



# Maneuvering Angry Consumers toward Brand Forgiveness and Repatronage: The Moderating Role of Personality and Recovery Strategies

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Citation: Najam, F., & Azar, S. (2022). Maneuvering angry consumers toward brand forgiveness and repatronage: The moderating role of personality and recovery strategies. *The Lahore Journal of Business*, 10(2), 1-52.

<https://doi.org/10.35536/ljb.2022.v10.i2.a1>

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**Abstract:** Brand hate occurs when consumers experience extreme negative emotions towards a particular brand and thus detach themselves from it. With this under consideration, the study investigates two types of recovery strategies. The first is an apology from the brand for not extending the experience it was expected to deliver, while the second is compensation. These recovery strategies can moderate the relationship between brand hate and forgiveness such that the use of recovery strategies generally encourages consumers to forgive the brand and ultimately make a repurchase. Additionally, the role of two consumer personality traits—agreeableness and conscientiousness—are examined to explore the type of recovery strategy that is best suited to consumers who are considering forgiving the brand. We sample a population of 237 working women and empirically test the model. Our findings show that the two approaches—that is, (i) managing brand hate by offering an apology to the consumer, with a subsequently high level of agreeableness, and (ii) offering compensation to consumers with a high level of conscientiousness—are significant in minimizing brand hate and making room for forgiveness on the consumer's end. The results also reveal that the interaction between personality type and recovery strategies significantly reduces the impact of hate and amplifies the level of forgiveness such that consumers eventually intend to repurchase the brand they had previously hated.

**Keywords:** Brand hate, forgiveness, personality, recovery strategies, repatronage intentions.

**JEL Classification:** M30; M31; M39; M37.



# **Maneuvering Angry Consumers toward Brand Forgiveness and Repatronage: The Moderating Role of Personality and Recovery Strategies**

## **1. Introduction**

In April 2017, United Airlines faced heavy criticism after a video featuring a passenger being dragged off an overbooked flight went viral. Viewers expressed feelings of hatred for the airline and their personal service failure experiences. The image caused a significant level of damage to the airline's reputation, adversely affecting its stock prices (Matousek, 2018). In addition, this experience was an eye-opener for other companies and marketers in understanding the devastating impact of emotions in brand management and the substantial losses in revenue associated with loyal consumers who never intend to return to the brand (Curina et al., 2020; Fetscherin, 2019).

Furthermore, it opened up a new arena for researchers to investigate negative consumer-brand relationships, specifically to study the brand hate, disgust or dislike experienced by consumers (Kucuk, 2019; Sarkar et al., 2020; Zhang & Laroche, 2020) as well as the effective recoveries required to retain a previously unsatisfied, resentful consumer and help them toward brand forgiveness for poor performance (Harrison-Walker, 2019). Brand hate is a concept defined as a 'psychological state whereby a consumer forms intense negative emotions and detachment toward brands that perform poorly and give consumers bad and painful experiences on both individual and social levels' (Kucuk, 2016, p. 20).

The rapid proliferation of digital platforms has empowered consumers with more vociferous opinions, which tends to create hostility in the market, particularly if the gap between consumer expectations and brand performance widens or remains unfulfilled (Kucuk, 2018; Sarkar et al., 2020). These negative reviews then affect the consumer's beliefs and preferences towards a brand, and the intensity of these feelings depends on the personality of the hater or the hater's motivation (Bayarassou et al., 2020; Kucuk, 2019).

This leads to the belief that negative brand experiences and feelings of hate prove costly to companies, particularly regarding the aggressive behavioral reactions that consumers extend. In this context, the focus of service providers has shifted primarily from acquisition to the retention of

existing consumers (Mostert et al., 2009; Steyn et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, any efforts made to retain an angry consumer, especially after a service/brand has experienced a control failure, are referred to as recovery strategies (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Azemi et al., 2019; Bae et al., 2020; Harrison-Walker, 2019; Jin et al., 2019; Radu et al., 2019).

In light of the preceding discussion, it is clear that in the overall brand management process, the emotions and feelings of consumers cannot be ignored; therefore, marketers need to customize their recovery strategies in line with the personality types of consumers (haters) to restore good relationships. As consumers form a bond with their preferred brands and develop a deep relationship with them (Akoglu & Özbek, 2021; Fournier, 1998; Mostafa & Kasamani, 2020), marketers should ideally focus on strengthening and nurturing these relationships. Fournier (1998) establishes that consumers tend to purchase the brand they usually associate with or about which they hold a positive feeling. However, another study shows a strong distinction between positively and negatively valenced relationships to understand 'bad' relationships with a particular brand (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). Despite the long-standing research conducted on positive brand associations and consumers' developing brand relationships, a wide gap has yet to be addressed in the field of negative emotions experienced and exhibited by consumers toward brands they dislike and the strategies that can be adopted to restore a positive relationship with such consumers.

As conventional scholars have focused primarily on the positive emotions and feelings of consumers towards brands rather than addressing negative feelings, the focus has shifted from loyalty and satisfaction to brand love, which can be defined as 'an intense form of positive emotion towards brands' (Batra et al., 2012). Substantial research is available on positive consumer-brand relationships, from liking to loyalty and even to loving (Albert & Merunka, 2013; Alić et al., 2020; Batra et al., 2012; Ferreira et al., 2019; Gorlier & Michel, 2020; Khamitov et al., 2019; Palusuk et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). However, research on brand dislike and hatred is still limited to the antecedents and outcomes of brand hatred (Grégoire et al., 2009; Hegner et al., 2017; Romani et al., 2015; Zarantonello et al., 2016). The concept of brand hate is at the opposite extreme of brand love, whereby consumers dislike a particular brand and intend to harm the brand and its reputation in many ways.

On this account, there is not enough research available to conceptualize a brand forgiveness strategy and reduce the harmful and hateful relationships established with specific brands (Ahmed & Hashim,

2018; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). Furthermore, only a few studies have investigated the role of brand recovery strategies as a pathway for brands to restore broken relationships with consumers (Babin et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2021). Indeed, forgiveness is believed to be the central element in restoring these relationships (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2018; Harrison-Walker, 2019). However, there has not been any substantial research on the type of recovery strategies required to match the personality type of the haters to gain consumer forgiveness.

In light of these observations, the goal of this study is (i) to explore the relationship between brand hate and forgiveness, (ii) to examine the links that exist between recovery strategies and consumer personality type concerning forgiveness for the brand, and (iii) to assess the recovery strategies that effectively lead to consumer repatronage.

The term ‘recovery strategy’ refers to the act of moderating the relationship between hate and forgiveness, further qualified by the personality type of the consumer in question. These factors determine what kind of recovery strategy would ideally be effective for a particular type of personality of the hater. This study effectively takes two types of personalities—agreeableness and conscientiousness—along with two popular recovery strategies—apology and compensation—to achieve hater forgiveness and encourage repatronage of the brand. Here, forgiveness mediates the relationship between brand hate and repatronage intentions. This study identifies tailored recovery strategies that would fit the personality type of the angry consumer to gain an appropriate form of forgiveness (Aw et al., 2022; Cummings & Yule, 2020; Harrison-Walker, 2019). It also highlights the importance of recovery strategies to earn forgiveness and secure consumer retention. Unlike prior studies based on the same discipline, this study (i) examines brand hate as an intense form of a negative relationship rather than mere dissatisfaction, (ii) incorporates a measure of brand hate that captures negative experiences, image incongruence and ideological incompatibility, (iii) uses adequate measures for forgiveness and recovery strategies in different scenarios, and (iv) draws on a sample of working women from the national population rather than a student sample. Table A1 in the Appendix presents a summary of these constructs and their definitions.

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

In the marketing literature thus far, brand hate is an emerging area of study. Much of the literature has studied this concept as a unidimensional

perspective of hate, conceptualizing it as a single form. However, only a few studies have explored it as a multidimensional structure, with levels of hate ranging from cold to burning brand hate (Aziz & Rahman, 2022; Kucuk, 2019; Yadav & Chakrabarti, 2022). In addition, previous studies have developed two theories of hate: the duplex and triangular theories. The duplex theory of hate is very similar to the duplex theory of love, which can be applied to individuals or groups of individuals (Sternberg, 2003). This theory discusses the development and structure of hate through its parts, the triangular theory of hate and the theory of hate as a story. This theory is also consistent with Fromm's theory (1973) and represents hate as a perversion of a human's positive possibilities. However, the triangular components suggest three interlinked emotions linked to hate: the negation of intimacy, passion and commitment (Sternberg, 2003).

### ***2.1. Transgressions of Brand Hate***

In their study, Zhang and Laroche (2020) find multiple reasons that could be considered motivators for brand hate and categorize these as a phenomenon that was company-related (negative brand image, bad marketing, employees, store environment), product-related (price, quality and design), consumer service-related (service quality, service failure) and consumer-related (failed expectations, personality, negative word-of-mouth and competing brands). However, the results derived for these factors are mixed. Kucuk (2016, 2019) also explores the positive relationship between company (norms and practices) and consumer-related reasons (personality traits) for developing brand hate.

Bryson (2013) presents three factors that could come into play in regard to the development of hate for any brand. The first is the dissatisfaction experienced by the consumer, the second is the negative stereotypes of consumers of the brand for which hatred is being felt, and the third is gender-specific behavior. Bryson (2013) supports the argument that men are less prone to develop feelings of hate than women and are less influenced by negative word of mouth. In this context, Table A2 in the Appendix gives a summary of the direct relevant studies that are based on brand hate, exclusive of other negative emotions such as dislike.

### ***2.2. Repatronage Intentions***

Repatronage intentions are defined as the consumer's willingness to make repeat purchases from the brand, even after experiencing service failure (Susskind, 2005; Yang & Chang, 2011). Following the same context,

Hume et al. (2007) support the idea that repatronage is the consumer's desire to continue buying from the service provider in the future as well. However, the literature is fragmented when focusing on consumer repurchase intentions. It is thus defined as 'the individual's judgement about buying a designated service again from the same company, taking into account his or her current situation and likely circumstances' (Hellier et al., 2003).

Much of the literature has thus far discussed the relationship between service recovery efforts, satisfaction and repurchase intention (Davidow, 2000; Susskind, 2005; Yang & Chang, 2011). However, the research shows positive associations between service recovery efforts and repatronage intentions (Susskind, 2005), which can lead to strengthened relations between service providers and consumers. Harrison-Walker (2019) also found a positive and significant relationship between forgiveness and repatronage intentions. However, the relationship between brand hate and repatronage intentions is negative. Hence, we hypothesize that brand hate is negatively related to repatronage intentions in the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 1:** Brand hate has a significant and negative relationship with repatronage intentions.

### *2.3. Forgiveness*

Aaker et al. (2004) shed light on the importance of brand forgiveness and its emerging role in the discipline of marketing. Likewise, Alvarez and Fournier (2016) acknowledge the concept of the consumer-brand relationship in the literature on branding and identify the missing literature on negative emotions. For some time, marketers have realized the importance of angry consumers and their hostile behaviors. However, the literature is silent on restoring broken consumer relationships and reaching out for consumer forgiveness (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). Recently, the research paradigm has shifted its focus toward negative emotions and consumer forgiveness. Such that achieving consumer forgiveness in the presence of brand hate requires challenging strategies by marketers or managers. Hence, we propose that brand hate is negatively associated with forgiveness.

**Hypothesis 2:** Brand hate has a negative relationship with forgiveness.

Following the same context, we can affirm that psychologists have defined forgiveness as 'one of the most important processes in restoring relationships' (Fernández-Capo et al., 2017). From the realms of psychology,

we can infer that forgiveness tends to replace negative emotions with positive ones, yet the concept is complex. Table A3 in the Appendix presents a summary of the relevant studies based on forgiveness.

This construct was first conceptualized as a coping strategy for negative emotions in marketing (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011; Zourrig et al., 2009). Therefore, a substantial number of studies on forgiveness have referred to Sternberg (2003), stating:

Forgiveness is being granted and requires only one person (the offended). In contrast, reconciliation must be earned through trustworthy behavior and always needs two parties, depending on the offender's response to the forgiver.

As defined by Joireman et al. (2016), forgiveness lets go of negative emotions and restores positive relationships. They examine the role of consumer forgiveness when encountering service failures. Common aspects of forgiveness include reducing anger, derision, feelings of revenge, and eventually moving towards reconciliation. This has therefore presented forgiveness as a process whereby consumers transform their negative emotions into more positive ones. Furthermore, achieving consumer forgiveness inhibits their repatronage intentions with the brand; therefore, we propose this relationship in the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 3:** Forgiveness has a positive relationship with repatronage intentions.

In line with prior studies, forgiveness has a positive and significant relationship with the intention to repurchase a specific brand (Fernández-Capo et al., 2017; Jaroenwanit & Chueabunko, 2015; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015). In a cross-cultural study, the mediating role of forgiveness reveals that, most commonly, individualistic-collectivist cultures influence repurchase intentions (Jaroenwanit & Chueabunko, 2015). One study also reports that brand hate is less likely to be a forgivable phenomenon, considering its characteristics, such as betrayal and the feeling of being treated unjustly, which consumers may feel strongly (Zhang & Laroche, 2020).

Fetscherin and Sampedro (2018) investigate forgiveness at various determinants and outcomes and analyse how it evolves. Their results confirm forgiveness as one of the consumer coping strategies among switching, avoidance, complaining or even revenge. They conclude that forgiveness is a sentimental action that brands can achieve and that



consumers would be willing to buy the brand in the future. Therefore, this study postulates that the negative link between brand hate and repatronage intentions is mediated by forgiveness in the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 4:** Forgiveness mediates the negative relationship between brand hate and repatronage intentions such that the indirect effect of forgiveness reduces the impact of brand hate.

#### *2.4. Recovery Strategies, Forgiveness and Personality Characteristics*

Over the last two decades, the focus has shifted from the concept of service recovery to brand recovery. Service recovery is defined as the actions and efforts made by a company to restore consumer confidence and balance out bad experiences (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020; Bell et al., 1987). In the same context, Gronroos (1988) defines it as an effort to redeem failures. Moreover, Ahmed and Hashim (2018) conceptualize brand recovery under three elements: apology, compensation and explanation.

Consumer forgiveness depends on how the brand attempts to reconcile failures experienced by consumers. In this regard, Kucuk (2016) claims that consumers feel discomfort and distress, particularly when companies fail to manage the brand/service failure, which can result in highly destructive behavioral outcomes. Moreover, the author examines the possibility of consumers' tendency to develop hate and intent to harm the brand if companies fail to provide viable solutions to complaints and thus bear the responsibility of consumers' hostility toward a particular brand. Consequently, if companies fail to manage consumer complaints appropriately, they allow the consumer to actively start indulging in anti-brand activities, which may ultimately translate into brand hate.

There have been a few studies that have taken up the role of recovery strategies in gaining forgiveness. Ahmed and Hashim (2018) explore the moderating role of three types of recovery strategies (apology, compensation, explanation) in reducing brand hate and gaining consumer reconciliation (forgiveness). They conclude that, in the presence of recovery interventions, consumers would most likely rate higher on the forgiveness scale. For instance, a combination of compensation and apology increases the probability of reconciliation (Joireman et al., 2016).

Many studies have investigated the role of brand equity, brand reputation, consumer coping strategies, and justice theory in brand management (Casidy & Shin, 2015; Muthukrishnan & Chattopadhyay,

2007; Sengupta et al., 2015). However, only a few studies have investigated the recovery model in managing brand hate by gaining consumer forgiveness (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Harrison-Walker, 2019). These studies use multiple recovery strategies to moderate the relationship between hate and reconciliation, focusing on investigating a strategy or combination of approaches to gain consumer reconciliation or forgiveness. Apology and compensation are clearly identified as pertinent strategies to gain consumer forgiveness.

Brands need to develop recovery strategies in response to feelings of hate before these worsen into other, perhaps even more extreme, forms of hate. Many studies have taken into account measures such as price discounts, refunds, complimentary services, free products/services, apologies or acknowledgement as recovery efforts (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Azemi et al., 2019; Bell et al., 1987; Hess et al., 2003; Jin et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 1993). Much of the literature focuses on recovery strategies, such as framed apologies and compensation, as primary elements of recovery. Another study presents the concept of apology, compensation and emotional support as viable and effective recovery strategies (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). In addition, some recent research has examined the positive impact of employee apology and empathy, particularly when interacting with the consumer in the case of a service failure, followed by an effort at reconciliation (Radu et al., 2019).

By reviewing the literature, we can affirm that the brand management process is essential to handling brand hatred. To further reduce the effects of brand hate, some studies have proposed three facets of brand recovery: apology, compensation and explanation (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Casidy & Shin, 2015; Joireman et al., 2013). Different brands use different combinations of these facets, depending on their policies. Thus, some might use compensation or explanation, while others might resort to the apology and compensation route or apply all three.

Our study considers effective action points such as apology and compensation, which may be fundamental to brand recovery in Pakistan's cultural context. For example, extending an apology is a strategy that several companies prefer to mend a broken relationship with an irate consumer (Casidy & Shin, 2015; Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006). The effectiveness of this strategy depends on various components: the acknowledgement of the offence that initially prompted the feeling of discomfort, the expression of deep concern for the damage done, and subsequently, offering assistance to the consumer to make their experience somewhat tolerable (Hareli &

Eisikovits, 2006; Radu et al., 2019). Another aspect includes both acknowledgement and subsequent action on consumer characteristics exhibited, such as the number of complaints, followed by cued apologies (Bae et al., 2020).

In line with some previous studies, apologies essentially aid in restoring broken relationships that have resulted from bad experiences, primarily by eliminating the objectionable motives of the transgressor (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Bae et al., 2020; Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006; Radu et al., 2019; Takaku et al., 2001; Tomlinson et al., 2004). Extending an apology to an angry consumer not only heals but also generates forgiveness, signifying the positive and significant relationship between apology and forgiveness (Harrison-Walker, 2019; Tsarenko et al., 2019).

The following proposed recovery strategy is 'compensation'. Studies have investigated the effectiveness of compensation (price reduction, discounts, free products/services, refunds), particularly in regard to managing angry consumers and mitigating their dissatisfaction following a service failure (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Bae et al., 2020; Casidy & Shin, 2015; Grewal et al., 2008; Harrison-Walker, 2019; Hui & Au, 2001; Joireman et al., 2013). Furthermore, research shows that compensation communicates a sacrifice that a company is willing to make to recover a potentially lost relationship with a product consumer (Joireman et al., 2013, 2016). The purpose of compensation, therefore, is to decrease the desire for revenge, engage the consumer in reconciliation and ultimately restore the company's damaged image.

Many scholars have discovered a positive relationship between the interaction of apology and compensation as practical recovery efforts in regard to altering consumers' natural response and attitude toward a brand (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Bae et al., 2020; Casidy & Shin, 2015; Harrison-Walker, 2019; Jin et al., 2019; Joireman et al., 2013). Based on the current literature, consumers are more willing to reconcile than seek revenge, especially in the presence of interventions such as an apology and compensation (Ahmed & Hashim, 2018; Joireman et al., 2016). Moreover, compensation typically exemplifies forgiveness, as research suggests that compensation influences negative postbehaviors, for instance, after service failures, such as the intention to repurchase, by reducing revengeful behaviors, that is, negative word-of-mouth or switching brands (Vázquez-Casielles et al., 2012).

### 2.4.1. *Moderating Effect of Personality*

The research has considerably advanced our knowledge regarding consumers' personalities and their impact on decision-making variables such as loyalty, love, hate, or even forgiveness. Much of the research conducted on consumer-brand relationships is based on the personality of the consumer (Aaker et al., 2004; Alvarez & Fournier, 2016; Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). However, it is not yet clear whether a particular set of personality traits or consumer characteristics initiates and drives hate toward a brand; the extent of hostility is also an underexplored variable (Bayarassou et al., 2020; Kucuk, 2019).

Similarly, the set of personality traits that lead to the development of the ability to forgive is yet to be discovered (Dametto & Noronha, 2019; Fu et al., 2004; Riaz & Khan, 2016). It is clear that consumers' personality traits strongly reflect their behaviors, such as the need to take revenge (Grégoire et al., 2009; Joireman et al., 2013), psychological distancing (Romani et al., 2013), and avoidance (Fetscherin, 2019; Goel & Yang, 2015). Nor has enough research been conducted to establish the linkages between consumers' tendency to forgive, particularly after receiving certain recovery efforts from the brand, and the intervention of their personality traits.

An impressive body of literature has developed many personality frameworks and scales that provide compelling evidence of personal selection based on specific personality characteristics and traits (Anglim et al., 2020; Bainbridge et al., 2022; Barrick & Mount, 1991). The Big Five personality or five-factor model (FFM) is the most influential empirical model. According to this overarching phenomenon, individual personality differences may be grouped into five behaviors or personality traits. These include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. As observed from the literature, different personalities behave differently regarding brand hate and forgiveness.

It takes two personality traits, conscientiousness and agreeableness (which are the focal point of this study), to better understand the characteristics and behaviors of haters and forgivers. Therefore, even in the context of this paper, these two personalities have been selected primarily based on the empirical findings of Kucuk (2019), whereby we analyse the adoption of levels of brand hate by the Big Five personality traits. The empirical results reveal a strong, significant relationship between conscientiousness, hot brand hate, agreeableness and cool brand hate. In addition, Dametto and Noronha (2019) demonstrate the trait of

agreeableness as the high ability of an individual to forgive, as opposed to a more conscientious one.

Agreeableness as a trait tends to typically manifest in cooperation, likeability, altruism, kindness and selflessness (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Mhlanga, 2019) and social conformity (Fiske, 1949; Han & Kim, 2019). Individuals who score high on this trait are deemed more friendly and willing to appease others. In addition, these individuals prefer to avoid confrontation and becoming involved in conflicts and arguments (Kucuk, 2019). In other words, they are peacemakers. On the other hand, people who score low on this dimension are driven by self-interest and may be perceived as selfish (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002). More traits listed under this component include flexibility, tolerance, courteousness, and good-naturedness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). This trait has been empirically validated to have a positive association with forgiveness (McCullough, 2001; Riaz & Khan, 2016; Wang, 2008) and can also be effective using recovery strategies for strength (Bae et al., 2020; Dametto & Noronha, 2019).

Practicing conscientiousness as a personality trait can be defined as being compassionate and focused (Abdullahi et al., 2020; Babcock & Wilson, 2020; Gönenç et al., 2020; Mulyanegara et al., 2009). People with a higher moral conscience can be more dependable and disciplined (Kucuk, 2019). More likely to be vigilant in their behavior, they anticipate the consequences of their actions, keep track of time, and exhibit ambitious and persistent behavior (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In contrast, unconscientious people are generally less motivated in life, engage in objectionable behavior, and often make last-minute choices. Thus, the former consumer foregoes brand failures easily, does not quickly develop feelings of hate and moves on equably even when confronted with a failure of the brand in providing the expected quality.

Perhaps perversely, however, highly conscientious individuals are also more affected by brand failures and prone to developing brand hate. Kucuk (2019) reveals that conscientiousness might play a vital role in brand hate compared to other elements. This is primarily because a highly conscientious consumer is most likely to develop powerful hateful feelings after experiencing brand failure (Bayarassou et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). In addition, a recent study suggests that consumers who practice high conscientiousness and possess neurotic traits are prone to negativity and more likely to articulate feelings of hate because of their self-discipline, awareness and consciousness of failed expectations (Kucuk, 2019). Likewise, the study also reports significant results for these two

personality traits as true haters, particularly those at the hot brand hate level in the hate hierarchy.

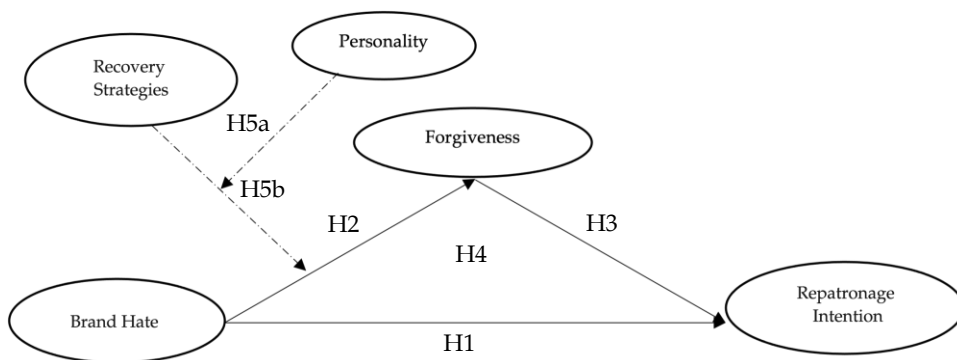
We can posit that consumers with high levels of conscientiousness, coupled with neurotic traits, have a low tendency to forgive because of their strength of character, which generally exhibits persistence, prudence, leadership and self-regulation (Abid et al., 2015; Dametto & Noronha, 2019; Wang, 2008; Watkins & Regmi, 2004). On the other hand, forgiveness and kindness are significant character strengths among people with high levels of agreeableness (Dametto & Noronha, 2019). Traits of openness and extraversion also follow medium levels of forgiveness (Abid et al., 2015). Therefore, we can hypothesize that apology and compensation positively moderate the link between brand hate and forgiveness for both types of personalities.

**Hypothesis 5a:** An apology positively moderates the relationship between brand hate and forgiveness for agreeableness (personality trait).

**Hypothesis 5b:** Compensation positively moderates the relationship between brand hate and forgiveness for conscientiousness (personality trait).

The conceptual framework representing all of the aforementioned hypotheses is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



Personality types: Agreeableness and conscientiousness.  
Recovery strategies: Apology and compensation.

### 3. Data Collection Method

#### 3.1. Sample and Procedure

This study considers the retrospective experience sampling method adopted by Harrison-Walker (2019) to analyze the concept of brand forgiveness. This method allows respondents to describe a service failure they experienced and complained about to the service provider and rekindled the respondent's associated feelings and thoughts, thereby reliving the experience, followed by the response scales.

For this study, women were selected as a suitable population because they are more prone to voice their opinions honestly, according to Bryson and Atwal (2013). In addition, women are believed to be more emotional and have reported feelings of hate regarding consumption behavior (Bryson & Atwal, 2013; Zarantonello et al., 2018).

Given the rise of prêt-wear popularity in Pakistan, a sample of working women was deemed appropriate for the study. Furthermore, working women in Pakistan are generally considered the target market for luxury fashion brands, particularly with their prêt-wear product lines. In this context, the Pakistan Employment Trends Report (2015) identifies that the percentage of Pakistani working women increased from 16 percent in 2000 to 24 percent in 2015, implying an approximate increase of 7 million women in the workforce. This increase indicates that Pakistani women can contribute more disposable income. However, at the same time, they frequently experience a lack of time to deal with seamstresses and tailors (who may experience delivery troubles owing to energy shortages), which creates the ideal conditions for a ready-to-wear revolution in the market for apparel.

An increase has also aided this change in trends in the number of malls and shopping centers where prêt-à-porter is readily available for working women. Arguably, ready-to-wear apparel has changed the landscape of local fashion in Pakistan over the past few years. Therefore, for this study, we consider the prêt-wear industry's target market of working women. We note that even though there has been an increase in women in the workforce, accessing them was difficult.

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were protected, following the ethical guidelines presented by Wiles et al. (2008). The survey began with a statement stating, 'You are invited to participate in

a brief anonymous survey on... You can terminate the survey anytime.' We reassured the respondents that we would base our analysis on their collective responses, not individualistic ones, to protect their identity and offered the choice to terminate the survey at any time.

We emailed a total of 1,200 invitations based on a list generated by the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry's women's wing and the LinkedIn profiles of Pakistani women in the workforce. The email gave a brief description of the study and requested active participation to reach conclusive results. Based on the pretest results, we communicated with participants regarding the product category: women's prêt-wear. First, we asked participants to name the brand they hated most. A follow-up query elicited if they still used the brand, with the help of a dichotomous scale (yes/no), followed by the measures pertaining to each of the constructs. The three prequalifiers for participation in the survey were those working women who had ever patronized a prêt-wear brand, experienced a service/brand failure, felt some degree of hate, and then filed a complaint to the management, measured on a dichotomous scale (yes/no). We intentionally skewed the sampling frame to find a brand's actual haters.

Three hundred forty-nine working women agreed to respond to the survey, thus ensuring a sample-to-item ratio higher than 10:1 (Nunnally, 1967). We also sent a biweekly reminder email to encourage the response rate. Of the 349 responses received, after filtering the outliers and missing data, we only included those responses in the study that had checked 'yes' in all three prequalifiers and ranked high on either of the personality traits, resulting in a total of 237 responses.

The sample included women from various backgrounds, filtered by measures such as age, marital status, education, professional status and monthly household income, as reported in Table 1. The average age of the participants was 30 years, with an average household monthly income of PKR 200,000. Of the 237 working women taken into account, 47.3 percent were married, 48 percent had a Master's degree, and 59 percent were women working at a middle-tier status.



**Table 1: Sample Demographics**

Category	N	Percentage
Age		
18-24	34	14.3
25-34	139	58.6
35-44	44	18.6
45+	15	6.3
Missing values	5	2.1
Marital status		
Single/divorced/widowed	125	52.7
Married	112	47.3
Highest education		
High school or less	3	1.3
Associate degree	15	6.3
Bachelor's degree	91	38.4
Master's degree	114	48.1
Doctorate (PhD, MD, JD)	14	5.9
Professional status		
Entry level	54	22.8
Middle level	140	59.1
Top level	43	18.1
Household monthly income		
Less than 50,000	27	11
51,000-100,000	63	26.2
101,000-150,000	15	6.3
151,000-200,000	31	13.1
201,000-250,000	13	5.5
251,000 above	50	20.7
Missing values	42	17.7

### 3.2. Pretest

Prior to the main study, we conducted a pretest ( $n = 30$ ) to assess the most common category of brand hate and to highlight any underlying ambiguity in the format or structure of the questionnaire (Dillman et al., 2009). Respondents were free to mention any brand they felt negatively about, share their experiences about the brands they purchased, and provide information on the type of relationship they have or have had with the brand, as well as efforts made by the brand to reconcile after complaints to the management. In addition, the pretest contained four optional questions to rate the accuracy and relevancy of the questions in the rest of the survey. Based on the pretest findings, we made minor changes to the questionnaire.

The most popular category was women's prêt-wear brands (21 percent). Other cited categories were from the restaurant industry (15.4 percent), salons (9.7 percent) and ride-hailing services (4.5 percent).

Approximately 50 percent of the brands were mentioned only once. Moreover, all the respondents had acquired at least a bachelor's degree or above. No significant changes were made in the questionnaire, as the respondents rated (very clearly) on the questions of clarity and relevancy. Based on the comments, we rearranged variables to avoid any bias. Additionally, brand hate and forgiveness items were placed apart and away from one another in the questionnaire.

### **3.3. Measures**

#### *3.3.1. Brand Hate*

The hate scale consisted of 13 items, as proposed by Lee et al. (2009). Four items were used to measure negative past experiences, five items were used to measure image incongruence, and the last four items were reserved for ideological incompatibility with Cronbach's alphas (.75), (.84) and (.91), as reported by Hegner et al. (2017). Respondents were requested to mention the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements based on the seven-point scale, starting from 7 ('strongly agree') to 1 ('strongly disagree'). An example of this may be, for instance, an item measuring a negative experience: 'The performance of products of brand X is poor.' Table 2 lists the remaining measurement items for each construct.

#### *3.3.2. Forgiveness*

We adopted the five-item scale Xie and Peng (2009) developed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76 to measure consumer brand forgiveness. The primary purpose of choosing the items suggested by Xie and Peng (2009) is to support the context of the study, as forgiveness is an ambivalent and complex construct with multiple interpretations in the literature on psychology. However, this scale has recently been used in the marketing literature (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019) and deemed the most suitable for this study.

In addition, Xie and Peng's (2009) scale for forgiveness has the most items compared to those used by other studies (Casidy & Shin, 2015; Sinha & Lu, 2016; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015). Participants were required to agree or disagree with statements such as 'I would think favorably of X brand' on a seven-point scale from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 7 ('strongly agree').

### 3.3.3. *Recovery Strategies*

The study incorporates two types of recovery strategies in the model taken into consideration: apology and compensation. Apology items consisted of a combination of the three-item scale, adapted from Liao (2007), and the two-item scale from Bradley and Sparks (2012), with a combined reliability of 0.97 for the five-item scale. For compensation, the four-item scale has been used by Harrison-Walker (2019), which includes a combination of items adapted from Bradley and Sparks (2012), Liao (2007), and Varela-Neira et al. (2010).

### 3.3.4. *Personality*

The characteristics of a person's personality have a broad spectrum of abstraction. To measure an individual's personality, the study considers the neo personality inventory revised (NEO-PI-R) scale for agreeableness and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1995, 2008). Each personality facet effectively carries nine items that are rated on a seven-point scale from 7 ('strongly agree') to 1 ('strongly disagree').

### 3.3.5. *Repatronage Intentions*

Three items were adapted from Blodgett et al. (1997), primarily due to their high reliability level (0.91). Items for repatronage intentions are expressed in Table 2 as 'I am likely to revisit this service provider in the future.'

### 3.3.6. *Control Variables*

The study controlled for variables such as age, income, education, marital status and the number of children of participants. These control variables are included because people with an age span of 25–34 years, with higher-than-average income and higher education, and who are positioned at higher professional forums are more likely to voice negative sentiments and be termed complainers (Walker, 2001).

### 3.3.7. *Reverse Coding*

All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (7 = strongly agree, 6 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). However, only a few items in the questionnaire were worded negatively to ensure complete comprehension of the item by respondents. Therefore, the negatively worded items were

reverse coded based on the following scores: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = agree, 4 = neutral, 5 = disagree, 6 = somewhat disagree, and 7 = strongly disagree.

**Table 2: Measurement Items**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Citations</b>	
Brand hate	<b>Negative experience</b>	<i>Adapted from Lee et al. (2009)</i>	
	The performance of products of X is poor		
	X's products are inconvenient		
	My hate for X is linked to the bad performance of this product		
	I'm dissatisfied by X		
	<b>Image incongruence</b>		
	The products of X do not reflect who I am		
	The products of X do not fit my personality		
	I don't want to be seen with X		
	X does not represent what I am		
	X symbolizes the kind of person I would never want to be		
	<b>Ideological incompatibility</b>		
	In my opinion, X acts irresponsibly		
	In my opinion, X acts unethically		
X violates moral standards			
X doesn't match my values and beliefs			
Forgiveness	I would think favorably of X	<i>Adapted from Xie and Peng (2009)</i>	
	Given X's response, I would condemn it (R)		
	Given X's response, I would forgive it		
	I would disapprove of X (R)		
I feel sympathetic toward X			
Brand recovery	<b>Apology</b>	<i>Adapted from Liao (2007)</i>	
	The service provider made an apology to me for what had happened.		
	The service provider apologized for the inconvenience the problem had brought to me.		
	The service provider expressed regret for the mistake the company had made.		
	The service provider said she or he was sorry for the service failure.		
	I received an 'I'm sorry' from the service provider regarding the service failure.	<i>Adapted from Bradley and Sparks (2012)</i>	
	<b>Compensation</b>		
	The service provider offered fair redress (such as a refund or other compensation) for the problem.		<i>Adapted from Varela-Neira et al. (2010)</i>

Variables	Measures	Citations
	The service provider provided extra compensation (such as a coupon, cash award or gift certificate).	<i>Adapted from Liao (2007)</i>
	The service provider made a very generous offer to compensate me for the breakdown in service.	<i>Adapted from Bradley and Sparks (2012)</i>
	I received no compensation for the service problem (R)	
Personality	<b>Agreeableness</b> Am suspicious when someone is too nice (R) Think that most people can be trusted Am often cynical and skeptical of others (R) Think all people deserve respect Don't sympathize with panhandlers (R) Find it easy to empathize with others Am willing to manipulate people to get my way (R) Am not embarrassed to brag about my talents (R) Know that I'm a better person than most (R)	<i>(Costa &amp; McCrae, 1995, 2008)</i>
	<b>Conscientiousness</b> Work hard to meet my goals. Always aim for excellence. Strive to achieve. Like to have everything in its place. Keep my things neat and clean. Prefer not to plan everything in advance (R) Often can't make myself do what I should (R) Am good at getting things done on time. Am quite self-disciplined.	
Repatronage intention	I am likely to visit this service provider again in the future. It is likely that I will never visit this service provider again (R) It is likely that I will still visit this service provider in the future.	<i>Adapted from Blodgett et al. (1997)</i>

Note: The study uses the 'retrospective experience' sampling method, asking participants to recall a service failure they have experienced and reported to the management. Thinking of the service failure rekindles associated emotions, feelings and thoughts, thus making them relive the experience, followed by the response scale. All items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale. R = reverse-coded item.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

#### *3.4.1. Validity and Reliability Tests*

We use the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett’s test of sphericity to test for sample adequacy. After these measures, we conduct validity and reliability tests through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In addition, to achieve composite reliability (CR), the values are expected to be above the threshold level of 0.60 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and with a Cronbach’s alpha greater than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1967). Furthermore, in assessing convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) is expected to exceed 0.50, with a CR above 0.6 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Moreover, the AVE values must be above the squared interconstruct correlation estimates (SIC) to hold for discriminant validity. Finally, to address multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) is calculated, which ranges from 1 to 5.

#### *3.4.2. Common Method Variance*

To address common method bias, we use Harman’s one-factor test (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012), which is considered a post hoc remedy. Moreover, the study randomized the order of the items for each construct.

#### *3.4.3. Hypothesis Testing*

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used in Amos 26 to test for model fitness and reported for the values of chi-square  $\chi^2$ , df,  $\chi^2/df$ , IFI, comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The model also considers brand hate as the independent variable, forgiveness as the mediating factor, and recovery strategies and personality as moderators. At the same time, repatronage intention is the dependent variable.

#### *3.4.4. Mediating and Moderating Analysis*

This study explores the mediating effect of forgiveness strategies in repatronizing a brand to reduce the feelings of hate developed toward it. Therefore, it assesses the total, direct and indirect effects using the PROCESS macro model 4 (Hayes, 2012). The Hayes PROCESS macro model 3 in SPSS 20 was cast to test for the moderator effect of recovery strategies and personality traits.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement Model

#### 4.1.1. Common Method Variance

Since the study tests the hypothesized relationship between brand hate, forgiveness and repatronage intentions from the same respondents at one point in time, the relationship between these measures might likely be influenced by the method variance (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Considering this, we designed the questionnaire prudently. Therefore, the study sequences the dependent variable (brand hate) first, goes on to the moderating variables (recovery strategy and personality) and finally to the mediating (forgiveness) and independent variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We also adopt procedural remedies and ex post statistical tests, including exploratory factor analysis and Harman's single-factor test. For the exploratory factor analysis, with varimax rotation, all the items are split into their intended constructs.

Harman's single-factor test concludes that the data does not suffer from CMV, as it loads all the factors into a single element. Thus, the first factor explains 25.40 percent of the variation, well below the 50 percent mark. Consequently, our research findings are uncontaminated by biased instruments.

#### 4.1.2. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

This study refers to descriptive analysis and a correlation methodology to validate the relationship among the variables and understand the data. In this regard, Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviations for all the latent measures considered. It also summarizes the Pearson correlation coefficients and reported negative correlations between hate and forgiveness ( $r = -.365, p < 0.05$ ), as supported by the literature. Similarly, repatronage intentions and brand hate are strongly negatively correlated ( $r = -.485, p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5
Brand hate	5.162	0.868	1				
Forgiveness	4.286	1.589	-.365*	1			
Repatronage intentions	4.189	2.037	-.485*	.058	1		
Recovery strategies	3.685	1.798	.036	.355	.202**	1	
Conscientiousness	4.259	2.343	.472*	-.456**	-.025	.130*	1
Agreeableness	4.253	2.101	.394*	.472**	.019	.037	-.855**

Note: \* and \*\* = correlation is significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels (2-tailed), respectively, N = 237.

#### 4.1.3. *Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

First, the study employs the KMO measure to test for sample adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The values obtained for the KMO are 0.849 and 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ) for Bartlett's test, respectively, ensuring an adequate sample for analysis. Second, to test for the internal consistency of the construct, Cronbach's alpha is estimated for each of the constructs. The study also reports alpha values for all the constructs above 0.7, considered reliable, as Nunnally (1978) suggests (Table 4). In addition, the overall reliability score with 48 items is 0.712.

The next step is to test for the reliability and validity of the measures with 48 items using AMOS 26. For this purpose, the study adopts CFA for the construct validity of all the latent variables in the measurement model. Moreover, we use the composite reliability method to test for the reliability of the data: the values for all the constructs exceed the threshold ( $> 0.60$ ) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) (Table 4). Next, the AVE is used to determine the convergent validity of the constructs.

**Table 4: Reliability and Validity**

	Items	Loadings
<b>Brand hate</b>		
Cronbach's alpha: .717	NPE1	.765
CR: 0.851	NPE2	.832
AVE: 0.656	NPE3	.744
MSV: 0.235	NPE4	.544
	IIC1	.724
	IIC2	.796
	IIC3	.573
	IIC4	.780
	IIC5	.665



	Items	Loadings
	IDC1	.511
	IDC2	.863
	IDC3	.932
	IDC4	.869
<b>Forgiveness</b>		
Cronbach's alpha: .906	F1	.871
CR: 0.901	F2	.885
AVE: 0.647	F3	.767
MSV: 0.222	F4	.770
	F5	.716
<b>Recovery strategies</b>		
Cronbach's alpha: .857	A1	.947
CR: 0.624	A2	.965
AVE: 0.468	A3	.968
MSV: 0.126	A4	.957
	A5	.954
	C1	.993
	C2	.605
	C3	.834
	C4	.924
<b>Personality</b>		
Conscientiousness	PC1	.988
Cronbach's alpha: .967	PC2	.985
CR: 0.957	PC3	.852
AVE: 0.848	PC4	.848
MSV: 0.731		
Agreeableness	PA1	.830
Cronbach's alpha: .972	PA2	.832
CR: 0.970	PA3	.942
AVE: 0.843	PA4	.945
MSV: 0.731	PA5	.973
	PA6	.976
<b>Repatriation intentions</b>		
Cronbach's alpha: .956	RPI1	.937
CR: 0.957	RPI2	.994
AVE: 0.882	RPI3	.884
MSV: 0.235		

Note: Cronbach's alpha ( $> 0.07$ ), CR = composite reliability ( $> 0.06$ ), AVE = average variance extracted ( $> 0.05$ ). All factor loadings were significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 4 reports the corresponding values of each construct exceeding a value of 0.5 and loadings above a value of 0.7. Furthermore, to assess the discriminant validity, the AVE values should exceed the SIC

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, considering the principal criterion, the discriminant validity is significant for all constructs, as the correlations among the variables are lower than 0.5 or nonsignificant. At the same time, the mean squared variance (MSV) is lower than the AVE for all the constructs.

Items with highly correlated errors or residual covariance with other items are checked and removed concerning the modification indices, and the final model is retained with 40 items. The model reflects a good fit under the statistical criteria ( $\chi^2 = 1034.13$ ,  $df = 234$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ,  $CMIN/df = 1.46$ ,  $CFI = .969$ ,  $IFI = .970$ ,  $RMSEA = .044$ ).

Finally, the study also considers a series of regression models to determine the variance inflation factor (VIF) to assess multicollinearity. Values from 1.01 to 3.75 are obtained from multiple models and thus unproblematic. Overall, from the validity and reliability results, the study is deemed suitable for further structural equation analysis.

## ***4.2. Structural Model***

After establishing the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the study then moves toward structural equation analysis using AMOS 26. This research shows a structural equation model with the intention of repatronage as the dependent variable, brand hate as the independent variable, forgiveness as the mediator, and recovery strategies and personality types as the moderators (see Figure 1).

### ***4.2.1. Mediating Effect of Forgiveness***

This study explores the impact of brand hate on consumers' repatronage intentions through the mediating role of forgiveness while controlling for age, educational background, job title, marital status and household income. Subsequently, the study assesses the total and direct effects of the brand hate construct on repatronage intentions (dependent variable) and the indirect effect via the mediating variable (forgiveness), such that forgiveness will positively affect the negative relationship between brand hate and intentions of repatronage.

For this analysis, we use the PROCESS macro in SPSS 20 (Hayes, 2013). Model 4 is used to test all the single mediating effects, with 10,000 bootstrap reiterations and a 95 percent bias-corrected confidence interval. Finally, all the variables are centered/standardized before the analysis to

address the ‘bouncing betas’ created by the interaction, thus addressing multicollinearity in the moderation procedure (Frazier et al., 2004).

In step 1, the macro regresses the variable of brand hate (independent variable) on the variable of forgiveness (outcome variable), and the model is significant in a negative direction ( $\beta = -0.239$ ,  $p$  value = 0.000, 95 percent CI [-0.318, -0.160]). In addition, the study estimates the direct effect model with brand hate and forgiveness as predictors of repatronage intentions. The results are significant and negative in relation to brand hate ( $\beta = -0.242$ ,  $p$  value = 0.003, 95% CI [-0.372, -0.112]). For the variable on forgiveness, the results are positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.531$ ,  $p$  value = 0.000, 95% CI [0.335, 0.728]). Finally, the total effect model is estimated and observed to be significant in a negative direction ( $\beta = -0.369$ ,  $p$  value = 0.000, 95% CI [-0.497, -0.242]). Table 5 summarizes these results.

**Table 5: Model Summary**

	Estimate	SE	t value	p value	LLCI	ULCI
Model a						
Constant	26.889	0.800	33.611	0.000	25.312	28.466
Brand hate	-0.239	0.040	-5.975	0.000	-0.318	-0.160
R2	0.131					
F(df)	F (234) = 35.37***					
Model b						
Constant	15.277	2.947	5.183	0.000	9.470	21.084
Brand hate	-0.242	0.065	-3.723	0.003	-0.372	-0.112
Forgiveness	0.531	0.099	5.363	0.000	0.335	0.728
R2	0.217					
F(df)	F (234) = 32.33***					
Model c						
Constant	29.569	1.290	22.921	0.000	27.026	32.112
Brand hate	-0.369	0.064	-5.765	0.000	-0.497	-0.242
R2	0.121					
F(df)	F (234) = 32.47***					

Note: a = outcome variable = forgiveness.

b = outcome variable = repatronage intentions.

c = outcome variable = repatronage intentions (total effect model).

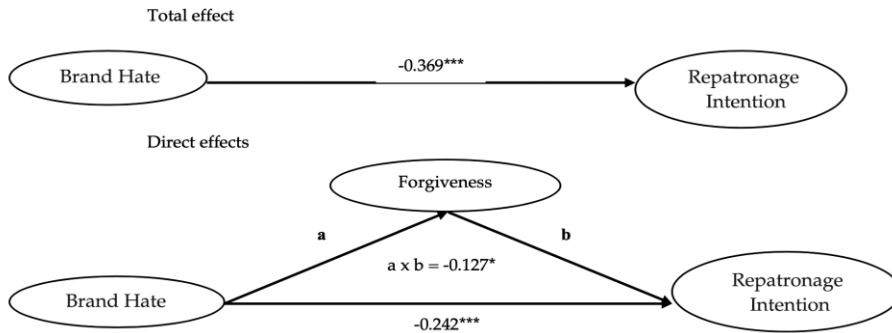
LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The estimated total effect of brand hate on repatronage intentions presents a significant total impact ( $\beta = -0.369$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In this regard, the direct effect of forgiveness and repatronage appears to be -0.242 in size at a 95 percent confidence interval (-0.372, -0.112). Then, to test the impact of the mediating factor (forgiveness), the study observes the significance of

the indirect path (Figure 2 and Table 6). Again, the indirect path’s results appear significant ( $\beta = -0.127, p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the confidence intervals are also larger than 0, confirming mediation, as suggested in the mediation effect test in the PROCESS macro approach (Hayes, 2012, 2013; Hayes & Rockwood, 2020).

**Figure 2: Mediation Analysis**



**Table 6: Total, Direct and Indirect Effects**

	Estimate	LLCI, ULCI	p value
<b>Total effect</b>			
Brand hate ⇒ repatronage intentions	-0.369	-0.497, -0.242	0.000***
<b>Direct effect</b>			
Brand hate ⇒ repatronage intentions	-0.242	-0.372, -0.112	0.000***
<b>Indirect effect</b>			
Brand hate ⇒ forgiveness ⇒ repatronage intentions	-0.127	-0.200, -0.006	0.031*

Note: LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit, CI = confidence interval.  
 \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The results reveal that significant partial mediation fits the model, as both direct and indirect effects appear significant. In conforming to the same direction of the direct (c) and indirect paths (a x b), the study also concludes complementary partial mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Zhao et al., 2010). The results also indicate that some of the effect of brand hate on repatronage intention is mediated through forgiveness, whereas brand hate still explains a portion of the repatronage intention, independent of the forgiveness factor. Thus, the results indicate that forgiveness mediates the negative relationship between brand hate and intention to repatronize.

In addition to assessing the total, direct and indirect effects, we are also interested in evaluating the strength of the mediation. Therefore, we use the 'indirect-to-total' effect ratio approach, which is also known as the variance accounted for (VAF) in estimating the strength of the mediated portion:

$$\text{VAF} = \frac{a \times b}{a \times b + c'}$$

According to the rule of thumb, if the VAF falls between 20 and 80 percent, it is characterized as partial mediation, while a VAF value above 80 percent can be considered full mediation (Hair et al., 2016). In this study, VAF equals only 41 percent. Therefore, we cannot assume full mediation. However, the direction assumed indicates the type of partial mediation, that is, complementary mediation in this case.

In line with the abovementioned analysis, this study also estimates the model fit to verify all the relevant effects. Without the mediator (forgiveness), the model reports RMSEA = .121, CFI = .718 and GFI = .962. However, after adding the mediator, the results exhibit a better fit, with RMSEA = .099, CFI = .902 and GFI = .987.

#### 4.2.2. Moderated Moderation

To test whether personality traits moderate the relationship between the types of recovery strategies and forgiveness, we use the PROCESS macro for SPSS 20 (Hayes, 2013).<sup>1</sup> For moderated moderation, the study adapts model 3 from the Hayes template (Figure 3 and Table 7). The model processes  $x$  and  $y$  as brand hate and forgiveness, respectively. While recovery strategy (M) moderates the effect of  $x$  on  $y$ , personality (W) moderates the path of  $x$  and  $y$  via M such that forgiveness can be achieved and brand hate reduced if the relevant strategy is offered to the personality type of the consumer. The conditional effect is thus  $X$  (brand hate) on  $Y$  (forgiveness) =  $b_1 + b_4M$  (recovery strategy) +  $b_5W$  (personality) +  $b_7MW$  (recovery strategy\*personality).

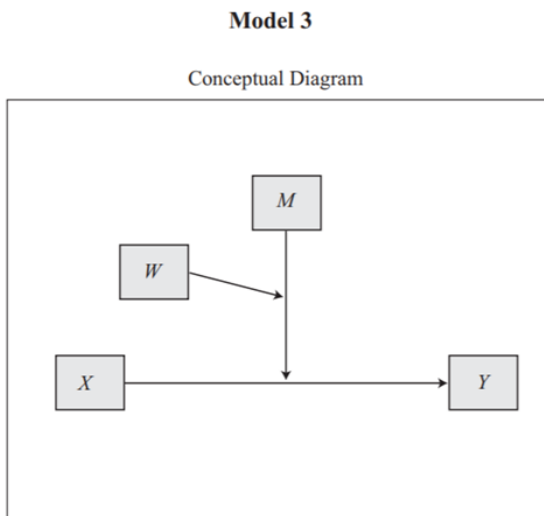
We compute both moderators as dichotomous. Two values for each moderator are defined, that is, recovery strategy (apology = 0, compensation = 1) and personality (agreeableness = 0, conscientiousness = 1). Considering the mean values of 'apology/compensation' and 'agreeableness/conscientiousness', the study creates a categorical variable

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.afhayes.com/>

with high and low levels of each category. Values above the mean are taken as high-level and below the mean as low-level.

**Figure 3: Hayes Model 3 (PROCESS Macro)**



Source: Hayes (2013)

**Table 7: Moderated Moderation**

	Estimate	SE	p value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.354	0.098	0.000***	5.163	5.548
Brand hate	-0.165	0.054	0.002***	-0.274	-0.057
Recovery strategy	0.211	0.094	0.025*	0.026	0.397
Personality	0.209	0.810	0.010**	0.050	0.369
Brand hate * recovery strategy	0.037	0.007	0.000***	0.021	0.053
Brand hate * personality	-0.108	0.048	0.024*	-0.203	-0.014
Recovery strategy * personality	-0.074	0.031	0.002**	-0.136	-0.013
Brand hate * recovery strategy * personality	0.086	0.039	0.029*	0.008	0.164
R <sup>2</sup>	.38				
F(df)	F (221) =				
	4.74*				

Note: LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit, CI = confidence interval.

\* p <.05, \*\* p <.01, \*\*\* p <.001.

We also compute a dummy variable to combine both strategies by taking their sum, such that four combinations are formed. These combinations include (i) high apology and high compensation, (ii) high apology and low compensation, (iii) low apology and high compensation,

and (iv) low in both strategies. The study drops high in both strategies and low in both, assuming that consumers who fall low in both categories receive no recovery strategies. Those who are high in both strategies are also not part of our research objective, as the study is geared toward a specific strategy with particular personality traits. Moreover, all the variables are centered before the analysis to minimize the potential bias caused by variances. For the criterion of statistical significance, all the outputs are generated on a 95 percent confidence interval via a bias-corrected bootstrapping approach, with 10,000 reiterations.

The moderated moderation analysis shows a significant interaction between brand hate, recovery strategies and personality traits leading to forgiveness ( $\beta = 0.086$ ,  $p = .029$ , 95% CI [.008,.164]). The highest-order unconditional interaction effect ( $x*w*z$ ) accounts for 1.85 percent of the overall variance in forgiveness ( $F(221) = 4.74$ ,  $p = 0.029$ ). Thus, we can say that recovery strategies weaken the negative relationship between brand hate and forgiveness. In other words, these strategies reduce the impact of hate and strengthen the level of forgiveness. The key finding supports an approach to management to recover from the negative emotions of the conscientiousness/agreeableness traits, primarily by offering viable and pragmatic recovery strategies (apology and/or compensation) and regaining consumer forgiveness. Table 8 summarizes these results.

**Table 8: Conditional Effects at Values of Moderators**

	Conscientiousness	Agreeableness
Apology	$\beta = -0.032$ , SE (0.082)	$\beta = 0.329$ , SE (0.064)
Compensation	$\beta = 0.415$ , SE (0.084)	$\beta = 0.304$ , SE (0.079)

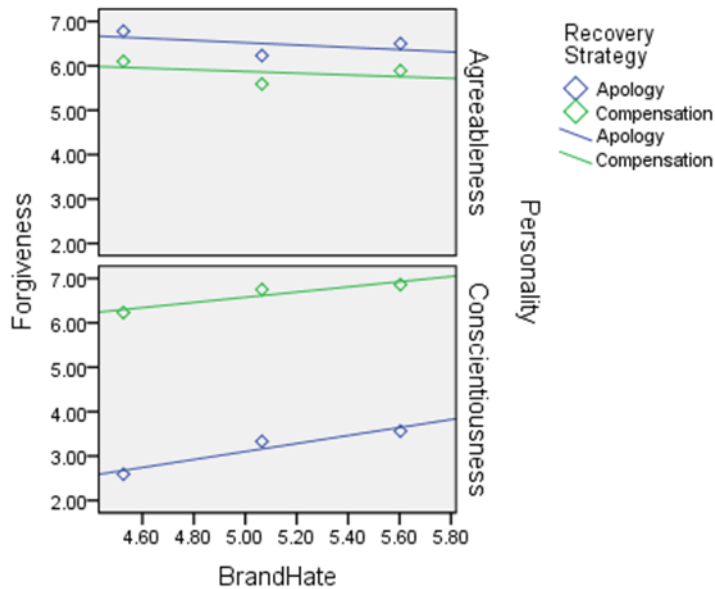
Note: 95% confidence interval, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

A post hoc simple slope test reveals that when an apology is offered to the conscientiousness factor, brand hate's effect on forgiveness is negative and nonsignificant ( $\beta = -0.032$ , CI [-0.198, 0.130]). However, with an apology offered for agreeableness, the effect reaches its highest level, which is positively significant ( $\beta = 0.329$ , CI [0.201, 0.456]). Similarly, when compensation is offered for conscientiousness, the effect of brand hate on forgiveness is positively significant and reaches its highest level ( $\beta = 0.415$ , CI [0.249, 0.581]). Likewise, with this effect with agreeableness added, the equation is positively significant ( $\beta = 0.304$ , CI [0.147, 0.461]). Therefore, our findings suggest that an apology will moderate the relationship between brand hate and forgiveness for agreeableness and compensation with

conscientiousness. In this regard, Figure 4 shows the conditional effect of the moderators.

**Figure 4: Conditional Effect of Moderators**



## 5. Discussion of Findings

### 5.1. Determining Brand Hate

To date, the literature has thoroughly examined brand hatred (Fetscherin, 2019; Hegner et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2018) and discussed the findings from a qualitative investigation based on the dimensions, antecedents and reactions of brand hate. As a step forward, we investigate how brand hate's outcome is conditionally determined by the personality and character of the individual who exhibits hate toward a brand.

This study complements the literature on brand hate in two ways. First, unlike previous studies, we have investigated how consumers with different personality traits exhibit brand hate and how they differ in their willingness to forgive the brand and their intent to repatronize. We have discussed consumers' personality, brand hate and forgiveness as a means to fill this theoretical gap. Second, to the best of our knowledge, no study has incorporated recovery strategies and personality traits to reduce brand hate's impact. Therefore, following the studies on brand hate (Fetscherin, 2019; Hegner et al., 2017; Kucuk, 2019; Sarkar et al., 2020; Sternberg, 2003;



Zarantonello et al., 2018; Zhang & Laroche, 2020), we have articulated an extended model of brand hate that distinguishes between the effect of hate, based on the type of personality, and the recovery strategy that could result in forgiveness and repatronage. Therefore, we hold that the research provides several key theoretical and managerial relevance insights.

One stream of the literature suggests that brand hate is a phenomenon that is not forgivable (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). This paper provides empirical evidence that a relationship between recovery strategies and personality traits tends to reduce the negative effect of brand hate on consumer repatronage intentions and, at the same time, gain forgiveness. The study also establishes that forgiving the brand can lead to the intent to repatronize under the right conditions. Our findings also demonstrate concrete actions that brands can take, particularly by offering due apologies or compensation, depending on the personality type of the hater, to encourage forgiveness and repatronage instead of revenge.

The results also indicate that conscientiousness has an increased capacity to influence consumer brand hate compared to agreeableness. This is because conscientious people are more prone to aggressive behaviors or expressing negative emotions under conditions where the brand fails and are less prone to forgiveness. However, agreeableness has shown less resilience toward brand hate and quickly leads to forgiveness. A possible explanation would be that agreeableness carries underlying traits that exhibit less confidence, a preference for staying silent, and feelings of sympathy and warmth. Thus, if a person is high on agreeableness, they will experience the subsurface of hate, feel less threatened and therefore prefer to let things go instead of being confrontational, unlike a person who feels threatened by the brand toward which they develop hate (Kucuk, 2019).

Casidy and Shin (2015) have stated that consumer forgiveness can be achieved through a brand's efforts to recover from brand failure. This study contributes to the literature by outlining the measures brands should take to reclaim consumer loyalty, such as apologizing or compensating affected customers. We demonstrate the actions that brand managers may take to reduce the effect of brand hate, encourage consumers to repatronize the brand and ultimately give it a second chance.

The results indicate that three groups are significant out of the four group comparisons (apology + agreeableness), (apology + conscientiousness), (compensation + agreeableness) and (compensation + conscientiousness). For agreeableness, offering just an apology is

significant, along with compensation to seek the consumer's forgiveness and repatronize the brand. However, in regard to conscientiousness, compensation is positively significant, unlike the same for offering an apology. An apology has a negative, nonsignificant coefficient with conscientiousness.

In broader terms, the results suggest that brands need to take prompt action on service failure to mitigate the rapid development of brand hate and its toxic outcomes. Angry consumers must be dealt with promptly through service recovery efforts after evaluating their personality traits. The study also finds that 'negative experiences' and 'image incongruence' are more significant dominant predictors of brand hate than ideological incompatibility. Pakistani consumers are largely unconcerned with the ethical practices of a brand or perhaps unaware of a brand's values or belief systems. Therefore, this factor has had no impact on determining brand hate, as supported by the literature (Lee et al., 2009). Interestingly, managers can also look at the level of forgiveness based on the determinant of brand hate. From our findings, brand hate is determined mainly by negative experiences with a particular brand.

## ***5.2. Theoretical and Managerial Implications***

This study extends the literature on brand management and consumer behavior. Recently, much attention has shifted toward consumers' negative emotions and behaviors toward a hated brand. However, very little research has focused on the personality of consumers who express hate as an emotion toward a brand. This research provides a comprehensive conceptualization of brand hate and the associated forgiveness strategy that needs to be adopted. Moreover, it has also empirically tested the relationship between hate and forgiveness, as moderated by appropriate recovery strategies. Therefore, in brand relationship studies, forgiveness is central to neutralizing negative emotions to more positive ones (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). This study also presents evidence of a significant relationship between brand forgiveness, recovery strategies and personality traits.

As per our study findings, we can also outline some marketing management practices. For instance, brand hate has the potential to influence consumers' choices in a dynamic market. Therefore, brand managers need to respond to such crises strategically. Brands that continuously face haters must carefully profile their consumers to combat brand hate and restore good relationships, highlighting the need for managers to understand and analyze the

personality of the angry consumer before making any recovery effort. Thus, they can adapt to any personality scale or the one used in this paper. Management must train service employees to assess the personality types of complainants. It also raises the need for managers to track the source initiating brand hate, that is, a negative experience or image incongruence, to distinguish it from other negative emotions such as brand avoidance.

The suggested strategy for brands is to act preemptively to mitigate the effects of brand hate. Unfortunately, brand managers usually have difficulty finding their way through the disorder created by brand hate. Therefore, before reaching this point, managers need to devise strategies for different types of haters' personalities by matching the relevant recovery offers they can make. The act of apologizing most frequently resorts to in-service failures seeking true forgiveness. However, our findings show that merely apologizing does not work with every consumer. Thus, combining recovery efforts with personality type to gain forgiveness is a crucial insight of this study. Therefore, service providers should devise a stepwise process to handle complainants.

In this regard, the first step requires identifying the personality type using personality assessment criteria. Then, the company must start by apologizing on the brand's behalf and offer compensation if deemed necessary according to the personality identified. The goal here is to restore the relationship with the consumer so that they do not engage in negative word-of-mouth or vengeful behaviors (Hegner et al., 2017) by viewing recovery efforts not just as a strategy but also as a relationship tool.

## **6. Study Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Although this study provides insights into the phenomena of brand hate and forgiveness, it suffers from some limitations that can be directed to future research avenues. The study's focal interest lies in consumers' social behavior and relationships. Examples of this include brand hate and forgiveness. We have adopted a cross-sectional design whereby consumers report their past hostility towards a brand and future intentions to repatronize or forgive the brand at a given time. However, a follow-up study could adopt a longitudinal study or experiments to observe the impact of the evolving nature of consumer feelings, that is, hate (Zarantonello et al., 2018).

The model in the study could also be tested with various datasets, as our unit of analysis was limited to working women. Moreover, we have investigated only one industry (women's prêt-wear). Future research could

include industry-wide variations. Future studies could use multiple-item scales for hate and forgiveness to improve the robustness of the scale. This study only considers two personalities in the model, and follow-up studies could test it with other personality traits or consumer characteristics. In so doing, future studies can perform a holistic analysis through advanced data analysis techniques to provide a comparative significance of variables of interest.

Another avenue for future research is looking for potential factors that capture the complex relationship between hate and forgiveness. While the current study uses two types of recovery strategies (apology and compensation) combined with two types of personalities (agreeableness and conscientiousness), future research is needed to explore more recovery strategies that can be effective with each type of personality trait. This could be undertaken to induce forgiveness and minimize the effect of brand hate, such as the timing and frequency of recovery efforts. The door has also been open to investigating variables that may moderate the relationship between hate and forgiveness, for instance, the hierarchy of hate or the intensity of hate (Kucuk, 2019) and individualistic/collectivist cultures (Jaroenwanit & Chueabunko, 2015).

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*Appendix***Table A1: Conceptual Definitions of Constructs**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Study</b>
Brand hate	'Consumers' detachment from a brand and its associations as a result of consumers' intense and deeply held negative emotions such as disgust, anger, contempt, devaluation and diminution...'	(Kucuk, 2019)
Brand forgiveness	'Consumers' willingness to give up retaliation, alienation, and other destructive behaviors, and to respond in constructive ways after an organizational violation of trust and the related recovery efforts.'	(Harrison-Walker, 2019)
Recovery strategies		
Apology	'A statement that acknowledges both responsibility and regret for a trust violation.'	(Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004)
Compensation	'An offer of compensation may take the form of a full or partial refund, product exchange, a discount on future purchase.'	(Hui & Au, 2001)
Personality	Openness to experience is conceptualize	Noftle and Shaver (2006)
Big Five personality	as openness to new experiences, ideas and feelings.	
	Conscientiousness trait is defined as compassionate and focused.	Mulyanegara et al. (2009)
	Extraversion symbolizes enthusiasm, sociable, excitement and emotional quotient.	Kucuk (2019)
	Agreeableness manifests cooperation, likeability, altruism, kindness and selflessness.	McCrae and Costa (1987)
	Neuroticism is defined as 'the propensity to experience unpleasant and disturbing feelings and emotions.'	Noftle and Shaver (2006)
Repatronage intentions	'Repatronage intentions are consumers' willingness to make repeat purchase.'	(Atulkar & Kesari, 2017)

Table A2: Summary of Relevant Studies on Brand Hate

Author(s) (Year)	Nature of Work: Empirical (E) or Conceptual (C)	Antecedents	Outcomes	Mediator/Moderator	Sample/Methodology
Grégoire et al. (2009)	E	Relationship quality	Revenge, avoidance	Perceived betrayal	N = 431 CFA, individual growth modelling
Johnson et al. (2011)	E	x	Anti-brand actions	Emotion of shame	
Romani et al. (2012)	E	x	Complaining, negative word-of- mouth and brand switching	x	N = 106, n = 227, n = 421, n = 146 CFA, SEM, ANOVA, MANOVA
Bryson et al. (2013)	E	Brand's country of origin, consumer dissatisfaction, negative stereotypes of a brand's consumers, and corporate social performance	x	x	N = 24 interviews Critical incident approach
Alba and Lutz (2013)	C	High switching costs, a local monopoly or some other manifestations of exit barriers	Consumer's frustration via social media, postings on hate sites on the Internet, and communicating negative affect in daily interactions with other consumers	x	x

Author(s) (Year)	Nature of Work: Empirical (E) or Conceptual (C)	Antecedents	Outcomes	Mediator/Moderator	Sample/Methodology
Karlsson (2015)	E	Brand image, group identification, self-identification	x	Negative aspects of brands, attitudes and attitude formation	N = 68 Multi-case study Experiments, focus groups N = 244 SEM
Goel and Yang (2015)	E	Negative experience, symbolic incongruity, ideological incompatibility	Brand avoidance, negative WOM, brand retaliation	X	
Romani et al. (2015)	E	Perception of moral violations by brand parent company	Anti-brand activism	Empathy, disgust, anger, contempt	N = 185, study 2 = 138 CFA
Zarantonello et al. (2016)	E	Corporate wrongdoings, violation of expectations, and taste systems	Negative WOM, consumer complaining, protest behaviors, and patronage reduction or cessation	x	N = 413 EFA, CFA, ANOVA
Kucuk (2016)	C	Dimensions of hate, intensity of hate, emotions of hate	x	x	x
Hegner et al. (2017)	E	Experience, symbolic incongruence and ideological incompatibility	Brand avoidance, negative word-of-mouth and brand retaliation	Brand forgiveness	N = 506 SEM

Author(s) (Year)	Nature of Work: Empirical (E) or Conceptual (C)	Antecedents	Outcomes	Mediator/Moderator	Sample/Methodology
Zhang and Laroche (2020)	E	Company-related reasons, product-related reasons, consumer service-related, consumer-related reasons	Fight with brand, anti-brand behaviors, brand avoidance, stay with brand, passive reactions, communication with brand	Emotional dimensions, cognitive dimensions, physical dimensions	12 interviews N = 304, study 2 = 303 EFA CFA
Ahmed and Hashim (2018)	E	X	Brand forgiveness	Brand recovery	N = 250 Experiments, multigroup analysis
Fetscherin and Sampedro (2018)	E	Negative experience, image incongruence and ideological incompatibility	Brand avoidance, revenge, retaliation, public/private complaining	x	N = 20 (interviews) n = 506 (survey) EFA, CFA, SEM
Fetscherin (2019)	E	Disgust, contempt, anger, five types of brand hate	Brand switching, revenge, retaliation, public/private complaining, willingness for financial sacrifice	x	Study 1 = 349, study 2 = 363 Structural equation models (SEM)
Kucuk (2019)	E	Hierarchy of hate, intensity of hate, consumer personality traits	x	x	Study 1 = 465, study 2 = 253 EFA, stepwise regression analysis, multilinear regression

**Table A3: Summary of Relevant Studies on Forgiveness in Marketing**

Author(s) (Year)	Research Approach: Empirical (E) or Conceptual (C)	Antecedents	Outcomes	Mediator/Moderator	Sample/Methodology
Zourrig et al. (2009)	C	Cross-cultural	x	x	x
Xie and Peng (2009)	E	Image	Repairing consumer trust		N = 220
Tsarenko and Tojib (2011)	C	Situational factors, service failure incidents	Consumer coping strategies	x	x
Jaroenwanit and Chueabunko (2015)	E	Collectivism vs individualistic culture	Consumer repurchase intention, forgiveness	Forgiveness	N = 250 T test
Tsarenko and Tojib (2015)	E	Brand transgression severity	Repurchase intention	CSR initiative, firm response/forgiveness	N = 202, n = 252 Scenario-based experiment ANOVA
Casidy and Shin (2015)	E	Harm direction (direct and indirect)	x	Compensation, hybrid recovery strategies	N = 332 Two-way ANCOVA
Giddens (2018) Riaz and Khan (2016)	E	Severity of failure, agreeableness	Switchover intention	Consumer forgiveness	N = 364 Hypothetical scenarios
Sinha and Lu (2016)	E	Relationship strength, transgression controllability	Forgiveness, NWOM	Self-construal	N = 161, n = 166, n = 176 ANOVA Three-way ANOVA

Author(s) (Year)	Research Approach: Empirical (E) or Conceptual (C)	Antecedents	Outcomes	Mediator/Moderator	Sample/Methodology
Joireman et al. (2016)	C	Service failure, motivations (avoidance, retaliation or reconciliation), behaviors (exit or revenge)	x	Anger	x
Ran et al. (2016)	E	Emotional frame of guilt, shame, anger, fear	Forgiveness	x	N = 243, n = 200, n = 295
Yagil and Luria (2016)	E	Relationship strength, goodwill, blame, gender	Forgiveness	x	N = 52 interviews, n = 286 respondents Coding of themes
Finsterwalder et al. (2017)	C	Celebrity transgressions		x	N = 11 In depth interviews
Fetscherin and Sampedro (2019)	E	Brand transgressions	Coping behaviors (flight or fight)	x	N = 472 ANOVA