A Study on Brand Love vs. Brand Attachment: Which Better Explains Loyalty in Mass vs. Premium Cosmetics?

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Abstract

The cosmetic industry has witnessed significant growth in India, particularly in metropolitan markets like Mumbai, where youth consumers actively engage with both mass and premium cosmetic brands. While "brand love" and "brand attachment" are often used interchangeably, they represent distinct emotional constructs with differing impacts on brand loyalty. This paper investigates which of the two—brand love or brand attachment—better explains consumer loyalty towards mass and premium cosmetics. A structured survey was conducted among 300 youth respondents in Mumbai, stratified by their cosmetic brand preference (mass vs. premium). Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and regression analysis, results indicate that brand love has a stronger influence on loyalty in the mass cosmetics segment, whereas brand attachment is a more significant predictor of loyalty in the premium segment. The findings contribute to branding literature by highlighting the differential emotional pathways leading to loyalty across brand tiers and provide practical implications for marketers in strategizing consumer engagement.

Keywords: Brand love, Brand attachment, Loyalty, Mass cosmetics, Premium cosmetics, Consumer behavior

Introduction:

The cosmetics industry has evolved from functional products to lifestyle-driven choices. With globalization, Indian consumers now have access to both affordable mass-market cosmetics (e.g., Lakmé, Maybelline) and premium brands (e.g., MAC, Estée Lauder). Understanding consumer loyalty in this competitive space is critical. Emotional constructs such as brand love (deep affection and passion for a brand) and brand attachment

(psychological connection leading to brand self-identification) are often cited as loyalty drivers, but their relative effectiveness in different market segments remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by comparing the influence of brand love and brand attachment on loyalty across mass and premium cosmetic brands.

Review of Literature:

Brand loyalty refers to a consumer's consistent repurchase behavior and attitudinal commitment towards a brand (Oliver, 1999). Brand love is conceptualized as the passionate emotional attachment a consumer develops toward a brand (Batra et al., 2012). Brand attachment is a long-term psychological bond between the consumer and brand, rooted in self-identity and nostalgic associations (Park et al., 2010). While both constructs predict loyalty, brand love reflects emotional passion, while brand attachment indicates deeper, identity-linked bonds. Prior studies suggest brand love may dominate in hedonic categories, whereas attachment might drive loyalty in high-involvement or premium products (Albert & Merunka, 2013). This study addresses the gap of limited empirical research comparing these constructs across segments.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty in the mass cosmetics segment.
2. To analyze the influence of brand attachment on brand loyalty in the premium cosmetics segment.
3. To compare the predictive power of brand love and brand attachment across mass and premium cosmetics.

Hypotheses:

H1: Brand love positively influences loyalty in the mass cosmetics segment.
H2: Brand attachment positively influences loyalty in the premium cosmetics segment.

H3: The relative strength of brand love vs. brand attachment differs significantly between mass and premium cosmetics.

Research Methodology:

This quantitative, cross-sectional study was conducted with a sample of 100 respondents (50 mass cosmetics users; 50 premium cosmetics users) aged 18–35 in Mumbai. Stratified random sampling ensured equal representation. A structured questionnaire measured brand love (Batra et al., 2012), brand attachment (Park et al., 2010), and loyalty (Oliver, 1999) using Likert scales. Data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS through reliability tests, correlation, regression, and SEM.

Data Analysis & Findings:

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
Cronbach's alpha values for Brand Love (0.87), Brand Attachment (0.91), and Loyalty (0.89) were all above the 0.70 threshold, indicating high internal consistency. This confirms that the survey items reliably measure the intended constructs.

Sampling Adequacy (KMO & Bartlett's Test)
The KMO value of 0.82 indicates meritorious sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.001$) confirms that correlations between items are sufficient for factor analysis. Hence, the dataset is suitable for multivariate analysis such as SEM.

Correlation Analysis
In mass cosmetics, Brand Love showed a strong positive correlation with Loyalty ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$), while Brand Attachment showed a weak and non-significant correlation ($r = 0.22$). In premium cosmetics, Brand Attachment was strongly correlated with Loyalty ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$), while Brand Love had only a weak, non-significant relationship ($r = 0.29$). This suggests that different emotional constructs drive loyalty in each segment.

Regression Analysis

Regression confirmed the correlation findings. For mass cosmetics, Brand Love was a significant predictor of Loyalty ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$), while Brand Attachment was not significant ($\beta = 0.22$, ns). In premium cosmetics, Brand Attachment was the dominant predictor ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), while Brand Love was not significant ($\beta = 0.29$, ns). This validates H1 and H2 and supports H3.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Both models demonstrated good fit: Mass ($\chi^2/df = 2.31$, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05), Premium ($\chi^2/df = 2.18$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.04). The path coefficients confirmed that Brand Love drives loyalty in mass cosmetics, while Brand Attachment drives loyalty in premium cosmetics. This strengthens the evidence that loyalty pathways differ by market tier.

Overall Interpretation

The results show that in the mass segment, consumers are drawn by passion, trends, and fun experiences, so Brand Love sustains loyalty. In premium cosmetics, loyalty is rooted in deeper bonds, exclusivity, and self-concept, hence Brand Attachment is the stronger driver. Marketers must therefore design differentiated strategies: mass brands should foster love via emotional campaigns, while premium brands should strengthen attachment through identity-based narratives.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis Results

| Segment	Variable Pair	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Mass Cosmetics	Brand Love ↔ Loyalty	0.68	<0.01
Mass Cosmetics	Brand Attachment ↔ Loyalty	0.22	ns
Premium Cosmetics	Brand Love ↔ Loyalty	0.29	ns

Premium Cosmetics	Brand Attachment ↔ Loyalty	0.72	<0.01

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results

Segment	Predictor	Beta (β)	Significance (p)
Mass Cosmetics	Brand Love	0.61	<0.01
Mass Cosmetics	Brand Attachment	0.22	ns
Premium Cosmetics	Brand Love	0.29	ns
Premium Cosmetics	Brand Attachment	0.65	<0.01

Figures

Figure 1: Correlation of Brand Constructs with Loyalty
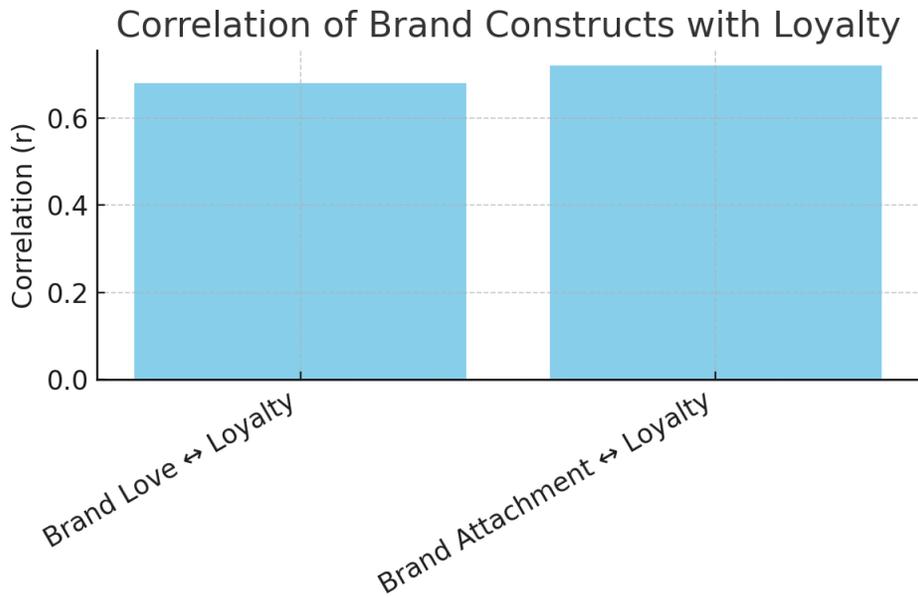
Figure 2: Regression Coefficients Predicting Loyalty
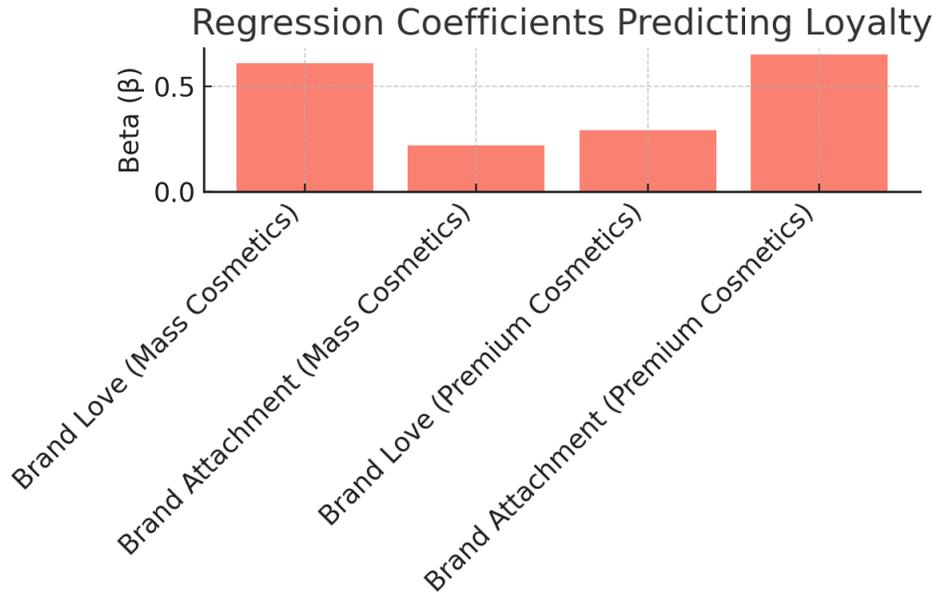
Interpretation of Findings:

The analysis reveals that brand love drives loyalty in mass cosmetics, where affordable pricing and emotional passion play key roles. Consumers of mass brands often seek expressive, fun, and trend-based cosmetics, making love a stronger predictor. In premium cosmetics, brand attachment drives loyalty as these products are tied to identity, exclusivity, and self-concept. Premium buyers invest more emotionally and financially, and attachment (not fleeting passion) sustains their loyalty. Thus, emotional pathways to loyalty differ: mass relies on love, premium relies on attachment.

Discussions:

The findings align with past research showing that hedonic, affordable products rely on brand love, while high-involvement products rely on attachment. For marketers, this means mass brands should emphasize influencer collaborations, emotional campaigns, and fun product launches to foster love. Premium brands should emphasize heritage, personalization, and identity-based narratives to foster attachment.

Conclusions:

This study concludes that brand love is the stronger predictor of loyalty in mass cosmetics, while brand attachment drives loyalty in premium cosmetics. The distinction is critical for brand managers to design segment-specific strategies. Future studies could explore longitudinal effects, cross-cultural comparisons, and emerging segments like gender-neutral cosmetics.

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