

Explore the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty of DHL Supply Chain

by
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ABSTRACT

The study is aimed to examine the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty considering the dynamics of DHL Supply Chain Services. In the onset, the study has proven that it is essential to have a sustained balance between brand image and brand loyalty since this holds the key to the success of DHL, considering the rising competition in the logistics industry. In the study, it has been argued that a strong balance between brand image and brand loyalty is also a great source of sustainable competitive advantage for DHL in the long term. The study has relied on a quantitative enquiry supported by the positivism paradigm and a conclusive approach to the findings. A survey was coordinated among active DHL Supply Chain Services users as these guaranteed honest and experienced-based answers to the questionnaire. In the study outcomes, it was evident that the participants, having relied on DHL Supply Chain Services for an extended period, have also built or instead created a positive impression in brand loyalty and brand reputation. Therefore, insofar as the sample was concerned, a positive brand image and reputation were present. Moreover, a supported relationship between the two facets was approved, which led to the upholding of H1 and H2 of the study. Nonetheless, to strengthen the findings of this study, it was proposed that an in-depth follow-up questionnaire in the form of qualitative analysis be conducted to validate the significant nexus between brand image and brand loyalty the participants have towards DHL Supply Chain Services.

Keywords: *DHL, supply chain, brand image, brand loyalty, SPSS, quantitative, p-value.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
1.1 Introduction.....	6
1.2 Background of the Research	6
1.3 Statement of the Research	7
1.4 Research Aim	7
1.5 Research Objectives	7
1.6 Research Questions and Hypotheses	8
1.7 Study's Significance	8
1.8 Outline of the Research	9
1.9 Conclusion of CHAPTER ONE	9
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1. Introduction.....	10
2.2 Theoretical Review	11
2.2.1. Introduction to brand equity	11
2.2.2. Brand equity theory (Keller's model)	11
2.2.3. Brand loyalty model (Oliver, 1999).....	13
2.3 Empirical Analysis.....	14
2.3.1 Effects of brand image of DHL Supply Chain on customer loyalty	14
2.3.2 Effects of brand image of DHL Supply Chain on consumer's decision to purchase.	16
2.4 Gaps in Knowledge	17
2.5 Conclusion of CHAPTER TWO.....	18
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	19
3.1 Introduction.....	19
3.2 Research Philosophy	20
3.3 Research Approach.....	20
3.4 Research Methodology	20
3.5 Research Strategy	21
3.6 Sampling and Participants	21
3.7 Data Collection Tools.....	22
3.8 Measurement, Data Analysis, and Interpretation	22
3.9 Ethical Considerations	22
3.10 Methodological Limitations	23
3.11 Conclusion of CHAPTER THREE	23

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	24
4.1 Introduction.....	24
4.2 Results.....	24
4.2 Discussion.....	29
4.2.1 Relationship between Brand Image and Brand Loyalty in DHL Supply Chain Services.....	29
4.2.2 Brand Image and Customer Buying Intention towards DHL Supply Chain Services.....	30
4.3 Conclusion of CHAPTER FOUR.....	32
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	33
5.1 Recommendations	33
5.2 Practical Implications of the Research.....	33
5.3 Limitations and Future Research.....	34
5.4 Conclusion of CHAPTER FIVE	34
APENDIXES	41

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Brand image and loyalty are determined by the interaction between the brand and customers (Bilgili and Ozkul, 2015). Brand images relate to the customers' perception of the brand based on how it meets their needs. Brand loyalty describes the customers' ability to repeatedly purchase the same brand despite competitors offering alternative products (Alhaddad, 2015).

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty and how loyalty affects purchasing power by conducting a DHL Supply Chain case study. The study used a questionnaire to analyse the responses quantitatively using SPSS. However, there is recognition that other factors can also influence consumer purchases and loyalty, such as income, age, and marketing strategies. The questionnaire, therefore, included a comprehensive list of all the factors likely to affect loyalty and purchases.

1.2 Background of the Research

DHL Supply Chain is a division of the global logistics and transportation company DHL, founded in 1969 in the United States. The company is a global logistics and supply chain management organisation in more than 220 countries. DHL has over 100,000 employees and over 2.7 million customers worldwide (DHL, n.d.). Despite its reputation as a leading logistics provider, brand loyalty has challenged DHL's Supply Chain. The main reason for this was a poor brand experience, leading customers to switch providers to its competitors. In addition, late deliveries, damaged goods, inadequate customer service, and unmet expectations can cause poor brand experiences (Princes, 2020).

DHL Supply Chain has invested heavily to improve its brand image and reputation in recent years. As the company has grown, it has allowed it to offer the highest quality services and bring innovative solutions. Therefore, it is crucial for the company with highly competitive companies, such as FedEx Supply Chain, UPS Supply Chain

Solutions, DPD and more, to maintain a positive image of their brand to attract and retain customers (Showrav et al. 2020).

1.3 Statement of the Research

Around 80% of consumers change a brand due to a negative experience (Jones, 2021). Thus, many companies need more understanding of what motivates consumer behaviour to develop strategies to enhance consumer experience and boost loyalty to the brand (Nagengast et al., 2014). Furthermore, in a highly competitive market like the one DHL operates in, it is vital to understand consumer behaviour to retain them and expand.

1.4 Research Aim

The study investigates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty in DHL Supply Chain to stimulate customers' desire to purchase the brand's products or services. The study will develop a questionnaire and analyse the responses quantitatively.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the impact of DHL Supply Chain's brand image on customer loyalty.
- To determine the factors influencing DHL Supply Chain's brand image and loyalty.
- To inform policy about how to improve loyalty through brand image improvement.

1.6 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions are:

- How does the brand image of DHL Supply Chain affect customer loyalty?
- How does the brand image of DHL Supply Chain influence the consumer's decision to purchase?
- What is the relationship between brand image and loyalty in DHL Supply Chain?

Further, the hypotheses to be addressed in the study include the following:

- H1: The relation between brand image and brand loyalty is positive.
- H2: Brand image is the essential determinant of brand loyalty.

1.7 Study's Significance

Exploring the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty of the DHL supply chain will offer strategic insight to the firm's management into optimising the two dimensions to drive more value to the shareholders and the customers. Therefore, understanding the balance concerning brand image and loyalty is meant to generate knowledge and formulate clear strategies for DHL Supply Chain to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in the long term (Urde, 1AD).

The findings from the research will deeply touch the DHL Supply Chain's heart of the marketing and branding strategies world. For example, the company can target marketing campaigns by gaining information on brand loyalty. The result could be that customers could have long-term relations with the brand, which will help the company increase profitability. In general, the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty will also enable DHL Supply Chain to discover the difference between the company and the competitors, increase customer retention, and drive sustainable business growth. In conclusion, this research will give DHL Supply Chain a significant knowledge of customer loyalty and branding in the logistics company. Furthermore, it will provide the company insight into strengthening its brand positioning and enhancing customer loyalty (Arslan, M. and Zaman, R., 2015).

1.8 Outline of the Research

The rest of the dissertation is structured as follows:

- **CHAPTER ONE** captures the study's background, research statement, aim, objectives, research questions, and significance.
- **CHAPTER TWO** features the theoretical framework, empirical review, and knowledge gaps.
- **CHAPTER THREE** details the research methods, which consist of the philosophy, approach, methodology, strategy, procedure, instrument, sample, and ethical considerations.
- **CHAPTER FOUR** features the outcomes for the analysis of data and respective discussions
- **CHAPTER FIVE** offers the study's conclusion, recommendation, and limitations.

1.9 Conclusion of CHAPTER ONE

Overall, the background analysis reveals the persistent orientation of DHL Company to align its supply chain with facets that enhance or increase brand image. Moreover, the role of brand image in stimulating the firm's competitive advantage is evident and requires further exploration during the study.

At the end of the research, and especially after the deep insight into the nature of the DHL Supply Chain's customers, there will be a result that will help the company understand its mistakes, evaluate its achievements so far, and have more understanding of its mission and vision future.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Snyder (2019) indicates that literature reviews facilitate a better understanding of existing research in a particular field by identifying relevant studies. The author should be able to identify the issue and ascertain what research has already been conducted by writing a literature review. The section provides an academic perspective on the existing studies and findings around the brand image and loyalty.

Brand image and loyalty have been extensively explored in the marketing literature. Some papers used qualitative approaches, while others used quantitative approaches to understand the relationships between branding and loyalty. Customers' opinions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding a brand constitute it is *brand image* (Keller, 1993). It is crucial to a company's success to have a marketing plan that differentiates a brand from its competitors and drives customer behaviour. In contrast, *brand loyalty* is "the frequency with which a customer purchases a particular brand" as held by Oliver, (1999). In addition to enhancing profitability, it is a crucial metric for retaining customers.

According to Duzgun and Yamamoto (2017), the brand image reflects how individuals perceive the brand. The research uses the causal method since it attempts to explain the cause-and-effect link between brand image and consumer loyalty, as defined by the causal research criteria. Consumers prioritise a company's finances when a brand's image has value.

A similar study Muhammad Qasim Shabbir, Ansar Ali Khan, and Saba Rasheed Khan (2017) found that brand loyalty is the ability of customers to purchase a company's products regularly. The paper used surveys of a 200 people to collect data and found strong relationship between brand image and loyalty. In addition, the paper found that when consumers receive constructive involvement from the organisation, they exhibit a high level of brand loyalty.

As held by Faircloth (2001) brand equity can also be considered a consequence of customer behaviour; it is the consumer's preference for brands with positive brand

connections. Similarly, Taylor (2001) noted that brand equity is significant because it creates a competitive advantage by differentiating a company's products and services from its rivals. Moreover, brand equity fosters consumer loyalty by developing an emotional bond between the brand and the customer. Furthermore, brand equity boosts the company's market value, improves access to finance, and lowers the cost of capital.

2.2 Theoretical Review

There are many theories, such as Keller, Aaker, and Oliver theory, associated with brand and loyalty in the marketing discipline. Each seeks to predict how consumers behave and what motivates them. Businesses have used these theories to develop strategies to improve the brand image and loyalty.

Therefore, this section will review some theories and select the relevant one for this study. Specifically, the section will look at the Brand equity theory, the Keller, and the Oliver theory.

2.2.1. Introduction to brand equity

As held by Faircloth (2001) brand equity can also be considered a consequence of customer behaviour; it is the consumer's preference for brands with positive brand connections. Similarly, Taylor (2001) noted that brand equity is significant because it creates a competitive advantage by differentiating a company's products and services from its rivals. Moreover, brand equity fosters consumer loyalty by developing an emotional bond between the brand and the customer. Furthermore, brand equity boosts the company's market value, improves access to finance, and lowers the cost of capital.

2.2.2. Brand equity theory (Keller's model)

According to Keller's (1993) model, brand image is critical to brand equity. It is "the set of perceptions, images, and beliefs that consumers hold about a brand". Brand image

encompasses various aspects of a brand, including its personality, quality, value, and credibility. In addition, Hawker (2019) stated that it is shaped by various marketing activities, such as advertising, packaging, and pricing, as well as by consumer experiences with the DHL Supply Chain.

The model has a pyramidal shape, and its pyramid has four levels. For example, the following are the levels of a Brand Equity model: Brand Identity, Brand Meaning, Brand Response and Brand Relationship. By utilising this model, a company understands which strategy to adopt and how to provide the optimal client experience.

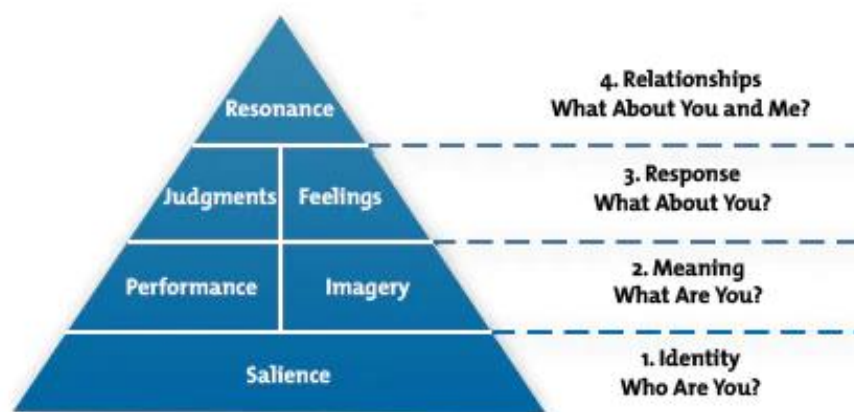


Figure 1: Keller's Model

Source: <https://www.mindtools.com/ajnlcxe/kellers-brand-equity-model>

2.2.2.1. Advantages and disadvantages of Keller's model

Keller's Model is advantageous because it places the customer at the centre of the branding process. As result, companies can establish brand equity and loyalty by recognising and meeting client requirements. Internal and external elements that affect brand equity are incorporated into Keller's model for brand management, which gives a complete approach.

For Leone (2006), developing and maintaining a good brand involves continuous marketing and advertising expenditures, which can be difficult for firms with restricted finances. While Keller's model highlights the significance of brand equity, it does not emphasise financial performance as heavily, which may be a disadvantage for firms who prioritise financial performance over other branding objectives.

2.2.3. Brand loyalty model (Oliver, 1999)

The 1999 model of brand loyalty provided by Oliver (1999) provides a thorough perspective of the concept of brand loyalty. The model's four components are cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty. The cognitive component displays the customer's knowledge and beliefs about the brand, whereas the affective component reflects the emotional attachment of the consumers and desire for the brand. In line with the above TaghiPourian (2015) held that the conative component reveals the customer's intent to purchase the brand, whereas the action component refers to the customer's purchasing and repurchasing behaviour.

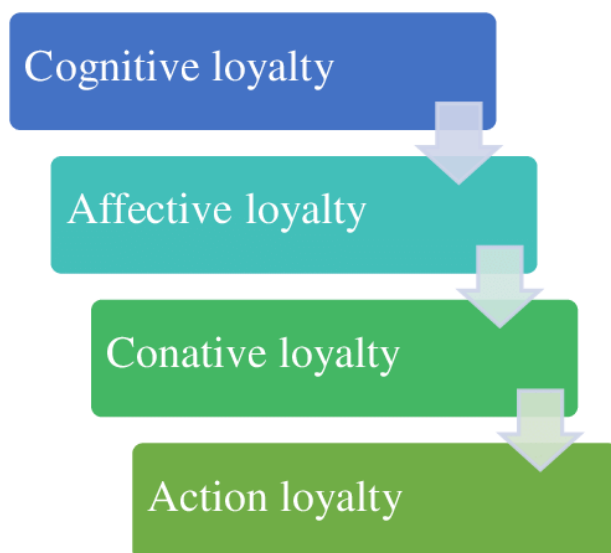


Figure 2: Oliver's Brand Loyalty Model

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Four-Stage-Model-of-Loyalty-Oliver-1999_fig2_338549146

2.2.3.1. Advantages and disadvantages of Oliver's model

The comprehensive nature and ability to capture numerous characteristics of brand loyalty are advantages of Oliver's concept. It offers a comprehensive view of the concept of brand loyalty and applies to various sectors and goods. In addition, it may be utilised to discover the drivers and barriers of brand loyalty and build strategies to increase consumer loyalty and retention.

However, Ottar Olsen (2013) affirmed that the model has its challenges. It focuses solely on the person's perspective and may not account for the broader social and cultural elements influencing brand loyalty. In addition, the model does not account for the influence of external factors like pricing, promotion, and distribution on brand loyalty.

2.3 Empirical Analysis

2.3.1 Effects of brand image of DHL Supply Chain on customer loyalty

According to Aaker (1997), brand image results from consumers' perceptions of and trust in a specific brand. The brand's image is the culmination of perceptions about a specific brand. Like the assertions above, Mishra and Datta (2016) said that this compilation of impressions is essential to the consumer's decision-making process when looking for an alternative brand. According to the statements, De Chertanony (2017) asserted that a company's corporate brand is a difficult-to-replicate intangible resource for the organisation. Corporate brands are distinct from product-specific brands in that they emphasise the importance of brand values. Ind (2017), agreeing with De Chertanony (2017), asserts that when consumers buy products from a corporation, they also get a set of values in addition to the actual products. According to Porter and Claycomb (2018), commercial brands represent an assortment of values that represent the organisation. Aside from enabling businesses to stand out more successfully, an entire company image also motivates consumers to conduct additional purchases.

According to Hsieh and Lindridge (2018), a brand's image refers to how customers view it once they identify it with a particular good or service. In line with the literature mentioned above, Sriram et al. (2017) also claimed that consumers who frequently buy a specific brand possess a consistent opinion of it. The outward appearance of an item or service is frequently used to assess its image as a brand.

Furthermore, Martinez (2017) concurs with Rahi (2016), suggesting that a product's physical appearance may influence what consumers think of it, influencing their decision to buy it again or not. In conclusion, it is evident how vital brand perception influences consumers' willingness to pay for DHL goods and services as they are

advertised across its supply chain. Since consumers contrast DHL with competing companies based on brand impression, the outcome of competitive advantage is addressed.

Several studies that, include Zhou et al. (2019), Huang et al. (2020), and Ismail and Yunan (2016), asserted that customer loyalty—defined as the consumer's desire to return to and purchase a service or product again from the same business—was the primary variable influencing DHL firm's success in the marketplace. According to Sriram et al. (2017), customers frequently purchase the same brand of goods because the business sets a high value on their continued support, which is advantageous. Zhou et al. (2019) held that a brand attains brand loyalty when a client repeatedly buys its products. According to Wilson (2018), backed up by Islam and Rahman (2016), *loyalty* may be defined as a client's dedication to an enterprise, which means the customer is willing to continue to use or buy products or services from the company and resist doing so for rival businesses. Identical to this, Dick and Basu (2018) argued that a customer's repeated purchases from an equivalent brand show behavioural loyalty. Overall, the literary ideas show how consumers are inclined to continue purchasing from DHL owing to their existing devotion and the favourable reputation they have built for their supply network among rival companies.

The brand image was evaluated in various concurring research by Chao et al. (2018), Huang (2020), and Rahi et al. (2017), utilising brand awareness and brand distinctiveness. Accordingly, Dam and Dam (2021) carried out research and discovered that service quality has a beneficial impact on brand perception, client retention, and loyalty to a company. In line with the claims, Tong and Hawley (2019) asserted that customers purchase a specific brand when they are familiar with it and feel that it can meet their demands. The opposite is brand fulfilment, which refers to how happy customers are with a specific brand. Gold et al. (2020), concurring with the above, observed that consumers who know a brand are attached to it and desire to possess it through a repurchase decision. When a customer makes a purchasing decision, brand awareness is advantageous. Due to their knowledge and awareness of the brand, the customer may easily make purchases. According to Tong and Hawley (2019), who support these points of view, customers choose to purchase a brand whenever they are fully aware of its features and think it can satisfy their needs.

According to Yeo et al. (2018), brand awareness is a critical factor in determining a consumer's loyalty. Yeo et al. (2018) claim that DHL prioritises customer satisfaction throughout the supply chain since customers are more inclined to repurchase a product, they are pleased with it. In addition, prior studies, like Simanjuntak (2020) and Rahi (2016), discovered that when a consumer is delighted by a brand, he becomes loyal to it, indicating a high correlation between brand pleasure and loyalty among consumers. The material mentioned clarifies the close relationship between brand image and customer loyalty and how this relationship influences customers' conscious, advantageous purchasing behaviours. The same body of study establishes a link between this behavioural outcome and brand satisfaction, which the DHL Company may take advantage of by continuously aligning its supply chain.

2.3.2 Effects of brand image of DHL Supply Chain on consumer's decision to purchase.

Strong brand image and consumer purchasing behaviour have a positive association because when the brand's perception of potential target customers improves, so does consumer perception of the brand and its products. Martín-Consuegra et al. (2018) estimated that 69% of consumers in the retail industry think about a brand's reputation before making a purchase. Customers support brands that participate in various brand-building activities. If they are satisfied, they encourage their friends and relatives to buy the goods and services offered by that brand. Supporting the claims, Amron (2018) claimed that marketing communication, customer experience, and word-of-mouth are all familiar sources of brand image building for DHL Company within the logistics sector. These factors are all critical when it comes to influencing favourable consumer purchase behaviour. According to Wang and Tsai (2018), the DHL Supply Chain and overall model, social media marketing and digital marketing have significantly impacted consumer purchase habits because they have made it possible for consumers to get information about the items. However, Zhang (2019) said that customers' self-concept impacts their purchasing decisions since it contributes to creating a brand image that encompasses perceptions of things like looks, flaws, talents, and traits. Therefore, there is a correlation between brand image and customer purchasing behaviours, with a strong brand image favourably affecting actions and a

low brand image negatively affecting behaviours. In conclusion, the claims made in the literature imply the techniques used by DHL to improve brand perception through online channels, leading to more favourable word-of-mouth and easier access to product and service information. The result is a reciprocating customer response to the business, with decisions to purchase their products or use their services based on recommendations from their peers.

According to Arslan and Zaman (2019), marketers for logistics organizations, including DHL, treat the brand image as an effective marketing strategy because it influences consumer purchasing decisions. As consumer opinions and attitudes regarding a particular brand's goods or services change, the resulting brand image influences consumer behaviour favourably and prompts favourable purchasing decisions. Along with marketing mix techniques, many brand-building projects and promotional activities also impact consumers' purchasing decisions. About 49% of buyers feel proud about utilizing products with a prominent brand name, such as the DHL brand, according to Mitra and Jenamani (2020). Therefore, consumers should remember brands with a positive reputation in the logistics sector.

Furthermore, Malik et al. (2018) maintained that a variety of industry-specific aspects of enhancing brand image or name, such as brand awareness programs, ensuring perceived quality and price, enhancing brand value and satisfaction, brand loyalty, celebrity endorsement programs, and public relations, have an impact on consumer purchase behaviours. Raj and Roy (2019), aligning with the findings above, noted that all brand-building initiatives increase consumers' brand knowledge, which encourages them to buy the company's compatible goods or services. In conclusion, most customers select and prefer items with a strong brand image due to the growth of brands in the competitive business logistics sector, and DHL is a part of that sector. Therefore, the company is more likely to generate more money over the long term as it sustains and strengthens its brand image.

2.4 Gaps in Knowledge

The brand image is the mediating factor determining the relationship between the brand and customers. How consumers relate to the brand depends on how it has

presented itself in the market, which determines whether the buyers will purchase it. The literature explored shows that brand loyalty can be cognitive, affective, or normative depending on which aspects of the consumer's life the brand affects. However, literature on brand loyalty's influence on logistics is scarce. Hence, the study focuses on establishing the interaction of the phenomena in the logistics industry by conducting a case study of the DHL Supply Chain.

2.5 Conclusion of CHAPTER TWO

The literature presents both theories/models aligned to brand image and loyalty, and findings from existing literature. The assertion across the empirical studies is that a positive nexus exists between brand image and brand loyalty, including extended effects on repeated purchase intentions. The literature analysis also presents contrasting views across authors on the relationship of the mentioned variables.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodological process of the study was based on the analysis of Saunders Research Onion. The layers of an onion, as described by Saunders et al. (2007), provide a more detailed overview of the research process step. Further, it offers a helpful approach to creating a research strategy.

The existing research on brand image and loyalty have used several methodologies to collect, analyse and interpret their relationships. Some used surveys, focusing on groups, while others interviewed. Each has its own merits and demerits.

The most suitable methodology for this research was primary research or, more explicitly, creating questionnaires. Creating a questionnaire, in turn, helped the researcher to reach the company's customers in-depth and thus make the connection between the customer and the brand (Taherdoost, 2022).

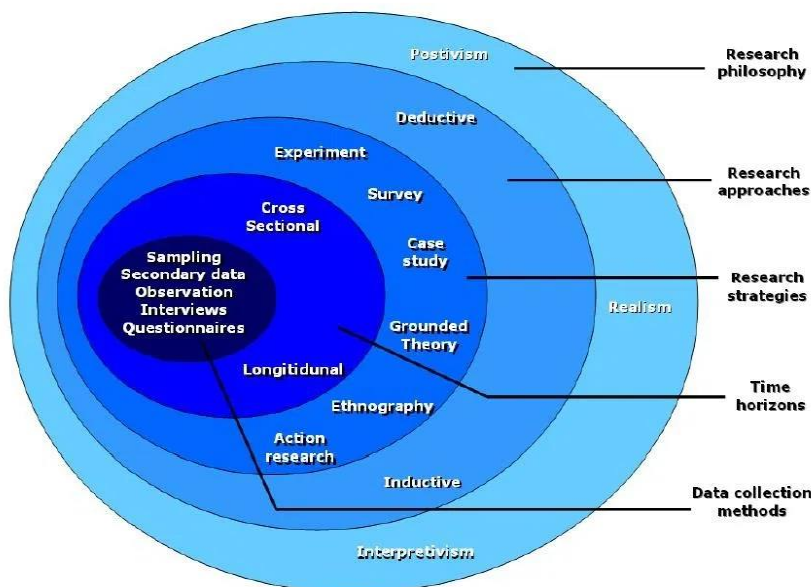


Figure 3: Saunders Research Onion

Source: Analysis of Saunders Research Onion - Thesismind

3.2 Research Philosophy

There are three research philosophies: positivism, post-positivism, and pragmatism. These philosophical perspectives enable researchers to determine the study's approach and why based on research questions (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). Positivism was the underpinning philosophy of this work. A key component of positivism is its reliance on scientific methods for investigating social phenomena. Further, the paradigm assumes that social reality is objective and can be investigated using empirical techniques (Pathirage, 2007).

3.3 Research Approach

The **approach** for the study was deductive. A deductive method requires the formulation of a hypothesis and the collection of data to evaluate that hypothesis. The approach is suitable for the study because of the unique premise of the correlation between brand image and brand loyalty. For instance, it provided a deeper insight into how DHL customers view the company's image and engage with the brand (Pathirage, 2007).

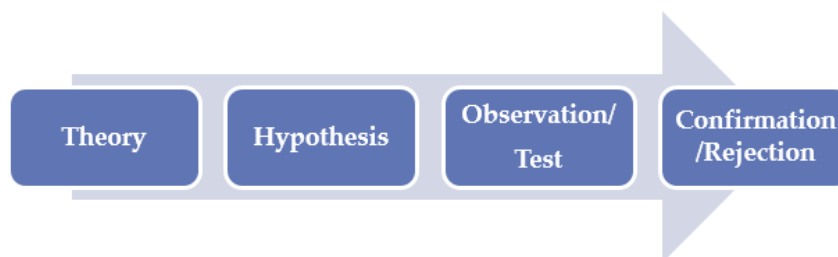


Figure 4: Deductive Approach

Source: Research Approach - Research-Methodology

3.4 Research Methodology

The research methodology sought in the study was quantitative technique. The researcher used the quantitative method to collect and analyse data. Quantitative methods are suitable for studies involving collecting, analysing, and interpreting numerical and statistical data (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015). A quantitative method

is deemed appropriate for the proposed study because it seeks to analyse the relationship between brand loyalty and brand image.

3.5 Research Strategy

The study consisted of a survey-based strategy. The research technique using surveys that investigators distribute to the participants is known as a survey-based strategy. The survey data is subsequently statistically examined to reach all the conducted requirements (Check and Schutt, 2012). Any company prefers to monitor the changing attitudes of its consumers constantly; hence, surveys are the most reliable and efficient approach (Dillman et al., 2014). Thus, it is made up of well-structured questionnaires that encourage participation. The study also pursued a cross-sectional survey investigation. A cross-sectional survey is carried out to gather information from an intended demographic at a specific time. Analytical or descriptive research can be conducted using cross-sectional surveys.

Moreover, it has the benefit of being rapid and assisting researchers in gathering data quickly. Investigators use a cross-sectional research approach when a descriptive analysis of an issue is required (Singleton and Straits, 2016). In application to the study, a one-time online survey was operationalised and targeted to the respective participants.

3.6 Sampling and Participants

The target audience for this study consisted of DHL clients who have utilised the company's services for more than five years. Therefore, the study used *purposive sampling* to choose study participants. Purposeful or judgemental sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that precisely selects participants who match the researcher's purpose and study procedures. Purposeful sampling is suited for the proposed study because it permits the researcher to select unique and informative examples, identify specific cases for in-depth analysis, and select participants from a community that is difficult to reach (Ishak et al., 2014).

3.7 Data Collection Tools

Data collection was achieved using questionnaires administered by the researcher to the participants. Participants were asked to state the type of services they regularly procure from DHL and why they always choose DHL over other logistic companies. These questions helped to establish which type of loyalty (affective, cognitive, or normative) had contributed to their preference for DHL services (Durmaz, 2018).

3.8 Measurement, Data Analysis, and Interpretation

Various instruments will be used to evaluate various facets of brand image and customer loyalty: branding and loyalty were evaluated using a Likert scale. The scale measured the DHL Supply Chain's customers' opinions, attitudes, and behaviours (Bhandari, 2020). In addition, consumer loyalty was evaluated based on cognitive, emotive, and normative characteristics.

Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods will be used to analyse the survey data. The inferential analysis provides the capability of concluding and making recommendations according to the information, whereas descriptive analytics describes the characteristics of a data set. Moreover, correlation and regression analyses were undertaken to identify the connection between brand image and consumer loyalty. Correlation evaluates the intensity of the linear connection between two variables, whereas regression measures such interaction through an equation (Guetterman, 2019). Using software such as SPSS, statistical analysis was performed. Finally, investigation results were displayed in tables and graphs (Byrne, 2007).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Consent on an informed basis and protecting participants are potential ethical issues that may arise during the study. Informed consent required the participants to be told how the study was conducted, the benefits and dangers of the study, and be given the option to either participate or withdraw (Miller, 2020). The researcher sent all participants consent forms and requested confirmation of their volitional

participation. Ethical protection of participants entails ensuring their safety from all threats throughout the study. Appendix A presents the questionnaire.

3.10 Methodological Limitations

Given that the study relied upon a closed-ended review or investigation on the interaction between brand image and brand loyalty of DHL Supply Chain, the research had to maintain an objective stance or judgment. Thus, there were minimal opportunities to critique the findings or suggest different opinions despite the inconsistency in the feedback generated by the participants. In this regard, the researcher was constrained to only address the participants' feedback without alterations and remain objective to the findings/outcomes.

3.11 Conclusion of CHAPTER THREE

Overall, the methodological process has been developed indicating that positivist philosophy will be the basis for knowledge development and subsequently implement a quantitative investigation. The study has also focused on implementing a survey-based strategy by targeting participants through purposive sampling criteria.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this section, the focus is to present evaluated results on the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty of DHL Supply Chain. Foremost, a demographic analysis of the sampled participants has been documented in terms of age and gender since they denote the control factors influencing the respondents' perceived brand image and brand loyalty. In addition, the trends in the longevity of DHL supply chain services, preferred factors on DHL supply chain services, and most disliked factors have been presented because they connote the extent of brand loyalty and brand image towards DHL supply chain services. Lastly, correlation and t-tests have been proposed to confirm or reject the study's hypotheses.

4.2 Results

The study results are reported in this section to establish the interaction between brand image and brand loyalty in the context of the DHL Supply Chain.

In terms of age, most participants, at 30%, were 35-44 years, as shown in Figure 5 below.

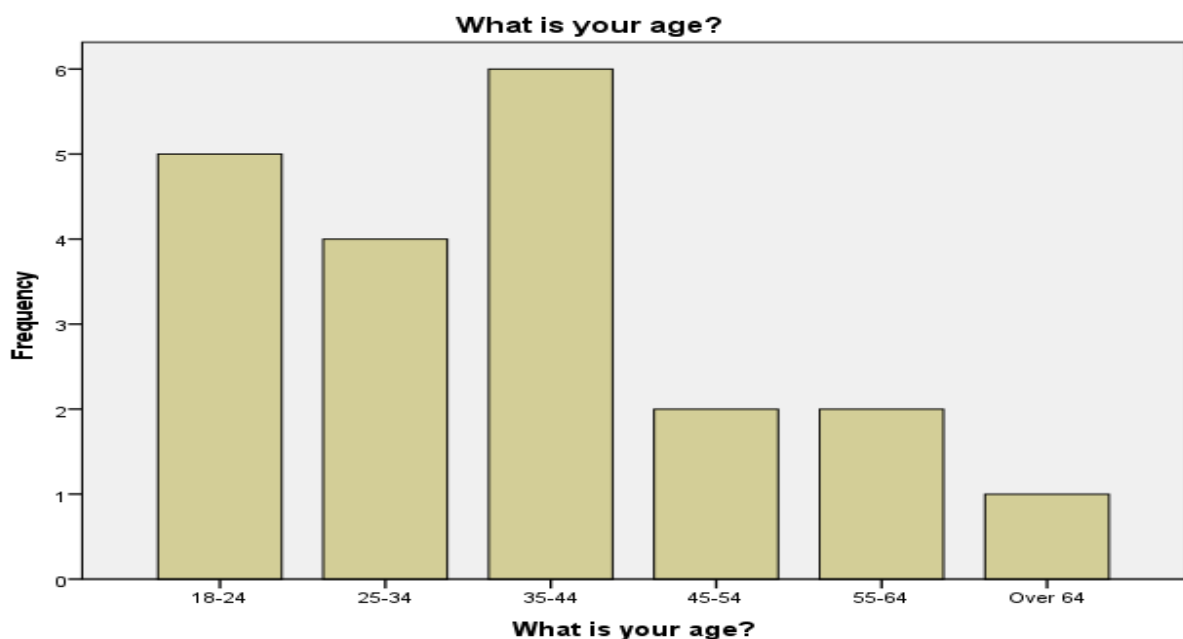


Figure 5: Age of the participants

Source: Created by the author, 2023

Moreover, 40% of the sample was females and 30% males as reported in Figure 6 below.

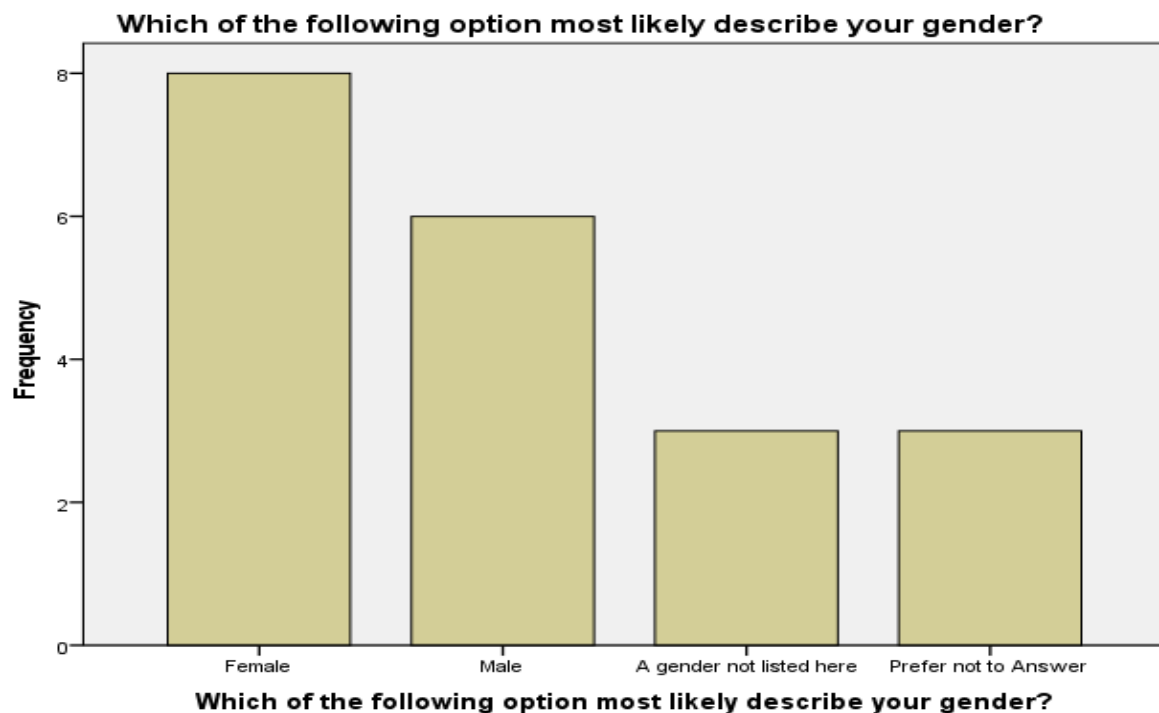


Figure 6: Gender of the participants

Source: Created by the author, 2023

The study also demonstrated that 50% of the sampled participants reported having used DHL Supply Chain Services for five years while 30% – for more than five years, and 20% stated they have been using the service all their life. Figure 7 presents the outcome.

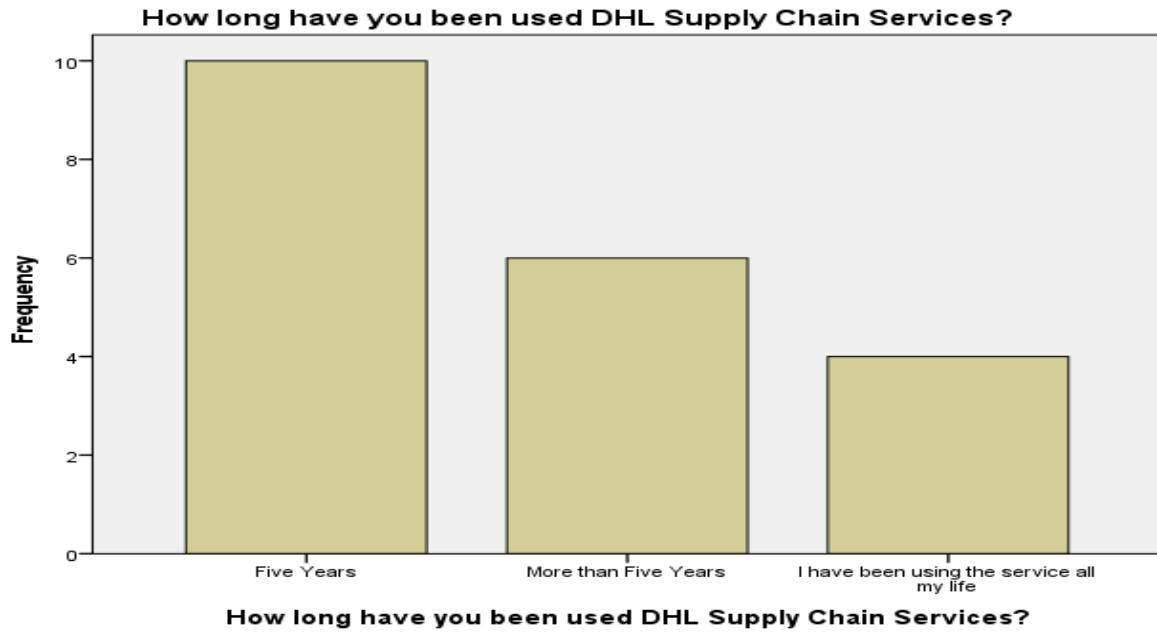


Figure 7: Use of DHL Supply Chain Service

Source: Created by the author, 2023

Figure 7 is essential to this study since it also can be used to gauge the brand loyalty of the participants towards DHL, and at this juncture, it can be confirmed to be strong. The fact that they have relied on the service proves a persistent buying behaviour or dependability on the company's logistics services.

The study sought to establish what the participants liked about DHL Supply Chain Services, whereby 15% stated it was the price, 25% quality of the parcel, 10% quick delivery, 25% customer service, and 25% ease of use.

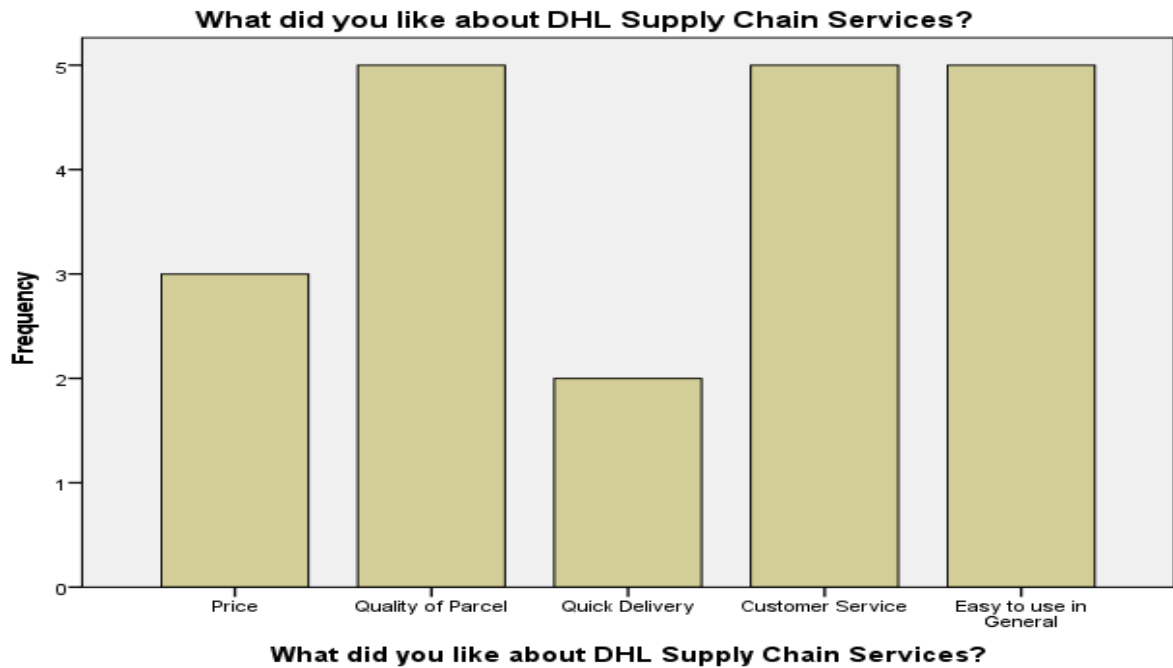


Figure 8: What did the customers like about DHL services?

Source: Created by the author, 2023

As such, what the participants did not like about DHL Supply Chain Services was an essential aspect of brand image and, to some extent, brand satisfaction or fulfilment. Notably, most of the participants said they did not like the quality of the parcel, while a majority indicated they disliked the matter of price.

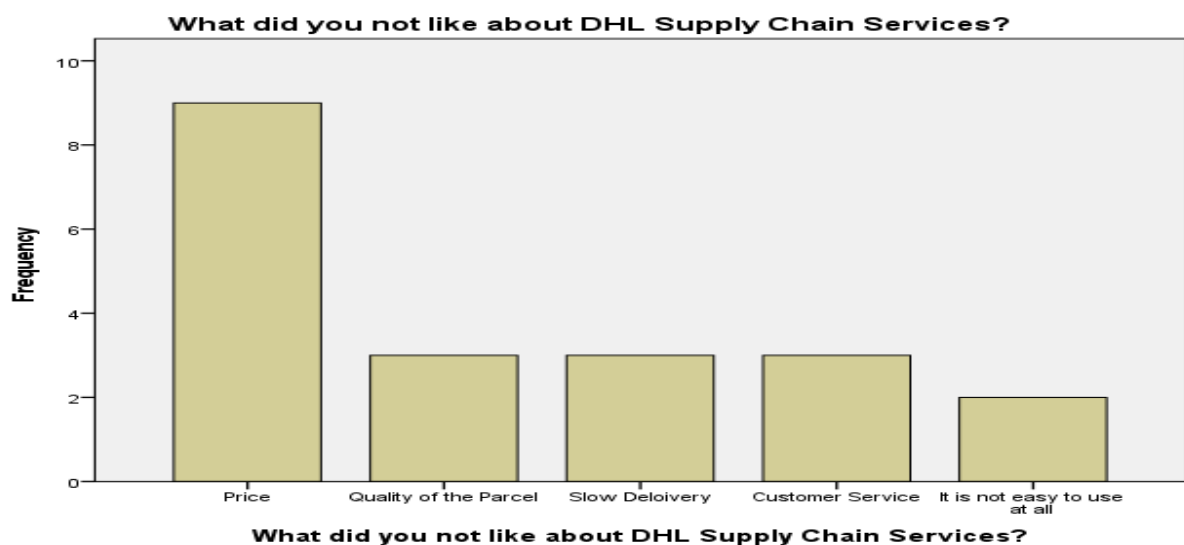


Figure 9: What did not the customers like about DHL services?

Source: Created by the author, 2023

As shown in Appendix B, the mean difference between brand images towards DHL Supply Chain Service has been presented in terms of what the participants like or do not like based on the trends shown in Figures 7 and 8. The results reveal the mean differences significant at a 95% confidence interval; thus, what the sample like and dislikes about DHL Supply Chain Service cannot be considered as mere chance.

A summary of statistics on other aspects of brand loyalty towards DHL Supply Chain Services is shown in Appendix C. The results mean satisfactory brand loyalty towards DHL Supply Chain Service. The rated outcome for DHL Supply Chain is also an excellent metric, meaning the participants have a positive brand image.

Next, a correlation to examine the relationship between brand loyalty and brand image aspects towards DHL Supply Chain Service is shown in Appendix D. The results prove that brand image and brand loyalty have most of the outcomes consisting of a significant and positive correlation. Therefore, the results confirm alternate hypothesis **H1** in that the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty is positive. The Pearson Correlation was directly implemented using the SPSS program which has in-built algorithm for this function. Nonetheless, the formula for obtaining correlation is as shown below (Sharma, 2005):

For instance, the correlation initiated in Appendix D depicts that brand image and brand loyalty is not significantly proportional either inversely or directly in the sense that the Pearson Correlations yield a significance confidence interval of below 95%. The rationale for a Pearson Correlation is to demonstrate whether brand loyalty and brand image can be symbiotically utilised to enhance customer value in the network coordinated by the DHL company across its supply chain.

The mean differences between brand image and brand loyalty have also been explored, as reported in Appendix E. The results prove that a statistically significant mean difference is present, which confirms a meaningful determining effect on the two

variables. Therefore, the second alternate hypothesis **H2** is upheld in that brand image is the essential determinant of brand loyalty.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Relationship between Brand Image and Brand Loyalty in DHL Supply Chain Services

The results of this investigation show a significant connection between brand loyalty and the DHL Supply Chain brand image. The study's findings supported alternate **H1**, which holds that brand image significantly relates to brand loyalty, i.e., customer-led brand loyalty. The study concludes that positive brand awareness may boost consumer loyalty and promote customer commitment towards DHL Supply Chain. The study assesses the importance of a brand's image to DHL Supply Chain. Therefore, it is evident that DHL should maintain the current model to ensure the customers maintain a positive brand conception.

The study's results are in line with those of De Chernatony (1999), Porter and Claycomb (2018), Ind (2017), and Hsieh and Lindridge (2018), which all affirmed the positive relationship between brand image and brand loyalty when effectively optimised in the supply chain of DHL. Considering the H2, there was an established immediate connection between satisfaction with the brand and loyalty among consumers. Therefore, the outcome of the study on brand image been an essential determinant of brand loyalty is in line with assertions by Mishra and Datta (2016), Martinez (2017), Sriram, Balachander, and Kalwani (2017), and Rahi (2016). The results of the studies affirmed the positive role of brand image in increasing customer loyalty in the logistics industry. More than just proving the positive effects of brand awareness and consumer fulfilment on brand loyalty was achieved in the current study.

According to this study, raising the brand image and awareness can increase consumers' brand loyalty towards DHL Supply Chain. Customers that rely on DHL Supply Chain made up most of the respondents, and the impact of brand image on their continued reliance on the company's services is not in doubt. Additionally, this study found that those respondents' preferences for brands and quality offered by DHL

had a favourable influence on repurchase decisions. DHL must, therefore, closely monitor these traits to establish a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with their customer and cultivate loyalty as a competitive advantage in the market. In the context of the study's findings and the affirmation of the first alternate hypothesis, i.e. brand image and brand loyalty significant relationship, the justification can be drawn from brand equity theory (Keller Model).

Keller (1993) confirmed the linkage between brand image and brand equity. Therefore, from this model, brand image can stimulate several aspects, such as beliefs, perceptions, and images that consumers positively hold about a brand. Therefore, from this model, it was evident that a positive brand image connects to the cognitive sphere of the consumer, where they go beyond the firm itself to consider other dimensions such as credibility, value, and quality of the brand. Under the brand equity theory, it was clear that brand image invokes other cognitive and affective aspects the consumers have on a product, and a favourable outcome leads to positive decisions.

4.2.2 Brand Image and Customer Buying Intention towards DHL Supply Chain Services

The findings of this investigation strongly concur with earlier studies that were critical to link brand image to brand loyalty and positive consumer behaviour, mainly repurchase intentions. According to earlier studies and the outcomes of Sriram, Balachander, and Kalwani (2017), Zhou, Lu, and Wang (2019), Huang et al. (2020), and Dick and Basu (2018), the customer's desire to make a repeat purchase is significantly influenced by the product or brand image, but only after the client feels a sense of obligation to the service provider.

However, the findings of this study are deconstructed by Dam and Dam (2021), who found contradictory findings about the connection between the two factors. A correlation between brand image and loyalty culminating in repurchase decisions was validated statistically in the current investigation. A strong brand reputation promotes repurchases intent and retention. Nevertheless, no relationship between brand image and customers' intentions to make another purchase was discovered in the current investigation.

In the context of the study's findings, Tong, and Hawley (2019), Yeo, Thai, and Roh (2018), and Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2020) reported a situation in which brand image was a poor predictor of consumer decision-making and intent for repeat purchases. According to Simanjuntak, Sumarwan, and Situmorang (2020), a particular circumstance that raises the degree of certainty after a purchase is the store's image. In addition to reassuring customers, brand image can benefit the business in the long run and unexpectedly. Further, it makes the customer delighted, enhancing their desire to repurchase the item or another product in the range.

Therefore, it is essential to remember that when a consumer is satisfied, they become more devoted to the business, as supported by the research by Amron (2018), Consuegra et al. (2018), and Wang and Tsai (2018). The development of the private brand's brand image also heavily depends on the customer experience, as affirmed in the works by Arslan and Zaman (2019), Mitra and Jenamani (2020), and Malik, Ghafoor, and Ahmad (2018).

According to the findings of this study, it was established that experience with DHL's Supply Chain coordination and brand image was symbiotic. However, the brand image was frequently linked to customers' cognitive and affective brand trust. The above assertions are the works by Huang et al. (2020) and Raj and Roy (2019), who stated that repurchasing is influenced by the brand reputation and cognitive percept the customers build in the long term. The intention to repurchase because of customer fulfilment increases their understanding of and awareness of the brand, which is influenced by its image.

According to Arslan and Zaman (2019), efforts to attain a solid and favourable brand image can lead to increased repurchasing behaviour. Customers who have positive opinions about DHL Supply Chain's excellence also contribute to the brand's image. The same assertions were supported by Arslan and Zaman (2019) and Wang and Tsai (2018) in their conclusion that the brand image of DHL Supply Chain influences how customers perceive the firm when unfamiliar with it. The discussions above can further be supported by Oliver (1999) based on the brand loyalty model and the fact that four components define the extent of brand loyalty. The model noted cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty. Based on this presupposition, it explains the study

findings that there are more explaining power factors when relating brand loyalty with the brand image within the DHL Supply Chain model implementation.

4.3 Conclusion of CHAPTER FOUR

In this chapter, the critical analysis of findings evidence that DHL Supply Chain Services directly benefit from the positive brand image the customers build due to how their needs are addressed. Therefore, the efforts by DHL to promote customer-friendly solutions throughout its supply chain are working well in creating brand loyalty and subsequent repurchase decisions that grow its revenue in the long term.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Recommendations

First, it can be advised as a plan that for DHL to improve their brand image, the company should maintain a services portfolio suitable for all consumer generations. The correct staff should be hired, and the firm should communicate its vision and objectives along with its expectations for the customer experience, mainly focusing on sustainable supply chain coordination to boost the value of its brand. DHL should concentrate on enhancing its digital logistics monitoring systems to foster integrated communication that strengthens customer relationships. Additionally, it can improve the usability of its digital application so that it can influence clients' purchase decisions through brand awareness strategies.

Secondly, before determining prices, the DHL Company's supply chain controllers should consider the advantages they provide to clients. The qualities they want to promote would also create an enduring brand image. To improve the brand image of the firm, the company ought to focus on brand-related activities and assess the market using the STP method of marketing strategy. Given that a considerable correlation exists between brand and customer loyalty within the DHL Supply Chain framework, more focus should be on service innovation to enhance the connection of the mentioned variables.

5.2 Practical Implications of the Research

The findings of this research may aid DHL Supply Chain in enhancing its brand image to increase consumer loyalty. The findings have implications for the future of the DHL Supply Chain since they demonstrate that due to the competition in the logistics industry globally by different firms, customers have more bargaining power and capacity to switch across service providers. In short, the logistics industry is today saturated with new entrants offering innovative solutions to the end users. The findings act as informative masterpieces to the management of DHL towards improving brand image and influencing consumer buying habits.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The research results were limited to DHL Logistics in the United Kingdom and were therefore inapplicable to other branches it operates globally. The study also had the drawback of not tracking changes in the variables that were the subject of the analysis, as it solely considered brand awareness and customer loyalty to measure brand image. To address the current study's limitations, the researchers may conduct more thorough studies after selecting all the global logistics services DHL Supply Chain involved. Future researchers will be able to include more constructs to perform in-depth research and provide more reliable conclusions. A larger sample should be selected in future to obtain accurate and replicable results. The other option is to undertake in-depth interviews to obtain follow-up insights for the study, i.e., sequential explanatory design. Additionally, future studies will determine how successfully DHL's strategies for improving its brand image have been accomplished by obtaining pertinent data and information at a global scale.

5.4 Conclusion of CHAPTER FIVE

The study focused on addressing the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty in the context of the DHL Supply Chain. The findings have established that the two aspects have symbiotic interaction, including the capacity they have provided the management of the firm to drive more value to the customers while at the same time widening its revenue base due to sustainable customer satisfaction and positive buying behaviour. For that reason, each of the objectives in the study has been achieved in that DHL Supply Chain's brand image has been proved to not only impact positively on customer loyalty but also increase it. The critical factors that influenced DHL Supply Chain's brand image were mainly quality and price, but also customer-shared experiences through word-of-mouth.

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APENDIXES

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Title: Explore the Relationship between Brand Image and Brand Loyalty of DHL Supply Chain

Student Name: Diana Stoyanova

Name of Participant:

Question 1. What is your age?

- a) 18-24
- b) 25-34
- c) 35-44
- d) 45-54
- e) 55-64
- f) over 64

Question 2. Which of the following option most likely describe your gender?

- a) Female
- b) Male
- c) A gender not listed here.
- d) Prefer not to answer.

Question 3. How long have you been used DHL Supply Chain Services?

- a) Five Years
- b) More than Five Years
- c) I have been using the services all my life.

Question 4. What did you like about DHL Supply Chain Services?

- a) Price
- b) Quality of the parcel
- c) Quick Delivery
- d) Customer Service
- e) Easy to use in general.

Question 5. What did you not like about DHL Supply Chain Services?

- a) Price
- b) Quality of the parcel

- c) Swol Delivery
- d) Customer Service
- e) It is not easy to use at all.

Question 6. How likely are you to come back and choose the brand services again?

- a) Very Likely
- b) Likely
- c) Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- d) Unlikely
- e) Very Unlikely

Question 7. How likely are you to choose another brand over DHL Supply Chain?

- a) Very Likely
- b) Likely
- c) Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- d) Unlikely
- e) Very Unlikely

Question 8. How likely would you recommend DHL Supply Chain to a friend or a colleague?

- a) Very Likely
- b) Likely
- c) Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- d) Unlikely
- e) Very Unlikely

Question 9. Please help us understand why you select the above (Question. 8)?

Question 10. Overall, how much you rate DHL Supply Chain?

- a) Excellent
- b) Very Good
- c) Good
- d) Fair
- e) Poor

Question 11. Could you write a short review of your opinion about DHL Supply Chain as a brand?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B: Mean Differences in Brand Image

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	What did you like about DHL Supply Chain Services? - What did you not like about DHL Supply Chain Services?	.90000	1.29371	.28928	.29453	1.50547	3.111	19	.006

Appendix C: Descriptive Statistics on Brand Loyalty

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How likely are you to come back and choose the brand services again?	20	1.00	5.00	3.2500	1.33278
How likely are you to choose another brand over DHL Supply Chain?	20	1.00	5.00	2.8000	1.50787
How likely would you recommend DHL Supply Chain to a friend or a colleague?	20	1.00	5.00	3.4000	1.46539
Overall, how much you rate DHL Supply Chain?	20	1.00	5.00	2.6000	1.39170
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Appendix D: Correlation on Brand Image and Brand Loyalty

Correlations

		How likely are you to come back and choose the brand services again?	How likely are you to choose another brand over DHL Supply Chain?	How likely would you recommend DHL Supply Chain to a friend or a colleague?	Overall, how much you rate DHL Supply Chain?
How likely are you to come back and choose the brand services again?	Pearson Correlation	1	.314	.081	.142
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.177	.735	.551
	N	20	20	20	20
How likely are you to choose another brand over DHL Supply Chain?	Pearson Correlation	.314	1	.514 [*]	.286
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.177		.020	.222
	N	20	20	20	20
How likely would you recommend DHL Supply Chain to a friend or a colleague?	Pearson Correlation	.081	.514 [*]	1	-.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.735	.020		.762
	N	20	20	20	20
Overall, how much you rate DHL Supply Chain?	Pearson Correlation	.142	.286	-.072	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.551	.222	.762	
	N	20	20	20	20

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix E: Mean Differences between Brand Loyalty and Brand Image

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	How long have you been used DHL Supply Chain Services? - What did you like about DHL Supply Chain Services?	-1.50000	1.70139	.38044	-2.29628	-.70372	-3.943	19	.001
Pair 2	How long have you been used DHL Supply Chain Services? - What did you not like about DHL Supply Chain Services?	-.60000	1.69830	.37975	-1.39483	.19483	-1.580	19	.131

