

The New Consumer Contract: Trust, Transparency, and Long-Term Brand Relationships

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Abstract

The new contract for consumers is undergoing a shift in expectations between brands and consumers, as they increasingly expect to work with brands that are trustworthy, transparent, accountable, and engaged in the long term. The present study focused on how consumer trust and brand transparency can contribute to building long-term consumer-brand relationships. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was used, and primary data were gathered from consumers using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The data were processed using descriptive statistics and item-level analysis through SPSS Statistics. The results revealed that consumer trust reflected high consumer confidence in the reliability, honesty, and consistency of the brand. Brand transparency also showed relatively positive views regarding the clarity, openness, and availability of information. Long-term brand relationships indicated strong intentions to continue purchasing, recommending, and interacting with preferred brands. Item-level findings further indicated strong confidence in purchasing from trusted brands and using clear product information. Consumers also demonstrated a strong willingness to choose a preferred brand again. The results suggest that consumers are demanding more from brands to remain reliable while maintaining clear messaging and engagement. The study suggests that organizations can build sustainable consumer relationships by establishing strategies based on trust, transparency, accountability, and ongoing consumer-focused communication.

Keywords: Brand Relationships, Consumer Trust, Engagement, Loyalty, Transparency, Trustworthiness.

1. Introduction

Consumer/CBrand relationship is shifting from brand purchases and sale to more of a relationship. The customers evaluate brands not only by the product and its value for money, but also its extensive communication, ethics, openness and its responsiveness. Digital platforms have coupled with new channels of consumer information access giving them the opportunity to compare and contrast what brands are claiming and provide feedback on social media as well as publicly judge the attitudes of organisations. Trust is one of the most crucial components for relationships between consumer and brand and when such environment arises, consumers will seek out brands that they can trust and believe in (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Differential amount of brand trust may also positively influence consumers' relationship commitment to the brand and may also bring about positive behavioral intention (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Genuine relationships with organizations, too, have come to have higher expectations on the part of people today. Clear brands provide clear and transparent information in relation to a product, a price, a policy, information practices, data practices and in relation to the activities of an organisation. Transparency could reduce information asymmetry which gives consumers an understanding of whether a firm is conforming to their expectations, or living up to their promises (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). It is important particularly in the digital marketplace, where consumers easily find out if there are differences between what brokers claim, and what they deliver. Consumer reaction to the perceived authenticity of corporate social responsibility and to organizations' actual behavior that corresponds with stakeholder expectations can also impact them (Du et al., 2010). Additionally, the positive assessments will be supported by the consumer's perception of brand authenticity, which is the perception of the branded being consistent, sincere and credible (Morhart et al., 2015).

Repeat purchases aren't enough to create long-term brand relationships, they go beyond that to emotional attachment, engagement, commitment, advocacy and loyalty. Consumer-brand identification alone can improve consumer-brand associations particularly when brand values are congruent with consumer's identity (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). With regard to those who are attached to their brands, it is possible that even the long-term relationships with their favorite brands may be maintained (Park et al., 2010). Brand extension is also carried out in the social media landscape, through brand's interactions, participation and communication with consumers (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

1.1 Background of the Study

Long-term consumer-brand relationships fall under the aegis of relationship marketing theory. For Morgan and Hunt (1994) trust and commitment are one of the key mechanisms that help people sustain positive relationship between exchange partners. As a result, the customers will be more likely to stay loyal to a brand, if they believe that the brand is trustworthy and will act in their best interest. Measures of remindative strength of purchase-response and attitudinal response to brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) also confirm the role of brand trust in consumer's loyalty.

Transparency has become an all-importing issue given increasing inquiries regarding organizational choices and operations by consumers. Transparency in organisation is information available and explanations to various groups of stakeholders, to help them to understand the actions and processes of organisation (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). Transparency can enhance consumer trust in accurate information in consumer markets. Furthermore, release of information can shape the consumer's perception of the company's social and environmental roles, for companies with transparent disclosure of their social and environmental activities, Du et al. (2010) found.

New markets created in the digital age, and their evolving role in real-world and dynamic relationships, has made a significant impact on the importance of the relationships between real and digital. The invention of new markets brought on by digitalization has enhanced the bigger picture of real-to-digital and dynamic-to-real connections. The digital platform allows consumers to engage in brand communities, create a capacity to make online content, share their experience and shape other consumers' experience. Hence, brand engagement goes beyond an actual purchase, and extends into cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Consumer preference for the brand's authenticity also gains importance as customers are more interested in brands that are deemed authentic which are loyal to their stated values (Morhart et al., 2015). Such as positive feeling and sensing of their identity when linked to a brand's identity, these relationships can be strengthened (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). In the same manner, brand attachment can prompt the customers to keep relationships even when there are substitutions (Park et al., 2010).

The new consumer contract can then be seen as an increased ritual of exchange of expectations, obligations, and values that occurs between consumers and brands. Purchases, attention, information, feedback and advocacy from consumers, and a reliance upon reliable products, accurate info, ethical behaviour, privacy protection and genuine communication from brands are becoming more common. Relationships can be further reinforced by a strategy of customising the experience for the customer, and making it possible for them to be actively involved in it, as it resonates with the brand (Vivek et al. 2012). An example of electronic word of mouth is an online buyer's experience with a brand that affects other online buyers' perceptions of the brand, even when they have not transacted with the sellers when the online buyer hadn't interacted with the sellers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Apart from this, perceived value is also important since it entails a consumer's evaluation of the total value of a customer relationship with a brand, and this value is determined by considering both benefits and costs (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the influence of **consumer trust** on long-term brand relationships.
2. To assess the effect of **brand transparency** on consumers' willingness to develop and maintain long-term relationships with brands.
3. To determine the combined role of **trust and transparency** in strengthening consumer loyalty and sustainable brand relationships.

1.3 Research Questions

- Q1. How does consumer trust influence long-term brand relationships?
- Q2. How does brand transparency affect consumers' willingness to maintain long-term relationships with brands?
- Q3. To what extent do trust and transparency collectively contribute to stronger consumer loyalty and sustainable brand relationships?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research has impact as it has enlightened the understanding of the contemporary brands to build a stronger and a trustworthy relationship with consumers through transparency. The results can inform marketing managers of the expectations of gradually more informed consumers and enable them to choose communication strategies that focus on honesty and openness, reliability, and accountability. The study is also a significant addition to the field of relationship marketing because of the shift of the expectations in the emerging customer's contract. More transparency and trust can help consumers make better choices and have more trust in the brand. The study serves as a springboard for other researchers interested in examining further aspects of long-term relations within a brand, such as authenticity, customer engagement, perceived value, privacy and brand loyalty.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Trust and Brand Relationships

Studies over the last few years have singled out 'consumer trust' as a major driver in building a long term bond with customers. In a digital marketplace where customers typically do not have firsthand experience of a product or organization, trust enhances the likelihood that the transaction will proceed as intended. Perceived authenticity, perceived self congruity, and perceived

parasocial interaction were shown to boost source credibility; Chen et al. (2022) concluded that they can significantly enhance consumer trust in online environments. In an emerging market context, Khan et al. (2023) found that trust and commitment are the factors that facilitate consumers' engagement and loyalty toward using social media. Results of this research highlight that trust is built up only when interactions are credible and activities of relationship building conducted regularly.

Additionally, trust is linked to consumers' loyalty towards the brand over time. The study by Nair (2023) revealed that among the social media users, brand trust along with brand love, product quality, and customer service contributes significantly towards customer engagement and customer loyalty. Results indicate that trust is more valuable when it comes with digital platforms, where people's perceived reliability is affecting their engagement and loyalty. According to the study by the author of Rather et al., (2022) brand credibility, value congruence, brand experience, brand identification and brand engagement are factors that are pertinent to brand loyalty formation. All of these studies indicate that trust is a parallel mechanism in addition to relational and experiential factors that facilitate deeper and more lasting consumer–brand relationships.

Recent studies illustrate that trust is now more closely linked to consumers' worry and corporate claims about sustainability. Riva et al. (2024) have investigated the role of brand trust during a scenario of sustainability scepticism and proved that credibility is essential for consumers' assessment of a sustainability-related claim by a brand. The group's results indicate that a consumer could grow suspicious when the claims from a sustainability message are exaggerated or do not align with organizational behavior. This signifies that, in the case of long-term brand relationships, the brand must exhibit trustworthy behavior and not only say nice things.

2.2 Consuming transparent Cultural Brands

Many believe that brand transparency is not only about the information companies can give, but about the multiple facets of the transparency. Sansome et al. (2024) suggest that merely the amount of information is not enough because consumers' perception of transparency is determined by factors other than information quantity such as the type of information and how it is useful. Lack of information is not the same as transparency—consumers need information that's available to alleviate uncertainty and allow for evaluation, their research shows. Montecchi and colleagues (2024) partitioned perceived brand transparency into two areas: not only by what is disclosed, but also by the perceived purpose behind disclosure.

Transparency can also shape levels of trust and a consumer's response to the brand by decreasing the level of uncertainty associated with a brand's actions. The findings of recent studies concerning traceable product information show that aspects such as information quality, brand image, and promotion targets brand trust and perceived value, which in turn affects purchase intention, word of mouth, and brand loyalty (2024). Where consumers are increasingly insistent on learning about the origins of a product, its organizational practices and its sustainability claims, this relationship has a special meaning.

Transparency is also a core element of consumer experiences in technology mediated situations. During the study of e-commerce recommendation systems, Li et al. (2024) concluded that transparency is a crucial factor in building consumer trust and that perceived effectiveness and discomfort accounted for that. It's not just the topic of product or company transparency, this finding brings the concept into the realm of the consumer and how digital technologies affect their lives and choices. Digipoli can thus lower uncertainty and foster trust in digital interactions through transparent technological practices.

2.3 Consumer Engagement, Loyalty, and Long-Term Brand Relationships

Digital offers a growing means for brands to build relationships over time with consumers. Drawing upon social media users' data, Gupta et al. (2023) determined that the characteristics of an online brand community affect the customers' engagement with the brand and the relationship between the engagement and brand loyalty is positive. In the same fashion, social media customer engagement studies show that relational content leads to increased social media engagement, which can positively impact marketing metrics including brand loyalty and word-of-mouth (2023). These findings illustrate how brand relationships shift from a one-way marketing push to a two-way conversation between the brand and the consumer, where the consumer is now reshaping brand experiences in their participation in the conversation and the activities performed.

It has been established that the quality and nature of digital brand content can impact consumer loyalty. This study constructs a meta-analysis that investigates the impact of user-generated content (UGC) and firm-generated social media (FGS) on various aspects of brand loyalty, including attitudes, satisfaction, and trust, on the basis of 223 independent samples from 97,709 UGC and FGS users. User-generated content (UGC) and firm-generated social media content (FGS) were examined in a meta-analysis of 223 independent samples and 97,709 respondents to both UGC and FGS, regarding attitudes, satisfaction, and trust dimensions of brand loyalty. The quality of the social media content can be used to cultivate customer engagement, brand love, and brand loyalty, as concluded by A.J. Bazi et al. (2023). These insights indicate that fostering a long-term relationship with a brand necessitates ongoing and engaging interaction, with the brand offering content and experiences that prompt consumers to engage and build deeper relationships. The connection between transparency and engagement is also emerging as a bigger factor as consumers read about another brand's sustainability and social responsibility activities. Cheng and Huang (2025) investigated 464 Taiwanese consumers, and revealed that the extent to which ESG information is perceived as transparent and quality would significantly influence the perceived brand credibility, which in turn would positively impact the brand purchase intent. This evidence shows the importance of a transparent communication for creating value beyond informing the consumer, and for enhancing the consumer's evaluation of the brand. In cases where consumers find the communication of an organization convincing and informative, transparency could increase behavioral reactions and serve as an important basis for long-term relationships that are also more sustainable.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed “Quantitative Research Design” of cross sectional type in order to analyze the correlations between consumer trust, brand transparency and long term brand relations. A quantitative design would be best used in this study because there was a focus on measuring participant perceptions quantitatively and testing some hypothesized relationships among precisely identified variables. Trust and transparency, as well as consumer responses to them, have also been the focus of previous consumer research, which employed questionnaire-based quantitative designs. The cross-section study enabled the researcher not only to gather responses from consumers a single time but also measure consumers' attitudes to brands.

3.2 Population of the Study

The primary target of this study was regular adult consumers who engage with brands in physical or online marketplaces. The study concentrated on consumers who had some brand expertise to be

able to assess their trustworthiness and transparency, their communication approach and their relationship building activity. Interview respondents had to be 18 years old and have bought or used a consumer brand in the last six months. This inclusion criterion helped outcome responses to be genuine consumer experiences and not hypothetical predictions. Other consumer studies have focused on people who have actual experience with the product, service or brand(s) about which they are answering the survey questions before gathering the responses.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The total number of consumers studied was 300, all of whom were valid. The sample size allowed a sufficient number of observations for the descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, reliability analysis and multiple regression analysis that were conducted with the variables of the study. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed because consumers were sampled by engaging with easily-reached online networks and communities with consumers. This allowed the researcher to access recent brand interaction experience and target those with it efficiently. Online consumer surveys are a viable data collection method for users distributed around the globe in the case of research that relates to perceptions and behavioral assessments. Questionnaires and responses which were not complete or did not meet the criteria for participation were omitted prior to statistical analysis.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Structured questionnaire with self-administration approach was used for the purposes of primary data collection. The questionnaire was mailed electronically to eligible consumers via online communication and social media. Participants were given a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, and were told that participation was voluntary before they filled out the questionnaire. The respondents were also told that the information would only be used for academic research purposes and that their answers would not be associated with their names. Data were collected using a standardized approach to ensure that the respondents were asked consistent questions and possible answers. Questionnaire distribution via online method allowed easy access to consumers and enabled a standardized collection of quantitative data.

3.5 Research Instrument

The main instrument of the research was structured questionnaire. A set of question sheets was used and consisted of four components. The initial section gathered demographical details like gender, age, education and interaction with brands. The second section reflected consumer trust in terms of brand reliability, honesty, consistency and confidence. The third section assessed brand transparency—which focused on clarity, accessibility, openness and simplicity of the information brands provide—was gauged. The fourth section looked at long-term brand relationships such as brand loyalty, continued brand intention, positive word of mouth, and brand engagement willingness.

3.6 Data Analysis

Coded and analyzed responses were collected using IBM SPSS Statistics. The respondents' characteristics and distribution of the major variables were summarized by descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The second method that was used on the data was Cronbach's alpha, which was used for the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Third, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to identify the direction

and intensity of the relationship between consumer trust, brand transparency and long-term brand relationships. Finally, using multiple linear regression, the predictive contribution of consumer trust and consumer brand transparency to long-term brand relationships was determined. The regression model yielded coefficients, standard errors, t-value, significance level, R^2 and adjusted R^2 . The level of significance used was at $p < 0.05$.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

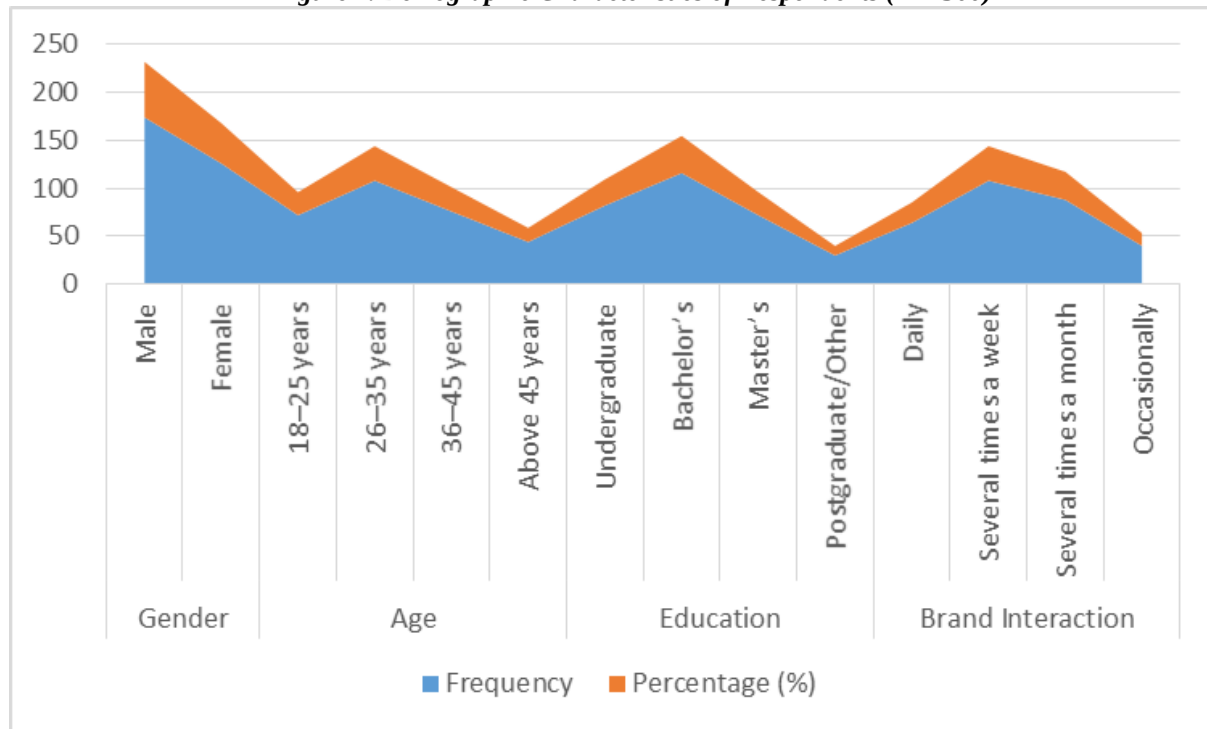
The demographic characteristics of the 300 respondents were examined to understand the composition of the sample.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	174	58.0
	Female	126	42.0
Age	18–25 years	72	24.0
	26–35 years	108	36.0
	36–45 years	76	25.3
	Above 45 years	44	14.7
Education	Undergraduate	82	27.3
	Bachelor's	116	38.7
	Master's	72	24.0
	Postgraduate/Other	30	10.0
Brand Interaction	Daily	64	21.3
	Several times a week	108	36.0
	Several times a month	88	29.3
	Occasionally	40	13.3

The Demographic result indicated that there were 174 male respondents (58.0%) and 126 female respondents (42.0%). The distribution showed that representation was equivalent for males and females, although the males were somewhat higher in number. As far as age is concerned, the biggest group were consumers between the ages 26 and 35, constituting 36.0% ($n = 108$) of the consumers. The respondents aged between 36 and 45 years accounted for 25.3% and those in the age group of 18–25 years accounted for 24.0%. Above 45 years old were the fewest: 14.7%, of participants. According to the educational profile, 38.7% ($n = 116$) of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, which was the largest educational group. A total of 27.3% ($n = 82$) of the undergraduate respondents had a graduate degree, also 24.0% ($n = 72$) had a master's degree. Postgraduate/other education accounted for 10.0% ($n = 30$) of the remaining respondents. The distribution indicated that the majority of respondents had some level of education of moderate and/or advanced, facilitating their capacity to assess the brand communication, transparency and problems related to trust. The frequency of brand interaction identified 36.0% ($n = 108$) who interacted with brands several times a week, and 29.3% ($n = 88$) who interacted several times a month with brands. Another 21.3% ($n = 64$) reported that they used to interact with brands on a daily basis, and 13.3% ($n = 40$) interact occasionally with brands.

Figure 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)



4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

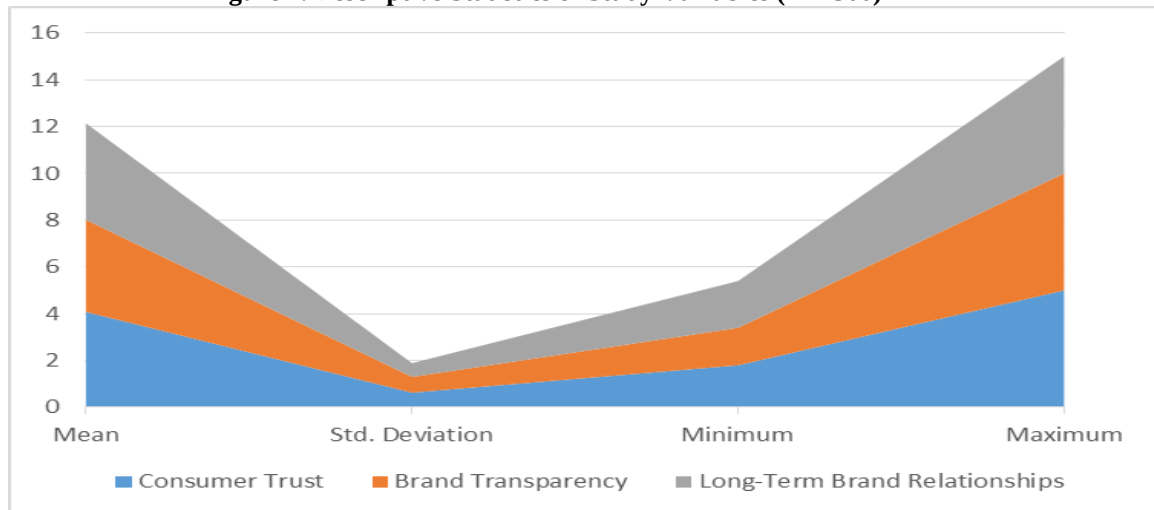
Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the overall levels of consumer trust, brand transparency, and long-term brand relationships.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 300)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Consumer Trust	4.08	0.63	1.80	5.00
Brand Transparency	3.94	0.67	1.60	5.00
Long-Term Brand Relationships	4.12	0.59	2.00	5.00

Means and SDs indicated that consumer trust was at a mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.63). The relatively high mean scores revealed overall positive attitudes among respondents towards the reliability, honesty, consistency and credibility of the brands with which they engaged. With the standard deviation of 0.63, respondents had moderate variation when considering the responses, which meant that they were generally not negative but they didn't all have the same views on brand trust. The mean score of brand transparency was 3.94 (SD = 0.67). The overall perceptions of the clarity, openness and accessibility of brand information were generally positive as mean scores remained above the 5-point scale mid-point. The slightly higher standard deviation compared with consumer trust indicated consumer assessment of a higher level of variation in transparency. Long-term brand relationship was the brand with the highest mean (M = 4.12, SD = 0.59). The overall findings showed that respondents had favorable attitudes regarding the use of the brands in terms of brand interaction, brand purchase, brand recommendation and brand loyalty. The relatively low standard deviation indicated that there was a fairly even response across participants.

Figure 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 300)



4.3 Item-Level Analysis of Consumer Trust

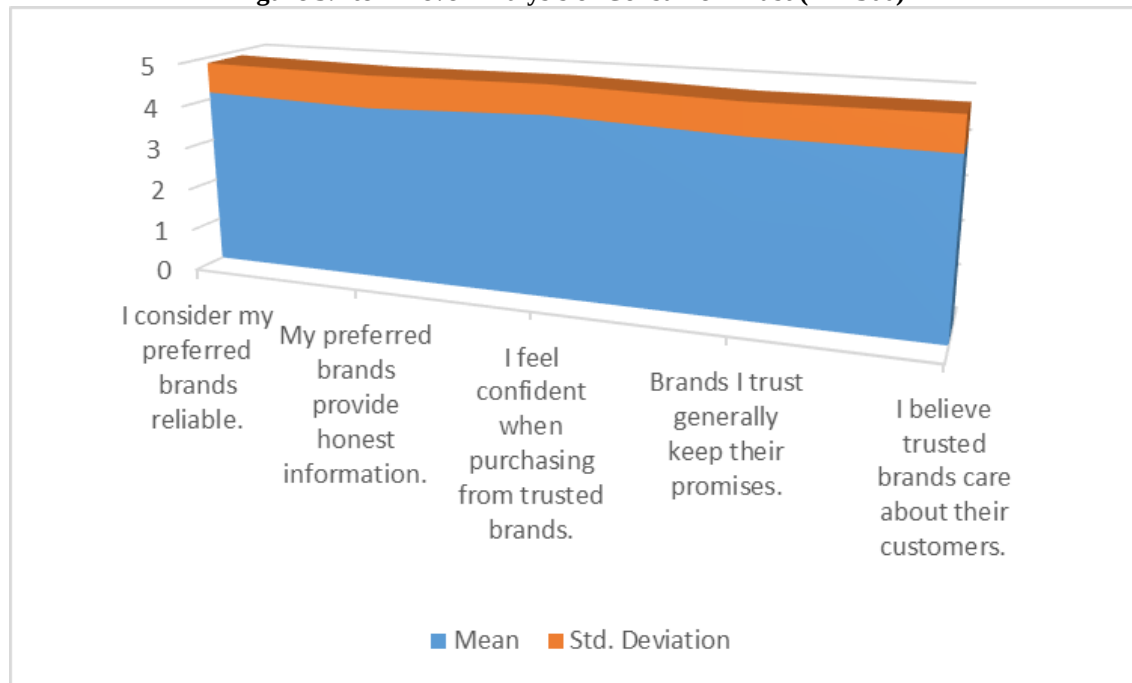
Consumer trust was assessed through statements relating to brand reliability, honesty, consistency, confidence, and fulfillment of promises.

Table 3. Item-Level Analysis of Consumer Trust (N = 300)

Consumer Trust Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
I consider my preferred brands reliable.	4.16	0.71
My preferred brands provide honest information.	4.05	0.76
I feel confident when purchasing from trusted brands.	4.18	0.68
Brands I trust generally keep their promises.	4.02	0.73
I believe trusted brands care about their customers.	3.99	0.79

The results showed that the highest mean in the consumer trust items was the confidence in buying from the trusted brands ($M = 4.18$; $SD = 0.68$). The discovery indicated that trust is one of the factors that significantly affected the confidence of customers when buying products. The mean of the value of preferred brands was also high (4.16 ; $SD = 0.71$), which meant that the majority of respondents considered trusted brands as reliable brands in terms of product and services as well as interactions. The means of these two statements were 4.05 ($SD = 0.76$) and 4.02 ($SD = 0.73$), respectively, with honest information having the higher mean. These findings suggest that the integrity and fairness were significant aspects of consumer trust. As a rule, people generally thought that when brands communicated, it was done accurately, and when they promised something, they follow up with the results. The lowest mean score was experienced with the statement 'trusted brands care about their customers' ($M = 3.99$ $SD = 0.79$), but even then this score was still reasonably high on the five-point scale. The result indicated that the general perception of the entire respondents responded positively on the customer concerns but still different perception was seen in one respondents compared to the other.

Figure 3. Item-Level Analysis of Consumer Trust (N = 300)



4.4 Item-Level Analysis of Brand Transparency

Brand transparency was assessed through items related to information clarity, openness, accessibility, disclosure, and communication.

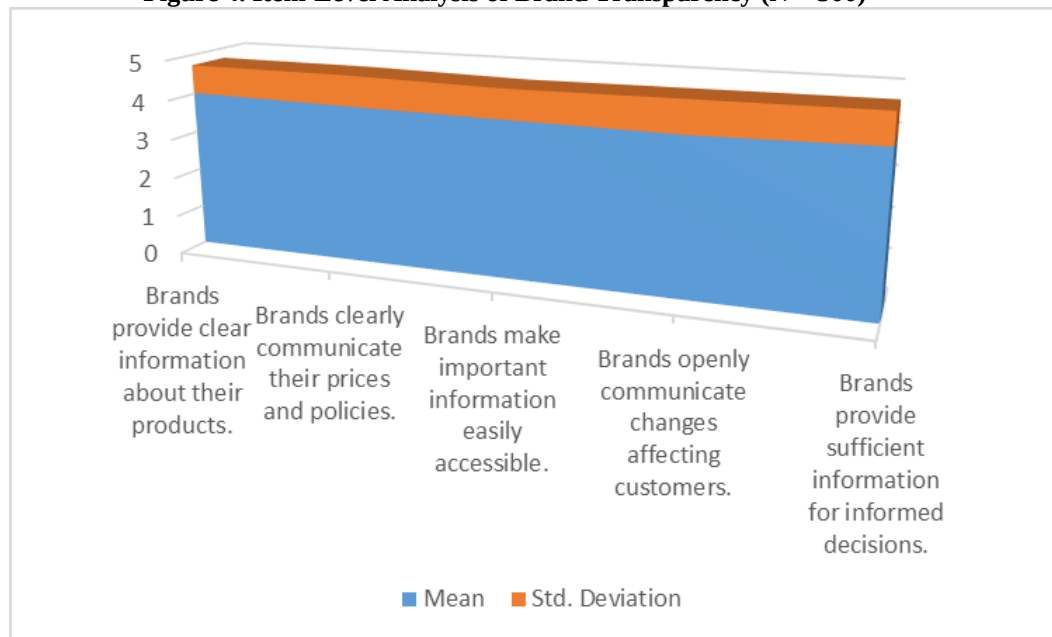
Table 4. Item-Level Analysis of Brand Transparency (N = 300)

Brand Transparency Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brands provide clear information about their products.	4.02	0.72
Brands clearly communicate their prices and policies.	3.96	0.77
Brands make important information easily accessible.	3.91	0.74
Brands openly communicate changes affecting customers.	3.87	0.81
Brands provide sufficient information for informed decisions.	3.95	0.76

The clear product information $M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.72$ had the highest mean score. This result showed that the general perception of the respondents towards the effectiveness of brands in communicating basic information about the products was at a high level. The finding further indicated that consumers emphasized the need for comprehensible communications prior to buying. There were mean scores associated with clear communication of prices and policies of 3.96 ($SD = 0.77$) and 3.95 ($SD = 0.76$) with sufficient information for informed decisions, respectively. In general, these results indicated that consumers' expectations for brands to convey practical information was understandable. The lowest mean score was for open communication about changes that have an impact on the customer ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.81$). However, the result remained positive, but the slightly larger standard deviation suggests the experiences of the respondents differ more. Consumers might have been given clearer information about the brand

during policy, price or services communications, but have also had less information communicated to them during certain communications.

Figure 4. Item-Level Analysis of Brand Transparency (N = 300)



4.5 Item-Level Analysis of Long-Term Brand Relationships

Long-term brand relationships were evaluated through consumer loyalty, continued purchasing intentions, recommendations, continued interaction, and willingness to maintain relationships with preferred brands.

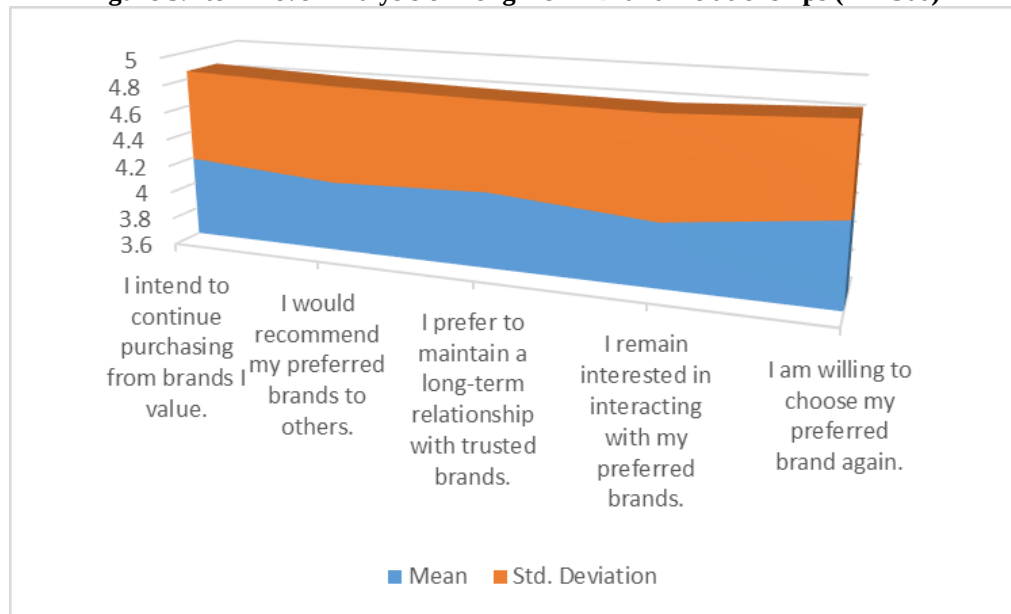
Table 5. Item-Level Analysis of Long-Term Brand Relationships (N = 300)

Long-Term Brand Relationship Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
I intend to continue purchasing from brands I value.	4.19	0.67
I would recommend my preferred brands to others.	4.11	0.71
I prefer to maintain a long-term relationship with trusted brands.	4.15	0.65
I remain interested in interacting with my preferred brands.	4.06	0.73
I am willing to choose my preferred brand again.	4.20	0.64

The results indicated that the mean value of willingness to choose the preferred brand again ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.64$) was the highest. A second key mean with a high value was the mean score of continued intention to purchase, which was 4.19 ($SD = 0.67$). These findings showed that the overall behavioural intentions towards brands with high value was strong. The results indicated that positive relationships with consumers went beyond current satisfaction, to intentions to repeat purchases. The statement on keeping the long-term relationship of the trusted brands scored: $M = 4.15$ ($SD = 0.65$) and the statement regarding willingness to recommend preferred brands got $M = 4.11$ ($SD = 0.71$). These findings signified that customers were pleased to keep their connections with brands that they judged to be valuable and trustworthy. The outcome of the recommendation

result also implied that positive brand relationships with consumers may not be limited to purchase behaviour but may also ground on the likelihood for happy consumers to share positive reviews with other consumers. The answer for continued interaction with preferred brands showed the lowest mean ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.73$), but still meant a positive response. The relatively greater standard deviation indicated that there was some difference in consumers' readiness to continuously interact with brands.

Figure 5. Item-Level Analysis of Long-Term Brand Relationships (N = 300)



5. Discussion

Consumer trust is back at the top of brand relationship scales, as people are growing more attuned than ever to an organization's reliability, honesty, consistency and delivery of promises. Online marketplaces are especially focused on the factor of confidence, in that consumers in many cases depend on information supplied on the web, which is not supplied as a result of face-to-face connection. Recent research reinforces Buyer Development stronger evaluations through the following brand information elements: observable, understandable, credible (Montecchi et al., 2024). Trust contributes to consumers' perception of a brand's credibility and willingness to continue to interact with an organization. Based on the new consumer contract, brands must thus act with trustworthy behaviour on a regular basis rather than letting trust be a result of the competition and sale campaigns.

Transparency is indeed another aspect of modern-day consumer-brand relations. Anyone who interacts with an organization is increasingly expected to have clear communication and to receive explanations of products, prices, policies, business activities and organizational decisions about sustainability. Research recently published indicates that transparency does not only require more information to be made available to consumers, it also requires information to be: comprehensible, meaning that consumers understand it and capable of being absorbed; relevant – consumers find it applicable in relation to their decision situation. Recent research suggests that transparency is not just about making more information available to consumers, it also involves making information relevant – that consumers find it applicable in relation to a decision situation – and comprehensible – that consumers understand it and it can be absorbed (Sansome et al., 2025). Perceived brand

transparency was also conceptualized by Montecchi et al., (2024) as observable, comprehensible, and intentional brand transparency. The views highlight the importance of communicating openly and transparently to build consumer trust when brands present information in a way the consumer can understand and assess. Building long-term customer affinity and relationship is no longer a matter of business transactions, but involves going the extra mile trying to engage customers and reach them personally and emotionally as well. Today's customers can interact with brands, join social communities, post their opinions and experiences and help shape the opinions of others via digital channels. According to Ahmed et al (2024), customer brand engagement is significant as one of the factors that contribute to brand loyalty, especially in the sense of emotional attachment to brands. Nurfarida et al (2024) found that social media marketing can improve brand loyalty by engaging customers with the brand. These studies indicate that companies want lasting bonds with consumers and this requires them to provide value-added opportunities for consumers to engage and interact with the company. This new consumer contract also means a “relational process,” whereby consumers demand that brands stay responsive and relevant in a continuous way after the initial sale.

Transparency and trust take place in a larger context of corporate accountability and responsible communication. Consumers are growing more aware of actual practices and questioning whether the claims for environmental sustainability, business ethics and social responsibility are backed by the actions of the organization. On the other hand, consumer perceived transparency and information quality are capable of reinforcing the brand credibility and impacting the consumer behavioral intentions (Cheng & Huang, 2025). Recent studies into traceable product information also stress information's quality and believability as influential factors to consumers' perceptions and reactions to the product. This result indicates that transparency has meaning when it is reinforced by “tacit” and “consistent” communication practices that can be substantiated. Brands have to match what they tell the public with what they do to be considered credible and maintain consumer confidence.

The new consumer contract, therefore, shows a move towards ‘engaged’, ‘accountable’ and ‘relationship-based’ relationships with the brand. Consumers are better informed about the need for brands to add value and to be authentic, open, responsive and responsible. Changan & Kumar (2024) highlighted that engagement with the brand community, self-brand congruency, and social media marketing, play roles to increase brand loyalty. More current studies also point to the role of useful and significant brand communication to induce consumer engagement within the digital environment. These viewpoints suggest that brand relationships must be constantly nurtured and adapted to align with evolving consumer expectations and needs, not just through individual marketing initiatives. Brands which incorporate dependent behavior, clearness in communication, significance in engagement and duty can build more powerful bases for lasting customer relations.

6. Conclusion

The researchers found that this consumer contract needs more trust, transparency and ongoing relationship-building between consumers and brands. The brands need to offer reliable products and services accompanied by the proper communication, being responsible and meeting the consumer expectations. But trust adds consumers' confidence in brands, while transparency adds to informed decisions and less uncertainty. Long-term brand relationships therefore need to go beyond mere exchanges: new consumers believe in the credibility, openness, engagement and consistency of brands, in addition to various services. As a key finding, the study pointed to the need for trust and transparency to be not just a marketing tool but an integral component of the organisation's strategy in managing consumer relationships for sustainability.

6.1 Recommendations

Communication is important and needs to be consumer-focused and transparent between groups on websites, social media, ads and customer service. Brands need to communicate all the relevant prices, the features of their products, policies, how they use data, and what they do in their organization in a way that is clear without embellishment or exaggeration. Businesses must also have common methods for handling queries from consumers, consumer complaints and consumer feedback. Communicating regularly regarding price, policy, service and/or product conditions/change may build a sense of openness and accountability. Additionally, brands should continue to focus on customer engagement by leveraging personalised communication, online communities, loyalty schemes and meaningful digital interactions. The main factor of organizational behavior will be having uniformity with public commitment, as trust can be built on the consumers thought of credibility and reliability.

6.2 Future Directions

By analysing various factors that can affect long-term customer-brand relationships, such as (for example) brand authenticity, customer experience, perceived value, privacy concerns, artificial intelligence, personalisation, and corporate social responsibility, future research on this study can build upon it. One aspect that can also be explored by researchers is whether there are distinctions between the expectations held by the different industries (e.g., retail, banking, hospitality, telecommunication, e-commerce). The study could be carried out longitudinally to gain insights into the development and change of trust and transparency over time. Larger samples and probability sampling methods may be used in future to enhance generalizability. Comparing studies in countries and various cultures can also offer further insights into how these various differences are affecting the new consumer contract.

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