



SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Alema Hossain

Corporate Branding in the Ready-Made Garments Industry

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Thesis abstract¹

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Author: Alema Hossain

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Corporate branding is the nucleus of an organization. However, there is a lack of research in the apparel industry in the context of Bangladesh, where more than 80% of foreign revenue originates. Therefore, this study aims to investigate corporate branding and performance in the apparel industry. Following the constructivist paradigm, the study applied a qualitative research strategy and a case study research design. Two managers were interviewed, and eight customers were surveyed via Microsoft Forms and Teams. The study analyzed the collected data to gain knowledge of corporate branding.

The research findings illustrate that corporate branding means customers perceive beliefs, perceptions, and trust. It is a long-term relationship focused on emotional connection, creating value, and experiences. It also includes the internal and external success of an organization. Corporate brand building depends on customer satisfaction, quality products and services, a positive brand image, employee engagement, eco-friendly practices, and fostering loyal customers. A strong corporate brand ultimately attracts customers to become loyal, which consequently leads to recommendations through word of mouth and increased sales growth and market share. The research demonstrates that corporate brand building and performance in the apparel industry align with Kevin Keller's theory of brand management.

The study suggests that the apparel industry must focus on its internal and external branding to enhance corporate branding, including employee engagement, personalized customer service, transparency to build trust, and eco-friendly practices. The government should also develop all the necessary infrastructure to assist the corporate brand-building process.

¹ Keywords: corporate branding, sustainability, marketing, company performance, customer satisfaction

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis abstract	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
Figures and Tables	5
1 INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1 Background	6
1.2 Research gaps and aim	8
1.3 Study question, objectives, and scope	11
1.4 Key ideas	12
1.5 Research framework	13
2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	14
2.1 Keller's customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model	14
2.2 Corporate branding	17
2.3 Corporate brand-building and performance.....	18
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	21
3.1 Philosophy in corporate branding	21
3.2 Inductive research approach and qualitative research strategy	22
3.3 A case research design, data collection, and thematic analysis.....	22
3.4 Relevance, consistency, and moral guidelines.....	24
4 ABC CASE STUDY	26
4.1 ABC Company and its offerings in the market.....	26
4.2 Market positioning in Bangladesh.....	27
5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS	29
5.1 Outcomes of the research	29
5.2 Answers regarding corporate branding	30
5.3 Results of corporate brand building and performance.....	31
6 DISCUSSION ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS	34
6.1 Results of the study.....	34
6.2 Understanding the corporate branding	35
6.3 Interpretation of corporate brand building and performance.....	37

7 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS 39

7.1 Conclusion 39

7.2 Kevin Keller’s CBBE theory and its implications 40

7.3 Managerial implications for the company 41

7.4 Strategic implications for corporation and governance 43

7.5 Limitations and suggestions 43

BIBLIOGRAPHY 45

APPENDICES 49

Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Elements for Brand (Tsabitah & Anggraeni, 2021).	7
Figure 2. Structure of the Study.	13
Table 1. Key concepts.	12
Table 2. Corporate brand building steps (Knox & Bickerton, 2003).	18

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the research. First, it highlights the context of the thesis, such as the importance of corporate brands in the apparel sector. Then, it highlights the research gaps and aims based on previous literature on corporate branding in the apparel sector. Afterward, the research question and objectives are established, following the identification of research gaps and aims. In the end, the study illustrated keywords and study structure.

1.1 Background

A brand is not just a logo or a symbol but a living entity. It is not only related to the transaction of a product or service; it means that a brand has a value beyond the transactions that are essentially business. Tsabitah and Anggraeni (2021) claimed that the word of brand means to burn something. Early humans initially used it to identify their animals or livestock and indicate ownership, and the word comes from this method. The author further explains that this also falls under the brand, whether at the design or personal level. It is considered a part of branding at any level, whether private or corporate. Branding involves creating a unique identity, image, or reputation that people associate with a person, product, or organization. Brands are composed of specific elements that are essential to their formation.

On the other hand, a corporate brand is more than a logo; it encompasses value, identity, and experience. In the past, a corporate brand was simply a symbol representing the company's ownership or name, but it has come to express more over time. Companies originally started using branding to understand consumers' behavior towards their brand. Today, the brand is not just a level; it influences customer loyalty, trust, and purchase decisions. A strong brand helps a company to survive in a competitive market and, at the same time, retain long-term loyal customers. The corporate brand is essential in today's business for companies and consumers. Above the traditional logo are the symbols of a corporate brand. Determining a customer's expectations or ideas through this brand is easy. Businesses now understand the importance of a strong brand in attracting customers. Overall, a corporate brand is a powerful means to connect with customers and earn their trust (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Moreover, in Figure 1, the components of building a brand are mentioned: Memorable, which refers to how easily customers can remember or recognize a brand, meaning communicating something important or relevant.

On the other hand, protectable refers to the aspect of a brand that can be legally protected (e.g., trademark). Moreover, the likable thing is that the brand is attractive and emotionally connected. Likewise, transferable means that a brand works across products, markets, and cultures (Tsabitah & Anggraeni, 2021).

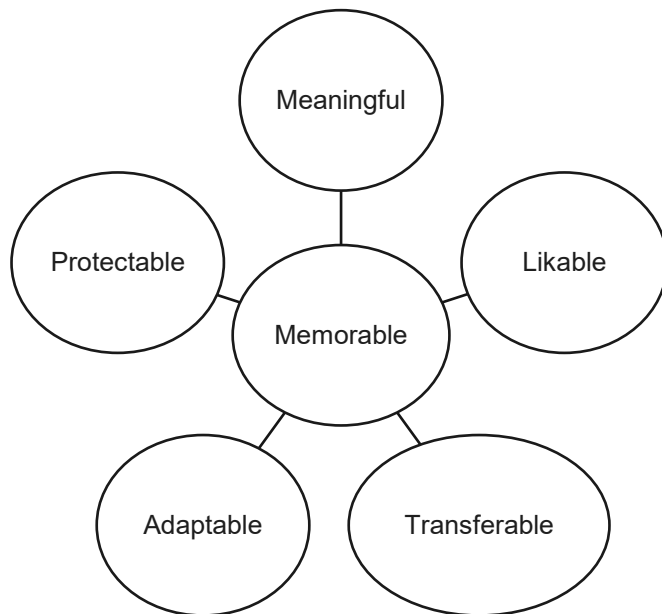


Figure 1. Elements for brand (Tsabitah & Anggraeni, 2021).

According to Khan et al. (2016), corporate brands serve as a means by which a company can differentiate itself from others and stay one step ahead of its competitors. It creates value for the product or service in front of the customers, above any logo. A strong brand profoundly contributes to building customer loyalty by providing high-quality products or services. Corporate branding is primarily associated with several key elements, including brand personality, exchange, and a visible signature. As wisely discussed, other elements are also included in corporate branding, such as prestige, way of life, and brand bond. A corporate brand is a strategic approach that enables companies to express themselves distinctly. A corporate brand refers to the entire product portfolio of a company. According to experts, culture, value, and customer loyalty are involved here. However, in terms of branding, corporate reputation primarily reflects the perspective or awareness of stakeholders, including clients, employees, and the association. Such insights are primarily shaped by the company's past actions and practices, which have a subtle impact on the company. A corporate reputation can range from positive to negative.

Nevertheless, a strong reputation creates a strategic advantage for the company and the brand. Research highlights this notion, stating that corporate reputation is essentially multi-faceted, encompassing employees, customers, and the wider community. It creates intangible assets for the company, which helps keep it one step ahead in the competitive market and also significantly enhances its corporate reputation in the apparel sector (Jung & Seock, 2016). According to Yu Xie and Boggs (2006), a commercial brand conveys how a firm is formed and, simultaneously, how it is represented to the public. It mainly depends on the core value, which builds trust relationships with customers, employees, and investors. A corporate brand can represent either a single company or a group of companies. A corporate brand does not focus solely on product promotion. Instead, it showcases the entire business, including its core values and culture, which differentiate the company from its competitors.

Furthermore, a strong corporate brand can attract talent while gaining recognition and attracting investors or partners. Due to changing market demands, high advertising costs, and competition from other brands, corporate brands have gained significant importance in recent years. A dominant corporate brand creates a positive reputation and brand image for the organization; meanwhile, a positive corporate image can easily influence customer behavior. A person's overall behavior and perception of the company are fully understood through the corporate image, which is primarily shaped by that person's experience and evolution. A company's managerial skills and the capabilities of its stakeholders are reflected in its corporate image. The corporate image can influence consumers' purchase decisions and loyalty (Clare, 2019).

1.2 Research gaps and aim

This study reviews recent research on corporate branding. For example, Tsabitah and Anggraeni (2021) explored the impact of public image and personal traits on product purchase and brand recognition for a local Indonesian brand. A quantitative research strategy is used in that study. The sample size consisted of only 160 people, and an online questionnaire was used as the data collection method. The main findings of this research indicate that brand personality and awareness play a significant role in purchase decisions, whereas brand image does not substantially influence buying choices. Despite the positive impact of brand personality, this research is limited by its constrained data set size and territorial scope. On the other hand, statistical assessments were the only tools employed in the research.

To overcome these barriers, the research could evaluate a larger sample size and a broader geographical scope and simultaneously employ both quantitative and qualitative strategies for a more comprehensive data review. Furthermore, Balmer and Gray (2003) examined the nature and management of corporate brands. The author uses a theoretical approach in this research and introduces a new typology that includes parent, co-brand, proxy, hybrid, and decentralized brands. They claimed that such an old model for business planning may not work in the new arena, and the writer does not elaborate on the new typology. Also, the research emphasized a theoretical framework but did not provide practical examples. The author does not provide any case studies or empirical evidence on the effectiveness of different branding typologies. The study might consider how new branding typologies can be applied across different industries to explore their practical implications. It might also utilize practical examples or case studies to illustrate how companies apply the theoretical framework and employ empirical evidence to enhance the legitimacy and trustworthiness of the data.

In addition, Khant et al (2016) studied the impact of corporate branding on luxury fashion and the creation of brand loyalty, where emotional attachment serves as a key link between the two factors. This study demonstrated that corporate branding makes a minor yet significant contribution to fostering emotional attachment and loyalty. Additionally, not only should the status and rarity be considered, but emotions should also focus on connection, as well as operation (i.e., whether something is realistic or valuable), and metaphoric (i.e., emotional or social advantage). This notably strengthens brand devotion. To overcome these drawbacks, the study could focus on increasing the sample size, examining how corporate branding operates in the luxury fashion industry, and investigating how branding facilitates emotional connections and fosters brand loyalty among customers.

Likewise, Jung and Seock (2016) investigated how multinational companies in developing countries adopt their branding strategies to enter emerging markets. When choosing corporate and product labeling, global businesses consider various factors, including the brand (i.e., firm credibility, business information, and challenger), client preferences, financial plan, and tribal influences and decision-making processes. In some neighborhoods, global brands are in high demand, while in others, homegrown brands excel. The trade sector and financial landscape play a pivotal role in adopting blueprint branding in the fluctuating markets. Although the study presents some decent findings, it initially has some shortcomings; it relies on previous studies, which may not adapt to the current trends in the emerging market.

On the other hand, Clare (2019) focuses solely on multinational companies in developing countries, thereby limiting their geographical scope. Additionally, this study did not utilize primary data collected from the company, so the actual strategy employed in business management is not disclosed. The study might shed light on how branding strategies operate in various emerging markets, allowing researchers to utilize the findings to gain a deeper understanding of how corporate brands function in diverse economic contexts. As this study did not rely on existing data, it could collect updated findings through interviews, case studies, and market reports. Additionally, how corporate image, mainly corporate ability (CA) and corporate ethics (CSR), influence the perception of a retail company in differentiating it from its competitors and the findings highlight that both CA and CSR have a significant impact on customer perception of competitive advantage, plus at the same time, whether a company performs positively or negatively, how a customer perceives that company depends on that performance.

Nonetheless, the study has a couple of restrictions. For instance, the author used fictional retailer companies, which may differ from actual companies. Secondly, the group of people selected for testing might not accurately represent the entire population. Ultimately, applying the results to all consumers might not be rational. The study could likely benefit from utilizing actual businesses and more diverse samples to enhance the reliability and generalizability of its findings. This research mainly explored the apparel sector's primary strategy of corporate branding. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of branding in maintaining the brand's reputation in the apparel sector, while also highlighting the challenges and opportunities the company faces in creating a successful corporate brand. After reviewing the above studies, it is evident that there is a notable lack of research on corporate branding in the context of an emerging country. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the corporate brand building and its performance in the context of Bangladesh. It is important since more than 80% of foreign revenue comes from this sector.

1.3 Study question, objectives, and scope

Based on research gaps and the aim, this study highlights the importance of corporate brand research in Bangladesh's apparel sector. Therefore, the research question is: How can a company build a corporate brand in the apparel industry? The primary objective is to recognize the magnitude of corporate branding. The specific objectives are outlined below:

- To understand the meaning of corporate branding in the apparel industry
- To explore the corporate brand-building and performance in the Bangladeshi apparel industry

The study objectives are practically and conceptually well-structured. Hence, Keller's CBBE model follows as the theoretical foundation for this study, focusing on customer perceptions and relationships (Keller, 2003). Four main stages can be identified: brand persona, brand essence, brand opinion, and brand impact. The research empirically addresses the research objectives by collecting data from the case company, while also considering the quality of the brand-building strategy and performance. The research primarily examines the role of corporate branding in the apparel sector, focusing on how branding influences customer perceptions and affects purchasing decisions. The research question investigated how corporate brand influences its perception and creates brand warranty in the garment industry. In this context, the data was collected from individuals, including customers, and the qualitative research strategy employed interviews and open-ended surveys. The research primarily focused on a clothing company in Bangladesh that has been collaborating with various clothing brands. This specific company has been selected as a case company, allowing for a clear understanding of the sequential process or steps involved in branding. A five-month data collection process was conducted, which was completed by the end of May after all necessary information was gathered. All interviews and surveys were conducted online for the convenience of participants. Microsoft Forms and Microsoft Teams were used to collect data and conduct interviews with the executives.

1.4 Key ideas

As outlined in Table 1, the key concepts of the ongoing research include corporate branding, which encompasses brand equity, brand awareness, customer perception, brand loyalty, and brand image.

Table 1. Key concepts.

Term	Explanation
Corporate Brand	An enterprise brand conveys a firm's values, distinctiveness, and image, influencing the decisions of stakeholders and customers. It fosters trust and loyalty, enabling a company to establish a strong market presence (Balmer & Gray, 2003).
Brand Equity	Brand equity means adding value to a company's products. Customer loyalty and long-term sales help with brand equity. It is created through brand awareness and image, which differentiates an organization from its competitors (Rusfian, 2017).
Brand Awareness	Brand awareness refers to the extent to which customers can recall a brand. It stimulates their perception of the brand. Superior brand awareness can foster customer loyalty and trust for an extended period (Jung & Seock, 2016).
Customer Perception	Customer perception refers to the consumer's attitude toward a brand grounded in their awareness and experience. A strong brand image can initiate positive opinions and trust in customers (Laishram et al., 2024)
Brand loyalty	Zhang (2024) suggests that brand loyalty is a central aspect of any brand image, which helps businesses survive in a competitive market and increases customer commitment.
Brand image	The brand image reflects the customer's perception of the brand, which is primarily influenced by emotions, past experiences, and affinity (Laishram et al., 2024).

1.5 Research framework

Figure 1 below illustrates the research framework, comprising seven chapters. Chapter one unveiled the research, which included background, research questions, and objectives. Chapter two presents a theoretical framework, which incorporates Kevin Keller's consumer-based brand equity model and relevant corporate brand theories. On the other hand, the research methodology highlighted in chapter three indicates a qualitative strategy. This study focuses on selection and data collection methods. Additionally, in chapter four, corporate branding practices and the apparel sector are discussed in detail. Chapter five presents empirical findings, discussing corporate branding strategies in the apparel sector. Research outcomes are discussed in chapter six, and the results obtained are linked to the theoretical framework. Lastly, chapter seven concludes this research by presenting its findings, implications for the apparel sector, and offering suggestions for future research.

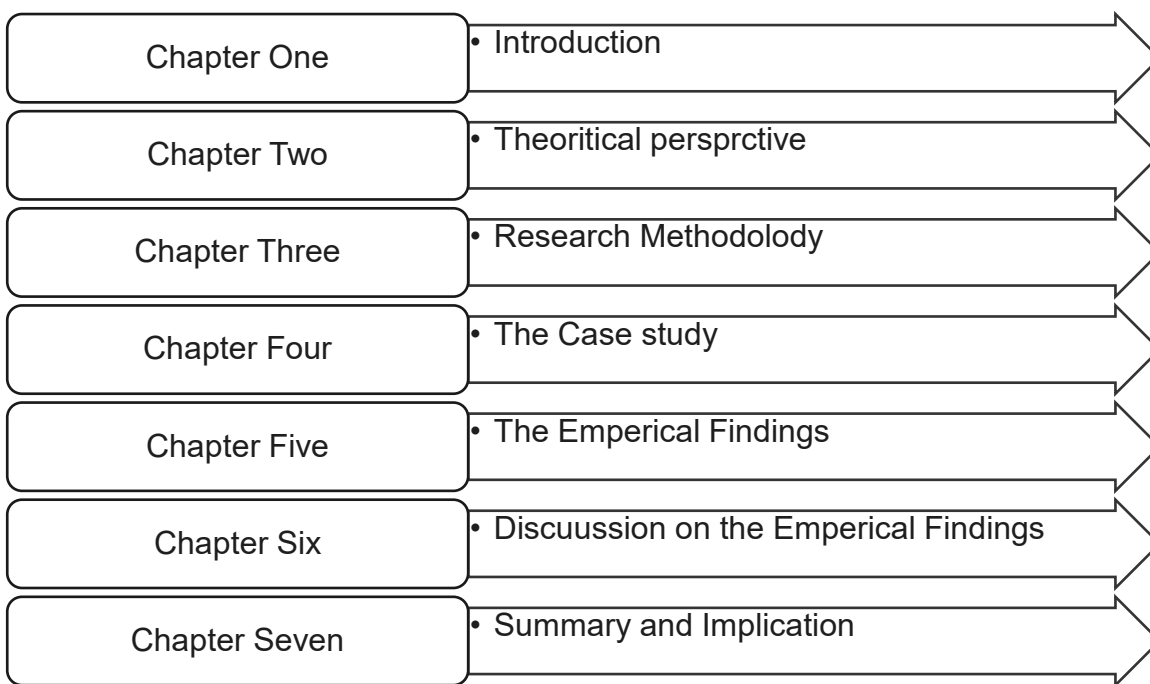


Figure 2. Structure of the study.

2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter presents a theoretical perspective on corporate branding in the apparel sector, focusing on Kevin Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model. It highlights how brand awareness, association, quality, and loyalty contribute to creating a strong corporate brand. It also examines how corporate branding is developed, its building process, and its performance.

2.1 Keller's customer-based brand equity model

Kevin Keller's consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) is the most widely used framework for understanding brand performance from a customer-centric approach. According to Brexendorf and Keller (2017), the model emphasizes that a strong brand quickly creates a strong, unique brand association in customers' minds. In the CBBE model, Kevin Keller mentioned four important brand components. The first is brand image, the second is brand identity, then brand equity, and finally, brand loyalty. A well-defined brand is crucial for any organization to survive in a competitive market, and the four elements mentioned above play a significant role in creating a strong brand. Brand images refer to how customers identify with a brand, which depends on their trust, experience, and connection. It mainly influences the customer's decision, loyalty, and brand equity. A solid brand reputation helps to distinguish a business from its rivals, introduces a sense of trust in customers, and can lead to long-term customer retention. A strong brand image comprises several elements, including marketing, customer interaction, and product quality. A positive brand image increases product sales and profits (Zia et al., 2021).

Expanding on this concept, Keller (2003) noted that brand image refers to how customers perceive or represent a brand, from their brand memory through their connection with it. A valuable, exceptional, and impactful brand image influences customer decisions and brand equity. While brand image is about judgment, brand identity involves recognition. Brand identity means creating brand awareness by ensuring customers can easily recall it. This process is identified in two ways. The first is depth, which refers to how easily customers can recognize a brand. Moreover, the other is breadth, which refers to the range of situations in which a specific brand name comes to mind first.

Creating a brand identity means creating a clear connection with the customer's needs so that the customer prioritizes the brand at the right time. Keller (1993) states that brand identity is how a brand represents itself to the world, in the same way. The method can be applied to visible things such as design and logo. Another is the invisible aspect, encompassing mission and value. Earlier, only the visual aspect was considered. However, nowadays, people want to know more about the brand, not just its logo, but also its values and mission. A key part of a brand's identity is its values, purpose, personality, etc. These elements shape how people perceive and think about the brand (Petek & Ruzzier, 2013). Connected to brand identity, brand equity is also based on the concept of brand identity.

Brand equity is essentially the additional value that a brand provides to a product or service. Strong marketing capabilities, company assets, and the market environment in which the brand operates all contribute to creating brand equity. Additionally, brand equity presents the brand as an important factor by increasing the value of intangible assets as well as strengthening financial performance that contributes to the company's overall success (Gutiérrez et al., 2024). Zia et al. (2021) stated that brand equity refers to the value of a brand in the market, which is determined by how customers perceive it. Brand equity represents the brand vigorously through trust, loyalty, and recognition. Robust brand equity can easily attract customers and charge high product prices without hassle. It is mainly created by combining a strong brand image, trust, awareness, and devotion. A positive experience with a brand lead to repeat customer behavior. They have been quickly choosing that brand over others and becoming repeat customers.

Chow et al. (2017) assert that brand equity is mainly created by customer perception and identity. Brand equity includes four key components. To begin with, awareness of the brand reinforces that it is effortlessly identifiable to customers. Moreover, subjective quality influences the consumer's purchase decision. Additionally, brand association influences the mental and emotional connection consumers have with the brand. Ultimately, brand loyalty fosters long-term customer loyalty to the brand. Combining all these elements creates brand equity, plays a crucial role in influencing customer usage, and helps the brand thrive in the competitive corporate market. Brand equity refers to how customers perceive and react to their knowledge of the brand. Includes how customers react to a familiar brand versus an unfamiliar one or a different version of the same product. When a customer has a positive image or perception of a brand, it creates substantial brand equity for that brand.

This equity can foster significant customer loyalty, ultimately contributing to increased brand sales and profits (Rifi & Mostafa, 2022). Extending this idea further, Keller (2001) noted that brand response refers to the customer's feelings or thoughts towards a brand. The response can be based on two: the first is logic (i.e., brand judgment), and the second is emotion (i.e., brand feelings). Brand judgment refers to how customers evaluate a brand's quality, credibility, relevance, and uniqueness in comparison to competitors. If the customer perceives the brand as full of high-quality, trustworthy, and valuable products, then they are more likely to decide to purchase from it. In contrast, the brand feeling is an emotional connection that occurs after using a brand, encompassing feelings of enjoyment, excitement, security, and social acceptance. Logical and emotional brand responses help customers build long-term relationships, trust, and loyalty with brands. And later, Keller (2003) stated that brand response is primarily expressed through how customers react to a brand based on its marketing and overall image. Brand judgment encompasses critical judgment, quality, universality, and excellence, while brand feelings signify emotional attachment, stability, amusement, and enthusiasm. Brand judgment is primarily formed through logical assessment, whereas emotions and social perception shape brand feeling. Ultimately, a strong brand can evoke positive thoughts and emotions, enabling customers to align with the brand quickly. After discussing brand response, the focus now shifts to brand loyalty, an important factor in maintaining customer engagement. Brand loyalty is primarily created from an emotional connection and a positive experience with the brand.

It primarily affects the emotional and behavioral aspects that enhance the brand's connection and establish trust with customers. A consistently good memory of a brand leads to brand loyalty, as customers are more likely to be loyal to brands that satisfy their emotional needs and expectations. Various studies have confirmed that brand experience is key in creating and helping businesses achieve long-term success (Pina & Dias, 2021). Keller (1993) stated that brand loyalty flows from emotional and behavioral dimensions. It essentially bridges a strong relationship between the customer and the brand. Building the foundation of brand loyalty requires a strong emotional attachment that stems from positive experiences with the brand. Brand loyalty flows from both emotional and behavioral dimensions. It essentially bridges a strong relationship between the customer and the brand. Building the foundation of brand loyalty requires a strong emotional attachment that stems from positive experiences with the brand.

2.2 Corporate branding

According to Balmer and Wang (2016), corporate branding is a strategy that enables a company to establish its identity and reputation quickly and effectively. Corporate branding refers to the process by which a company creates and maintains its overall brand image. Typically, the company's senior managers, especially the CEO, oversee the creation of the company's identity and ensure that the brand identity is appealing to stakeholders and customers. The author also emphasizes that a new concept known as co-creation suggests that company leadership, customers, and stakeholders should play a more significant role in brand creation. Some experts agree with this statement, although others argue that strong management is necessary within the organization. These two approaches help to understand how corporate branding is built and maintained. Nevertheless, according to Balmer and Gray (2003), corporate branding is a strategic approach that focuses on the product and encompasses the creation and maintenance of the company's entire brand. It plays a crucial role in shaping a company's identity and influencing various stakeholders, including employees, investors, customers, and even the government.

In the 21st century, corporate branding is widely recognized as it can easily foster association and trust, a crucial aspect of business. Building on this idea, corporate branding is the strategic process of creating and maintaining a company's reputation through behaviour and communication. It is closely related to service branding, as employees within the organization play a crucial role in creating brand value. Effective corporate branding uniquely builds a reputation for the organization by changing or reshaping stakeholders' perceptions of it. These include managing messages achieved through employee behaviour, communication styles or techniques, and ultimately, corporate identity (Hawabhay et al., 2009). Knox and Bickerton (2003) It also claimed that corporate branding focuses on the entire company, rather than individual products, to create and maintain a strong company identity and reputation. This includes maintaining good relations with various stakeholders. Corporate branding is more complex than product branding because it encompasses both tangible elements, such as the logo, and intangible aspects, including emotion and ethos. It also reveals a company's culture, values , and business structure.

2.3 Corporate brand-building and performance

According to Knox and Bickerton (2003), corporate brand-building process is a step-by-step approach through which a company can create a strong and recognizable corporate identity, discussing its core vision, culture, and competitive environment to understand its market position. There are six steps to follow to give a solid foundation to a corporate brand, which are discussed below:

Table 2. Corporate brand building steps (Knox & Bickerton, 2003).

Brand outline	The company's core, mission, culture, and market competition are analyzed to build a strong foundation.
Brand creation	This step defines the company's core values and unique brand positioning.
Brand verification	Brand messages are formally defined and communicated through
Brand harmony	Ensuring that all communications create a coherent brand identity
Brand stability	Combining the brand with everyday operations and customer experience
Brand association	Reviewing the brand performance daily and polishing accordingly so that the brand can stay ahead of the competition

Corporate brand creation starts with combining a brand's vision, culture, and how people see that brand. Corporate branding differs from product branding, which focuses on the entire company, encompassing customers, employees, and various stakeholders. A brand must be aligned with the company's core values and long-term goals, rather than focusing solely on market trends. The type of management plays a crucial role in how the company is represented and moves forward. When creating or establishing a corporate brand, the company must carefully plan to maintain customers' loyalty. Corporate branding is an ongoing process in which a brand represents an integrated form of what stakeholders think or feel about the company, as well as the company's values. These processes create a strong, long-lasting corporate brand (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Wallström et al. (2008) proposed three main steps for corporate brand creation. Conducting a brand audit is the first step in creating a corporate brand. The company's mission, culture, and competitive landscape are well understood through this. The second step is to create a brand identity, which involves determining how people perceive the company's brand, encompassing its core values and personality. This step reveals how your brand has been treating or communicating with customers. A strong brand is more emotionally connected to its customers, which makes it more memorable and believable to them. Moreover, the last step is to create the brand position. It clearly states what makes the brand unique from other competitors in the market.

It explains to customers why they should choose that company's brand over others. On the other hand, a corporate brand is how people see a brand. In creating a strong brand, that brand must represent important values such as trust, teamwork, fearlessness, and care. Similarly, when creating a strong corporate brand, choosing a specific name is a crucial process. There are two key considerations when choosing a brand: first, the name should reveal what the company does, and second, it should ensure the company's survival in the market. Nevertheless, branding is more than just a name; it essentially creates a company's identity, so people think positively about that brand. Ultimately, a well-defined branding process enables the company to stay competitive and foster a positive customer interaction (Muzellec, 2006).

A corporate brand performs differently at each company. Dowling (2006) noted that a strong corporate brand creates a strong reputation, which motivates the company to perform well. Consumers typically have more trust in well-established brands and are more inclined to purchase products from those brands. A good reputation attracts various investors to the company, which ultimately helps the company's bottom line. So, companies must try to maintain their brand and corporate reputation. An organization with a transparent communication system can quickly establish public trust, deliver high-quality products or services, and uphold its business ethics. A strong brand constantly strives to engage and motivate its employees. A well-established reputation can protect a company during economic downturns and help it recover quickly. A corporate brand ensures customer satisfaction, long-term success, and financial viability for a company.

On the other hand, corporate brand performance refers to how effectively a brand helps a company achieve success, including market growth, economic stability, and customer loyalty. A strong corporate brand helps increase company profits by increasing sales, retaining long-term customers, and reducing marketing costs. Moreover, it reduces business risk, helps to increase the organization's credit rating by attracting external investors, and ultimately makes it easier for a company to collect capital. Although some financial models, such as the DCF (i.e., discounted cash flow), have attempted to measure the exact value of a brand, it has been found that this is not easy because numbers cannot fully capture a brand's reputation. However, some research has shown that companies with a strong brand can survive in the market for a long time and earn more profit than their competitors (Dowling, 2006).

Additionally, Anisimova (2013) stated that a strong corporate brand enhances the customers' trust and feeling towards the brand. When a company's value is clear and it has a good reputation, customers are naturally satisfied with its products. Corporate performance, encompassing product quality, safety, and innovation, is essential for maintaining customer satisfaction. If a brand consistently meets customer needs, customers are more likely to be satisfied and loyal to that brand. Moreover, emotional attachment, such as a sense of pride in being connected to a brand, also plays a key role in increasing customer satisfaction. Overall, a well-structured and well-managed brand can satisfy customers, and by buying products from that brand, customers feel valued and are happy with the brand.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology used in conducting the research. It first discusses the research philosophy, techniques, and approaches used. Next, it describes the methods for data collection and analysis. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of validity and reliability to ensure the study's precision. Finally, it addresses ethical considerations to maintain research integrity.

3.1 Philosophy in corporate branding

Research philosophy is a fundamental belief and concept that guides and directs a study approach, making it easier to understand both reality and the knowledge related to the study. Ontology is the subject of understanding whether reality exists by itself (i.e., objectivism) or is dependent on human experience (i.e., subjectivism). Another part is epistemology, which deals with how knowledge is acquired, whether through positivists' use of the scientific method or numbers to find facts, or through the interpretivist approach (Wahyuni, 2012). According to Pretorius (2024), the research paradigm is a comprehensive set of guidelines for how research looks at reality. These include three topics. The first is epistemology, which refers to the study of knowledge acquisition and its foundations. It discusses how knowledge is acquired. The second is axiology, which examines the importance of value in research.

Moreover, ontology studies reality and existence, emphasizing what things are and how they exist. The ontological view of recharge helps to know whether reality exists independently or is created based on human experience. Some researchers are realists, meaning that reality exists even when we are not observing it. Others support constructivism and argue that it is socially bound and created primarily through culture, language, and interaction. Ontologies help researchers understand how to collect and analyze data. (Fleetwood, 2005). There are two research strategies for this: qualitative and quantitative. The difference between the two is noticeable in the type of data analysis. Qualitative research strategy emphasizes words, meanings, and descriptions to make understanding concepts and experiences more straightforward. In contrast, quantitative research uses numbers, measurements, and statistical analysis to identify patterns and relationships. Both strategies are essential, depending on the objective of the research (Schoonenboom, 2023)

3.2 Inductive research approach and qualitative research strategy

Three types of research strategies can be used: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed strategies. Considering the characteristics of corporate branding in the apparel sector, a qualitative research strategy and an inductive approach are selected for this research. Business researchers often use both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. However, qualitative data is the best technique for this research as it has provided details about customer loyalty, perceptions of branding, and corporate identity. Corporate branding inherently involves customer emotions, storytelling, and conceptual links. A better understanding of these issues requires detailed information that is impossible to understand in-depth with numerical data. Therefore, open-ended interviews and surveys have been conducted to collect data from professionals in the apparel industry.

According to Tarnoki and Puentes (2019), qualitative research strategy emphasizes social interaction, meaning understanding and experience rather than numerical data. It helps researchers understand complex behavior, cultural influences, and subjective experiences in topics that are not easily quantified, such as emotional attachment, brand insight, and customer trust. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of human interaction and ideas. In an open-ended survey, participants are informed that they can provide feedback based on their experience. Although adopting qualitative research is time-consuming, Microsoft Teams has been utilized to address this issue, allowing participants sufficient time to express their opinions effectively. Open-ended interviews with officials are more independent than structured surveys, allowing them to elaborate on various answers, such as industry challenges, freely. This strategy is beneficial for gathering helpful information about branding, and at the same time, it is much easier to understand the research's goals and objectives.

3.3 A case research design, data collection, and thematic analysis

Qualitative researchers primarily employ a case study research design, utilizing methods such as interviews and observation (Antunes & Martins, 2023). Because branding involves customer perceptions, emotional connections, and strategic decision-making, it is better to get detailed information than just numerical data. This study has mainly been based on a case study, as it has provided detailed information about the corporate brand, your affiliation with it, and the business identity of the ABC group. This interview method was chosen for an information gathering, and two business staff members were identified for the interview.

Their willingness was obtained before the interview. It was mentioned earlier that this research was conducted on a case study basis to provide a detailed understanding of the branding strategies of the ABC group. Case studies are mainly used in qualitative research to understand real-life business contexts that cannot be measured statistically. . Since branding involves customer perceptions, emotional connections, and strategic decision-making, it is better to get detailed information than just numerical data. This study employed a case study research design, as it provided detailed information about the corporate brand, its affiliation, and the business identity of the ABC group.

This interview method was chosen for information gathering, and two business staff members were identified for the interview. Their willingness was obtained before the interview. As mentioned earlier, this research was conducted on a case study basis to provide a detailed understanding of the branding strategies employed by the ABC group. Case studies are mainly used in qualitative research to understand real-life business contexts that cannot be measured statistically. During the interview, participants were provided with information about the research topic, objectives, and goals in advance. Then, two officials from the ABC group, who are familiar with the organization and have significant experience, were invited for an interview. Considering the convenience and flexibility of the participants, the interview questions were generated by email through Microsoft Forms.

Participants were assured that their personal information would not be disclosed and that only their responses would be used for research. This study was conducted solely through interviews with officials; open-ended surveys were conducted with eight customers. The researcher primarily employed a qualitative strategy, utilizing open-ended interviews as the primary data collection method. As it relied only on interviews with officials, participant responses were carefully reviewed and analyzed using categorization and thematic analysis. This process helped identify key themes, trends, and patterns in corporate branding strategies. Participant responses were first decoded, and then coded tables were generated to bring them into meaningful categories. The central theme was developed and reviewed to ensure it aligns perfectly with the research objective.

3.4 Relevance, consistency, and moral guidelines

Validity ensures that non-numerical analysis accurately reflects reality. On the other hand, maintaining consistency in findings ensures reliability. Researchers employ various techniques, such as triangulation, expert validation, and thematic analysis, to enhance the credibility of their research and minimize biases (Brink, 1993). On the other hand, according to Bashir et al. (2008), validity and reliability in qualitative research refer to ensuring that the study is accurate, reliable, and unbiased. In this case, researchers check the answers of participants, collect data using various methods, and accurately review these techniques. All these factors ensure that the findings obtained through this belief are accurate, precise, and related to real-life experience. In this investigation, ensuring that the theme-driven findings are valid and accurate is crucial. Considering this aspect, only an experienced and knowledgeable person is selected for the interview.

Since human participants are the primary source of data collection in this research, their experience and proper involvement in the study organization played a crucial role in providing reliable data. To ensure reliability and validity, the participants who understood and had experience related to the research objective were carefully selected in this study. Since qualitative research places more emphasis on trustworthiness than numerical data, it is noteworthy to ensure the authenticity of the information accumulated (Morse et al., 2002). In this context, trustworthiness is primarily established through transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research. Additionally, peer review, checking participants' responses, and maintaining detailed records were employed to enhance the authenticity of the results. This study ensured that corporate branding strategies were accurately tested by following this structure, and its findings were credible and usable in real business environments.

Ethics in research refers to treating participants fairly, upholding their rights, and ensuring that no harm is done to them. They must be honest about their findings and keep the information private. The ethics board establishes the basic regulations, but accurate and ethical decisions are made during the research process. Researchers must behave ethically above and beyond the rules (Li et al., 2025). Since human participants are the primary source of fact acquisition, ethical considerations in data collection are crucial. First, participants in this research must provide their consent. In addition, consent means being fully informed about the research before participating and agreeing to join it (Vreeman et al., 2012).

To maintain this, participants were informed about the aims and objectives of this research before they participated. After understanding the whole topic, they expressed interest in participating. Those who showed interest were given interview questions to answer. Their personal information was kept private and never shared with anyone, by our confidentiality policy. At this stage, another moral philosophy to-do list standard was pursued. Finally, the answers given by the participants in the interview must be authentic. According to Le (2024), authenticity refers to the genuineness and authenticity of something, such as an idea, experience, or object. Furthermore, authenticity refers to the originality and meaningfulness of something, which are important aspects of trust and credibility. No false or fabricated information has been included in this thesis, as the primary focus of this exploration is to provide various business organizations in the apparel industry with insights into corporate branding strategies. The most important part is that authenticity is maintained throughout the study. This entire process essentially ensures the validity and reliability of the research findings.

4 ABC CASE STUDY

This chapter discusses the case company, its products and services, and its market position in Bangladesh. It also examines the company's core values, history, background, and business operations.

4.1 ABC Company and its offerings in the market

The company started its journey in 2000 by manufacturing and exporting ready-made knit garments. Initially, this company started its journey with only two swing lines and 200 employees in Mirpur, Dhaka. Later, ABC expanded its business to various locations in Dhaka and Gazipur, employing 13,500 employees and operating 92 swing lines. Over time, this company has established itself as one of the largest conglomerates in the textile and apparel sector. This company has gradually established strong linkages in all aspects of knit production, including textile processing, wet processing, and garment accessory manufacturing. Through this integrated work, the company has ensured trouble-free production operations, achieved cost efficiency, and ultimately supplied high-quality products. ABC group supplies its products to the international market in several countries, including the United States, Europe, China, and Japan. The company has maintained international standards, such as Oeko-Tex Certification, by ensuring product quality and sustainability.

The ABC group has modern factories where garment products are manufactured with high efficiency, accuracy, and a commitment to maintaining quality. The company manufactures its products strictly by international standards to meet global expectations. Design and development are their core services, where stylish clothes are made keeping current trends in mind. Additionally, the complete textile processing cycle is managed by ABC company, which encompasses dyeing, finishing, and the manufacturing of high-quality fabric. Large orders from reputable brands are primarily due to their extensive production capacity. Every manufactured product undergoes a rigorous quality control process to ensure consistency of its quality. After production, the ABC group is responsible for delivery and shipping and delivers the goods to various countries worldwide. After production, the ABC group is responsible for delivering goods to various countries worldwide. In addition to manufacturing, the ABC group offers professional branding and packaging services, which help fashion brands to represent their products more beautifully and attractively.

Having advanced quality tag printing machines enables them to produce excellent quality and specialized-level printing, utilizing high-quality branding materials. The company also offers customized packaging services, which include a variety of cartons, stickers, and other packaging items for branding purposes. These services establish a distinct identity and differentiate themselves in the competitive fashion brand. The company is also recognized for its eco-friendly practices and ethical manufacturing processes. To reduce environmental pollution, the company uses sustainable fabrics for textiles. Every one of their products is manufactured to meet the Oeko-Tex standard, ensuring that they are safe and free from harmful ingredients. The ABC group also uses electric vehicles to reduce carbon emissions. In addition, they do recycle and waste solutions with a greener footprint.

4.2 Market positioning in Bangladesh

Marketing positioning is how a company holds an unparalleled position in the minds of customers by satisfying their needs in different ways. In this case, a company adopts various strategies, including pricing, design, quality, and brand image, to differentiate its products from those of its competitors. Also, if the company can comprehend the necessities and desires of the customers and react accordingly to the market changes very quickly, then it can easily create a strong brand identity (Gul et al., 2021). ABC is one of the leading garment manufacturers in Bangladesh. Moreover, it has gradually expanded its name in the global fashion market. The company is primarily familiar with its premium items, green practices, and innovative ideas. This company not only manufactures garments but also provides a comprehensive package that encompasses product manufacturing and packaging, offering a one-stop solution for many international brands.

ABC Group exports its products to various countries worldwide, including Europe, North America, South America, Japan, China, and Southeast Asia. This significant export capacity demonstrates that the company has successfully established trust with global buyers. This company has established itself as a reliable and responsible exporter, consistently fulfilling large volumes of orders. Ultimate's international research has helped the firm to achieve a successful brand image as a leading garment supplier with ease. The most important step taken by ABC company in terms of its marketing position is its emphasis on sustainability. In today's age, many buyers and sellers are increasingly concerned about the environment. ABC company adopts an eco-friendly approach to its production.

For example, this company uses materials certified by Oeko-Tex, and their dining practices are safer for the environment, as they follow ethical labor laws for their workers. This company primarily focuses on creating safe products for both the environment and the user, enabling it to quickly meet the demands of customers who want their clothes to be made in an environmentally friendly manner. ABC Company's emphasis on both the environment and sustainability has given it a market advantage over rival firms in the ready-made garment sector, and ultimately, this advantage has helped it build a strong brand image. Another strength of ABC company's marketing position is its in-house capabilities. This company has its own research and development team, design team, and production unit. As a result, they do not have to rely on other companies to deliver large orders or create new styles. Due to this, ABC Company can quickly adapt to changing fashion designs in the market and deliver what buyers want. These skills are the key tools for surviving today's ever-changing and fast-paced fashion industry. ABC company can quickly transform designs into fashion products that help buyers stay one step ahead in today's competitive market. This ability to respond quickly helps them maintain long-term partnerships with their buyers.

ABC company does not limit its business to the garment sector, but also includes areas such as garment accessories, retailing, and textile production. For example, the company produces various logos, levels, ribbons, polybags, elastics, and cartons through its trim and accessories unit. These products are essential for the professional packaging of garment products and for giving a flawless finish. As ABC company integrates all activities from product manufacturing to finishing, buyers can obtain everything quickly from a single source without any hassle. Another strong aspect of ABC's marketing strategy is that it has its retail brand. The retail stores of this company sell products directly to customers in Bangladesh, through which the ABC company's quality and design help showcase its offerings to the public. It ultimately enhances the brand's recognition while also increasing its value. ABC has emphasized three values to strengthen its marketing position: trust, quality, and innovation. Customers trust the ABC company for their quality and good track record. Since their products meet international standards, they outperform other competitors in the market by efficiently catering to the needs and demands of their customers. By focusing on eco-friendliness and sustainability, they have easily attracted international brands that are seeking more than just inexpensive products. International brands are primarily seeking suppliers who are environmentally friendly and have consistently provided high-quality products. Moreover, all these criteria are fulfilled by ABC company, for which many international brands prefer it.

5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the upcoming part, data has been collected through interviews and customer surveys, reviewing the consequences of corporate branding in the apparel sector. This research focuses on the ABC group, a leading textile company in Bangladesh. In this case, two interviews were conducted along with eight customer surveys. Consequently, the study explains first research outcomes and presents the responses related to the two objectives.

5.1 Outcomes of the research

During this investigation, information was systematically gathered from the interviewees of the focal company, using an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was used as a tool to find the necessary findings. The core intentions of the study were to determine and understand the extent to which corporate branding influences customer satisfaction and the degree to which employees contribute to shaping that satisfaction. The open-ended questionnaire was designed to be clear and understandable, allowing participants to express their experiences about the importance of branding for customer satisfaction. Moreover, the open-ended questionnaire is included in Appendix 1. The employees of the case company answered the questions based on their real-life experiences. This study tried to achieve its primary goal and key points, including understanding customer satisfaction, identifying factors that have a significant impact on branding, and examining the impact of branding on customer loyalty.

The questions were sent to the participants, and information was successfully collected from the respondents. Besides, these responses helped to understand the level of customer satisfaction and the connection between corporate branding in the apparel sector and the data needed for the survey. Participants provided essential information about customer satisfaction with services and products in the apparel sector. Their feedback makes it easy to understand what customers want, their expectations, and which aspects of the organization need improvement. The data collected measured customer satisfaction and helped to understand how branding influences consumer behavior, particularly in terms of appearance. The findings guide future marketing strategies.

5.2 Answers regarding corporate branding

The ABC group developed the clothing market by attracting loyal customers. The company has consistently focused on delivering high-quality products and excellent customer service while upholding eco-friendly practices. The survey revealed that most customers expressed a favorable opinion of the company and its brand, indicating they would recommend it to others. One customer said that I would recommend the brand to others. Moreover, employees agree with this, saying that happy customers return to the store repeatedly, which helps build a stronger relationship between the customer and the brand. They also stated that when customers are satisfied with a brand, they tend to purchase more from that brand, which ultimately increases the brand's sales and leads to success. Moreover, according to employees, their good work for the company and its brand image are directly linked. These findings underscore the importance of delivering consistent service, upholding social responsibility, and fostering employee engagement in the development of successful and trustworthy branding. This idea is entirely consistent with the statement of the first manager, who stated that.

Corporate branding is how customers perceive and trust a brand. This means that successful branding is connected to customer beliefs and perceptions, and to actively manage both, a company must adapt its current strategies accordingly. Additionally, corporate branding is indispensable for introducing their products. (H1)

From this statement, it is undoubtedly clear that the corporate brand encompasses more than just the name or design. However, it is also associated with the comprehensive view that the customer forms through their experience. When a company provides services tailored to customers' needs, it fosters trust between the company and its customers. Moreover, it fosters a strong relationship that encourages repeat business and customer retention, ultimately benefiting the organization, leading to positive feedback and recommendations. It also strengthens both brand loyalty and recognition. That is why corporate branding is a long-term relationship that is primarily an emotional connection, and secondary to delivering the correct value to customers. Moreover, in today's busy era, customers are more inclined towards brands that can match their time and provide a good experience. It can be said that branding, especially corporate branding, is a very crucial issue not only for the external appearance of an organization but also for its overall success, as it ultimately helps a company to increase sales and growth.

5.3 Results of corporate brand building and performance

This section discusses brand building and performance through customer satisfaction and its impact on the corporate brand of the ABC group, a leading company in Bangladesh. The focus here is on identifying the key elements of customer satisfaction and how these elements are linked to branding, ultimately determining their impact on brand loyalty and customer experience. The unstructured survey was adopted to obtain data from both employees and customers of the ABC group, as detailed in Appendix 1. The questionnaire was designed to analyse the company's viewpoints regarding its branding efforts and identify the factors contributing to customer satisfaction. Respondents expressed their views on various aspects, including customer service, eco-friendly practices, quality of others, and overall customer experience. The response is given below.

It is understood that the standard of the commodity and the offerings provided to the customers play a key role in increasing or maintaining customer satisfaction. Additionally, due to this company's emphasis on quality and customer service, it has easily established a positive brand image and fostered long-term customer retention. Additionally, the company's employees highlighted the company's work in this area, which has been identified as a key factor in distinguishing the ABC company from its competitors in the market. (H1)

Customer feedback has also highlighted several key factors that significantly impact customer satisfaction, including the quality of goods, the reliability of service, and the ease of use of the products provided by the company. Many customers have expressed their satisfaction with the company's products, which has led to them becoming loyal customers for a long time. Many respondents in this survey stated that they would recommend the brand to others, indicating that the company has achieved high customer satisfaction and a strong business identity. However, some aspects of the ABC company were also mentioned by customers for improvement. Increasing personalized customer service was identified as a critical area for improvement, alongside providing faster responses and more efficient communication channels. Additionally, booking products online was also mentioned as a potential area for improvement, with feedback being a significant consideration, especially for customers who are not as familiar with technology. The organization's employees and customers have emphasized consistent delivery service and quality products in creating a corporate brand. By focusing on these areas, the ABC group has easily increased customer satisfaction and built its brand even stronger in the competitive apparel sector.

Now it is illustrated how the corporate brand impacts customer loyalty and overall company performance. The primary objective is to explain how this company's branding strategy has helped create and retain loyal customers, while also increasing the firm's total sales and growth in the apparel sector. Customer loyalty is a powerful tool for corporate branding. Based on employee interviews and survey data, customers are loyal to ABC Company because it consistently delivers high-quality products, provides exceptional customer service, and maintains eco-friendly practices. Most customers said they would recommend the brand to others. One customer in the survey stated that I would recommend the brand to others due to its consistent quality and excellent customer service. In continuation of this statement, the employees of ABC agree that customers are the primary reason for the consistently excellent quality of service and products provided to them. In this case, an employee shared that when customers understand they can trust the brand and receive quality products from the company, they become loyal customers. It is understood that a strong brand can bring customers back to a company, which helps in building long-term relationships with them.

Corporate branding also significantly impacts the ABC group's performance in a competitive market. Both employee interviews and customer service have shown that the company's branding efforts have helped it stand out from its competitors. One employee also mentioned that sustainability and eco-friendly practices have significantly shaped the company's identity. Environmentally conscious customers tend to prefer buying from firms that are involved in some way with environmental issues. When employees were asked about their company's growth, they consistently said that having a strong brand is essential to an organization's success. One manager noted H1 claims that.

A strong brand attracts many loyal customers, ultimately increasing the company's sales and contributing to its growth. (H1)

Customer surveys have shown that when customers use a brand's product or are satisfied with the service provided by that brand, they naturally tend to recommend the brand to others and consistently purchase products from it. This type of loyalty directly affects the company's financial growth because if the customer is satisfied with a service and product, they are more likely to continue buying the same brand's products repeatedly and recommend that brand to others they know. It helps in creating new customers.

Moreover, strong corporate branding helps the ABC group to grow its business in the apparel sector. Surveys and interviews have demonstrated that customer satisfaction has been a key driver of the company's growth. Customers who are satisfied with their experience with the company are more likely to return and make future purchases. This enables the company to grow and establish a strong foundation of loyal customers. In this case, employees also agreed that the company's commitment to product innovation and its quick response to customers help them survive and stay ahead in the competitive market. By consistently meeting the needs and expectations of customers, the ABC group has quickly expanded its reach to new customers. The emphasis on sustainability and high-quality products has also helped this company to differentiate itself from others. Another manager noted as H2.

Personalized service and quick response to customer needs are essential to customer satisfaction. In addition, when a brand consistently meets customer needs, customers are more likely to recommend that brand to others, ultimately helping the ABC Group grow its business. (H2)

Customers who genuinely appreciate the company's products and services are likely to recommend it to others without hesitation, ultimately driving more business to the company. Ultimately, the ABC group gained more loyal customers and strengthened its marketing position in the competitive market. ABC group has easily enhanced its market position by consistently using and improving these strategies. Additionally, it is emphasized that.

6 DISCUSSION ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The section presents the data collected through qualitative questionnaires in which the employees of the ABC group and customers who use their products participated. In this case, the data collected is related to the existing literature and explained. Additionally, this chapter presents the findings related to the research questions, objectives, and arguments that are appropriate to the study's objectives.

6.1 Results of the study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the corporate brand building and performance. Generally, its overall performance depends on customer satisfaction and company performance in Bangladesh's apparel industry. Moreover, this entire research has been conducted with two objectives in mind to achieve this goal. The topics clarify the meaning of business branding, narrow down the schools of activity involved in brand management, and explore the extent to which corporate branding affects company performance. Data have been collected from ABC group employees and customers through open-ended questionnaires and surveys to fulfil this objective. At the same time, a qualitative research strategy was employed, and all responses were analysed through thematic analysis.

Employee interviews revealed that corporate branding is essential in creating brand awareness and attachment towards the brand. Employees of the ABC group noted that the company has established its brand by delivering exceptional customer service, implementing eco-friendly practices, and maintaining high standards. These findings are in line with existing claims by Balmer and Gray (2003) and Balmer and Wang (2016). Corporate branding is a strategy that helps create a company's identity and reputation beyond traditional products. The response from customers also supports this view. Most customers were delighted with the company's customer service and product quality. Moreover, many respondents stated that they would recommend the brand to others, indicating that the ABC group has established a firm and loyal customer base. However, a few customers found areas where the company needs improvement, such as making the service faster and the online booking process more manageable. This feedback highlights the importance of continuous maintenance and improvement.

Moreover, the literature review also reveals that developing a business brand is a continuous process that encompasses various elements, including customer perception of the brand, culture, and vision (Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2003). The data collected from ABC Company confirms this as ABC group employees shared that consistency in branding, communication with customers, and receiving customer feedback are key tools in their branding approach. The straightforward consequence of corporate branding on customer loyalty and satisfaction is readily apparent from the responses of both external and internal stakeholders. A strong brand image can easily retain existing customers and attract new ones to your organization or brand, significantly impacting the company's overall results.

6.2 Understanding the corporate branding

Study outcomes from a survey of ABC group employees and customers reveal some primary similarities and differences in how the corporate brand is perceived and built. Employees and customers agree that corporate branding has a significant impact on building trust, loyalty, and a positive impression of the organization. However, personnel' perceptions tend to emphasize in-house dynamics, namely work culture, product quality, and customer service, while customers focus more on overall satisfaction and experience with the brand. According to an employee at ABC company, corporate branding is essential for creating a strong identity and recognition in the market (H1). He also added that the right brand can easily create customer trust and loyalty. That matches perfectly with the findings of Balmer and Wang (2016), who noted that organizational branding fosters a strong brand identity while promoting customer loyalty.

Employees also emphasized that satisfaction is crucial in delivering high-quality service, which ultimately impacts the company's brand image. Knox and Bickerton (2003) also pointed out that the internal professional atmosphere of a corporation and employee satisfaction play a crucial role in creating a strong corporate brand. This same sentiment emerged in the employee interview responses (H1), where employees believe that, along with the company's values, culture, and work environment, their satisfaction has a direct impact on providing exemplary service to customers, which ultimately contributes to creating a positive brand image for the organization. This statement aligns with the existing literature, which suggests that employee behaviour has a significant influence on brand perception.

Customer feedback, in conjunction with employee responses, plays a crucial role in shaping a positive brand image by ensuring that the quality of service and products aligns with their expectations. It has been demonstrated that there is a high likelihood of customers recommending business and brand offerings when they are satisfied with them. Knox and Bickerton (2003) also agreed that corporate branding refers not only to the product but also to how the winning brand interacts with its customers. Hawabhay et al. (2009) also agreed with this and emphasized that the company's reputation largely depends on how it presents itself to customers. This aligns with data collected through customer surveys. However, customer feedback has suggested improvements in certain areas, such as faster response times and simplifying the booking system for customers. These suggestions highlight that corporate branding is a process of continuous adjustments to meet customer demand (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

The customer is essentially a brand for those practical aspects, such as service availability and ease of use; these factors together indicate that the brand's focus on customer experience needs to be further increased and strengthened. However, customers and employees agree that the standard of the product and service to the user is crucial in creating corporate branding. However, regarding internal factors, both parties have different opinions. Employees primarily emphasize internal satisfaction with the organization, such as expressing solidarity with the company's values and working towards sustainability. This is exactly what Balmer and Wang (2016) emphasized. According to him, delivering precisely what the brand promises to its customers is much more crucial. On the other hand, customers are more attached to tangible services, such as product availability, response times to customer inquiries, and ease of access to products. Similarly Hawabhay et al. (2009) claim that customer satisfaction is primarily established through clear communication and reliable service delivery.

The literature on this study suggests that corporate branding is a multifaceted process that extends beyond the product itself. (Knox & Bickerton, 2003). While employees highlight the company's internal culture and eco-friendly practices, customers focus on how easily they can collaborate with the company or brand and the value of the offerings. This is where the difference lies between how employees perceive branding through internal culture and company values. Furthermore, how customers experience it through the quality of others and the quality of service emerges.

6.3 Interpretation of corporate brand building and performance

This chapter examines the impact of corporate branding on the ABC group's overall company performance and growth. Interviews with employees and customer service representatives suggest that a strong corporate brand not only helps gain customer trust and loyalty but also enhances the overall success of a company. Empirical findings have shown that corporate branding has a direct impact on a company's performance. Product quality and customer service are key components of a company's brand image, and both employees and customers agree on this. Employee satisfaction and eco-friendly practices are crucial in creating a strong corporate brand, which ultimately motivates employees to provide the best customer service and results in the highest employee satisfaction. This statement is entirely consistent with the literature review, which has shown that corporate branding is a strategy that strengthens a company's reputation and enhances the organization's performance (Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Balmer & Wang, 2016). When customers are satisfied with the quality of a brand's products, they naturally return to buy from that brand again and again and recommend it to others. This type of loyalty is crucial for the company, as it fosters repeat business and generates positive word-of-mouth. Ultimately, this helps the company maintain its growth and stay ahead in the competitive apparel sector.

The research also shows that corporate branding has a direct impact on a company's brand. A solid brand image is developed through continuous product quality and excellent customer service, which helps ABC Group expand its customer base. Both employees and customers have noted that customers tend to support brands they trust and have a positive perception of, especially those committed to sustainability and eco-friendly practices. Aligned with the literature, Balmer and Gray (2003) also, emphasize that a strong corporate brand can quickly drive growth for a business by building trust and long-term customer relationships. The ABC group has emphasized sustainability and quality, enabling the company to quickly enhance its reputation and attract new customers, which has ultimately helped increase sales and significantly improved its marketing position. It is also evident from today that the ABC group has placed a strong emphasis on its branding, which has helped it thrive in the competitive market. By maintaining a distinct brand identity, the company has successfully differentiated itself from its competitors in the market, primarily by offering eco-friendly practices and premium-quality products to its customers.

This strategy has enabled the company to establish a psychological connection with its customers, leading to increased loyalty and repeat business. The company's employees also believe that a strong corporate brand helps enhance the firm's reputation while attracting loyal users and increasing sales. Knox and Bickerton (2003) claimed that corporate branding is not just a marketing strategy but a method through which a company achieves long-term growth and economic improvement.

7 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study summarizes the entire research and findings. First, it provides a summary of the study. Then, the theoretical implementation of Kevin Keller's theory. After that, it explains managerial implications. Consistently, policy implications for companies and governments are explained. Lastly, the study highlights its limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

7.1 Conclusion

This research examines the corporate branding and company performance. The study primarily focused on two objectives: understanding branding and examining the activities involved in brand building, as well as company performance. Moreover, to accomplish this objective, data were collected from the company's employees and customers through open questionnaires. The study found that product quality, eco-friendly practices, and providing the best customer service played the most important role in customer dedication and faithfulness. On the other hand, employees highlighted internal factors, such as employee satisfaction and a positive working environment, that directly impact customer experience and overall brand image. Moreover, trust in the brand from the customer's side and consistently providing good customer service were the main tools for creating customer satisfaction and loyalty.

However, it also highlights areas of customer service that need improvement, such as faster response times and easier online booking systems, which are pivotal points in enhancing the overall customer experience. The chapter's key findings begin with the statement that the value of merchandise and the service provided to the customers play a part in brand building. A strong company identity ensures customers remain loyal to that brand. In the case of the group, it was also observed that when customers received high-quality products and excellent service, they consistently gravitated towards that brand and tended to make repeat purchases from it. Moreover, these two factories help create a positive brand image, assuring customers that the company values their needs and wants. When a brand consistently provides high-quality products and services, it establishes a foundation of trust and helps retain loyal customers in the long run. Additionally, another important factor is job satisfaction, which has a direct impact on customer service. Besides, it affects the overall brand experience. When employees are happy and engaged in their tasks, they tend to provide the best service to customers.

In the case of the ABC group, it has also been observed that employees who are satisfied with their work feel secure and have a positive working environment, which naturally enables them to provide excellent customer service and have a positive experience. Moreover, this creates a virtuous circle where satisfied employees provide good service to the customers, and as a result, the customers are pleased, and those happy customers are loyal to the brand. Additionally, the emphasis on eco-friendly practices and sustainability has enabled the ABC group to establish a strong brand image and differentiate itself from competitors.

Through eco-friendly practices, the ABC group has not only presented itself to environmentally conscious customers. However, it has also transformed into a company that can think one step ahead in a competitive market. However, according to customer surveys, ABC group still needs to improve in some areas, including responding quickly to customer needs and ensuring the accessibility of the services it provides to customers. Customers have addressed these aspects for improvement. By paying closer attention to these issues, the ABC group has been able to take its company to the next level. It has convinced customers that this company provides significant value, resulting in their long-term loyalty to the brand.

7.2 Kevin Keller's CBBE model and its implications

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for these study findings using Kevin Keller's customer-centric brand equity value. It shows how the ABC group aligned with the steps outlined in this model to build a brand. Customer surveys and employee interviews have consistently shown that corporate branding plays a significant role in customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall company performance. This aspect highlights Keller's theory, which emphasizes how a brand can create substantial customer equity, which includes elements such as brand identity, brand resonance, brand meaning, and brand response. The first step in Keller's model is brand identity, which describes how customers remember a brand. The interviews and surveys suggest that the ABC group has successfully established a strong brand identity by focusing on key elements of a strong brand, including product quality, excellent customer service, and sustainability. ABC group employees and customers agree that these elements help make a brand easily recognizable and trustworthy, like Keller's model, which emphasizes brand salience and awareness. Brand identity is the initial step in the Keller model, which describes how customers form a memory of a brand.

The interviews and surveys suggest that the ABC group has successfully established a strong brand identity by focusing on key elements of a strong brand, including product quality, excellent customer service, and sustainability. ABC groups employees and customers agree that these elements help make a brand easily recognizable and trustworthy, which emphasizes brand salience and awareness. The next step is to establish a brand meaning. This is very important for a brand. The ABC group has quickly established a positive brand identity by emphasizing eco-friendly practices, high-quality products, and sustainability.

Customers can easily create a deep emotional link with a brand through trust and product, and they develop a positive approach towards that brand, as mentioned in Kevin Keeler's CBBE model. Additionally, after evaluating the meaning, customers naturally move towards brand response. This research also shows that the ABC group has adopted a positive approach towards this brand by consistently providing high-quality products and excellent customer service. Additionally, by implementing eco-friendly practices and promoting sustainability, the brand has increased customer trust, ultimately resulting in more loyal customers. After creating a strong brand image, the final step in Kevin Keller's CBBE model is brand resonance, where customers feel or create an emotional bond with the brand. The ABC group has successfully achieved brand resonance with its customers through the quality of its products and eco-friendly practices, which have helped create a long-term emotional connection with the brand. However, when a brand provides a quality product and is associated with environmental awareness, customers easily trust the brand, and a perfect emotional bond is shared between the customers and the brand. Moreover, this refers to a positive view of the brand, which Kevin Keller discussed in his model.

7.3 Managerial implications for the company

The ABC group case study highlights a crucial aspect of how corporate branding influences employee performance and customer satisfaction in the Bangladeshi apparel sector. These findings have significant managerial implications that can inform a company's branding strategy and performance. The study found that corporate branding plays a role in motivating and engaging employees. According to the survey results, employees who identify with the company's brand values, such as providing high-quality products and promoting sustainability, are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Ultimately, this has a direct impact on their performance.

The ABC group has created a work environment where employees take pride in their brand and are motivated to deliver the best service to their customers. The managerial suggestion for this company is that the company's employees must be given priority and connected to the brand values, and to do this, various steps can be taken, such as providing training, workshops, and feedback systems through which the company's core values can be connected to the company's employees. Another important aspect that the study revealed is that corporate branding has a direct influence on customer satisfaction. Customers who have a positive perception of the brand are naturally loyal to it, become repeat customers, and recommend it to others. The ABC group survey data revealed that this company created an emotional bond with customers by emphasizing phone quality and eco-friendly practices, which resulted in the highest customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Managers in the apparel sector need to stay connected to the brand value and the promises made to the customers. To enhance the customer experience, managers should continually improve the quality of their service. Additionally, the brand or company should prioritize eco-friendly practices to attract customers who are concerned about environmental friendliness. This research has suggested some strategies for the corporate brand performance of the ABC group. The most important strategy is that, regardless of how customers communicate with the brand, whether online or through a physical store, the company's promise to customers must be consistently expressed through the quality of their products and customer service. Another important suggestion is to focus on personalized service. Although this ABC group is performing very well, according to customer feedback, some areas need improvement, such as reducing response times and providing more personalized service. In this case, to achieve customer satisfaction, managers should train the team engaged in customer service.

Since employees represent the brand to customers, their contribution to branding is undeniable. This research has demonstrated that satisfied employees can effectively introduce themselves to customers, thereby creating a positive brand image. Therefore, the ABC group needs to pay attention to employees. They can utilize various methods, including open communication with employees, discussions on career development, and fostering a supportive work environment. Additionally, to keep employees motivated, managers should offer them golden incentives and opportunities for career growth. Moreover, the company should invest in technology and digital marketing to further expand the ABC group brand. Additionally, it should offer gifts to repeat or loyal customers, which has helped retain customers in the long term.

7.4 Strategic implications for corporation and governance

The findings of this study have revealed various administrative consequences for both the ABC group and the Bangladesh governing body to improve corporate branding and employee performance in the Bangladeshi apparel sector. ABC group should consider sustainability a significant aspect of its branding policy and focus more on it. This study suggests that sustainability can connect with both employees and customers, and by focusing on it, the company can quickly gain a competitive advantage in the competitive market. The company can invest more in eco-friendly practices or sustainability schemes, as customers currently support environmentally conscious brands. The company must also monitor employee satisfaction, as this can have a direct impact on customer satisfaction.

From the government side, supporting sustainable production and a healthy work environment is very much needed. The government can offer tax incentives to companies, such as ABC Company, to encourage environmentally friendly practices. Additionally, the government can introduce flexible working hours, a healthy work environment, employee rights, and a work-life balance in companies. In that case, it has been beneficial and essential for employee satisfaction in the apparel sector. Additionally, a crucial aspect is that the government can offer various training programs to its employees, enabling them to acquire the necessary skills. As employees gain more skills, their market position in the apparel sector might be more assertive.

7.5 Limitations and suggestions

Although this research has provided important observations on the Bangladeshi apparel sector, it has some limitations. First, this study is primarily based on a specific case analysis, which may limit its generalizability. Various companies should conduct future research to gain a deeper understanding of this sector. They can also explore the impact of corporate branding on customer loyalty, employee satisfaction, and company performance in the apparel sector in more detail. Secondly, the data for this research were gathered through a qualitative research strategy, including in-depth conversations and surveys, which provided critical insights. However, in some cases, there is a possibility of biased responses from participants in these surveys and interviews. In this case, if quantitative research strategies had been used and there had been more information options in the service, a clearer picture of corporate branding and company performance could have been presented.

Additionally, the sample size was small, which does not provide an accurate representation of the entire apparel industry. Finally, this research was conducted solely within the context of Bangladesh, which might not accurately represent the global fashion sector. This research was conducted exclusively in the context of Bangladesh, so the results may not fully represent the global apparel industry. Countries have diverse cultures, economic situations, and labor market conditions, which can influence how customers perceive corporate branding. What works in Bangladesh might not work the same way in other regions. For example, branding strategies that succeed in a developing country might not have the same effect in a developed country. Due to this, the findings of this study might not be applied to international markets. Future research should incorporate data from global apparel companies to obtain a more precise and comprehensive picture. This would help to understand how corporate branding affects customers in different parts of the world.

The flaws of this study indicate the need for future experiments in different areas. A quantitative or mixed strategy can be used to collect data in the future. Additionally, statistical data can be collected in conjunction with a qualitative research strategy. Through this, the role of corporate branding in influencing customer loyalty, employee satisfaction, and company performance can be better understood. Future research should focus on studying cases from other countries, including Bangladesh, to better understand the common challenges in the textile industry and how they can impact an organization. Cross-country comparisons can provide a more in-depth understanding of how cultures, economies, and labor markets affect corporate branding. Furthermore, future research can investigate the impact of government policies on corporate branding. Furthermore, future research should investigate the impact of government incentives on corporate branding strategies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview with managers

Appendix 2. Survey with customers

Appendix 1. Interview with two managers

Questions	Responses
How would you define corporate branding for the apparel sector and its importance for companies like yours?	Corporate branding is how customers perceive and trust a brand. It is important because it helps customers recognize and prefer our products.
How does your company differentiate its corporate brand from other companies?	Our company differentiates itself from other corporate brands primarily through product quality and eco-friendly practices.
How is your company's brand identity introduced to customers, stakeholders, and partners?	We promote our brand through marketing our website and our connections with partners.
What are the main activities to build a strong corporate brand in the apparel industry?	The key to building strong corporate brands in the industry is consistently delivering what is promised to customers every time.
How do marketing and advertising help promote your brand? Can you give an example?	Through marketing and advertising, we deliver our message to the right people. For example, last year we placed an advertisement for eco-friendly work.
What strategies does your company use to strengthen your brand?	6/ 6/What we focus on the most is customer feedback, product innovation, and sustainability.
How can the corporate brand affect customers' long-term relationships and trust? How?	7/A strong brand can quickly build long-term relationships of trust and loyalty with customers by consistently providing quality full service
How does branding influence organizational culture and motivate employees?	8/ Branding makes the organization's employees proud of the organization and their work, and motivates them to stay connected with the company values.
How has branding helped your company increase sales, customer loyalty, or growth?	9/ Branding has attracted loyal customers to our company, ultimately driving better sales and growth.
What challenges has your company faced in maintaining a strong corporate brand, and how have you overcome them?	10/ Our main challenge is competition, but we overcome it mainly by focusing on product quality and customer service.

Appendix 2. Survey of eight customers

Question	Responses
How did you first find out about the company?	From the house (1 respondent) Friend (2 respondents) Family (1 respondent) Relatives (2 respondents)
How familiar are you with this brand?	Extensively experienced with this brand (1 respondent) Quite familiar (1), Well-known (3), very familiar (1)
How do you feel about the overall brand of this company?	Trustworthy (1), Satisfied (2), Comfortable (2), very comfortable (2).
Have you ever seen Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in this company's work?	Yes (6), No (1)
How satisfied are you with this company?	Very pleased (1), very satisfied (2), fully satisfied (2), satisfied (2)
Would you recommend the brand to others?	Definitely (2), recommend for quality (1), must (2), yes (1)
In your opinion, what improvements can be made to enhance the brand image and	satisfied (1), personalized service (1), Hygiene (1), response time (1), focus on accessibility (2), faster service (1).