



## An Integrated Framework for Assessing the Interplay between Corporate Ability Associations and the Customer-Based Brand Equity Model Dimensions

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**Abstract:** Branding recipes need upgrades by the trending fashions; as a valuable asset of the entity managing brands is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, it has gained an overpowering thirst to examine the integrated framework that provides insights into the customer-based brand equity model and the corporate ability associations. Based on the customer-based brand equity model this research identifies the relationship between customer-based brand equity model dimensions and corporate ability associations. A previously adapted survey instrument was distributed among general consumers of durable shopping goods in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa by employing a purposive sampling technique. The data was assessed through AMOS SPSS; confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were employed to examine the relationship between the customer-based brand equity model and corporate ability associations. The findings of the study support all six sets of hypotheses which revealed that brand equity dimensions impart a significant and positive impact on corporate ability associations. The current study contributes to the literature by developing an integrated model that combines all the constructs of the customer-based brand equity model and corporate ability associations.

**Key words:** Brand salience, Brand performance, Brand imagery, Brand resonance, Corporate ability associations.

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### 1. Introduction

Brands are termed as a mark of identity and a cherished emblem for businesses around the globe. They assist in generating healthy cash flows for the firm in the long run. Additionally, these impalpable assets exist in the minds of consumers as a complex system of associations. Consumers' cognitive associations with brands are termed as a decisive tool and a source of competitive advantage (Neelam Akbar, Yousafzai, & Akbar, 2023). As corporate associations play a key role in strategic brand management, organizations invest huge sums of their resources on corporate promotional campaigns, social conscience, cause-related marketing, and brand reputations (Ab Hamid, Maulan, & Wan Jusoh, 2023). However, attaining the desirable results out of the efforts indulged in generating corporate associations is strenuous to measure and accomplish (Gupta, Gallear, Rudd, & Foroudi, 2020). In addition, as demonstrated by Neelam Akbar, Mordhah, Kausar Takrim, and Tauqeer (2023) based on the complexity of human nature, it is hard to calculate the actual purchase behavior of customers. As a marketing manager, the understanding of how consumers bracket their purchase decisions with the corporate image and associations is the pre-requisite in gaining edge over competitive brands (Neelam Akbar, Zeb, & Ahmad). Furthermore, as discussed by Karim and Rabiul (2024) Corporate ability associations refer to the composite of

consortiums relevant to the firm's virtuosity in production and delivering its market offerings. Moreover, as a supreme phenomenon in strategic brand management, corporate ability covers a bunch of all relevant information that a consumer holds about a specific brand (Yuan, Shahzad, Waheed, & Wang, 2024). From the preceding arguments, it is assessed that corporate associations engulf the consumer perceptions, conjunctures, and beliefs about the firm's brand, their comprehension based on previous experiences with the company (Raghuvir & Rani, 2024).

Brands have intangible associations that rely on the firm's history, preliminary actions, frame of mind, and emotional conversance of consumers with that specific company (du Plessis, D'Hooge, & Sweldens, 2024). As described by N Akbar, Rafiq, Hussain, and Perveen (2022) Managing brands over time is the prime ingredient of corporate strategic goals as it takes the firms to the highest competitive positions in the market. Branding is the game-changing antecedent of the firm's long-term success. Since the last decade, there has been a frenzy of amalgamations of firms in which brands played a key role in uplifting the organizational brand image (Chandramohan, 2024). Progressively, as the world economy shifts from conventional setups to advanced emerging status, the management of brands changed significantly. As reported by Gürhan-Canli and Fries (2023) In the competitive business spheres, corporate branding is regarded as the supreme marketing mix determinant that assists in maintaining a strategic fit between organizational capabilities and customer satisfaction levels. Well-managed brands coupled with secondary associations, where companies take advantage of their capabilities can beat the sweating price competition (Neelam Akbar, Ghutai, & Yousafzai, 2024). As the firm's efforts to profit from the outstretching of the existing brand success to new geographical proximities, the branding decisions have gained profound significance (Aydın & Nalbant, 2023). However, unacquainted markets are challenging as very little research has been conducted on the realm of customer-based brand equity model determinants and their connection with corporate ability association in local and global markets.

Keeping in view the buildouts in globalization, there is a dire need for research focusing on the connection between corporate ability associations, and the customer-based equity model as a strategic brand management tool that can enliven the corporate brand identity. In addition, the quantification of the brand equity model and corporate ability associations is a complex phenomenon, as brand equity depends on the perceptual thought processes of consumers (KR, Yusuf, Mariana, & Marsuni, 2023). As examined by Soleimani, Dana, Salamzadeh, Bouzari, and Ebrahimi (2023) consumers prefer brands that consummate their psychological and emotional needs along with the basic product attributes. The basic purpose of the current research is to identify the structural connection between the customer-based brand equity model developed by K. L. Keller (1993) and the corporate ability associations. Furthermore, despite impregnable interest in the field, there is rare experiential research on how corporate ability associations are tied to the customer-based brand equity model determinants in Pakistan, and what effects the brand equity model has on Pakistani consumers. Previous research has been carried out in developed economies such as the United States, China (Hong, Park, Jaroenwanit, Siriyota, & Sothonvit, 2023; Wang, Wei, & Yu, 2008), and Australia, the current study employs a sample of Pakistani consumers. Therefore, the findings may yield valuable implications for domestic and global brands.

Based on Keller's model, the current research has undertaken all the ingredients of the model namely, the brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance applied to Pakistani consumers. A panoramic model has been constructed considering the dimensions of Keller's model and corporate ability associations. Corporate ability associations (CAA) are the secondary characteristics that the firms utilize to take advantage of their internal capabilities to strengthen their brand image. The CAA is considered the pathway to enhance the entity's brand value in the long run. Therefore, keeping in view the significance attached to the corporate ability associations in enlightening the firm's competitive positions in the market, this research aims to examine the structural connection between the customer-based brand equity model and corporate ability associations for the host of convenience and shopping goods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region of Pakistan. The combination of convenience and shopping goods is selected to dig the root cause of attitudinal intentions consumers attached to different categories of goods and services.

## **2. Theoretical Underpinnings and Hypotheses Development**

### **2.1 Corporate Ability Associations and Customer-Based Brand Equity Model**

Corporate ability associations give shapes to the overall image of the brand, as just a tangible face of the product is not enough to gain a competitive edge over rival firms (du Plessis et al., 2024). As described by D. A. Aaker (2009) in explaining the Associative Network Theory, brand associations reveal a ray of facets stockpiled in consumers'

minds regarding a specific brand (D. Aaker, 1991). These associations coincide to construct a picture that leads to the development of brand image. Corporate ability associations refer to the secondary characteristics that capitalize on the firm's strategic involvement to spark the image of its brand (Lamlo & Selamat, 2021). As reported by Erjansola, Lipponen, Vehkalahti, Aula, and Pirttilä-Backman (2021) the ability associations are regarded as philosophical assumptions, that depict the notion of abstractions in consumers' memory concerning specific brands. K. L. Keller (1993) developed the first model of customer-based brand equity that defines brand equity as a descriptive notion that imparts a unique impression on consumers' psychological state of mind about the promotional campaigns of a specific brand. Consumers differentiate among brands based on their marketing mix strategic considerations (Pina & Dias, 2021).

As stated by K. L. Keller (2001) brands can have favorable and unfavorable customer-based brand equity when consumers retaliate positively or negatively towards the marketing mix of one brand over competitive brands. Customer-based brand equity crops up when consumers are aware of the brands, and their meaning in terms of the positive associations with the brand (Qorbani, Koosha, & Bagheri, 2021). In addition, the customer-based brand equity model is the composite of brand strength and value, the brand strength explains the associations revolve around the brand in the consumer cognition system (Ramadhani & Mujayana, 2022). Furthermore, the brand value is the sum of gains that is attained when the firm capitalizes on its brand strengths to achieve competitive market positions (He & Calder, 2020). As discussed by K. L. Keller (2001) the model explains the consumer's emotional state of perception, perceptual thought processes, feelings, and the value they attach to specific brands. The main determinants of the customer-based brand equity model are as follows; brand salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance (K. L. Keller, 1993).

Brand salience and awareness is the very first stage of consumer encounter with that specific brand as it assists consumers with the basic information of that corporate brand (Suhardi, Susilo, Priyanto, & Abdi, 2022). Brand salience is the first ladder in the hierarchy of making strong connections with the brand, it lays the foundation for developing strong ties between consumers and the brand (K. L. Keller, 1993). In addition, favorable encounters lead corporate brands to attain their desirable image in the minds of their target customers (K. L. Keller, 2007). Moreover, the salience explains the main identity of the brand which gives meaning to the brand, understanding the essence of brands helps in creating a strong consumer base such as it smoothens the ways for the consumers to pay premium prices for the brands; brand salience reveals the awareness of the market offerings in the consumer's mind. (K. L. Keller, 2016). As discussed by Bergkvist and Taylor (2022) brand salience is the tendency of the brands to be considered by the buyers in consideration and choice set. Therefore, it reveals the strength of the consumer's memory to recall or recognize the brand among the set of competitive brands. In addition, it is termed a yardstick in making a selection among a set of alternative brands available to the customer (Connors & Spangenberg, 2024). As revealed by Piriyaikul, Kunathikornkit, and Piriyaikul (2024) the brand salience strengthens feelings of familiarity and leads to strong attitudinal loyalty toward brands. In a similar context, a study carried out in the Indonesian market by Lamlo and Selamat (2021) reveals positive and significant ties between brand salience, brand associations, brand value, and brand loyalty in the tourism industry. Similarly, Ngo, Gregory, Miller, and Lu (2022), identified that brand salience has a strong impact on the choices that consumers make. Additionally, it serves as a prime indicator in making final purchase decisions. Brand salience can be boosted by integrating mindfulness into advertising strategies that can benefit the firm position in the market (Errmann, 2024).

The second ladder of the customer-based brand equity model reveals the significance of brand meaning and is further classified into brand performance and brand imagery (K. L. Keller, 2001). Brand performance is characterized by the actual experiences with the use of the brand. As stated by K. L. Keller (2007), brand performance stems from the functionality of the market offerings concerning their quality, and utility. It explains the aesthetical representations tied to the economic needs of the consumers (Pertwi & Sigit, 2024). As reported by E. Keller and Fay (2012), the basic ingredients without which the product does not work such as the capabilities and features of the brand; describe the significance of product reliability, durability, and serviceability that differentiates based on the expected life of the brand. Additionally, the brand performance relies heavily on the integrated system of factors that includes how appropriately, and quickly the product is satisfying the needs of their ultimate consumers (Liu, Hu, Lin, Tsai, & Xiao, 2020). As suggested by Gul et al. (2021), brand performance is the interconnected anecdotes that reveal all the stages starting from the production to the final delivery. Brand performance stems from multiple sources ranging from service effectiveness that describes the brand performance in terms of the associative services that are considered the prime part of the performance of the main product. Furthermore, the style, design, and price of the products come under the brand performance umbrella that embarks

on the performance of the specific brand (Dong, Yuan, & Huang, 2023).

Brand imagery is the second determinant of the customer-based brand equity model that highlights the outward components of goods and services (Nasib, Azhmy, Nabella, Rusiadi, & Fadli, 2022). Moreover, imagery is the abstraction of consumers regarding a specific brand; it refers to visualization backed by a consumer “black box” (Ward, Yang, Romaniuk, & Beal, 2020). As reported by Lee, James, and Kim (2014) it is a series of interconnected associative networks in consumers' memory that represent all the sensational modalities in creating a mental picture of a specific brand that might deviate from the actual representations of the brand. Previous research has ignored the role of brand performance and imagery in connection with corporate ability associations concerning convenience and shopping goods in Pakistan. Prior research conducted by Gavilan and Avello (2020) suggested that brands play a prime role in evoking consumer simulations that have a profound impact on the mental imagery of specific brands. Similarly, Xie, Peng, and Hampson (2020) examined the role of brand user imagery as a unique determinant of brand imagery; the findings demonstrated the significance of the premium price strategy in the formulation of mental imagery of the brand. A similar nature study conducted by Affonso and Janiszewski (2023) identified the significance of the functional positioning of brands in connection with their visual representation in creating their structural perceptual images. However, the hedonic considerations perform better in developing about constructing unstructured perceptions from the integrated marketing communications of the firm. In the light of foregoing discussions, it is assessed that brand performance and imagery play an important role in consumer final purchase decisions.

The third ladder of the customer-based brand equity model describes the brand response which is the composite of two determinants namely, brand judgments and feelings (Jeon & Yoo, 2021). Judgments about the brand depict its quality, credibility, considerations, and superiority; the brand feelings refer to the feelings about specific brands such as warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval, and respect (K. L. Keller, 2001). Consumer makes judgments about a product while keeping in view their real and perceived quality determinants. Moreover, the credibility aspects attached to the brand narrate the expertise, trust, and likeability aspects that give a definite meaning to the brand responses (Veloutsou, Chatzipanagiotou, & Christodoulides, 2020). As asserted by Loureiro and Sarmento (2018) the true reflection of customer needs that are tied to the brand delineates its consideration which is a prime ingredient of brand judgments that generates the brand response. In addition, the superiority of a brand stems from its unique features or associations that serve as a differential image in consumers' minds. As reported by Dedeoğlu, Van Niekerk, Weinland, and Celuch (2019) the superior product wins the hearts of their customer which helps in eliciting positive brand responses. The second element of brand response is brand feelings which describe the array of feelings attached to the brand. Such as the use of a specific brand generates responses that are in line with the customer's mood, personality, and other cognitive responses (Tasci, 2018). Additionally, the brand in combination with some positive or negative feelings evokes desirable or undesirable responses in final purchase decisions (Pina & Dias, 2021). In the light of preceding arguments, it is scrutinized that brand judgments and feelings have a profound impact on generating customer responses in the form of purchase decisions.

The top of the customer-based brand equity model is occupied by brand resonance which refers to the most desirable and profitable connection of consumers with the brand. In addition, attaining this status requires an emotional bond with the use of the brand. Based on the classification of K. L. Keller (1993); the top ladder brand resonance has four sections; namely behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community, and active engagement. Behavioral loyalty shows the regular purchase of a brand over repeated intervals; the next level of resonance explains the attitudinal attachment that highlights the feelings of affection and love for a specific brand. The third step in brand resonance explains the sense of community; which describes the consumer's highest level of satisfaction with a brand as they represent themselves as a part of their community. The fourth level of brand resonance is active engagement which represents the more powerful associations of customers with the brand. As revealed by K. L. Keller (2001); the marketer's main goal is to earn active engagement positions as it yields the highest revenues for the customers. The corporate ability associations work in alignment with the customer-based brand equity model which gives shapes to the company's overall brand image. In line with previous arguments, it is evaluated that all the related associations help the firm convince their customer towards some level of loyalty. Based on the preceding literature, the following hypotheses are developed;

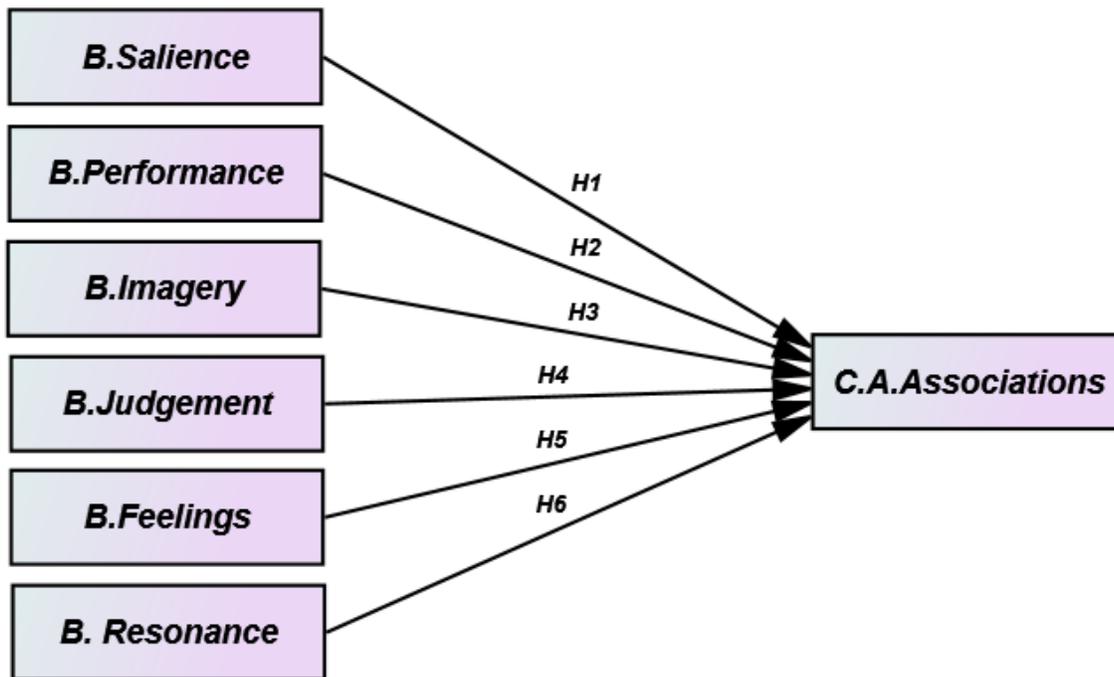
H1; Brand salience has a significant positive impact on CAA

H2 & H3: Brand performance and imagery have a significant and positive impact on CAA

H4 & H5: Brand judgments and feelings have a significant and positive impact on CAA

H 6: Brand resonance has a significant and positive impact on CAA.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework



## 3. Methodology

The present study sheds light on the structural bond between the customer-based brand equity model and corporate ability associations. This research is based on the quantitative positivism philosophy in which the data was accumulated through the structural survey instrument that contained the items from previously adapted questions. The hypothesized connection was examined through structural equation modeling. The items covering corporate ability associations, brand salience, brand performance, and brand resonance were extracted and modified from the study conducted by Wang et al. (2008). However, the items covering the brand imagery, and brand feelings were taken by the study conducted by (K. L. Keller, 2001). The main study utilized electronic-assisted survey instruments that were sent via email and personally administered to the consumers, students, and other professionals including males and females in shopping goods categories. Email addresses were taken from the registered electronics shops in Peshawar, Mardan, Swat, and Dera Ismail Khan. A purposive sampling technique was employed to gain the objectives of the research; Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was selected as a sample of the study at the end of 2023 and early months of 2024. The sample adequacy was assessed through Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin and Bartlett's test sphericity (Thao, Van Tan, & Tuyet, 2022); which yields the adequacy of data about factor analysis. The threshold level has ascertained the value of 0.06 and above; the sample for current research has 350 respondents which was marked as adequate for factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The KMO value for the present study was found as 0.943. The current study has used SPSS and AMOS for the analysis of the structural connection between the customer-based brand equity model and corporate ability associations.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Reliability Statistics

Reliability analysis is a pre-requisite for assessing the consistency of results over repeated encounters in survey output interpretations. The values of all the variables showed excellent reliabilities as determined by the threshold level of above 0.7. The Cronbach alpha values for the brand salience constructs were ascertained as 0.923; the value of Cronbach alpha for the brand performance was determined as 0.909; the brand imagery 0.917; brand judgment value 0.890; brand feelings 0.934; and the brand resonance value was identified as 0.881. computation of all the variable's reliability was ascertained as 0.952. The total sample of 350; constituted 177 females and 173 males with 50.6% and 49.4% for females and males respectively. Based on the age of the respondents 98 number represented

the age bracket of less than 21 with 28% of the total population. The age bracket of 21-29 presented 139 respondents with 39.7% of the total population. 96 respondents with 27.4% revealed the age group of 30-39 years. 17 respondents with 4.9% represented the age group of 40-49 years.

#### 4.2 Factor Analysis and Model Fit

The standard loadings of the questions that cover brand salience were regressed as 0.82; 0.84; 0.88; 0.86; and 0.80 for BS1; BS2; BS3; BS4; and BS5 respectively. The items that represented Brand performance were 0.79; 0.89; 0.88; 0.84; 0.76 for BP1; BP2; BP3; BP4; and BP5 respectively. The standard loadings for Brand imagery were ascertained as 0.77; 0.84; 0.87; 0.85; and 0.82 for BI1; BI2; BI3; BI4; and BI5 respectively. Similarly, the standard loadings of the questions covering Brand judgments were identified as 0.75; 0.84; 0.90; 0.85; and 0.80 for BJ1; BJ2; BJ3; BJ4; and BJ5 respectively. The items covering Brand feelings represented 0.69; 0.98; 0.97; 0.86; 0.83 for BF1; BF2; BF3; BF4; and BF5 respectively. The standard loadings of the items that covered Brand resonance were identified as 0.81; 0.84; 0.83; 0.81; and 0.58 for BR1; BR2; BR3; BR4; and BR5 respectively. The standard loadings of the questions presented by corporate ability associations were identified as 0.65; 0.89; 0.72; 0.77; and 0.75 for the items CAA1; CAA2; CAA3; CAA4; and CAA5 respectively. The model fit indices with  $\chi^2 / DF$  were identified as 3.581; the value of CFI was revealed as 0.89; the GFI value showed 0.93. The AGFI value is depicted as 0.98. The TLI value was found as 0.97; SRMR and RMSEA showed 0.08 and 0.03. All the values of model fit indices were identified as above the threshold level which fairly indicated the model fit.

#### 4.3 Hypotheses Testing

The structural equation model via AMOS supported all of the hypothesized customer-based brand equity model determinants with the corporate ability associations. The first hypothesis of the study revealed a significant and positive association between brand salience and corporate ability associations (with a standardized estimate value of 0.382, the critical ratio was ascertained as 9.063, and the p-value was identified as 0.000); the p-value was less than 0.005 which indicated the positive and significant relationship between brand salience and corporate ability associations. The second and third hypotheses were accepted as the p-values of both were ascertained less than 0.000. The second hypothesis hypothesized the positivity between brand performance and corporate ability associations was accepted (with a standardized coefficient value of 0.256; with a critical ratio of 7.121; and the p-value was determined as 0.000; which leads to the acceptance of the second hypothesis of the study. The third hypothesis revealed the standardized estimate of 0.095; with a critical ratio of 3.491; and a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.005. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the study is accepted. The fourth and fifth hypotheses of the study were supported by the study findings as the p-values of both were less than 0.005. The p-value of hypothesis fourth was determined as slightly above the minimum threshold level at 0.009. Yet. The difference is minimal. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was accepted with a standardized coefficient value of 0.068; a critical ratio of 2.616, and a p-value of 0.009). Based on the fifth hypothesis developed from the theoretical framework brand imagery was linked positively and significantly with corporate ability associations; which were accepted as the p-value was ascertained as less than 0.002 which is less than the minimal threshold level; Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was accepted with standardized beta coefficient value of 0.090; the critical ratio of 3.126 and p-value 0.002. The last hypothesis was also accepted as the standardized coefficient value of 0.11 was found positive and significant with the critical value of 3.014 as the p-value was determined as 0.003.

Table 1: Hypothesis Testing

Predictor	Standardized Estimates	SE	CR	P-Value
<i>B. Salience</i>	0.382	0.042	9.063	***
<i>B. Performance</i>	0.257	0.036	7.121	***
<i>B. Imagery</i>	0.095	0.027	3.491	***
<i>B. Judgment</i>	0.068	0.026	2.616	.009

<i>B. Feelings</i>	0.090	0.029	3.126	.002
<i>B. Resonance</i>	0.116	0.038	3.014	.003

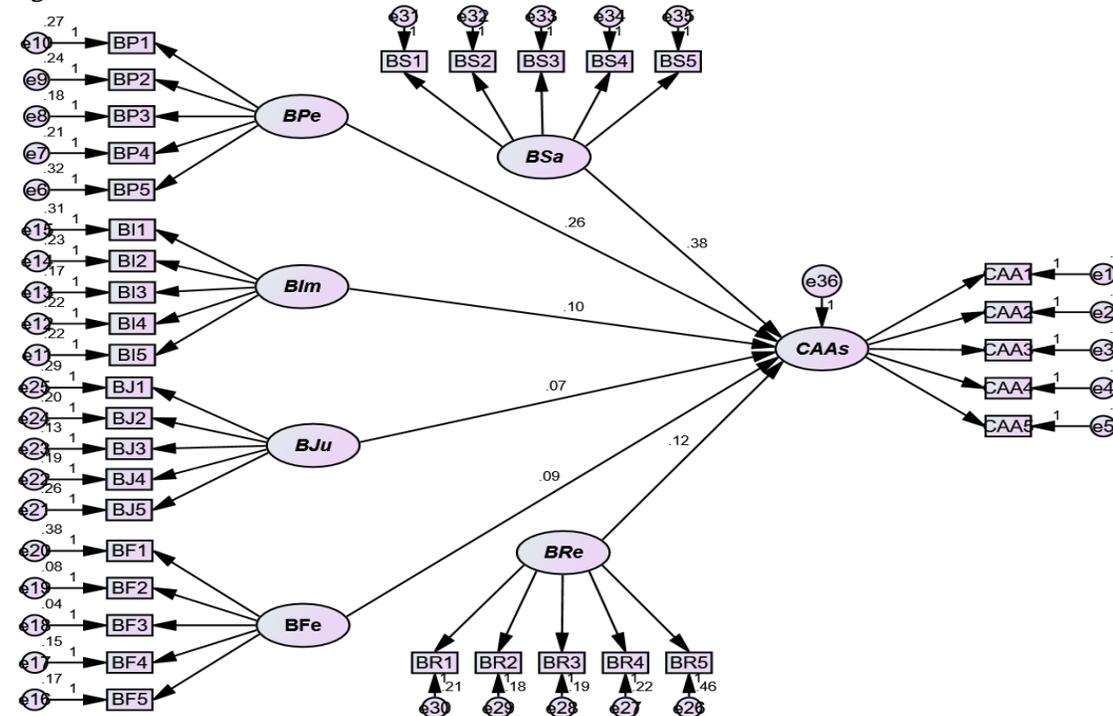
Notes: N= 350; bootstrap sample size =2000. DV= CAA

Table 2: Correlation

The Pearson Correlation values of (as indicated in Table 2 of the study) all the constructs revealed a strong connection between each other.

		CAA	BS	BP	BI	BJ	BF	BR
Pearson Correlation	CAA	1.000						
	BS	.834	1.000					
	BP	.799	.783	1.000				
	BI	.732	.684	.714	1.000			
	BJ	.741	.693	.728	.810	1.000		
	BF	.758	.724	.703	.774	.817	1.000	
	BR	.708	.685	.679	.680	.744	.746	1.000

Figure 1: Structural Model



### 5. Conclusion

In the global competitive sphere; the notion of brand equity has gained profound significance for marketers and

brand managers (Pimentel, Bassi-Suter, & Didonet, 2024). The corporate ability associations as one of the prime ingredients of generating brand equity has been neglected by researchers in the brand equity domain. Rare studies have been carried out in advanced economies. However, emerging economies lack studies that cater to the need for corporate ability associations' significance within the brand equity realm. Keeping in view the K. L. Keller (2001) model; the current research has developed a model by combining the determinants of the customer-based brand equity model (brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand judgments, brand feelings, and brand resonance) and corporate ability associations in the context of durable convenience goods in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa four cities namely Peshawar, Mardan, Dikhan, and Swat. Results were assessed through confirmatory factor analysis by employing structural equation modeling. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between the constructs of the customer-based brand equity model and corporate ability associations. The findings support the hypothesized sixth-dimensional integrated customer-based brand equity model with corporate ability associations across durable shopping goods. The current study contributes to the in-depth analysis of customer-based brand equity model dimensionality with the addition of corporate ability associations.

The current research focuses on the significance of a brand as an inestimable possession, a strategic yardstick that flourishes the corporate identity of any organization. Therefore, it is proposed that to understand the true essence of a brand's demeanor; the connection between the customer-based brand equity model and corporate ability associations needs to be identified within the corporate management system in goal setting. The study's findings suggest that employing corporate ability association firms can uplift their brand image in the long run. The corporate ability associations assist in winning the hearts of customers from brand awareness to the highest level of loyalties attached to the brand. Therefore, companies with corporate ability associations relationships with branding concepts to assist the firm in spotting their problems with possible solutions. Thus, the findings of the current research confirm the relationship between the brand equity model and corporate ability associations. Managerial implications of the current research can open a ray of opportunities for corporate brand and marketing managers; marketers can examine the integrated model of brand equity in designing their branding decisions. Brand salience is the prime goal of the firm. However, just creating awareness is not enough in the competitive realm. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the firm is to reach the top of the ladder positions in a customer-based brand equity model in the form of active engagements and the highest peaks of loyalties.

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