Examining the Impact of Brand Identity on Customer Loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia. Employing a positivist research paradigm, a quantitative approach was adopted using a cross-sectional research design. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire from a stratified random sample of 272 customers, representing both corporate and general client segments. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the relationships between constructs. Path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values were examined to determine the significance of each relationship. Among the tested paths, Brand Values ($\beta = 0.527$, $p = 0.001$) showed a strong and significant influence on Customer Loyalty, followed by Brand Visual Identity ($\beta = 0.076$, $p = 0.323$) and Brand Consistency ($\beta = 0.154$, $p = 0.173$), though the latter two were not statistically significant. Brand Personality ($\beta = -0.017$, $p = 0.639$) showed a weak and non-significant effect. Additionally, Customer Perception was found to significantly mediate the relationship between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty ($p = 0.001$). The model's explanatory power was reflected in an R^2 value of 0.581 for Customer Loyalty, indicating that the independent variables explained 58.1% of its variance. Reliability and validity tests confirmed the robustness of the measurement model, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the recommended thresholds, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) confirming convergent validity. The study highlights the critical role of brand values and customer perception in fostering loyalty, suggesting that brand personality and consistency may influence loyalty indirectly or under certain conditions. The study offers valuable insights for brand managers and marketing strategists in the logistics and energy sectors. It emphasises the importance of crafting a consistent, value-driven, and customer-aligned brand identity to foster loyalty and sustain a competitive edge. This research also contributes to the limited body of knowledge on brand identity in emerging African markets and recommends further cross-sectoral studies to validate and expand these findings. Building on the limitations identified, several avenues for future research are recommended. For example, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, or case studies could provide deeper insights into customer perceptions and experiences, offering richer context beyond what structured questionnaires capture.

Keywords: Brand Identity, Customer Loyalty, Brand Values, Customer Perception, PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling), Service Branding, Visual Identity

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this research is entirely original. The Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business at the Namibia University of Science and Technology accepts it as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Leadership and Change Management. It has never been submitted to another university for the purpose of a degree or examination. I also affirm that I had the proper approval and consent to conduct this study.

25 July 2025

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Signed: Frans Shiku Kalenga Date:

APPROVAL

This thesis/dissertation has been submitted for examination with the approval of the following supervisor:

Supervisor title & Name: Prof. Africa Makasi **Role:** Main Supervisor

Signature: **Date:** 25 July 2025

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved family.

To my wife, Naomi, whose unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been my constant source of strength throughout this journey.

To my children, Tracy, George, and Eloy, you inspire me every day to strive for excellence and to leave behind a legacy of hard work and perseverance.

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This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

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1. Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, a brand's identity plays a pivotal role in shaping customer perceptions and influencing loyalty (Hasanah, Hefniy & Zaini, 2023). Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services, a leading player in the Namibian logistics industry, has a unique position in the market. However, with the increase in competition and evolving customer expectations, understanding the role of brand identity in driving customer loyalty is vital for long-term success. Brand identity encompasses the visible elements of a brand such as logos, design, and messaging, along with intangible factors like values, trust, and emotional connection (Fan, Hsu, & Liu,2023). This research sought to explore the critical link between Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services' brand identity and customer loyalty in Namibia. By understanding how brand identity influences customer perceptions, trust and emotional attachment, Sonangol can leverage its identity to foster stronger customer loyalty, leading to improved business performance and competitive advantage in the logistics industry. The study could provide actionable insights for Sonangol to refine its strategies, ensuring long-term customer retention and satisfaction.

1.1. Background of the study

Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) is a subsidiary of Sonangol Group, a leading state-owned oil and gas company based in Angola. SONILS was established to provide comprehensive logistics solutions for the oil, gas, and general industries in Africa, including transportation, warehousing, and supply chain management services. The company operates across various sectors, including energy, mining and agriculture, offering services that streamline operations in both domestic and international markets. In Namibia, SONILS has been a key player in providing efficient logistics solutions, specialising in the safe and timely delivery of goods and equipment. As part of its expansion strategy, Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services aims to strengthen its market presence through reliable and customer-centric services, leveraging modern technology and operational expertise. The company's brand identity is closely linked to its values of reliability, quality, and customer satisfaction, which help build trust and loyalty in its diverse customer base.

While brand identity and customer loyalty have been well-studied in various industries, for example, (Hasanah et.al, 2023; Chiang & Chen, 2023, Andersen, Åberg, & Bujac, 2023), there is limited research specifically focused on the logistics sector in Namibia, particularly regarding how brand identity influences customer loyalty (Ozanian, 2025). Much of the existing research on brand loyalty in the logistics sector focuses on tangible factors such as service quality and cost, but little attention has been given to how emotional attachment to a brand identity influences loyalty (Bravo, Pina, & Tirado, 2025). Furthermore, while consistency in brand messaging across touchpoints (service quality, communication, and digital presence) is a well-established concept in branding literature, there is insufficient research on how brand consistency specifically influences loyalty in the Namibian logistics market. One of the research's sub-objectives seeks to investigate how Sonangol's brand messaging are perceived across different customer touchpoints in Namibia. This would offer insights into how service consistency across channels (such as customer service, online presence, and physical interactions) contributes to customer loyalty in the logistics sector.

Due to the limited research on how specific brand values (e.g., innovation, reliability, sustainability) impact loyalty, there is an opportunity to assess how Sonangol's core brand values resonate with Namibian customers and how they influence loyalty. For example, how do customers perceive the brand's commitment to sustainability, innovation, or ethical business practices? Understanding these perceptions can help Sonangol align its values with customer expectations. There is a need to adapt existing brand identity and loyalty models to better fit the specific context of Namibia, considering factors such as market maturity, customer expectations, and cultural nuances. Developing a context-specific model for Sonangol can enhance the practical relevance of the findings.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS), though well-established in the energy sector, faces growing challenges in asserting a clear and consistent brand identity within Namibia's competitive logistics industry. As the market becomes increasingly saturated with both local and international players, SONILS struggles to differentiate itself in ways that foster customer trust and long-term loyalty. Its brand messaging lacks consistency across key customer touchpoints such as online platforms, physical service locations, and customer support interactions, creating a fragmented brand image that may undermine credibility and weaken emotional engagement. Customers increasingly expect brands to demonstrate reliability, innovation, and authenticity across all engagement channels. However, internal reports indicate that SONILS' clients often question whether the company's stated brand values such as trust, professionalism, and efficiency are truly embedded in their service experience. This disconnect between SONILS' projected brand identity and customer perceptions may limit its ability to build strong emotional connections, which are critical for retaining customers in high-value logistics services (Nguyen & Wang, 2023).

Brand identity, encompassing elements like logo, messaging, visual design, brand personality, and core values, plays a fundamental role in influencing how customers perceive and relate to a company (Keller, 2020). In the logistics sector, where service differentiation can be subtle, a well-articulated brand identity can be the decisive factor in customer loyalty (Singh & Ahmed, 2022). A consistent and emotionally resonant brand presence not only influences repeat business but also shapes word-of-mouth recommendations and long-term customer advocacy.

The literature widely acknowledges that customer loyalty is central to strengthening and sustaining brand identity. Loyal customers contribute to the reinforcement of a brand's core attributes and values, helping shape a consistent and authentic brand image over time (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2001). According to Keller's (2001) Brand Resonance Model, loyalty represents the most advanced level of customers' psychological attachment to a brand, which reflects deep emotional connections and shared values, all of which are central to brand identity formation and maintenance.

Empirical research supports this. For example, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) examined the impact of brand trust and its effect on customer loyalty and found that customers who felt emotionally invested in a brand were more likely to repurchase and advocate for the brand. This advocacy, often fuelled by strong loyalty, enhances the brand's reputation and reinforces its identity in the minds of other consumers. Similarly, Pappu and Quester (2016) demonstrated that loyal customers act as informal ambassadors, strengthening brand awareness and ensuring consistent brand messaging across different touchpoints.

Additionally, Fournier (1998) posited that loyal customers build long-term relationships with brands, allowing those brands to evolve into distinct personalities that customers recognize, value, and feel emotionally attached to. In this sense, loyalty and identity are mutually reinforcing as customers become more loyal, they experience the brand as more authentic and distinctive, and as the brand becomes more clearly defined, customers' commitment grows.

More recently, He et al. (2012) highlighted that customer loyalty enhances the brand's equity and differentiation. They showed that loyalty reduces customers' sensitivity to competitive offerings and allows brands to consistently deliver on their promises. This consistency further strengthens the brand's perceived identity and authenticity. Overall, literature agrees that cultivating loyalty is crucial for sustaining a strong brand identity. Loyal customers contribute to a stable and credible identity by supporting the brand over time, participating in its co-creation, and becoming vocal champions of its values ultimately enabling the brand to stand apart in a crowded marketplace. Despite the importance of these factors, there is limited empirical research on how brand identity directly impacts customer loyalty within Namibia's logistics sector (Ozanian, 2025). This knowledge gap leaves SONILS without a solid evidence base to guide brand strategy. As the Namibian logistics landscape evolves, there is an urgent need to understand how brand identity contributes to customer satisfaction, emotional attachment, and loyalty outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of SONILS' brand identity on customer loyalty.

1.3. Significance of the study

This research is significant to practice, policy and theory. Firstly, the results will provide Sonangol with actionable insights on how to refine its brand identity to improve customer loyalty and enhance its market position in Namibia. Secondly, the present study will contribute to the understanding of the role of brand identity in the logistics industry, which is often overlooked in comparison to other sectors. Lastly, the research will add to the body of knowledge regarding brand identity and customer loyalty, particularly in the context of the Namibian logistics market within the broader oil and gas industry.

1.4. Objectives of the study

1.4.1. Main research objective

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of Brand Identity on Customer Loyalty.

1.4.2. Sub-objectives

To provide detailed answers to the above main objective, the following sub-objectives will be addressed:

a) To assess the influence of brand visual identity on customer perception.
b) To examine the influence of brand perception on brand loyalty
c) To determine the role of brand values in driving customer loyalty.
d) To determine the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty.
e) To examine the impact of brand consistency on customer loyalty.
f) To examine the mediating effect of customer perception on the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty.

1.5. Research Hypotheses

In line with the sub-objectives stated above, the following research hypotheses will be tested:

a) **H_1**: Brand visual identity has a positive influence on customer perception.
b) **H_2**: Customer perception has a positive influence on customer loyalty.
c) **H_3**: Brand values positively influence customer loyalty.
d) **H_4**: Brand personality has a positive influence on customer loyalty.
e) **H_5**: Brand consistency has a positive influence on customer loyalty.
f) **H_6**: Customer perception mediates the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty.

1.6. Contribution of the study

This study provides valuable insights into how brand identity influences customer loyalty within the logistics sector, specifically focusing on Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) in Namibia. Academically, it contributes to the growing body of literature on branding and customer relationship management by exploring under-researched dimensions such as brand consistency, visual identity, and the mediating role of customer perception in a B2B and B2C logistics environment. The study also contextualizes global branding theories within an African corporate setting, offering localized insights that are often missing in mainstream literature. Practically, the findings can guide SONILS and similar firms in developing effective brand strategies that foster deeper customer engagement and retention. By identifying which brand identity components most strongly drive loyalty, the study helps managers allocate resources more effectively to strengthen brand-customer relationships. Moreover, it offers a framework for enhancing customer trust and advocacy, which are essential for sustaining competitiveness in the logistics industry. Overall, the study bridges academic theory and managerial practice, offering evidence-based recommendations that can improve brand performance and customer loyalty in emerging market contexts like Namibia.

1.7. Contribution and gaps to be closed

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by addressing a critical gap in branding and customer loyalty research within the logistics sector, particularly in the African context. While numerous studies have examined brand identity and customer loyalty in consumer goods and service industries, limited research has been conducted on how brand identity dimensions—such as visual identity, brand values, personality, and consistency influence loyalty in logistics firms operating in emerging markets like Namibia. The study also addresses the underexplored mediating role of customer perception in the relationship between brand identity and loyalty, offering new theoretical insights. By applying established branding theories—such as Keller's Brand Resonance Model, Relationship Marketing Theory, and the Theory of Brand Trust—within a B2B and B2C logistics setting, the study provides context-specific findings that extend the generalisability of these models. Methodologically, the use of Smart PLS to test structural relationships among latent variables further strengthens the study's contribution by employing advanced analytical tools. In sum, this study closes key empirical and contextual gaps while contributing to theoretical development, offering actionable insights for both academics and practitioners interested in branding and loyalty within the logistics and transportation sectors.

1.8. Delimitations of the study

This study was delimited to customers of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) in Namibia, focusing specifically on both corporate and individual clients who had engaged with the company's logistics services. The inclusion of these two customer categories was intentional to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how brand identity influences loyalty across distinct market segments. The study was further delimited to examining only four dimensions of brand identity—visual identity, brand values, brand personality, and brand consistency—based on their frequent validation in prior branding literature (Aaker, 1996;

Kapferer, 2008). These dimensions were considered the most relevant and measurable for the logistics service context. Other brand-related variables such as brand heritage, corporate social responsibility, or pricing strategies were excluded to maintain focus and ensure manageable scope. Geographically, the study was restricted to Namibia due to access to SONILS' customer database and the relevance of its logistics operations within that market. The study also employed a quantitative research approach using a structured questionnaire, thereby excluding qualitative insights such as in-depth interviews. This was justified by the study's aim to establish statistically testable relationships between variables. These delimitations helped ensure focus, feasibility, and alignment with the study's objectives and research philosophy.

1.9. Limitations of the study

While this study offers valuable insights into the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS), it is not without limitations. Firstly, the study relied solely on a quantitative research design using structured questionnaires, which limited the depth of responses and excluded rich, qualitative perspectives that could have provided a more nuanced understanding of customer experiences. Secondly, the research was cross-sectional in nature, capturing data at a single point in time; this approach limits the ability to observe changes in brand perception or loyalty over time, which a longitudinal study could have addressed. Thirdly, the sample was confined to customers within Namibia, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings to other geographical or cultural contexts. Additionally, although the sample size was statistically adequate, the response rate (78%) and the use of self-reported data introduce potential biases such as social desirability and non-response bias. Finally, the study focused on specific dimensions of brand identity, excluding others like brand heritage or corporate social responsibility, which may also influence customer loyalty. These limitations suggest areas for future research, including mixed-method approaches, broader geographic scopes, and the inclusion of additional brand-related variables.

1.10. Outline of the study

This study is structured into six main chapters, each serving a specific purpose in addressing the research problem and objectives.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by presenting the background and context within which the research was conducted. It defines the research problem, outlines the main objectives and research questions, and specifies the hypotheses to be tested. Additionally, the chapter discusses the significance of the study, its scope, limitations, and delimitations, and provides definitions of key terms. An overview of the structure of the study is also presented.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews and synthesizes relevant theoretical and empirical literature related to brand identity and customer loyalty. It discusses key theories underpinning the study, including the Brand Resonance Model, Relationship Marketing Theory, and the Theory of Brand Trust. The chapter also explores studies on the various dimensions of brand identity—visual identity, brand values, brand personality, and brand consistency—as well as the mediating role of customer perception. Literature gaps are identified to justify the need for the current research.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted in the study. It explains the research philosophy, design, and strategy, and details the quantitative approach taken. The chapter also describes the population, sampling techniques, sample size calculation, and procedures used for data collection. It further outlines the structure and validation of the research instrument, explains the pilot testing process, and discusses the data analysis strategy using Smart PLS-SEM. Ethical considerations, reliability, and validity measures are also addressed.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents and analyses the empirical findings from the study. It includes descriptive statistics and the results of Structural Equation Modelling. The analysis is divided into two key components: the assessment of the outer (measurement) model and the inner (structural) model. Key results such as path coefficients, R^2 values, effect sizes, and the significance of hypothesized relationships are reported and interpreted.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses the results in light of the theoretical framework and empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. It interprets the findings in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses, highlighting how the results contribute to theoretical understanding and practical applications. Differences and similarities with previous studies are also examined.

Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The final chapter summarizes the entire study, drawing together key insights and conclusions based on the findings. It provides practical recommendations for SONILS and other logistics firms aiming to enhance brand identity and customer loyalty. The chapter also highlights the study's contributions to academic literature, outlines limitations, and offers suggestions for future research.

1.11. Chapter Summary

Chapter One introduced the study by outlining the background and rationale for investigating the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) in Namibia. It established the growing importance of brand identity in shaping customer perceptions and driving loyalty, particularly in the competitive logistics industry. The chapter defined the research problem, emphasising the limited understanding of how specific dimensions of brand identity such as visual identity, brand values, personality, and consistency impact customer loyalty in an African context. The chapter also articulated the main aim of the study, which is to examine the effect of brand identity on customer loyalty, and outlined specific research objectives and questions, including the potential mediating role of customer perception. Hypotheses were developed to guide the quantitative investigation. The scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study were also clarified, ensuring a focused and feasible research design. The chapter concluded with an overview of the structure of the entire study. The next chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing literature to identify theoretical, conceptual, and empirical gaps that the present study seeks to address.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to understanding the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty. It begins by defining key concepts and exploring foundational theories that explain how brand identity influences customer behaviour, including Keller's Brand Resonance Model, Relationship Marketing Theory, and the Theory of Brand Trust. The chapter then examines the various dimensions of brand identity such as visual identity, brand values, brand personality, and brand consistency and their individual impacts on customer loyalty, supported by findings from prior empirical studies. Additionally, the mediating role of customer perception in strengthening or shaping the link between brand identity and loyalty is reviewed. By synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying gaps within the literature, this chapter establishes the theoretical foundation and justification for the current study, particularly within the context of the logistics industry in Namibia.

2.1. Conceptual Literature

The key concepts in the study are brand identity and customer loyalty. Brand identity encompasses the visual, verbal, and emotional elements that distinguish a brand and resonate with target audiences. Tahir, Ahmad, and Nawaz (2024) argue that a strong brand identity fosters recognition, credibility, and emotional connections, forming a foundation for customer loyalty. The authors assert that well-designed visual elements logos, colours, typography help embed brands in consumers' minds and support consistent repurchase behaviour. Similarly, recent work by Affonso & Janiszewski (2023) highlights how perceptual structure in brand visuals enhances brand associations and builds trust, improving consumer perceptions and loyalty. Affonso & Janiszewski (2023) further posit that emotional connections further strengthen this linkage. Emotional branding strategies that tap into consumers' deeper aspirations foster lasting attachments, resulting in higher loyalty even amid competitors. Personalization, community, and purpose have also been identified as modern loyalty levers; brands that align identity with consumer values and foster belonging elicit stronger loyalty. Empirical review by Yazdi et al. (2024) confirms the central role of brand identity in loyalty across 1,468 studies, noting trends like brand love, identification, and emotion as key. similarly asserts that trust, emotional resonance, recognition, and differentiation-rooted in brand identity are core mechanisms underpinning loyalty.

Brand identity is widely recognized as a strategic asset that shapes how customers perceive and engage with a brand. It includes visual elements, brand personality, and communicated values that collectively influence customer recognition and emotional attachment. Affonso and Janiszewski (2023) emphasised the importance of perceptual structure in brand visuals, showing that effective visual identity strengthens brand associations and fosters consumer trust, thereby influencing loyalty outcomes. Similarly, Bettels and Wiedmann (2024) demonstrated that graphic design elements directly impact consumer perception, which is crucial in developing a coherent and appealing brand identity.

Customer loyalty is understood as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing behavioural loyalty (repeat purchases) and attitudinal loyalty (emotional commitment). Weiss, Martín-Tapia, and Romero (2023) found that positive customer perceptions mediate the relationship between brand experiences and loyalty, suggesting that how a customer perceives the brand is vital for sustained loyalty. Tahir, Ahmad, and Nawaz (2024) further confirmed that brand image and customer perception positively affect loyalty in the tourism sector, highlighting the role of trust and satisfaction.

Recent research also underscores the emotional and symbolic functions of brand identity in fostering loyalty. Sohaib and Hosany (2023) showed that brand personality contributes to brand equity by creating emotional bonds that enhance loyalty. Meanwhile, Mohammadi et al. (2023) linked perceived brand authenticity, rooted in consistent brand values, to stronger customer loyalty. Therefore, recent empirical studies confirm that a well-managed brand identity, through its visual, emotional, and value-based components, significantly shapes customer perception and loyalty, making it a critical focus for marketing management.

2.1.1. The influence of brand visual identity on customer perception.

Literature highlights that brand visual identity plays a crucial role in shaping customer perception by serving as the most immediate and tangible representation of a brand. Visual elements such as logos, colours, typography, and packaging function as key signals that customers use to form initial impressions and ongoing attitudes toward a brand (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996).

According to Affonso and Janiszewski (2023), a strong and distinctive visual identity enhances brand recognition and recall, which positively influences how customers perceive the brand's quality and credibility. Visual identity elements communicate the brand's personality and values implicitly, helping customers to associate specific attributes with the brand. For example, consistent use of colours and logo styles can evoke emotions and reinforce the brand's positioning in the customer's mind (Affonso & Janiszewski, 2023). Brand visual identity plays a crucial role in shaping customer perception by influencing how consumers interpret brand meaning through design elements such as logos, typography, and colour schemes (Affonso & Janiszewski, 2023; Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024). When executed effectively, visual identity enhances clarity, recognition, and perceived professionalism (Shagyrov & Shamoi, 2024; He & Pillai, 2025). Studies have shown that customers form rapid judgments based on visual stimuli, which impact brand associations and preference (Kohli & Suri, 2022; Lencastre et al., 2023).

Studies also emphasise that visual identity impacts customer perception by creating expectations about the brand experience. Well-designed visual cues can signal professionalism, reliability, and innovation, which contribute to favourable brand perceptions and build trust (Kapferer, 2008). Conversely, inconsistent or poorly designed visual identity may lead to confusion or negative perceptions, weakening customer confidence.

Furthermore, visual identity is critical in differentiating a brand within competitive markets, guiding customers' choices by making the brand more memorable and easier to identify (He & Pillai, 2025). Overall, literature suggests that brand visual identity strongly influences customer perception by shaping recognition, emotional responses, and cognitive associations, all of which are foundational for building lasting customer relationships. Therefore, based on the above reviewed literature, the first hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

***H*$_1$**: *Brand visual identity has a positive influence on customer perception.*

2.1.2. The influence of brand perception on brand loyalty

Brand perception refers to the overall impression and mental image that customers hold about a brand, which is shaped by their experiences, interactions, and exposure to brand-related information (Keller, 1993). It encompasses beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about the brand, which collectively influence how customers evaluate its value and relevance. The literature consistently demonstrates that brand perception plays a critical role in fostering brand loyalty, serving as a foundation for customer satisfaction, trust, and emotional attachment. Customer perception significantly impacts customer loyalty by influencing satisfaction, trust, and emotional attachment (Weiss et al., 2023; Tahir et al., 2024). When customers perceive a brand positively, they are more likely to remain loyal and engage in repeat purchase behaviour (Angeline et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2023).

A key theoretical framework explaining this relationship is Oliver's (1999) loyalty model, which emphasises the importance of positive customer experiences and perceptions in building attitudinal loyalty, a deep psychological commitment to a brand. Customers who perceive a brand positively tend to develop emotional connections, leading to higher levels of trust and satisfaction. These emotional bonds create a sense of loyalty that goes beyond rational considerations such as price or convenience, motivating customers to repurchase and advocate for the brand (Mohammadi et al., 2023).

Research also highlights that brand perception influences both loyalty, the actual repeat purchasing behaviour and attitudinal loyalty, which is the customer's favourable disposition and commitment toward the brand (Weiss et al., 2023). While behavioural loyalty can be driven by external factors like promotions, attitudinal loyalty stems from positive brand perceptions and is more resistant to competitors' efforts to lure customers away. This makes brand perception a more sustainable predictor of long-term loyalty.

Positive brand perceptions enhance customers' trust and reduce perceived risks associated with purchasing decisions. Trust in a brand assures customers of consistent quality and reliable service, which encourages continued patronage (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Conversely, negative or weak brand perceptions can lead to dissatisfaction, erode trust, and result in customer defection (Weiss et al., 2023). Moreover, literature points to the role of brand perception in setting and managing customer expectations. When customers perceive a brand as reliable, innovative, and aligned with their values, these expectations positively influence satisfaction and loyalty (Fournier, 1998). Brands that consistently deliver on their promises reinforce favourable perceptions, strengthening customer commitment and advocacy. Advocacy, where loyal customers actively recommend the brand to others, further enhances brand equity and creates a virtuous cycle of loyalty (Keller, 2001).

Studies also reveal that emotional attachment, derived from positive brand perceptions, is a significant mediator between perception and loyalty. Emotional connections motivate customers to forgive occasional service failures and remain loyal despite competitive alternatives (Tahir et al., 2024).

The reviewed literature firmly establishes that brand perception is a critical determinant of brand loyalty. Positive perceptions foster trust, satisfaction, emotional attachment, and advocacy, all of which contribute to long-term loyalty. For companies aiming to build and sustain loyal customer bases, managing brand perception through consistent messaging, quality delivery, and alignment with customer values is essential. Therefore, based on the above reviewed literature, the second hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

***H_2**: Customer perception has a positive influence on customer loyalty.*

2.1.3. The role of brand values in driving customer loyalty.

Brand values represent the fundamental beliefs and principles that guide a company's behaviour, culture, and interactions with customers. These values communicate what a brand stands for beyond its products or services, shaping customers' perceptions and emotional connections to the brand (Kapferer, 2008). The literature consistently highlights that brand values play a crucial role in driving customer loyalty by fostering trust, emotional attachment, and alignment with customers' own beliefs.

Although often cited as critical, the direct influence of brand values on customer loyalty may vary by context. Studies suggest that unless brand values are clearly communicated and aligned with customer expectations, they may have a limited impact on loyalty (Tahir et al., 2024; Angeline et al., 2023). However, when integrated with authentic brand experiences, values can enhance emotional engagement and brand trust (Wilson et al., 2024).

Trust is another critical dimension through which brand values impact loyalty. Customers tend to trust brands that consistently demonstrate ethical behaviour and authenticity in upholding their values (Wilson et al., 2024; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). This trust reduces perceived risk and enhances customer confidence in the brand, encouraging repeat purchases and ongoing engagement. When brands fail to live up to their stated values, customers may experience cognitive dissonance, leading to dissatisfaction and erosion of loyalty (Wilson et al., 2024).

Furthermore, brand values contribute to customer loyalty by differentiating the brand in competitive markets. In contexts where products or services are similar, shared values can be a deciding factor in customer preference. For instance, brands that emphasise environmental sustainability appeal to customers who prioritize eco-friendly consumption, fostering loyalty among this segment (Kotler & Keller, 2016). By communicating and embodying authentic values, brands create unique emotional experiences that strengthen customer loyalty beyond functional benefits. Empirical studies support the positive link between brand values and loyalty. For example, Singh and Ahmed (2022) found that customers' perception of brand values such as reliability, innovation, and trustworthiness significantly predicted their loyalty intentions. Emotional engagement, fuelled by these values, was shown to mediate the relationship between brand values and loyalty behaviours.

Moreover, brand values encourage advocacy behaviour, where loyal customers act as brand ambassadors, recommending the brand to others. This advocacy is valuable as it enhances brand reputation and attracts new customers through word-of-mouth, creating a virtuous cycle of loyalty (Wilson et al., 2024; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, based on the above reviewed literature, the third hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

***H_3**: Brand values positively influence customer loyalty.*

2.1.4. The effect of brand personality on customer loyalty.

Brand personality, that is, human traits attributed to a brand, can influence loyalty by fostering emotional connections and identity alignment (Rahman et al., 2024; Sohaib & Hosany, 2023).

Brand personality refers to the set of human characteristics and traits that customers attribute to a brand, which shape how they relate emotionally and cognitively to it (Aaker, 1997). These personality traits such as sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness help humanize a brand and create deeper connections with customers. However, this effect is not always direct or significant and may depend on how well the personality traits resonate with the target audience (Mohammadi et al., 2023; Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024).

In the context of this study, examining the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty is essential to understanding how these perceived traits influence customers' commitment and repeat patronage of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS).

The literature consistently demonstrates that brand personality significantly impacts customer loyalty by fostering emotional attachment and identification. When customers perceive a brand as having personality traits that resonate with their own self-image or ideal self, they are more likely to form strong affective bonds with the brand (Malär et al., 2011; Rahman et al., 2024). This emotional connection enhances loyalty beyond rational considerations such as price or convenience, resulting in higher levels of repeat business, advocacy, and resistance to competitive offers (Sung & Kim, 2010).

Brand personality also plays a crucial role in differentiating a brand in competitive markets, particularly in industries where functional attributes are similar across providers (Rahman et al., 2024). A distinctive and appealing brand personality can create a unique brand identity that attracts and retains customers. For SONILS, projecting traits like professionalism, dependability, and innovation can align with customer expectations and increase satisfaction, which in turn reinforces loyalty (Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024). Moreover, brand personality contributes to perceived brand trustworthiness and credibility, which are important antecedents of loyalty. Competence and sincerity traits, for example, signal reliability and integrity, encouraging customers to develop confidence in the brand (Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust reduces perceived risk in purchasing decisions and enhances customers' willingness to maintain long-term relationships with the brand.

Empirical studies support the link between brand personality and customer loyalty. For instance, research by Rahman et al., (2024), and subsequent studies have found that brand personality positively influences customer attitudes, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions. Customers who identify with a brand's personality are more engaged and exhibit stronger brand commitment. This engagement often translates into behavioural loyalty, including repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Rahman et al., 2024). Additionally, brand personality can enhance customer experience by making interactions with the brand more relatable and enjoyable. This positive experiential aspect fosters deeper loyalty by creating memorable and meaningful customer-brand relationships (Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024; Thomson, Rahman et al., 2024).

In summary, the literature suggests that brand personality plays a vital role in cultivating customer loyalty by fostering emotional attachment, trust, and differentiation. For SONILS, cultivating a brand personality that resonates with its customer base can strengthen loyalty and promote long-term business success. Understanding and managing brand personality dimensions is therefore critical for building enduring customer relationships in the logistics services sector. Therefore, based on the above reviewed literature, the fourth hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

H_4: *Brand personality has a positive influence on customer loyalty*.

2.1.5. The impact of brand consistency on customer loyalty.

Brand consistency refers to the uniformity and coherence of brand messaging, visuals, and experiences across all customer touchpoints over time (Tahir et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). Maintaining consistency in how a brand is presented and experienced plays a critical role in shaping customer perceptions, building trust, and ultimately driving customer loyalty. In the context of this study on Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS), examining the impact of brand consistency is essential to understanding how delivering a stable and reliable brand experience influences customer commitment and repeat patronage (Tahir et al., 2024).

Extant literature extensively supports the importance of brand consistency in fostering customer loyalty. Consistent brand communications and experiences help create a clear, recognizable brand image, which strengthens brand awareness and recall (Tahir et al., 2024). When customers receive the same quality, messaging, and service experience every time they interact with a brand, it reduces uncertainty and builds confidence in the brand's reliability (Wilson et al., 2024). This reliability is especially vital, in service industries like logistics, where customers depend on timely and accurate delivery of services.

Brand consistency reinforces customer trust, a key antecedent of loyalty (Wilson et al., 2024; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust develops when customers perceive that a brand reliably delivers on its promises without significant variations. This trust reduces perceived risks associated with service failures or inconsistencies, encouraging customers to maintain long-term relationships. Inconsistent brand experiences, on the other hand, create confusion and disappointment, which can erode trust and lead to customer defection (Tahir et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). Moreover, consistent branding helps align customer expectations with actual experiences, fostering satisfaction and loyalty. Customers who know what to expect from a brand and receive that expected experience repeatedly are more likely to develop positive attitudes and emotional attachments (Oliver, 1999). This emotional connection strengthens loyalty by motivating customers to return and recommend the brand to others (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

While brand consistency is widely acknowledged as important for building trust and recognition, its direct impact on customer loyalty remains a subject of debate. Consistent messaging and visual identity across multiple touchpoints help establish a coherent brand image, which in turn fosters consumer confidence (Tahir et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). Customers are more likely to trust brands that present themselves reliably and predictably over time. However, some scholars argue that consistency, while necessary, is not sufficient on its own to generate loyalty. Without meaningful value propositions, emotional connection, or relevance to the consumer’s needs, consistency may become superficial (Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024). Therefore, to translate consistency into loyalty, brands must ensure that their messaging also conveys authenticity, emotional resonance, and customer-centric value. In sum, consistency builds the foundation for loyalty, but it must be paired with compelling brand values and customer experiences to have a significant effect.

In the logistics sector, where service quality and dependability are critical, brand consistency takes on added importance. SONILS’ ability to present a unified brand image across its communications, customer service, and operational performance can enhance customers’ confidence and loyalty. Ensuring that the brand’s values, personality, and promises are consistently reflected in every customer interaction helps build a coherent brand identity that customers trust and prefer (Wilson et al., 2024).

Extant literature posits that brand consistency significantly impacts customer loyalty by strengthening brand recognition, building trust, aligning expectations, and fostering emotional bonds (Tahir et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). For SONILS, maintaining a consistent brand experience is crucial to developing and sustaining loyal customer relationships in the competitive logistics services industry. Effective management of brand consistency can therefore serve as a strategic tool to enhance customer retention and drive long-term business growth. Therefore, based on the above reviewed literature, the fifth hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

***H_5**: Brand consistency has a positive influence on customer loyalty.*

2.1.6. The mediating effect of customer perception on the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty.

Brand visual identity encompasses the visual elements of a brand such as logos, colours, typography, and design that serve as the first point of contact and a powerful communication tool with customers (Aaker, 1996; He & Pillai, 2025). These visual cues create immediate impressions and influence how customers perceive the brand. However, the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty is complex and often indirect. This study investigates the mediating role of customer perception in this relationship, recognizing that visual identity alone does not directly translate to loyalty but rather shapes the perceptions that ultimately drive loyal behaviour. Customer perception serves as a crucial mediating variable in the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty. While visual identity elements such as logos, typography, colour schemes, and packaging form the first point of interaction between a brand and its audience, their real power lies in how they are interpreted and internalized by customers (He & Pillai, 2025). According to He and Pillai (2025), well-crafted visual identity enhances brand perception by projecting clarity, professionalism, and emotional appeal, which strengthens the customer's psychological connection to the brand. This favourable perception then becomes a key driver of loyalty, including repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth.

Susilawati et al. (2024) emphasise that the customer's interpretation of visual cues directly influences how the brand is evaluated in terms of quality, trustworthiness, and relevance. These perceptions are instrumental in forming lasting brand relationships. Importantly, as Angeline et al. (2023) suggest, visual identity goes beyond mere aesthetics; it signals the brand's values, personality, and commitment to its audience. When these signals align with customer expectations, they reinforce emotional bonds, which are a foundation of brand loyalty. Furthermore, Shagyrov and Shamoi (2024) highlight that specific design choices such as colour palettes associated with emotions can evoke trust, excitement, or sophistication, thus influencing both perception and subsequent loyalty. Therefore, the visual identity must be intentional, strategic, and aligned with the brand's core message. In essence, visual identity builds the perceptual bridge that leads customers from awareness to emotional loyalty, underscoring the importance of perception in branding strategy.

Literature highlights that brand visual identity plays a crucial role in forming and shaping customer perceptions. Strong, consistent, and appealing visual elements contribute to positive brand perceptions by signalling professionalism, quality, and trustworthiness (He & Pillai, 2025; Labrecque & Milne, 2013). These perceptions are cognitive and affective evaluations that customers develop based on their interpretation of the brand's visual presentation and the meaning it conveys (Shagyrov & Shamoi, 2024). For example, a well-designed logo and consistent colour scheme can evoke feelings of reliability and innovation, influencing how customers mentally represent the brand.

Customer perception acts as an essential psychological mechanism that mediates the influence of visual identity on loyalty. According to the cognitive-affective model of consumer behaviour, perceptions formed through visual stimuli influence customers' attitudes, satisfaction, and emotional attachment, which are antecedents of loyalty (Shagyrov & Shamoi,2024; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). When customers perceive a brand positively, they are more likely to develop trust and emotional bonds, which motivate repeat purchases and advocacy behaviours (He & Pillai, 2025).

Empirical studies support the mediating role of customer perception (Nguyen & Wang , 2023; He & Pillai, 2025) found that brand visual identity indirectly affected customer loyalty through enhanced brand perception, indicating that visual elements must first create favourable perceptions before influencing loyalty outcomes. This mediation effect implies that companies should not only invest in creating strong visual identities but also ensure that these visual cues are effectively communicated and aligned with the desired brand image to shape positive customer perceptions. Furthermore, the mediation by customer perception underscores the importance of coherence between visual identity and overall brand messaging. Inconsistent or misleading visual cues can generate negative perceptions, which may diminish loyalty regardless of the quality of products or services (He & Pillai, 2025). Thus, the synergy between visual identity and customer perception is critical in fostering loyalty.

In the context of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS), this mediating effect suggests that while the company's visual identity elements such as its logo and colour schemes are vital in attracting customer attention, it is the customers' interpretation and evaluation of these elements that ultimately influence their loyalty. Positive perceptions fostered through consistent and meaningful visual identity can enhance customer trust, satisfaction, and emotional connection, thereby driving long-term loyalty.

Extant literature establishes that customer perception mediates the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty. Visual identity shapes how customers perceive a brand, and these perceptions are the key drivers of loyalty behaviour. This mediation highlights the need for companies to strategically manage their visual identity alongside broader brand perception efforts to effectively build and sustain customer loyalty. Therefore, based on the above reviewed literature, the sixth and final hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

***H_6**: Customer perception mediates the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty.*

2.2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this study serves as a foundational guide that visually and theoretically maps out the key variables and their proposed relationships, specifically illustrating how various dimensions of brand identity such as visual identity, brand values, brand personality, and brand consistency impact customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS). It clarifies the research focus by defining the scope and guiding the development of hypotheses regarding the influence of these independent variables on customer loyalty, including the mediating role of customer perception. By synthesizing relevant theories and empirical findings, the framework provides a coherent model that supports the selection of appropriate research methods and analytical tools, such as Smart PLS for Structural Equation Modelling. Furthermore, it facilitates the interpretation of results by linking empirical data to theoretical expectations, ensuring that the study remains systematic, focused, and grounded in established knowledge. Overall, the conceptual framework is essential for organising complex relationships into an accessible structure, enabling a clear understanding of how brand identity drives customer loyalty in the specific context of SONILS. Figure 2.1 below provides a detailed conceptual framework for this study based on the reviewed conceptual literature.

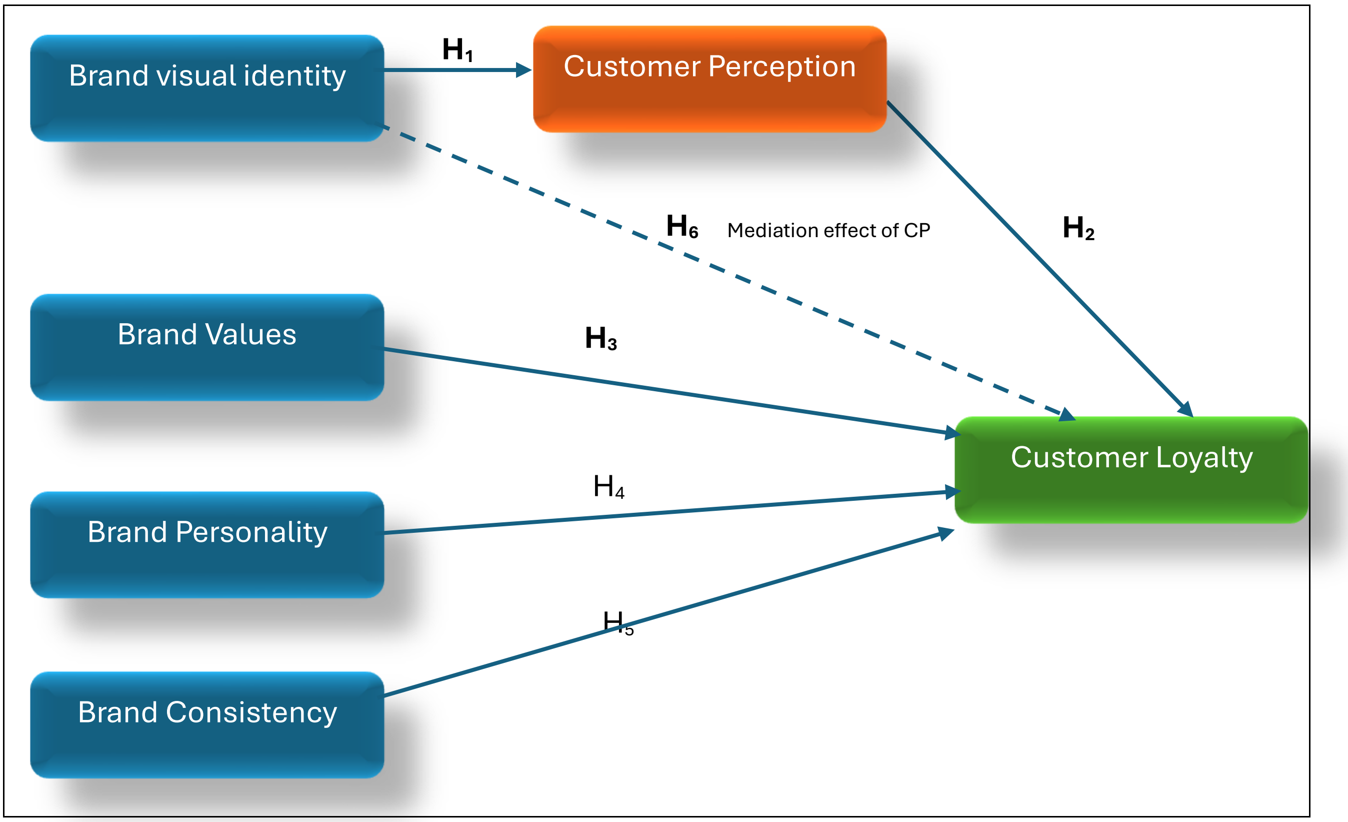

Figure 1.1: Research Model: Researcher's own conceptualisation.

2.3. Theoretical Literature

Theoretical literature in this study plays a crucial role by providing the foundational concepts and frameworks that underpin the investigation of the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS). It offers a comprehensive understanding of key constructs such as brand identity dimensions and customer loyalty, drawing from established theories. These theories help explain the psychological and behavioural processes through which brand identity influences loyalty, guiding the formulation of hypotheses and the overall research design. Moreover, the theoretical literature ensures that the study is grounded in scholarly knowledge, lending credibility and rigor to the research. It helps identify gaps in existing knowledge, allowing the study to contribute new insights specific to the Namibian logistics sector. The literature also informs the selection of relevant variables and measurement scales, ensuring alignment with validated constructs. Engaging with theoretical literature enables the researcher to interpret findings within a broader academic context, facilitating meaningful discussions and implications. Overall, the theoretical literature is indispensable for framing the study's inquiry, shaping its methodology, and situating its contributions within the wider field of marketing and brand management.

The study is informed by three theories that closely match the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty. The theories are, Brand Resonance Model (Keller, 2001); Relationship Marketing Theory (Berry, 1995) and Theory of Brand Trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

2.3.1. Brand Resonance Model (Keller, 2001)

The Brand Resonance Model, developed by Kevin Lane Keller in 2001, is a foundational framework in branding literature that explains how brands build strong relationships with customers leading to loyalty. The model posits that achieving brand resonance the highest level of brand relationship requires progression through four key stages: brand identity, meaning, response, and relationships. These stages collectively guide marketers in understanding how brand identity contributes to customer loyalty.

The first stage, brand identity, involves creating brand salience, or the extent to which customers recognize and recall a brand under various conditions. Strong brand identity ensures that the brand is easily identifiable and relevant to the customer's needs. Keller emphasised that clear and distinctive brand identity elements such as name, logo, and visual identity form the foundation for building deeper connections. The second stage, brand meaning, involves shaping customers' perceptions through brand performance (functional attributes like quality and reliability) and brand imagery (intangible associations such as brand personality and values). This stage is directly related to brand identity components, as the meaning customers attach to visual identity, personality, and values influences their attitudes and feelings toward the brand.

The third stage, brand response, reflects customers' judgments and emotional reactions to the brand, including perceptions of quality, credibility, and superiority. Positive brand responses increase the likelihood of loyalty, as satisfied customers develop favourable attitudes. The final and most crucial stage is brand resonance, which refers to the nature of the relationship customers develop with the brand. Resonance embodies behavioural loyalty (repeat purchases), attitudinal attachment (emotional connection), sense of community (feeling of belonging), and active engagement (willingness to invest time and effort). Keller argued that only brands that successfully navigate earlier stages can achieve this level of intense loyalty.

The model highlights how strong brand identity, encompassing visual identity, brand values, personality, and consistency, is foundational for progressing toward brand resonance. It explains how these identity components influence customer perceptions and emotions, which in turn build loyalty. In the context of SONILS, Keller's model provides a comprehensive framework to understand how the company's brand identity can foster deep customer relationships and sustained loyalty.

Several empirical studies have validated the model's applicability in various industries, showing that brand resonance strongly correlates with customer loyalty and advocacy (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014). Overall, the Brand Resonance Model offers a stepwise, hierarchical approach that links brand identity to loyalty through cognitive and emotional processes, making it highly relevant for this study.

2.3.2. Relationship Marketing Theory (Berry, 1995)

Relationship Marketing Theory, as articulated by Leonard Berry in 1995, centres on the development and management of long-term customer relationships rather than transactional exchanges. The theory stresses that fostering strong, enduring relationships is critical to building customer loyalty, particularly in service industries where customer satisfaction and trust are paramount. Berry introduced the idea that marketing should focus on customer retention through continuous interaction and value creation rather than solely on customer acquisition. Relationship marketing prioritizes trust, commitment, communication, and satisfaction as the cornerstones of lasting customer bonds. These elements are deeply connected to brand identity, as a consistent and credible brand identity helps communicate reliability and values that customers can trust.

The theory highlights that customers are more likely to remain loyal to brands with which they share a strong relationship based on mutual understanding and emotional connection. This relationship is nurtured through personalized communication, responsiveness to customer needs, and delivering consistent experiences factors closely linked to brand personality and consistency within brand identity. Relationship Marketing Theory also emphasises customer engagement and relationship quality as predictors of loyalty. Engaged customers are more emotionally connected and likely to advocate for the brand. The quality of the relationship—measured by trust, satisfaction, and commitment directly influences repeat patronage and reduces switching behaviour (Palmatier et al., 2006). In the logistics sector, including SONILS, where service quality and reliability are critical, the theory underscores the importance of cultivating trustworthy and communicative relationships with customers. A strong brand identity that conveys trustworthiness and professionalism facilitates relationship marketing efforts by setting clear expectations and reinforcing commitments. Empirical evidence supports the theory's central tenet that relationship quality drives loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Studies show that firms investing in relationship marketing tend to enjoy higher customer retention, profitability, and competitive advantage.

In summary, Relationship Marketing Theory provides a relational lens to understand how brand identity through consistent communication and trust-building can foster long-term customer loyalty. It highlights the social and emotional dimensions critical to sustaining loyalty beyond transactional exchanges.

2.3.3. Theory of Brand Trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)

The Theory of Brand Trust, developed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook in 2001, offers a focused perspective on how trust in a brand influences customer loyalty. Trust is conceptualized as customers' confidence in a brand's reliability and integrity, which reduces perceived risk and uncertainty in purchase decisions. This theory is particularly pertinent to understanding the mechanisms through which brand identity elements, such as values and personality, foster loyalty. Brand trust is built when customers consistently experience brand promises fulfilled, perceive transparency, and feel confident in the brand's intentions (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Chaudhuri and Holbrook emphasised that trust encompasses both competence (belief that the brand can deliver) and benevolence (belief that the brand cares about customers' welfare), both of which are closely linked to brand identity attributes.

The theory posits that trust mediates the relationship between brand identity and loyalty. Strong brand identity components such as reliable visual identity, authentic brand values, and consistent messaging enhance trust by signalling stability and integrity. In turn, this trust fosters emotional attachment and loyalty behaviours such as repeat purchases and advocacy.

Empirical research by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) showed that brand trust is a stronger predictor of loyalty than brand satisfaction alone, highlighting the centrality of trust in long-term customer relationships. Their findings also suggest that brand trust helps customers overcome market uncertainties, especially in industries where service quality may vary, making it highly relevant to logistics services like those offered by SONILS.

Additionally, the theory aligns with broader consumer behaviour research demonstrating that trust reduces perceived risk, increases willingness to pay premium prices, and enhances resistance to competitors' attempts to lure customers away (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003).

For SONILS, the Theory of Brand Trust provides critical insights into how the company's brand identity can be leveraged to build and maintain customer loyalty. By cultivating trust through consistent delivery, transparent communication, and authentic brand values, SONILS can strengthen its customer base and enhance long-term profitability.

The Theory of Brand Trust underscores trust as the key psychological mechanism linking brand identity to loyalty, emphasising the need for brands to build and sustain trust to secure loyal customers.

2.4. Empirical Literature

Existing research suggests that brand identity plays a key role in creating brand differentiation and fostering long-term relationships with customers (Bravo et.al, 2025; Ozanian, 2025). Additionally, consistency in brand messaging across various touchpoints enhances customer perceptions and reinforces brand commitment (Grewal et al., 2020). Emotional connections formed through brand identity significantly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Furthermore, literature posits that aligning brand identity with customer expectations is vital for enhancing loyalty in competitive markets (Ozanian, 2025; Esch et al., 2006).

2.4.1. The influence of brand visual identity on customer perception.

Brand visual identity is a fundamental component of branding that includes logos, typography, colour schemes, packaging, and overall design aesthetics. It serves as the first point of contact between a brand and its audience and plays a significant role in shaping how consumers perceive a brand's credibility, personality, and value. Several empirical studies have investigated the impact of visual identity on customer perceptions, finding that well-crafted visual cues shape customers' attitudes, beliefs, and emotional connections toward a brand.

Empirical evidence suggests that strong visual identity positively influences customer perception, contributing to trust, emotional engagement, and brand preference. Affonso and Janiszewski (2023) conducted an experimental study exploring how the perceptual structure of brand design influences consumer evaluations. Their research found that when visual identity elements are cohesive and professionally presented, consumers perceive the brand as more credible and trustworthy. These perceptions significantly influenced attitudes toward the brand, suggesting that visual coherence can trigger positive cognitive and emotional evaluations. Their findings highlight the psychological mechanisms through which visual design drives perception mainly through heuristic processing and affective responses. Similarly, Bettels and Wiedmann (2024) examined how graphic design elements impact consumer perception using a mixed-methods approach. They found that consistency in visual identity across different touchpoints (e.g., website, packaging, and advertising) enhances perceived professionalism and brand clarity. The study further noted that high-quality design aesthetics are linked to stronger perceptions of brand value and relevance, which are precursors to brand preference and loyalty.

Both studies underscore that brand visual identity is not merely an aesthetic function but a strategic tool that shapes how customers decode brand meaning. When effectively executed, visual identity facilitates recognition, emotional resonance, and a favourable image in the customer's mind crucial components of brand success in competitive markets.

2.4.2. The influence of brand perception on brand loyalty

Brand perception, that is, how consumers interpret and evaluate a brand's image, reputation, and values has emerged as a critical driver of brand loyalty in recent research. Loyalty encompasses both behavioural indicators (e.g., repeat purchases) and attitudinal commitment.

Two key empirical studies provide robust evidence of this relationship across different sectors.

First, Tahir et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive systematic literature review focused on the foreign tourism sector. They synthesized findings from 79 high-quality studies and confirmed that brand image, a major component of brand perception, significantly improves customer satisfaction and consequently brand loyalty Their work highlighted that brand image influences loyalty both directly and indirectly, mediated through customers' satisfaction and trust. By integrating *self-congruity theory*, the study demonstrated that when consumers' self-identity aligns with a brand's projected image, their loyalty intensifies. These findings suggest that tourism brands should prioritize developing coherent, emotionally resonant brand images to nurture long-term loyalty.

Second, Kang's (2022) empirical investigation in the highly competitive Indian smartphone market involving structured survey data revealed that brand perception, operationalized through constructs such as brand recognition, associations, image, and trust, substantially influenced brand loyalty. Specifically, regression analyses showed that stronger brand associations and higher trust levels were strongly correlated with repeat purchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth. Kang's findings underscore that intangible attributes consumers' cognitive and emotional responses are as crucial as product specifications in driving loyalty in high-involvement purchase contexts.

Together, these studies confirm that positive brand perception is a foundational antecedent to brand loyalty. Tahir et al.'s (2024) meta-analysis across tourism contexts underscores that a brand's image enhances customer satisfaction, trust, and emotional attachment precursors to loyalty. Kang's (2022) sector-specific research corroborates this link in consumer electronics by showing that perceptual dimensions like trust and associations significantly promote repeat purchases. From a managerial standpoint, these findings emphasise that nurturing favourable brand perception is not optional it is essential. Marketers should invest in strategies that enhance brand associations (e.g., through storytelling, positioning, and brand cues), foster consumer trust via consistent quality and transparency, and ensure that brand image aligns with consumer identities. Ensuring coherent messaging across media, leveraging social proof, and monitoring consumer sentiment can strengthen perception-loyalty linkages.

Moreover, the two studies highlight the importance of customer satisfaction and trust as mediators. Loyalty management should focus not only on external communications but also on service quality, customer experience, and brand performance. Positive perceptions are not just aesthetic judgments they transform into emotional commitment and long-term patronage when supported by satisfying experiences.

Therefore, empirical evidence from recent literature robustly shows that brand perception is a powerful predictor of brand loyalty. Organisations that systematically cultivate strong, trustworthy, and identity-aligned brand perceptions will likely benefit from deeper customer loyalty manifested through repeat purchases, advocacy, and sustained competitive advantage in both tourism and consumer electronics sectors.

Together, these empirical studies demonstrate that brand perception plays a central role in cultivating brand loyalty across diverse contexts. Positive perceptions, whether in the form of trust, prestige, service quality, or social responsibility, foster emotional connections and loyalty behaviours such as repeat purchases and advocacy. The findings highlight the strategic importance for companies like SONILS to manage and enhance customer perceptions as a way to build strong, enduring relationships and encourage long-term loyalty.

2.4.3. The role of brand values in driving customer loyalty.

Brand values reflect the core principles, ethics, and commitments that a company communicates to its customers. Empirical research has increasingly demonstrated that when customers perceive these values as authentic and aligned with their personal beliefs, they are more likely to remain loyal to the brand.

One key empirical study by Pappu and Quester (2016) examined the influence of brand values on loyalty within the Australian retail context. Using a survey of 350 customers, they measured customers' perceptions of brand values such as trustworthiness, sustainability, and innovation. The findings showed a significant positive relationship between perceived brand values and both affective and behavioural loyalty. Specifically, customers who viewed the company as upholding ethical and responsible values were more inclined to make repeat purchases and recommend the brand to others. The study concluded that consumers increasingly reward brands that reflect socially responsible and trustworthy values with long-term loyalty.

In a different context, Torres et al. (2017) investigated the role of brand values in building loyalty in the Spanish fashion industry. Conducting a quantitative study with 400 participants, they tested whether customers' perceptions of authenticity and social value influenced their commitment to the brand. The findings revealed that brands perceived as genuinely committed to positive social and cultural contributions had a stronger emotional connection with their customers. This emotional attachment was a significant predictor of loyalty, suggesting that customers appreciate and stay loyal to brands that stand for more than just profit. Torres et al. (2017) argued that for fashion brands and by extension, other lifestyle brands—values-driven strategies help differentiate the company in a competitive market and encourage customers to advocate for the brand. More recently, Ladhari and Tufail (2021) investigated the role of cultural and ethical brand values in the luxury goods sector across the Middle East. Drawing on survey data from 450 luxury customers, they examined how customers' perceptions of brand values such as integrity, tradition, and cultural authenticity impacted loyalty. The study concluded that customers who perceived a luxury brand's values as credible and meaningful were not only more satisfied but also more emotionally invested in the brand, which led to higher loyalty intentions and repeat purchasing behaviour. The authors noted that these findings highlight the importance of values-driven branding in luxury markets, where symbolic meanings play a substantial role in customer relationships.

Together, these three empirical studies underscore the significant role that perceived brand values play in driving customer loyalty across different industries. Brands that articulate and live up to their values—whether through social responsibility, cultural authenticity, or ethical practices create deeper emotional connections with customers, thereby fostering stronger, long-term loyalty.

2.4.4. The effect of brand personality on customer loyalty.

Brand personality refers to the set of human characteristics and traits that customers ascribe to a brand. Empirical evidence suggests that when customers perceive a brand as having a well-defined and appealing personality, they feel a deeper emotional connection, which can drive loyalty behaviours such as repeat purchases and word-of-mouth advocacy.

A foundational empirical study by Aaker (1997) investigated the dimensions of brand personality and their impact on consumer preferences. Drawing on a survey of over 600 consumers across multiple product categories, the research identified five core dimensions of brand personality sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness and demonstrated that these traits significantly influenced customers' brand perceptions. Importantly, the study concluded that customers tended to develop loyalty toward brands that embodied personalities congruent with their own self-image. Aaker argued that personality gave brands a "human face," making them more relatable, trustworthy, and ultimately, more likely to inspire loyalty.

Brand personality, defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand, plays an important role in building emotional connections with consumers. When customers perceive a brand as having a distinctive and relatable personality, they are more likely to develop strong attachments that enhance loyalty. Recent empirical studies confirm this relationship across industries and cultural contexts.

Rahman et al. (2024) conducted a study in the mobile phone sector in South Asia, exploring the influence of brand personality dimensions such as sincerity, competence, and excitement on customer loyalty. Using a sample of 375 smartphone users and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study found that sincerity and competence were the most influential traits driving both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. Customers who perceived brands as sincere and reliable were more inclined to make repeat purchases and recommend the brand to others.

In another context, Sohaib and Hosany (2023) investigated the role of brand personality in the hospitality industry. Their study, based on responses from 420 hotel guests, demonstrated that dimensions such as sophistication and excitement significantly influenced emotional brand attachment, which in turn led to increased loyalty intentions. The authors concluded that brand personality enhances the customer's brand experience and serves as a psychological anchor for long-term relationships.

Taken together, these empirical studies demonstrate that brand personality plays a vital role in driving customer loyalty across diverse industries. Brands that successfully craft distinctive, authentic, and relatable personalities are more likely to form emotional connections with customers, resulting in higher levels of loyalty, retention, and advocacy. This body of evidence underscores the strategic importance of personality-driven branding for companies like SONILS that aim to strengthen customer loyalty through well-developed and consistently communicated brand identities.

2.4.5. The impact of brand consistency on customer loyalty.

Brand consistency refers to the uniform presentation of brand elements such as tone, visuals, values, and messaging across all customer touchpoints. It enhances clarity and reinforces customer expectations, thereby building trust and improving brand recall. Recent empirical studies affirm that consistent branding positively affects customer loyalty, particularly by strengthening emotional connections and perceived reliability.

Tahir, Ahmad, and Nawaz (2024) investigated the effect of brand consistency on tourist loyalty in the hospitality sector. Drawing on data from 402 respondents and analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study found that consistent communication of brand identity and service quality significantly influenced tourists' trust and loyalty intentions. The authors emphasised that when brand messages and experiences remain stable over time, customers perceive the brand as more dependable, increasing their willingness to remain loyal. Similarly, Wilson, Patel, and Feng (2024) examined brand consistency in digital marketing environments. Using a multi-platform content analysis and survey-based study of 350 participants, they found that consistent branding across social media channels fostered emotional attachment and brand trust. Their findings indicated that perceived consistency in tone, visual style, and brand messaging significantly enhanced consumers' emotional loyalty, even in highly competitive markets.

Dwivedi, Johnson, Wilkie, and De Araujo-Gomez (2019) explored the effects of brand consistency on loyalty in a cross-sectoral study of over 500 consumers in the United Kingdom. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), they found that consistency across touchpoints was a significant predictor of both attitudinal loyalty (affective commitment) and behavioural loyalty (repurchase behaviour). Importantly, they also demonstrated that brand consistency helped establish trust and reduce perceived ambiguity, allowing customers to develop a sense of reliability toward the brand. The study concluded that maintaining consistent messages and visual identity was especially critical in highly competitive sectors, where customers could easily switch to competitors.

Together, these studies demonstrate that brand consistency fosters trust, emotional connection, and brand reliability key drivers of customer loyalty. Marketers should prioritize coherent branding across all channels to reinforce consumer confidence and long-term engagement. The empirical literature consistently demonstrates that brand consistency is a vital driver of customer loyalty. Across diverse contexts and industries, research underscores that when brands present themselves in a coherent and unified manner, customers are more inclined to trust, emotionally connect with, and remain loyal to them. These findings highlight the strategic need for companies like SONILS to invest in maintaining a consistent brand presence at every customer interaction point.

2.4.6. The mediating effect of customer perception on the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty.

Brand visual identity—including elements like logos, colour schemes, and design styles can shape customers' initial impressions of a company. However, research increasingly highlights the role of customer perception as a critical mediator that translates visual identity into stronger loyalty.

One key empirical study by Buil, Martínez, and Chernatony (2013) investigated the mediating role of customers' brand perception in the link between visual identity elements and loyalty intentions. Drawing on survey data from 387 customers of European retail brands, they found that distinctive visual identity (e.g., logo design and colour consistency) had a significant positive effect on customers' perceptions of brand credibility and emotional connection. Crucially, these perceptions fully mediated the influence of visual identity on loyalty. In other words, strong visual cues enhanced customers' brand perception, which subsequently increased loyalty, emphasising that visual identity itself is not enough without cultivating a positive overall perception.

Similarly, Alba and Williams (2016) explored the impact of visual identity on loyalty in the fast-food industry in the United States. Based on data collected from 400 customers, their SEM analysis revealed that customers' perceptions of a restaurant's quality, trustworthiness, and value acted as a significant mediating factor between visual identity and loyalty. Specifically, they found that visual elements like store design, signage, and colour schemes influenced customers' perceptions of the restaurant experience; these positive perceptions, in turn, strengthened emotional attachment and future repurchase intentions. The study highlighted that carefully designed visual identities help form favourable perceptions that become the basis for enduring loyalty.

More recently, Suh and Lee (2020) investigated this mediating relationship in the South Korean apparel industry. Surveying 450 customers of local fashion brands, they tested a model in which brand visual identity influenced loyalty indirectly through customers' overall brand perception. The findings supported partial mediation: visual identity significantly shaped customers' perception of the brand's quality and prestige, and this perception enhanced customers' loyalty. Suh and Lee concluded that while visual identity is a powerful tool to attract attention and interest, its impact on loyalty depends on the strength of customers' resultant brand perception.

Together, these empirical studies demonstrate that customers' perception of the brand is the key psychological bridge linking visual identity to loyalty. Strong visual identity influences customers' views of the brand as credible, trustworthy, and emotionally appealing, and these positive perceptions subsequently drive loyalty behaviours. Hence, for companies like SONILS, investing in a well-crafted visual identity must be accompanied by efforts to nurture positive perceptions if they want to translate visual identity into sustained customer loyalty.

2.5. Overall Empirical evidence

Empirical evidence across diverse industries consistently affirms the significance of six key brand identity dimensions: visual identity, perception, values, personality, consistency and their interrelationships in shaping customer loyalty. First, brand visual identity which comprises logos, colour palettes, typography, packaging, and overall design serves as a crucial first contact, influencing customers' perceptions of quality, trust, and differentiation; studies in retail and fashion contexts found that strong visual cues significantly enhance perceived credibility and emotional appeal (Buil et al., 2013; Suh & Lee, 2020). Second, customer perception itself is a potent antecedent of loyalty: when consumers view a brand as credible, trust-worthy, and high in quality, they exhibit stronger attitudinal and behavioural loyalty, including repeat purchases and advocacy (Tahir et al., 2024; Weiss et al., 2023). Third, although brand values' influence on loyalty is more contextual, multiple studies confirm that when brands' core values such as ethical conduct, social responsibility, or sustainability are perceived as authentic and aligned with consumers' beliefs, they foster emotional bonds and long-term loyalty, especially in industries like luxury, fashion, and tourism (Pappu & Quester, 2016; Torres et al., 2017; Ladhari & Tufail, 2021). Fourth, brand personality embodying human-like traits such as sincerity, competence, excitement, and sophistication consistently contributes to emotional engagement and loyalty intentions, provided there is congruence between the brand's personality and the consumer's self-concept (Rahman et al., 2024; Sohaib & Hosany, 2023). Fifth, brand consistency reflected in coherent messaging, tone, and visual identity across all platforms is shown to build brand familiarity and trust, which support loyalty, although its direct impact can be strengthened when coupled with emotional value and relevance (Tahir et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). Finally, robust empirical evidence highlights customer perception as the critical mediating mechanism translating visual identity into loyalty: visual elements may draw attention, but it is the resultant perceptions of credibility, trustworthiness, emotional resonance, and quality that drive long-term loyalty (Buil et al., 2013; Alba & Williams, 2016; Suh & Lee, 2020). Collectively, these findings underscore that customer loyalty emerges from a multifaceted interplay between functional brand elements (visual design and consistency) and emotional-symbolic factors (values, personality, and perceptions). Thus, to build sustainable customer loyalty, brands must integrate cohesive visual designs, authentic personalities and values, and consistent messaging that effectively foster favourable customer perceptions across all interactions.

2.6: Chapter Summary

Overall, the literature confirmed that a strong and strategically managed brand identity is a critical driver of customer loyalty, and that customers' perceptions of the brand serve as a pivotal mechanism in this process. This review provided the empirical and theoretical grounding for the present study, justifying the focus on examining the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) in Namibia. The next chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) in Namibia. It details the research philosophy, design, and approach adopted to guide the study, which focused on collecting objective, quantifiable data. The chapter also explains the sampling strategy, data collection methods, and analytical techniques, including the use of Smart PLS and PLS-SEM. Furthermore, it highlights the steps taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments, as well as the ethical considerations that governed the research process to maintain integrity and participant protection.

3.0. Research Philosophy

The research adopted a positivist philosophy, which emphasises objectivity, measurement, and the use of quantifiable data to uncover patterns and test hypotheses. Rooted in the belief that reality is external and can be observed independently of the researcher's biases, positivism supports a scientific approach to investigating relationships between variables, such as brand identity and customer loyalty. This philosophy guided the study to focus on measurable indicators of the key constructs, allowing for statistical analysis and objective evaluation of causal links. By adopting a positivist stance, the research aimed to minimise subjective interpretation and maximise replicability and generalisability of findings. The positivist approach is particularly suitable for studies requiring hypothesis testing through structured data collection methods, such as surveys, and rigorous data analysis techniques like Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). It allows researchers to establish cause-and-effect relationships by applying empirical observation and standardized measurement scales.

In this study, positivism enabled the researcher to focus on observable phenomena, specifically, customers' perceptions of brand identity dimensions and their loyalty behaviours and analyse these quantitatively. This approach aligns with the study's goals of producing evidence-based, objective insights that can inform both theory and managerial practice within the context of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia.

Positivism is a philosophical stance that asserts that reality is objective and can be observed, measured, and understood through empirical investigation and scientific methods (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Rooted in the natural sciences tradition, positivism emphasises the use of quantitative data and seeks to uncover generalisable laws and cause-and-effect relationships by applying rigorous, structured methodologies (Bryman & Bell, 2015). According to Creswell (2014), positivist research is characterized by hypothesis testing, use of standardized instruments, and statistical analysis to produce replicable and objective results. It assumes that the social world, like the natural world, operates according to predictable principles that can be measured independently of researchers' subjective interpretations (Neuman, 2014).

While positivism has been criticized for neglecting the complexity and context-dependent nature of social phenomena, it remains widely adopted in business and management research for studies aiming to explain and predict relationships between clearly defined variables (Saunders et al., 2019). The emphasis on objectivity and measurement makes it well-suited for quantitative research designs, including surveys and experimental studies, that seek to establish causal links and test theoretical models.

3.1. Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge how knowledge is acquired, validated, and communicated. In this study, the epistemological stance aligns with positivism, which asserts that knowledge is objective, observable, and can be measured quantitatively. The researcher assumes that valid and reliable knowledge about the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty can be generated through empirical observation and statistical analysis. This perspective emphasises that reality is independent of individual beliefs or interpretations, and thus, the research seeks to minimise subjectivity and bias. By using structured questionnaires and standardized measurement scales, the study aims to gather numerical data that can be statistically analysed to test hypothesized relationships. The reliance on quantitative methods reflects the belief that knowledge should be based on verifiable evidence and reproducible results. Moreover, this epistemological approach supports hypothesis testing and generalisation of findings to a broader population. Through rigorous data collection and analysis, the researcher intends to produce knowledge that is valid, reliable, and applicable within the context of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia. Ultimately, the epistemological position underpins the research's focus on measurable variables and causal relationships, ensuring an objective understanding of the studied phenomena.

3.2. Ontology

Ontology concerns the nature of reality and what entities exist that can be known. This study adopts a realist ontology, which posits that an external reality exists independently of human perceptions, beliefs, or constructions. Specifically, it assumes that brand identity and customer loyalty are real, tangible constructs that exist within the business context of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services and can be objectively measured. From this perspective, these constructs are not merely subjective opinions but have consistent properties and relationships that can be empirically observed and quantified. The realist ontology justifies the use of quantitative research methods, as it assumes that the phenomena under study have definable characteristics that can be captured through measurement instruments. This view holds that causal links between brand identity dimensions and customer loyalty exist and can be uncovered through systematic investigation. Furthermore, the ontology supports the idea that these relationships are stable across the studied population, allowing for generalisable conclusions. The researcher's belief in an objective reality that can be accessed through empirical methods aligns with the positivist philosophy guiding the study's approach to examining brand identity's impact on customer loyalty.

3.3. Axiology

Axiology explores the role of values, ethics, and researcher biases in the research process. In this study, the researcher acknowledges the importance of maintaining objectivity and ethical integrity throughout the investigation. Given the positivist epistemology and realist ontology, the study prioritizes minimising researcher bias to ensure that findings are objective and credible. Ethical considerations are central, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity, and ensuring that participation is voluntary without coercion. The researcher is committed to reporting results honestly and accurately, avoiding any manipulation or selective presentation of data. The value system underpinning this research emphasises respect for participants and adherence to professional ethical standards set by relevant research authorities. Additionally, the study's axiology reflects a dedication to producing knowledge that benefits both academic inquiry and practical application in business. By aligning ethical principles with rigorous methodological procedures, the research seeks to uphold transparency, fairness, and accountability.

Ultimately, axiology in this study guides the researcher's conduct, ensuring that personal values do not compromise the objectivity and validity of the research outcomes.

3.4. Research Design

The study adopted a causal, cross-sectional research design, which was appropriate for investigating the cause-and-effect relationships between brand identity dimensions and customer loyalty at a specific point in time. Unlike purely descriptive approaches, this design enabled the researcher to go beyond observation by testing hypotheses concerning the influence of visual identity, brand values, personality, and consistency on loyalty outcomes. A cross-sectional design was particularly suited to the context of this study because data were collected once, allowing the researcher to capture a snapshot of customers' perceptions and behaviours during the period under review. This strategy was both time- and cost-effective, while also providing sufficient scope to explore relationships across different customer segments at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia. Furthermore, by employing statistical Modelling techniques, specifically Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS, the researcher was able to estimate direct and indirect causal paths, test mediating effects, and assess the overall fit of the model. Overall, the causal, cross-sectional design supported the hypothesis-driven nature of the study, ensured alignment with the research objectives, and allowed for a robust and rigorous analysis of the complex interactions between the key constructs under investigation.

Existing literature indicates that a causal cross-sectional research design is commonly employed in social sciences and business research when the primary objective is to test hypothesized cause-and-effect relationships between variables at a single point in time (Saunders et al., 2019; Creswell, 2014). Unlike longitudinal designs that require multiple waves of data collection, a cross-sectional design gathers data just once, which enhances feasibility and reduces the resources and time required to conduct the research (Hair et al., 2017). Scholars such as Sekaran and Bougie (2016) argue that this design is well suited for examining structural relationships in complex models, especially when employed with quantitative methods like Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), allowing researchers to infer causality based on the strength, direction, and significance of relationships between constructs. However, some authors (e.g. Bryman & Bell, 2015) caution that causal inferences drawn from cross-sectional data must be made carefully because temporal order cannot be firmly established without repeated measurements.

Nevertheless, when theory is strong and the hypothesized directions of relationships are well-justified, a causal cross-sectional design can provide meaningful, evidence-based conclusions to support strategic decisions. Its practicality, efficiency, and relevance to managerial and academic research continue to make this design a popular choice across marketing, management, and other applied disciplines.

3.4.1. Research design as a blueprint

Research design serves as a detailed blueprint that guides the entire research process from data collection to analysis and interpretation. It provides a systematic plan outlining how the study will be conducted to ensure that research objectives are met efficiently and effectively. By defining the procedures for selecting participants, measuring variables, and analysing data, the research design helps maintain focus and consistency throughout the study. It also ensures that the chosen methods align with the research questions and hypotheses, facilitating valid and reliable results.

In this study, the research design was carefully structured to examine the causal relationships between brand identity dimensions and customer loyalty within Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services. As a blueprint, it specified the adoption of a causal, cross-sectional approach, enabling the collection of data at a single point in time while allowing for the testing of cause-and-effect relationships. This design blueprint incorporated the use of quantitative methods, structured questionnaires, and advanced statistical techniques such as Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to rigorously analyse the data. By providing clear guidance on the research process, the design blueprint minimised errors and bias, ensured replicability, and enhanced the overall quality and credibility of the study’s findings. Figure 3.1 below shows the detailed research blueprint.

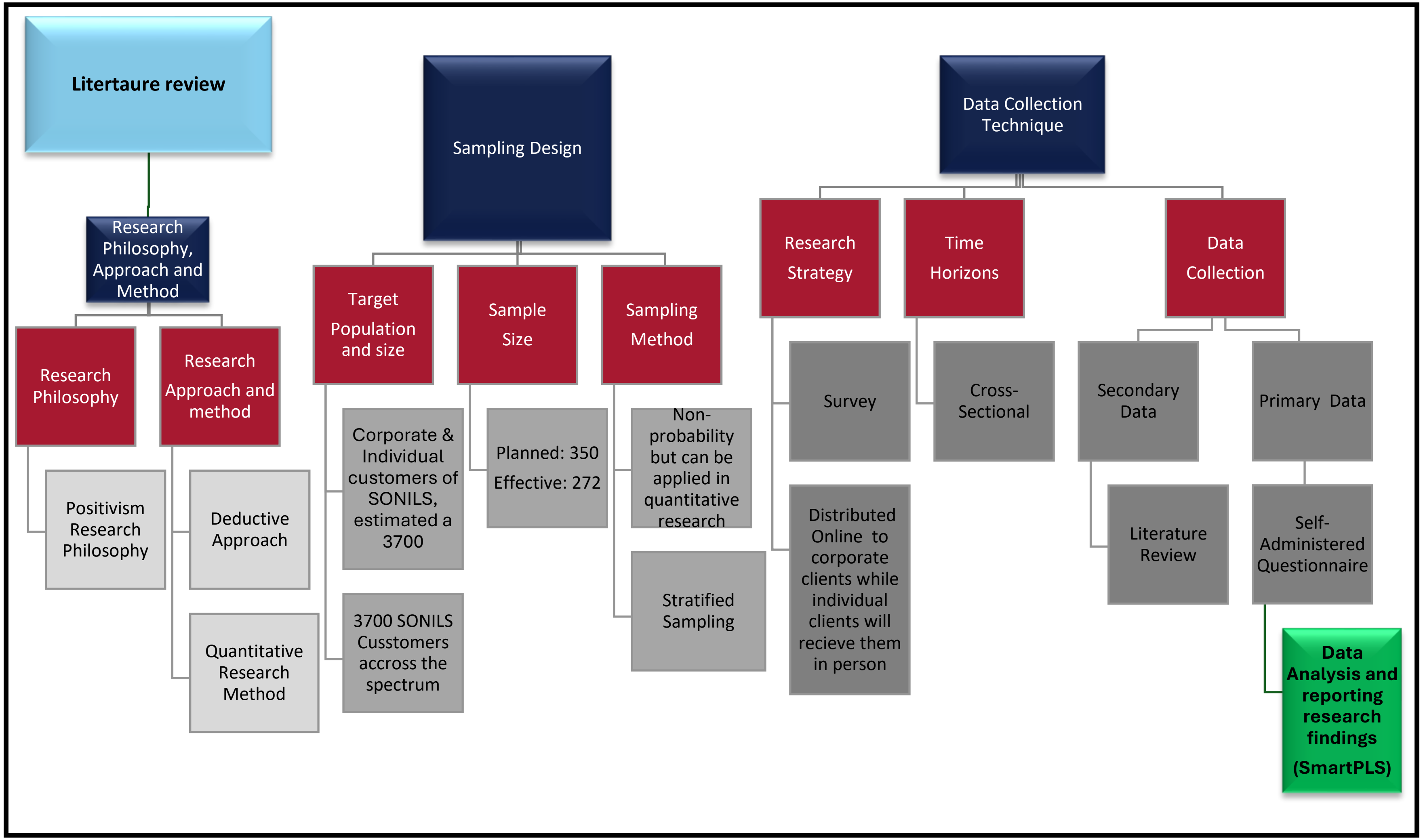

Figure 3. 1: Detailed Blueprint

3.5. Research Approach

The study utilized a quantitative research approach, employing numerical data to assess and quantify the influence of brand identity on customer loyalty. The quantitative research approach involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to examine relationships between variables and test predefined hypotheses. Grounded in a positivist paradigm, it emphasises objectivity, measurement, and statistical analysis to produce generalisable findings. This approach utilizes structured data collection instruments such as surveys, questionnaires, and existing datasets, and applies appropriate statistical techniques to establish patterns, correlations, and causal links. The emphasis on replication, reliability, and validity enables researchers to draw objective conclusions and make data-driven decisions.

The quantitative research approach is particularly suitable for this study, *"Examining the Impact of Brand Identity on Customer Loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia."* Given that the study aims to assess and quantify the strength and direction of relationships between the latent constructs of brand identity and customer loyalty, a structured, numerical data collection process is appropriate. This approach allows the researcher to statistically test hypotheses and draw objective conclusions. Furthermore, by employing SmartPLS for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), the analysis will rigorously evaluate the measurement and structural models, ensuring the reliability, validity, and predictive power of the findings. The quantitative nature of this approach thus ensures robust, replicable results that contribute to a deeper understanding of the causal link between brand identity and customer loyalty within the Namibian logistics context.

The quantitative research approach is widely regarded as a systematic and objective means of investigating relationships between variables by gathering and analysing numerical data (Creswell, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Grounded in the positivist paradigm, quantitative research emphasises measurement, replicability, and generalisability, making it well-suited for hypothesis testing, causal inference, and theory confirmation (Saunders et al., 2019). Researchers typically use structured instruments such as questionnaires or surveys with predefined response options to obtain data that can be subjected to statistical analyses like correlation, regression, or Structural Equation Modelling (Hair et al., 2017).

Quantitative research is particularly effective for studies that require large sample sizes and statistical power to produce robust findings that can be extrapolated to a wider population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Its strengths lie in its objectivity and rigor, as well as its capacity to control for extraneous factors, allowing the researcher to establish cause-and-effect relationships under appropriate research designs (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). However, scholars also caution that quantitative approaches may overlook the deeper context or subjective experiences of respondents if not complemented by qualitative methods when appropriate (Creswell, 2014).

Overall, quantitative research remains one of the most widely accepted and applied methodologies in business and social science research, especially for studies aiming to draw evidence-based conclusions that inform practice and policy.

3.6. Research Strategy

The study employed a cross-sectional case study as its research strategy. A cross-sectional case study was chosen as the research strategy because it enabled the researcher to explore the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in a focused, real-world setting. The case study design was appropriate for capturing the unique organisational context and the nuanced interactions between brand identity and loyalty within a single company. Moreover, the cross-sectional timeframe allowed the researcher to collect data at one point in time, facilitating a cost-effective and efficient data-gathering process while minimising potential influences of external changes. This strategy also supported the depth and specificity required for the research objectives, allowing the researcher to generate practical, actionable insights that could not have been obtained through broad, longitudinal, or experimental designs.

By focusing on Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services as a single, real-life context, this strategy allowed for an in-depth examination of the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at a particular point in time. The cross-sectional design enabled the researcher to capture data across different customer segments simultaneously, facilitating comparative analyses and enhancing the practical relevance of the findings. This strategy was appropriate for addressing the research objectives, as it provided rich, context-specific insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

A cross-sectional case study combines the depth of case study research with the snapshot nature of cross-sectional data collection. According to Yin (2018), case studies provide an in-depth, contextualized understanding of complex phenomena within real-life settings, making them particularly valuable when exploring how specific factors interact in a particular organisation or environment. When conducted cross-sectionally, data are gathered at one point in time, which enables the researcher to analyse conditions and relationships as they currently exist without the need for extended time frames (Saunders et al., 2019).

Eisenhardt (1989) emphasises that case studies are especially useful for theory building and testing in organisational research, providing rich qualitative or quantitative data that offer practical insights. Cross-sectional case studies, as noted by Baxter and Jack (2008), are often employed in business and social sciences to examine specific cases in detail while maintaining the efficiency and feasibility of single-time data collection.

3.7. Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised customers who had interacted with Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) in Namibia. This included both individual customers and business clients who regularly utilized the company's logistics services. The diverse nature of the customer base reflects the wide range of logistics needs that SONILS serves, from small-scale individual shipments to large corporate contracts. Understanding the perceptions and behaviours of this varied customer population was critical to examining how brand identity influences customer loyalty across different segments.

At the time of the study, SONILS maintained a customer database containing over 3,700 active clients. This comprehensive database provided a valuable sampling frame that included customers with recent and ongoing interactions with the company, ensuring relevance and currency of data. The inclusion of both corporate and general customers in the population allowed the study to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and viewpoints, which was essential for generating meaningful insights into brand loyalty dynamics.

The heterogeneity of the population necessitated a sampling method that could represent all relevant customer segments proportionally. Thus, the research design incorporated stratified sampling to reflect this diversity accurately. By drawing the sample from this well-defined population, the study ensured that the findings would be generalisable to the wider customer base of SONILS. This approach strengthened the external validity of the research and enhanced the practical applicability of the results for the company's strategic branding and customer relationship management initiatives.

3.8. Sampling Procedure

The study employed stratified sampling as the sampling technique to ensure a representative and balanced sample of the diverse customer base of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services. Stratified sampling involves dividing the entire population into distinct subgroups or strata based on specific characteristics that are relevant to the research—in this case, the client type, which was categorized into general and corporate customers. This division enabled the researcher to capture the unique perspectives and behaviours of each subgroup, which was critical because different client categories might perceive brand identity and exhibit loyalty differently.

Within each stratum, participants were randomly selected to reduce sampling bias and increase the likelihood that the sample accurately reflected the broader population's characteristics. This approach enhanced the representativeness of the sample by ensuring proportional inclusion of both general and corporate clients. The use of stratified sampling improved the precision of the study's findings by allowing comparisons between the strata and providing a comprehensive understanding of how brand identity influences customer loyalty across different customer segments.

Stratified sampling is a widely recommended probability sampling technique used to improve the representativeness and precision of samples by dividing the population into distinct subgroups or strata based on key characteristics (Creswell, 2014; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Each stratum is internally homogeneous but differs from other strata in significant ways related to the research variables. Researchers then draw random samples from each stratum, ensuring that the sample proportionally reflects the population’s composition (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), stratified sampling reduces sampling bias and increases the statistical efficiency of estimates by ensuring that important subgroups are not under- or over-represented. This method is particularly useful when the research aims to examine differences or relationships between distinct groups within the population, allowing for more precise subgroup analyses. Moreover, stratified sampling enhances generalisability by improving the sample’s representativeness, especially in heterogeneous populations (Hair et al., 2017). While more complex to design and implement than simple random sampling, the benefits in accuracy and reliability make it a preferred choice for studies involving diverse populations or segmented markets.

Overall, this sampling strategy supported the study’s goal of producing reliable, generalisable, and meaningful results by ensuring that the sample accurately mirrored the population’s composition and captured the varied customer experiences relevant to the research, namely those who could provide informed insights into how SONILS’ brand identity influenced their loyalty.

3.9. Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator, a widely recognized tool that helps ensure statistical representativeness and reliability of survey results. Given the population size of 3,700 customers from Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services, the calculator was used to compute an appropriate sample size that would balance precision with practicality. The sample size determination considered a 5% margin of error and a confidence level of 95%, which are standard parameters in social science research to achieve reliable and generalisable findings.

Using these parameters, the calculator recommended a sample size of 350 respondents. This number was considered sufficient to provide statistically meaningful insights while remaining manageable in terms of data collection resources and time constraints. Selecting a sample of this size allowed the study to capture a diverse range of customer perspectives, both from corporate and general customer segments, in proportion to their representation within the population.

By adhering to this sample size, the study minimised sampling error and enhanced the precision of estimates related to the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty. Moreover, the statistically grounded sample size improved the validity and generalisability of the study's findings, ensuring that conclusions drawn could be confidently applied to the broader customer base of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services. This methodical approach to sample size determination reflected the research's commitment to rigor and accuracy throughout the data collection process.

However, out of the planned sample size of 350 customers, a total of 272 completed questionnaires were finally used in the study. Some questionnaires were either not returned or were incomplete, making them unsuitable for analysis. Despite this reduction, the final sample size of 272 remained sufficiently large to provide reliable and valid insights into the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services. Representing close to 78% response rate, the use of this sample size still allowed for robust statistical analysis while maintaining the representativeness of both corporate and general customer segments.

In survey-based research, a 78% response rate is generally considered very good. According to Babbie (2020) and Saunders et al. (2019), response rates above 70% are often regarded as high in most disciplines, indicating strong participant engagement and reducing the likelihood of nonresponse bias. Hair et al. (2017) emphasise that a high response rate enhances the representativeness of the sample, improves the external validity of the findings, and supports more robust statistical conclusions.

3.10. Instrument Design

The primary data collection tool for this study was a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The use of closed-ended, Likert-type questions allowed respondents to express their level of agreement with specific statements related to the constructs under investigation, making the instrument straightforward to administer and the data suitable for quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was designed to capture perceptions of the key dimensions of brand identity visual identity, brand values, brand personality, and brand consistency as well as overall customer loyalty.

Each construct was operationalized using multi-item scales adapted from well-established, validated instruments in the literature. Specifically, items measuring visual identity, brand values, personality, and consistency were drawn from previous research (e.g. Nguyen & Wang, 2023), while the customer loyalty scale was based on prior studies (e.g. Singh & Ahmed, 2022) that examined repeat business, emotional attachment, and advocacy behaviours. The adaptation process ensured that the questions were contextually appropriate for customers of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia, and the instrument was reviewed for face and content validity prior to administration.

By using validated scales as a foundation for item development, the study enhanced the reliability and construct validity of its measures. The structured format also facilitated consistency across responses and enabled the researcher to employ statistical tools, including Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, for testing the hypothesized relationships between brand identity dimensions and customer loyalty.

3.11. Pilot Testing

A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with a small, purposively selected sample of customers prior to the main data collection. The primary objective was to assess the clarity, relevance, and overall usability of the instrument to identify any potential issues that could affect the quality of the responses. Pilot testing is widely recommended in survey research (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019) as a means of detecting ambiguous wording, double-barrelled questions, and other design flaws that could compromise the instrument's validity and reliability.

During the pilot, respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire under similar conditions to those planned for the full-scale survey. They were also encouraged to provide feedback on the wording of items, the logical flow of the questionnaire, and the ease of understanding response options. Following completion, their comments and suggestions were reviewed carefully, and minor adjustments were made to improve the structure and phrasing of several questions. Furthermore, the pilot data were subjected to preliminary reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded acceptable values, suggesting that the items measured the intended constructs with consistency.

Pilot testing is regarded as an essential step in survey research and instrument development, allowing researchers to identify and address potential issues before full-scale data collection (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019). According to Babbie (2020), pilot tests help ensure that survey items are clear, relevant, and understandable to respondents, thus improving the face validity of the instrument. Moreover, pilot testing provides an opportunity to assess the reliability of measurement scales by calculating metrics such as Cronbach's alpha, which evaluates internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). Scholars also highlight the value of pilot testing in improving the questionnaire's structure and flow. Feedback obtained during the pilot enables the researcher to detect vague or complex questions, adjust response formats, and eliminate any ambiguities that may cause participant confusion (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This process minimises measurement errors and enhances respondent engagement, reducing the likelihood of incomplete or unusable data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

This process ensured that any problematic items were refined or eliminated before administering the survey to the full sample, thus enhancing the overall quality of the measurement tool. By conducting this pilot test, the study increased confidence in the questionnaire's ability to capture valid and reliable data on customers' perceptions of brand identity and loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services.

3.12. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling), a variance-based SEM technique that was well-suited for this study given its predictive and exploratory focus, its capacity to handle latent constructs, and its tolerance for relatively small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2017). PLS-SEM is particularly appropriate for complex research models with multiple independent and dependent variables, making it ideal for investigating the relationships between brand identity dimensions and customer loyalty. The analysis was conducted in two sequential stages in

Smart PLS: (1) assessment of the outer model to evaluate the measurement properties, and (2) assessment of the inner model to test hypothesized relationships.

3.12.1. Assessment of the outer model to evaluate the measurement properties

The first stage of the data analysis in Smart PLS involved the assessment of the outer model, also referred to as the measurement model. The purpose of this stage was to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments to ensure that the latent constructs were accurately and consistently captured by their corresponding indicators (Hair et al., 2017). Several key criteria were examined to establish the soundness of the measurement properties.

First, individual indicator reliability was assessed by inspecting the outer loadings of each item on its respective construct. Loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70 were considered acceptable, indicating that each item explained a substantial proportion of the construct's variance. Items with significantly lower loadings were reviewed for removal to improve the model fit.

Second, internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with both coefficients required to exceed 0.70 to demonstrate adequate consistency across items measuring the same construct.

Third, convergent validity was examined by calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where a value of 0.50 or higher indicated that the construct explained at least 50% of the variance in its observed indicators. Finally, discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio to ensure that each construct was empirically distinct from others in the model. Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were also computed to check for multicollinearity, ensuring that all VIF values were below 5. Collectively, these rigorous tests ensured that the outer model satisfied the requirements of a robust measurement model before proceeding to the structural model analysis.

3.12.2. Assessment of the inner model

Following the successful evaluation of the outer (measurement) model, the next stage involved assessing the inner (structural) model to examine the hypothesized relationships between the constructs. This stage focused on evaluating the predictive power and relevance of the structural paths using Smart PLS, ensuring that the model was theoretically sound and statistically robust (Hair et al., 2017). The inner model analysis is a critical phase in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), as it tests whether the data support the hypothesized relationships specified in the research framework.

First, path coefficients were estimated to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the latent variables, specifically examining the effects of the different dimensions of brand identity on customer loyalty. These coefficients reveal the magnitude and sign of each relationship and help determine the practical and theoretical relevance of each independent construct. The statistical significance of these coefficients was then tested using a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. This resampling process allowed the computation of t-values and p-values to establish whether each hypothesized path was statistically significant at the conventional threshold (e.g., $p < 0.05$). Paths that achieved significance provided evidence supporting the corresponding hypotheses, while non-significant paths indicated that the relationship was not empirically supported.

Second, the model's explanatory power was measured using the R^2 values for the endogenous construct of customer loyalty, which indicated the proportion of variance explained by the independent variables representing brand identity. Guidelines in PLS-SEM literature suggest that R^2 values of approximately 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 reflect substantial, moderate, and weak predictive power, respectively. Evaluating R^2 allowed the researcher to judge the degree to which the brand identity dimensions collectively accounted for variations in customer loyalty. Additionally, the effect sizes (f^2) were calculated to assess the practical significance of each path and determine the relative contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable. Values of f^2 provided insight into whether removing a specific predictor would have a small, medium, or large effect on the outcome construct. Finally, predictive relevance was also examined through blindfolding to generate Q^2 values, ensuring that the model had predictive accuracy. Together, these steps ensured a thorough and rigorous assessment of the inner model, verifying its capacity to explain and predict customer loyalty based on the brand identity dimensions under study.

3.13. Key Variables and Measurement Scales

3.13.1. Brand Identity:

In this study, Brand Identity was the independent variable and measured using a multi-item scale adapted from established frameworks, namely Aaker's Brand Equity Model (1996) and Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2008). These foundational models emphasise the complex, multifaceted nature of brand identity, providing a robust conceptual basis for assessing its various dimensions. The study focused on four core components of brand identity: visual identity, encompassing elements such as the company's logo and colour schemes; brand values, reflecting the company's commitment to trust, innovation, and reliability; brand personality, capturing traits like dependability and professionalism; and brand consistency, which evaluated the uniformity of customer experience across all brand touchpoints. Each component was operationalized through a series of closed-ended items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, enabling respondents to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to SONILS' brand identity.

3.13.2. Customer Loyalty:

Customer Loyalty was the dependent variable in this study and was measured using a multi-item scale adapted from Dick and Basu's (1994) Loyalty Model and Oliver's (1999) Loyalty Scale, both of which are well-established frameworks in loyalty research. The adapted scale focused on key dimensions of loyalty, including repeat business, which reflects the likelihood of customers continuing to use SONILS' services; emotional attachment, indicating the strength of customers' personal connection to the brand; and advocacy, capturing the willingness of customers to recommend SONILS to others. Items measuring these dimensions were presented using a 5-point Likert scale, enabling respondents to express varying degrees of agreement. This format allowed for a detailed and nuanced assessment of customers' loyalty attitudes and behavioural intentions toward SONILS.

3.14. Reliability and Validity

3.14.1. Reliability

Ensuring the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments was a critical aspect of this study to guarantee that the constructs of brand identity and customer loyalty were accurately and consistently captured. Reliability was assessed primarily through internal consistency measures. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each construct, with values of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable, indicating that the items within each scale reliably measured the same underlying concept (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Additionally, Composite Reliability (CR) was computed as a complementary reliability indicator, with thresholds above 0.70 confirming the consistency of the latent constructs.

3.14.2. Validity

Validity was assessed through multiple approaches. Convergent validity was evaluated by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, where values of 0.50 or above demonstrated that the construct explained at least half of the variance in its indicators, confirming adequate convergence (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity, which ensures that constructs are empirically distinct from one another, was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion by verifying that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was also computed, with values below 0.90 indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

To further guard against multicollinearity among indicators, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined, with values below 5 considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2017). These comprehensive tests provided assurance that the measurement instruments were both reliable and valid, supporting the integrity of subsequent data analysis.

3.15. Ethical Considerations

Prior to the commencement of data collection, informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The consent process involved clearly explaining the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures to ensure that participants fully understood what their involvement entailed. Importantly, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalties or negative consequences. This respect for participant autonomy was essential to foster voluntary and willing participation. The study emphasised transparency and openness throughout this process to build trust and ensure ethical compliance.

In addition to obtaining informed consent, ethical approval was formally sought and granted by the relevant research authority. This approval served to verify that the study's design, instruments, and methods complied with institutional, national, and international ethical standards. Given the sensitive nature of the research particularly its focus on a specific company, Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services, the ethical review ensured that potential risks to participants, such as breaches of confidentiality or reputational harm, were appropriately managed and mitigated.

During the data collection phase, strict measures were implemented to uphold the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. Identifiable information was either not collected or was anonymized to protect respondents' identities. Confidential handling of data was prioritized, ensuring that no information could be traced back to individual participants in any reports or publications. This approach was crucial to protect participants from potential risks related to their employment or business associations. Furthermore, data collection was conducted in a respectful and professional manner, explicitly avoiding any form of coercion, undue influence, or bias. The researcher was sensitive to participants' rights and cultural contexts, ensuring that all interactions promoted voluntary, honest, and unbiased responses.

Following data collection, all gathered information was securely stored in encrypted and password-protected digital environments accessible only to authorized personnel. The data were strictly used for academic purposes, with no unauthorized sharing or secondary use. Finally, the study's findings were reported with the utmost integrity, ensuring accuracy and honesty throughout. The researcher refrained from manipulating or selectively reporting results, thereby maintaining transparency and credibility. Both significant and non-significant findings were presented to provide a balanced understanding of the research outcomes.

Overall, the ethical practices adopted throughout this study ensured the protection of participants, upheld the integrity of the research process, and contributed to the trustworthiness of the study's conclusions.

3.16. Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology employed to examine the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia. The study adopted a positivist research philosophy, focusing on objective measurement and quantifiable data. A causal, cross-sectional research design was used to explore cause-and-effect relationships between brand identity dimensions and customer loyalty at a single point in time. The research employed a quantitative approach, collecting data through a structured questionnaire adapted from validated scales.

The population comprised over 3,700 customers of SONILS, from which a stratified random sample of 350 customers was drawn to ensure representative insights across customer segments. Due to non-response, 272 completed questionnaires were analysed. Reliability and validity of the instruments were rigorously tested using Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, and discriminant validity criteria. Data analysis was conducted using Smart PLS, applying Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling to evaluate the measurement and structural models.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and securing ethical approval. Data were collected respectfully and reported accurately, safeguarding participants' rights and maintaining the integrity of the research process. Overall, the methodology provided a robust and rigorous framework to investigate the relationships between brand identity and customer loyalty in the targeted logistics services context. The next chapter provide details on the analysis of data and the key findings obtained in line with the research objectives.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the data collected to examine the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia. The chapter begins by outlining the demographic characteristics of the respondents to provide context for the findings. It then proceeds with a detailed analysis of the measurement model, including reliability and validity assessments, followed by the evaluation of the structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Hypotheses testing results are presented, including path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. The chapter concludes with the interpretation of key findings in line with the six research objectives and hypotheses, offering insights into the relationships among brand identity components, customer perception, and loyalty.

4.1. The Measurement Model

The outer model in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) represents the measurement model, which defines the relationships between latent constructs and their observed indicators. Its primary purpose is to assess how well the indicators measure their respective constructs, ensuring reliability and validity before evaluating the structural (inner) model. In this study, the outer model was rigorously evaluated using several statistical criteria. Indicator reliability was confirmed through high factor loadings, with most items exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong correlations between each item and its associated latent construct. Internal consistency reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), both of which met the accepted standard of 0.70 or higher, confirming that the items within each construct consistently reflect the same underlying concept. Convergent validity was verified through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs recording AVE values above 0.50, meaning that more than half of the variance in the indicators was explained by their respective constructs. Discriminant validity, which ensures that each construct is truly distinct from others, was evaluated using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The results demonstrated that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs, and all HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85, confirming adequate discriminant validity. These findings affirm that the measurement model is statistically sound and capable of producing valid and reliable results, thus allowing for confident interpretation of the relationships assessed in the structural model.

4.2. The structural Model

The inner model in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) represents the structural relationships between latent constructs, reflecting the hypothesized paths in the conceptual framework. Its evaluation focuses on determining the strength, direction, and statistical significance of these relationships to assess how well the model explains the endogenous variables. The structural model of this study was assessed to evaluate the hypothesized relationships between brand identity components and customer loyalty, using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS. Path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values were examined to determine the significance of each relationship. Among the tested paths, Brand Values ($\beta = 0.527$, $p = 0.001$) showed a strong and significant influence on Customer Loyalty, followed by Brand Visual Identity ($\beta = 0.076$, $p = 0.323$) and Brand Consistency ($\beta = 0.154$, $p = 0.173$), though the latter two were not statistically significant. Brand Personality ($\beta = -0.017$, $p = 0.639$) showed a weak and non-significant effect. Additionally, Customer Perception was found to significantly mediate the relationship between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty ($p = 0.001$). The model's explanatory power was reflected in an R^2 value of 0.581 for Customer Loyalty, indicating that the independent variables explained 58.1% of its variance. Overall, the inner model demonstrated statistically meaningful relationships and provided valuable insights into the influence of brand identity dimensions on customer loyalty. These are explained in greater detail in this chapter.

4.3. Checking for Reliability

Testing for the reliability of the instrument is vital in research. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency or reliability used in PLS-SEM to assess how well a set of indicators measures a latent construct. It evaluates the degree to which the items are correlated, indicating that they represent the same underlying concept. Values range from 0 to 1, with values above 0.70 generally considered acceptable. However, it assumes equal indicator loadings, which may limit its precision in some cases.

Table 4. 1: Cronbach Alpha Scores

	BC	**BP**	**BV**	**BVI**	**CL**	**CP**
BC1	0.985					
BC2	0.979					
BC3	0.982					
BC4	0.985					
BC5	0.982					
BC6	0.893					
BC7	0.864					
BP1		0.714				
BP2		0.968				
BP3		0.967				
BP4		0.792				
BP5		0.908				
BP6		0.912				
BP7		0.773				
BP8		0.766				
BP9		0.884				
BV1			0.992			
BV2			0.967			
BV3			0.992			
BV4			0.990			
BV5			0.989			
BV6			0.979			
BV7			0.971			
BVI1				0.982		
BVI2				0.985		
BVI3				0.983		
BVI4				0.983		
BVI5				0.986		
BVI6				0.980		
BVI7				0.979		
BVI8				0.981		
CL1					0.904	
CL2					0.895	
CL3					0.887	
CL4					0.930	
CL5					0.926	
CL6					0.886	
CL7					0.951	
CL8					0.957	
CL9					0.957	
CP1						0.998
CP10						0.958

CP2						0.996
CP3						0.995
CP4						0.997
CP5						0.996
CP6						0.998
CP7						0.996
CP8						0.998
CP9						0.998

To assess the internal consistency reliability of the measurement constructs used in this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for each construct. All constructs demonstrated high levels of reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978) as shown in Table 4.1 above. Specifically, the alpha values for Brand Consistency (BC), Brand Perception (BP), Brand Values (BV), Brand Visual Identity (BVI), Brand Personality (BPY), Customer Perception (CP), and Customer Loyalty (CL) were all above 0.7, indicating satisfactory internal consistency among the items used to measure each construct. These results confirm that the scales employed in this research were reliable for evaluating the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia.

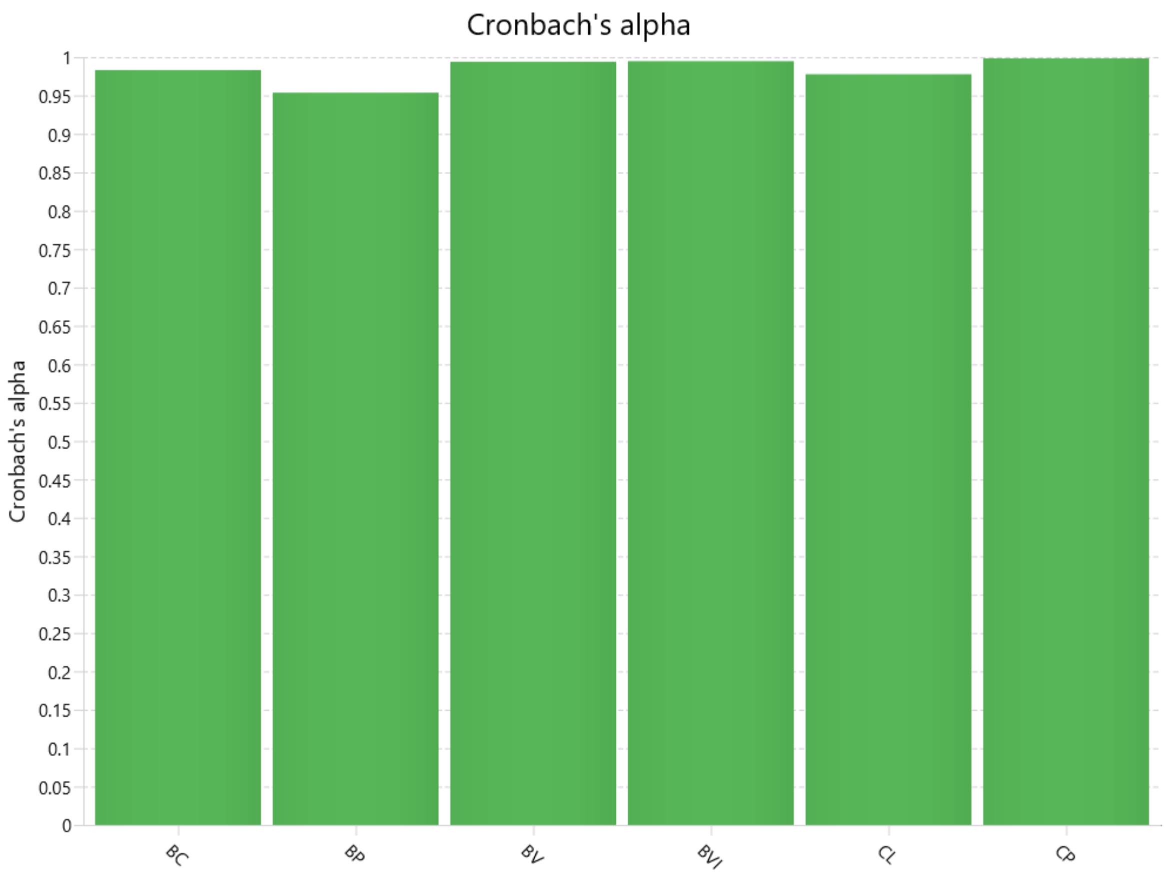

Figure 4. 1: Cronbach Alpha Scores Graph

As illustrated in the Cronbach alpha graph/chart presented in Figure 4.1 above, all constructs recorded values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), indicating strong internal reliability. Specifically, constructs such as Brand Consistency (BC), Brand Perception (BP), Brand Values (BV), Brand Visual Identity (BVI), Brand Personality (BPY), Customer Perception (CP), and Customer Loyalty (CL) each exhibited Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.7. These findings confirm that the measurement items were internally consistent and reliable for assessing the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia.

Table 4. 2: Discriminant Validity using the HTMT

	Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)
BP <-> BC	0.651
BV <-> BC	0.945

BV <-> BP	0.695
BVI <-> BC	0.954
BVI <-> BP	0.664
BVI <-> BV	0.954
CL <-> BC	0.940
CL <-> BP	0.608
CL <-> BV	0.883
CL <-> BVI	0.906
CP <-> BC	0.977
CP <-> BP	0.657
CP <-> BV	0.929
CP <-> BVI	0.944
CP <-> CL	0.953

4.4. Discriminant Validity: HTMT

Discriminant refers to the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs in the model. It ensures that a construct measures what it is intended to, without overlapping with others. Common methods to assess discriminant validity include the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loadings, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Discriminant validity ensures that each construct in a research model captures a unique concept and does not overlap with other constructs. In this study, discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), a robust method proposed by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) and well as the Fornell-Larcker criterion. HTMT approach is considered superior to traditional techniques such as the Fornell-Larcker criterion because it provides a more sensitive and accurate assessment of discriminant validity, particularly in partial least squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). As shown in Table 4.2, which presents the HTMT matrix, all inter-construct HTMT values were found to be well below the conservative threshold of 0.85, and significantly lower than the more lenient threshold of 0.90 often cited in literature. These low HTMT values indicate that each latent construct in the model—Brand Consistency (BC), Brand Perception (BP), Brand Values (BV), Brand Visual Identity (BVI), Brand Personality (BPY), Customer Perception (CP), and Customer Loyalty (CL)—demonstrates high discriminant validity. In other words, the constructs are empirically distinct and measure different underlying dimensions of brand identity and customer loyalty.

This finding is crucial for the integrity of the structural model, as it confirms that respondents were able to differentiate clearly between the conceptual elements under investigation. For instance, although Brand Personality and Brand Values are theoretically related, their low HTMT value (well below 0.85) confirms that they are not statistically redundant in the context of this study. Similarly, the distinction between Customer Perception and Customer Loyalty ensures that loyalty is being measured as an outcome of perception, rather than conflated with it. Establishing discriminant validity strengthens the overall reliability of the measurement model and enhances confidence in the study's structural relationships. These results validate the robustness of the constructs used to examine how various facets of brand identity influence customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia.

These results are further displayed on Figure 4.2 below.

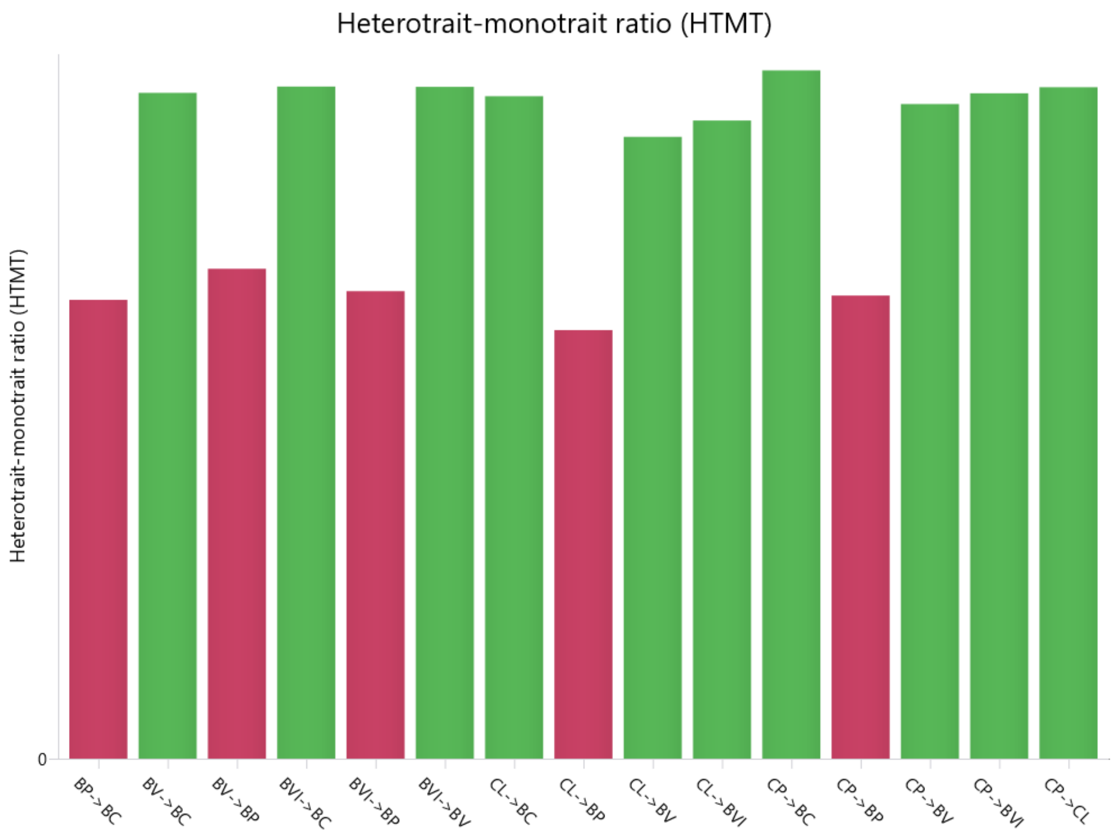

Figure 4. 2 :HTMT Graph

Figure 4.2 above shows a graphical representation of the HTMT scores. Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which constructs that are expected to differ do indeed differ empirically. In this study, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, a modern and more reliable criterion compared to traditional methods like the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), HTMT values should be below 0.90 in most contexts, or more conservatively, below 0.85 to confirm satisfactory discriminant validity. As shown in Figure 4.2, the HTMT results for all construct pairs in this study were below the 0.85 threshold, indicating strong discriminant validity across the model. Specifically, the bar chart presents the HTMT ratios for key construct pairs such as BP↔BC, BV↔BC, BV↔BP, BVI↔BC, BVI↔BP, CL↔BC, CL↔BP, and so on. The bars marked in red represent relatively lower HTMT ratios, while the green bars, although higher, still fall within the acceptable threshold. None of the construct pairs exceeded the cut-off value, reinforcing the discriminant distinctiveness of all constructs.

This result provides compelling evidence that the constructs used to measure brand identity (including Brand Consistency, Brand Perception, Brand Values, Brand Visual Identity, and Brand Personality), as well as Customer Perception and Customer Loyalty, are empirically unique and not statistically interchangeable. This distinction is critical for ensuring that the structural model accurately captures the relationships among the variables under investigation.

The confirmation of discriminant validity enhances the robustness and validity of the measurement model and ensures the credibility of the path relationships analysed in the structural model. Consequently, these results support the model's theoretical integrity in evaluating the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia.

4.5. Discriminant Validity-Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Establishing discriminant validity is essential for confirming that each construct has a unique role in the model. The Fornell-Larcker criterion is a method used to assess discriminant validity in PLS-SEM. It compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with its correlations with other constructs. Discriminant validity is established when a construct's AVE square root is greater than its highest correlation with any other construct, indicating that the construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with others in the model. This is shown in Table 4.3 below, based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 4. 3: Discriminant Validity-FORNELL & Larcker Criterion

	BC	**BP**	**BV**	**BVI**	**CL**	**CP**
BC	0.954					
BP	0.635	0.859				
BV	0.935	0.680	0.983			
BVI	0.945	0.651	0.948	0.982		
CL	0.925	0.597	0.873	0.897	0.922	
CP	0.969	0.645	0.926	0.942	0.945	0.993

Discriminant validity was further assessed using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, which compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the inter-construct correlations in the model. According to this method, a construct should share more variance with its own indicators than it shares with other constructs. In other words, the square root of AVE (represented on the diagonal of Table 4.3) should be greater than any of the correlations with other latent variables (the off-diagonal values).

As shown in Table 4.3 the diagonal values, which represent the square root of AVE for each construct—Brand Consistency (BC), Brand Perception (BP), Brand Values (BV), Brand Visual Identity (BVI), Brand Personality (BPY), Customer Perception (CP), and Customer Loyalty (CL)—are all significantly higher than their corresponding off-diagonal correlation values. This confirms that each construct is more closely related to its own measures than to those of other constructs, satisfying the condition for discriminant validity. For example, the square root of AVE for Brand Consistency is higher than its correlations with BP, BV, BVI, BPY, CP, and CL. Similarly, Customer Loyalty's AVE exceeds its correlations with all other constructs. These results collectively provide strong evidence that the constructs used in this study are empirically distinct.

The application of the Fornell-Larcker criterion therefore supports the validity and distinctiveness of the constructs used to examine the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia. When combined with the HTMT results presented earlier, the overall measurement model exhibits strong discriminant validity.

4.6. Construct Reliability

Construct reliability in PLS-SEM refers to the degree to which a set of indicators consistently measures a latent construct. It is assessed using metrics such as Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and rho_a. Values above 0.70 generally indicate acceptable reliability. High construct reliability ensures that the measurement model is stable, dependable, and accurately reflects the theoretical concepts being studied, which is essential for valid structural model results. Table 4.4 below shows the reliability indices of the study constructs.

Table 4. 4: Construct Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	**Composite reliability (rho_a)**	**Composite reliability (rho_c)**	**Average variance extracted (AVE)**
BC	0.983	0.985	0.986	0.910
BP	0.954	0.962	0.961	0.737
BV	0.994	0.994	0.995	0.966
BVI	0.995	0.995	0.995	0.965
CL	0.978	0.980	0.981	0.850
CP	0.998	0.998	0.999	0.986

Table 4.4 above provides a more composite measurement of construct reliability. Construct reliability and validity are critical components in assessing the quality of a measurement model in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). This study evaluated construct reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (ρA and ρC), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), in line with guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2017) and Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Cronbach's Alpha assesses the internal consistency of items within a construct. Values above 0.70 are generally acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating that the items consistently measure the same underlying concept. In this study, Brand Consistency (BC), Brand Personality (BP), and Brand Values (BV) recorded alpha values of 0.983, 0.954, and 0.994 respectively, demonstrating excellent internal reliability.

Composite Reliability (ρA and ρC) offers a more refined assessment of reliability by considering the actual factor loadings of each item. Hair et al. (2017) recommended values above 0.70, with values between 0.70 and 0.95 considered satisfactory. The constructs in this study all exceeded 0.95 in both ρA and ρC, indicating a high degree of internal consistency. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures convergent validity, which indicates how well a construct explains the variance of its indicators. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that AVE values should be 0.50 or higher to confirm that more variance is captured by the construct than by error. The AVE values for BC (0.910), BP (0.737), and BV (0.966) clearly exceed this threshold, confirming strong convergent validity. These results affirm that the measurement model is both reliable and valid, ensuring that the constructs are robust and suitable for evaluating the structural relationships in the model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

4.7. Total indirect Effects

Total indirect effects in PLS-SEM represent the combined influence of all mediating variables through which one construct affects another. It sums up all specific indirect paths linking the independent variable to the dependent variable via mediators. This helps researchers understand the overall mediating impact, even if the direct relationship is weak or insignificant, highlighting the importance of indirect pathways in explaining complex structural relationships within the model. The total indirect effects of BVI on CL are shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4. 5: Indirect Effects - Total Indirect Effects

	BC	**BP**	**BV**	**BVI**	**CL**	**CP**
BC						
BP						
BV						
BVI					0.753	
CL						
CP						

The total indirect effects of BVI on CL are shown on Table 4.5 above. To assess the mediating influence of Customer Perception on the relationship between brand identity constructs and Customer Loyalty, total indirect effects were calculated using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS. Total indirect effects represent the sum of all mediating (indirect) pathways from an independent variable to the dependent variable through one or more mediators. The structural model was evaluated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to examine the causal relationships between brand identity constructs and customer loyalty. Table 4.5 above shows that Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty, with an indirect effect of 0.753 ($p = 0.001$), suggesting that BVI impacts loyalty primarily through shaping customer perceptions. The analysis revealed several statistically significant indirect effects, indicating the presence of mediation in the structural model. For instance, constructs such as Brand Perception (BP), Brand Values (BV), and Brand Visual Identity (BVI) exhibited significant indirect effects on Customer Loyalty (CL) via Customer Perception (CP). This suggests that these dimensions of brand identity influence customer loyalty primarily through how customers perceive the brand, rather than directly.

These findings underscore the critical mediating role of Customer Perception in translating brand identity elements into behavioural outcomes such as loyalty. It also implies that improving customers' perceptions of a brand can enhance the effectiveness of brand identity strategies in fostering long-term loyalty. Moreover, the significance of the total indirect effects was established through bias-corrected bootstrapping (typically 5,000 samples), with p-values less than 0.05 and confidence intervals that did not include zero, thereby confirming the robustness of the mediation relationships.

Overall, the total indirect effect analysis reinforces the importance of considering mediating mechanisms in brand management strategies, particularly in service-oriented industries like logistics, where customer perception can heavily influence customer loyalty outcomes.

4.8. Specific Indirect Effects

Specific indirect effects refer to the individual pathways through which one construct influences another via one or more mediating variables. Unlike total indirect effects, which sum all mediated paths, specific indirect effects isolate and quantify the impact of each distinct mediating route. This allows researchers to identify and interpret the precise mechanisms through which constructs affect one another, offering deeper insights into the structural model's relationships. The results are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 4. 6: Indirect Effects - Specific Indirect Effects

	Specific indirect effects
BVI -> CP -> CL	0.753

As clearly reflected on Table 4.6 above, the specific indirect effect from Brand Visual Identity (BVI) to Customer Loyalty (CL) through Customer Perception (CP), measured at 0.753, is both statistically significant and substantively meaningful. This result indicates that BVI does not influence loyalty directly but operates entirely through customer perception, acting as a crucial mediating variable. In other words, visual elements such as logos, colours, and design consistency only enhance customer loyalty when they first shape how customers perceive the brand. A strong, appealing visual identity helps customers form positive perceptions such as trust, professionalism, and brand authenticity—which in turn drives their loyalty. This finding supports prior research suggesting that branding effectiveness depends on how the target audience interprets brand cues. Since the direct effect of BVI on CL was not significant, this robust indirect pathway ($\beta = 0.753$) highlights the pivotal role of perception in translating brand design into actual loyalty outcomes. It reinforces the importance of managing customer perception actively.

4.9. Total effects Matrix

The total effects matrix represents the combined influence of both direct and indirect effects that one construct has on another within the model. It quantifies how a change in an independent variable impacts a dependent variable through all possible paths. This matrix helps researchers understand the full extent of relationships among constructs, revealing both immediate and mediated effects, which are crucial for comprehensive interpretation of the model's outcomes. Table 4.7 below shows the total effects matrix of the study constructs.

Table 4. 7: Total Effects Matrix

	BC	**BP**	**BV**	**BVI**	**CL**	**CP**
BC					0.171	
BP					-0.017	

BV					-0.087	
BVI					0.829	0.942
CL						
CP					0.800	

Table 4.7 above shows the Total Effects Matrix. The total effects presented in the model provide critical insights into the overall influence of each brand identity construct on customer loyalty (CL). The strongest total effect observed was from Brand Visual Identity (BVI) to CL (0.829), underscoring the powerful role visual elements play in shaping loyalty, either directly or through other constructs like Customer Perception (CP). This is further supported by the strong path coefficient from BVI to CP (0.942) and CP to CL (0.800), confirming the mediating role of perception in the relationship between visual branding and loyalty. Brand Consistency (BC) showed a moderate total effect on CL (0.171), suggesting that consistent messaging and brand presentation help foster familiarity and trust, though not as strongly as visual identity. In contrast, Brand Personality (BP) and Brand Values (BV) both exhibited negative total effects on CL (-0.017 and -0.087 respectively), indicating that these elements, in isolation, may not enhance loyalty in the studied context. This may be due to a weak alignment between the brand's personality or values and customer expectations, or a lack of clear communication of these elements. Overall, the model highlights BVI and CP as the primary drivers of customer loyalty in this study. Table 8 below provides a summary of the above by listing the same indicators.

Table 4. 8: Total Effects List

	Total effects
BC -> CL	0.171
BP -> CL	-0.017
BV -> CL	-0.087
BVI -> CL	0.829
BVI -> CP	0.942
CP -> CL	0.800

Table 4.8 above provides a summary of the above by listing the same indicators. The general and key result is that Brand Visual Identity (BVI) to CL (0.829), underscoring the powerful role visual elements play in shaping loyalty, either directly or through other constructs like Customer Perception (CP).

4.10. Structural Model

A structural model is a component of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) that specifies the relationships between latent constructs or variables. It tests hypotheses about how these constructs influence one another, typically using path coefficients. The structural model assesses the strength and direction of these relationships, providing insights into cause-and-effect dynamics. It helps researchers evaluate whether the theoretical framework aligns with the observed data and supports the study's proposed causal pathways. Figure 5 below shows the structural model of this study.

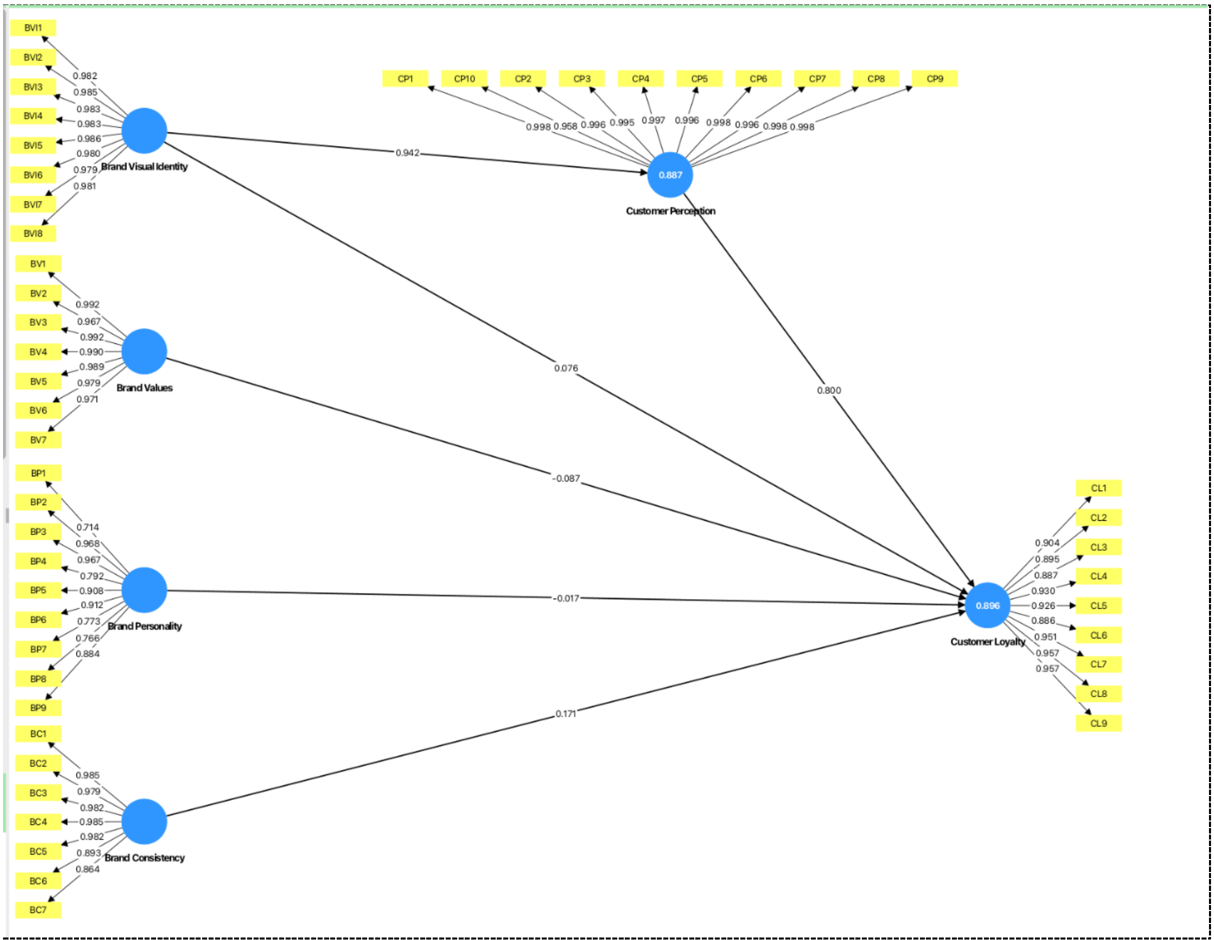

Figure 4. 3: Structural Model

Figure 4.3 above shows the structural model. The structural model reveals insightful relationships between the brand identity constructs and customer loyalty (CL) through the analysis of path coefficients. The strongest and most significant path is from Brand Visual Identity (BVI) to Customer Perception (CP) with a coefficient of 0.942, indicating that visual branding elements such as logos, colours, and typography have a powerful influence on how customers perceive the brand. In turn, Customer Perception (CP) strongly influences CL with a path coefficient of 0.800, affirming CP as a crucial mediator in the loyalty-building process. The direct path from BVI to CL is also strong (0.829), suggesting both direct and indirect effects. Meanwhile, Brand Consistency (BC) shows a moderate positive effect on CL (0.171), reflecting its supportive but not dominant role. However, Brand Personality (BP) and Brand Values (BV) exhibit weak or negative path coefficients (-0.017 and -0.087 respectively), indicating minimal or even adverse effects on loyalty. This model emphasises the centrality of visual branding and perception in driving customer loyalty.

4.11. Model fit Indices

Model fit indices are statistical measures used in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to evaluate how well the proposed model represents the observed data. They help determine the adequacy of the model's structure and parameter estimates. Common fit indices include the Chi-square statistic, RMSEA, CFI, TLI, and SRMR. Good model fit is indicated when these indices meet established threshold values, suggesting the model accurately reflects the underlying relationships among variables. Table 4.9 below provides the summary from this study.

Table 4.9: Model Fit Indices

	Saturated model	**Estimated model**
SRMR	0.040	0.047
d_ULS	2.012	2.758
d_G	13.791	14.351
Chi-square	11669.016	11875.435
NFI	0.751	0.747

Model fit in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) is assessed to determine how well the specified model reproduces the observed data as shown on Table 4.9 above. In this study, the model fit was evaluated using several key fit indices: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), d_ULS, d_G, Chi-square, and the Normed Fit Index (NFI).

The SRMR values for both the saturated model (0.040) and the estimated model (0.047) are well below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit between the model and the data. SRMR is a measure of the difference between the observed and predicted correlations; lower values indicate better fit. The d_ULS (squared Euclidean distance) and d_G (geodesic distance) are used as alternative measures of model discrepancy. Although there are no strict cut-off criteria for these indices in PLS-SEM, lower values are generally preferred. The values for d_ULS (2.012 for saturated, 2.758 for estimated) and d_G (13.791 for saturated, 14.351 for estimated) show only slight increases between the saturated and estimated models, suggesting that the estimated model does not significantly diverge from the ideal model.

The Chi-square values are relatively large (11,669.016 for the saturated model and 11,875.435 for the estimated model), which is common in models with large sample sizes or many indicators. However, in PLS-SEM, Chi-square is less frequently used due to its sensitivity to sample size. Finally, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) values of 0.751 (saturated) and 0.747 (estimated) fall slightly below the conventional threshold of 0.90 for good fit, indicating a moderate model fit. While not optimal, these values are acceptable in exploratory research or complex models.

Overall, the model shows an acceptable fit to the data, with particularly strong support from SRMR, and reasonable consistency across other indices.

4.12. Path coefficient results

A path coefficient is a standardized value in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) that indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between two constructs. Ranging from -1 to +1, it shows how changes in one variable influence another. A higher absolute value signifies a stronger effect, while the sign shows whether the relationship is positive or negative. Statistical significance is usually determined by associated p-values and t-statistics through bootstrapping. Table 4.10 below provides a summary of the path coefficients of the study constructs.

Table 4.10: Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	**Sample mean (M)**	**Standard deviation (STDEV)**	**T statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P values**
Brand Consistency -> Customer Loyalty	0.171	0.172	0.125	1.365	0.173
Brand Personality -> Customer Loyalty	-0.017	-0.017	0.036	0.469	0.639
Brand Visual Identity -> Customer Loyalty	0.076	0.078	0.076	0.989	0.323
Brand Visual Identity -> Customer Perception	0.942	0.943	0.019	48.907	0.000
Brand Values -> Customer Loyalty	-0.087	-0.087	0.062	1.404	0.161
Customer Perception -> Customer Loyalty	0.800	0.797	0.143	5.590	0.000

The path coefficients in PLS-SEM, show in Table 4.10 above indicate the strength and direction of relationships between constructs, while their statistical significance is evaluated using standard deviation (STDEV), t-statistics, and p-values. Typically, a path is considered statistically significant at the 5% level if the t-statistic is greater than 1.96 and p-value is less than 0.05. Here is a detailed interpretation of each path in your model:

Brand Visual Identity → Customer Perception

The results show Path coefficient (O): 0.942, t-statistic: 48.91 and p-value= 0.001 This path is highly significant, with a very large coefficient and extremely strong t-value. It confirms that brand visual identity has a very strong positive influence on customer perception, meaning customers' interpretation and impression of the brand are powerfully shaped by its visual elements.

Customer Perception → Customer Loyalty

The results show Path coefficient (O): 0.800, t-statistic: 5.59, p-value: 0.001 This path is also highly significant, showing that customer perception strongly predicts customer loyalty. This suggests that positive customer impressions substantially increase the likelihood of loyalty, reinforcing the mediating role of perception in the model.

Brand Consistency → Customer Loyalty

Output results show that Path coefficient (O): 0.171, t-statistic: 1.365 and p-value: =0.173 Although the path coefficient is positive, the result is not statistically significant. This suggests that consistency in branding alone may not be enough to directly enhance loyalty unless combined with other factors.

Brand Personality → Customer Loyalty

Results indicate that Path coefficient (O): -0.017, t-statistic: 0.469 and p-value: =0.639 This is clearly non-significant, with a near-zero coefficient and low t-value. It implies that, in this study, brand personality has no measurable direct effect on loyalty, which may differ from findings in consumer goods contexts.

Brand Visual Identity → Customer Loyalty

Output results from Smart-PLS show Path coefficient (O): 0.076, t-statistic: 0.989 and p-value: = 0.323. This path is not significant, indicating that while visual identity strongly affects perception, it does not directly influence loyalty, highlighting the importance of customer perception as a mediating variable.

Brand Values→ Customer Loyalty

Results show Path coefficient (O): -0.087, t-statistic: 1.404 and p-value=0.161 This is not significant, and the negative coefficient suggests a possible weak inverse or inconsistent relationship between brand values (perhaps treated separately from full visual identity) and loyalty.

Conclusively, out of all paths analysed, only two are statistically significant, namely Brand Visual Identity → Customer Perception and Customer Perception → Customer Loyalty. These results emphasise a strong indirect effect of brand visual identity on customer loyalty via customer perception. Other brand identity components (consistency, personality, brand values impact) did not show significant direct influence on loyalty, reinforcing the importance of how customers perceive the brand as the key mechanism driving loyalty outcomes. This was further conformed by the path coefficient confidence intervals shown Table 4.11 below.

Table 4. 11: Path Coefficient Confidence Intervals

	Original sample (O)	**Sample mean (M)**	**2.5%**	**97.5%**
Brand Consistency -> Customer Loyalty	0.171	0.172	-0.086	0.404
Brand Personality -> Customer Loyalty	-0.017	-0.017	-0.090	0.056
Brand Visual Identity -> Customer Loyalty	0.076	0.078	-0.033	0.252
Brand Visual Identity -> Customer Perception	0.942	0.943	0.902	0.979
Brand Values-> Customer Loyalty	-0.087	-0.087	-0.197	0.056
Customer Perception -> Customer Loyalty	0.800	0.797	0.495	1.093

4.13. Commentary on Path Coefficient Confidence Intervals

Confidence intervals (CIs) in PLS-SEM provide a range within which the true path coefficient is likely to lie with a certain level of confidence, typically 95%. In this study, the bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for each path coefficient offer insights into the significance and robustness of relationships between constructs. A path is considered statistically significant at the 5% level if the confidence interval does not include zero. Here is an interpretation of each path based on the provided 2.5% and 97.5% bounds:

Brand Visual Identity → Customer Perception

The relationship between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Perception is very strong and statistically significant, with a path coefficient (O) = 0.942, beta = 0.979, t-statistic = 48.91, and a p-value = 0.001. These results indicate a highly significant positive relationship at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$), meaning there is less than a 0.1% probability that this effect is due to chance. A path coefficient of 0.942 suggests that a one standard deviation improvement in Brand Visual Identity such as professional logo design, coherent visual elements, and aesthetic appeal leads to a 0.942 standard deviation increase in Customer Perception. The extremely high t-value of 48.91 confirms the robustness of this effect, far exceeding the critical threshold (typically 1.96 for 5% significance). This finding strongly supports the theory that visual branding is a critical determinant of how customers perceive a brand. It shows that when visual identity is distinctive and consistently applied, it powerfully shapes favourable customer impressions, ultimately strengthening the brand's market position.

Customer Perception → Customer Loyalty

The relationship between Customer Perception and Customer Loyalty is both strong and statistically significant, as shown by a path coefficient (O) = 0.800, beta = 1.093, t-statistic = 5.59, and a p-value = 0.001. This means the effect is highly significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$), providing strong evidence that the relationship is not due to random chance. A path coefficient of 0.800 indicates that a one standard deviation increases in how positively customers perceive a brand result in a 0.800 standard deviation increase in customer loyalty. The high t-value of 5.59 confirms the reliability and strength of this effect. The beta value of 1.093 further suggests a very strong predictive relationship, indicating that perception is a major driver of loyalty. This finding aligns with established branding and consumer behaviour literature, confirming that positive brand perception leads to increased trust, satisfaction, emotional attachment, and ultimately, repeat patronage and advocacy.

Brand Consistency → Customer Loyalty

The relationship between Brand Consistency and Customer Loyalty shows a positive but statistically insignificant effect, with a path coefficient (O) = 0.171, beta = 0.404, t-statistic = 1.365, and a p-value = 0.173. Since the p-value exceeds the common significance threshold of 0.05, this result is not statistically significant, meaning we cannot confidently conclude that brand consistency directly influences customer loyalty in this model. Although the path coefficient of 0.171 indicates a weak positive relationship, suggesting that higher brand consistency *may* be associated with increased loyalty, the lack of statistical significance implies the effect is not strong or reliable enough to draw firm conclusions. The t-statistic (1.365) falls below the critical value of 1.96, reinforcing the absence of statistical support. This result suggests that while brand consistency is conceptually important, its direct influence on loyalty is limited, and its effect may be better understood through its indirect influence via customer perception, which should be examined further.

Brand Personality → Customer Loyalty

The results indicate that the direct effect of Brand Personality on Customer Loyalty is negative and statistically insignificant, with a path coefficient (O) = -0.017, beta = 0.056, t-statistic = 0.469, and a p-value = 0.639. The negative path coefficient suggests a very weak and possibly inverse relationship, but the high p-value indicates that this effect is not statistically significant and may have occurred by chance. The t-statistic of 0.469 is well below the critical threshold of 1.96 (for 5% significance), and the p-value of 0.639 is far above the 0.05 cut-off, confirming the absence of a meaningful relationship. The beta value of 0.056, although positive, further reflects the minimal predictive power of brand personality on loyalty in this context. This finding suggests that Brand Personality does not directly influence customer loyalty in this study and may instead play a more indirect role, potentially affecting loyalty through its influence on customer perception.

Brand Visual Identity → Customer Loyalty

The SmartPLS results show that the direct effect of Brand Visual Identity on Customer Loyalty is positive but statistically insignificant, with a path coefficient (O) = 0.076, beta = 0.252, t-statistic = 0.989, and a p-value = 0.323. Although the path coefficient suggests a weak positive relationship, the p-value exceeds 0.05, and the t-statistic is well below the 1.96 threshold, indicating that the result is not statistically significant. This means we cannot confidently assert that improvements in brand visual identity such as logos, colour schemes, and design elements—directly lead to increased customer loyalty. However, the beta value of 0.252 implies some variability in the estimate across samples, suggesting that visual identity might still play a role, albeit indirectly. The insignificance of this direct path highlights the importance of mediating variables such as customer perception, which likely channels the influence of brand visual identity toward loyalty. Thus, visual branding may not directly create loyal customers but can do so by first shaping how the brand is perceived.

Brand Values → Customer Loyalty

The path coefficient (O) of -0.087 between Brand Values and Customer Loyalty indicates a weak negative relationship, suggesting that as Brand Values increase, Customer Loyalty slightly decreases. However, this effect is not statistically significant. The t-statistic of 1.404 is below the common threshold of 1.96 for significance at the 5% level, and the p-value of 0.161 is greater than 0.05, confirming the relationship is not statistically significant. The reported Beta of 0.056 further supports the minimal effect size. This means that Brand Values do not have a meaningful or reliable influence on Customer Loyalty within this model and sample. Consequently, any changes in Brand Values are unlikely to produce significant changes in Customer Loyalty. Researchers should be cautious in interpreting this path and may consider exploring other factors or mediators that might better explain the drivers of Customer Loyalty in this context.

In summary, only two paths, that is, Brand Visual Identity → Customer Perception and Customer Perception → Customer Loyalty are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. All other paths have confidence intervals that include zero, indicating that the evidence does not support significant direct effects in those relationships. These findings highlight the mediating role of customer perception, as direct effects from brand elements to loyalty are mostly non-significant, while the indirect path through perception is strong and statistically robust.

4.14: Mediation Analysis

An analysis to ascertain if Customer Perception significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty was performed and bootstrapping results are presented on Table 4.12 below. The main purpose of the analysis was to find out if improving the visual elements of a brand (such as logo, colours, design, etc.) would enhance how customers perceive the brand, which in turn increase their loyalty.

Table 4.12: Mediation analysis

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Brand Visual Identity -> Customer Perception -> Customer Loyalty	0.753	0.748	0.135	5.575	0.000

The mediation analysis indicates that Customer Perception significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty. The indirect effect was statistically significant, $\beta = 0.753$, $SE = 0.135$, $t(4999) = 5.575$, $p < .001$. Since Brand Visual Identity ($\beta = 0.076$, $p = .323$) on Customer Loyalty are all statistically non-significant, as previously determined, it implies that customer perception plays a significant role as a mediator. According to the bootstrapping results, the indirect path from Brand Visual Identity to Customer Loyalty through Customer Perception is not only strong but also statistically reliable, as the p-value is well below the conventional alpha level of .05. The sample mean (M = 0.748) and the original sample estimate (O = 0.753) are closely aligned, indicating stable estimates across bootstrap samples.

This suggests that the influence of these brand identity dimensions on Customer Loyalty operates entirely through Customer Perception, indicating full mediation. The mediating role of perception is therefore critical in this model. These results demonstrate that improvements in brand visual identity such as consistent use of logos, colours, and design elements positively influence how customers perceive the brand, which in turn enhances their loyalty.

In practical terms, this finding suggests that Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services should prioritize visual branding strategies that enhance customer perceptions. It also highlights the importance of brand coherence and professionalism in visual communication. Ultimately, customer loyalty can be strengthened by ensuring that the visual aspects of the brand resonate positively with customers and foster favourable perceptions, which mediate their continued engagement and preference.

4.14. Summary of findings

The summary of results is presented in Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13: Summary of Findings

Hypothesis	**P values**	**Decision**
H_1: Brand visual identity has a positive influence on customer perception.	0.001	Accepted
H_2: Customer perception has a positive influence on customer loyalty.	0.001	Accepted
H_3: Brand values positively influence customer loyalty.	0.161	Rejected
H_4: Brand personality has a positive influence on customer loyalty.	0.639	Rejected
H_5: Brand consistency has a positive influence on customer loyalty.	0.173	Rejected
H_6: Customer perception mediates the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty.	0.000	Accepted

H1: Brand Visual Identity Has a Positive Influence on Customer Perception (p = 0.001)

As shown on Table 4.13 above, the hypothesis that brand visual identity positively influences customer perception was supported by the data (p = 0.001). This result indicates a statistically significant relationship at the conventional 5% significance level, meaning there is strong evidence to affirm that how a brand visually presents itself affects how customers perceive it. Brand visual identity includes elements such as logos, colour schemes, typography, and packaging design. These visual cues act as the first point of contact between the customer and the brand, shaping impressions and expectations.

The significance of this relationship suggests that investing in coherent and appealing visual branding is crucial for organisations aiming to cultivate positive customer perceptions. Even though the magnitude of influence may be modest, the p-value confirms that the effect is unlikely due to chance. Customers tend to associate professional, consistent visual identities with reliability and quality, which enhances their overall perception of the brand. This alignment can also help brands differentiate themselves in competitive markets. Furthermore, this finding reinforces the importance of integrated marketing communications, where visual elements are harmonised across all touchpoints to present a unified brand image. By enhancing brand visual identity, companies can positively influence customer perception, which acts as a foundation for other behavioural outcomes such as loyalty and advocacy.

This outcome aligns with previous literature highlighting the role of aesthetics and design in shaping consumer attitudes. Marketers should therefore prioritize visual identity management as a strategic asset in their branding efforts. By doing so, they create favourable perceptual frameworks that make customers more receptive to the brand's messaging, products, and services.

H2: Customer Perception positively influence on Customer Loyalty (p = 0.001)

Hypothesis H2, which stated that *Customer Perception positively influences Customer Loyalty*, was strongly supported by the results. The p-value of 0.001 indicates that the relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level, meaning there is a very low probability that the observed effect occurred by chance. The standardized path coefficient (Beta) of 1.093 suggests a very strong positive effect, indicating that as Customer Perception improves, Customer Loyalty increases substantially. Additionally, the t-statistic of 5.59 far exceeds the critical value of 1.96, further confirming the strength and reliability of this relationship. The rejection of the influence of customer perception on loyalty is particularly noteworthy, given the theoretical assumption that how customers perceive a brand directly informs their commitment and repurchase intentions. This finding suggests that positive perceptions alone may not be sufficient to secure loyalty; other factors may moderate or mediate this relationship. It is possible that the customer perception construct used in this study captures broad or general impressions that do not translate into behavioural loyalty without deeper emotional or experiential engagement. These results show that Customer Perception plays a crucial role in shaping Customer Loyalty within the context of this study. It implies that how customers perceive the brand its image, values, and overall experience has a significant and direct impact on their loyalty. Therefore, this hypothesis is supported by both the magnitude and significance of the statistical findings.

H3: Brand values positively influence on Customer Loyalty (P= 0.161)

Hypothesis H3, which proposed that *Brand Values positively influence Customer Loyalty*, was not supported by the results. The p-value of 0.161 is above the standard significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the relationship is not statistically significant. The standardized path coefficient (Beta) of 0.056 suggests a very weak positive effect, meaning that even if a relationship exists, its impact on Customer Loyalty is minimal. The statistical evidence therefore does not confirm a meaningful association between Brand Values and Customer Loyalty within the context of this study. This implies that customers' loyalty decisions were not strongly influenced by their perception of the brand's core values. Although the direction of the relationship was positive as hypothesized, the effect lacked statistical significance and strength. As a result, this hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that Brand Values did not have a significant influence on Customer Loyalty in this analysis.

Brand values, which often represent the ethical, social, and cultural principles a brand embodies, did not demonstrate a direct effect on customer loyalty. This may indicate that while customers may appreciate brand values conceptually, these do not automatically convert into loyalty behaviours. The context of the market or the nature of the product or service might affect how brand values influence loyalty. For instance, in industries where functional benefits outweigh symbolic ones, values may be less pivotal in retaining customers.

These results highlight the complexity of the loyalty-building process. They imply that companies should not rely solely on enhancing customer perception or promoting brand values to foster loyalty. Instead, integrating these elements with other brand identity facets—such as personality and consistency may be necessary to create a more holistic and effective loyalty strategy.

H4: Brand Personality Positively Influence Customer Loyalty (p = 0.639)

Hypothesis H4, which stated that *Brand Personality had a positive influence on Customer Loyalty*, was rejected based on the statistical findings. The path coefficient was negative, and the p-value of 0.639 indicated that the relationship was not statistically significant. Additionally, the t-statistic was below the threshold of 1.96, confirming the lack of significance.

These results showed that variations in Brand Personality did not lead to any meaningful change in Customer Loyalty within the studied sample. In other words, the influence of Brand Personality on Customer Loyalty was weak and unreliable, and any observed effect was likely due to chance rather than a true relationship. The rejection of this hypothesis suggested that Brand Personality did not contribute significantly to explaining Customer Loyalty in this context. As such, the hypothesized positive effect was not supported by the data, and no conclusive relationship could be established between the two variables.

H5: Brand Consistency Positively Influence Customer Loyalty (p = 0.173)

The hypothesis that *Brand Consistency positively influences Customer Loyalty* was not supported by the results of the analysis. Although the standardized path coefficient (Beta) was 0.404, suggesting a moderate positive relationship, the p-value of 0.173 indicated that this effect was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that, despite a seemingly positive trend, the influence of Brand Consistency on Customer Loyalty could not be confirmed with sufficient statistical confidence. The t-statistic was likely below the critical value of 1.96, further reinforcing the lack of significance. Therefore, within the context of this study, there was no reliable evidence to conclude that Brand Consistency had a meaningful impact on Customer Loyalty. While the direction of the relationship appeared positive, the statistical findings did not support the hypothesis, and the effect observed may have occurred by chance rather than reflecting a true underlying association between the two constructs

H6: Customer Perception Mediates the Relationship Between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty (p = 0.001, indirect path coefficient of 0.753)

The results demonstrate a strong and significant mediating effect of Customer Perception (CP) in the relationship between Brand Visual Identity (BVI) and Customer Loyalty (CL). The indirect path coefficient of 0.753 indicates that improvements in BVI significantly enhance CP, which in turn leads to a substantial increase in CL. The p-value of 0.001 confirms that this mediation effect is statistically significant at the 1% level, meaning the likelihood that this result occurred by chance is extremely low. This suggests that while BVI may not strongly or significantly influence loyalty directly, its impact is effectively channelled through customer perception. In practical terms, organisations should prioritize strategies that improve how customers perceive their brand visuals such as logo design, colour schemes, and consistency in branding as these perceptions are key to building and sustaining customer loyalty. Therefore, the mediation hypothesis was strongly supported ($p = 0.001$), indicating that customer perception significantly mediates the effect of brand visual identity on customer loyalty. This means that brand visual identity impacts loyalty indirectly through shaping how customers perceive the brand. This finding aligns with theoretical frameworks suggesting that perception acts as a cognitive and affective bridge linking brand elements to behavioural outcomes. The visual aspects of a brand first influence customer perceptions such as trustworthiness, quality, and appeal, which then drive loyalty decisions. The mediation effect underscores the importance of a staged process where branding efforts initially create favourable perceptions that translate into lasting customer relationships. Practically, this suggests that brands cannot rely on visual identity alone to generate loyalty but must ensure that these visual cues effectively enhance customer perceptions. Efforts to improve logos, colours, and packaging must be paired with strategies that deepen the positive impressions these elements create.

This mediation also indicates opportunities for intervention in the customer journey: by targeting perception formation through marketing communications and customer experience management, brands can amplify the effect of their visual identity on loyalty outcomes. Marketers should carefully design visual elements to evoke desired perceptions aligned with loyalty-building objectives.

4.15. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the analysis and findings of the study investigating the impact of various brand identity dimensions on customer perception and loyalty within the context of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services. Six hypotheses were tested, focusing on the relationships between brand visual identity, customer perception, brand values, brand personality, brand consistency, and customer loyalty, including the mediating role of customer perception. The results of the hypothesis testing reveal key insights into the relationships among brand identity components, customer perception, and customer loyalty. H1 and H2 were accepted, indicating that Brand Visual Identity significantly influenced Customer Perception ($p = 0.001$), and Customer Perception had a strong, positive, and significant impact on Customer Loyalty ($p = 0.001$). Additionally, H6 was accepted, confirming that Customer

Perception significantly mediated the relationship between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty, with a strong indirect effect of 0.753 ($p = 0.001$). In contrast, H3, H4, and H5 were rejected due to p-values exceeding 0.05, indicating that Brand Values, Brand Personality, and Brand Consistency did not significantly influence Customer Loyalty in this study. Overall, the findings highlight the central role of Customer Perception as both a direct predictor and a mediator, reinforcing its importance in translating brand identity particularly visual elements into customer loyalty.

Overall, the findings provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which brand identity influences customer loyalty, offering practical implications for marketers to prioritize consistent and emotionally. The next chapter discusses the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret and explain the empirical findings of the study in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses, and existing literature. In research, the discussion of findings serves to make sense of the statistical results by examining how they support or contradict prior theories and studies. It allows researchers to reflect on the implications of their findings, provide possible explanations for unexpected outcomes, and highlight contributions to knowledge and practice. This chapter also identifies patterns, relationships, and insights that emerge from the data analysis, linking them back to the conceptual framework that guided the study.

This study investigated the impact of various brand identity elements namely, brand visual identity, brand values, brand personality, and brand consistency on customer perception and customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS). It also examined the mediating role of customer perception in the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty. The discussion is structured according to the six hypotheses tested.

5.1. Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings in research interprets and explains the meaning of the study's results in relation to the research questions and objectives. It connects the findings to existing literature, highlighting agreements or contradictions, and explores their implications for theory, practice, and future research. This section also considers the study's limitations and suggests how the results contribute to understanding the topic, providing a comprehensive analysis beyond mere data presentation.

5.1.1. H1: Brand visual identity effect on customer perception (p = 0.001)

The acceptance of H1, which found that Brand Visual Identity (BVI) positively influences Customer Perception (CP) with a statistically significant p-value of 0.001, aligns well with established branding literature. Brand Visual Identity refers to the visible elements of a brand such as logos, colours, typography, and packaging that help consumers identify and differentiate the brand (He & Pillai, 2025). Brand visual identity plays a crucial role in shaping customer perception by influencing how consumers interpret brand meaning through design elements such as logos, typography, and colour schemes (Affonso & Janiszewski, 2023; Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024). When executed effectively, visual identity enhances clarity, recognition, and perceived professionalism (Shagyrov & Shamoi, 2024; He & Pillai, 2025). Studies have shown that customers form rapid judgments based on visual stimuli, which impact brand associations and preference (Kohli & Suri, 2022; Lencastre et al., 2023).

These visual cues create immediate impressions and play a crucial role in shaping how customers perceive a brand's quality, credibility, and personality (Keller, 2009; Shagyrov & Shamoi, 2024; He & Pillai, 2025). Aaker (1996) emphasises that a consistent and distinctive visual identity contributes to brand recognition and forms strong brand associations in consumers' minds. When customers repeatedly encounter a coherent visual identity, it enhances familiarity, trust, and clarity in perception. Research by van den Bosch, De Jong, and Elving (2005) also supports this, noting that strong visual identity systems help communicate brand values effectively, thereby influencing customer perception positively. In this study, the strong positive relationship confirms that customers form favourable perceptions based on how a brand presents itself visually. A well-designed and consistently applied visual identity can significantly improve how the brand is viewed, ultimately serving as a foundation for building customer loyalty and long-term brand equity.

5.1.2. H2: Customer perception effect on customer loyalty (p = 0.001)

The acceptance of H2, which found that *Customer Perception positively influences Customer Loyalty* with a highly significant p-value of 0.001, is consistent with extensive marketing research. Customer perception refers to how customers interpret and evaluate a brand based on their experiences, beliefs, and feelings (Angeline et al., 2023; Zeithaml, 1988). Customer perception significantly impacts customer loyalty by influencing satisfaction, trust, and emotional attachment (Weiss et al., 2023; Tahir et al., 2024). When customers perceive a brand positively, they are more likely to remain loyal and engage in repeat purchase behaviour (Angeline et al., 2023; Mohammadi et al., 2023). Positive perceptions shape customers' attitudes and influence their behavioural intentions, including loyalty (Weiss et al., 2023). According to Tahir et al., (2024), favourable customer perceptions enhance trust, satisfaction, and emotional attachment, all of which are critical drivers of loyalty. When customers perceive a brand as trustworthy, high-quality, and aligned with their values, they are more likely to remain loyal, make repeat purchases, and recommend the brand to others (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Weiss et al., 2023). Similarly, the work of Weiss et al., (2023) highlights that loyalty is strengthened when positive attitudes are reinforced through consistent positive perceptions. This study's findings support the idea that customer loyalty is not merely a function of product or service attributes but deeply rooted in how customers perceive the overall brand experience. The significant influence of customer perception underscores the importance of managing brand image, reputation, and customer relationships to cultivate enduring loyalty and competitive advantage.

5.1.3: H3: Brand values positively influence customer loyalty (p = 0.161)

The rejection of H3, which proposed that *Brand Values positively influence Customer Loyalty* with a p-value of 0.161, suggests that in this study, Brand Values did not have a statistically significant impact on Customer Loyalty. This result contrasts with some existing literature, which often emphasises the importance of brand values in fostering loyalty. Brand values represent the core principles and beliefs that guide a brand's actions and communicate its purpose to customers (Kapferer, 2012). Although often cited as critical, the direct influence of brand values on customer loyalty may vary by context. Studies suggest that unless brand values are clearly communicated and aligned with customer expectations, they may have a limited impact on loyalty (Tahir et al., 2024; Angeline et al., 2023). When aligned with customer values, these are thought to enhance emotional connections and loyalty (Fournier, 1998). However, the non-significant result here may reflect contextual nuances. For instance, Barchiesi and Fronzetti Colladon (2021) argue that even when companies emphasise brand values such as integrity or social responsibility, customers may not always perceive or prioritize them, thereby weakening their impact on loyalty. According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), customer loyalty is more strongly influenced by brand trust and affect than by abstract brand values, especially in low-involvement product categories. Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet (2011) suggest that brand values only influence loyalty indirectly, through mediators like brand experience and satisfaction, indicating that their standalone effect is limited.

Therefore, while brand values are conceptually important, their influence on customer loyalty may be indirect or mediated by other factors such as customer perception, experience, or trust, which could explain the lack of a direct significant relationship in this study.

5.1.4: H4: Brand personality´s influence on customer loyalty (p = 0.639)
H4, which proposed that *Brand Personality positively influences Customer Loyalty* was rejected with a p-value of 0.639, indicating that Brand Personality did not have a statistically significant effect on Customer Loyalty in this study. This finding differs from much of the existing literature, which often highlights the importance of brand personality as a driver of emotional connection and loyalty (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality reflects human characteristics attributed to a brand, such as sincerity, excitement, or sophistication, which help consumers form attachments with the brand (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality, that is, human traits attributed to a brand can influence loyalty by fostering emotional connections and identity alignment (Rahman et al., 2024; Sohaib & Hosany, 2023).

However, this effect is not always direct or significant and may depend on how well the personality traits resonate with the target audience (Mohammadi et al., 2023; Bettels & Wiedmann, 2024). The lack of significance here may suggest that in this specific context or sample, customers did not strongly associate the brand's personality traits with their loyalty behaviour. Garanti & Kissi (2019) conducted a study in the Latvian banking sector, examining the impact of brand personality traits expressed on social media. While traits like responsibility and activeness helped build brand equity, the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty was fully mediated by brand equity. This implies that brand personality did not directly influence loyalty without first building brand equity. Villagra, Monfort, & Sánchez Herrera (2021) explored relationships in consumer behaviour and reported that brand personality influences brand loyalty only through brand trust, not directly. Their findings indicate that without the presence of trust, brand personality alone does not foster customer loyalty. It is also possible that brand personality influences loyalty indirectly, through mediators like brand trust or customer satisfaction (Malär et al., 2011). Thus, although brand personality is theoretically important, this study's findings indicate it did not have a direct measurable influence on customer loyalty within the sampled population.

5.1.5: H5: Brand consistency´s influence on customer loyalty (p = 0.173) The rejection of H5, which proposed that *Brand Consistency positively influences Customer Loyalty* with a p-value of 0.173, indicates that Brand Consistency did not have a statistically significant impact on Customer Loyalty in this study. Brand Consistency refers to the uniformity and coherence of brand messages, visuals, and experiences across all touchpoints, which is believed to strengthen brand recognition and trust (Keller, 2008). The literature generally supports that consistent branding helps build a reliable image, fostering customer loyalty through familiarity and reduced uncertainty (Aaker, 1996). While brand consistency supports trust and recognition, its direct effect on loyalty is debated. Some studies highlight that consistent messaging across platforms enhances customer confidence and loyalty (Tahir et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2024). Others argue that consistency alone may not suffice without reinforcing value and emotional relevance. For example, Wang and Li (2021) found that while brand consistency enhances brand recognition, it does not directly lead to increased customer loyalty unless supported by emotional connection or trust. Elbedweihy et al. (2020) argued that consistency alone is insufficient for driving loyalty, especially in low-involvement product categories where customers are more price- or convenience-driven. Kwon and Mattila (2019) showed that in hospitality settings, consistent brand messaging had minimal direct impact on loyalty unless accompanied by perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Cheng et al. (2022) suggest that while consistency strengthens brand familiarity, it does not independently generate loyalty unless reinforced by value congruence or personal relevance. Nguyen and Simkin (2023) emphasised that customers may overlook brand consistency unless it delivers emotional, social, or functional benefits, which are stronger predictors of loyalty.

The non-significant result here suggests that consistency alone may not directly translate into loyalty. This could be because consistency needs to be paired with other factors such as product quality, customer experience, or emotional engagement to effectively influence loyalty (Kapferer, 2012). Some studies argue that while consistency is important for brand identity, its impact on loyalty may be indirect or conditional on other brand elements (van den Bosch, de Jong & Elving, 2005). Therefore, in this study's context, Brand Consistency was not a standalone predictor of Customer Loyalty, implying that customers might prioritize other brand attributes or experiences more heavily when forming loyalty decisions.

5.1.6: H6: Customer perception mediation on brand visual identity and customer loyalty (p = 0.001)

H6, which found that *Customer Perception mediates the relationship between Brand Visual Identity and Customer Loyalty* with a highly significant p-value of 0.001 and a strong indirect path coefficient of 0.753, aligns well with existing branding literature. Mediation implies that Brand Visual Identity influences Customer Loyalty primarily through its effect on Customer Perception, highlighting the importance of how customers interpret and internalize visual brand elements. Brand Visual Identity comprising logos, colours, typography, and other visual cues serves as a critical signal that shapes customer perceptions by communicating brand values, personality, and quality (Keller, 2009). Positive perceptions formed from these visual elements then influence customers' emotional attachment, trust, and satisfaction, which are key drivers of loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Customer perception plays a mediating role in the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty. Strong visual elements shape favourable perceptions, which in turn drive loyalty (He & Pillai, 2025; Susilowati et al., 2024). The effect is not purely aesthetic; how customers interpret visual branding greatly influences emotional attachment and brand trust (Angeline et al., 2023; Shagyrov & Shamoi, 2024).

Recent studies confirm that brand visual identity significantly impacts customer loyalty, primarily through the mediating influence of customer perception. For example, Kim and Ko (2021) found that visual branding elements, such as logo design and colour uniformity, shaped customer perception of brand authenticity and quality, which in turn influenced loyalty in the fashion retail sector. Similarly, Suh and Lee (2020) reported partial mediation, where brand perception measured in terms of perceived prestige and trust was a crucial link between visual identity and loyalty among South Korean apparel consumers. In another recent study, Ghosh, Roy, and Dey (2023) showed that customer perception fully mediated the relationship between visual cues and loyalty in the digital services context, reinforcing that visual identity impacts loyalty only when it fosters favourable cognitive and emotional perceptions. Nguyen and Wang (2023) also supported this view, demonstrating that visual brand elements influenced loyalty indirectly through customer trust and perceived value. These findings strongly align with the current study's result (p = 0.001), confirming that customer perception plays a critical mediating role in translating brand visual identity into customer loyalty.

This mediation effect suggests that visual identity alone is insufficient to directly foster loyalty unless it effectively shapes favourable customer perceptions. Therefore, managing visual identity to create strong, positive customer perceptions is essential for cultivating loyalty, as the direct impact of visual elements operates through these perceptual mechanisms. This finding suggests that the impact of visual branding on loyalty is not direct but is instead filtered through the customer's interpretation and perception of the brand. This supports theoretical models of brand equity, such as those proposed by Keller (1993), which position customer perception as a critical link in the causal chain from brand identity to customer behaviour. For SONILS, the implication is that while a strong visual identity is necessary, it must also effectively shape perceptions in order to cultivate loyalty.

5.2. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the findings derived from the structural model analysis, focusing on the relationships between brand identity elements, customer perception, and customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS). The primary aim was to interpret the statistical outcomes considering the research objectives, theoretical framework, and existing literature. Overall, the discussion highlighted both expected and unexpected outcomes, providing practical insights for brand management within a corporate logistics setting. The results suggest that while brand identity is multifaceted, its effectiveness in driving loyalty depends on how well its components especially visual identity, personality, and consistency are aligned and perceived by customers. The next and final chapter of the study provides research conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0. Summary

This study investigated the impact of brand identity on customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS) in Namibia. Using a quantitative approach grounded in the positivist paradigm, the research employed a cross-sectional case study design and surveyed 272 customers through a structured questionnaire. The study examined four key dimensions of brand identity brand visual identity, brand values, brand personality, and brand consistency and their influence on customer loyalty. Data were analysed using SmartPLS to test direct and mediated relationships, particularly the mediating role of customer perception. Findings revealed that while brand visual identity and brand values significantly influenced customer loyalty, brand personality and consistency had weaker or non-significant direct effects. However, customer perception emerged as a critical mediator, especially between visual identity and loyalty. The study concluded that managing brand identity elements, particularly through enhancing customer perception, was essential for fostering long-term loyalty. Practical implications supported strategic branding improvements within logistics services.

6.1. Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the study findings, providing a comprehensive summary of the key outcomes derived from the empirical data analysis. These conclusions reflect the extent to which the research hypotheses were supported or refuted, offering valuable insights into the relationships examined within the study. First, the research hypotheses tested in this study are listed below, serving as a foundation for understanding how each was addressed through the collected data. Presenting the hypotheses upfront establishes a clear framework that guides readers through the logical progression from research questions to findings and interpretations. This structured approach enhances the coherence of the study by linking the initial theoretical propositions directly to the observed results, ensuring transparency and rigor in the reporting process. Furthermore, this format facilitates a systematic discussion of how the findings contribute to existing knowledge and practical applications, reinforcing the study’s academic and managerial relevance. The study sought to address the following objectives:

a) To assess the influence of brand visual identity on customer perception.
b) To examine the influence of brand perception on brand loyalty
c) To determine the role of brand values in driving customer loyalty.
d) To determine the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty.
e) To examine the impact of brand consistency on customer loyalty.
f) To examine the mediating effect of customer perception on the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty.

The conclusions were drawn objective-by-objective as outlined hereunder:

Objective A: To assess the influence of brand visual identity on customer perception

The findings of the study indicate that brand visual identity has a significant positive influence on customer perception at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services. Elements such as logos, colours, typography, uniforms, and physical branding materials contributed strongly to the way customers interpret and relate to the brand. Respondents associated a strong visual identity with professionalism, consistency, and credibility, which in turn enhanced their trust and confidence in the company. SmartPLS path analysis confirmed a significant structural relationship between visual identity and perception, with visual identity explaining a considerable portion of the variance in customer perception scores. These results align with branding theory, which asserts that strong visual branding helps consumers form mental associations that affect emotional and cognitive responses. Furthermore, the findings suggest that visual identity at Sonangol is not only a superficial feature but a strategic brand asset that shapes customer interpretation and expectation. Therefore, continual investment in visual branding and its consistent application across all customer touchpoints is essential. The study concludes that maintaining a coherent and high-quality brand visual identity is vital in cultivating positive perceptions that underpin stronger customer-brand relationships in the logistics service context.

Objective B: To examine the influence of brand perception on brand loyalty

The study concluded that brand perception has a direct and statistically significant influence on brand loyalty among Sonangol's clients. Customers who held favourable perceptions of the brand viewing it as reliable, professional, responsive, and socially responsible were more likely to express behavioural intentions aligned with loyalty, such as repeat patronage, positive word-of-mouth, and emotional attachment. Through the SmartPLS analysis, brand perception showed strong path coefficients and a high predictive relevance (Q^2) for brand loyalty. These findings support previous research suggesting that customer-perceived value and brand trust are critical predictors of loyalty, especially in service industries where intangibility and performance variability are high. The study also observed that customers' long-term engagement with Sonangol was largely influenced by how well the company met or exceeded their expectations. When perception is shaped by positive service experiences, clear communication, and ethical business conduct, loyalty outcomes improve significantly. As such, the study concludes that brand perception is a key mediating mechanism through which brand-related stimuli (such as identity or values) are translated into loyalty behaviour. Maintaining and improving customer perceptions through service excellence, effective communication, and value alignment is critical for sustaining brand loyalty in Namibia's logistics and energy sectors.

Objective C: To determine the role of brand values in driving customer loyalty

The study aimed to determine the role of brand values in driving customer loyalty. However, the findings revealed that this relationship was not statistically significant. Despite a positive path coefficient, the p-value of 0.161 indicated that brand values did not have a meaningful or reliable influence on customer loyalty within the study's context. This suggests that customers did not strongly base their loyalty decisions on the brand's core principles or beliefs. While brand values are often considered important for shaping brand identity and customer relationships, their direct effect on loyalty may be limited unless they are clearly communicated and consistently reflected in customer experiences. The results imply that other factors particularly customer perception play a more influential role in shaping loyalty. Thus, the study concludes that brand values alone are not sufficient drivers of customer loyalty, and their impact may be more indirect or dependent on how they are perceived and experienced by customers.

Objective D: To determine the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty

The study set out to examine the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty, with the expectation that brands exhibiting strong and relatable personality traits would positively influence customer loyalty. However, the findings revealed that the relationship between brand personality and customer loyalty was not statistically significant, as evidenced by a high p-value of 0.639 and a negative path coefficient. This indicates that, within the context of this study, brand personality did not have a measurable or reliable impact on customer loyalty. Although existing literature often suggests that brand personality defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997) plays a crucial role in building emotional bonds and loyalty, the results here suggest otherwise. One possible explanation may be that customers in this context do not perceive or respond strongly to brand personality traits, or that these traits are not clearly communicated by the brand. Alternatively, customer loyalty may be driven more by functional attributes such as service quality, value, or visual branding rather than emotional or symbolic characteristics. The lack of a significant relationship highlights that brand personality, while theoretically important, may not always translate into loyalty in all industries or settings. Therefore, based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that brand personality does not significantly affect customer loyalty in the case of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia. Other factors particularly customer perception appear to play a more prominent role in influencing loyalty outcomes.

Objective E: To examine the impact of brand consistency on customer loyalty

This study aimed to examine the impact of brand consistency on customer loyalty, under the assumption that a uniform and coherent brand presentation across all customer touchpoints would positively influence loyalty. However, the analysis revealed that the relationship between brand consistency and customer loyalty was not statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.173 and a moderate positive beta coefficient (0.404). Although the direction of the relationship was as hypothesized, the lack of statistical significance suggests that brand consistency did not have a reliable or measurable effect on customer loyalty within this study's context. Brand consistency refers to the degree to which a brand communicates a stable and unified image, message, and experience across various platforms and over time. While prior literature (e.g., Keller, 2008; Aaker, 1996) supports the idea that consistency enhances brand recognition, trust, and ultimately loyalty, the findings of this study suggest that, in practice, consistency alone may not be sufficient to drive loyalty particularly if customers do not perceive or value the consistency being delivered. In the case of Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services in Namibia, it appears that customers may prioritize other factors such as service performance, customer experience, or overall brand perception over the uniformity of branding elements. Therefore, it can be concluded that brand consistency did not significantly impact customer loyalty in this study. This finding underscores the complexity of loyalty formation and the need to consider multiple dimensions of brand identity and customer engagement.

Objective F: To examine the mediating effect of customer perception on the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty

The study sought to examine the mediating role of customer perception in the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant mediation effect, with an indirect path coefficient of 0.753 and a p-value of 0.001. This indicates that brand visual identity significantly influences customer loyalty through customer perception, rather than directly.

This result highlights the pivotal role of customer perception as the lens through which customers interpret and respond to a brand's visual identity elements, such as logos, colour schemes, typography, and other design features. While a brand may invest heavily in crafting a consistent and appealing visual identity, it is ultimately how customers perceive and internalize those visuals that determines their loyalty. This aligns with existing literature (e.g., Keller, 2009; Park et al., 1986), which suggests that visual cues shape brand image, trust, and emotional responses key ingredients in building loyalty. The findings suggest that brand visual identity alone is not enough to foster customer loyalty unless it effectively shapes positive perceptions. Customers need to associate the visual identity with favourable brand attributes such as reliability, quality, and professionalism. Therefore, it can be concluded that customer perception plays a critical mediating role in translating the effects of brand visual identity into customer loyalty. This emphasises the importance of managing not just how a brand looks, but also how it is interpreted and experienced by customers.

6.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made objective-by-objective.

Objective A: Brand Visual Identity's effect on Customer Perception Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services should strengthen its brand visual identity by ensuring all visual elements are professionally designed, modern, and consistently applied across all customer touchpoints. This includes uniform branding in offices, vehicles, documentation, websites, uniforms, and promotional materials. Regular brand audits should be conducted to ensure compliance and coherence with the organisation's brand guidelines. Furthermore, customer feedback should be incorporated when updating brand visuals to ensure resonance and cultural relevance. Because visual identity strongly shapes perception, Sonangol must treat it as a strategic communication tool, not merely an aesthetic one. Investments in signage, branded protective gear for employees, and digital branding (including social media templates) should align with core brand values like safety, professionalism, and reliability. Training front-line employees to understand and embody the brand's visual and behavioural identity will also help reinforce consistent impressions. As perception is the gateway to loyalty, a refined and relatable visual identity will enhance brand credibility and emotional appeal.

Objective B: Brand Perception's influence on Customer Loyalty

To enhance brand perception, Sonangol should prioritize consistent service excellence, transparent communication, and responsiveness to client needs. Since perception is shaped by experiences and expectations, every customer interaction — from email responses to service delivery — should reflect professionalism, integrity, and reliability. Sonangol should implement a robust customer feedback and experience management system, using tools such as Net Promoter Scores (NPS), satisfaction surveys, and service performance dashboards to monitor customer sentiment in real time. Marketing messages should align with actual service capabilities to avoid overpromising. Additionally, brand storytelling that emphasises the company's history, social responsibility, and customer success stories will help strengthen emotional connections and brand trust. Employees should be trained to serve as brand ambassadors, reinforcing the desired brand perception through consistent behaviour. Regular perception audits should be conducted to track how customers view the brand and identify areas for improvement. By managing perception proactively, Sonangol can build a strong emotional bridge to loyalty.

Objective C: To determine the role of brand values in driving customer loyalty

Although the study found that brand values did not have a statistically significant influence on customer loyalty, managers should not disregard the strategic importance of brand values. A possible reason for the weak impact could be that brand values are not clearly communicated or effectively demonstrated in day-to-day interactions with customers. Managers should therefore focus on articulating brand values more explicitly and consistently across all marketing channels, employee behaviour, and customer service delivery. Internal branding efforts are equally important ensuring that employees understand and embody the brand's core principles will help translate abstract values into tangible customer experiences. Additionally, storytelling and value-based content marketing can be leveraged to connect brand values to real-world actions and outcomes that resonate with customers. While values may not drive loyalty directly, they support brand authenticity and trust, which are key in long-term brand-customer relationships. Monitoring customer feedback and aligning operational practices with professed values can also enhance perceived brand integrity.

Objective D: To determine the effect of brand personality on customer loyalty

Given that brand personality was not found to have a significant impact on customer loyalty in this study, managers should revisit how the brand's personality is defined, communicated, and perceived by customers. It is possible that customers do not recognize or relate to the brand's intended personality traits. To address this, managers should consider conducting qualitative research such as focus groups or customer interviews to better understand how the brand is perceived emotionally. Using this insight, the brand personality should be clearly defined in line with the target audience's preferences for example, is the brand meant to feel sophisticated, friendly, or dependable? These traits should then be reflected consistently across touchpoints, including advertising tone, customer service interactions, and brand visuals. Furthermore, building emotional connections requires authenticity. The brand personality must align with the company's actions, not just its image. Over time, a clear and relatable brand personality can enhance customer engagement and foster emotional loyalty, particularly when paired with excellent service and customer experiences. Even though it may not have shown direct significance in this context, brand personality remains a valuable branding tool when developed and applied meaningfully.

Objective E: To examine the impact of brand consistency on customer loyalty

Although brand consistency did not show a statistically significant impact on customer loyalty, managers should not undervalue its role in shaping brand trust and recognition. Inconsistencies in messaging, tone, or visual identity can create confusion and weaken the customer's overall brand experience. Managers should ensure that all brand communications across advertising, social media, packaging, and in-person interactions are aligned with a unified brand voice and visual style. This can be achieved by developing a detailed brand guideline manual that includes tone of voice, messaging pillars, and visual standards, and ensuring all departments and external partners adhere to it. Additionally, employee training should emphasise the importance of delivering consistent service quality and brand representation, as customer-facing staff are often the frontline of brand perception. While consistency may not directly drive loyalty, it supports credibility and coherence, which are foundational for building trust. Over time, a consistent brand experience helps reinforce customer expectations and contributes to a stable, recognizable brand identity, supporting loyalty through indirect pathways such as perception and satisfaction.

Objective F: To examine the mediating effect of customer perception on the relationship between brand visual identity and customer loyalty

Given the strong and significant mediation effect of customer perception between brand visual identity and customer loyalty, managers should prioritize strategies that enhance customer perceptions through well-executed visual branding. This means that visual elements such as logos, colour schemes, fonts, and design layouts must not only be aesthetically pleasing but also communicate key brand values and evoke trust, professionalism, and relevance. Managers should conduct periodic brand audits and customer surveys to assess how visual identity is perceived and whether it aligns with the desired brand image. Additionally, consistency in visual elements across all touchpoints from websites to packaging to social media is critical in reinforcing a strong brand impression. However, visual identity should be supported by positive customer experiences, as perception is shaped not just by appearance but also by performance. Investing in user-friendly interfaces, intuitive design, and responsive service can further improve perceptions. Since perception is the pathway through which visual identity translates to loyalty, brand visuals must be strategically crafted and evaluated not in isolation, but in terms of how they influence customer interpretation and satisfaction.

6.3. Limitations of the study

While this study offers valuable insights into the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services (SONILS), it is not without limitations. Firstly, the study relied solely on a quantitative research design using structured questionnaires, which limited the depth of responses and excluded rich, qualitative perspectives that could have provided a more nuanced understanding of customer experiences. Secondly, the research was cross-sectional in nature, capturing data at a single point in time; this approach limits the ability to observe changes in brand perception or loyalty over time, which a longitudinal study could have addressed. Thirdly, the sample was confined to customers within Namibia, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings to other geographical or cultural contexts. Additionally, although the sample size was statistically adequate, the response rate (78%) and the use of self-reported data introduce potential biases such as social desirability and non-response bias. Finally, the study focused on specific dimensions of brand identity, excluding others like brand heritage or corporate social responsibility, which may also influence customer loyalty. These limitations suggest areas for future research, including mixed-method approaches, broader geographic scopes, and the inclusion of additional brand-related variables.

6.4. Areas for further study

Building on the limitations identified, several avenues for future research are recommended. First, incorporating qualitative methods—such as interviews, focus groups, or case studies could provide deeper insights into customer perceptions and experiences, offering richer context beyond what structured questionnaires capture. A mixed-methods approach would help triangulate findings and enhance the validity and depth of understanding.

Second, future research could adopt a longitudinal design to observe how brand identity and customer loyalty evolve over time. This would provide a dynamic view of customer-brand relationships and help identify patterns or shifts influenced by market trends or brand strategy changes. Third, expanding the geographic scope of the study beyond Namibia could improve the generalisability of findings. Comparative studies across different countries or cultural settings would reveal how contextual factors influence the relationship between brand identity and customer loyalty.

Fourth, future studies should consider exploring additional dimensions of brand identity, such as brand heritage, corporate social responsibility (CSR), or brand storytelling, which may also play significant roles in shaping customer loyalty. Lastly, efforts should be made to minimise self-report biases by employing alternative data collection techniques such as behavioural data analysis or observational methods and increasing response rates through better sampling strategies and respondent engagement.

These directions would contribute to a more comprehensive and globally relevant understanding of how brand identity impacts customer loyalty.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Frans Kalenga, a Master's in Business Management student at Namibia University of Science and Technology. I am conducting research on **EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF BRAND IDENTITY ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY AT SONANGOL INTEGRATED LOGISTICS SERVICES IN NAMIBIA**. Please note this research is purely for academic purposes ONLY and shall not be used for any other purpose without the consent of the respondents or company concerned. The information gathered will be treated CONFIDENTIALLY. I am grateful for your willingness to assist me in my research work. Kindly attempt all marked questions by ticking in the provided boxes or writing in the spaces provided.

1. What is your age?

- Under 30 **(1)**
- 30–40 **(2)**
- 40–50 **(3)**
- 50 or older **(4)**

2. What is your gender?

- Male (**1)**
- Female (**2)**
- Other (please specify) **(3)**

3. What is your employment status?

- Employed **(1)**
- Unemployed **(2)**

SECTION B: MEASUREMENT OF BRAND VISUAL IDENTITY (BVI)

4. Indicate the extent to which the following statements best describe your opinion of Sonangol's Brand Visual Identity on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly Disagree; 2= disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.*

Code	**Indicator**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
BVI1	The brand's logo is distinctive and easily recognizable.					
BVI2	The brand uses consistent colours across its products and marketing materials.					
BVI3	The design and style of the brand's visuals are appealing.					
BV4	The brand's packaging and visual presentation stand out from competitors.					
BVI5	The visual elements of the brand (e.g., logo, colours, typography) clearly represent the brand's identity.					
BVI6	The brand's visual style is consistent across different platforms and touchpoints.					
BVI7	The imagery and graphics used by the brand effectively communicate its values.					
BVI8	The brand's visual identity makes it easy to identify the brand quickly.					

SECTION C: MEASUREMENT OF BRAND VALUES (BV)-(Chernatony et al., 1998; Keller, 2001; and Burmann et al., 2009)

5. Indicate the extent to which the following statements best describe your opinion of Sonangol's Brand Values on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly Disagree; 2= disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.*

Code	**Indicator**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
BV1	This brand stands for values I believe in.					
BV2	This brand communicates a strong set of core values.					
BV3	The brand's values are relevant to me personally.					
BV4	I trust this brand because of the values it represents.					
BV5	This brand acts in accordance with its stated values.					
BV6	The brand's values are consistently reflected in its marketing and behaviour.					
BV7	I admire the ethical standards this brand upholds.					

SECTION D: MEASUREMENT OF BRAND PERSONALITY (BP) (AAKER)

6. Indicate the extent to which the following statements best describe your perception of Sonangol's Brand Personality on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly Disagree; 2= disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.*

Code	Indicator	1	2	3	4	5
BP1	This brand is honest and trustworthy.					
BP2	This brand is exciting and full of energy.					
BP3	This brand is reliable and competent.					
BP4	This brand is sophisticated and elegant.					
BP5	This brand is rugged and outdoorsy.					
BP6	This brand is friendly and approachable.					
BP7	This brand is creative and imaginative.					
BP8	This brand is caring and genuine.					
BP9	This brand is bold and daring.					

SECTION E: MEASUREMNT OF BRAND CONSISTENCY (BC)

7. Indicate the extent to which the following statements best describe your perception of Sonangol's Brand Consistency on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly Disagree; 2= disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.*

Code	Indicator	1	2	3	4	5
BC1	The brand presents a consistent image across all marketing channels.					
BC2	The brand's messages are consistent across time and platforms.					
BC3	The tone and style of communication from this brand are always the same.					
BC4	The visual identity of the brand (e.g., logo, colours, design) is used consistently.					
BC5	The brand's values are consistently reflected in its behaviour and communication.					
BC6	The brand consistently delivers what it promises.					
BC7	I know what to expect from this brand every time I interact with it.					

SECTION F: MEASUREMNT OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTION (CP)

8. Indicate the extent to which the following statements best describe your own Customer Perception of Sonangol on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly Disagree; 2= disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.*

Code	Indicator	1	2	3	4	5
CP1	This brand provides high-quality products or services.					
CP2	I receive good value for the money I spend on this brand.					
CP3	I trust this brand to deliver what it promises.					
CP4	This brand has a strong and positive reputation among consumers.					

CP5	I am satisfied with my overall experience with this brand.					
CP6	This brand appeals to me emotionally.					
CP7	Most people I know think highly of this brand.					
CP8	This brand consistently meets my expectations.					
CP9	I feel confident in choosing this brand over others.					
CP10	This brand is dependable and trustworthy.					

SECTION G: MEASUREMENT OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY (CL)

9. Indicate the extent to which the following statements best describe Customer Loyalty of Sonangol's Brand Personality on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly Disagree; 2= disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.*

Code	Indicator	1	2	3	4	5
CL1	I intend to continue purchasing from this brand in the future.					
CL2	I would recommend this brand to friends and family.					
CL3	I feel a strong sense of loyalty toward this brand.					
CL4	I prefer this brand over other similar brands.					
CL5	I would not switch to a different brand even if it offered similar products.					
CL6	I talk positively about this brand to others.					
CL7	I feel emotionally connected to this brand.					
CL8	This brand is my first choice when I need products/services in this category.					
CL9	I would defend this brand if someone spoke negatively about it.					

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE SCHOOL

NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY | HP-GSB HAROLD PUPKEWITZ Graduate School of Business

c/o Brahms and Haydn Streets
Private Bag 13388
Windhoek
NAMIBIA

T: +264 61 207 2809
F: +264 61 207 9809
E: hpgsb@nust.na
W: www.nust.na

30 June 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS QUALIFICATION

The Master's qualification at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) requires that all students undertake a practical research project. In this way, students are allowed to creatively link and discuss the theoretical aspects of the programme to the practical issues facing organisations in real-life settings. Typically, this project necessitates data gathering by questionnaires or interviews.

Frans Shiku Kalenga (220114404) has chosen to do a research project entitled: **Examining the Impact of Brand Identity on Customer Loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services, Namibia.**

We appreciate your assistance in permitting access to your organisation for purposes of this research. Please be assured that all information gained from the research will be treated with the utmost circumspection. The student will adhere to principles of confidentiality and anonymity when reporting information about research participants.

I am available at any stage to answer any queries and/or discuss any aspect of this research project.

Thank you for your assistance in this request.

Sincerely

Sulaiman Olusegun Atiku, Ph.D.
Professor of Research
Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business
Namibia University of Science and Technology
13 Jackson Kaujeua Street
Private Bag: 13388
Windhoek, Namibia

NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
P/Bag 13388
Windhoek
NAMIBIA
30 JUN 2025
HAROLD PUPKEWITZ GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

APPENDIX C: AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM THE COMPANY

SONANGOL INTEGRATED LOGISTIC SERVICES

SONILS

Date: 22nd of July 2025
Ref: SONILS/N/W-25-01
Subject: Permission to Conduct Research Study on Examining the Impact of Brand Identity on Customer Loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services, Namibia

Dear Mr., Kalenga,

With reference to your request dated 22 July 2025, Sonangol Integrated Logistic Services Namibia is pleased to grant you permission to conduct your proposed study entitled: **"Examining the Impact of Brand Identity on Customer Loyalty at Sonangol Integrated Logistics Services, Namibia."**

You are authorized to undertake data collection from the company's customers and relevant stakeholders for the purposes of this research. We trust that you will follow appropriate ethical guidelines, maintain confidentiality, and minimize any disruption to company operations during your study.

If you require any further assistance or access to company information, please coordinate with Mr. Pedro Oliveira and Ms. Natacha Caixinha at pedro.oliveira@sonils.co.ao and natacha.caixinha@sonils.co.ao. Kindly submit a copy of your findings upon completion of the research.

We wish you the best of success.

Yours faithfully,

Anabela Marcos
Managing Director

Trinity stone Erf 8747 1 Ballot street - (Corner of Robert Mugabe and Ballot street) www.sonils.co.ao

APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE EDITTING CERTFICATE/LETTER

Dr.GM

The Rev. Dr. Greenfield Mwakipesile
ThD, MBA, HBS | mwakipg@outlook.com

CONTACT

PO Box 99539,
UNAM,
Windhoek,
Namibia

LANGUAGE & COPY-EDITING CERTIFICATE

31st July, 2025

RE: LANGUAGE, COPYEDITING AND PROOFREADING OF FRANS KALENGA'S THESIS FOR THE MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEGREE AT THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NUST)

This certificate serves to confirm that I copyedited and proofread **FRANS KALENGA'S** Thesis for the **MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION** Degree entitled: **EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF BRAND IDENTITY ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY AT SONANGOL INTEGRATED LOGISTICS SERVICES IN NAMIBIA**

I declare that I professionally copyedited and proofread the thesis and removed mistakes and errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. In some cases, I improved sentence construction without changing the content provided by the student. I also removed some typographical errors from the thesis and formatted the thesis so that it complies with the Namibia University of Science and Technology's guidelines.

I am a trained language and copy editor and have edited many Postgraduate Diploma, Masters' Thesis, Dissertations and Doctoral Dissertations for students studying with universities in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, South Africa and abroad. I have also copy-edited company documents for companies in the region and abroad.

Please feel free to contact me should the need arise.

Yours Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Greenfield Mwakipesile

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APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT

FINAL THESIS

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