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# A Theoretical Brand Loyalty Model for Private Higher Education Institutions

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## Abstract

*Public higher education institutions do not have the infrastructure and capacity to accommodate all South Africa's tertiary students. This provides an opportunity for private higher education institutions. This study focuses on developing a theoretical model to measure and manage brand loyalty in a private higher education institution. The study also addresses the variables that encompass the brand loyalty model. The advent of brand loyalty has led to an increase in interest in how brands are managed. Previous studies have focused on brand loyalty in the FMCG, banking, health care, and fashion industries. However, limited research has focused on South African brand loyalty in the private higher education sector. Brand loyalty can only be managed if measured, measured, and the relevant variables (antecedents) must be identified. The existing frameworks for managing brand loyalty must be adapted to higher education. This study aims to develop a theoretical model to measure brand loyalty in a private higher education institution. Antecedents and measuring criteria are identified using a review of the review of validated brand loyalty models and recent research. The literature study identified ten fitting antecedents using relevant measurement criteria to measure brand loyalty in a private higher education institution. These findings were used to develop a theoretical model ready for empirical validation.*

**Keywords:** Brand, Loyalty, Private Higher Education, Antecedents, Model, Framework.

## Introduction

South Africa has more than one million students in the higher education system, yet the country has a participation rate below 20%. The participation rate refers to students enrolled in higher education institutions than those not (Coetzee, 2019). According to the latest employment statistics, there are 18.3 million people of working age who are not in education or employment (Stats SA, 2023). Public higher education does not have the resources or technology to accommodate all tertiary students. More than 100,000 of these students are in private higher education institutions. Khuluvhe (2021) states South Africa has 87 private higher education institutions. These institutions of higher learning provide a career platform for thousands of students who may otherwise be left without acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills.

Private higher education institutions are under constant pressure to enrol and retain students in the contact and distance modes of instruction. The COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of government funding, and increased unemployment rates are some constraints facing private higher education institutions. Higher education institutions help shape the future of students and their families and provide employment to many educators, administrators, and clerical staff. According to Galindo-Illanes et al. (2021), higher education plays a key role in the country's social, economic and cultural development. The total student enrolment figures for private higher education institutions in the following table are based on student enrolment as listed in the Register of PHEIs dated 20 August 2021 (see Table 1) (DHET, 2021).

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**Tab 1:** Number of Students Enrolled in Private Higher Education Institutions in South Africa from 2011 To 2021.

Year	Total Number of Students Enrolled	% Growth Per Year
2011	103036	***
2012	97478	-5.4%
2013	119941	23.0%
2014	142557	18.8%
2015	147210	3.3%
2016	167408	13.7%
2017	185046	10.5%
2018	197898	6.9%
2019	208978	5.6%
2020	219031	4.8%
2021	232915	6.3%

\*Please note: The DHET released data only up to 2021

Source: DHET (2021)

Table 1 shows that the total number of students enrolled at private higher education institutions continues to grow annually, doubling in the past ten years (from 103,036 students in 2011 to 232,915 in 2021). The four years up to 2021 show a steady annual growth between 5% and 7%.

## Problem Statement

The modern competitive environment necessitates product and service features to fit well with consumers' demands and expectations. Consumer behaviour changes continuously (even more so during and now after the COVID-19 pandemic), and organisations must adapt continuously to satisfy, retain, or create loyal customers (Arslan, 2020).

There are many studies where brand loyalty models have been applied to specific industries. Previous studies have been conducted both locally and internationally, focussing on brand loyalty in the banking industry (Bisschoff & Salim, 2014; Taoana *et al.*, 2022), hospitality (Scholtz, 2014), online booking platforms (Joubert, 2020), arts festivals (Burger, 2015), and the tourism industry (Eksteen, 2018), agricultural buying (Bisschoff, 2021; Hill, 2017; Wiese, 2014), wholesale pharmaceuticals (Du Plooy, 2012), chicken to consumers (Schmulian, 2019), pet food (Basson, 2015) and fast-moving consumer goods (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012). However, there is limited research on a general brand loyalty model applicable to multiple industries in South Africa.

Although brand loyalty measuring models have been applied to various specific industries, resulting in many different brand loyalty models, there is no general brand loyalty model which can be applied to a general business or multi-faceted enterprises that do not specialise in selling a single product or product line.

This study aims to solve this problem by developing a general model for South Africa to measure and manage brand loyalty. Therefore, this study aims to answer the question of which antecedents are relevant in a general model to measure and manage brand loyalty in South Africa.

Brand loyalty is one way to develop a strategic competitive advantage. However, managers must know the organisation's current loyalty levels to manage and improve brand loyalty. Numerous generic models exist for measuring and managing brand loyalty. However, a local brand loyalty model explicitly tailored for private higher education institutions could not be found. A brand loyalty model specifically for South African Private Higher Education is non-existent. This needs to be revised for PHEI's aiming to measure and manage brand loyalty using a specialised model.

This article aims to solve this problem by developing a model for private higher education institutions to measure and manage brand loyalty.

## Research Methodology

This is a theoretical study on brand loyalty. The literature research engaged studies since the inception of brand loyalty as a competitive business concept, which dates back to the early 19th century. As such, seminal works, developments and recent brand loyalty models and studies have been investigated. These studies encompassed multiple industries and application settings and did not require a link to higher education to be identified (the antecedent's applicability to higher education was established at a later stage). Only statistically validated antecedents were considered for inclusion. Initially, the study identified 126 validated brand loyalty antecedents. These antecedents were diminished to 96, then to 52, and to 26. Finally, the theoretical list applicable to private higher education resulted in the selection of 10 antecedents (see Table 3). Three criteria were used in this elimination process. They are 1) The frequency of use in validated brand loyalty measurement models, 2) The relative importance (or factor weightings) of the antecedents compared to rival antecedents in measuring models, and 3) The applicability of the antecedent to higher education. The theoretical journey of brand loyalty is discussed below.

## Branding and Brand Loyalty

### *Historical Overview of Branding*

Branding has evolved over the centuries but gained traction as a competitive advantage since the 1940s when researchers like Guest (1944), Cunningham (1956), and later seminal work by Jacoby and Chestnut (1971) started to focus on branding and brand loyalty as a competitive edge. It has evolved from an unknown concept to an organisational competitive advantage in practice today. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2021), some analysts see brands as a major enduring business asset outlasting the organisation's products and facilities. Some chief executive officers even regard the brand as more valuable than the physical attributes of the organisation because the brand signifies a competitive advantage in the market (Heyward, 2022). The ability to generate sales from the customer. Brands are powerful assets that should be developed and managed carefully. The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2022) defines a brand as: "*a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers.*"

Branding is a psychological consumer behaviour process where positioning plays an important role. It encompasses aligning what the organisation wants the market (people) to think about the organisation and its products or services with what the market thinks about it (Bynder, 2023). The brand of Spur Steak Ranch, for example, successfully aligned itself as a family-friendly restaurant (Spur, 2024), while the Chesanyama restaurant brand aligns with a more relaxed and on-the-go fresh barbeque market (Chesanyama, 2024); both restaurants similarly serve A-grade premium meats, but they target different market segments using brand positioning. As such, the success of an organisation is largely on its capability to attract consumers to its brands. An organisation must continue attracting its current consumers and maintain brand loyalty. Companies with loyal customers tend to produce a greater market share (Zaidun, 2021).

According to Belfanti (2018), the authors maintain that the branding is much more unique. Since the Middle Ages, craftsmen and guilds have used marks singly and collectively to define a framework and maintain a quality standard. Some trademarks and branding trends detected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been witnessed in the markets of the pre-modern age. The first research on the branding of manufactured items, identified by placing seals, bulls, monograms, and hallmarks, dates back to the early twentieth century. The craftsman's mark played a crucial role in the metalworking sector. The artisans' stamp portrays a symbol of the quality of the product to the consumer.

Grant (2022) mentions that the history of modern brands significantly depends on the history of trademarks. Historically, trademarks emerged before modern branding to link products to manufacturers. Brands are more multiplexed and have mostly emerged from registered trademarks. There are cases where historians used the

term brand without hesitation. John Styles illustrated the debut of branded products on the British market between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Another example is Robert Turlington, *whose Balsam of Life* was sold in a unique bottle with instructions on how consumers should use it (as cited by Jones, 2016).

Many countries, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and other European nations, enjoyed a stable economic phase during the early twentieth century. Consumers had income to spend on goods, services, and luxuries. Graphic design, advertising and marketing stimulated consumers to purchase goods and services. Consumers with additional income spent it on brands ranging from food items to automobiles. The mass media contributed to the advent of a branded world. Radio sponsorship of advertisements paved the way for consumers to listen to brand advertisements daily. Later, brand sponsorship on television heralded a new beginning for the advertising and viewing of brands worldwide.

## Models of Brand Development

### *The Goodyear Model*

Brand development developed as an active competitive strategy in the 1940s when resellers like Wilford White focused on the brand to achieve a competitive advantage. A popular business model was the Goodyear brand development model. According to Jain (2011), the Goodyear model was used to explain targeting the market segments using different strategies for the same brand. The model can explain situations in which management uses different strategies for the same brand, resulting in the brand being located in more than one stage. Managers can view any brand as having multiple stages depending on the stage of the brand life cycle. The Goodyear model explains the development of the branding process over time, as depicted by six stages across all product categories. These six stages explain the development of the brand process over time, and they are (Ranjan, 2011):

**Stage 1: Unbranded:** Unbranded products and packaged goods represent a large proportion of non-industrialised goods.

**Stage 2: Brand as Reference:** A brand name often refers to the manufacturer's name. The name is used for identification, advertising, service, and support and focuses on rational attributes. With time, becomes a guarantee of quality and consistency.

**Stage 3: Brand as Personality:** The brand name evolves to be a "stand-alone," and marketing support focuses on emotional appeals and product benefits. Advertising focuses on contextualising the brand.

**Stage 4: Brand as an icon:** The consumer owns the brand, and the brand taps into the higher-order values of society. Advertising assumes a close relationship with customers and uses symbolic brand language. These brands are often established internationally.

**Stage 5: Brand as Company:** Brands have complex identities, specifically when they are associated with the company brand. Brands must align with company values, focus on corporate benefits, and use an integrated communication strategy.

**Stage 6: Brand as Policy:** The company and brands are aligned to social and political issues, and consumers vote on issues through companies. Consumers now identify with brands, companies, and policies.

Following the construction of the Goodyear model and considerable interaction with brand marketers in the service sector, it is proposed that brand interpretations follow an evolutionary spectrum. Brands take time to develop. Therefore, companies follow a distinct procedure for conversations with a brand (Ranjan, 2011).

### *The Rockbridge Brand Development Model*

A brand development model is a diagnostic tool that integrates many proven metrics into a framework that guides strategy. Marketers need to consider six stages of development for a brand, each equating to a different marketing priority, starting with creating basic awareness and concluding with building customer loyalty (Rockbridge, 2023).

**Figure 1:** The Rockbridge Brand Development Model.

STAGES OF BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND TRACKING MEASURES			
Level of Development	Development Stage	Survey Measures	Strategic Emphasis
Low Equity/ Unformed Brand	Recognizable	-Aided Awareness	Create awareness through repeated exposure to name
	Memorable	-Unaided Awareness -Top of Mind Awareness -Familiarity	Educate on what brand represents
	Favored	-Overall Excellence -Best-in-Class -Positive momentum	Communicate the brand's advantages
	Distinctive	-Image -Competitors' Image	Create a distinctive positioning
	Preferred	-Preference from a choice set -Inclination to use brand	Encourage trial
High Equity/ Fully Formed Brand	Consumed & Satisfactory	-Incidence of usage -Share of usage -Satisfaction -Advocacy	Improve loyalty and satisfaction

Source: Rockbridge (2023)

Rockbridge's brand development stages are discussed below:

**Stage 1:** The brand should be recognisable. The brand aims to build consumer trust and gain consumer recognition.

**Stage 2:** The brand should be memorable. Once the brand has recognition, the next step is to be prominent in the minds of consumers.

**Stage 3:** A brand should be favourably viewed and respected as meeting customers' needs.

**Stage 4:** The brand must be distinctive and unique to foster a strong brand identity. Brands with a vague identity will soon become just another commodity.

**Stage 5:** A brand should be preferred. Brand awareness and a clear and distinct value proposition should translate into preferences amongst prospective customers.

**Stage 6:** The market should be consuming the brand and satisfied. If the product or service matches customer expectations, the prospect of brand loyalty amongst customers improves.

It was soon evident that specific antecedents, or brand characteristics, can enhance businesses' competitiveness. Many researchers have shifted their focus to brand loyalty and its drivers to engage customers toward loyalty and repeat purchases of a brand (or a specific business).

### Brand Loyalty

Historically, brand loyalty was introduced as a competitive advantage by Guest (1944; 1955), Cunningham (1956), and Jacoby and Kyner (in Jacoby 1971). The latter authors also seminally defined brand loyalty in 1971 as:

*"Brand loyalty is (1) biased (non-random), (2) behavioural response (purchase), (3) expressed over time, (4) by a decision-making unit, (5) concerning one or more alternative brands out of a set of brands, and (6) is a function of psychological (evaluative; decision-making) processes."*

At the turn of the century, brand loyalty researchers Chaudhury and Holbrook (2001) simplified the definition of brand loyalty as follows.

*"The customer's belief that a brand can perform its claimed functions."*

The modern definition of the American Marketing Association (2022) is that brand loyalty is: *"The situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category."*

The historical development of brand loyalty is listed in Table 2 after Guest (1944) first introduced the concept.



**Table 2:** Historical Development of Brand Loyalty.

Year	Framework	ResearchInstrument	Researcher(S)
1940	Unidimensional related to the measurement perspective taken by the researcher	Questionnaire	Unknown
1944	Brand preference measure related to attitudinal loyalty	Questionnaire	Guest (1944). Cantril (1946)
1955	Brand preference measure related to attitudinal loyalty	Questionnaire	Guest (1944). Atkinson (1957)
1956	Behavioural Loyalty	Questionnaire	Cunningham
1969	Bi-dimensional related to attitudinal and behavioural loyalty	Questionnaire	Day et al. (1961)
1971	Composite loyalty is related to the combination of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty	Questionnaire	Jacoby (1971) Bennett & Harrel (1975).
1973	Composite loyalty related to the combination of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty	Questionnaire	Jacoby (1971) Bennett & Harrel (1975). DuBois (1975).
1978	Composite loyalty related to the combination of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty	Questionnaire (Version 2)	Jacoby and Chestnut (1971)
1994	Multidimensional loyalty treating composite loyalty as separate dimensions	Questionnaire	Dick & Basu (1994)
1995	Composite loyalty related to the combination of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty	Questionnaire	Bloemer & Kasper (1995) Breckler (1994).
1996	Multidimensional loyalty treating composite loyalty as separate dimensions	Questionnaire	de Ruyter et al. (1998)
1996	Multidimensional loyalty treating composite loyalty as separate dimensions	Questionnaire	Narayandas (1999)
1996	Multidimensional loyalty treating composite loyalty as separate dimensions	Questionnaire	Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996)
1999	Composite with stages of loyalty	Questionnaire	Oliver (1999)
2001	Composite loyalty related to the combination of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty	Questionnaire	Bennett (2001)
2001	Multidimensional loyalty treating composite loyalty as separate dimensions	Questionnaire	Yu & Dean (2001)
2004	Multidimensional loyalty with the focus on brand equity as the most important antecedent of brand loyalty	Questionnaire	Taylor et al. (2004)
2006	Multidimensional loyalty for the next generation	Questionnaire	Esch et al. (2006)
2008	Examining the Antecedents of Brand Loyalty from an Investment Model Perspective	Questionnaire	Xiang & Petrick (2008)
2011	Development of a conceptual framework of brand loyalty	Questionnaire	Kabiraj & Joghee (2011)
2011	A framework for assessing brand loyalty score for commodities	Questionnaire	Punniyamoorthy et al. (2011)
2014	A conceptual framework to build brand loyalty in the modern marketing environment	Questionnaire	Latif et al. (2014)
2016	Extending the four-stage brand loyalty framework in African Telecoms	Questionnaire	Hinson et al (2016)
2017	Customer engagement: A framework for assessing brand loyalty behaviour in the hotel industry	Questionnaire	John (2017)
2020	A meaningful-based framework of customer loyalty	Questionnaire	Närvänen (2020)
2021	The development of a conceptual framework for customer loyalty among users of mobile loyalty programmes	Questionnaire	Seridaran & Noor (2021)
2023	A conceptual framework of factors in Halal bakery customer loyalty	Questionnaire	Idris & Razali (2023)

Source: Compiled from research by the authors cited in the table

### Behavioural and Attitudinal Antecedents of Brand Loyalty

In 1978, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) developed their brand loyalty model and seminally formalised that brand loyalty antecedents are either attitudinal or behavioural (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978).

An antecedent is something that comes before a behaviour and may trigger that behaviour. Behaviour is anything an individual does. A consequence is something that follows the behaviour. Behavioural loyalty is the intention of a consumer to repurchase the same product or service over time (AMA, 2023). Behavioural loyalty may be motivated by several antecedents, such as high switching costs, lack of alternatives, and price changes (Haryanto, 2022). Attitudinal loyalty is the consumers' devotion and attachment towards a brand. Attitudinal antecedents include customer satisfaction, brand trust, relationships, and self-concept (AMA, 2023).

**Identifying Antecedents to Measure Brand Loyalty**

Private higher education institutions must understand the behaviour of customers to devise strategies to retain them. The following antecedents of brand loyalty contribute immensely in this regard. Customer satisfaction, switching costs, brand trust, customer relationships, technology and online learning, perceived value, waiting time, dependability and reliability, brand image, and brand participation are the most important antecedents in measuring brand loyalty at private higher education institutions. Table 3 shows the antecedents, their criteria, and their respective theoretical underpinnings.

**Tab. 3:** Bisschoff and Moolla’s Brand Loyalty Antecedents, Their Description, And Supporting Studies.

	Description	Researchers
Customer Satisfaction	Customers differ according to their needs and wants. Whether the buyer is satisfied after purchase depends on the offer's performance. If the performance does not meet expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If performance matches expectations, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectations, the customer is delighted. A higher level of customer satisfaction leads to increased brand loyalty. Customer satisfaction and service quality are strongly correlated, and good post-purchase complaint-handling practices further increase customer satisfaction, increasing brand loyalty.	Kotler and Armstrong (2021); Anwar (2019); Arslan (2019); Musa (2005); Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007); Bowden-Everson <i>et al.</i> (2013); Dilham <i>et al.</i> (2018); Rather (2018); Zouari & Abdelhedi (2021); Mittal (2019); Tukiran (2021)
Switching Costs	Switching is a porting decision from one provider to another. This decision is due to poor quality, unstable prices, lack of satisfaction, and poor service delivery by the current provider of goods or services. Switching costs refer to all the factors that make switching to alternative service providers more difficult and costly. Procedural switching costs involve time and effort, including learning, risk, setup, and evaluation costs. Financial switching costs involve the monetary loss incurred by the customer. Relational switching costs involve emotional or physical discomfort caused by switching brands.	Demir et al. (2021); Bisschoff (2021); Ong <i>et al.</i> (2018); Närvänen (2022)
Brand Trust	Higher education's challenges to maintaining a brand image and a positive societal perception are increasingly complex. Institutions must remain consistent and continue to improve to provide the best service to students. If student satisfaction improves, then student loyalty will also improve. Alumni recommendations can also increase the number of students. Student loyalty creates a brand image for institutions during and post-campus life; therefore, loyalty refers to current and future studies. The trust in the brand has a significant impact on the reputation and credibility of the institution. Therefore, building long-term relationships with customers who want to emotionally connect with a brand and show long-term commitment to the brand requires brand trust.	Haryanto (2022); Musa (2005); Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007); Närvänen (2022); Dilham <i>et al.</i> (2018); Ebrahim (2020); Grant (2021).

Customer Relationship	In today's dynamic and ever-changing market, an effective customer relationship strategy is required for every organisation. If the customer thinks that the brand performs the best and can live up to their expectations, then relationships between the consumer and the brand can be formed and even flourish.	Navarro (2021); Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001); Schijns (2003); Van der Westhuizen (2018); Soedarto <i>et al.</i> (2019).
Technology and online learning	Online and eLearning are learning experiences using various electronic devices, e.g., computers, laptops, smartphones, and internet availability in synchronous or asynchronous environments. Online learning makes learning more student-centred, creative, and flexible. According to Cloke (2018), a brand is a visual reminder of what your company stands for. An online educational institution's brand is based on the values of excitement, fun, and positivity. A learning platform without branding is like a country without a flag. An institution's brand neatly summarises what the organisation stands for.	Zalat (2021); Bisschoff (2021); Basson (2015), Van der Westhuizen (2018).
Perceived Value	The value of the perceived customer depends on the benefits offered based on the customer's view. The value differs from the price of the product. The customer's perceived value involves the category value and the relative value. The category value is a value that considers only the product's characteristics without considering the brand attached to it. The relative value is the value that compares one product to another and is categorised as the same but has a different brand. The meaning of value for each customer may differ according to their needs.	Tukiran <i>et al.</i> (2021); Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007); Ong <i>et al.</i> (2018); Rather (2018); Van der Westhuizen (2018); Soedarto <i>et al.</i> (2019).
Waiting Time	Waiting time is an unavoidable part of the service industry. Negative waiting experiences can infuriate customers, affecting their perception of the service provider and loyalty to the brand. According to Mittal (2016), the time a customer spends waiting for the service delivery influences customer loyalty. Customer loyalty has an impact on brand loyalty. Time is a factor when it comes to buying cost and acquisition. Service customers tend to view waiting as a waste of time because it is seen as an unwarranted cost. Customers are spoilt for choice, with many alternatives available. Therefore, prompt customer service and delivery are vital to keep the customer brand loyal.	Ayodeji (2022); Bowden-Everson <i>et al.</i> (2013); Ong <i>et al.</i> (2018); Soedarto <i>et al.</i> (2019).
Dependability and reliability	Satisfied customers buy regularly, sometimes out of habit, because they are satisfied with the brand's performance over a long period. Customers perceive the brand as familiar and reliable, resulting in a good buying experience. The more reliable the customer perceives the brand, the more loyal the customer is to the brand. Fundamentally, brand loyalty behaviour is consistent with repeat buying behaviour. In essence, repeat purchases refer to how often customers repurchase the same brand over the same period.	Aaker (2021); Ayodeji (2022); Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007); Ong <i>et al.</i> (2018); Bisschoff (2021).
Brand image	The brand image can be created and meaningful based on three important dimensions of brand association. They consist of strength, favourability, and uniqueness of association. The strength of association refers to a function that refers to how much information is received and how its quality is processed in customers' memory so that it can be part of the brand image. Creating a good brand is vital to enhancing customer loyalty. A distinguished and recognisable brand enables the company to get ahead of the competition. A company with a high-quality representation in the marketplace can acquire a better position and a superiority effect.	Bernarto (2022); Martin (2021); Zia (2021); Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001); Schijns (2003); Musa (2005); Dilham <i>et al.</i> (2018).



Brand involvement	The cutthroat competition posed by increasing the presence of social networking websites recognises brand involvement as a critical strategic value factor for brand marketing and customer-brand interaction. Brand participation improves service quality and is powerful in service marketing activities. Academic institutions provide services, so the brand must be portrayed positively to all stakeholders.	Gupta (2021); Schijins (2003); Aaker (2021); Dilham <i>et al.</i> (2018), Bisschoff & Moolla (2015).
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**Tab 4:** Origins of Questionnaire Items.

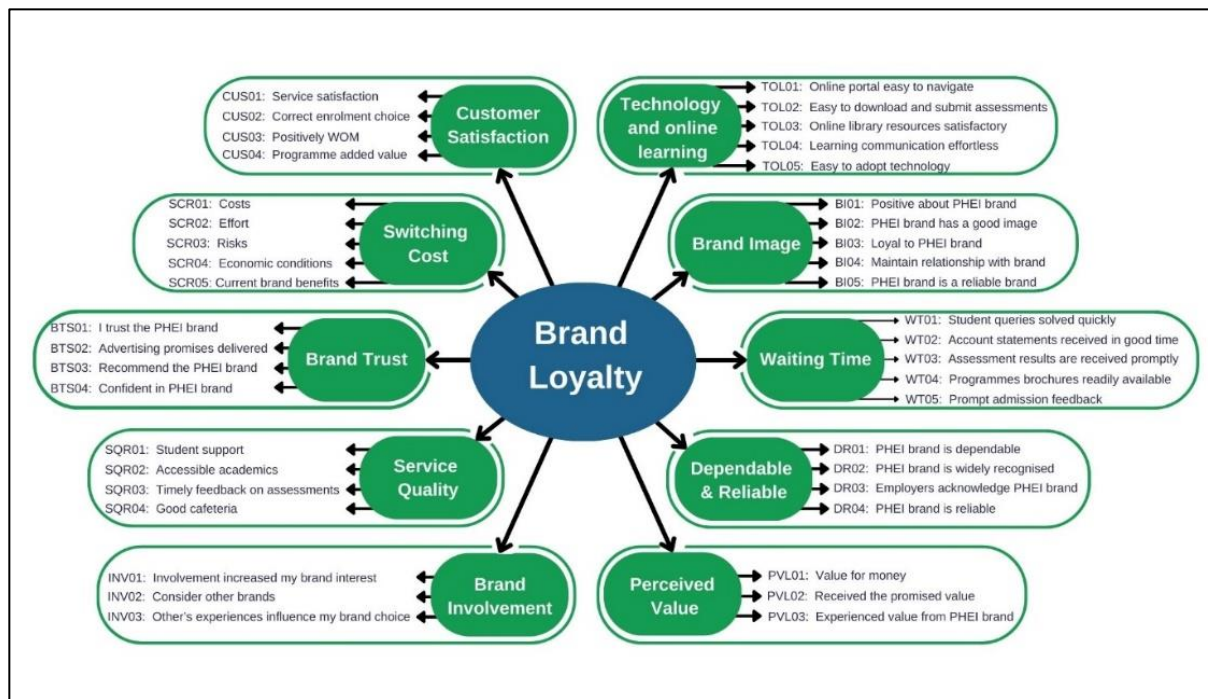
	Code	Item	Source
Customer Satisfaction	CUS01	I am satisfied with the service delivered by the institution	Kotler and Keller (2019)
	CUS02	I made the correct choice by enrolling at the institution	Self-generated item
	CUS03	I speak positively about the institution to friends and family	Anwar (2019)
	CUS04	The programme I completed added value to my life	Self-generated item
Switching Cost	SCR01	I do not switch brands due to the high-cost implications	Demir (2021)
	SCR02	I do not switch brands due to the effort required to reach the level of comfort	Ong et al. (2018)
	SCR03	I avoid switching brands due to the risks involved	Self-generated item
	SCR04	I switch brands due to economic conditions	Wilys (2018)
	SCR05	I prefer not to switch brands due to the fact of losing out on the benefits of the current brand	Self-generated item
Brand Trust	BTS01	I trust the institution's brand completely	Haryarto (2022)
	BTS02	What was promised as advertised was delivered	Self-generated item
	BTS03	I will recommend this brand to prospective students	Grant (2022)
	BTS04	I confidently speak of this brand to others	Self-generated item
Service Quality	SQR01	The student services department was supportive	Schneider (2017)
	SQR02	Academics were accessible when needed	Self-generated item
	SQR03	The assessment department provided accurate feedback was given by assessments department	Widiyanto et al. (2021)
	SQR04	The standard of the cafeteria was good	Self-generated item
Perceived Value	PVL1	The price of the brand gave me value	Tukiran et al. (2021)
	PVL02	I received the total value for what was advertised	Ong et al. (2018)
	PVL03	I derived value from the brand due to my experience	Soedarto et al. (2019)
Dependability & reliability	DR01	The brand is considered dependable	Aaker (2021)
	DR02	The brand is reliable because of its recognition	Ong et al. (2018)
	DR03	The brand is reliable in the long term	Self-generated item
Waiting Time	WT01	Student queries are resolved in rapid time	Avodeji (2022)
	WT02	The accounts are received in good time	Tong et al. (2018)
	WTO3	Assessment results are received promptly	Soedarto (2019)
	WT04	Information regarding programmes to study is forwarded upon request	Self-generated item
	WT05	Admission and selection feedback is prompt	Self-generated item
Brand Image	BI01	I experience positive thoughts when I think of this brand	Bernarto et al. (2022)
	BI02	This brand has a good image and reputation	Martin (2021)
	BI03	The reputation of the institution's brand is a key factor in maintaining brand loyalty	Zia (2021)
	BI04	I prefer to maintain a long-term relationship with this brand	Self-generated item
Technology and online learning	TOL01	The online portal and learning journey was easy to navigate	Zalat (2021)
	TOL02	The download and submission of assessments were simple	Van der Westhuizen (2018)
	TOL03	The library resource centre provided access to e-books and journals	Basson (2015)
	TOL04	Communication between yourself and the institution was effortless	Self-generated item
	TOL05	It is easy to adopt the technology	Self-generated item

Table 4 summarises the antecedents and their measuring criteria to serve as the foundation for the questionnaire. Figure 2 graphically displays the theoretical brand loyalty model. This theoretical model can be empirically validated with quantitative data and multivariate statistical analyses

## Measuring the Respective Antecedents of Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is just not measured by sales. A customer may keep returning to an organisation for other reasons like the service is excellent, they trust the brand, the brand has an outstanding image or perceived value of the product or service. (Rather, 2021). An organisation must get to the heart of brand loyalty through comprehensive research. A notable way to measure brand loyalty is through a customer survey. Questionnaire-based surveys can directly and quickly obtain customer information using a Likert measurement scale. Quantitative analysis is generally linked to interpretive paradigms that analyse the quantitative characteristics, relations, and changes in social phenomena. For research on private higher education institutions, surveys, especially questionnaire-based surveys, are an acceptable adopted data collection method (Bisschoff & Moolla, 2015).

A comprehensive literature study of the antecedents adopted in this study is required to gauge customers' brand loyalty. This article reviewed quantitative studies about brand loyalty from 2011 to 2023 to select the most appropriate and important questions.



**Figure 2:** A Theoretical Brand Loyalty Model.

Source: Own

## Conclusion

The theoretical study aimed to identify brand loyalty antecedents relevant to private higher education institutions and then to find measurement criteria for each antecedent. This study concluded that: Ten antecedents were identified to measure and manage brand loyalty in a private higher education institution.

42 theoretical measuring criteria were identified to measure these antecedents individually.

## Areas For Further Study

This article developed a theoretical model that includes the antecedents and their respective measurement criteria for private higher education institutions. This theoretical model must now be tested with empirical data to determine if the model is valid and can be used reliably to measure the brand loyalty of private higher education institutions. The antecedents must also be validated individually, and their relative importance in the model must be established; confirmatory factor analysis or structural equation modelling would be suitable statistics to do that.

## Summary

The study focused on developing a theoretical brand loyalty model for private higher education institutions. Based on the reviewed literature, research on the essential concepts, and the postulated brand loyalty model, this study first identified the antecedents to measure brand loyalty in private higher education institutions. These antecedents are *customer satisfaction, switching costs, brand trust, service quality, brand involvement, perceived value, dependability and reliability, waiting time, brand image and technology, and online learning*. Second, the literature study also developed measuring criteria for each antecedent. In total, the theory identified 42 criteria suitable for higher education. These antecedents and criteria are combined in a theoretical model that forms a basis for a questionnaire to measure the brand loyalty of private higher education institutions. The study, therefore, presents a usable theoretical model ready to be applied to measure the brand loyalty of private higher education institutions in South Africa.

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