks, 2020), and cognitive engagement including attention and absorption (Shin & Back, 2020) among others. Moreover, the hospitality industry provides experiences that contribute to the well-being of customers in order to build long-term relationships and foster positive behavior (Lin & Choe, 2022). The direct impact of customer well-being in hospitality industry has been studied in detail. For instance, customer services well-being impacts the customer's behavioral intentions and life satisfaction (Falter & Hadwich, 2020). One way of improving the customer well-being and engagement is through fostering brand love into the customers (Junaid et al., 2020). Customer well-being fosters brand love (Attiq et al., 2022), provides competitive service advantage (Shulga et al., 2021), customer satisfaction (Awan et al., 2023), customer retention (Han et al., 2020), service experience and customer participation (Xie et al., 2020). This study intended to find the mediating effect of customer well-being on brand love.

Besides, service attributes are also the most important factors to create brand love and a sense of well-being in consumers. Service attributes are the tangible, and intangible elements of services that are provided by the organizations, that help in shaping up the customer experience, and perception of the organization (J. J. Kim et al., 2022). Service attributes such as quality of service, responsiveness, reliability, and empathy have been regarded as crucial towards determining the customer satisfaction and loyalty (Pitt et al., 1995). Cleanliness of the premises, and employees behavior are also the important service attributes in the hospitality industry identified by the customers (Karamustafa & Ülker, 2020). Research also suggests that the intangible service attributes carry more weightage in hotel selection compared to the tangible service attributes (J. Kim & Lee, 2019). Also, that the intangible service attributes are focused more by the service providers compared to the tangible service attributes that are relatively neglected (Santos, 2002). The impact of hotel attributes may vary in different markets, and among different types of travelers, and regions (Bi et al., 2020). Therefore, the research explored how tangible and intangible service attributes can impact the brand love in hospitality industry of Pakistan. Thus, this study aims to study the influence of tangible, and intangible service attributes on brand love through mediating role of customer well-being in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. By investigating these relationships, hospitality managers can gain insights into the specific service attributes that drive the brand love and the emotional and psychological mechanisms underlying these relationships. Understanding the customer brand love, and the factors that impact this behavior like service attributes, and well-being is essential for the organizations to cater the needs of the customers, and develop a long-term relationship with them.

These variables and their relationships have been discussed by researchers including (Kaufmann et al., 2016; Loureiro et al., 2012) but their existing literature is less explored in the context of understanding the customer brand love that has been addressed in this research. Also, while there is a considerable body of literature on service attributes, well-being and brand love in the hospitality industry, there is not enough research focusing specifically on the tangible and intangible service attributes through mediating role of well-being on brand love, which has been addressed in the study. The research adopted the “Brand Resonance Model” to test the impact of tangible and intangible service attributes on brand love with the mediating role of well-being. The brand resonance model explains the cause and effect relationship between different constructs of a brand (salience, image, performance, feeling, judgment and resonance), forming a brand equity (Moura et al., 2019). The model will help in understanding the factors like services attributes, brand love, and customer well-being in the hospitality industry. The research is significant in many ways including understanding the how customers engage with brands and contribute to their success. Also, by understanding the factors including brand love, service attributes, and the mediating role of customer well-being can help organizations in the hospitality industry in Pakistan to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to foster positive customer behaviors. It will be significant in terms of understanding the social, economic and cultural context of the hospitality industry of the country that can provide valuable insights into its industry that are relevant and applicable to developing countries like Pakistan. To do this, the research adopted quantitative study using structural equation modelling to understand how these variables impact the overall hospitality industry of Pakistan. The implications of the study will extend to both academia and industry, providing theoretical insights and practical recommendations for hospitality businesses to enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall well-being.

Literature Review

Tangible Service Attributes and Brand Love.

Tangible service attributes are the physical parts of the services that the customers can observe and can be easily measured or observed (Lefkoff-Hagius & Mason, 1990). The elements of tangible service attributes comprise of physical facilities, equipment, employee’s appearance, and other tangible attributes that form the part of overall service experience (J. J. Kim et al., 2022). Tangible service attributes such as clean and comfortable hotel rooms play a significant part in making a selection for hotels (Marić et al., 2016). These attributes help in developing the brand love for the customers, hence enhancing their loyalty towards the brand. (Bagozzi et al., 2017) posit that brand love as “an intense, passionate, and positive emotional state that consumers experience toward a brand, involving an intense emotional bond, affection, and deep attachment to the brand”. Brand love is characterized by a strong sense of commitment, self-identity fusion with the brand, and a willingness to engage in various positive behaviors to express and maintain the love for the brand, also Brand love refers to a strong emotional attachment to a brand (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). A research by (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012) suggests that consumers have a tendency towards

establishing brand love based on service attributes like customer services, and behaviour of front-line staff. Another study by (Wang et al., 2019) also highlight the fact that service attributes are very important in forming brand love and brand commitment by the consumers in sub-brands, and corporate brands. The study tested the relationship between tangible service attributes and brand love through the following hypothesis.

H1: There is a positive impact of tangible service attributes on brand love.

Intangible Service Attributes and Brand Love.

Intangible service attributes, such as service quality, personalization, empathy, and reputation, play a crucial role in shaping customers' emotional attachment and deep affection towards a particular brand (Sharif & Sidi Lemine, 2021). Intangible attributes are non-physical aspects of a service that are not directly observable but are experienced by customers. Studies have shown that specific service attributes can significantly influence brand love. For instance, intangible attributes such as staff courtesy, hotel security, personal attention and service quality are very important for the customers to choose their hotel stays (Marić et al., 2016). Intangible service attributes are of dire importance towards forming brand love for customers. When customers perceive high levels of service quality, including responsiveness, competence, and courtesy, they are more likely to develop a positive emotional connection with the brand (Wu et al., 2015). In the context of the hospitality industry in Pakistan, where customer satisfaction and loyalty are crucial for business success, fostering brand love through intangible service attributes is of utmost importance. Therefore, this research tested the relationship between intangible service attributes and brand love through the following hypothesis.

H2: There is a positive impact of intangible service attributes on brand love.

Mediating role of Well-being.

(Lalicic & Weismayer, 2018) defined well-being as "individuals' subjective evaluation and interpretation of their overall well-being, encompassing their cognitive and affective assessments of their own life satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment." (Hwang & Lee, 2018) operationalize well-being perception as "individuals' subjective understanding and interpretation of their own well-being, incorporating their cognitive assessments of life satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment, as well as their affective evaluations of positive emotions and overall positive functioning". According to (Grzeskowiak and Sirgy, 2007), "Consumers' perceptions of the extent to which brands actively contribute to improving their quality of life". A research by (J. J. Kim et al., 2021) into tangible and intangible hotel service attributes concluded that these attributes positively impact the consumer well-being perception, and brand loyalty in the hotel industry. The customer well-being has been used in the past research to study its impact where it was found that customer well-being mediated between customer loyalty, and word of mouth communication in the retail industry (Gardiazabal et al., 2020). The study used customer well-being as a mediator between tangible and intangible services attributes, and brand loyalty in the hospitality industry of Pakistan.

H3: Tangible Service Attributes positively impact the Customer Well-being

H4: Intangible Service Attributes positively impact the Customer Well-being.

H5: Customer Well-being positively Impacts the Brand Love.

H6: Customer Well-being mediates the relationship between Tangible service Attributes and Brand Love.

H7: Customer Well-being mediates the relationship between Intangible service

Attributes and Brand Love.

Brand Resonance Model:

The brand resonance model is used to test the customer resonance by managers and verify the strength of the bond of consumers with the brand (Raut et al., 2020). The brand resonance model is derived from the Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model, and comprises of four stages namely brand awareness, brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance (Moura et al., 2019). Each stage in the model contributes to the creation of a strong, resonant brand, with the model emphasizing the interplay between rational and emotional elements in consumer-brand relationships (Saputra et al., 2021). One of the factors that create a strong brand resonance is the brand love, which creates a strong bond between the customers and the companies (Saputra et al., 2021). Brand resonance and brand experience are also important segments of luxury consumption, with customer involvement mediating their relationship (Husain et al., 2022). As the study is on the consumption of luxury services of hotels in the hospitality industry, the application of brand resonance model will help understand how brand love can be enhanced to increase brand resonance in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. Previous researches on brand love including (Huang & Chen, 2022; Husain et al., 2022; Viertamo, 2023; Wijekoon & Fernando, 2020) have used the brand resonance model. The model is tested in the study to test the relation between service attributes, and brand love along with the mediating role of well-being in the hospitality industry.

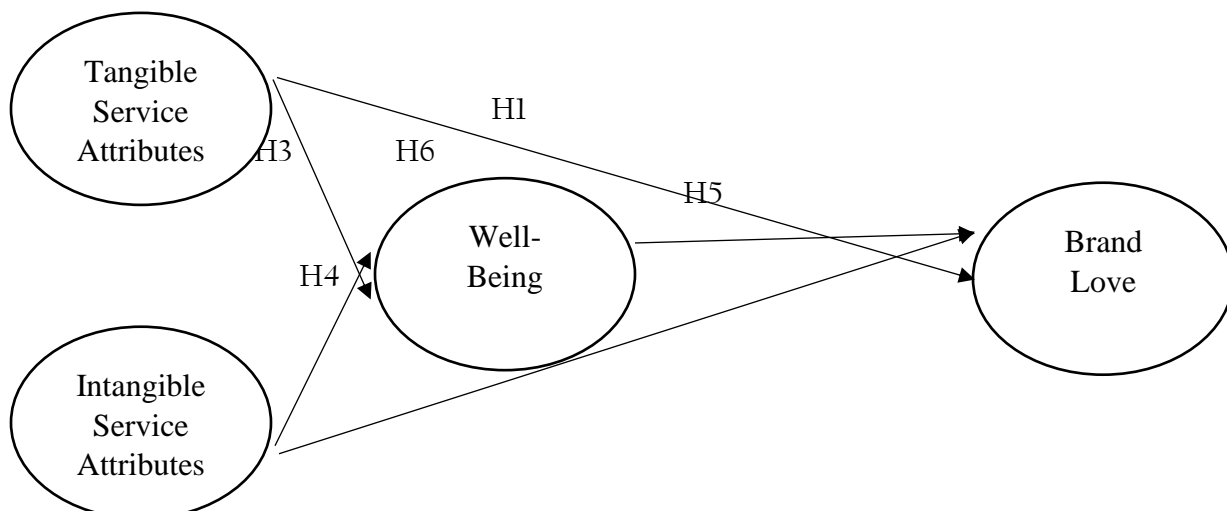


Figure 1: Study model and hypothesis development

Methodology

The study is quantitative in nature and applied a positivist approach to test the impact of tangible service attributes, and intangible service attributes through the mediating role of well-being on brand love. The study took the deductive approach to test the hypothesis, and took the questionnaire survey strategy, and is cross-sectional as data was taken from the respondents within the passage of six months. The study used structural equation modelling through SMART PLS 4.0 to analyze the results of the samples collected. Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is one of the widely used software for data analysis using complex relationships between the latent and observed variables (J. Hair et al., 2017).

Data Collection

Data was collected from customers that visit the hospitality industry of Pakistan including the hotels that fall into the category of four star and five-star hotels using questionnaires. Probability sampling was used in the study and further random sampling techniques were applied to collect data from respondents that visited four star and five star hotels in Pakistan in the years 2022-23. Responses were collected from 480 participants using a 5-point Likert scale. The scales indicated "1=Strongly Disagree", "2=Disagree", "3=Neutral", "4= Agree", and "5= Strongly Agree". The survey comprised of two parts. The first part comprised of the demographics data collected from the respondents, and the second part tested the study variables and the relationship between them was tested later using statistical software SMART PLS.

Analysis And Discussion

Descriptive of Demographics

A total of 480 respondents agreed to fill in the survey form. The respondents were asked demographics questions related to their gender, age, visits to the four-star, and five star hotels. The demographic statistics are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographical Statistics of Respondents (N=480)

	Demographics	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	187	39.03
	Female	293	60.97
Age	19-26 Years	64	13.15
	27-34 Years	111	23.17
	35 and above	305	63.67
Visits to 4 star Hotels	Once Only	148	30.68
	2-3 Times	150	31.31
	More than 3 Times	182	37.99
Visits to 5 star Hotels	Once Only	130	27.13

2-3 Times	170	35.49
More than 3 Times	180	37.36

Data Normality Analysis

Data normality analysis was conducted on the demographics and the study variables using mean values, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis. In tests with larger samples, the normality tests with Skewness and kurtosis should be used (DemiR, 2022). The results in Table 2 show that the values of Skewness and kurtosis of the demographics and study variables are within the thresholds hence showing that the values are normally distributed.

Table 2: Data Normality Analysis (N=480)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Gender	480	1.42	.506	.444	.129	-1.485	.257
Employment level	480	2.24	.845	-.469	.129	-1.442	.257
Age	480	2.17	.782	-.304	.129	-1.307	.257
4 star visits	480	1.93	.880	.415	.129	-1.475	.257
5 star visits	480	2.13	.825	.345	.129	-1.315	.257
Service Attribute (T)	480	12.38	2.18		.131	4.782	.261
Service Attributes (I)	480	43.50	7.13		.131	4.965	.261
Well-Being	480	27.67	10.06		.131	6.573	.261
Brand Love	480	110.14	14.84		.131	5.811	.261

Test Results for the Measurement Model

Factor Loading

The first step in testing the measurement model is testing the factor loading. According to (Aburumman et al., 2023), the factor loading of items to be included in the analysis should be above 0.50. The values of factor loading for the items were found to be above the threshold of 0.50.

Internal Consistency Reliability

The data was tested through Cronbach's Alpha, Composite reliability and the Average Variance Extracted. The values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (Rho Alpha) exceed the threshold values of 0.60 and 0.70 respectively (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and the value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) also exceeds the threshold limit of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010) showing the values have the reliability and validity to be used. The values of variables are given in (Table 3).

Table 3: Internal Consistency Reliability (N=480)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Love	0.891	0.908	0.509

Service Intangible	Attributes	0.861	0.881	0.600
Service Tangible	Attributes	0.866	0.897	0.608
Well-Being		0.923	0.928	0.621

Convergent Validity

The values of the latent variables were tested for convergent validity according to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. The results are shown in (Table 4).

Table 4: Convergent Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

		Brand Love	Service Attributes I	Service Attributes T	Well-being
Brand Love		0.714			
Service Intangible	Attributes	0.904	0.775		
Service Tangible	Attributes	0.809	0.763	0.780	
Well-Being		0.896	0.939	0.919	0.788

Discriminant Validity

In order to test the discriminant validity, Hetrotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) for correlation was applied to the variables. The value of discriminant validity is not determined as a thumb of rule, but some authors have suggested the maximum threshold value of 0.70 and others 0.85 to establish validity in HTMT tests (Hamid et al., 2017). The values in the test are well below the suggested threshold provided in all the categories which proves the variables fulfill the criteria of discriminant validity (Table 5).

Table 5: Hetrotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Brand Love	Service Attributes I	Service Attributes T
Brand Love			
Service Attributes Intangible	0.236		
Service Attributes Tangible	0.613	0.289	
Well-Being	0.450	0.204	0.689

Test Results of the Structural Model

For structural model, the values of collinearity statistics, R^2 and F^2 were tested to check the value of the path hypnotized and the significance of the paths. The values of cross-validated redundancy measure, statistical significance and relevance of path coefficients were also tested for the structural model.

Testing the Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

For goodness of fit model (Validity of Analysis model), we used the coefficient of determination R^2 to test the linear regression between the variables. The values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 are considered substantial, moderate and weak (J. Hair et al., 2017). The values of the coefficient of determination show a strong relation between the variables as shown (Table 6) which show a substantial relation between the variables.

Table 6: Coefficient of Determination R^2

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Love	0.859	0.858
Well-Being	0.980	0.980

Testing the Distribution Analysis (F^2)

Using the F^2 distribution, we have tested the impact of tangible and intangible service attributes, and well-being on brand love. The values in (Table 7) show that the relation between dependent variable brand love and tangible service attributes is medium, between brand love and intangible service attributes is high, whereas relation between brand love and mediator well-being is low.

Table 7: Distribution Analysis F^2

	Service Attributes T	Service Attributes I	Well-Being
Brand Love	0.161	0.392	0.048

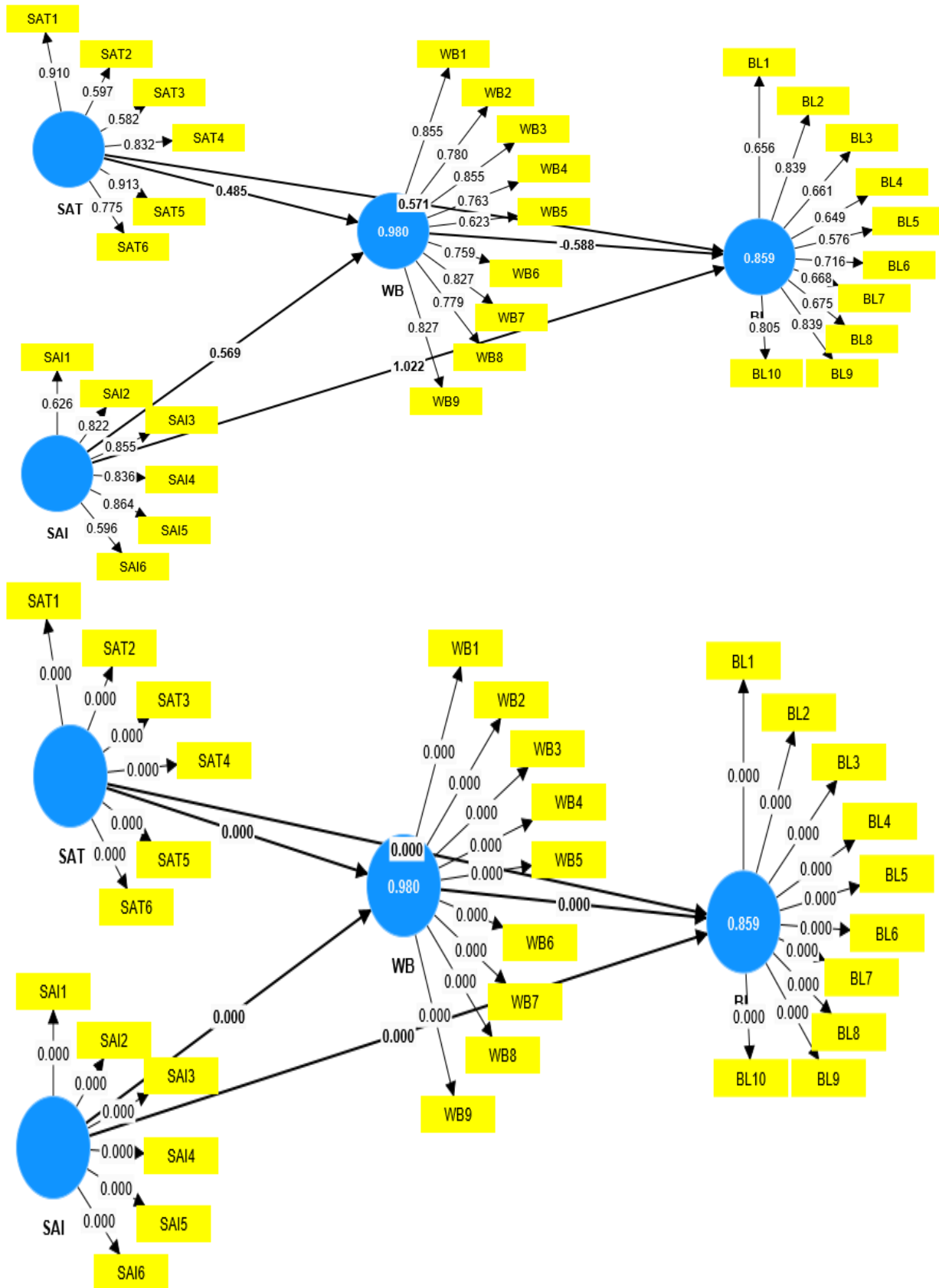


Figure 3: Structural Model

Direct and Indirect Effects

The direct-effect model comprised testing the direct relationship between Tangible Service Attributes, Intangible Service Attributes, and Brand Love where service attributes are independent variables and Brand Love is a dependent variable. The indirect path of service attributes (Tangible and Intangible), and Brand Love were mediated by Well-being. This was done in line with the (Baron & Kenny, 1986) mediation criteria (Table 9).

Table 9: T Statistics (Bootstrapping)

	Original Sample (Beta) (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
SAI -> BL	1.022	0.104	9.827	0.000
SAI -> WB	0.569	0.013	44.092	0.000
SAT -> BL	0.571	0.078	7.334	0.000
SAT -> WB	0.485	0.014	33.800	0.000
WB -> BL	0.588	0.153	3.852	0.000

Hypothesis Testing (Direct Relation)

The study tested the direct relation between tangible service attributes, intangible service attributes, and brand love. The first hypothesis of the study H1: Tangible service attributes positively impact Brand Love ($\beta = 0.571$, $t = 7.334$, $p = 0.000$) was approved. The second hypothesis of the study H2: Intangible service attributes positively impact Brand Love ($\beta = 1.022$, $t = 9.827$, $p = 0.000$) was also approved. The third hypothesis of the study H3: Tangible service attributes positively impact the customer well-being ($\beta = 0.485$, $t = 33.800$, $p = 0.000$), H4: Intangible service attributes positively impact the customer well-being ($\beta = 0.569$, $t = 44.092$, $p = 0.000$), H5: Customer well-being positively impacts the brand love ($\beta = 0.588$, $t = 3.852$, $p = 0.000$) were also approved.

Mediation Analysis

The study tested the impact of tangible service attributes, and intangible services attributes on brand love by applying the mediating impact of well-being on the variables. The results of the study are; H6: Customer Well-being mediates the relationship between Tangible service Attributes and Brand Love ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 3.798$, $p = 0.000$), and H7: Customer Well-being mediates the relationship between Intangible service Attributes and Brand Love ($\beta = 0.335$, $t = 3.796$, $p = 0.000$). The results of the study (Table 10) suggest that there is a mediating impact of well-being between Tangible services attributes, Intangible service attributes, and Brand love.

Table 10: Specific Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
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SAI->BL	0.335	0.332	0.088	3.796	0.000
SAT->BL	0.285	0.283	0.075	3.798	0.000
SAI ->					
WB -> BL	0.335	0.332	0.088	3.796	0.000
SAT ->					
WB -> BL	0.285	0.283	0.075	3.798	0.000

Discussion

The research was based on testing the impact of tangible and intangible service attributes on brand love in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. The study also tested the mediating effect of customer well-being on these variables. The study was conducted based on customers visit and their experiences to these places. Drawing upon the results of the study, the first attribute tested in the study was the service attributes in hospitality industry, and its impact on brand love. The service attributes, for the purpose of this study were distributed into tangible and intangible service attributes. First, the tangible service attributes of the four star and five star hotels were studied in terms of its impact on brand love. The results suggest that the physical features or tangible service attributes like hotel ambiance have a lasting impact on the customer visits, and they play a positive role in bringing back happy memories of the customers of the places they visit. The intangible features of the hotel industry including staff attitude, service quality, and ease of use of facilities also play a vital role in bringing the customers back to these premises, and maintain happy relations with the customers. The tangible and intangible features of the service attributes together are vital for the success of the hospitality industry (J. J. Kim et al., 2021), and are a source of revenue generation for the hospitality sector, as the returning customers increase the goodwill of these places, and along with that generate customer repeat footfall (Calmon et al., 2021). These traits are also important in terms of maintaining the customer well-being which increases customer satisfaction while their stay at these places (Park et al., 2020).

The second objective of the research was to test the mediating role of customer well-being between service attributes (tangible and intangible), and brand love. The research suggested that the positive customer well-being mediates between the tangible and intangible service attributes and brand love. The service attributes by hotel staff plays significant role in increasing the customer well-being, increasing the goodwill (Purohit et al., 2023). Customer well-being is also found to have mediated the relation between customer experience and customer retention (Fan et al., 2023). The findings of this study are important as they serve as an interplay between the service quality, customer well-being, and brand love within the context of the hotels in Pakistan. When customers' experience superior customer services, and ambiance of a brand, they feel the emotional connection with the place, which deepens with time, leading to more profound memories of the customers increasing brand love. While there is research on these variables in the literature, this study has contributed towards the hospitality industry of Pakistan, and studied the impact of service attributes on enhancing brand love, through a positive customer well-being

effect. These attributes can help the luxury hotels to develop strategies that foster brand love in the customers, resulting in increased goodwill, and revenue for the hospitality sector businesses.

Conclusion

The study results are significant for the hotel industry in Pakistan as businesses should prioritize towards improving the service attributes in their workplaces, recognizing the impact of service quality and customer well-being on brand love. Also, understanding and addressing the holistic approach towards customer experience is very crucial for the management as their business have a direct impact of these attributes. Brands need to focus on creating a memorable experience that goes beyond transactions, and focus on emotional connection with their customers and their well-being. This research contributes towards providing valuable insights that are significant for making a marketing and service promotion strategies, service design, and customer relationship building in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. By integrating these findings into business practices, participants of the Pakistani hospitality industry, particularly four star and five star hotels can not only meet but exceed customer expectations, ultimately fostering brand love, customer well-being and sustainable business success.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the research provides important findings for the academics and practitioners, there are some limitations to the study. Firstly, the research was conducted in the vicinity of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan which makes the analysis limited to the perception of these variables from the visitors in these cities only. Future researchers can add other cities in the country to test if the results generated vary from our outcome. Secondly, the research tested the tangible and intangible service attributes only for analysis. Future researchers can add further variables in the study and test the results, which could expand the findings of the study.

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