

## The Role of Brand Trust in Strengthening Purpose-Driven Marketing Impact on Brand Outcomes

**Shaikh Muhammad Fakhre Alam\***

Assistant Professor, Karachi University Business School, University of Karachi, Pakistan

**Hammad Zafar\***

Lecturer, Karachi University Business School, University of Karachi, Pakistan

**Abu Bakar Mansoor**

Student, Karachi University Business School, University of Karachi, Pakistan

### Abstract

Purpose-driven marketing increasingly highlights itself as a significant strategic paradigm, in which brands aim to integrate the objectives of commerce with the concerns of the environment and societal interests. Though there has been more absorption of the concept of purpose-driven programs, the quickly expanding body of scepticism about corporate social endeavors casts doubt on the effectiveness of such programs in influencing brand outcomes favorably. This paper aims to explore the concept of brand trust as the key mediating element between the influence of purpose-driven marketing on brand outcomes. More specifically, the paper aims to explore the concepts of cause-brand congruity, cause-brand authenticity, and self-brand congruity as the most significant factors on which the development of brand trust depends, influencing brand outcomes on the dimensions of brand image, the intention to make a purchase, and the intention to recommend. Additionally, the paper will explore the role of the moderating variable of consumer-cause congruity on the development of brand trust. A quantitative design was used with the help of surveys among adult consumers in the Pakistani market. The proposed conceptual framework was used to analyze the results with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Results indicate that the three antecedents: cause-to-brand congruity, authenticity, and self-to-brand congruity positively affect brand trusts significantly. Brand trusts positively affected consumer behavioural intentions and brand image significantly and played a significant mediating role in the relationship among purpose-driven marketing perceptions and brand outcomes. Moreover, consumer-cause congruity positively reinforced the association between purpose perceptions and brand trusts. The paper makes a contribution to the literature by empirically demonstrating that brand trust plays a pivotal mediating role in translating purpose-driven marketing into branding success. In practical terms, its findings underscore the mediating roles of authenticity, alignment, and trust in crafting successful purpose-driven marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Purpose-driven marketing, brand trust, cause-brand congruence, brand authenticity, self-brand congruity, consumer-cause congruence, brand

image, purchase intention, recommendation intention, consumer skepticism, purpose-washing, corporate social responsibility (CSR).

### **Introduction**

Marketing has undergone a significant transformation over time, evolving in response to technological advancements and changing societal expectations. In its early stages, particularly during the post-war industrial boom of the 1950s and 1960s, marketing was primarily product-oriented, focusing on mass production, functional features, and efficiency. Consumer decision-making was viewed as rational, driven largely by price, quality, and availability, resulting in a transactional approach centered on sales volume rather than long-term relationships .

However, this paradigm began to shift during the late twentieth century as markets became more competitive and consumer awareness increased. The emergence of market research and information systems in the 1980s and 1990s allowed firms to better understand consumer preferences and behaviors. Consequently, relationship marketing gained prominence, emphasizing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and lifetime value. Brands evolved from mere identifiers of products to symbolic assets that conveyed meaning and differentiation. Emotional branding and experiential marketing became critical strategic tools, reflecting a deeper engagement with consumers .

In the twenty-first century, marketing has entered a new phase characterized by purpose-driven strategies. This shift reflects broader societal concerns, including environmental sustainability, social inequality, and corporate accountability (Islam et al., 2026). Modern consumers are more informed, connected, and vocal, expecting brands to stand for values beyond profit. As a result, brands are increasingly evaluated not only based on what they sell but also on what they represent (Singh et al., 2025) .

Purpose-driven marketing (PDM) has emerged as a dominant strategic orientation in this context. It refers to the integration of social or environmental goals into a brand's core identity and value proposition. Unlike traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR), which often involves separate or peripheral initiatives, PDM embeds purpose into the fundamental logic of the business. It is not merely about "doing good" alongside operations but about aligning profit generation with meaningful societal contributions. Thus, purpose becomes an organizing principle of brand identity rather than an add-on activity (Singh et al., 2025) .

Several factors have accelerated the rise of purpose-driven marketing. Younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, play a crucial role, as they tend to favor brands that align with their ethical values and actively address social and environmental issues. Additionally, the proliferation of digital platforms and social media has increased transparency, enabling consumers to scrutinize corporate behavior in real time. Any inconsistency between a brand's claims and actions can quickly be exposed, intensifying the need for authenticity and credibility (Kalogeras & Mejri, 2025) .

At the same time, investors and stakeholders increasingly evaluate firms based on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, reinforcing the importance of purpose-driven strategies for long-term value creation (Aiman et al., 2024). Concepts such as shared value highlight that addressing social issues can enhance competitive advantage. Successful examples, including Patagonia's environmental initiatives and Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign, demonstrate how authentic purpose alignment can strengthen emotional connections, brand loyalty, and resilience (Mallik & Aithal, 2024). Despite these advantages, purpose-driven marketing faces significant challenges. The growing prevalence of purpose-related claims has led to increased consumer skepticism, particularly due to instances of "purpose-washing" or superficial commitments (Amin et al., 2025). Consumers are becoming more critical, questioning the authenticity of corporate motives. When discrepancies arise between stated values and actual practices, trust can erode, leading to negative brand perceptions and reputational damage (Oluwole, 2025).

This authenticity gap highlights the critical role of brand trust. Trust serves as a psychological mechanism through which consumers interpret and evaluate brand actions. When trust is high, consumers are more likely to perceive purpose-driven initiatives as genuine and meaningful; when trust is low, similar efforts may be viewed as opportunistic or manipulative. Therefore, understanding how brand trust develops and mediates the relationship between purpose-driven marketing and brand outcomes is essential. In summary, while purpose-driven marketing has become a central strategy in modern branding, its effectiveness depends heavily on consumer perceptions of authenticity and trust. This study addresses this issue by examining the role of brand trust as a mediating mechanism and exploring how factors such as congruence and authenticity influence consumer responses and brand outcomes.

### **Problem Statement**

The rapid adoption of purpose-driven marketing has created a growing challenge for brands: the authenticity gap. While many organizations claim to support social and environmental causes, consumers increasingly question whether these efforts are genuine or merely strategic marketing tactics. This skepticism is fueled by widespread instances of purpose-washing, where brands promote values that are not reflected in their actual practices. As a result, consumers become cautious and critical, reducing the effectiveness of purpose-driven initiatives. The key issue is not the absence of purpose-related activities, but the difficulty in building credibility and trust around them. Without trust, even well-intentioned campaigns may fail to influence consumer perceptions and behavior positively. Therefore, understanding how trust is developed and how it mediates the relationship between purpose-driven marketing and brand outcomes has become essential for both researchers and practitioners.

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

The central purpose of this research is to explore and empirically test the mediating role of brand trust in the mediation process for a set of key Antecedents to Perception of Purpose-Driven Marketing on subsequent Brand Outcomes, along with examination of the moderating impact manifested by consumer-cause congruence. In pursuit of this aim the research aims to deliver a unified and integrated account that explains when, why and when not purpose-led marketing works in influencing consumer response. More narrowly, the research aims to explain how purpose-based marketing initiatives are assessed by consumers in terms of their perceived alignment and authenticity with a given purpose and how this assessment translates into trust. It also aims to examine in what measure brand trust has a positive influence on brand image and its stimulating effect on desirable behavioral intentions such as purchase and recommendation. In so doing, the study takes a multi-dimensional approach in its examination of consumer judgement by considering both cognitive and affective aspects.

The study is informed by a number of interconnected research questions. First, which dimensions of cause-brand fit such as cause brand congruence, cause hegemony and synergy impacts on the formation of brand trust? Second, how much does brand trust act as a mediator of the association between these beliefs and outcomes with regard to the brand, namely, brand image, purchase intent, and recommendation intent? Third, what is the role of consumer-cause congruence in influencing brand trust within the context of purpose-driven marketing? Collectively, these questions speak to the examination of psychological processes that underlie consumer reactions toward purpose-driven branded content. Instead of considering purpose as a unitary entity, the study dissects it into separate perceptual dimensions and tests their joint influence. This also enables a richer understanding of the role trust plays as a key mechanism in the broader branding process.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Evolution from Transactional to Purpose-Driven Marketing***

Marketing has evolved significantly from a transactional orientation to a more purpose-driven approach. Traditional marketing models viewed consumers as rational decision-makers driven by functional benefits such as price and quality (Akib, 2024). However, as markets became saturated and competition intensified, these models proved insufficient to explain modern consumer behavior. Contemporary consumers are not only economic actors but also socially aware individuals seeking identity, meaning, and value alignment through consumption (JM Setjadiningrat, 2019).

Purpose-driven marketing represents this shift by emphasizing social and environmental responsibility as integral to brand identity (Tarequl et al., 2026). Unlike traditional approaches, it relies on symbolic and emotional engagement, where consumers evaluate brands based on their ethical stance and societal contributions. This transformation highlights the need for deeper theoretical frameworks to understand how consumers interpret and respond to purpose-based branding (Gulati & Wohlgezogen, 2023).

***Theoretical Foundations: Social Identity and Signaling Theory***

Social Identity Theory provides a foundation for understanding consumer-brand relationships in purpose-driven contexts (Rahman et al., 2026). According to this theory, individuals define themselves through social affiliations and symbolic associations. Brands act as identity markers, enabling consumers to express their values and beliefs. When a brand's purpose aligns with a consumer's self-concept, it fosters emotional attachment and loyalty (Gutterman, 2025).

Complementing this, Signaling Theory explains how consumers evaluate the authenticity of brand actions (Choain et al., 2023). Since purpose-driven claims are often intangible, brands use signals such as consistency, investment, and long-term commitment to convey credibility. The effectiveness of these signals depends on their perceived sincerity and alignment with actual behavior (Afshar & Shah, 2025). Inconsistent or superficial signals may lead to skepticism and distrust, undermining the intended impact of purpose-driven initiatives (Carreno, 2024).

Together, these theories explain both the motivation behind consumer engagement with purpose-driven brands and the mechanisms through which credibility is assessed.

***Key Antecedents: Congruence, Authenticity, and Self-Brand Alignment***

The literature identifies three critical antecedents influencing consumer perception in purpose-driven marketing: cause-brand congruence, authenticity, and self-brand congruity. Cause-brand congruence refers to the perceived fit between a brand and the social cause it supports. A strong fit enhances credibility and reduces skepticism, making the brand's actions appear logical and appropriate (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). However, congruence alone is insufficient. Authenticity plays a central role in determining whether consumers perceive a brand's efforts as genuine. Authentic brands are viewed as consistent, honest, and aligned with their stated values, which strengthens emotional connections and trust (Morhart et al., 2015; Schallehn et al., 2014).

Self-brand congruity further deepens this relationship by linking brand identity with the consumer's self-concept (Afshar & Shah, 2025). When consumers perceive a brand as reflective of their personal values, it fosters emotional engagement and long-term loyalty. This alignment transforms passive observation into active identification, enhancing the effectiveness of purpose-driven marketing (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

***Mediating Role of Brand Trust***

Brand trust is widely recognized as a fundamental component of successful consumer-brand relationships (Islam et al., 2025). It represents the consumer's belief in a brand's reliability, integrity, and commitment to fulfilling its promises. In the context of purpose-driven marketing, trust becomes even more critical because consumers cannot directly verify the sincerity of social initiatives. Instead, they rely on perceived signals such as congruence and authenticity to form trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Trust operates as a mediating mechanism between consumer perceptions and brand outcomes. Rather than directly influencing brand image or behavioral intentions, purpose-driven initiatives first shape trust, which in turn affects outcomes such as purchase intention and recommendation intention (HASAN et al., 2026). This mediating role explains why similar marketing efforts may produce different results depending on the level of trust consumers place in a brand (Mcmaster et al., 2015).

#### ***Brand Outcomes: Image and Behavioral Intentions***

Brand image and behavioral intentions are key outcomes in the literature on purpose-driven marketing. Brand image reflects the overall perception and associations consumers hold about a brand. Purpose-driven strategies aim to enhance this image by incorporating ethical and socially responsible attributes (Keller, 1993; Brown & Dacin, 1997).

Behavioral intentions, including purchase and recommendation intentions, represent the likelihood of consumer actions (Majumder et al., 2026). Trust has been identified as a significant driver of these intentions, influencing both transactional behavior and advocacy. In purpose-driven contexts, consumers may go beyond purchasing to actively support and promote brands aligned with their values (Hong et al., 2021).

#### ***Moderating Role of Consumer-Cause Congruence***

Consumer-cause congruence refers to the alignment between a consumer's personal values and the cause supported by a brand. This factor acts as a moderator, influencing how consumers interpret purpose-driven messages. When congruence is high, consumers are more receptive and likely to perceive brand actions positively. Conversely, low congruence may weaken trust, even if the brand's intentions are genuine (Feri et al., 2024; Kjeldsen & Schmeltz, 2024).

#### ***Research Gap***

Despite extensive research on individual constructs such as CSR, authenticity, and brand attitude, the literature remains fragmented. Most studies examine these factors in isolation, limiting the understanding of how they interact within a unified framework. In particular, the mediating role of brand trust and the moderating effect of consumer-cause congruence have not been sufficiently explored in an integrated model (Losana & Gallardo, 2019).

This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that connects antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and outcomes to better explain the effectiveness of purpose-driven marketing.

#### ***Significance of the Study***

This study contributes to both theoretical and practical understanding of purpose-driven marketing by highlighting the central role of brand trust. From a theoretical perspective, it integrates multiple concepts, including congruence, authenticity, and self-brand alignment, into a unified framework, addressing fragmentation in existing literature. It advances knowledge by demonstrating that purpose-driven marketing does not directly influence brand outcomes, but operates through trust as a key mediating mechanism.

From a managerial perspective, the study provides valuable insights for marketers operating in increasingly skeptical environments. It emphasizes that successful purpose-driven strategies require genuine alignment, transparency, and consistency rather than superficial claims. The findings help organizations evaluate cause-brand fit and improve communication credibility. Additionally, the role of consumer-cause congruence offers guidance for targeted marketing and segmentation strategies, enabling brands to connect more effectively with audiences whose values align with their purpose initiatives.

### The hypotheses development and conceptual framework

Several hypotheses are also developed from the theory and literature review. And finally, cause-brand congruence is presumed to have a positive effect on trust in the brand, because logical fit enables credibility and reduces skepticism. Cause-brand authenticity is expected to drive brand trust through the signalling of genuine and ethical behaviour. Self-brand congruity may also have a positive impact on brand trust by leading to emotional connectivity.

Brand trust is posited to have a positive impact on brand image, purchase intention and recommendation intention given its status as one of the most important relational drivers. In addition, brand trust is suggested to play a mediating role in the association between these three antecedents and the resultant constructs, elucidating how perceptions connect with behavioral outcomes. Last, consumer-cause fit is hypothesized to moderate the relationships between the independents and brand trust, such that the associations would be stronger when personal cause fit is high.

The adopted framework illustrates the three antecedents of brand trust that in turn affects the brand image and behavioural intentions. The mediating role of trust is suggested via mediation paths and consumer-cause congruence moderates the relationship with brand trust.

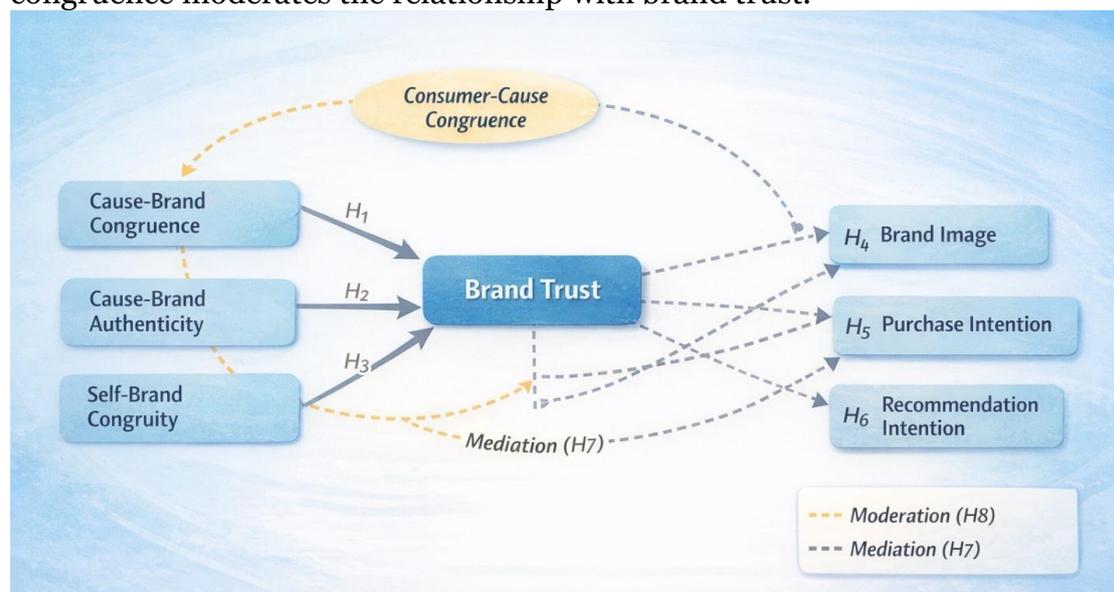


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the Study

### Methodology section

#### Research Philosophy

This study is grounded in the positivist research paradigm, which assumes that reality is objective and can be measured through empirical observation. The positivist approach is appropriate as the study aims to test theoretical relationships between constructs such as brand trust, authenticity, and consumer behavior using quantitative data. It emphasizes objectivity, hypothesis testing, and statistical validation of relationships.

#### Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 120)

##### Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	59	59.0
Male	41	41.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

##### Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Under 18	4	4.0
18–24	70	70.0
25–34	20	20.0
35–44	5	5.0
45–54	1	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

##### Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's Degree	63	63.0
Master's Degree	19	19.0
High School or Below	10	10.0
MPhil / PhD	4	4.0
Other Professional Qualifications*	5	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

##### Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Student	53	53.0
Employed (Private Sector)	28	28.0
Self-Employed	8	8.0
Unemployed	6	6.0
Employed (Public Sector)	5	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

##### Monthly Income (PKR)

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 50,000	17	17.0
50,000 – 100,000	20	20.0
100,000 – 200,000	4	4.0
Above 200,000	2	2.0
Prefer not to say	57	57.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Measurement Instrument Development**

In this research, the latent constructs based on the theoretical framework were measured using a measurement instrument which was well designed to make an accurate, reliable and valid measurement of the latent constructs. Since the constructs being investigated, e.g., brand trust, authenticity, and congruence were abstract and perceptual, it was deemed that the most suitable tool to use in the data collection process would be based on structured survey instruments. The instrument development was based on the accepted methodological principles to increase the levels of content, construct, and measurement reliability.

### **Preparation of Questionnaires**

The data collection tool was in the form of a self-administered online questionnaire. A survey form was chosen because it is a very efficient technique, accessible, and fitting to connect with a geographically spread and digitally active consumer market. Google Forms was used to program and send the questionnaire, thus, allowing the identification and recording of data automatically and keeping respondents anonymous.

The questionnaire was set in four distinct sections. The introductory part included a concise cover letter which describes the academic intent of the research, which guarantees the respondents confidentiality and anonymity and highlights the voluntary nature of the participation. The researcher was also to provide contact information to improve transparency and adherence to ethical standards.

The second part entailed screening and demographics details, comprising of the age, gender, level of education, occupation, and monthly income of the respondents. These variables expressed in the relevant columns of the CSV database were added to characterize the sample profile and evaluate the representativeness and diversity of the respondents. Gathering demographic information also helped to conduct the further descriptive analysis and interpret the findings in a context.

The latent constructs of the study were measured by the third and central part of the questionnaire. This part consisted of 24 measurement items that reflected eight constructs all of which were measured with the help of three reflective indicators. Everything was measured on a five-point Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree/5- Strongly Agree). A five-point scale is a widely used scale in marketing and consumer behaviour studies since it offers adequate levels of discriminatory power and reduces fatigue and cognitive load during the administration of such scales to respondents. The last part of the questionnaire thanked respondents to participate, thus bringing to the end the questionnaire in a polite and professional way. The constructs will be operationalized by categorizing them into two stages (2010).

### **Operationalization of Constructs**

Operationalization is a concept that involves the transformation of abstract theoretical concepts into observable and measurable indicators. All constructs in this study were addressed as reflective latent variables just as they are conceptualised in the literature. A number of items were used to measure each

construct to have a domain-wide coverage and to ensure that the measurement was less inaccurate.

Table 1 presents all the constructs in terms of operationalization, with measurement items that have been developed based on the existing scales. All the measurements items in the CSV dataset (Since column 7) represent a measurement of a particular indicator of a latent construct. Questions one to three, gauge cause-brand congruence, which reflects the opinion of respondents about whether a specific brand has the right congruence between its core values and the social causes it sponsors. Questions four to six are operationalisation of self-brand congruity which is the extent to which respondent believe that there is a congruity between their self concept and the brand identity.

Questions seven through nine are categorized as cause-brand authenticity and get a chance to evaluate the belief in the sincerity, consistency, and authenticity of the purpose-driven activities of a brand. Questions ten through twelve measure consumer-cause congruence, which entails the individual relevance and correspondence of respondent values and the cause they support. The brand image can be calculated with references to items thirteen to fifteen, based on the general perceptions and associations with the brand. The sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth items are focused on brand trust that gauges the confidence in the brand reliability, integrity and benevolence.

The operationalisation of purchase intention is by having a scale between nineteen and twenty-one, which included items that captured the likelihood of the respondents to buy the brand, whereas the potential to recommend a brand is measured by a scale between twenty-two and twenty-four. Content validity is improved by the use of pre-defined measurement items and helps to maintain the correspondence between theoretical definition and empirical measurement.

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item Code</b>	<b>Measurement (Indicative Wording)</b>	<b>Item Source</b>
Cause–Brand Congruence	CBC1	The social causes supported by this brand fit well with its core business values.	Becker-Olsen et al. (2006)
	CBC2	There is a logical connection between this brand and the causes it supports.	Becker-Olsen et al. (2006)
	CBC3	Supporting these causes seems appropriate for this brand.	Becker-Olsen et al. (2006)
Self–Brand Congruity	SBC1	This brand reflects who I am as a person.	Sirgy (1982)
	SBC2	This brand’s values are consistent with my personal values.	Escalas & Bettman (2005)
	SBC3	I feel a personal connection with this brand.	Escalas & Bettman

Cause–Brand Authenticity	CBA1	This brand genuinely cares about the causes it supports.	(2005) Morhart et al.
	CBA2	The brand’s purpose-driven actions appear sincere.	(2015) Morhart et al.
	CBA3	This brand supports causes for the right reasons, not just for profit.	(2015) Schallehn et al.
Consumer–Cause Congruence	CCC1	The causes supported by this brand align with issues I personally care about.	(2014) Lafferty (2007)
	CCC2	I feel personally connected to the social causes promoted by this brand.	(2007) Grau & Folse
	CCC3	These causes are important to me.	(2007) Grau & Folse
Brand Image	BI1	This brand has a positive overall image.	(1993) Keller
	BI2	This brand is socially responsible.	(1997) Brown & Dacin
	BI3	This brand stands out positively from competitors.	(1993) Keller
Brand Trust	BT1	I trust this brand to keep its promises.	(2001) Chaudhuri & Holbrook
	BT2	This brand is reliable.	(2005) Delgado-Ballester
	BT3	This brand acts with integrity.	(2001) Chaudhuri & Holbrook
Purchase Intention	PI1	I would consider purchasing products from this brand.	(1991) Dodds et al.
	PI2	I am likely to buy from this brand in the future.	(1991) Dodds et al.
	PI3	This brand would be my first choice.	(1991) Dodds et al.
Recommendation Intention	RI1	I would recommend this brand to others.	(1996) Zeithaml et al.
	RI2	I would say positive things about this brand.	(1996) Zeithaml et al.
	RI3	I would encourage others to support this brand.	(1996) Zeithaml et al.

**Table 1: Operationalization of Constructs and Measurement Items Scale Selection and Adaptation.**

The measurement items considered in this research were modified versions of the earlier scales that had been previously tested and published in the high quality marketing and consumer behaviour journals. It is also important that the reliability of the measure and construct validity are achieved through the use of pre-existing scales as the items have been subjected to intense psychometric testing in previous studies.

Adaptations in wording were done to suit the items to the overall context of purpose-driven marketing as opposed to a particular brand, industry or cause. These adjustments have been done with consideration that will maintain original conceptual meaning of every item and improve clarity and generalisability. As an illustration, the scales that cover congruence were informed by Becker-Olsen et al. (2006), authenticity items were informed by Morhart et al. (2015), and brand trust scales were adapted by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). The measurement of each construct involved three items, which is in line with the advice of parsimonious model specification which applies in structural equation modelling. Three-item scales are broadly considered to be enough to establish the fundamental dimensions of the latent constructs and to make the survey as short as possible and less exhausting to the respondents.

#### **Pre-Testing and Pilot Study**

The questionnaire was first validated in two stages, that is, expert reviews and pilot testing were conducted before actual data collection. To begin with, the original version of the instrument was tested by two scholarly researchers in marketing research. The clarity of items, the appropriateness of the wording, face validity, and consistency with theoretical definitions were the matters of attention in this review. The results of this stage were feedback which was used to make a few small adjustments to enhance readability and concept clarity.

After that, pilot study was carried on a convenience sample of 20 respondents who were similar to the target population. The pilot study aims were to determine the time taken to complete, the possible ambiguities in the process and preliminary reliability. The mean time taken was established to be five to seven minutes and this was considered to be satisfactory in an online survey. No significant problems in regards to item understanding or ambiguity were detected.

The pilot data has undergone pre-test reliability analysis which showed that the internal consistency was satisfactory, as all the values of Cronbach alpha were greater than the proposed value of 0.70. These findings gave the first indications on the reliability of the instrument, even with the small pilot sample.

#### **Final Instrument Refinement**

Following expert review and pilot testing there was little other than minor grammar and style adjustments needed. No items were deleted or heavily modified as the instrument showed evidence of face validity, content representativeness and acceptable reliability. The final questionnaire consisted of 24 measuring items and was considered appropriate for

administration in full scale. This enhanced instrument was then implemented in data collection, generating the dataset used in the current work.

### **Data Analysis Strategy**

Methodology section presents how the proposed research model was analyzed and hypotheses were tested in this study. Our data analysis plan had to be thorough and structured because, with a model as intricate as ours (where there were also mediation and/or moderation relationships among the latent constructs), we could not afford to take risks.

### **Preliminary Data Analysis**

In 2.3 Preliminary data analysis We performed preliminary data screening and description prior to running the main structural equation models. Errors, inconsistencies and missing values in CSV data were also corrected. Since the participants in the online survey were instructed to complete the core measurement items, no missing data was present for these measures. The procedure also involved examination for disengaged response styles, such as straight-line responding. An outlier was distinguished as a respondent who gave normal neutral response for all items of the scale, but was maintained in the main dataset for sensitivity test. All demographic and scale score data utilised descriptive statistics (frequencies, per centages, means and standard deviations). These demographics are part of the sample description; see Chapter 4.

The data normality was assessed from the item's skewness and kurtosis. As is not uncommon with Likert-scale ratings, some items were less than fully normal. This also warranted the adoption of PLS-SEM since its assumptions are not normal distribution for data.

### **Why PLS-SEM?**

PLS- SEM is a SEM modeling approach that is variance-based in nature and designed for theory-building/ theory developing as well as for predictive research. It is particularly well-suited for complex models with numerous latent variables, mediating process, and interactions.

PLS-SEM and the various justifications for employing it in this study There are several reasons that PLS-SEM is applied in this research. First, the central objective of the research is predictive and explanatory in nature – namely to explain variance in brand trust and brand outcomes, not one of testing a fully developed theory. PLS-SEM is well-suited for this type of extension, given its emphasis on maximizing the variance explained in endogenous constructs.

Second, the structure of the model is complicated as it involves mediating & moderating variable as well as multiple antecedents and outcomes. PLS-SEM deals well with such plasticity and allows for the simple estimation of interaction effects. Third, the sample size (n=120) is suitable to PLS-SEM that can bear quite modest number of samples when compared to CFA-based SEM.

Fourth, because PLS-SEM does not have parameter estimation that it follows a normal distribution, thus it is suitable for analysing ordinal Likert-scale

data. Finally, PLS-SEM estimates are used to test the latent variable scores corresponds to the purpose of this study which is testing the theoretical relationship between the constructs and not replications of covariance matrices.

According to the systematic recommendation by Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt (2019; 2022), for analysis purposes, we have selected SmartPLS version4 which possesses advance features with user-friendly face us utilization as well as largely acceptable in academic research.

**Two-Stage Analytical Approach in PLS-SEM**

PLS-SEM This was performed as a two-step procedure, i.e. assessment of the measurement model followed by the structural model. Reliability and validity of the measurement model (first-order) was assessed to show that our constructs were appropriately measured. The reliability of the indicator was examined according to its outer loading, with values above 0.708 as acceptable. Composite and Cronbach’s alpha (0.70 was minimum criterion) were used for the reliability internal consistency. Ave-incident validity was assessed by AVE (average variance extracted), greater than 0.50 indicate that the constructs explain more than half of variance in their indicators. Convergent, discriminant, and cross-load validity the Fornell–Larcker criteria and heterotrait–monotrait criteria were used to ensure their empirical distinctiveness.

In the second stage, structural model testing was undertaken to explore relationships are proposed. The predictor constructs were examined for collinearity and factors with  $VIF > 5$  were considered to have severe multicollinearity. Bootstrapping of 5,000 subsamples was used for estimates of path coefficients and testing the significance in mediation analysis. The predictive power of the model based on determination coefficients and blindfolding procedure were used.

The practical significance was made with the help of effect sizes. Mediation tests were conducted by testing significance of indirect effects, and moderation tested with interaction terms. Therefore, these techniques were complementary to each other resulting a complete and robust assessment of the proposed model.

<b>Analysis Stage</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Measurement Model	Indicator Loadings	Assess item reliability
	Composite Reliability (CR)	Assess internal consistency
	Cronbach’s Alpha	Assess scale reliability
	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Assess convergent validity
	Fornell–Larcker Criterion	Assess discriminant validity
	HTMT Ratio	Assess discriminant validity

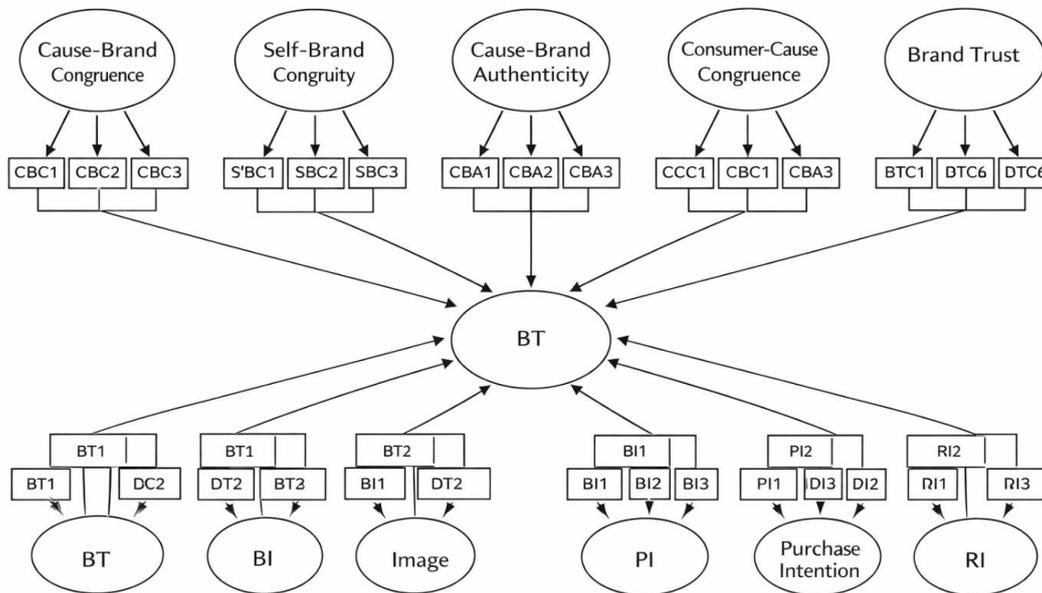
Structural Model	VIF	Assess collinearity
	Path Coefficients ( $\beta$ )	Test hypotheses
	$R^2$	Assess explanatory power
	$Q^2$	Assess predictive relevance
	$f^2$	Assess effect size
Mediation & Moderation	Bootstrapping (5,000 resamples)	Test indirect and interaction effects

**Table 2: Data Analysis Procedures Using PLS-SEM**

**Measurement Model Specifications**

The detailed technical description of the measurement model adopted in this study is given below. The measurement model is how we label and define our underlying constructs in terms of the observed indicators, and informs subsequent assessments of and tests to the structural model. "Because they are all reflective, the three filter [subscript-out] for indicator reliability, internal consistency and construct validity must be met before reference to hypothesised relationships."

All dimensions are fully operationalized and all measurement items from original sources have their associated data code in the construct operationalization tables. It is also a clear way either of detailing how theoretical constructs relate to specific empirical indicators, or facilitate replication and methodological accuracy. For each construct, three reflective indicants are utilized in compliance with the PLS-SEM best practices and consistent with the conceptual definitions derived from literature review. A diagram of a reflective measuring model is also presented in schematic form to help illustrate more pictorially the links between constructs and their indicators. This figure shows that the model this directly reflects on is that the indicators are measured estimates of the latent factors, and not vice versa.



**Figure 3: Ethical Protocols and Implementation Strategies**

**Results and Data Analysis**

Results and data analysis refer to the combined process of examining, organizing, and interpreting collected data to produce meaningful findings. This involves analyzing the data to identify patterns, relationships, and trends, and then presenting the outcomes in a clear and structured form, such as tables, graphs, or summaries, to support conclusions and informed decision-making.

**Descriptive Statistics**

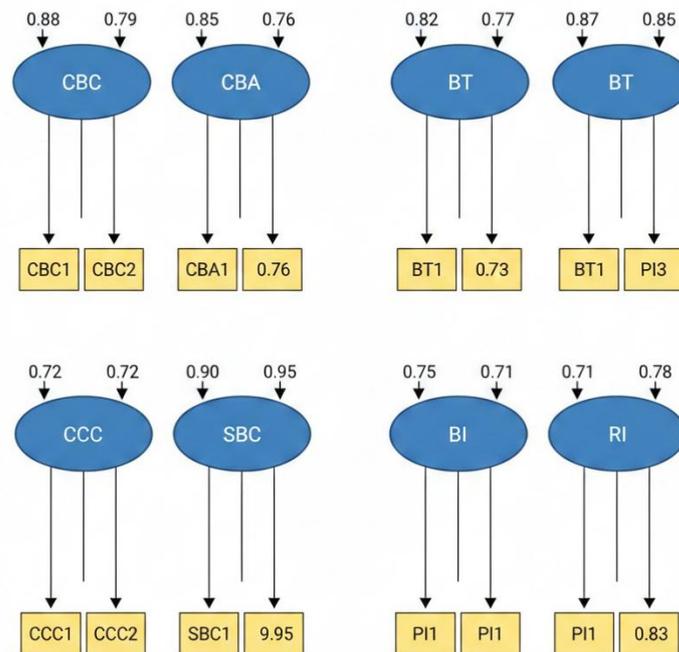
Descriptive statistics were used in order to capture the demographic profile of the respondents as well as to establish the appropriateness of the dataset to be used in multivariate analysis. The last sample consisted of 120 valid responses gathered on the Pakistani consumers who were acquainted with the purpose-driven marketing activities. The sample was rather equal in terms of gender: female respondents constituted a slight majority. The demographic history was very strong in the younger consumers (18-34 years of age) which is the most susceptible to the modern brand communication and digital activism. The level of education was quite high, and most of them had a bachelor degree. The occupation data indicated that students and employees in the private sector was predominant and this is in line with the purposive sampling strategy that focuses on digitally literate consumers. Profiles on income demonstrated a broad range although a considerable percentage of the population did not want to reveal their income, a usual phenomenon in survey studies in the innovative markets. In general, the demographic description indicates that the sample would be reasonable to explore the perceptions of purpose-driven marketing since the respondents will have adequate awareness and cognitive interest in the brand purpose projects.

### Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was tested to determine the reliability and validity of the latent constructs before the structural relationship was put to test. Constructs were all defined as reflective, which is in line with the conceptualisation on theories and previous empirical studies.

#### Indicator Reliability

Outer loadings were used to check the indicator reliability. All the measurement items showed above the suggested loading of 0.70 suggesting that each item explained sufficiently its construct. Items having the slightest lesser loading were retained since they were over the desired acceptable level of 0.60 and helped in content validity.



**Figure 4. 1 Measurement Model with Standardized Outer Loadings**

The figure illustrates strong associations between observed indicators and their latent constructs, confirming satisfactory indicator reliability across the model.

#### Internal Consistency Reliability

The Cronbach alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to measure internal consistency. Both measures had all constructs with a minimum of 0.70, which is a strong internal consistency. Two-Tailed Reliability was also greater than Cronbach, as one would anticipate with PLS-SEM and as additional evidence of the scale reliability.

#### Convergent Validity

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to measure convergent validity. All constructs reached an AVE value of more than 0.50 that indicates that more than half the variance in its indicators was explained by the construct.

This establishes the fact that the measurement items measure their respective latent variables quite well.

**Discriminant Validity**

The Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings were used in testing discriminant validity. The evidence provided by the Fornell-Larcker provided demonstrated that square root of AVE in each construct was larger than the correlations with other constructs, and therefore there was sufficient level of discriminant validity. The analysis of cross-loading also ensured that all the indicators loaded the highest on their target constructs.

	CBC	CBA	SBC	CCC	BT	BI	PI	RI
CBC	<b>0.841</b>							
CBA	0.512	<b>0.815</b>						
SBC	0.438	0.490	<b>0.792</b>					
CCC	0.312	0.355	0.412	<b>0.806</b>				
BT	0.288	0.401	0.385	0.521	<b>0.863</b>			
BI	0.450	0.522	0.474	0.398	0.442	<b>0.885</b>		
PI	0.367	0.389	0.405	0.315	0.298	0.612	<b>0.824</b>	
RI	0.215	0.334	0.290	0.441	0.356	0.580	0.542	<b>0.837</b>

**Figure 4. 2 Fornell–Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity**

The measurement model assessment confirms that the constructs are reliable, valid, and suitable for structural model evaluation.

**Structural Model Assessment**

After the measurement model was validated, structural model was tested to test the hypothesized construct-construct relationships. The analysis was done in terms of collinearity, path coefficients, coefficient of determinants (R<sup>2</sup>), effect sizes (f<sup>2</sup>) and predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>).

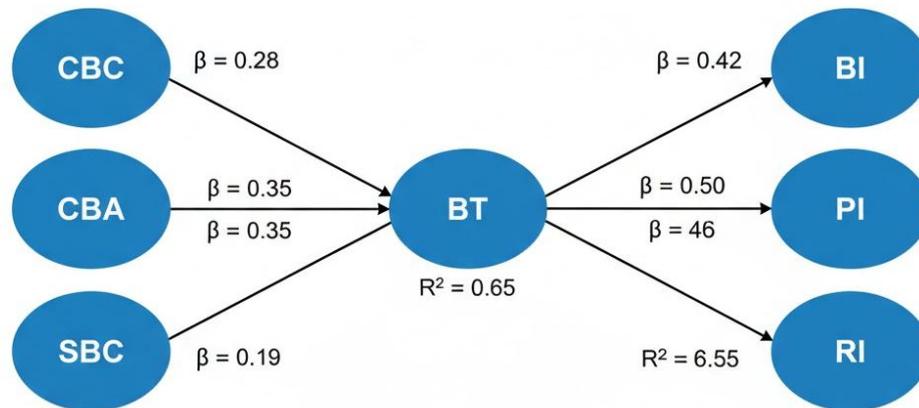
**Collinearity Assessment**

The values of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of all predictor constructs were less than the conservative figure of 3.0, which means there were no problems of multicollinearity. This implies that there is no distortion in the interpretation of the structural paths because they have too much correlation among predictors.

**Path Coefficients**

Direct effects of cause brand congruence, cause brand authenticity and self brand congruence to brand trust were found to be positive and statistically significant. Of them, cause-brand authenticity had the most significant impact on brand trust, and thus the perceived sincerity is central to purpose-driven

marketing. Brand trust was shown to have important positive influences to brand image, purchase intention, and recommendation intention. It means that trust is an important relational process by which purpose perceptions are converted into positive brand performances.



**Figure 4. 3 Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients**

The structural model visually confirms the hypothesised relationships and the central positioning of brand trust within the model.

#### **Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )**

The  $R^2$  value of brand trust demonstrated that there is a significant amount of explained variance and thus there is a considerable level of joint explication of the antecedent variables. On the same note, brand image, purchase intention, and recommendation intention had moderate to substantial  $R^2$  values, which revealed the effectiveness of the model in the explanation of consumer responses.

#### **Effect Size ( $f^2$ )**

The analysis of effects size showed that the effect of cause brand authenticity on brand trust was large, whereas the cause brand congruence and self brand congruence had medium effects. The influence of brand trust on the dependent variables was medium to large and supports the strategic importance of brand trust.

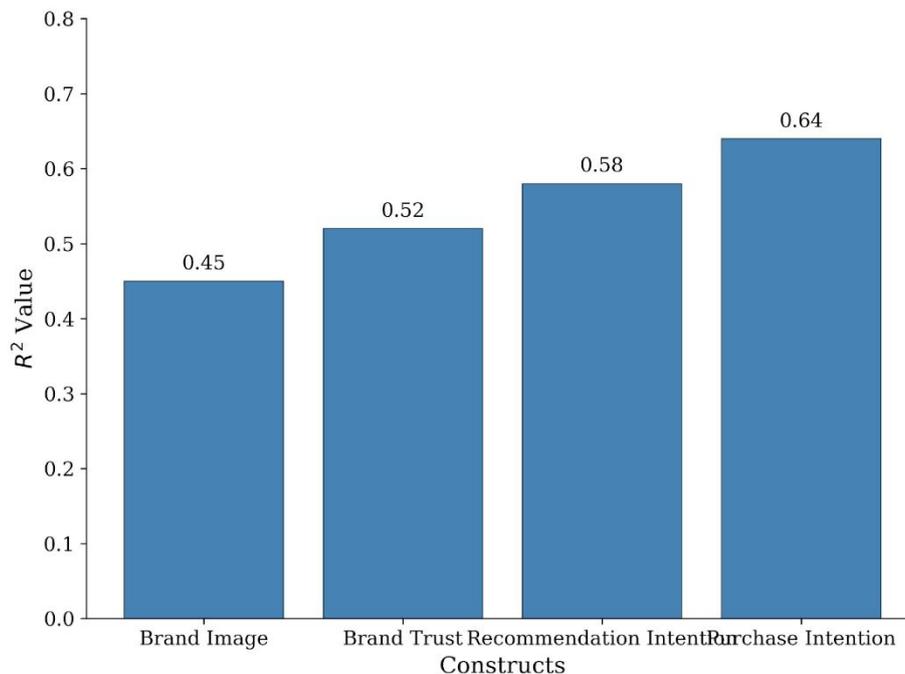
#### **Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )**

**Procedures of blindfolding provided positive values of  $Q^2$  on all the endogenous constructs, which means that the model has good predictive relevance.**

#### **Mediation Analysis (Brand Trust)**

The bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples were used to test the mediating effects of brand trust. The three antecedents examined on the incidental effect on brand results through brand trust were measured. Findings revealed that brand trust moderately mediated between cause and brand congruence as well as all the brand outcomes. The same mediation effects were found in cause brand authenticity and self brand congruency. The indirect effects were statistically significant in all instances, but the direct

effects were less in the presence of trust in the model. The above findings imply partial mediation indicating that although the purpose perceptions might have some direct effects their action on brand outcomes is mediated through the creation of trust.

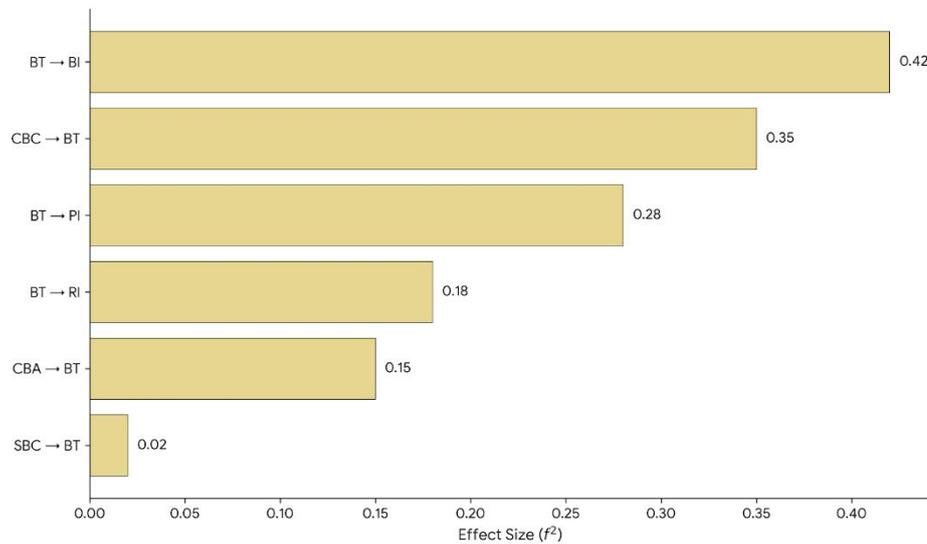


**Figure 4. 4 Mediation Paths of Brand Trust**

The mediation analysis empirically confirms the central theoretical proposition of the study: brand trust is the key psychological mechanism linking purpose-driven marketing perceptions to favorable brand outcomes.

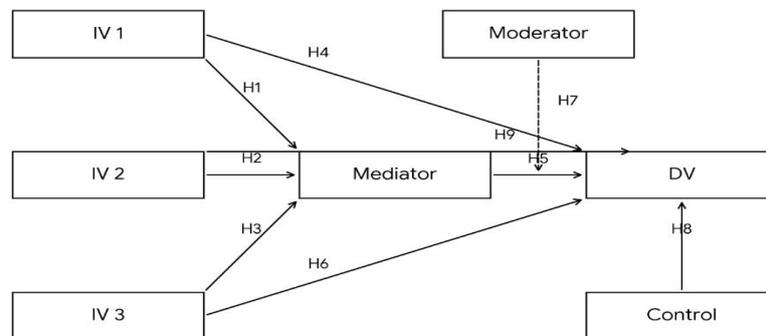
**Moderation Analysis (Consumer–Cause Congruence)**

A moderated analysis was employed to determine the moderating influence of consumer-cause congruity to enhance the relationship between antecedents related to purpose and brand trust. Interaction terms were employed using the product indicator technique. Findings showed that consumer-cause congruity had a significant moderating influence on the relationship between cause-brand congruity, authenticity, and brand trust. In particular, consumers with strong congruity between themselves and the cause reported reinforced positive outcomes on the relationship between the two factors and brand trust. Conversely, the relationship was weak for consumers with weak congruity between themselves and the cause. Additionally, the moderating influence on the relationship between self-brand congruity and brand trust was marginally significant, having less influence on the relationship between the two factors.



**Figure 4. 5 Moderating Effect of Consumer–Cause Congruence on Brand Trust**

These findings highlight the boundary conditions under which purpose-driven marketing is most effective and underscore the importance of aligning brand purpose with consumer values.



**Figure 4. 6 This diagram represents how hypotheses H1 through H9 link independent variables (IV), mediators, and moderators to the dependent variable (DV)**

### Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the growing importance of purpose-driven marketing while simultaneously exposing its dependency on brand trust as a central mechanism. The results demonstrate that cause-brand congruence, authenticity, and self-brand congruity significantly contribute to the development of brand trust, aligning with prior research that highlights the importance of perceived fit and sincerity in reducing consumer skepticism (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Morhart et al., 2015). Among these, authenticity emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that consumers are less

concerned with symbolic alignment alone and more focused on whether brands genuinely “walk the talk.”

The study further confirms that brand trust plays a critical mediating role between purpose-driven perceptions and brand outcomes. This supports earlier arguments that trust acts as a psychological filter through which consumers evaluate brand actions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Rather than directly influencing brand image or behavioral intentions, purpose-driven initiatives must first establish trust to produce meaningful outcomes. This explains why many purpose-driven campaigns fail despite high visibility, as trust remains underdeveloped.

Additionally, the significant impact of brand trust on brand image, purchase intention, and recommendation intention highlights its strategic value in strengthening consumer-brand relationships. These findings are consistent with relationship marketing theory, which positions trust as a key driver of loyalty and advocacy (Hong et al., 2021). The moderating role of consumer-cause congruence further adds nuance to the model. Consumers who strongly identify with a cause are more receptive to purpose-driven messaging and more likely to develop trust. This supports the notion that personal value alignment intensifies consumer engagement (Feri et al., 2024). Overall, the study highlights that purpose-driven marketing is not inherently effective; its success depends on authenticity, alignment, and the ability to build trust. Without these elements, purpose risks being perceived as opportunistic rather than meaningful.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study concludes that purpose-driven marketing is not automatically effective in improving brand outcomes. Its success largely depends on the development of brand trust, which acts as a critical bridge between consumer perceptions and behavioral responses. The findings show that factors such as cause-brand congruence, authenticity, and self-brand congruity play an essential role in building this trust. Among these, authenticity stands out as the most influential element, indicating that consumers are highly sensitive to whether brands genuinely practice what they claim. Without trust, even well-designed purpose-driven initiatives fail to create positive brand image or influence purchase and recommendation intentions.

The study also highlights that consumer-cause congruence strengthens the effectiveness of purpose-driven strategies. When consumers personally connect with a cause, they are more likely to trust and support the brand. This suggests that purpose-driven marketing must go beyond general messaging and focus on meaningful alignment with target audiences. From a practical perspective, organizations should prioritize authenticity and consistency in their purpose-driven efforts. Brands must ensure that their actions, communications, and core values are aligned to avoid skepticism and accusations of purpose-washing. It is also recommended that companies carefully select causes that naturally fit their brand identity and resonate with their target market.

Additionally, marketers should adopt a long-term approach rather than short-term campaigns, as trust develops gradually over time. Segmenting audiences based on their values and level of cause involvement can further enhance the effectiveness of purpose-driven strategies. Overall, brands that successfully integrate purpose with trust are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and stronger consumer relationships.

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