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Exploring Brand Relevance: Gender Perspectives and Product Category Variances in Pakistan

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Abstract
This study delves into new dimensions of brand relevance, focusing on understanding the significance of brands in influencing consumer purchase behavior and decision-making processes. While previous research has emphasized the role of brand relevance in determining the success of new products, there remain unexplored areas in this field. The study adopts Brand Relevance in Context (BRiC) as its framework, with a particular emphasis on gender perspectives. Additionally, it compares brand relevance across six product categories in Pakistan. The results of the study provide compelling evidence supporting the chosen BRiC measures for conducting cross-category and cross-gender comparisons. It is revealed that gender differences indeed impact brand relevance in certain product categories, while their influence may be similar in others. Moreover, cross-category comparisons shed light on the variability of brand relevance across different product categories. While some categories exhibit similar impacts on brand relevance, others show significant variation. The findings of this study hold valuable implications for managers and marketers in navigating the complexities of brand investments and market dynamics. By understanding the nuances of brand relevance across genders and product categories, managers can make informed decisions to minimize risks associated with brand investments and optimize marketing strategies. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior and brand dynamics in the Pakistani market, paving the way for more effective brand management practices.
Keywords: Brand Relevance, Consumer Behavior, Gender Perspectives, Product Categories
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1. INTRODUCTION

Branding is a strategic endeavor that goes beyond mere labeling. It involves crafting a unique identity for a product or service, one that resonates with consumers on both rational and emotional levels. Effective branding requires careful consideration of various elements, including visual design, messaging, values, and positioning in the market. It's about creating a distinct personality for the brand, one that sets it apart from competitors and establishes a meaningful connection with consumers. A successful brand is more than just a name; it's a promise of quality, reliability, and satisfaction. It represents a commitment to delivering value and meeting customer expectations consistently. Through branding, companies seek to build trust and loyalty among their target audience, fostering long-term relationships that transcend transactional exchanges. Moreover, branding extends beyond the product itself to encompass the entire customer experience. It influences how consumers perceive and interact with the brand at every touchpoint, from initial awareness to post-purchase support. By cultivating a strong brand presence across various channels and touchpoints, companies can create a cohesive and compelling brand narrative that resonates with consumers and drives engagement and loyalty. In essence, branding is a strategic imperative for businesses seeking to thrive in today's competitive marketplace. It's a powerful tool for differentiation, value creation, and relationship building, shaping perceptions, influencing behavior, and driving business success.

In the ever-changing and emerging market landscape, brands are recognized as valuable assets for companies. Central to this value is the positive perception held by customers, which contributes to what is known as brand equity. Brand equity represents the value attributed to a brand by consumers, and it is this perceived value that ensures expected future revenue from branded products, distinguishing them from their unbranded counterparts. In a market saturated with numerous offerings, understanding how consumers evaluate brands and identifying the key factors that influence their decision-making processes is essential. Consumers evaluate brands based on a variety of factors, including product quality, brand reputation, perceived value, and emotional resonance. Product quality refers to the tangible attributes and performance characteristics of the product, while brand reputation encompasses the overall perception of the brand's reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness. Perceived value relates to the benefits consumers believe they receive relative to the price paid, and emotional resonance involves the feelings and associations evoked by the brand. Additionally, factors such as

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brand image, brand personality, and brand loyalty play significant roles in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences. Brand image refers to the mental picture that consumers have of the brand, encompassing its visual identity, messaging, and positioning in the market. Brand personality reflects the human characteristics and traits associated with the brand, which can influence consumer affinity and connection. Brand loyalty, on the other hand, reflects the degree of commitment and attachment that consumers feel toward the brand, leading to repeat purchases and advocacy. By understanding these key factors and their impact on consumer decision-making processes, companies can develop strategies to enhance their brand equity and competitive advantage. This may involve investing in product innovation, marketing communications, customer experience initiatives, and brand-building activities that resonate with target consumers and differentiate the brand in the marketplace. Ultimately, building strong brand equity is essential for driving customer loyalty, market share, and sustainable business growth in today's dynamic and competitive market environment. Once we've completed the study of consumer purchasing behavior, we can tailor our product designs to better align with customer needs. Gender is a crucial aspect in understanding consumer purchasing behavior, as it significantly influences the relevance of brands across different product categories. However, it's important to note that we cannot apply a one-size-fits-all approach, such as the BRiC construct, across diverse product categories. Previous research has demonstrated that brand relevance varies significantly depending on the specific product category. Consumers' gender identities shape their preferences, perceptions, and purchasing decisions in distinct ways. For example, certain product categories may be more strongly associated with traditional gender roles or societal expectations, influencing how individuals of different genders perceive and interact with brands within those categories. Understanding these nuances is essential for developing effective marketing strategies and product designs that resonate with target audiences. Moreover, research has shown that brand relevance can vary widely across different product categories. What makes a brand relevant in one category may not necessarily translate to another. Factors such as product functionality, brand image, perceived value, and emotional appeal can all influence brand relevance within specific product contexts. Therefore, it's essential to conduct category-specific analyses to identify the unique drivers of brand relevance and tailor strategies accordingly. By recognizing the role of gender and the importance of category-specific considerations, companies can develop more targeted and impactful marketing initiatives and product offerings. This approach allows businesses to better meet the diverse needs and preferences of their customer base, ultimately enhancing brand relevance and driving competitive advantage in the marketplace.

This study builds upon previous research conducted by Fischer et al. on the Brand Relevance in Different Categories (BRiC) construct, which assesses brand relevance across various product categories and countries. In this study, we aim to expand upon this framework by examining brand relevance through a gender perspective as a foundational element. Additionally, we will utilize the BRiC construct to measure brand relevance across six distinct product categories: Food, Clothing, Electronics, Apparel, Automobiles, and Personal Care. By focusing on the gender perspective, we seek to better understand how individuals of different genders perceive and engage with brands across these categories. This approach allows us to explore the nuanced ways in which gender influences brand relevance and purchasing decisions, providing valuable insights for marketers and product developers. Furthermore, leveraging the BRiC construct enables us to assess the effectiveness of brand launches within specific product categories. By analyzing the importance of brand and its relevance within each category, we can pre-diagnose the potential success of new product introductions. This strategic approach helps companies make informed decisions about brand positioning, product development, and marketing strategies, ultimately enhancing their competitive advantage in the marketplace. Previous research has extensively explored brand relevance across different countries and product categories. However, our study aims to shift the focus towards understanding how gender differences can influence brand relevance in the context of cross-category comparisons. By examining the interplay between gender and brand relevance across diverse product categories, we seek to provide marketers with valuable insights into the nuanced ways in which gender dynamics shape consumer perceptions and behaviors. Understanding how gender differences impact brand relevance is essential for marketers seeking to effectively engage with their target audiences. By recognizing the distinct preferences, needs, and motivations of individuals based on gender, marketers can tailor their branding strategies, product offerings, and messaging to better resonate with diverse consumer segments. Through our study, we aim to shed light on how gender influences brand perception, purchase decisions, and brand loyalty across different product categories. By identifying gender-specific patterns and preferences, marketers can develop more targeted and effective marketing initiatives that appeal to the unique sensibilities of male and female consumers. Ultimately, our research endeavors to provide marketers with actionable insights that can inform strategic decision-making and enhance brand performance in today's dynamic and competitive marketplace. By better understanding the impact of gender differences on brand relevance, marketers can position their brands more effectively, drive customer engagement, and ultimately achieve greater success in building strong and enduring brand relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Building a strong brand is indeed a strategic imperative for success in any industry. However, the importance and relevance of brands can vary significantly across different markets and consumer segments. The conceptual background suggests that brand relevance, defined as the degree to which a brand plays a key role in customers' decision-making process for a given product category, is a critical factor influencing purchasing decisions. A brand is considered more relevant to a product

category when it supersedes and outweighs other decision criteria, such as customer service, price, and product quality. This concept, as articulated by Perrey et al. (2003), underscores the influential role that brands play in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences. A brand's relevance is indicative of its ability to resonate with consumers, evoke positive associations, and influence purchase behavior. While the concept of brand relevance has been acknowledged in various studies, there remains a gap in achieving a better and more detailed understanding of this phenomenon. Further research is needed to explore the nuances of brand relevance across different industries, markets, and consumer segments. By delving deeper into the factors that contribute to brand relevance and its impact on consumer decision-making, researchers can provide valuable insights for marketers seeking to enhance brand performance and competitive positioning. Ultimately, a comprehensive understanding of brand relevance is essential for companies striving to build and maintain strong brand equity, drive customer loyalty, and achieve sustained success in today's dynamic and competitive marketplace. Closing the gap in our understanding of brand relevance will enable marketers to develop more effective branding strategies that resonate with target audiences and drive business growth. In the existing literature, the concept of brand relevance is indeed multifaceted and can vary in its interpretation. Aaker (2004) offers a nuanced perspective on brand relevance, defining it based on three key conditions. According to Aaker, a brand is deemed important and relevant if it exists within a product category or subcategory that possesses a suitable combination of applications, attributes, and distinguishing characteristics. This suggests that the brand's relevance is contingent upon the specific context of the product category and the unique value proposition it offers. Brand relevance is also influenced by the presence of a recognized need or demand from a particular customer segment towards the category or subcategory in question. In other words, the brand's relevance is contingent upon its ability to address the needs and desires of its target audience, thereby fulfilling a meaningful role in their lives. This implies that brands must resonate with consumer needs and preferences to maintain relevance in the marketplace. Finally, Aaker emphasizes the importance of the brand being part of the evoke set—a subset of brands that consumers consider when making purchasing decisions within a given product category. Being included in this set signifies that the brand is considered relevant and worthy of consideration by consumers when evaluating options in the market. This highlights the competitive nature of brand relevance, as brands vie for a place in consumers' consideration sets by delivering value, relevance, and differentiation.

Our understanding of brand relevance aligns more closely with its significance in decision criteria, as outlined by Perrey et al. (2003). In essence, brand relevance can be viewed as the average sensitivity of brands within an industry, reflecting their impact on consumer decision-making processes. This concept draws from Kotler's (2003) definition of a brand as a name, symbol, sign, or design that identifies goods and services of one seller and sets them apart from competitors. Additionally, Aaker (1991) suggests that brands evoke consumer feelings and associations, further emphasizing their role in shaping perceptions and behaviors. Brands hold considerable economic value for businesses, as the relevance and strength of brands such as Samsung and Nestle allow them to command premiums over their competitors. Consumers who purchase brands like Titan watches or Mercedes-Benz cars often exhibit higher levels of brand loyalty, which bodes well for the company's future sales prospects. Consequently, this brand strength is reflected in higher firm valuations, as evidenced by the findings of Simon and Sullivan (1993). Overall, brands play a crucial role in driving consumer preferences, fostering loyalty, and enhancing the overall value proposition of products and services in the marketplace.

It's unsurprising that leaders across various companies, as well as executives and senior management, prioritize brand building activities as one of their key management challenges. Existing literature and studies on brand management, as exemplified by works such as those by Aaker (1996) and Keller (2008), provide valuable guidance to managers on how they can effectively build and grow their brands. However, despite these insights, there remains a continued need for substantial investments in distribution, communication, and other brand-building activities to maintain and enhance brand relevance in the marketplace. In parallel, when studying gender roles and consumption behaviors, there is often significant overlap and confusion regarding the meanings of concepts and the labeling of terms. Winstead and Derlega (1993) point out this ambiguity, highlighting the complexity inherent in understanding the relationship between gender and consumption behaviors. Moreover, studies suggest that the term "sex" is increasingly viewed as a matter of an individual's biological sex, whether male or female, as noted by Palan (2001). This distinction underscores the importance of clear terminology and conceptual frameworks when examining the intersection of gender and consumer behavior. By clarifying these concepts, researchers can better understand the nuanced ways in which gender influences consumer preferences, decision-making processes, and brand perceptions.

Gender is indeed a complex construct that encompasses psychological traits of masculinity and femininity, which can vary from one individual to another (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). Unlike biological sex, which is assigned at birth, gender is more closely linked to an individual's social interactions and experiences (West & Zimmerman, 1987). While masculinity is often associated with traits such as dominance and workplace orientation, femininity is typically associated with traits like compliance, nurturance, and empathy (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). It's important to note the distinction between terms such as gender role, gender identity, and gender, which are often used interchangeably in consumer behavior studies despite having nuanced differences (Palan, 2001). Gender role refers to the socially and culturally determined actions and behaviors associated with masculinity and femininity that individuals may choose to adopt. On the other hand, gender identity relates to an individual's personal sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with societal expectations. Lastly, gender

encompasses one's beliefs regarding the roles, responsibilities, and rights of men and women within society, reflecting broader cultural norms and values. Clarifying these distinctions helps researchers better understand the multifaceted nature of gender and its influence on consumer behavior.

While gender identity and gender roles are undoubtedly related concepts, it's important to recognize that there may not always be a congruent relationship between an individual's gender identity and their gender role (Fischer & Arnold, 1994). As Sullerot (1992) noted, women have increasingly adopted qualities and characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity, such as participation in work, education, financial independence, and control over reproductive rights. Furthermore, contemporary advertising often portrays men and women in diverse roles, with men being depicted as sex objects and engaging in activities previously associated with masculinity, such as cigar smoking (Kimmel & Tissier-Desbordes, 1999). Prior research on gender identity and consumer behavior has highlighted the significant role that gender plays in shaping consumer preferences and attitudes towards brands across various product categories (Bem, 1981; Fischer & Arnold, 1990/1994; Palan, 2001; Spence, 1993). However, studies such as those by Sirgy (1982, 1986) suggest that there is a positive relationship between consumers' gender identity and their consumption of certain brands. Additionally, gender can influence brand loyalty by eliciting a strong gender congruency effect, whereby consumers tend to prefer brands that align with their sense of masculinity or femininity (Fry, 1971; Worth et al., 1992). This underscores the importance of considering gender dynamics in brand positioning and marketing strategies to effectively target and engage diverse consumer segments. Indeed, consumers often seek gender cues when evaluating products and brands. Debvec and Iyer (1986) put forth the notion that consumers tend to associate certain products as either masculine or feminine, with little room for interchangeability between the two categories. This suggests that gender plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions of brands, as brands often acquire specific gender-related meanings. Gainer (1993) further expands on this idea by suggesting that consumer characteristics linked to gender are intricately connected with consumer behavior towards products or brands through an intermediate step known as "consumer product involvement."

Consumer product involvement refers to the degree of interest or importance that consumers attach to a particular product or brand. This concept suggests that consumers may exhibit different behaviors and preferences based on their level of involvement with a product, and gender can serve as a significant determinant of this involvement. For example, consumers may be more inclined to engage with products or brands that align with their gender identity or reflect their perceived gender roles. This underscores the complex interplay between gender, consumer behavior, and brand perception, highlighting the need for marketers to carefully consider gender dynamics in their branding and marketing strategies. Brands serve as symbolic instruments that allow consumers to express their self-image (Levy, 1959). Through symbolic communication, brands can represent intrinsic or extrinsic values, where intrinsic values relate to self-expression and extrinsic values denote prestige. However, the significance of these values depends on whether an individual is communicating with themselves or with their social surroundings (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1976). Brands play a crucial role in defining the personality of the user and associating them with a particular lifestyle. In doing so, brands foster a sense of belongingness and affiliation with specific groups (Murphy, 1990). Theories such as self-congruity (Sirgy, 1982) and self-enhancement (Shrauger, 1975) provide insights into why consumers strive for these symbolic benefits of brands. Individuals seek to maintain and enhance their self-concept by purchasing products they believe align with their self-image (Shrauger, 1975). This underscores the psychological motivations underlying consumer-brand relationships and the role of brands in shaping individual identity and social interactions.

The extent to which brands allow for personalization of products can significantly impact their ability to serve as symbols that contribute to achieving self-congruity. Products that offer personalization options, such as shoes or mobile phones, are more conducive to achieving self-congruity compared to services like home food delivery. This is because personalized products enable consumers to express their unique preferences and identity more effectively. For example, individuals can customize the design, features, and functionalities of their shoes or mobile phones to better align with their self-image and personal style. Similarly, clothing plays a crucial role in the enactment of social encounters and is considered a vital source of non-verbal communication (Noesjirwan & Crawford, 1982). The clothes we wear send powerful signals about our identity, values, and social status, making them an important aspect of self-expression. As highlighted by Grubb and Grathwohl (1967), an individual's sense of self evolves through complex processes of social interaction rather than in isolation. Brands are often used by consumers as tools to convey their self-image and aspirations, reflecting both who they are and who they aspire to be (Belk, 1988; Escalas and Bettman, 2005). By choosing specific brands and products, consumers actively construct and communicate their identities to others, thereby shaping their social interactions and relationships.

3. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

This study employed a structured questionnaire, meticulously designed after thorough analysis of previous research on brand relevance and in alignment with the defined research objectives. The questionnaire comprised four distinct sections, with the first section aimed at gathering demographic information from respondents. The subsequent three sections focused on eliciting responses related to three key variables: customer satisfaction, the role of brands in social acceptance, and consumer purchase behaviors. These variables were adapted from the BRiC study conducted by Marc Fischer, Franziska

Volcker, and Henrik Sattler (2010). Data collection for this study was conducted in urban areas of Pakistan. Urban areas were chosen to provide an optimal setting for examining the defined constructs. Six product categories were selected based on their significance in urban settings. Given the quantitative nature of the research, a survey technique was employed, utilizing close-ended questions to gather responses. A total of 195 responses were collected from respondents. However, 25 responses were found to be incomplete or lacking in reliability, and were consequently excluded from the analysis. This resulted in a final dataset comprising 170 responses for statistical analysis. Moreover, equal representation of both male and female respondents was ensured to enhance the credibility and impartiality of the findings, particularly in the context of a cross-gender study of BRIC.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The descriptive statistics table provides a comprehensive summary of six variables, each with 170 observations. For each variable, the table includes the minimum and maximum values, the mean, and the standard deviation, offering insights into the central tendency and variability of the data. Starting with the variable FD, the data ranges from a minimum value of 2 to a maximum value of 7. The mean, or average, is 4.96, indicating that the typical value is slightly below the midpoint of the range. The standard deviation of 1.343 suggests a moderate level of dispersion around the mean, meaning that while there is some variability in the data, most values are relatively close to the average. For the variable CL, the values span from 1.8 to 7.0, with a mean of 5.508. This average is higher than that of FD, suggesting that the typical value for CL is closer to the upper end of the range. The standard deviation is 1.1196, which indicates that the values are fairly consistent and do not deviate widely from the mean. The AP variable has values between 2.0 and 7.0, with an average of 5.228. The standard deviation is 0.9883, the lowest among the variables, indicating that AP values are quite tightly clustered around the mean. This low variability suggests a high degree of consistency in the data for AP. EL, with a minimum value of 1.0 and a maximum value of 7.0, has a mean of 5.800. The standard deviation is 0.9759, similar to that of AP, indicating low variability. This means that the values of EL are also very consistent, with most data points close to the mean. For the variable AM, the data ranges from 1.0 to 7.0, with an average of 5.805. The standard deviation is 1.2084, which is slightly higher than that of EL and AP but still relatively low. This suggests moderate consistency in the values of AM, with a bit more dispersion around the mean compared to EL and AP. Lastly, the variable PC has values ranging from 2.2 to 7.0 and a mean of 5.741. The standard deviation is 0.9463, the lowest among all the variables, indicating the highest consistency. The values of PC are closely grouped around the mean, reflecting very low variability. Overall, the descriptive statistics show that all variables have mean values that are relatively high, suggesting that on average, the values are closer to the maximum end of their ranges. The standard deviations for all variables are low to moderate, indicating that the values are fairly consistent and do not deviate widely from their respective means.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
FD	170	2	7	4.96	1.343
CL	170	1.8	7.0	5.508	1.1196
AP	170	2.0	7.0	5.228	.9883
EL	170	1.0	7.0	5.800	.9759
AM	170	1.0	7.0	5.805	1.2084
PC	170	2.2	7.0	5.741	.9463
Valid N (list wise)	170				

The table presents the results of independent sample t-tests comparing two pairs of variables: EL vs. AM and EL vs. PC. The goal of these tests is to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the two independent groups in each pair. For the comparison between EL and AM, the t-value is -0.040, with degrees of freedom (Df) of 338 in the first row and 323.657 in the second row. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.969, which is much higher than the typical alpha level of 0.05, indicating no significant difference between the means of EL and AM. The mean difference is -0.0047, very close to zero, suggesting that the average values of EL and AM are almost identical. The standard error of the difference is 0.1191. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.2390 to 0.2296, encompassing zero. This further supports the conclusion that there is no significant difference between the means of EL and AM. In the comparison between EL and PC, the t-value is 0.564, with degrees of freedom (Df) of 338 in the first row and 337.679 in the second row. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.573, again much higher than the alpha level of 0.05, indicating no significant difference between the means of EL and PC. The mean difference is 0.0588, indicating a very small average difference between the two variables. The standard error of the difference is 0.1043. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.1463 to 0.2639, also including zero. This

indicates that the observed difference in means is not statistically significant. Overall, the t-tests reveal that there is no statistically significant difference between the means of EL and AM, nor between the means of EL and PC. Both tests yield high p-values, small mean differences close to zero, and confidence intervals that include zero, all of which suggest that the means of these variables are statistically indistinguishable from each other.

Table 2

ELECTRONICS

Independent Sample t-test	t-test for Equality of Means						
						90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
EL-AM	-.040	338	.969	-.0047	.1191	-.2390	.2296
	-.040	323.657	.969	-.0047	.1191	-.2391	.2297
EL-PC	.564	338	.573	.0588	.1043	-.1463	.2639
	.564	337.679	.573	.0588	.1043	-.1463	.2639

Table 3

FOOD

	t-test for Equality of Means						
						90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
FD-CL	-4.079	338	.000	-.5471	.1341	-.8109	-.2832
	-4.079	327.369	.000	-.5471	.1341	-.8109	-.2832
FD-AP	-2.088	338	.038	-.2671	.1279	-.5187	-.0155
	-2.088	310.488	.038	-.2671	.1279	-.5187	-.0154
FD-EL	-6.587	338	.000	-.8388	.1273	-1.0893	-.5883
	-6.587	308.523	.000	-.8388	.1273	-1.0894	-.5882
FD-AM	-6.087	338	.000	-.8435	.1386	-1.1161	-.5709
	-6.087	334.283	.000	-.8435	.1386	-1.1161	-.5709
FD-PC	-6.419	338	.000	-.8059	.1255	-1.0528	-.5589
	-6.419	305.051	.000	-.8059	.1255	-1.0529	-.5588

The table presents the results of t-tests comparing the means of the variable FD (Food) with five other variables: CL, AP, EL, AM, and PC. Each comparison includes two rows, providing the t-value, degrees of freedom (Df), significance (2-tailed), mean difference, standard error of the difference, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference.

In the comparison between FD and CL, the t-value is -4.079, with degrees of freedom of 338 in the first row and 327.369 in the second row. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.000, indicating a highly significant difference between the means of FD and CL. The mean difference is -0.5471, suggesting that, on average, the value of FD is 0.5471 units lower than CL. The standard error of the difference is 0.1341. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.8109 to -0.2832, indicating that the true mean difference is significantly different from zero.

When comparing FD and AP, the t-value is -2.088, with degrees of freedom of 338 and 310.488. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.038, which is below the typical alpha level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the means of FD and AP. The mean difference is -0.2671, suggesting that, on average, FD is 0.2671 units lower than AP. The standard error of the difference is 0.1279, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.5187 to -0.0155, confirming the significant difference.

For the comparison between FD and EL, the t-value is -6.587, with degrees of freedom of 338 and 308.523. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.000, indicating a highly significant difference between the means of FD and EL. The mean difference is -0.8388, meaning that FD is, on average, 0.8388 units lower than EL. The standard error of the difference is 0.1273. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -1.0893 to -0.5883, highlighting the significant difference. In the comparison between FD and AM, the t-value is -6.087, with degrees of freedom of 338 and

334.283. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.000, indicating a highly significant difference between the means of FD and AM. The mean difference is -0.8435, suggesting that FD is 0.8435 units lower than AM on average. The standard error of the difference is 0.1386. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -1.1161 to -0.5709, confirming the significant difference. Finally, for the comparison between FD and PC, the t-value is -6.419, with degrees of freedom of 338 and 305.051. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.000, indicating a highly significant difference between the means of FD and PC. The mean difference is -0.8059, suggesting that FD is 0.8059 units lower than PC on average. The standard error of the difference is 0.1255. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -1.0528 to -0.5589, reinforcing the significant difference. Overall, the t-test results reveal that FD is significantly different from all the other variables (CL, AP, EL, AM, and PC), with FD having lower mean values in each comparison. The significant p-values, substantial mean differences, and confidence intervals that do not include zero all support these findings.

Table 4

CLOTHING

Independent Sample t-test	t-test for Equality of Means						
						90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
CL-AP	2.445	338	.015	.2800	.1145	.0547	.5053
	2.445	332.872	.015	.2800	.1145	.0547	.5053
CL-EL	-2.561	338	.011	-.2918	.1139	-.5158	-.0677
	-2.561	331.817	.011	-.2918	.1139	-.5158	-.0677
CL-AM	-2.346	338	.020	-.2965	.1263	-.5450	-.0479
	-2.346	336.049	.020	-.2965	.1263	-.5450	-.0479
CL-PC	-2.072	338	.039	-.2329	.1124	-.4541	-.0118
	-2.072	328.869	.039	-.2329	.1124	-.4541	-.0118

Table 5

APPARELS

Independent Sample t-test	t-test for Equality of Means						
						90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AP-EL	-5.367	338	.000	-.5718	.1065	-.7813	-.3622
	-5.367	337.946	.000	-.5718	.1065	-.7813	-.3622
AP-AM	-4.815	338	.000	-.5765	.1197	-.8120	-.3410
	-4.815	325.194	.000	-.5765	.1197	-.8120	-.3409
AP-PC	-4.888	338	.000	-.5129	.1049	-.7194	-.3065

The table presents the results of independent sample t-tests comparing the mean values of the variable CL (Clothing) with those of AP, EL, AM, and PC. Each comparison includes the t-value, degrees of freedom (Df), significance (2-tailed), mean difference, standard error of the difference, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference.

In the comparison between CL and AP, the t-value is 2.445, with degrees of freedom of 338 in the first row and 332.872 in the second row. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.015, which is below the typical alpha level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the means of CL and AP. The mean difference is 0.2800, suggesting that, on average, the value of CL is 0.2800 units higher than AP. The standard error of the difference is 0.1145, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately 0.0547 to 0.5053, indicating that the true mean difference is significantly different from zero.

For the comparison between CL and EL, the t-value is -2.561, with degrees of freedom of 338 and 331.817. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.011, also below the alpha level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference

between the means of CL and EL. The mean difference is -0.2918, suggesting that, on average, the value of CL is 0.2918 units lower than EL. The standard error of the difference is 0.1139, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.5158 to -0.0677, confirming the significant difference.

In the comparison between CL and AM, the t-value is -2.346, with degrees of freedom of 338 and 336.049. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.020, indicating a statistically significant difference between the means of CL and AM. The mean difference is -0.2965, suggesting that CL is, on average, 0.2965 units lower than AM. The standard error of the difference is 0.1263, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.5450 to -0.0479, highlighting the significant difference.

Finally, for the comparison between CL and PC, the t-value is -2.072, with degrees of freedom of 338 and 328.869. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.039, below the alpha level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the means of CL and PC. The mean difference is -0.2329, suggesting that CL is 0.2329 units lower than PC on average. The standard error of the difference is 0.1124, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.4541 to -0.0118, reinforcing the significant difference. Overall, the t-test results indicate that CL is significantly different from AP, EL, AM, and PC. The significant p-values, mean differences that deviate from zero, and confidence intervals that do not include zero all support these findings. Specifically, CL has a higher mean value compared to AP but lower mean values compared to EL, AM, and PC.

The table displays the results of independent sample t-tests comparing the means of the variable AP (Apparels) with three other variables: EL, AM, and PC. For each comparison, the table includes the t-value, degrees of freedom (Df), significance (2-tailed), mean difference, standard error of the difference, and the 90% confidence interval for the mean difference. When comparing AP and EL, the t-value is -5.367, with degrees of freedom of 338 in the first row and 337.946 in the second row. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.000, which is well below the conventional alpha level of 0.05, indicating a highly significant difference between the means of AP and EL. The mean difference is -0.5718, suggesting that, on average, the value of AP is 0.5718 units lower than EL. The standard error of the difference is 0.1065. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.7813 to -0.3622, indicating that the true mean difference is significantly different from zero. For the comparison between AP and AM, the t-value is -4.815, with degrees of freedom of 338 in the first row and 325.194 in the second row. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.000, also well below the alpha level of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the means of AP and AM. The mean difference is -0.5765, suggesting that, on average, the value of AP is 0.5765 units lower than AM. The standard error of the difference is 0.1197. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.8120 to -0.3410, confirming the significant difference. In the comparison between AP and PC, the t-value is -4.888, with degrees of freedom of 338. The significance value (2-tailed) is 0.000, again indicating a highly significant difference between the means of AP and PC. The mean difference is -0.5129, suggesting that, on average, the value of AP is 0.5129 units lower than PC. The standard error of the difference is 0.1049. The 90% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from approximately -0.7194 to -0.3065, reinforcing the significant difference. Overall, the t-test results demonstrate that the mean value of AP is significantly lower compared to EL, AM, and PC. The highly significant p-values, substantial mean differences, and confidence intervals that do not include zero all support the conclusion that there are statistically significant differences between the means of AP and the other three variables.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study represents an endeavor to extend the scope of existing research on brand relevance, building upon the work of Fischer and his colleagues. In our investigation, we seek to assess brand relevance across six distinct product categories: Food, Clothing, Apparels, Electronics, Automobiles, and Personal Care. Our objective is to conduct a cross-category comparison to ascertain whether significant differences exist between these independent product categories. By examining brand relevance across a diverse range of product categories, we aim to contribute novel insights into the nuanced dynamics of consumer perceptions and preferences. Through this comparative analysis, we endeavor to uncover any discernible patterns or variations in brand relevance across different product domains. Such findings hold implications for marketers and brand managers seeking to optimize their strategies for enhancing brand relevance and engagement across various market segments.

The results of our analysis indicate that there were no significant differences observed in brand relevance between the automobile-personal care and automobile-electronics pairs. However, significant differences were identified in other comparisons between product categories. This suggests that certain product categories within the pairs exhibited distinct levels of impact on brand relevance compared to their counterparts. These findings underscore the importance of considering the unique characteristics and consumer perceptions associated with each product category when assessing brand relevance. While some product categories may share similarities in terms of their impact on brand perception, others may differ significantly. Understanding these distinctions is essential for marketers and brand managers seeking to tailor their strategies effectively to each product category and its respective consumer base. By recognizing and leveraging these nuances, businesses can enhance their brand relevance and resonance within specific market segments. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, were employed to assess the impact of brand relevance across various product categories.

The results revealed notable differences in the perceived importance of brands across different product categories. Specifically, brand relevance was found to be highest in the categories of Electronics (mean score, M = 5.800) and Automobiles (M = 5.805). This suggests that consumers perceive brands in these categories as particularly influential or significant in their purchasing decisions. Conversely, the category of Food exhibited the lowest level of brand relevance, with a mean score of M = 4.96. This indicates that brands in the food category may have less impact or importance compared to other product categories. For Apparels (M = 5.228) and Personal Care (M = 5.741), brand relevance was notably high, albeit slightly lower than that observed for Electronics and Automobiles. This suggests that brands in these categories still hold considerable sway over consumer preferences and purchasing behavior.

These findings highlight the varying degrees of brand relevance across different product categories, underscoring the importance of understanding and effectively managing brands within specific market contexts. Marketers and brand managers can use these insights to tailor their branding strategies to align with consumer perceptions and preferences within each product category. Additionally, we examined brand relevance from a gender perspective to ascertain whether there were discernible differences between male and female responses. An independent sample t-test was employed to assess the significance of these differences in brand relevance. The results revealed that for the categories of Clothing and Apparels, insignificant differences were observed between male and female responses. This suggests that both genders responded to brand relevance in a similar manner within these product categories. One possible explanation for these findings could be the demographic profile of the respondents, many of whom were university students. Given their familiarity with fashion trends and their inclination to integrate these trends into their lifestyle choices, both male and female respondents may have exhibited similar levels of sensitivity to brand relevance in the Clothing and Apparels categories. It's noteworthy to recognize that the findings of our study may not be applicable to the broader population of Pakistan, as our research focused solely on a segment of the urban population and did not encompass the larger rural demographic. In developing countries like Pakistan, individuals often prioritize activities that enhance their social standing and prestige. However, it's important to acknowledge that urban areas may exhibit distinct consumer behaviors and preferences compared to rural areas, which can stem from differences in socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, and access to resources.

Given the diversity within Pakistan's population, future research endeavors could aim to include a more comprehensive and representative sample that encompasses both urban and rural regions. By capturing a broader spectrum of perspectives and experiences, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of consumer behaviors and brand relevance across different segments of the population. Such insights would be invaluable for marketers and policymakers seeking to develop targeted strategies that resonate with diverse audiences nationwide. The analysis of brand relevance in the Food category revealed significant differences between male and female respondents. Descriptive statistics indicated that females (M=5.139, SD 1.34) had a higher impact on brand relevance compared to males (M=4.78, SD 1.33). One potential explanation for this discrepancy could be the heightened brand consciousness often observed among female consumers, particularly when it comes to food products. Females may place a greater emphasis on brands as a signal of quality, reliability, and satisfaction in their food choices. Additionally, they may have a stronger inclination to associate positive experiences and emotions with branded food items. Another contributing factor could be differences in exposure and awareness of non-branded or generic food options. Females, who may be less inclined toward adventurous or spontaneous culinary experiences compared to males, could be more reliant on established brands as a guarantee of product quality and safety. However, it's important to note that these interpretations are speculative and would benefit from further empirical investigation. Conducting qualitative research or surveys to explore the underlying motivations and behaviors driving brand relevance in the Food category among male and female consumers could provide deeper insights into this phenomenon. Such insights would be invaluable for marketers seeking to tailor their branding strategies to effectively target different demographic segments within the food market. The analysis of brand relevance in the Automobile and Electronics categories revealed significant differences between male and female respondents. Despite these differences, both genders exhibited strong brand relevance in these categories, as indicated by the mean scores. This suggests that while there may be variations in the way male and female consumers perceive and prioritize brands in these product categories, brands remain influential and relevant to both demographics. Similarly, in the Personal Care category, no significant difference was found in the impact of brand relevance between male and female respondents. This suggests that both genders attribute similar importance to brands when making decisions related to personal care items. Given that the respondents in this study are educated and health-conscious, it's reasonable to expect that they would prioritize brand attributes such as quality, efficacy, and reputation when selecting personal care products. Overall, this study provides further insights into the dynamics of brand relevance across different product categories and gender demographics. While it confirms some findings from previous studies, it also highlights the nuanced differences that exist in consumer perceptions and behaviors. However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including its focus on urban populations and the need for further research to address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of brand relevance in diverse consumer contexts.

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