Article

Nexus between Brand Love, Loyalty, Affective Commitment and Positive Word of Mouth: In the Context of Social Identity Theory

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Abstract: The aim of the current study was to examine how employees are involved in positive word of mouth (PWOM) in the presence of brand love. In this study we also investigate the mediating role of employee loyalty between employee brand love and PWOM links. Furthermore, moderating the role of affective commitment (AC) has also been tested. Data was collected from 296 employees of the tourism sector including hotels and transport and travelling agencies. Collected data were analyzed with the help of correlation, hierarchical regression and Amos 7.0 software. The results proved that employee brand love plays an essential role for the loyalty of employees towards organization and PWOM. Findings also proved that employee's loyalty directly predict PWOM, but it also acts as mediator for the brand love and PWOM link. The current study adds to the existing literature by investigating how employee brand love is helpful for achieving the PWOM and employee loyalty. Based on the findings of current study, this is a unique study which recommends that management of the tourism sector enhance PWOM with the help of employee brand love and employee loyalty.

Keywords: employee brand love; loyalty; affective commitment; positive word of mouth; social identity theory

1. Introduction

The success of any organization in the competitive business world largely depends on a committed work force that is willing to contribute to the better performance of their organizations [1]. Devoted employees contribute significantly to the successful operation of business organizations [2]. Organizational brand plays an important role in the development of employees' emotional attachment towards their organization [3]. Deliberation on the role of organizational brand in the existing literature mostly focuses on customer-related brands [3,4]. Therefore, the current study considered the employee related response to the organizational brand and its effects on the behavior of the employee.

The role of the PWOM communication of employees has gained the wide attention of researchers and management in practice in order to find its determinants [4]. Particularly, in the era of massive competition and changing business environments, PWOM behavior of employees become a strategic approach that ensures the dissemination of vital information about business strategies, products and services among potential customers [1]. In this regard, organizations pay attention to the satisfaction of employees regarding their organizational brand. Satisfied employees gain strategic importance for the success of the organization [5]. Organizations formulate various strategies for the improvement of employee satisfaction and sense of belongingness towards the organization. Employees' emotional affection towards an organizational brand plays an important role for sustaining satisfaction levels [6]. Existing studies have only focused on customer-related brand love and have ignored the employees' brand love perspective which is important for the development of the positive behavior of employees towards the organization [7,8]. Therefore, the current study fills this gap and highlights the successful branding mechanism of an

organization that improves the employee identification and emotional affection towards organization necessary for the development of his or her positive behavior.

Organizations exercise various mechanisms for the improvement of performance and for the survival; however, deliberation on the role of employee brand love has been ignored. Employee brand love mechanisms determine the emotional attachment of employees, which enhances positive interaction with key customers in order to enhance the performance of an organization [9]. Recently, business organizations have put in effort towards successful branding and making sure of employee loyalty. Employees' positive perceptions towards organizational brands have gained significant consideration and have become a valuable strategic movement of business organizations [1], which increases employee loyalty [10]. Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine how employee brand love plays a role in the improvement of the loyalty of employees towards an organization. Furthermore, employee brand love has strategic importance for the successful operation of organizations [11], however, this does not mean that only employee brand love can make visible change in PWOM automatically or effectively. Consequently, it is necessary to understand the mechanism involved in employee brand love and the PWOM link. Therefore, we contend that the level of employee loyalty provide an explanatory power for employee brand love and the PWOM relationship. Employee brand love is driving force for the loyalty intension of employees [12].

Loyalty improves the employee's attachment for the organization's strategic objectives, processes and product [2]. When employees are highly attached and satisfied with their organization regarding their brand, they are more inclined to be involved in PWOM behavior [13]. Existing studies have highlighted that employees with brand love provide massive opportunities for the involvement of employees in organizations' marketing processes via PWOM. In line with these findings, it is argued that an employee brand love mechanism increases the loyalty of the employee [14], which ultimately improves the PWOM. The current study highlights the intervening role of employee loyalty in the connection between employee brand love and PWOM. Furthermore, AC, the emotional attachment of an employee to his/her organization, also plays an important role in developing positive behavior [15,16]. An employee with higher levels of loyalty and AC shows a higher effect on his/her behavior, such as PWOM. The current study proposes how employee brand love predicts loyalty and PWOM. Furthermore, we also tested for the moderating role of AC.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Employee Brand Love and PWOM in View of Social Identity Theory

Ref. [17] documented that social identity theory (SIT) highlighted how an individual shapes their identity with some specific groups or categories due to his or her association with these groups or categories. Furthermore, [18] postulated that social identity is concerned with individuals' self-conception which is based on his or her relationship with social groups along with the emotional significance and value attached to that relationship. Individuals with well-built social identities build affecting attachment with those identities and act to enhance their self and social group outcomes [19]. On the other hand, communication plays a significant part of marketing activities of an organization and is used as a means to convey the message or change the feelings and mentalities of customers [20]. PWOM is an informal way of communicating with customers regarding the features of products or services. Word of mouth has both negative and positive aspects based on the perception of customers towards an organization or their products or services [21]. PWOM is considered an independent and truly sound wellspring of information [22]. PWOM is a process through which one can help others by telling them about a product [23]. PWOM behaviors of employees are concerned with the dissemination of valuable information to the customers regarding the brand and product [24].

The current study extends the SIT application in the employee-organization context as we proposed that employees with brand love respond with positive behavior and attitudes. Ref. [25] acknowledged that employee brand love is the intensity of his or her

significance emotional affection for the brand of an organization for which he/she serves. It is self-evident that organizations that own a strong brand augment its significance and value-perception for both customer and its employees [26]. An individual identifies with a social group only when they get pleasure and pride in being a member of that group [27]. An individual's identification is not only determined by the organization but also by the result of individual factors such as its brand [28]. In line with SIT we proposed that employees who love their organizational brand are more likely to involve in PWOM.

H1. *Employee brand love is positively related with PWOM.*

2.2. Employee Brand Love and Loyalty

Brand love is the positive value perceived by the employees for a particular organizational brand name [1]. The existing literature defined brand love as the perception of strength developed by a brand in the mind of employees and customers [29]. Brand love has major effect on the emotional affection and commitment of the employees [25]. An employee experience with a particular brand is manifested in psychological and behavioral actions [30]. Perception towards particular brand name refers to psychological processes through which loyalty of employees is formed for specific brands or organizations [2].

Employee loyalty is the perseverance of employees for the success of his or her organization [31]. Employee loyalty is the relationship and attitude between benefaction entity and behavior which is linked with emotional affection for the success of an organization [32]. Loyalty is the positive attitude of employees to the success of an organization due to their self-interest as a result of their love of an organizational brand [1]. Loyalty is a significant business outcome. Few theoretical and conceptual studies have proven that loyalty comes from the positive perception of employees for a particular brand [10]. Positive feelings and experiences of employees are attached with company brand and then they show more loyalty with company. Positive perceptions of employees sustain high-connection and strong interactions with a company and concentrate on the successful operation of the organization.

H2. *Employee brand love has positive association with employee loyalty.*

2.3. Mediating Role of Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty towards an organization is a result of his/her satisfaction about the brand or product [33]. Loyal employees act on behalf of the organization and make voluntary contributions for the better performance of the organization [26,34]. Existing studies formulated that employees who have positive experiences with the brand and product/services are more inclined to show greater loyalty towards the organization [35]. These satisfied employees play important roles for the improvement of advertising campaigns and feel happy to advise potential customers towards particular brands or products [10]. Employees with higher levels of loyalty mostly engage in PWOM behavior and disseminate information to others [8,16,36].

Employees demonstrate more loyalty and attachment towards organizations when they like or love the organizational brand [37]. As such, employee loyalty involves positive feelings and sense of belongingness for the organization [16]. Due to sense of loyalty and belongingness, employees demonstrate positive behavior [36]. According to [1] the potential outcome of employee loyalty may involve communications such as PWOM. Employees who perceived positive feelings and are proud of and loyal to their organization are likely to communicate it to others.

Employee loyalty plays mediating role between employee brand love and PWOM links. Loyalty has grown to be important for all types of businesses landscapes [38]. The motive behind this phenomenon is the involvement of employees' love with the brand to enhance PWOM through employee loyalty [14]. Firms try to build up employees' loyalty

by developing their positive feelings for a brand which is a pleasing and desirable factor for the enhancement and achievement of PWOM [8]. Employee loyalty as a response to brand love is a positive influence on PWOM behavior [1,10]. However, employee loyalty is a valuable source to make sure of PWOM, and plays a significant role and acts as link between brand love and PWOM. Mediating role of employee loyalty validates with the aid of brand love which encourages employees by giving confidence, belongingness and satisfaction which is the base of PWOM [1,16]. Employee brand love is the interpreter of employee loyalty, on the other hand employee loyalty shapes and changes the relationship nature through information and personal experiences about a firm and therefore brings about PWOM [16].

From the above arguments, it is found that employee loyalty acts as medium between employee brand love and PWOM. This facts shows that brand love significantly predicts PWOM directly, with the help of employee loyalty. Employees' PWOM behavior develops through loyalty and employee loyalty is derived from employee brand love [11,31]. However, employee evaluation and perception toward organizational brands makes sure of the development of employee loyalty which eventually enhances PWOM communications.

H3. *Employee loyalty has a positive relationship with positive word of mouth.*

H4. *Employee loyalty positively mediates between employee brand love and the PWOM link.*

2.4. Moderating Role of Employee Affective Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the strength of an employee's identification and attachment with his or her organization [39]. Ref [40] classified organizational commitment as normative, continuance and AC. Moreover, the AC of an employee has a strong effect on his/her behavior in the workplace. AC is defined as the emotional attachment and involvement of employee in the work organization [40]. Existing studies emphasize that the AC has become a source of identification and emotional attachment of employees towards organizations [41]. Employees with AC contribute significantly to the organizational outcomes compared with those who have observed lesser AC [42]. A higher strength of emotional attachment and sense of belongingness of employees for the organization will result in positive behavior [15,16]. Loyal employees are more inclined to involve in AC which is significant for the outcomes of PWOM communication. In the current study, we proposed the positive strengthening effect of AC on the association between employee loyalty and PWOM. Figure 1 Shows Theoretical Framework.

H5. *The relationship between employee loyalty and PWOM is moderated by employee AC.*
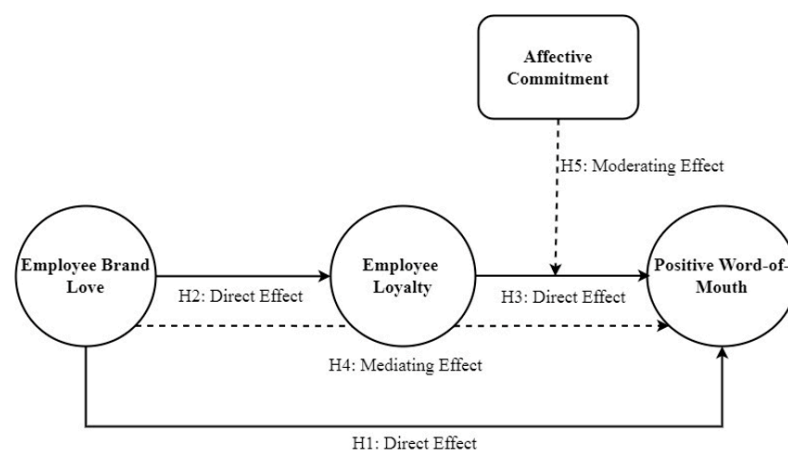

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

2.5. Methodology

The current study is based on cross sectional design and we tested the study hypotheses with the help of Amos 7.0 software of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. Furthermore, correlation analysis was conducted to confirm the correlation among the study constructs. Coefficient of correlation determined the direction of relationship between variables in one-to-one relation irrespective of their significant level or to what extent one variable depends on another variable. After the confirmation of direction in the next step we conducted the SEM to find the significance and strength of dependency of one variable to another variable.

Sample and Procedure

Employees of the tourism sector, including hotels and travelling agencies, with 2 years of experience were included in the sampling frame. A list of 2240 employees was provided by the representatives of the tourism departments under governmental governance. The list contained the names, mailing address, email addresses and designations of the respondents. With the help of systemic random sampling, every fifth respondent was selected as a study sample. The current study considered the privacy of the selected participants regarding the information they shared during data collection.

An online data collection procedure was implemented using the applications of Google Docs. For this purpose, the on-line survey forms were designed. To overcome the issue of common method bias we administered the survey in two waves, i.e., T1 and T2 with a temporal interval of two weeks. Links of the Web used for the surveys were sent to the selected respondents via email. The questionnaire was designed in both the English and Urdu languages, for better understanding of the constructs. Respondents were approached between January and April 2022 via email. In the first wave (T1), the survey was administered for 463 respondents selected as a study sample. During (TI), data were collected on employee brand love, employee loyalty and AC. During the first wave only 327 useable responses were received, resulting in a 72.99% response rate. With the interval of two weeks, the second wave (T2) of data collection was initiated. In the second wave, the survey was administered to only 327 respondents. The employees were requested to rate their PWOM communication for their organizations. Finally, 296 responses were finalized which are complete in all respect. Table 1 presents the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondents' Characteristics.

		N	**%**
Employees' Age (in years)	1–5	43	15.86
	6–10	109	40.22
	11–15	41	15.12
	15–20	44	16.23
	Above 20	34	12.54
Employees' Experience	10–20	07	2.58
	21–25	17	6.27
	26–30	143	52.76
	More than 30	104	38.37
Employees' Education Level	10 years education	143	9.96
	12 years education	54	19.92
	14 years education	27	52.76
	Others	47	17.34

2.6. Study Measures

2.6.1. Employee Brand Love

In order to obtain the responses of respondents regarding the constructs of employee brand love, we used 10 items in the study survey. This 10-item scale was adapted from

the research work of Carroll and Ahuvia [43]. The items generated a α value of 0.82. Appendix A contained the items used for the measurement of study variables.

2.6.2. Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty measured with a seven-item scale was developed and validated by Srinivasan, Anderson and Ponnavolu [44]. The items used for the measurement of loyalty intension produced a Cronbach's α value of 0.85.

2.6.3. Positive Word-of-Mouth

The responses regarding positive word-of-mouth on a four-item scale was obtained from Carroll and Ahuvia [43]. These items generated an alpha value of 0.89.

2.6.4. Affective Commitment

Employee AC was measured with the help of a six-item scale, which has been adapted from the work of [40]. An alpha value of 0.80 was generated.

3. Results

Data were analyzed with the help of correlation, hierarchal regression, and AMOS 7.0 software. In the first step, we established the reliability of the study constructs. The outcomes presented in Table 2 confirmed that the construct's validity and reliability are established as the values of Alpha, Loading, CR and AVE are above the threshold proving that reliability and validity is not an issue.

Table 2. Validity.

Details	Items	Alpha	F-L	C-R	A.V.E
Employee Brand Love	10	0.79	0.73–0.91	0.82	0.68
Employee Loyalty	07	0.76	0.70–0.88	0.80	0.71
Positive Word-of-Mouth	04	0.81	0.76–0.90	0.84	0.73
Affective Commitment	06	0.74	0.71–0.93	0.81	0.69

In the second step of the study's analyses, we confirmed the correlation between constructs using the coefficients obtained through the correlation analysis. Table 3 contained the outcomes of correlation. The coefficients of correlation confirmed the positive direction of the relationship among all the study constructs. The findings revealed that employee brand love has a significant positive direction towards employee loyalty, AC and PWOM (0.32**; 0.21*; 0.25**), respectively. Furthermore, employee loyalty also has a positive direction towards AC and PWOM (0.30**; 0.23*), respectively. Finally, AC, which moderates on employee loyalty and the PWOM link, is also positively correlated with PWOM (0.17*). In the next step we tested the study hypotheses with the help of path analysis.

Table 3. Correlation.

Details	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gender	0.9	0.81	1							
Age	31	—	0.09	1						
Experience	2.8	0.84	0.08	0.03	1					
Education Level	2.4	0.91	0.06	0.05	0.04	1				
Employee Brand Love	3.8	0.93	0.09	0.12 *	0.08	0.07	1			
Employee Loyalty	3.5	0.91	0.05	0.09	0.04	0.05	0.32 **	1		
Positive Word-of-Mouth	3.9	0.95	0.03	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.21*	0.30 **	1	
Affective Commitment	3.6	0.90	0.08	0.03	0.04	0.09	0.25 **	0.23 *	0.17 *	1

Note: * *p* < 0.05, two tailed; ** *p* < 0.01, two tailed.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was done with the help of AMOS 7.0 software for the confirmation of model fitness. For the verification of the model's fitness, we have used four separate models with different configurations. Table 4 contains the outcomes of the CFA generated and the fourth model is a good fit (χ^2 = 141.31; *df* = 119; CFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.92 and RMESA = 0.05).

Table 4. CFA Approach showing results of model comparisons.

Model	$\chi 2$	df	RMESA	RMR	GFI	CFI
Hypothesized four-factor model	141.31	119	0.05	0.04	0.92	0.94
Three-factor model	137.11	113	0.09	0.25	0.87	0.84
Two-factor model	133.09	109	0.11	0.22	0.89	0.86
Single-factor model	140.21	114	0.13	0.34	0.86	0.82

Hypotheses Testing

After the satisfactory results of the correlation, reliability and validity for the study's constructs, in the next step we tested the study's hypotheses with the help of SEM. The outcomes of SEM are presented in Table 5. Among five study hypotheses, three hypotheses proposed a direct relationship. Table 5 contained the outcomes of a direct relationship between employee brand love, employee loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. The findings of the path analysis confirmed that employee brand love directly effects PWOM (0.24**). These findings accepted the proposed relationship of the study's H1. Secondly, H2 proposed a direct association between employee brand love and employee loyalty. The findings also confirmed that a proposed direct relationship between employee brand love and employee loyalty is positive at a significant level (0.39**). Therefore, we accepted the study's H2. Finally, we proposed a direct effect of employee loyalty on positive PWOM. The outcomes of the path analysis also confirmed the direct effect of employee loyalty on PWOM. The findings presented in Table 4 revealed that GSCM has a positive significant effect on EP (0.31**). Hence, we accepted the study's H3.

Table 5. SEM and Path-Analysis.

Details	Estimates	L-L	U-P
Standardized Direct Impact			
Employee Brand Love → Positive Word-of-Mouth	0.24 **	0.13	0.18
Employee Brand Love → Employee Loyalty	0.39 **	0.22	0.34
Employee Loyalty → Positive Word-of-Mouth	0.31 **	0.25	0.40

Note: two tailed; ** *p*< 0.01.

Furthermore, the study's H4 formulated for the mediation effect of employee loyalty between employee brand love and PWOM. The mediating role of employee loyalty was tested through the indirect effect of employee loyalty using SEM with the help of path analysis. The findings presented in Table 6 show that the standardized indirect effect of employee loyalty is significant for the direct effect of employee brand love and PWOM (0.16*). On the basis of outcomes generated through the path analysis of the indirect effect of employee loyalty, we accepted the study's H4.

Table 6. Indirect effect of employee loyalty.

Details	Estimates	L-L	U-P
Direct Impact (Standardized)			
Employee Brand Love → Positive Word-of-Mouth	0.13	−0.05	0.27
Employee Brand Love → Employee Loyalty	0.44 *	0.39	0.58
Employee Loyalty → Positive Word-of-Mouth	0.33 *	0.19	0.50
Standardized indirect effects			
Employee Brand Love → Employee Loyalty → Positive Word-of-Mouth	0.16 *	0.07	0.27

Note: * $p < 0.05$, two tailed.

The findings of the moderating effect of AC are presented in Table 7. The outcomes of hierarchical regressions revealed that AC significantly moderated the association between employee loyalty and PWOM. Analysis was conducted using three steps. In the first step, control variables were regressed for PWOM. In the second step, along with control variables, we included an independent variable (employee loyalty) and a moderating variable (AC) in the regression. Finally, we included an interaction term i.e., employee loyalty × AC in the regression to observe the strength of the moderation effect of AC. The findings revealed that AC positively moderates employee loyalty and PWOM links. Hence, we accepted the study's H5.

Table 7. Moderation Analysis.

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Moderation of Employee Affective Commitment			
Gender	0.028	0.010	0.009
Age	0.023	0.020	0.017
Work Experience	0.007	0.005	0.006
Educational Level	0.033	0.034	0.043
Employee Loyalty		0.30 **	0.33 **
Affective Commitment		0.22 **	0.26 **
Employee Loyalty × Affective Commitment			0.24 **
R^2	0.009	0.191	0.198
Adjusted R^2	0.003	0.159	0.175
Δ R^2	0.007	0.163	0.028
Δ F	4.172	79.63	17.13

Note: two tailed; ** $p < 0.01$.

4. Discussion

4.1. Theoretical Implications

The current study investigated the effects of employee brand love on PWOM and employee loyalty. The findings also proved the mediating role of employee loyalty on employee brand love and PWOM links. The current study tested five hypotheses and the findings of various analyses proved the study's hypotheses.

The research hypothesis H1, that employees love towards employer brands in the tourism sector has a positive effect on PWOM, has been accepted. The positive effect that employee brand love has on PWOM (0.24**) should be taken into account as it is statistically significant. It is therefore employee love towards brand and image that develops positive behavior, which necessarily impacts PWOM. Therefore, the findings support previous researchers who argued that the PWOM behavior of employee is developed with the help of employee brand love [11]. This means that employee brand love increases perceptions of employees' positive behavior. Therefore, this positive relationship suggests that the brand image of hospitality and tourism makes it possible to improve the employee love for a brand image as has been documented in the previous literature [13].

The study hypothesis H2, that employee love towards an employer brand has a positive effect on employee loyalty, has been accepted. This means that there is a statistically

significant positive effect of employee brand love on employee loyalty towards the employer. When employees have positive feelings for their employer's brand, i.e., customer relation and service quality, they are more committed towards the organization. These findings are aligned with past researchers who suggested that employees with brand love are more loyal to their organization [28]. Employees who like their organizational brand adhere to a high level of loyalty. Ref. [16] demonstrated that employee brand love is an important predictor for employees' loyalty towards their organization. These findings are in line with the results achieved by some previous authors [1]. Researchers in the field of marketing need to pay more attention to incorporate the individual level factor such as employee brand love for the improvement of loyalty of employees. The strength of this investigation denotes a review of employee brand love in bringing loyalty. Employee loyalty towards an organization is an important factor that enhances the employees' emotional attachment and sense of belongingness towards the organization [2]. Limited studies have highlighted the role of employee loyalty with respect to its determinant and outcomes. Therefore, to fill this gap in the existing knowledge, this research focuses on employee brand love as a potential determinant of employee loyalty.

The study's hypothesis H3, that employee loyalty has a positive effect on PWOM, has been accepted. This means that there is a statistically significant positive effect of employee loyalty on PWOM. When employees have positive feelings for their employer's brand they are more inclined towards positive behavior. However, the negative feelings of employees towards their employer's brand should be considered. Furthermore, the results of H3 revealed that employee loyalty positively and significantly predicts PWOM. These findings are similar to existing studies conducted by various researchers, i.e., [8,36]. These findings suggest that employees' loyalty increases the positive feelings of employees towards their organization which in turn causes them to demonstrate positive behavior. This research adds to the existing literature. The main contribution is the formulation of a model that tested the individual level factors for the improvement of PWOM. There are limited research studies that consider the individual level factors for boosting PWOM of employees.

Moreover, this study proved that employee loyalty works as mediator for employee brand love and PWOM links, i.e., our study hypothesis 4. The findings of the study revealed that employee brand love recorded significant indirect relationships with PWOM. Employee loyalty mediates between employee brand love and the PWOM link [1,14]. Finally, the study H5 proposed that AC moderates between employee loyalty and PWOM. The findings shows the interaction term, such as employee loyalty × AC of employee, has a significant effect on employee loyalty and PWOM links. The findings suggested that employees with a higher level of commitment are more inclined towards positive behavior. Employees' positive behavior is significant for the outcomes of PWOM communication. Hence, on the basis of the study's findings all the hypotheses are significantly proved.

The image of an employer's brand is the most important for the feelings and attitudes of employees in the tourism sector [4,25]. The present research has demonstrated that individual level factors are important in terms of their impact on the behavior of employees. The positive behavior of employees is determined by psychological factors such as brand love and loyalty [25]. These psychological factors at an individual level should not be forgotten, as brand love and loyalty is usually important for achieving PWOM. The current research extends the use of SEM methodology for researching individual level aspects in the tourism sector. Individual level aspects relating to employees in the tourism sector have previously been tested through a SEM approach in order to explain the performance and productivity of the tourism sector. The present research extends the understanding of employees' level of psychological aspects in the tourism sector by developing a comprehensive research model for PWOM instead of performance and productivity aspects.

4.2. Managerial Implication

The current study recommends that the management of the tourism sector must concentrate on brand management. First, the findings suggested that management can

develop the PWOM mechanism with the help of employee loyalty via employee brand love. By doing so, PWOM can only be achieved when organizations increase the level of employee loyalty. It is self-evident that employee brand love will set a strong foundation for developing both PWOM and the loyalty of the employees. PWOM relates to the extent to which employees are happy and satisfied with the brand and product and give proper information regarding that brand and product to others. Hence, PWOM is achieved with employee brand love through which employees become loyal and do right thing and avoid from wrong doings. Organizations should exercise brand management and concentrate on employee brand love and in response the employees of that organization are more inclined towards loyalty.

4.3. Limitations of the Study

This study has valuable theoretical and practical implications. However, the current study also has some limitations. First, the current study was conducted on the tourism sector and collected data were self-reported and there is a possibility of inflated correlations. Second, for the current study we applied a cross sectional design for the collection of data and testing the study results and hence claims of causality is limited. Third, the current study tested the relational impact of brand love on brand loyalty and PWOM based on social identity theory and ignored the other theories that explain the psychological determinants of PWOM. The findings of the current study's reliance on hypothetical consequences and self-reporting analyses are also a methodological drawback. In addition, the current study only focused on the tourism sector, which is a limitation of generalizability.

5. Conclusions

The study in hand was conducted to examine the relationship between employee brand love, employee loyalty, the AC of employees and positive word of mouth. In this study we proposed that employee brand love developed employee loyalty which in turn enhanced PWOM behavior. The findings confirmed that employee brand love positively determined employee loyalty. Furthermore, employee loyalty significantly predicted PWOM. Moreover, the mediating role of employee loyalty also proved for the link of employee brand love and PWOM. Finally, the findings revealed that AC significantly moderated employee intention and the PWOM link.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of UKM Malaysia (RDNo, 578-987; 28 September 2022).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The raw data which support the conclusions of the current article will be made available on demand.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Employee brand love
The brand of my company is wonderful.
The brand of my company makes me feel good.
The brand of my company is awesome.
I have neutral feelings about my company brand.
The brand of my company makes me happy.
I love my company brand

I am passionate about the company brand
Positive word of mouth
I always recommended my company to lots of people.
I give my company's brand tons of positive word of mouth advertising.
I always talk up about the brand to my friends.
I try to spread the good word about my company's brand.
Affective commitment
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in my current organization.
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
I don't feel like part of the family at my organization.
I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization.
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

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