

Unpacking the Roles of Trust and Emotional Attachment in The Relationship Between Brand Authenticity and Customer Loyalty

Yaw Brew, Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, School of Business,
University of Education, Winneba

Abstract:

This study draws on the cognitive-affective-behavioural theory to examine the direct effects of brand authenticity on customer trust and emotional attachment and its indirect impact on customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage products. A survey was conducted among 417 consumers of local and foreign beer, wine and spirits in Ghana. Partial least squares structural equation modelling was utilised to analyse data and test the proposed hypotheses. The findings show that brand authenticity directly affects customer loyalty of alcoholic beverage consumers. In addition, customer trust and emotional attachment mediate the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty. Further, customer trust moderates the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty. This study's findings have direct implications for alcoholic beverage brand marketers and managers. The study extends the cognitive-affective-behavioural theory to branding and consumer behaviour research by demonstrating the significance of building customer trust and emotional connection with authentic brands to enhance customer loyalty. These findings have implications for stakeholder efforts toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 12, specifically good health and well-being, as well as responsible consumption and sustainable production. This study makes unique theoretical contributions to the literature on brand authenticity's influence on customer loyalty by providing more holistic insights into the intervening roles of customer trust and customer emotional attachment. This novel contribution enriches the branding and consumer behaviour literature, particularly in the context of alcoholic beverage brands in an emerging country.

Keywords: Brand authenticity, customer loyalty, emotional attachment, consumer trust

Introduction

In highly homogeneous modern markets, consumers face overwhelming exposure to numerous commercial brands from firms (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006). Increasing exposure to product imitations and similar brands causes consumers to feel an intense loss of meaning and to be sceptical about the originality and genuineness of competing products on the market, and this steers them to look out for authentic brands (Mensah and Brew, 2024). Authentic brands serve as symbolic resources that reflect a consumer's perception of product quality, credibility, integrity, commitment, and benevolence (Napoli et al., 2014; Yousaf et al., 2018). Deng et al. (2024) posit that authentic brands convey strong brand ideals, evoke genuine passion, attract customers, and build strong customer-brand bonds. Brand authenticity has become a major concern for contemporary branding and consumer behaviour strategies (Brown et al., 2003).

Brand managers pursue brand authenticity to address market uncertainties, influence consumer purchase behaviour and repeat purchase decisions (Kumar and Kaushik, 2022). Brand authenticity, as a crucial criterion in consumer purchase decisions, drives positive word of mouth and customer trust — a positive evaluation of brand dependability, innovation, and performance, which are critical in building sustainable customer loyalty (Kosiba et al., 2018). Emotional attachment is a psychological identification and bond between a brand and its consumers, reflecting a profound emotional connection to the brand beyond mere satisfaction with its functionality (Mensah and Brew, 2023). Scholars suggest that brand authenticity provides the foundation for establishing brand quality and credibility, while consumer trust and emotional attachment amplify its impact by fostering profound emotional connections and reliance (Portal et al., 2019). Other studies suggest that

customer trust and emotional attachment foster sustainable customer loyalty (Kumar and Kaushik, 2022; Arthur et al., 2024).

A scrutiny of the brand marketing literature shows that considerable attention has been given to studying the crucial role of brand authenticity in branding and consumer behaviour (Arya et al., 2019; Campagna et al., 2022). Unfortunately, there is scant empirical literature on the direct effect of brand authenticity on customer trust and emotional attachment and its indirect impact on customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage brands. This view is corroborated by Deng et al. (2024) that the potential impact of different cultural backgrounds market environment is often neglected.

Other studies (Adam et al., 2018; Boateng et al., 2020) have examined the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty in the telecommunications industry. Nyamekye et al. (2023) focused on place attachment and brand loyalty of customers of restaurants, while Arya et al. (2019) focused on brand authenticity and brand attachment in online communities. Yousaf et al. (2018) examined the indirect roles of institutional commitment in building students' trust. Unfortunately, there is limited research on the indirect effects of customer trust and emotional attachment to brand authenticity and customer loyalty towards alcoholic brands.

For millennia, alcohol consumption has been an integral part of human cultural, religious, and routine social life in many countries (Kyei-Arthur and Kyei-Gyamfi, 2023). Intense competition, regulatory restrictions, and shifting consumer preferences are the characteristics of the alcoholic beverage industry (Euromonitor International, 2024), and Ghana's alcoholic beverage industry is not an exception (Mensah and Brew, 2024). The Ghanaian market is characterised by the coexistence of emerging local distilleries, well established international brands, and the proliferation of counterfeit products, which poses unique challenges for both brand trust and consumer loyalty (Nyarko et al, 2023; Mensah & Brew, 2024). In Ghana, for instance, the proliferation of pubs, nightclubs, drinking spots, and alcohol vending sites popularly called "blue kiosks" has made it easy to access local and foreign alcohol brands like Kasapreko, Club Beer, Guinness, Condor Peak, Carnival, and Smirnoff. Estimates indicate that alcohol consumption increased from 1.46 L per person in 1960 to 2.7 L per person in 2016, and as of 2022, the prevalence rate reached 47.4% among the general population of Ghana (Ghana NCD Alliance, 2022). The industry enjoys steady growth propelled by a youthful demographic and urbanisation (Euromonitor International, 2024), which makes the market very competitive. In such a competitive market, building lasting customer loyalty through brand authenticity becomes a key differentiator as consumers gravitate towards trustworthy, locally relevant, and emotionally vibrant brands (Amankwah-Sarfo & Baah, 2022).

Despite government interventions in the alcohol industry, weak enforcement of food and beverage regulations in Ghana has led to the proliferation of counterfeit alcoholic brands and inconsistent quality, diminishing consumers' trust and weakening their emotional connections with brands (Arthur et al., 2024). Customer dissatisfaction and switching remain persistent challenges for brewery managers and marketers aiming to retain competitiveness as consumers increasingly prioritise authentic brand experiences over transactional relationships (Napoli et al., 2014). Napoli et al. posit that brewery managers have little empirical knowledge about the factors that drive how brand authenticity affects their consumers' behaviour. These challenges highlight the importance of authentic brands and positive consumer-brand relationships, cultivating deep-seated trust and emotional attachment beyond superficial branding strategies to drive loyalty. Unfortunately, this association is yet to be substantiated by empirical evidence from alcoholic beverage consumers in the emerging country context, including Ghana. Consequently, by testing the proposed study model, the empirical findings contribute unique insights to branding and consumer behaviour theory and practice by demonstrating how brand authenticity interacts with customer trust and emotional attachment to drive customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage brands. The study further contributes to global, national, and firm-level policy and actions toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 3 and 12 on good health and well-being, responsible consumption, and sustainable production (United Nations, 2015). Authentic alcohol brands that promote responsible marketing and genuine quality can promote trust and emotional attachment, and at the same time discourage the consumption of counterfeit and unsafe alcohol products in Ghana. By encouraging customer loyalty to authentic, regulated brands, consumers may shift consumption behaviour from harmful and unsafe alternatives, which indirectly contributes to harm reduction efforts and health promotion in line with SDG 3. In Ghana, authentic alcoholic brands, especially those that stress on

local heritage and ethical production, identify with responsible production practices. Building consumer trust, emotional attachment, and loyalty around such values supports more sustainable consumption patterns in line with SDG 12. The study provides useful management directions for alcoholic beverage manufacturing and marketing companies on how to develop cognitive and affective brand elements that could positively shape the behaviours towards responsible consumption. The structure of this paper includes the introduction, theoretical background and hypotheses, method, results, discussion and research implications, limitations and future research directions.

Literature Review

Brand Authenticity

Branding has become a powerful means for companies to engage in effective competition at the product augmentation level, as it helps set apart one product from another. Brands consistently work to attract attention and build customer loyalty (Chang, 2025). According to Keller and Swaminathan (2020), a brand is more than a product as it possesses attributes that differentiate it from other products intended to satisfy the same need. These attributes may be rational and tangible (the product's performance of the brand) or symbolic, emotional and intangible (related to what the brand represents). A brand is, therefore, expected to be authentic as it represents the tangible and intangible expectations of the customers from their purchase. Brand authenticity is considered to be a brand's genuineness, transparency, consistency, and truthfulness to what it claims to be (Al-Abdallah and Ababakr, 2023) while aligning with customer expectations in culturally relevant ways (Suo and Huang, 2023). In the view of Deng et al. (2025), the potential impact of different cultural backgrounds in different market environments is often neglected by existing studies. In contemporary brand management and marketing, a crucial criterion in consumer shopping choices is authenticity (Deng et al, 2025).

Trust

Customer trust plays a significant role in shaping behaviour, as it impacts purchase decisions and nurtures long-term brand loyalty (Ramadhan and Rusmaningsih, 2023). It refers to the assurance consumers have in a brand, reflecting their belief that the brand is dependable, keeps to its commitments, and operates with integrity (Yunanto et al, 2025). Brand trust plays a crucial role in reducing consumer perceived risk and uncertainty, especially in markets with weak enforcement of regulations, which has led to the proliferation of counterfeit and inconsistent quality, such as the Ghanaian alcohol market (Arthur et al, 2024). Consequently, establishing and maintaining brand trust is crucial for businesses seeking to maintain a competitive edge and retain customers in a dynamic environment.

Emotional Attachment

Consumer emotional attachment to a brand indicates the emotional bond between consumers and brands, involving strong emotional ties, reflections of self-identity, and a sense of dependence on and trust in the brand (Fournier, 1998 as cited in Deng et al., 2025). Customers' strong emotional connections with a brand increase both engagement and loyalty (Theocharis and Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Chang, 2025). Firms need to understand the factors that positively influence or cause consumers to develop high emotional attachments with their brands to engage in meaningful competition in the market.

Customer Loyalty

The attention from marketing practitioners and scholars on customer loyalty has been significant (Gli et al., 2024). Customer loyalty is an important outcome of brand equity (Keller and Swaminathan, 2020). Customer loyalty is a behavioural and attitudinal intention of customers to rebuy/reuse a particular brand over time in spite of the existence of marketing efforts and situations influencing customers to switch to alternative offers (Al-Abdallah and Abakakr, 2023; Mukhtar et al, 2024). Several factors influence customer loyalty, including service quality, corporate social responsibility, product quality, customer satisfaction, trust, and sustainability (Gli et al., 2024). The success of a firm can be greatly impacted by understanding and nurturing these factors (Gli et al., 2024). Mukhtar et al (2024) opine that it is necessary to examine the factors that influence customer loyalty at different levels

Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical approaches, such as social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour (TPB), and cognitive-affective-behavioural (CAB) theory, have been employed to explore the interplay between cognitive, affect and behaviour. The theoretical framework that guided this study was the cognitive-affective-behavioural (CAB) theory. The CAB theoretical orientation explains how cognitive (C), affective (A), and behavioural intentions (B), which are mutually dependent and interpenetrating, affect human social interactions (Qiu, 2021). The theory underscores the notion that cognition (personal beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes) about an object drives the affective (feelings or emotions) towards that object, which ultimately influences behaviour (intentions to act or actual actions). The CAB theoretical orientation suggests that brand authenticity acts as a stimulus that elicits emotional reactions, i.e. customer trust and emotional attachment, which ultimately influence customer loyalty as a behavioural response (Napoli et al. 2014). In branding literature, Suo and Huang (2023) suggest that cognitive processing of brand-related information could activate consumers' emotional responses and form an emotional connection with the brand, stimulating behavioural intentions.

This current study developed a conceptual model (Figure 1) to test the direct effect of brand authenticity on customer trust and emotional attachment and its indirect impact on customer loyalty. This study adopts the CAB framework's cognition and behavioural intention dimensions to underpin how a consumer's personal beliefs about a brand's authenticity can influence behavioural intentions or responses, specifically loyalty to the brand. The study adopts the cognitive and affective dimensions of the CAB framework to explain how customer trust and emotional connection arising from brand authenticity drive loyalty towards alcoholic brands. Drawing from the CAB, the study hypotheses in Figure 1 suggest that brand authenticity acts as a stimulus that elicits emotional reactions, i.e. customer trust and emotional attachment, ultimately influencing customer loyalty as a behavioural response.

Hypotheses Development

Brand Authenticity and Customer Loyalty

A brand is an intangible asset for firms, offering a sustainable competitive advantage (Mensah and Brew, 2023). According to Jian et al. (2019), authenticity provides consumers with evidence of product quality and innovative differentiation, making it vital for brand success. Thus, brand authenticity has become a cornerstone of a firm's branding strategy (Campagna et al., 2023; Arya et al., 2019). Studies have shown that brand authenticity is crucial in building customer loyalty (Deng et al., 2025). Customer loyalty is a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronise a preferred product consistently in the future. In their study, Busser and Shulga (2019) found a positive effect of brand authenticity on brand loyalty and trust. Similarly, Shahzad, Li and Sarwar (2025) examined how brand authenticity affects brand loyalty in the frozen fish industry in Pakistan. According to Deng et al. (2024), true-to-ideal, true-to-fact, and true-to-self authenticities significantly influence customer loyalty in the international sports brands industry in China. Given the literature, it is hypothesised that:

H₁: Brand authenticity has a significant effect on customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage brands

Brand Authenticity and Customer Trust

Cognitively, trust derives from the customer's rational appraisal of the brand's competency, credibility, and consistency (Huang et al., 2020). Affectively, trust involves emotional confidence and good feelings toward the brand based on past interactions and perceived genuineness (Huang et al., 2020). Behaviorally, it manifests in a customer's readiness to depend on the brand, engage in repeat purchases, and recommend it to others, demonstrating an alignment of cognition, affective, and behaviour (Jiang et al., 2023). According to Portal et al. (2019), brand authenticity affects customer trust in South Africa's airline industry. Similarly, Eggers et al. (2013) found a positive influence of brand authenticity on brand trust through brand experiences, familiarity, and customer satisfaction. Other empirical studies. Busser and Shulga (2019) found a significant influence of involvement in consumer-generated advertising (CGA) on brand trust and loyalty, with brand

authenticity playing a substantial role in influencing CGA involvement. This study proposes the second hypothesis (H2) that;

H₂: Brand authenticity has a significant effect on customer trust in alcoholic beverage brands

Brand Authenticity and Customer Emotional Attachment

Emotional attachment to a brand measures consumers' psychological response that reflects the unique strength of the relationship between the consumer and the brand (Shimul, 2022). Rodrigues et al. (2022) found that brand authenticity positively affects brand image, which enhances brand satisfaction and love. Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) revealed that authentic brands evoke stronger emotional attachment. Similarly, Arya et al. (2019) indicated that consumers' brand emotional attachment becomes very high when the brand is perceived as authentic and genuine. Deng et al. (2024) further found that brand authenticity significantly influences customer attachment to sports brands. Therefore, based on the literature, hypothesised that;

H₃: Brand authenticity significantly affects customer emotional attachment to alcoholic beverage brands

Customer Trust and Customer Loyalty

Customer trust refers to the assurance consumers have in a brand, reflecting their belief that the brand is dependable, keeps to its commitments, and operates with integrity (Yunanto et al, 2025). Previous studies have found that brand trust has a direct effect on brand loyalty (Akoglu and Ozbek, 2022; Islam et al., 2021). Customer trust plays a critical role in creating repurchase behaviour in customers. Customers who exhibit positive and confident emotions about a brand are those who feel comfortable identifying with the brand (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Therefore, based on the literature, it is hypothesised that:

H₄: Customer trust has a significant effect on customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage brands

Emotional Attachment and Customer Loyalty

Previous studies have investigated the association between emotional attachment and loyalty in different industries. Boateng et al. (2020) suggest that a relationship exists between brand attachment and brand loyalty. Nyamekye et al. (2021) found that identity-based and emotion-based attachment enhances brand loyalty within a restaurant setting. Deng et al. (2025) found a significant positive impact of brand attachment on brand loyalty. When customers have strong emotional connections with a brand, it increases both engagement and loyalty (Theocharis and Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Chang, 2025). Thus, based on the literature, it is hypothesised that:

H₅: Customer emotional attachment has significant effects on customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage brands

Mediating and Moderating Role of Trust

The alcoholic beverage industry deploys various kinds of enticing marketing promotions to attract consumers to patronise their products. In so doing, firms make known their value propositions of which customers expect them to be authentic. But firms need to do more in the face of stiff competition to ensure the full impact of their authentic brands results in positive behaviours such as repeat purchases. It is therefore necessary for marketers and managers to understand the factors that influence the relationship between authentic brands and customer loyalty. From the literature, trust has been suggested to mediate the relationship between two or more variables (Azhar et al, 2023). In the relationship between authenticity and e-loyalty (Aslam et al. 2020). Between social media marketing (SMMA) and brand loyalty (Yunanto, 2025), between SMMA and purchase intention (Azhar et al., 2023). In the relationship between CRM and customer loyalty (Alam et al. 2021). Therefore, based on the literature, it is hypothesised that:

H₆: Customer trust mediates the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty

Although many current studies explore trust as a mediator, others explore its moderating potential (Deng et al., 2024). In their study of brand experience, trust, love, and loyalty in Korea, Zhao et al. (2022) found that the relationship between brand experience and brand love is moderated by trust, which indirectly influences loyalty. In another study by Cop and Astekin (2022), it was found that

the relationship between brand authenticity and brand preference is moderated by brand trust. Evidence from literature suggests that brand trust does more than mediate; it can amplify the effects of authenticity on loyalty. Therefore, based on the literature, it is hypothesised that:

H₇: Customer trust moderates the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty

Mediating Role of Emotional Attachment

Consumer emotional attachment to a brand indicates the emotional bond between consumers and brands, involving strong emotional ties, reflections of self-identity, and a sense of dependence on and trust in the brand (Fournier, 1998, as cited in Deng et al., 2025). Previous studies have shown the mediating role of emotional attachment between variables. Suo and Huang (2024) show that authenticity dimensions positively influence word-of-mouth recommendation indirectly through emotional attachment. Lin and Ku (2023) found that digital brand experiences improve brand authenticity and attachment, which further drives loyalty. Sun et al. (2024) found that emotional attachment mediates the relationship between brand authenticity and loyalty. When customers have a strong emotional attachment to a particular alcoholic brand, they are more likely to see the brand as authentic and are loyal to that brand. Therefore, based on the literature, it is hypothesised that:

H₈: Customer emotional attachment mediates the effect of brand authenticity on customer loyalty

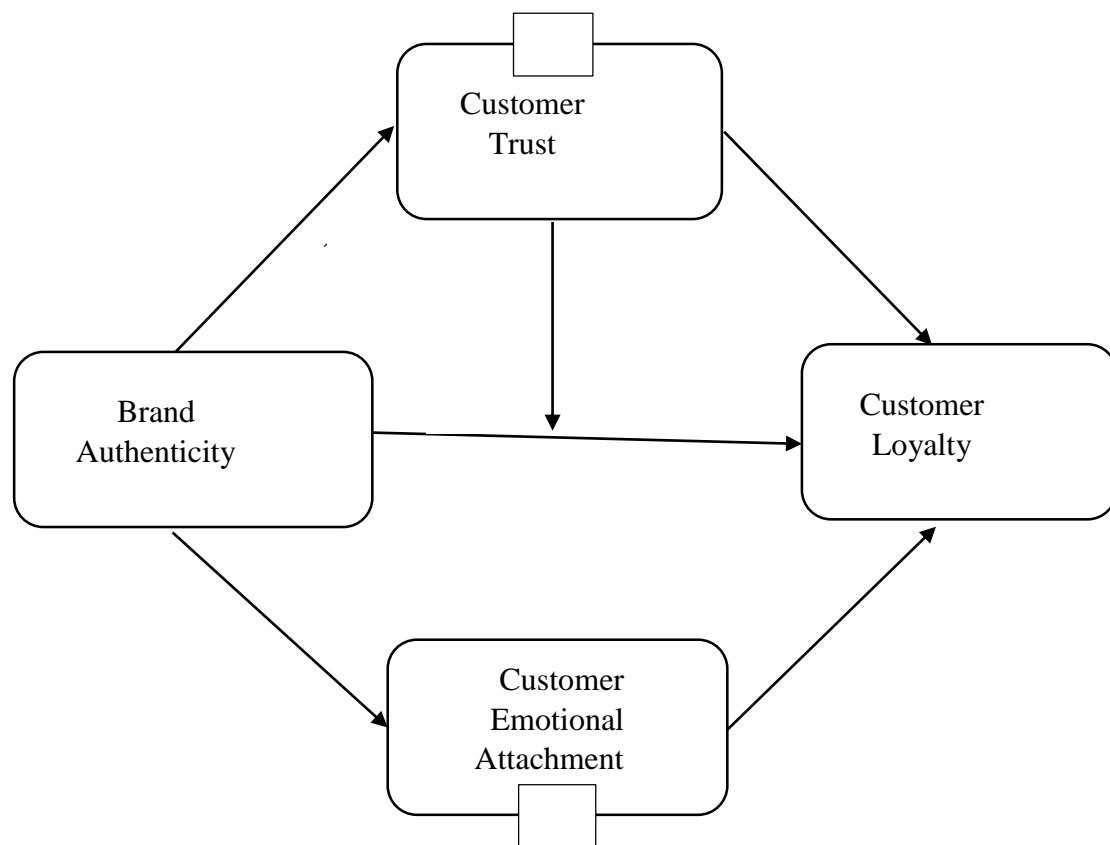


Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Author's construct (2025)

Research Methodology

Data Collection and Sample

The study employed the quantitative survey design. Through the convenience sampling technique, a total of 700 tertiary students in Ghana were targeted based on their participation in previous research by the author. 417 valid responses were obtained from respondents who confirmed they consume alcohol (local and foreign beer, wine, and spirits). The sample size is consistent with Bagozzi and Yi (2011), who suggest that in factor analysis, a sample size of 200 is adequate for studies which make use of structural equation modelling. The data were collected through an online survey, which was sent via WhatsApp. Closed-ended type instrument was used to collect the survey data. The respondents were informed of the aim of the study and their rights as participants before the data collection. Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Review Board, University of Education, Winneba (Approval no: SGS-EC-Z9-25). The first section of the instrument asked respondents to provide demographic information: sex, age, consumption lifestyle, and income level. Second, the instrument followed the order of the variables tested in the conceptual framework (Figure 1). The respondents assessed brand authenticity (independent variable), customer trust (mediator/moderator), customer emotional attachment (mediator), and customer loyalty as a dependent variable.

Measures and Data Analyses

The instrument comprised four key variables and 21 measurement items. The items used to measure the study variable were adapted from the validated and reliable (α) relevant literature and adjusted to the current research context. Brand authenticity ($\alpha = 0.80$) was measured using five items (Campagna et al., 2023; Deng et al., 2024), customer trust ($\alpha = 0.86$) had five items (Eggers et al., 2013; Levy and Hino, 2016), customer emotional attachment ($\alpha = 0.91$) had six items (Levy and Hino, 2016; Shimul, 2022), and customer loyalty ($\alpha = 0.77$) had five items (Aryal et al., 2019; Levy and Hino, 2016). The items were measured on two bipolar 7-point Likert-type scales, where 1 means the very least agreement, to 7 means very strong agreement.

Two marketing professors, an MPhil candidate and an industry professional conducted a face validity of the instrument. Pretesting was done with 16 respondents from the accessible population, and the feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the final instrument. This is in line with the recommendation of 15 – 30 respondents for pretesting instrument (Bujang et al., 2024). After the data collection period, the responses were screened to arrive at a response rate of 59.57%, representing 417 valid outputs that were entered into IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25 for further screening to address missing data concerns. Descriptive statistics, specifically percentages and frequencies, were utilised to analyse respondents' demographic data.

The respondents are predominantly males (62.8%), and the females (37.2%) also indicate that they play a vital role, as they are more inclined to value emotional ties and trust in their brand choices. The predominant age group resides in the 18–25 years (51.1%) and 25–40 years (36.0%). These age groups are still in the exploring phase of their alcohol brand preferences. They are responsive to trends and brand narratives, authenticity and emotional attachment, which are major drivers of loyalty. Consumers above 40 years (12.9%) are more likely to appreciate history and established trust, making authenticity crucial to keeping their allegiance.

The respondents are mostly regular alcohol drinkers (41.2%), followed by casual drinkers (29.9%) and social drinkers (28.9%). For regular drinkers, constant engagement with their preferred brands presents substantial potential to strengthen perceptions of authenticity and enhance emotional connection. Brand authenticity and accessible storylines by peers are crucial for trust-building among social drinkers. Lastly, middle-income earners (46.1%), compared with low-income earners (36.0%), are the largest group, likely preferring value for money, authenticity and emotional resonance in their purchase decisions while enjoying luxury attributes. High-income earners (18.0%) are more attracted to premium brands, with loyalty impacted by brand quality, exclusivity, and intriguing brand stories. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the survey respondents.

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Std. Dev
Sex	Male	262	62.8	0.234
	Female	155	37.2	
Age	18 - 25	213	51.1	0.661
	25- 40	150	36.0	
	Above 40	54	12.9	
Consumer Lifestyle	Social drinker (drinks mainly in social settings)	121	29.0	1.111
	Casual drinker (occasional consumption)	124	29.7	
	Regular drinker (frequent consumption)	172	41.3	
Income level	Low-income (below Ghc 1,000/month)	150	36.0	0.563
	Middle-income (Ghc 1,000 – Ghc 5,000/month)	192	46.0	
	High-income (above Ghc 5,000/month)	75	18.0	

Source: Author's construction (2025)

The final data set was analysed using partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM 4.0) statistical tools. PLS-SEM statistical technique examines the relationships between latent (unobserved) and observed variables. It helps understand the complex relationships and dependencies among variables (Legate et al., 2023).

Results

Measurement Model

The measurement model assessment used the study construct's outer loadings, dependability, and validity (Hair et al., 2020). First, outer loading scores greater than 0.7 demonstrate how healthy the measurement items reflect their respective constructs (Purwanto, 2021). For this study, the outer loadings ranged from 0.72 to 0.89; thus, the items are suitable and substantially represent their respective constructs. The model assessment results are in Table 2.

Table 2: Indicator reliability and validity results

Instrument measurement items	Outer loading value	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (rho_a) (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Authenticity:		0.832	0.833	0.598
BA1: My brand clearly distinguishes itself from other alcoholic beverage brands on the market	0.760			
BA2: I think that my brand is unique and stands out from other alcoholic beverage brands	0.766			
BA3: I think that the quality of my alcoholic beverage product is consistent over time	0.819			

BA4: My experience of my brand has shown me that it keeps its promises	0.757			
BA5: I think that the brand stays true to itself	0.763			
Customer Loyalty:		0.843	0.874	0.615
CL1: I give prior consideration to my brand when I have a need for an alcoholic beverage product	0.808			
CL2: I am unlikely to make negative comments about my brand to my family and friends	0.818			
CL3: I have a strong preference for my brand	0.824			
CL4: In the near future, I intend to use more of alcoholic beverage provided by my brand	0.739			
CL5: Generally, I would recommend my brand to my co-workers, friends and family	0.734			
Customer Trust:		0.800	0.815	0.563
CT1: My brand is trustworthy	0.792			
CT2: My brand fulfils its obligations to consumers	0.853			
	0.824			
CT3: My brand is concerned with its consumers' best interests	0.631			
CT4: I have confidence in my brand	0.620			
CT5: I have faith in my brand				
Customer Emotional Attachment:		0.902	0.902	0.671
CEA1: I have a unique relationship with my brand	0.836			
CEA2: I am proud to be a consumer of my brand	0.847			
CEA3: I feel a sense of belonging to my brand	0.789			
CEA4: I identify with what my brand stands for	0.778			
CEA5: I care deeply about what happens to my brand	0.852			
CEA6: My brand fits my personality	0.839			

Heterotrait –monotrait ratio

	CT	CL	CEA	BA	CT x BA
Customer trust (CT)					
Customer loyalty (CL)	0.811				
Customer Emotional Attachment (CEA)	0.660	0.544			
Brand Authenticity (BA)	0.757	0.716	0.545		
Customer trust x BA	0.126	0.020	0.171	0.042	

Source: Smart PLS 4 Output (2025)

Second, construct dependability assesses the degree to which items yield reliable and foreseeable results (Hajjar, 2018). Construct dependability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α) and a composite reliability (CR) threshold of 0.7 (Yusoff et al., 2020; Cronbach, 1951). In this study (Table 2), the Cronbach's alpha scores for brand authenticity ($\alpha = 0.832$), customer trust ($\alpha = 0.800$), customer emotional attachment ($\alpha = 0.902$), and customer loyalty ($\alpha = 0.843$) are all above the 0.70, suggesting good internal consistency. Similarly, the CR scores for brand authenticity (0.833), customer trust (0.815), customer emotional attachment (0.902), and customer loyalty (0.874) confirm the excellent reliability of the study constructs.

Third, construct validity evaluates how much a research instrument accurately assesses the study concepts it is intended to measure (Clark and Watson, 2019). Convergent validity and discriminant validity were employed to determine construct validity. Convergent validity uses an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) threshold of 0.5 (Cheung et al., 2023). The AVE scores (Table 2) for brand authenticity (0.598), customer trust (0.563), customer emotional attachment (0.671), and customer loyalty (0.615) indicate that each study's construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators, hence establishing convergent validity.

To attain discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations was used. The HTMT specifies that the degree of association across study variables ought to be less than or equal to 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). The HTMT scores (diagonal values in Table 2) were below the threshold of 0.85, confirming a good discriminant validity (Yusoff et al., 2020). Good discriminant validity means that the study model is free from multi-collinearity threats. Thus, the constructs measure what they intended to measure. This validation provides robustness and credibility of the constructs' path coefficients. The overall fitness statistics show an excellent level of fit ($d_ULS=0.078 < 0.08$ and $d_G = 0.093 < 0.10$, $SRMR=0.067<0.08$, $NFI = 0.81>0.90$, $Chi-square=2599.87$), indicating validity of path model (Girish et al., 2023). Figure 2 shows the output of the measurement model assessment.

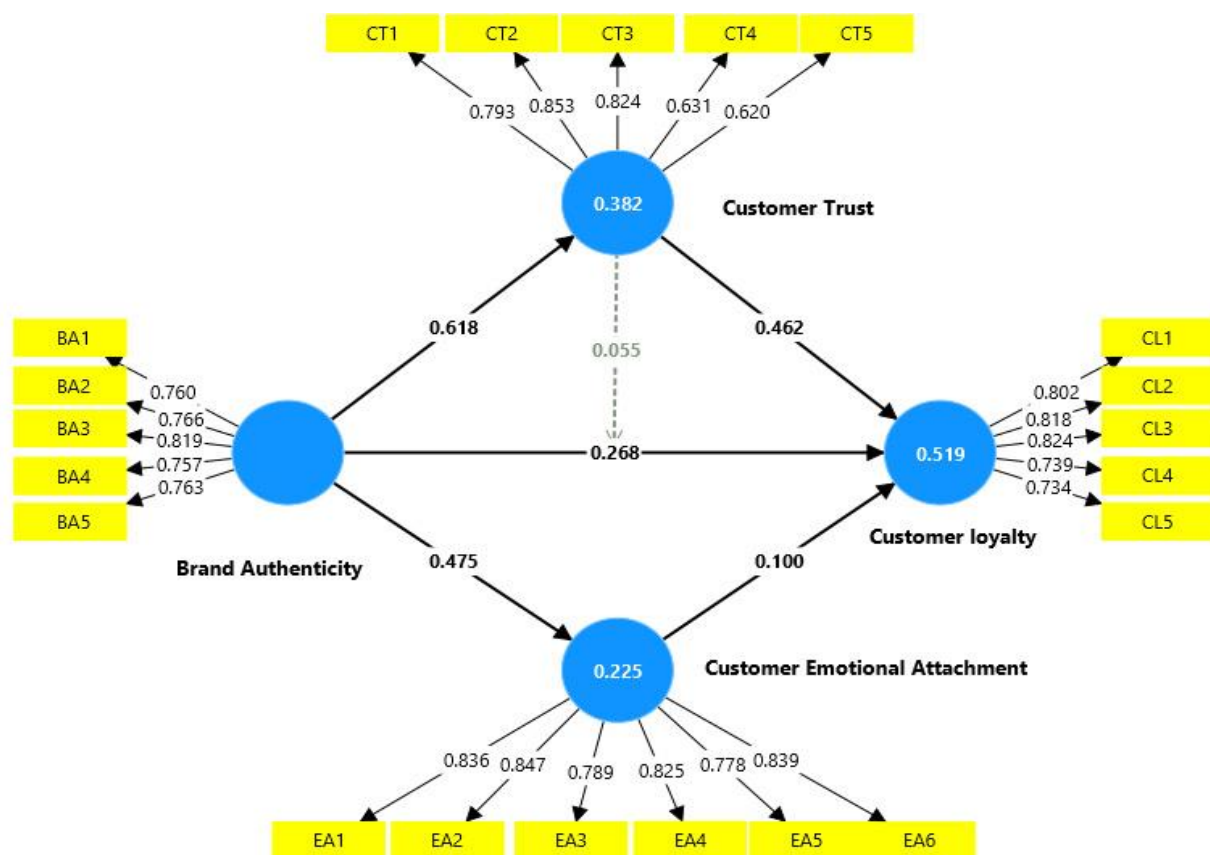


Figure 2: Measurement model

Source: Smart PLS 4 Output (2025)

The Structural Model

The structural model evaluation focuses on the predictive power, relevance and significance of path relationships and explanatory power (Hair et al., 2022). In this current study, structural model evaluation results (Table 3) show adequate explanatory power, predictive power, and predictive significance and relevance of path relationships. First, the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) was used to measure the structural model's predictive ability and explain how the independent variables predicted the variance in the dependent variable. The Adjusted R^2 scores of 0.225, 0.382,

and 0.519 indicate significant explaining power in customer emotional attachment, customer trust, and customer loyalty, respectively.

Table 3: Predictive relevance of the model

Constructs	VIF	F ²	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ²	RMSE	MAE
CEA-> CL	1.547	0.069					
CT-> CL	1.913	0.233	0.225 (CEA)	0.225	0.224	0.882	0.697
BA-> CEA	1.000	0.291	0.382 (CT)	0.382	0.381	0.788	0.599
BA->CT	1.000	0.619	0.521(CL)	0.519	0.364	0.799	0.621
BA-> CL	1.697	0.088					
CT x BA -> CL	1.035	0.051					

Source: Smart PLS 4 Output (2025)

Note 1: BA — brand authenticity, CEA — customer emotional attachment, CT — customer trust, CL — customer loyalty

Second, the Stone-Geisser (Q²) indicator scores prove that the structural model has adequate predictive relevance and that all the study constructs have predictive significance for the overall adaptation of the study model. A structural model is assumed to have predictive validity if the Q² > 0 (Henseler et al., 2015). Thresholds guided the assessment of predictive validity: small (0.00 < Q² < 0.15), medium (0.15 < Q² < 0.35), and large (Q² > 0.35). The Q² statistic results for customer emotional attachment (0.224), customer trust (0.381), and customer loyalty (0.364) demonstrate medium to large predictive accuracy and overall model importance since Q² for all constructs are > 0.15

Third, F² statistic was employed to check the predictive effect of the structural model. F² statistics of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 show small, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively (Hair et al., 2022). The F² statistic shows that the exogenous constructs have predictive effects on the endogenous construct. For example, brand authenticity has a large predictive effect on customer trust (0.619), a moderate effect on customer emotional attachment (0.291), and a small effect on customer loyalty (0.088). Customer trust (F² = 0.051) has a small moderating effect on how brand authenticity influences customer loyalty. Figure 3 shows the output of the structural model assessment and hypotheses testing

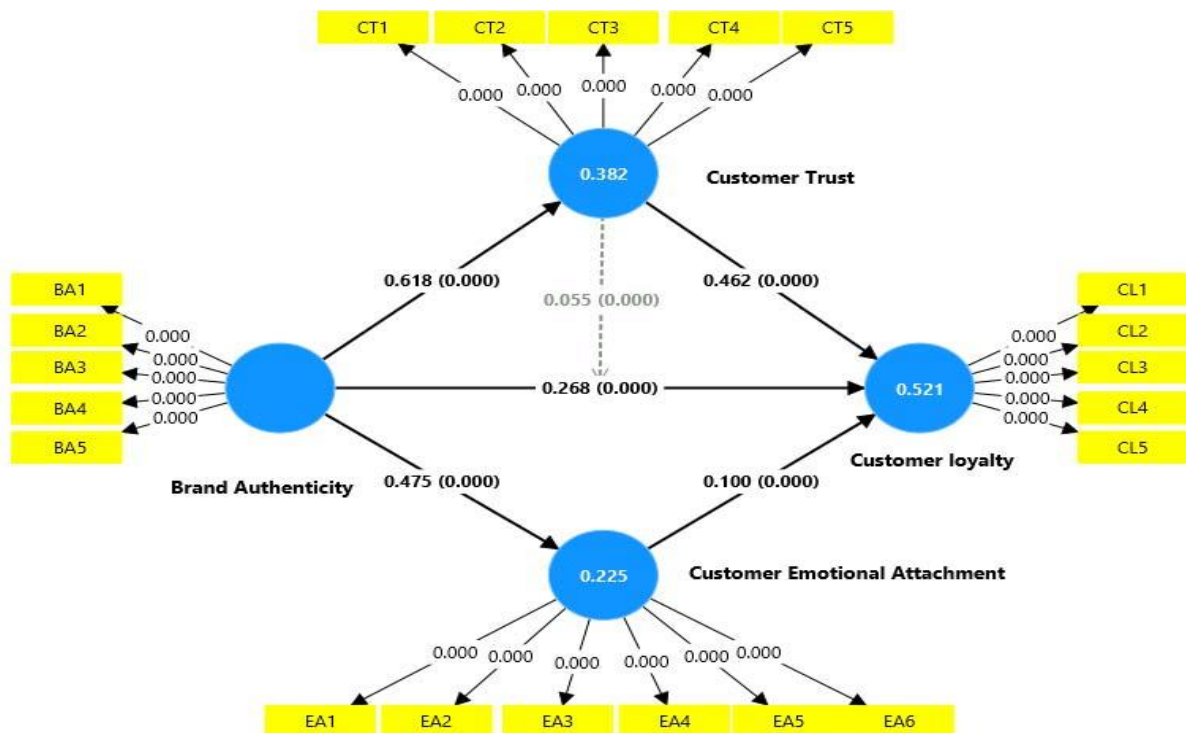


Figure 3: Structural model

Source: Smart PLS 4 Output (2025)

Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Test Results

The study draws on the CAB theory to test a conceptual framework (Figure 1) showing the path relationship among four variables: brand authenticity, customer trust, emotional attachment, and customer loyalty. The framework shows the direct effect of brand authenticity (BA) on customer loyalty. It also shows the direct impact of brand authenticity on customer trust and customer emotional attachment, and its indirect effects on customer loyalty. The framework further shows the moderating influence of customer trust in the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty. In this study, path coefficients assess the degree of relevance of one variable to another using the p-value (significance level), β value (direction of the path), and t-value (hypothesis testing) (Hair et al., 2019). All hypotheses with t-values more than 1.96 are supported, and p-values less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) are considered statistically significant (Hair et al., 2022).

Direct Path Analyses

Table 4 presents the hypotheses test results for the direct and indirect (mediation) and moderation path analyses. First, the direct path analyses show statistically significant positive effects in the following direct relationships: BA and customer loyalty (H1: $\beta = 0.268$, t-value = 10.126, $p < 0.000***$), BA and customer trust (H2: $\beta = 0.618$, t-value = 32.116, $p < 0.000***$), and BA and customer emotional attachment (H3: $\beta = 0.475$, t-value = 22.376, $p < 0.000***$). The result further shows a significant and positive direct effect of customer trust on customer loyalty (H4: $\beta = 0.462$, t-value = 17.822, $p < 0.000***$) and customer emotional attachment on customer loyalty (H5: $\beta = 0.100$, t-value = 4.377, $p < 0.000***$).

Table 4: Hypothesis test results

Structural Relationship	Hypotheses	Standardised Beta (β)	T-Statistics (t-Value > 1.96)	P-values	Status of The Hypothesis
Direct effect: BA \rightarrow CL	H1	0.268	10.126	0.000***	Supported
Direct with Mediator:					
BA \rightarrow CT	H2	0.618	32.116	0.000***	Supported
CT \rightarrow CL	H4	0.462	17.822	0.000***	Supported
Indirect effect: BA \rightarrow CT \rightarrow CL	H6	0.286	15.801	0.000***	Supported
Moderating effect:					
CT \times BA \rightarrow CL	H7	0.055	4.063	0.000***	Supported
Direct with Mediator:					
BA \rightarrow CEA	H3	0.475	22.376	0.000***	Supported
CEA \rightarrow CL	H5	0.100	4.377	0.000***	Supported
Indirect effect: BA \rightarrow CEA \rightarrow CL	H8	0.047	4.356	0.000***	Supported

Source: Author's construction (2025)

Note 1: BA — brand authenticity, CEA — customer emotional attachment, CT — customer trust, CL — customer loyalty

Note 2: Sig.* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$, t-Value > 1.99

Indirect Path Analysis (Mediation)

From Table 4, the mediation analysis shows that customer trust partially mediates the relationship between BA and customer loyalty (H6: $\beta = 0.286$, t-value = 15.801, $p < 0.000***$), supporting hypothesis H6. Again, customer emotional attachment showed a significant and positive indirect effect in the relationship between BA and customer loyalty (H8: $\beta = 0.047$, t-value = 4.356, $p < 0.000***$), confirming hypothesis H8.

Moderation Analyses

From Table 4, the moderating test results show that customer trust moderates the relationship between BA and customer loyalty (H7: $\beta = 0.055$, $t\text{-value} = 4.063$, $p < 0.000^{***}$). Thus, H7 was supported. The results further show that customer trust partially moderates the relationship between BA and customer loyalty since the direct effect (BA — customer loyalty) showed a higher beta value ($\beta = 0.268$, $t\text{-value} = 10.126$, $p < 0.000^{***}$) when customer trust moderated the path (BA — customer loyalty).

Figure 4 further illustrates the relationship between brand authenticity and consumer trust (moderator) in customer loyalty. The figure demonstrates a favourable correlation between BA and customer loyalty at all levels of consumer trust, with loyalty augmenting as authenticity enhances. The intensity of this relationship fluctuates based on the degree of customer trust. First, at elevated levels of consumer trust (green line), the correlation is most pronounced, exhibiting a sharp incline that signifies a substantial enhancement in loyalty as authenticity rises. Second, at typical consumer trust levels (blue line), the correlation intensifies moderately, demonstrating a significant rise in loyalty as authenticity is enhanced. Lastly, at diminished levels of consumer trust (red line), the correlation between BA and customer loyalty is comparatively weak, as evidenced by the less steep slope.

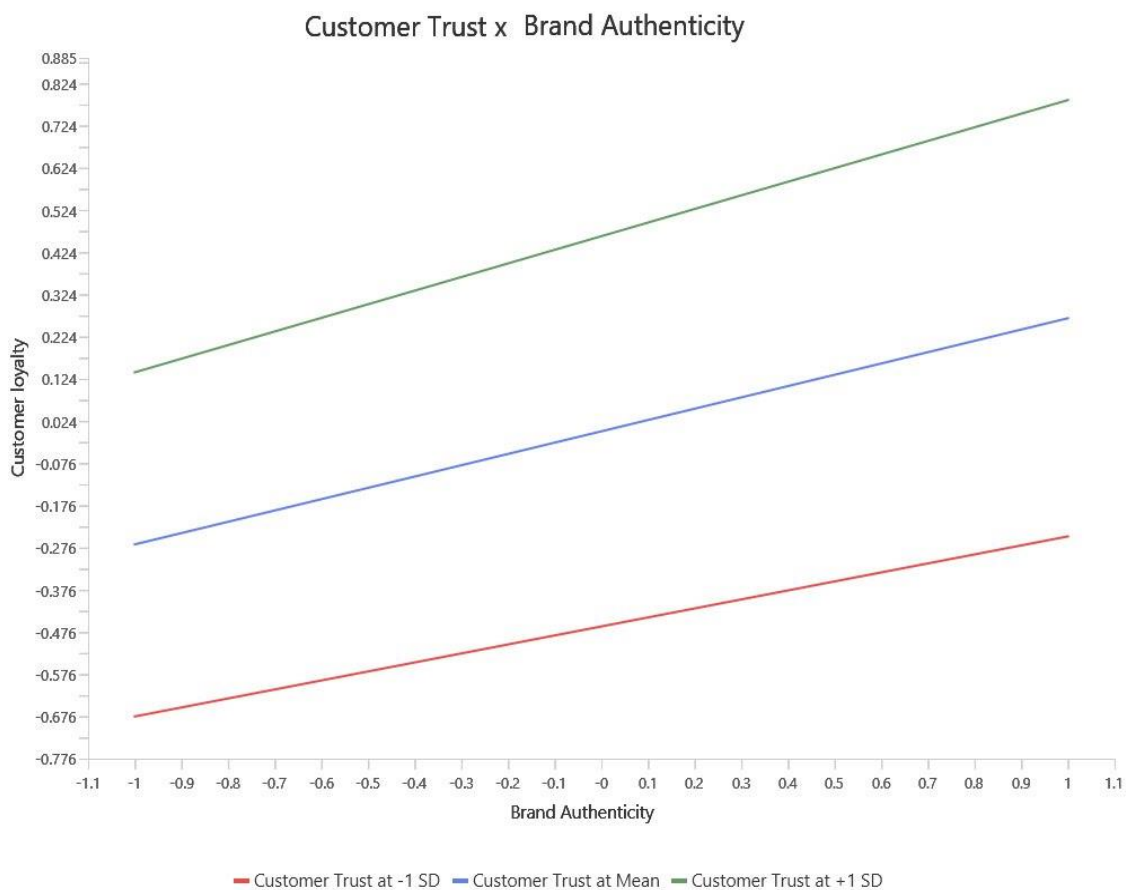


Figure 4: Moderation assessment
Source: Smart PLS 4 Output (2025)

In sum, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, and H8 are supported because T values are more significant than 1.96, with p values below 0.05, as displayed in Table 4 (above).

Discussion and Theoretical Implications

This study utilised the CAB theory to develop and empirically test a conceptual framework showing the mediating effects of customer trust and emotional attachment in the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty. The study further ascertains the moderating influence of customer trust in this relationship.

The study findings establish that customer trust significantly and positively affects customer loyalty. This finding corroborates existing studies (Levy et al., 2016; Akoglu and Ozbek, 2022; Islam et al., 2021) and further emphasises the role of authenticity in cultivating consumer trust. Similarly, emotional attachment is shown to have a significant and positive effect on customer loyalty, aligning with previous research (Islam et al., 2021; Aslam et al., 2020). These findings contribute to the branding and consumer behaviour literature by demonstrating that alcoholic beverage consumers prefer to patronise brands they perceive as uniquely authentic and emotionally resonating, reinforcing the critical role of emotional engagement in customer loyalty in the alcoholic beverage industry.

The study results further reveal that customer trust and emotional attachment mediate the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty. These findings extend existing literature (Deng et al., 2024) by integrating customer trust and emotional attachment as critical mediators, offering a nuanced perspective on the psychological mechanisms of affective feelings and emotions that drive customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage brands. Moreover, the study contributes new insights to the branding and consumer behaviour literature by showing how brand authenticity concurrently fosters both customer trust and emotional attachment, reinforcing the literature on brand authenticity's impact on customer trust (Eggers et al., 2013) and emotional attachment (Guèvremont and Grohmann, 2016). By incorporating these mediating factors, the study provides comprehensive insights into how brand authenticity translates into customer loyalty towards alcoholic beverage brands, thus addressing a critical gap in the branding and consumer behaviour literature in the Ghanaian context (Arthur et al., 2024).

This current study indicates that customer trust moderates the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty. Brand authenticity positively affects customer loyalty, whereas consumer trust is a significant moderating factor. This finding demonstrates that increased consumer trust magnifies brand authenticity's impact on customer loyalty. This finding integrates past studies that trust amplifies the impact of brand quality and credibility (Portal et al., 2019; Arthur et al., 2024) on customer loyalty (Kumar and Kaushik, 2022).

The empirical findings validate the conceptual framework and affirm the CAB theory, which emphasises that consumers' cognitive processing of brand-related information could activate their emotional responses and result in the formation of an emotional connection between consumers and the brand, hence stimulating consumers' behavioural intentions (Suo and Huang, 2023). By addressing the research gap in understanding the mediating mechanisms of customer trust and emotional attachment, this study extends the scope of the CAB theory by providing a comprehensive insight into how brand authenticity influences customer loyalty.

Managerial Contributions

The study offers unique actionable insights into what marketers and brand managers of beer, wine, and spirits should consider in improving the authenticity of their brands, which would enhance customers' loyalty. Brand managers must appreciate the power of unique brand authenticity in building customer trust and emotional attachment and stimulating customer loyalty. In their brand-building activities, marketers and brand managers must ensure that customers regard the brand as uniquely credible, genuine, transparent, and consistent with their fundamental beliefs and perceptions.

Therefore, brewery managers should be attentive towards developing an authentic product in order to catch the consumers' buying inclination and should consider having their presence on social networking sites, communities, and forums. In addition, customer trust and emotional attachment mediate the relationship between brand authenticity and customer loyalty; therefore, successfully portraying how authentic the brand is must build trust in customers and invoke the correct emotional

responses and connections between consumers and the brand, without which brand authenticity has less impact on customer loyalty.

The government, through agencies such as the Food and Drugs Authority and the Ghana Standards Authority, should develop and improve on existing manufacturing and marketing regulations that regulate alcoholic beverages marketing. This will ensure alcoholic beverage brand elements and adverts do not appeal to children and vulnerable stakeholders in society, thus embracing and contributing to the collective efforts toward achieving SDGs 3 and 12 on good health, well-being, responsible consumption, and sustainable production.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study was limited to investigating the targeted alcoholic beverage consumers using a quantitative research approach. Future studies can explore this phenomenon from a qualitative perspective using interviews to gain in-depth knowledge. In addition, the current study's limitations were that it looked at the alcohol consumers in Ghana, which limits the generalisation of the findings to other contexts. Future studies can focus on other countries in South Saharan Africa to cater for cultural differences. It is highly recommended that future researchers consider a comparative study between local and foreign alcoholic brands to see if there is higher brand authenticity, customer trust, customer emotional attachment and customer preference between them.

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