

Impact of Customer Experience on Word of Mouth and Brand Switching with Gender as the Moderator of the Mediating Role of Brand Image: A Moderated-Mediation Model

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of customer experience (CX) on word of mouth (WOM) and brand switching (BS), with the impact of brand image (BI) taken into account. Moreover, it examines the role of gender in this relationship, how the brand image of Pakistani clothing brands (CB) influences customer behaviour, and the urge to reduce brand switching or spread word of mouth. Data was collected from targeted customers of different clothing brands through a questionnaire survey of a sample size of 230. Studying the moderating variable at low and high levels to get insights by using moderated mediation. The findings revealed that CX does not significantly influence word of mouth, and BI does not mediate between the CX and WOM relationship, but gender as a moderator partially signifies the relationship. CX influences BS along with significant moderated mediation relationships between them. The research findings have great suggestions for managers of clothing brands and marketing researchers who could help consumers by giving them better services than those of competitors.

Keywords: Brand image, Gender, Customer experience, Brand switching, Customer word of mouth, Pakistani clothing brands.



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Introduction

Brand name, term, design, or symbols are the features that associate with goods or services mentally and physically (American Marketing Association, 2025); brand tangible elements include names, designs, and intangible elements like trust associated with the brand, reputation of the brand, and emotional values, which influence the choices of consumers (Keller et al., 2010). Aaker said that brand is not only name or symbol, it hold a set of assets and liabilities with it, that added or subtracted from its value of brand in the consumers mind, the concept of brand equity carries awareness about brand, brand related associations, perceived quality, loyalty, and proprietary assets with brand and by differentiating offerings, building trust, and fostering long-term loyalty can create strong brands and create value for both firms and customers (Aaker, 1991). When we talk about the global fashion industry, we face financial uncertainty, changing market trends, and shifts in consumer behavior (McKinsey & Company, 2024).

Customer experience is all about the perceptions that customers create in their mind during their interaction and provoke a reaction in the form of behavior (Manyanga et al., 2022; Danyal et al., 2024); the experience is a comparison between expectations before the experience and the evaluation of post-experience (Gahler et al., 2019). Firms should orchestrate a series of touchpoints, from motivation to the realization of customer goals, throughout the customer's interaction process for seamless experiences and customer satisfaction (Chang & Li, 2022), that comprehends customer behavior (Motta-Filho, 2021). Positive emotional consumer-brand relationships are relevant to brand love (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Brand love helps in positive word of mouth, but not enough to stop consumers from brand switching (Santos & Schlesinger, 2025). Good communication builds strong customer and brand relationships (Malik & Asim, 2025). The perception of customers about a brand reflects the associations they hold in their minds (Keller & Brexendorf, 2018). Being familiar with a brand makes consumers buy products because it develops a sense of confidence in things that already exist in their mind (Zinkhan & Smith, 1992). The customer thinks and perceives the brand, which reflects the association in their minds (Leijerholt et al., 2022). Brand credibility, prestige, trust, and familiarity promote excessive buying behavior. The emotional satisfaction a consumer gains from repeat purchases may decline, which can lead to switching to new brands (Pandowo & Mamuaya, 2024). Positive consumer experience also supports brand values and helps shape purchasing decisions (Samudra & Juanda, 2024). Their integrated examination is relevant in the Pakistani fashion clothing market, which is characterized by intense competition and changing customer preferences. Good experience engages customers, and social interaction ties are anticipated to have a significant effect on word-of-mouth intention (Kanwal et al., 2024; Fida et al., 2023). Due to strong competition and changing marketing trends, brand switching is common in the apparel industry (Shahzad & Shaiq, 2023). Consumer perception significantly influences the brand reputation of a clothing brand (Hameed, 2020).

A customer's multidimensional emotional and cognitive reactions to an interaction with touchpoints during the customer journey (Gahler et al., 2023), as part of their experience, customers contact a brand directly or indirectly, and how customers feel, perceive, and react at various touchpoints (Heinonen & Lipkin, 2023).

Table 1 shows that factors influencing CX, such as the expectation of customers and the performance of the brand, play an important role in generating WOM, satisfaction, and brand image.

In Pakistan, the rise of digital transformation means customers increasingly engage through online touchpoints, where quality, trust, and satisfaction are essential (Ashiq & Hussain, 2024) for seamless, personalized, and secure experiences (Zafran, 2025). COVID-19 boosted online shopping and digital payments, making CX a crucial factor in gaining a competitive edge. Additionally, Pakistan has a youth-dominated population (over 60% under 30), who are highly tech-savvy and more likely to evaluate brands based not only on products but also on service quality, digital experience, and brand image (State Bank of Pakistan, 2023). Satisfied customers tend to stay loyal and make repeat purchases. CX analysis helps companies identify pain points that may lead to churn. In Pakistan's e-commerce sector, poor service quality causes switching, while strong CX fosters loyalty (Khan et al., 2023). By analyzing CX data, firms can customize products, services, and communication to meet customer needs. data, firms can tailor products, services, and communication to customer needs (Huang & Rust, 2021).

The research contributes to relationship management theory, which emphasizes that trust, experience, communication, and brand perception are key to building long-term relationships (Ferguson & Brown, 1991). Brand and customer relationships affect customer behaviour (Bansal & Thakur, 2024). Combines CX, BI, gender, WOM, and brand switching in one framework, making the model more comprehensive than previous fragmented studies. This study also addresses how customer experience management influences consumer behavior, highlighting the importance of mediated effects in strengthening relationships with end users to enhance consumer behavior. It will offer gender-based strategies, enabling firms to design more targeted marketing campaigns for male and female customers in clothing brands. Moreover, it addresses the cultural and economic dynamics of Pakistan's clothing brand, where brand image, brand switching, and WOM are highly influenced by social interactions and trust.

CX significantly drives WOM and BS (Khan et al., 2023; Wattoo et al., 2025; Siqueira et al., 2019; Kuppelwieser et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2023). Prior research focuses on how brand image affects consumer perception, attitude toward the brand, and behavioral intentions (Junianto & Ruswanti, 2025; Rehman & Zeb, 2023); it positively influences purchase decision and e-wom (Nurhadi et al., 2023). Customers prefer a brand based on brand image and price (Kavitha & Muthulakshmi, 2025). Lack of empirical evidence on gender differences shaping CX outcomes in emerging markets (Rahman & Mannan, 2018). The present research empirically tests a research model that examines how customer experience influences consumer behavior (WOM and BS), with the influence of brand image and gender in Pakistani clothing brands. The specific research questions include.

1. How do customer-brand relationships shape CX and consumer behavior, while brand image functions as a mediation mechanism?
2. How does gender role in customer-brand relationship moderate the association between BI and consumer behavior?

Brand image as a mediating variable between CX and WOM/brand switching, showing how experiences translate into perceptions and then into behavior. Gender as a moderator, research uncovers whether men and women perceive brand image differently and how these shape their likelihood of spreading WOM or switching brands.

Provides localized insights from Pakistan, addressing the gap in the literature, which has been largely Western-focused. Contribute to understanding cultural differences in CX research. Pakistani consumers operate in a collectivist environment where social influence, brand trust, subjective norms, customer satisfaction, and attributes of products significantly shape consumer purchase decisions (Bukhari et al., 2023). Moreover, Pakistani clothing brands carry symbolic value and culturally embedded practices, making brand image an important element of consumer choice (Sahar et al., 2025). When these factors integrate with the competitive market and pricing create a unique pattern of consumer behavior.

Literature Review

Customer experience

Customer experience has a vast concept in marketing. Firms design, manage the offering, and customers reflect those offerings, besides the product or service (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), but others said that experience is the customer's response to a firm-related contact (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The connectivity of stimuli across touchpoints during the interaction of the customer with the brand drives positive customer outcomes (Weidig et al., 2024; Kuehnl et al., 2019). A firm must understand the types of stimuli (that match the needs of customers) to improve customers' responses (Patrício et al., 2011); it builds confidence, trust, and satisfaction when there are emotional connections with the brand concerning the brand destination (Kim & Chung, 2022).

Customer experience moderators

The significance of moderators in understanding CX outcomes, which include gender and age, moderates the effect of brand personality on customer satisfaction (Hayat et al., 2020). Store aesthetics, the age of customers, and their region moderate the brand love that intends to purchase the brand (Singh & Bajpai, 2024).

Pakistani Context

In Pakistan, brands now realize that product and price advantages are no longer enough; customers now expect personalized, seamless, and trust-based experiences. With platforms like Daraz, Foodpanda, and online banking apps, CX has shifted toward digital service quality, ease of use, and trust. Service quality in Pakistan's e-commerce sector significantly impacts customer satisfaction, complaint behavior, and loyalty, especially among youth (Wattoo et al., 2025). E-service quality (e.g., security, responsiveness, reliability) enhances e-loyalty through e-satisfaction in Pakistan's banking sector. This highlights that trust and responsiveness are central to CX in financial services (Khan et al., 2023).

Role of brand image in shaping the behavior of customers

Customers usually learn through marketing communication tools, especially advertising, about the brand, which helps to enhance the brand image (Gilaninia & Mousavian, 2012). Brand image is the dimensions of branding (Keller & Brexendorf, 2018); a key driver of consumers' purchase decisions (Ansary & Nik Hashim, 2018). Brand image consisted of two key dimensions: self-brand connection and brand prominence. The former represents the mental and affective connection of a brand with an individual (brand attachment) (Hemsley-Brown, 2023), whereas the latter indicates the positive affection and associations that are linked with objects (Vashist, 2018). Brand attachment is positively linked with shopaholic (addiction to shopping) or excessive purchasing (Japutra et al., 2018) and buying of goods without planning (Fenton-O'Creevy et al., 2018). Consumers who have an affinity with a brand or store (Liu et al., 2018) are more interested in interacting with it (Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Celebrity endorsements can make the brand stand out in advertising clutter, providing memorability to the consumers (Chen et al., 2025; Tejashwini, 2024); significantly increase the product's sales and brand image (Fernandez & Lean, 2009). More frequent exposure may slightly increase the perceived persuasiveness of the commercial, even though the association is weak (Gramazio et al., 2021).

The performance of a customer journey is strongly connected with customer value (McKinsey & Company, 2024). As companies struggle to attract and retain their customers to offer a distinct customer value, each touch point endorses the brand's image, so poor management can harm brand relationships (Lusch & Vargo, 2014); factors that discourage further purchases are dissatisfaction, anger, and regret (Ibrahim Awwad et al., 2023); brand personality creates loyalty among customers (Mehedul & Sabuj, 2024); loyalty is a driver that develops repetitive purchasing and exceeds consumer spending (Dick & Basu, 1994). Trust and satisfaction make customers loyal and happy; otherwise, if the confidence level in buying the product is not satisfactory, that makes consumers unhappy, so they will change their brand (Indelicato & Martín, 2024). If a brand does not deliver what they promise leads to brand hate among consumers (Muhammad et al., 2025). Brand switching is the replacement or exchange done by a consumer with a current brand or the exchange with another brand (Bansal & Taylor, 2015). Customer switch for variety seeking, it can be defined as personal preferences to look for different experiences (Aroean, 2012). A psychological state, fear of missing out (FOMO), is significant for justifying customers' uncontrollable behavior, anxiety of consumers, and their vulnerability, to conform to market trends (Hayran & Anik, 2021); FOMO experiencing customers tend to be loyal and actively engage with brands, through commenting on social media platforms in the form of WOM (Global Web Index, 2018).

Favorable reviews were effective in encouraging consumers to buy a brand (Ibrahim Awwad et al., 2023). Social influence, interpersonal influence, and mass media can be described as the change in behavior, intentionally or unintentionally, where one person causes a change in another (Koo & Abd Razak, 2023).

Communication, which is informal and takes place among private parties regarding the evaluation of goods and services (Anderson, 1998). Word of mouth is more influential in the presence of customer experience compared to repurchasing behavior in a digital financial system;

word of mouth is more important to other customers because it explains a person's experience information, which is easily accepted and put into action (Liana et al., 2024). Customers treated with good service increase positive WOM in the banking sector (Iqbal & Hassan, 2019).

To ensure customer satisfaction, positive impression of brands, loyalty, satisfaction, and customer happy to return, businesses must shape a strong BI (Tahir et al., 2024). BI is important for the satisfaction and loyalty of customers (Karim & Rabiul, 2024); customers compare the expected performance of the brand with the experience after consumption, it arises satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Oliver, 2014), and rewards make consumers happy (Mullins & Sabherwal, 2020).

For clothing brands targeting a specific demographic, leveraging celebrity endorsements to create emotional connections and build lasting competitive advantages has been emphasized as a strategic imperative (Fernandez & Lean, 2009). The effectiveness of young women who act as influencers on social media, compared to celebrities in endorsing luxury fashion goods, has a substantial influence on celebrities in developing positive attitudes in young females regarding brands (McNeill & McDonald-Mair, 2024). Male and female teenagers had more favorable attitudes towards brands with a female and male celebrity endorsement, respectively (Gramazio et al., 2021). Gender depictions have conceivable effects on the corporate image (Mullins & Sabherwal, 2020) and the purchasing patterns of consumers (Gramazio et al., 2021). Gender shapes consumer behavior patterns (Kotler & Keller, 2016); a key demographic factor, gender, if it were an unpleasant experience, makes them not purchase from the same brand again, decreasing WOM and trust (Shahzad et al., 2024); gender was one of the vital demographic variables in various decision-making situations (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

In the fashion consumption context, gender plays its role in shaping consumer behavior. In previous studies, females involved in clothing purchases focus on brand image, which influences their word of mouth, compared to males (Talaat, 2022). Female emotionally involved, more conscious about fashion (Riaz et al., 2019), while men adopt a utilitarian approach towards clothing (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2023). On the other hand, prior studies show male greater sensitivity to brand image, influencing brand switching more than females in fashion consumption (Islam et al., 2021).

Men and women experience differences during shopping that affect their satisfaction and loyalty (Bhat et al., 2024). Gender moderates the effect of BI on intention to purchase, with women being more responsive to brand warmth and sincerity (Nadeem et al., 2015); females are more likely to be fashion-conscious and variety-seeking, whereas males tend to shop less frequently and more purposefully (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006), more interested in fashion than men (Cengiz & Barin, 2024). Males liked new technologies as they have assertive and competitive behavior (Eagly & Kite, 1987); frequently depicted browsing websites to achieve the main goal of buying (Dittmar et al., 2004); influenced by achievement, competitions, and setting goals (Zhang et al., 2021). Females are influenced by financial benefits (Frank et al., 2014). Similarly, women are involved in more shopaholic or excessive purchasing habits (compulsive behavior) (Tarka & Kukar-Kinney, 2022) and an urge to purchase something out of the blue (impulsive behavior) (Coley & Burgess, 2003) compared to men. He suggests that in the consumption of fashion clothing, the behaviors of both genders have become similar (Vieira, 2009), with the neglect of

traditional gender roles, which were defined by societal norms, and both genders' interest in fashion clothing to show their identities (Cengiz & Barin, 2024). Gender significantly influences consumer perception of brand personality traits (e.g., sincerity, excitement, ruggedness) (Lieven et al., 2014), and the majority of marketing scholars believe that brand personality and brand image are interchangeable (Freling & Forbes, 2005). Table 2 shows the previous studies' research area and research gap that have been addressed by the current research.

Research Methodology

Research Model

Figure 1 shows one independent variable (IV), customer experience (CX), and two dependent variables (DVs), word of mouth (WOM) and brand switching (BS), with brand image as a bridging variable and moderating variable, gender. To see the effect of IV on DVs through the brand image mediating variable and gender as a moderator.

Data collection

The study target population comprises customers who are conscious about their brand in clothing. The sampling technique, e.g., convenience, has been used. The participation of the respondents is voluntary. Respondents were approached online by being given Google Forms, and were personally approached via the mall and the university. Respondents living in the region of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore are included in the sample. This study is based on quantitative analysis. The data is cross-sectional. Data has been analysed through SPSS PROCESS v3.2 by Andrew F. & Hayes. The correlation analysis has been done to check the reliability and validity of an instrument using Cronbach's alpha value. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis, and its significance was assessed through the beta coefficient, t, and p value.

The questionnaire was adopted from previous studies and then adapted. There are five sections of the questionnaire. Demographic information, i.e., gender, education, and age, is being covered in the first section of the questionnaire. Other sections, dependent and independent variables, along with mediators, are covered.

One of the 10 items of Customer experience is: "The clothing brand tries to engage my senses", which was adapted from (Chen & Lin, 2015). One of the three items of word of mouth, "I would say positive things about my brand to other people" was adapted from (Sweeney & Swait, 2008). One of the 4 item of brand switch, 'I do not expect to stay with my current brand for long, ' was adapted from (Wong et al., 2019), and one of the six items of brand image, "My brand provides good value for money" was adapted from (Martínez & De Chernatony, 2004). The Likert scale used in the study, ranking from 1 to 5, 1 represents strongly disagree, and 5 represents strongly agree.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows gender values, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation, qualification, CB (Clothing brand), and age. The data has been collected from 230 customers, which is represented in the table as N.

The number of participants was 230, including 115 males, who represented 50% of the sample, and 115 were females, with 50% illustration of the sample represented in Table 4.

From the overall sample of 230, 23 people belonged to the age group of 21, 28, and 22, 25 people were aged 25, 44 individuals were from the age of 26, 45 were aged 23 age and 47 customers belonged to the age of 24 are shown in Table 5. Respondents with a qualification of a Bachelor's degree were 170, which showed 73.9% of the overall sample. The participants with a Master's level program were 26, which was 11.3% of the sample. The MPhil students were 23, which represented 10%. The remaining 11 had a PhD, representing 4.8% shown in Table 6. In Table 7, clothing brand Khaadi has been used by 68 customers, with 29.6%. Junaid Jamshed respondents are 41, representing 17.8%; participants using Gul Ahmed are 51, representing 22.2%; and respondents of the Bonanza brand are 70, representing 30.4%. These brands had not been selected randomly; Khaadi, Gul Ahmed, and Bonanza Satrangi were familiar among men, kids, and females (Paradigm Shift, 2024; Mykonline, 2025), and the highest-selling fashion brands, representing huge market share and commercial impact (Statista, 2024). They generate appropriate context for brand image, customer experience, and behaviour outcomes.

Table 01. Hypothesis

H1	Consumer experience has a positive influence on word of mouth	Not Accepted
H2	Experience of the customer has a negative impact on brand switching.	Accepted
H3	Brand image mediates between the relationship of customer experience and word of mouth.	Not Accepted
H4	Brand image mediates between the relationship of customer experience and brand switching.	Accepted
H5	Brand image has a greater influence on word of mouth among females than among males.	Not Accepted
H6	Brand image has a greater influence on brand switching among males than among females.	Accepted

Source: Author's presentation

Results

Correlation Analysis

The primary concern is the link between the IV, the mediating variables (Med), and the DVs. Table 8 shows result of current research suggest that the CX and BI corelation values ($r = 0.69, p < .01$) and CX correlated to WOM ($r = -0.7, p < .01$). CX is positively correlated to BS with the value of ($r = 0.13, p < .05$). BI is correlated positively to BS with the value of ($r = 0.28, p < .01$) and is also correlated to WOM with the value of ($r = 0.27, p < .01$). Gender correlated to

BI with value of ($r = 0.41, p < .01$), correlated to BS ($r = 0.88, p < .01$), correlated to WOM ($r = -0.51, p < .01$) and correlated to CX ($r = 0.36, p < .01$) respectively. The BS is correlated to WOM ($r = -0.66, p < .01$), where r represents the correlation coefficient and p shows the statistical significance. The relationship between customer experience and word of mouth inversely correlated means too good seamless customer experience can reduce shareability (Padigar et al., 2024), it's a monotonic concave effect, which means higher satisfaction was linked with decreasing word of mouth (Peres et al., 2011); limited conceptional experience arises more word of mouth than unlimited/repeated experience, author argue that scarcity of experience make worthy and less share (Saenger & Thomas, 2021).

As Pearson correlation is denoted with 'r', its range is from -1 to +1. The correlation between gender and brand switching was strong ($r = 0.88, p < 0.01$) due to the data's naturalness. This strong correlation is supported by existing literature, which shows that gender often serves as a moderator in brand loyalty and switching models, as it influences distinct consumer pathways (Nikhashemi & Valaei, 2018). Women show higher brand commitment and are involved in hedonic consumption, whereas men, based on functional reasons or price, may switch more frequently (Mehta, 2020).

According to social science standards, a correlation of $|r| \geq 0.80$ is very strong (Evans, 1996), while values between 0.70–0.89 are deemed strong (Schober et al., 2018). Observed value of 0.88 falls within the very strong range but remains below the 0.90 threshold, which raises no serious concerns with discriminant validity or redundancy among variables (Byrne, 2013). Thus, gender and brand switching can be considered sufficiently distinct constructs.

Regression Analysis

Main Effect Relationships & Mediation Analysis

Mediating Role of brand image among CX and brand switching

Table 9 shows that path 'c', which illustrates the effect of CX(IV) on BS(DV) in the absence of mediator (BI), the statistical outcomes of this relationship ($\beta = 0.32, t = 1.99, p < .05$) validate the proposed hypothesis H2 "CX has a favourable influence on BS".

Path 'a' represents the CX and BI relationship, which is essentially the association of CX with the BI mediator. The calculated figures ($\beta = 0.68, t = 14.39, p < .01$) indicate that CX and BI have a constructive link.

Path 'C' shows the direct influence of the CX on the BS when the BI mediator plays a role. The results ($\beta = -0.67, t = -7.09, p < .01$) indicate significant outcomes even when the mediator BI is in the model. Indirect effect outcomes ($\beta = 0.48, LL95\%CI = 0.23, UL95\%CI = 0.80$) represent that BI as a mediator exists among CX and BS, which supports our hypothesis H4. BI mediates the relationship between CX and BS in terms of the calculation of results. A customer with high CX will increase BI, resulting in less BS, as supported.

Path 'b' represents the link of BI with BS; it is the BI and BS (DV) association ($\beta = 0.70$, $t = 4.46$, $p < .01$), where the beta coefficient shows the strength and direction of the relationship, which can be positive or negative, and the t value tells whether the effect is meaningful or not at 95% confidence interval.

Mediating Role of brand image between customer experience and word of mouth

In Table 10, path 'c' analyses data ($\beta = 0.00$, $t = 0.00$, $p > .01$), the values show there is no such relationship, and it does not support hypothesis H1 "CX has a significant impact on WOM".

Path 'a' represents data results ($\beta = 0.68$, $t = 14.39$, $p < .01$) showing a significantly positive relationship of path 'a'.

Path 'C' displays outcome ($\beta = -0.67$, $t = -7.09$, $p < .01$), which shows that they have a significant relationship. Indirect effect data output ($\beta = 0.11$, LL95%CI = -0.05, UL95%CI = 0.33), mediator role does not exist between CX and WOM which is main effect relationship, hypothesis H3 "BI mediates the relationship between CX and WOM" not supported at all, it means people with high CX will have high BI, and the BI, in turn, will result in less WOM, which is not supported.

Moderated Mediation Relations

Customer experience, brand image, gender, and brand switching

The results of research are displayed in Table 11, path 'a' ($\beta = 0.68$, $t = 14.39$, $p < .01$). The value represents IV significantly related to the mediator.

The moderator relation with mediator represents path 'b2', the data output ($\beta = 0.50$, $t = 3.07$, $p < .01$) shows a positive, favorable relationship.

Path 'b3' is the association of CX, and BS; the values of this relationship indicate that gender moderates among them ($\beta = 1.90$, $t = 30.30$, $p < .01$)

'C' path shows the independent variable CX and dependent variable BS when mediating variable BI ($\beta = -0.67$, $t = -7.09$, $p < .01$), the moderated mediation effect creates a significant relationship. Besides this, the negative sign of the coefficient means the main relationship is weakening. The moderated mediation index also supports the hypothesis with its significant effect. Moderated mediation effect is valid when values of LLCI and ULCI are non-zero as well as significant (Hayes, 2015).

Indirect conditional effects with two dimensions of the moderating variable are included in the table. Two different values of gender indicate that when gender is at a lower level (-1SD), the indirect effect is insignificant. In contrast, when the moderator value is on the higher side (+1SD), the indirect effect becomes significant because it contains a non-zero value between the LLCI and ULCI.

As the graph shows (in Figures 2 & 3), the effect of males and females on the relationship between BI and BS indicates that as BI increases, BS among males decreases, whereas among females, BS in clothing brands shows a slight increase as BI increases. Thus, our hypothesis H6, “BI has a greater influence on BS among males than among females,” is supported overall.

Customer experience, brand image, gender, and brand switching

The results mentioned in Table 12 are giving us some relations as path ‘a’ illustrating that CX is positively and significantly related to BI ($\beta = 0.68, t = 14.39, p < .01$).

Path ‘b1’ ($\beta = 0.49, t = 3.33, p < .01$) shows that the mediator BI has a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable WOM.

Path ‘b2’ indicates a negative and significant relationship between the interaction moderator Gender and mediator BI ($\beta = -1.04, t = -4.43, p < .01$). Path ‘b3’ shows that Gender moderates the link between CX and WOM ($\beta = -0.95, t = -10.54, p < .01$).

The path ‘C’ ($\beta = -0.03, t = -0.24, p > .01$), indicating that the moderated mediation effect makes this path insignificant. Moreover, the negative sign of the coefficient shows that the main relationship is weakening. Thus, mediated relationship through BI moderates by gender, between CX and WOM, which proposes that people with a gender role will increase the WOM. Moderated mediation index supports the argument stated in the hypothesis, as it is significant, as there are non-zero values between LLCI and ULCI, and the coefficient has a negative sign. The indirect effect is significant at the 1-SD level and on the higher side, +1SD, with an insignificant indirect effect, as it contains zero values between LLCI and ULCI.

As Figures 4 and 5 show, the effect of males and females in the relationship of BI and WOM, it shows that as the BI value increases, the WOM value also increases in males; males are more involved in WOM communication about clothing brands, as compared to females, who are less involved in WOM communication. Thus, our hypothesis H5 “BI has a greater influence on WOM among females than among males” is not supported at all.

In Table 8, reliability values in brackets range from 0.730 to 0.907, which are more than 0.7, which suggests the minimum acceptability level of an instrument to be reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The reliability coefficient ‘r’ values were considered acceptable, exceeding 0.5, and are comparable to previous studies conducted in other countries (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006; Lysonski et al., 1996).

In the moderated mediation model, the adequacy of the regression was assessed using standardized beta coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and R^2 values with Hayes process macro version 3.2 for SPSS (Hayes, 2022). The index of moderated mediation values of lower and upper limits of the confidence interval (LLCI and ULCI) was 0.14 and 0.54 (Table 11) and -1.01 and -0.43 (Table 12), respectively, indicating that the moderated mediation effect is valid if values of LLCI and ULCI are non-zero (Hayes, 2015). Coefficients above 0.50 represent strong effects, also indicating the individual strength and direction of the relationship in the model (Jacob Cohen, 1988). Table 11 shows that the hypothesis is statistically significant, the beta coefficient

value ranges from -0.67 to 1.90, with t-values ranging from 30.30 to -7.09, and at a high level of moderation (+1SD), the effect on BS is significant. The presence of moderation is indicated by the variation in magnitude and direction, where the level of the moderator tells about the effect of the predictor (Hayes, 2022). Table 12 presents that most hypothesized paths (except the direct effect 'C') are statistically significant, from 0.68 to -1.04, showing a beta coefficient range, with t-values from 3.33 to -10.54 and $p < .01$, at a low level of moderation (-1 SD), demonstrating slightly reliable relationships between brand image (BI), gender, and word-of-mouth (WOM).

An R^2 value above 0.26 is considered substantial, while 0.13 signifies a medium effect size in behavior sciences (Jacob Cohen, 1988). Figures 3 and 5 indicate R^2 values of 0.581 and 0.115 for the male subsample, suggesting significant explanatory power. Conversely, the R^2 of $3.928E-4$ and 0.008 for females indicates negligible explanatory power, highlighting gender heterogeneity in the model. If the purpose is theory testing without regard to the explanatory power of the model, focus on factors that are unmeasurable directly, e.g., BI, WOM, BS, satisfaction, etc. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Process macros SPSS provides adequate statistical validation to confidently interpret the moderated mediation effects, using a bootstrap sample size of 5,000 at ULCI and LLCI in regression-based conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2022; Hayes & Rockwood, 2017).

Conclusion

Practitioners are struggling to manage customer journeys for better customer experiences (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Managers must establish touchpoints and seamlessly connect in the customer journey (Homburg et al., 2017). This research invites practitioners to examine more closely the role of gender and brand image, and how these factors influence the behavioral outcomes of customers. As well as marketers must deliver a consistent and manageable form of experience to their respective customers that should align with customer senses and emotions.

However, the results of the current research offer several novel insights into the existing literature on CX and behavioural outcomes in Pakistani clothing brands. The brand image and gender used in this study to see the effect of customer experience, e.g., emotionally, socially, and cognitively, on word of mouth and brand switching. In modern society, males and females are conscious of their appearance, and materialistic possessions are things through which individuals are judged (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023). The results show that mediation is not enough to affect WOM, but the moderation-mediation model (BI and gender) makes it possible to slightly influence WOM. Also, the association between CX and brand switching mediator BI plays a significant role, and the moderation-mediation model (BI and gender) plays its vital role in decreasing brand switching. Customer experience on brand switching and word of mouth are argued to be moderated by customer characteristics such as gender. The research shows that with an increase in brand image, male reviews increase (negative or positive) about the brand, and word-of-mouth declines among females. Behaviour of switching decreases among females as brand image increases, and is high among females. Marketing managers of clothing brands must focus on how to advertise and offer discounts on special occasions according to the gender needs for positive recommendations, and decrease switching by keeping the reputation, familiarity, and credibility of the brand.

Clothing itself is an expression. Appropriate brand image is essential for a fashion brand to succeed. Consumers at a young age develop a brand love for their clothing brands. Therefore, a foundation will be established between the consumers and the brands that will permit the consumers to give their experiences and give a positive response to other consumers. Trust, commitment, and satisfaction, as explained by the theory of relationship management (Ferguson & Brown, 1991). Satisfied and happy customers spread favorable reviews (Tahir et al., 2024; Leelavathi & Reddy, 2024) and decrease BS (Japutra et al., 2018).

The result of brand image has a significant part in the behavioural outcome of customers in Pakistani clothing brands. Experience the brand through senses and generate constructive or undesirable responses towards the brand, relate the brand to others, and act according to them. There are some limitations, the convenience sampling technique does not represent the whole population, and a limited budget and time are faced by the researcher. Future research must take into account diverse age groups for research. Most of the respondents are university students, which may not cover the broader perspective of the clothing brand population, which may limit the scope of the findings. Future research should adopt a diverse set of demographic profiles to enhance the scope of the study. Measure the buyers' purchase frequency for the clothing brand for future studies. To reexamine the relationship between gender and brand switching in fast-moving consumer goods or in the healthcare context. As the emerging Pakistani market, further investigation of CX and WOM is needed by using other variables as moderators or mediators. Assessment of model fitness, the F-test should be noted as a limitation.

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Declaration About the Scope of AI Utilization

The author did not utilize any AI tool in the process of preparing this article.

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Tables

Table 1. Key drivers of Customer experience

Study	Drivers of customer experience
(Keller et al., 2010; Aaker, 1991)	If a brand is perceived as luxurious and high-quality, customers interpret service encounters more favorably.
(Khalifa et al., 2025)	In restaurants, tangible and intangible elements (physical appearance, perceived value, standardization) drive affective satisfaction, which then
(Iglesias et al.,	influences participation behavior and WOM.

2019) Brand image positively drives customer perceptions of service encounters.

Source: Author's compilation

Table 2. Summary of Past Research

Study	Context / Industry	Variables Studied	Research Gap Addressed by Current Study
(Ismail, 2015)	Fashion brands (UK and Switzerland).	Brand image and WOM	Use gender as a moderator in a fashion clothing brand.
(Ghazali et al., 2016)	Online retailers (UK).	Barriers to Switching. Cost of Switching. Alternative, satisfaction, and loyalty.	Use gender as a moderator.
(Hwang & Choi, 2017)	Airline Context (Korea)	<u>Nature</u> <u>experiences</u> , image, and <u>gender</u> .	Use a framework in fashion clothing brands.
(Rahman & Mannan, 2018)	Clothing brands (Bangladesh).	E-WOM, Consumers' purchase behavior, and Online brand experience	Use gender as a moderator.
(Iqbal & Hassan, 2019)	Banking Sector.	Word of Mouth, Intentions of continuity.	Use a framework in fashion clothing brands.
(Mofokeng, 2021)	E-commerce (South Africa).	E-commerce experience, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.	Experience, gender as a moderator, and brand switching.
(Kuppelwieser et al., 2022)	Professional service experience, i.e., bank, grocery (UK).	Customer experience(CX) and WOM.	Use different behavioral outcomes to learn the effects of CX.
(Manyanga et al., 2022)	Banking Sector (Zimbabwe).	Customer Experience, WOM, and gender.	Consider other sectors to enhance the generalizability of the results.
(Ibrahim Awwad et al., 2023)	Student behaviour (American University).	Dissonance, regret, Satisfaction, and BS.	Use other industries, e.g., luxury goods.
(Mehedul & Sabuj, 2024)	Footwear industry (Bangladesh).	Loyalty, brand-personality, and Gender.	Replicating the study while integrating the brand image at different points in the customer journey in different industrial contexts.
(Tahir et al., 2024)	Tourism sector.	BI, satisfaction of customers, and brand	To see the effect of brand image on word

		loyalty.	of mouth and brand switching in different sectors.
(Leelavathi & Reddy, 2024)	Indian brands.	Brand image, BS and customer satisfaction.	Specifically, a fashion brand in Pakistan is being used to see the effect on Gender.
(Liana et al., 2024)	Telecom (Tanzania).	Customer Experience on WOM, and repurchase behaviors.	Future studies can employ other variables and other research contexts.
(Bhat et al., 2024)	Organic food retail (Britain).	Customer experiential paradigms, Customer behavior, and gender.	Use in the fashion industry.
(Kavitha & Muthulakshmi, 2025)	Smartphone (Tamil Nadu).	Brand Image and Brand Switching Behavior.	Expanding the geographic scope and using other contexts.
(Santos & Schlesinger, 2025)	Netflix market (Spain).	Brand love, WOM intensity, switching intention.	Replicating the study while integrating the brand image.
(Fida et al., 2023)	Banking industry (Punjab).	Customer Experience, and WOM.	Other variables are used in different study contexts.
(Danyal et al., 2024)	Social media (South Punjab).	Customer experience and e-WOM.	Investigate additional mediation and moderation constructs.
(Muhammad et al., 2025)	Brand Outlet (South Punjab).	Brand hate, experience, and WOM effects.	Use brand image, experience, and word of mouth effects.
(Iqbal et al., 2025)	Retail (Quetta).	Customer's experience, online shopping behavior, and Repurchase intentions	Customer experience, brand image, and brand switching
(Malik & Asim, 2025)	Apparel industry (Lahore).	Customer-Brand Connections, customer experience, and brand advocacy.	Add further variables to see the effect on apparel brands.

Source: Author's compilation

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Gender	230	1	2	1.5	0.5
Qualification	230	1	4	1.8	0.91
CB	230	1	4	2.32	1.09

Age	230	21	28	24.2	1.99
Valid N	230				

Source: Author's compilation

Table 4. Gender Descriptive

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Male	115	50	50	50
Female	115	50	50	100
Total	230	100	100	

Source: Author's compilation

Table 5. Age Descriptives

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
21	23	10	10	10
22	23	10	10	20
23	45	19.6	19.6	39.6
24	47	20.4	20.4	60
25	25	10.9	10.9	70.9
26	44	19.1	19.1	90
28	23	10	10	100
Total	230	100	100	

Source: Author's compilation

Table 6. Qualification Descriptive

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Bachelor	170	73.9	73.9	73.9
Masters	26	11.3	11.3	85.2
MS/M.Phil.	23	10	10	95.2
PhD	11	4.8	4.8	100
Total	230	100	100	

Source: Author's compilation

Table 7. Clothing Brands

Brand names	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Khaadi	68	29.6	29.6	29.6

J.	41	17.8	17.8	47.4
GulAhmed	51	22.2	22.2	69.6
Bonanza satrangi	70	30.4	30.4	100
Total	230	100	100	

Source: Author's compilation

Table 8. Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation, and Reliability

	Mean	SD	CX	BI	WOM	BS
CX	3.45	0.41	-0.73			
BI	3.6	0.41	0.69**	-0.78		
WOM	3.33	0.79	-0.70**	0.27**	-0.9	
BS	3.4	1.02	0.13** *	0.28**	-0.66* *	-0.91
Gender	1.5	0.5	0.36**	0.41**	0.51**	0.88**

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), ***correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. CX Customer Experience, BI Brand Image, WOM, BS, SD (Standard Deviation), and reliabilities are shown in brackets.*

Source: Author's compilation

Table 9. Customer Experience, Brand Image, and Brand Switching

Paths	β	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Direct and Total Effects						
Path C, total effect 0.048	0.32	0.16	1.99		0	0.64
Path a 0.00	0.68	0.05	14.39		0.59	0.78
Path b 0.00	0.70	0.16	4.46		0.39	1.02
Path C' 0.00	-0.67	0.09	-7.09		-0.85	-0.48
Showing mediation						
	β	SE			LLCI	ULCI
Indirect effects using bootstrap						0.8
		0.48	0.11			
		0.23				

Source: Author's compilation

Table 10. Customer Experience, Brand Image, and Word of Mouth

Paths	β	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
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Direct and Total Effects						
Path C, total effect	0.00	0.13	0.00	1.00	-0.25	0.25
Path a	0.68	0.05	14.39	0.00	0.59	0.78
Path b	0.17	0.13	1.30	0.20	-0.09	0.42
Path C'	-0.67	0.09	-7.09		-0.85	-0.48
0.00						
Showing mediation						
	β	SE	LLCI	ULCI		
Indirect effects using bootstrap				0.33		
	0.11	0.08	-			
	0.05					

Source: Author's compilation

Table 11. Customer Experience, Brand Image, Gender, and Brand Switching

Paths	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	LL95 CI	UL95CI
Direct and Total Effects						
Path a IV to Med	0.68	0.05	14.39	0.00	0.59	0.78
Path b1 Med to DV	0.31	0.10	3.05	0.00	0.11	0.51
Path b2 Mod × Med	0.5	0.16	3.07	0	0.18	0.82
Path b3 Mod to DV	1.9	0.06	30.3	0	1.77	2.02
Path C', Direct Effect	-0.67	0.09	-7.09	0	- 0.85	-0.48
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>			LL95 CI	UL95CI
Index of Moderated Mediation					0.14	0.54
			0.34			
			0.10			

Conditional indirect effects of customer experience on brand switching through brand image

Mod. Gender	Ind. Eff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1SD (-0.50)	0.04	0.06	-0.08	0.15

+1 SD (0.50) 0.38 0.10 0.18 0.57

N = 230. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. LL = lower limit;

CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit. Path a represents impact of IV customer experience on Med brand image, path b1 represents impact of Med brand image on DV brand switching, Path b2 represents the interaction term effect of Moderator gender on Mediator brand image, path b3 represents moderating effect between the relationship of brand image and brand switching, , Path C 'represents direct effect of IV customer experience on DV brand switching when Med brand image is part of the model.

Table 12. Customer Experience, Brand Image, Gender, and word of mouth

Paths	β	SE	t	P	LL95CI	UL95CI
Direct and Total Effects						
Path a IV to Med	0.68	0.05	14.39	0.00	0.59	0.78
Path b1 Med to DV	0.49	0.15	3.33	0.00	0.20	0.78
Path b2 Med $\times$ Mod	-1.04	0.24	-4.43	0	-1.51	-0.58
Path b3 Mod to DV	-0.95	0.09	-10.54	0	-1.13	-0.78
Path C', Direct Effect	-0.03	0.14	-0.24	0.81	-0.3	0.24
					β	SE
Index of Moderated Mediation					LL95CI	UL95CI
					-1.01	-0.43
					-0.71	
					0.15	

Conditional indirect effects of customer experience on word of mouth through brand image

Mod. Gender	Ind. Eff.	SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1SD (-0.50)	0.69	0.07	0.56	0.84
+1 SD (0.50)	-0.02	0.18	-0.37	0.34

N = 230. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. LL = lower limit;

CI = Confidence Interval; UL = upper limit.

Path a represents impact of IV customer experience on Med brand image, path b1 represents impact of Med brand image on DV word of mouth, Path b2 represents the

interaction term effect of Mod gender on Med brand image, path b3 represents moderating effect between the relationship of brand image and word of mouth, Path C 'represents direct effect of IV customer experience on DV word of mouth when Med brand image is part of the model.

Figures

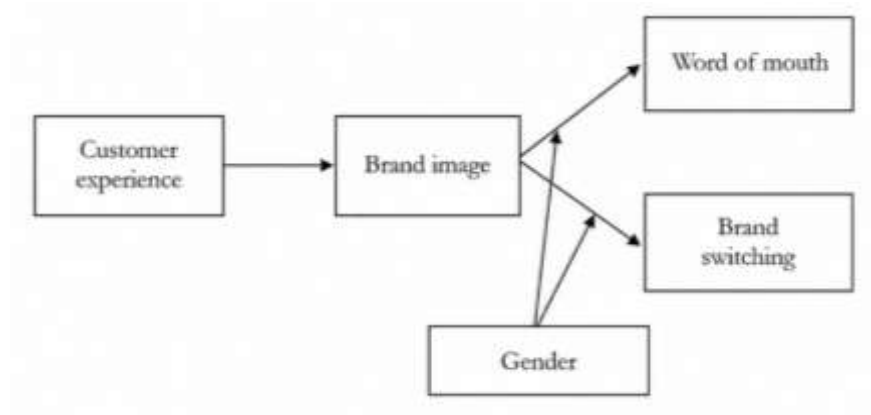


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

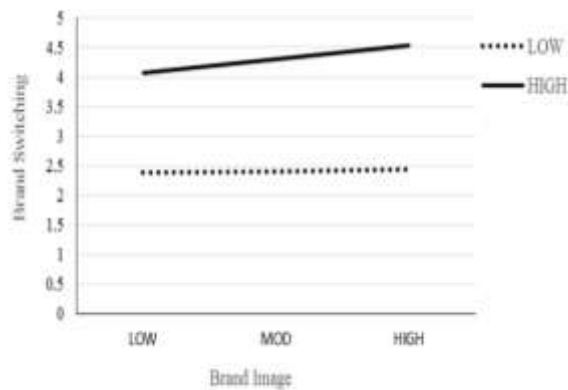


Figure 2. Moderator Gender on the Relationship between BI and BS.

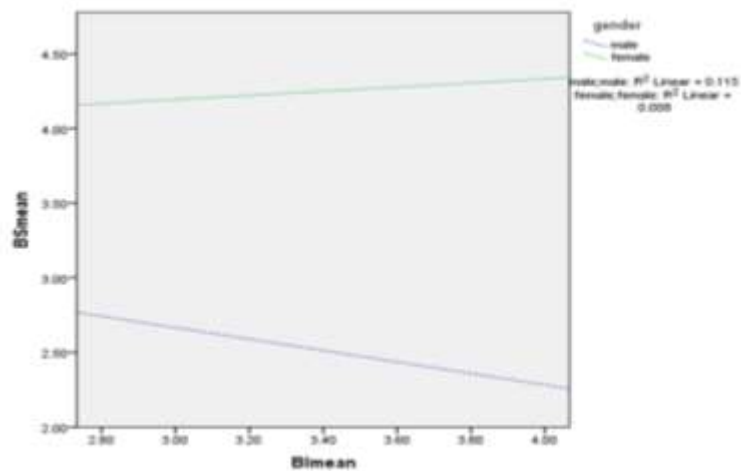


Figure 3. Categorically Gender (male and female) Effect on Relationship between BI and BS.

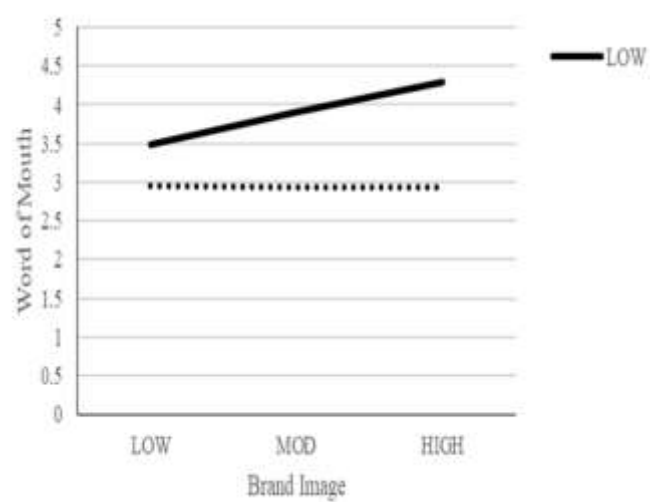


Figure 4. Moderator Gender on the Relationship between BI and WOM.

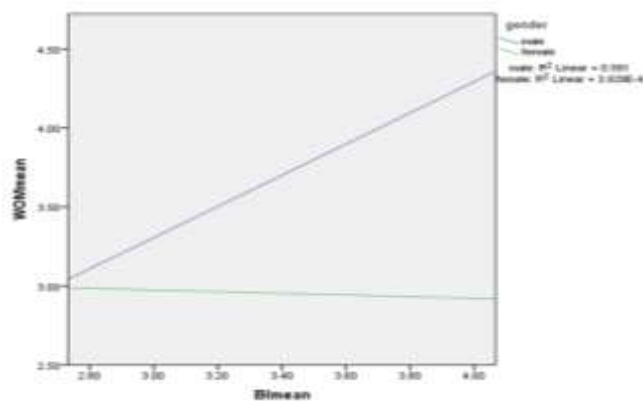


Figure 5. Categorically gender (male and female) effect on relationship between BI and WOM.