



# Establishing Brand Credibility in the Times of COVID-19 in Airline Service Industry: Mediating Role of Brand Commitment Typology

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Article Information	Abstract
<b>Article history:</b> Submitted: 2022-02-17 Accepted: 2022-03-24 Published: 2022-03-25	Lately, the impact of brand on consumer choice has grabbed considerable attention. Brand credibility helps consumers evaluate the product or services before purchase. This work is focused on analyzing the role of customer brand credibility on consumers' purchase intentions with the mediating role of brand commitment in the airline sector. Data were collected through 336 respondents to evaluate the hypothesized relationships. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has been applied to consumer survey data through AMOS to check the relationships among variables. The results obtained through SEM showed that brand credibility has a significant impact on purchase intention directly and indirectly via brand commitment. Brand commitment partially mediates this relationship and has a causal effect relationship between the two variables. The study will pave the way for airline marketing managers to formulate effective marketing strategies to combat aftershocks of the coronavirus pandemic.
Volume No. 2 Issue No. 1 ISSN: 2790-7899	
<b>Keywords:</b> Brand credibility; Purchase intention; Brand commitment; Structural equation modelling	

## Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has harmed different sectors of the economy during past years (Shafi, Liu, & Ren, 2020).; the tourism and hospitality industry is also one of them (Khawaja, Sarfraz, Rashid & Rashid, 2021; Hassan & Soliman, 2021). This pandemic has not only main setback industries but also the integrated industries. There seems to be zero demand for hotels and tourism due to the quarantine period from March 2020 (in Europe) till mid of June 2020. De-globalisation (Niewiadomsky, 2020) emerged due to the closure of international borders and the shutting down of flights operations. According to the UNWTO forecast (UNWTO, 2020a), there is a seemingly massive decrease in international flights arrival from 58% and 78%. Such deterioration in the flights' operations is so historic that even in a brief recovery period during the past quarter of 2021, there seems to be little improvement in this sector. However, the current scenario poses several avenues for research, specifically in air transport, from a marketing perspective.

The usage of air transport has gradually increased over the years, influencing the global economy (Allen et al., 2020; Tahanisaz & Shokuhyar, 2020; Ganiyu, 2017; Zhang &

Graha, 2020) as it is the most popular tool of tourists (Huang & Liu, 2020). Air transport and tourism are believed to be interrelated (Fernández, Coto-Millán, & Díaz-Medina, 2018) as air transport is one of the leading sources of transport to tourist destinations (Bieger & Wittmer, 2006). Airport infrastructure and worldwide air transport networks provide vital support for tourism for efficient and safe airline services (Chen, Zhou, Zhan, & Zhou, 2020; Lohmann & Duval, 2015). Solid and credible brand influence behaviour of airline consumers (Jimenez-Barreto et al., 2020; Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013). The credibility of a service-focused brand is needed of time and warranted (Baek & King, 2011; Lusch et al., 2007; Sweeney & Swait, 2008). Instead of its importance, brand credibility's influence on consumer response gained less attention (Baek & King, 2011, Foroudi et al., 2018) in the airline service sector. The current study focuses on filling this gap by studying the influence of brand credibility on purchase intention via mediating the role of brand commitment.

Brand credibility is recognized as one of the promising tools for the development of tourism marketing (Brakus et al., 2009) as well through which customers are engaged (Chen et al., 2020) to promote the tourism industry by influencing demand (Zhang & Graham, 2020). Besides this, air transport opened new destinations and tourism forms such as long-haul excursions (Bieger, Doring & Laesser, 2002). Tourists would like to use a potential airline to reach out to their destinations on time and to achieve memorable experiences (Kumar & Kaushik, 2018), which enhances customer satisfaction, commitment, and revisit intentions (Reitsamer, & Brunner-Sperdin, 2021; Kalesaran, 2021; Cetin et al., 2019). Credible airline transport is a helpful tool for tourism and impacts a destination's economy (Spasojevic, Lohmann & Scott, 2018).

Airlines are always working hard to create a compelling brand image and differentiate from competitors (Detzen et al., 2012), keeping in view that brands encompass the consumer's experience with the service provider (Bougoure et al., 2016; Sweeney & Swait, 2008). Apart from brand equity, companies can attain the competitive edge by formulating effective strategies to grasp market share (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Berry, 2000; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). The perspective of brand credibility mainly emphasized intangible or physical goods (Erdem and Swait, 1998, 2004), but this narrative has been changed and focusing on the importance of brand credibility in the service domain (Berry, 2000; Bougoure et al., 2016) by moving towards services sector from product domain (Merz et al., 2009).

The present study contributed towards signalling theory and branding literature in three ways: Firstly, by analyzing the direct impact of brand credibility on consumers' purchase intention. Secondly, previous research only focuses on affective commitment. However, this work significantly contributed to the body of literature by incorporating commitment typology. Thirdly, it is contended that brand credibility is the keystone of brand management in the airline sector (Kao, Wang, & Farquhar, 2020; Jeng, 2016), and there has been nuanced understanding in airline context in South Asia, specifically in Pakistan (Shen & Yahya, 2021; Baloch & Jamshed, 2017).

## **Hypotheses Development**

### ***Signaling Theory***

In 1998 Erdem and Swait studied consumer-based brand equity grounded on signalling theory. This signalling theory proposed that brand credibility can serve as a signal that helps the consumers in decision-making, leading to increases in their purchase intention, as it encompasses the firm's marketing strategies (Baek & King, 2011) and provides knowledge (Erdem et al., 2004). This theory assumed an asymmetric flow of information about the service or product between the consumers and the service provider, which produces uncertainty among the consumers about the quality of the service (Molinillo, Japutra & Ekinici, 2022).

The hypothesis' essential center is to diminish and make sense of asymmetrical information between a firm and the client (Bergh et al., 2014). The hypothesis chips away at the adequacy of five discrete parts of the sign in decreasing data imbalances: signal expense, consistency, recognizability, credibility, and recurrence (Connelly et al., 2011). The hypothesis comprised of four key angles: the signaler, the sign, the collector, and the criticism. The signaler depicts the firms that deliver the signal to the receiver or the customers, generating feedback through their behaviour and perception (Kharouf et al., 2020). Rao et al. (1999) defined signal as "action that has been taken to deliver the information about the quality of the product/ service by the company to the buyer". Signals deliver information regarding seller attributes, and consumers examine them to evaluate the validity and credibility of the qualities promised by the seller. Signalling theory assists in describing the attitude of two parties approaching different information (Connelly et al., 2011), explicating the relationship among signals and qualities, and depicting the importance of reliable signals (Mavlanova et al. 2012). Bergh and Gibbons (2011) suggested that a powerful sign should be trustworthy that clients see a positive relationship between the firm and the association's real abilities (Stigler, 1961; Stiglitz, 1985). The center of flagging hypothesis manages investigating unmistakable sorts of signs and the conditions (Spence, 2002).

### **Brand Credibility and Purchase Intention:**

Brand credibility is customers' perception on a brand that whether it has the ability to consistently convey what has been guaranteed in the item's data encased in a brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998). This concept comprises three components: expertise, Trustworthiness, and attractiveness/likableness (Erdem et al. 2002, 2004, 2006).

Erdem et al., (1998) outlined that brand credibility is a multi-layered develop. In light of past exploration reliability and aptitude are aspects of higher brand credibility (Erdem & Swait, 2004). The ability addresses a brand's capacity to convey what has been guaranteed, Trustworthiness inspects the availability of a firm to introduce what they have guaranteed, Likableness aspect is related with an appearance of a brand and passionate connection of a purchaser towards a brand (Maathuis, Rodenburg, and Sikkel, 2004).

Wu et al., (2011), characterized purchase intention as "the likelihood that buyers are probably going to purchase a specific item/administration later on" expressed by an intellectual state (Grewal et al., 1998). Theory of Planned Behavior suggested that customer purchase intention is an emotional construct that is different from behavior (Honkanen et al., 2006). The purchase intention is formed by the consumer's attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior. This theory is based on the assumptions that a consumer's behavior is influenced by several psychological factors (Ajzen, 1991) which include subjective norms, perceived behavior control, beliefs, willingness to perform a behavior, and attitude beliefs (Schaller & Malhotra 2015). Ajzen (2002) defined attitude as a consumer's reaction about a particular behavior, more positive leads towards high intentions to perform a task. Schaller & Malhotra (2015) defined Perceived behavior control as an individual's assumptions about how easily a task can be performed. Individuals having means to perform and find a behavior easily are more willing to sustain that behavior. Subjective norms are defined as the supposition that emerges from the individual's background and is perceived as social stress. The more the stress to achieve a particular behavior, the individual would more possible to associate with that behavior (Ajzen, 2002).

Elliot et al (2013) proposed that relationship quality, system quality, service quality and information quality have a positive impact on intentions whereas C2C communication quality also affects buying behavior (Adjei et al., 2010). Previous researchers found that purchase intention was influenced by consumer attitudes (Leonidou et al., 2010) towards a specific brand or services (Jin & Suh, 2005; Limbu et al., 2012) as attitudes strongly predict consumer

intention (Casidy et al., 2018) which leads to affects consumption behavior (Dilmperi et al., 2017). Brand credibility upgrades purchaser utility (Erdem et al., 2002), which is decidedly connected with feelings and reasons in shopper navigation (Maathuis, Rodenburg, & Sikkell, 2004) which in turn is positively associated with purchase intentions (Seiders et al., 2007).

Brand signal symbolizes previous and current marketing activities and strategies related to that particular brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Thus, Erdem & Swait (2004) proposed that brand credibility enhances the consumer's expected and perceived quality of a brand and the attitude of consumers towards a brand choice.

Furthermore, Wang and Yang (2010) have likewise inspected that brand credibility decidedly affects the purchase intention of the customers. Brand credibility altogether influences the customer purchase intentio (Lafferty, 2002) Consumers tend to purchase these credible, dependable brands more frequently and are convinced to pay higher charges (Netemeyer et al., 2004; Sichtmann, 2007). Despite this, positive and strong brand credibility would improve brand equity and brand image, thus enhancing brand credibility which results in higher purchase intention (Jeng, 2016; Akdeniz, Calantone, Voorhees, 2013; Baek & King, 2011).

Brand credibility gives huge advantages to aircraft organizations and customers. Carrier shoppers accept that the aircraft organization can satisfy its guarantees, would have a positive methodology towards the brand, and would probably purchase the administrations from the aircraft organization. Subsequently, carrier brand credibility has positive, direct effects on the buyer's purchase intention while thinking about the effect of brand credibility. Research shows that in the carriers' area brand value prompts brand credibility which straightforwardly influences purchase intention (Jeng, 2016). Appropriately, in view of flagging hypothesis, it is reasoned that the more sound the brand is, the higher the purchase intention of the shopper is probably going to be. It would expect that brand credibility would emphatically connect with the purchase intention of shoppers. Subsequently it has been recommended that

*H<sub>1</sub>: Customer brand credibility significantly and positively impact the purchase intentions*

### **Brand credibility and customer brand commitment**

Brand commitment is an emotional attachment to an object or service provided by the organization (Keiningham et al., 2015; Gruen, Summers, & Acito, 2000, p. 37), affected by the level of relations among the customers and the service provider. Pi and Huang (2011) characterized commitment as the level of client's confidence in the credibility and altruism in the nature of administrations given by an association (Su et al., 2016). Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed emotional commitment, continuation commitment, and standardizing commitment typology to advertising connections (Bansal et al., 2004; Fullerton, 2005, 2011). Full of feeling commitment is the enthusiastic or mental connection (Yuniari et al., 2020), it portrays a shopper's desire to proceed with a relationship shows a good passionate association with a specialist organization (Jauhari, Singh, & Kumar, 2017; Gruen et al., 2000), and an integral part of the consumer-brand relationship (Izogo, 2017). Relationship marketing theory proposed that affectively committed customers felt linked to the airline company (Bolton, Katok, Ockenfels, 2004).

Normative commitment connects the consumer to the brand despite perceived commitment. In an organizational context, it "depicts a sense of bonding from the employee side to sustain a relationship" (Meyer & Smith 2000) whereas, in the customer perspective, consumers ought to stay with the brand. Normative commitment is highly correlated and has the same but weaker effect as that of affective commitment (Bloemer & Schroder, 2007; Meyer et al., 2002; Gruen et al., 2000). Long term commitment is termed as continuous commitment that refers to the inspiration and plan for continuing a relationship is driven more by an impression of what might be forgotten (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Continuance commitment relies

on the cost and benefit rational calculations on staying or leaving (Lariviere *et al.*, 2014; Jones *et al.*, 2010). Consumer perceives the higher brand credibility with the services offered to them are more valuable (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Aaker (1991) proposed that high brand equity leads to more committed customers that will enhance customer interaction with the brand. When customers find that the company fulfills its promise and provide the services as a claim (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), then it tends to have a higher commitment (Keiningham *et al.*, 2017; Hunt *et al.*, 2006). Wang (2017) illustrated that the credibility of an airline company has a direct effect on consumers' commitment. Relationship marketing theory proposed that commitment of customer towards brand is an exchange of desire to continue the relationship by company and consumer (Engizek & Yasin, 2017) which has been created through the favorable reputation of a brand, (Walsh, 2012), they are more likely to commit toward the brand (Fedorikhin, Johnson, & Kamins, 2006), feel connected and have a positive attitude towards the brand (Beatson, Cotte, & Rudd, 2006). Sallam (2015).

*H<sub>2</sub>: Brand credibility positively affects the brand commitment*

### **Brand Commitment and Consumer Purchase Intention**

The strong relationship between brand credibility and customer purchase intention is reported in hotels and airlines by Fullerton (2005) and retail services. Morgad and Hunt (1994) examined that strong brand commitment enhances purchase intention, and committed customers are more associated with the company (Bolton *et al.*, 2004) and have the desire to sustain their relationship (Verhoef *et al.*, 2002, 2003),

The theory of planned behaviour (TBA) illustrated that customers are directed by own feelings and emotions to purchase a particular brand (Kemp & Kopp, 2011) and positive responses towards a brand influence the purchase intention. In their study Jin & Suh (2005) and Limbu *et al.* (2012) proposed that consumers' attitude towards a product affects the purchase intention and significantly influence the ethical behavioral intention (Leonard *et al.* 2004; Leonidou *et al.*, 2010). TBA concludes that purchase intention will produce only when consumers have positive feelings towards a brand (Cheah & Phau, 2011). Thus, it can be postulated that

*H<sub>3</sub>: Brand commitment positively and significantly impact the purchase intention*

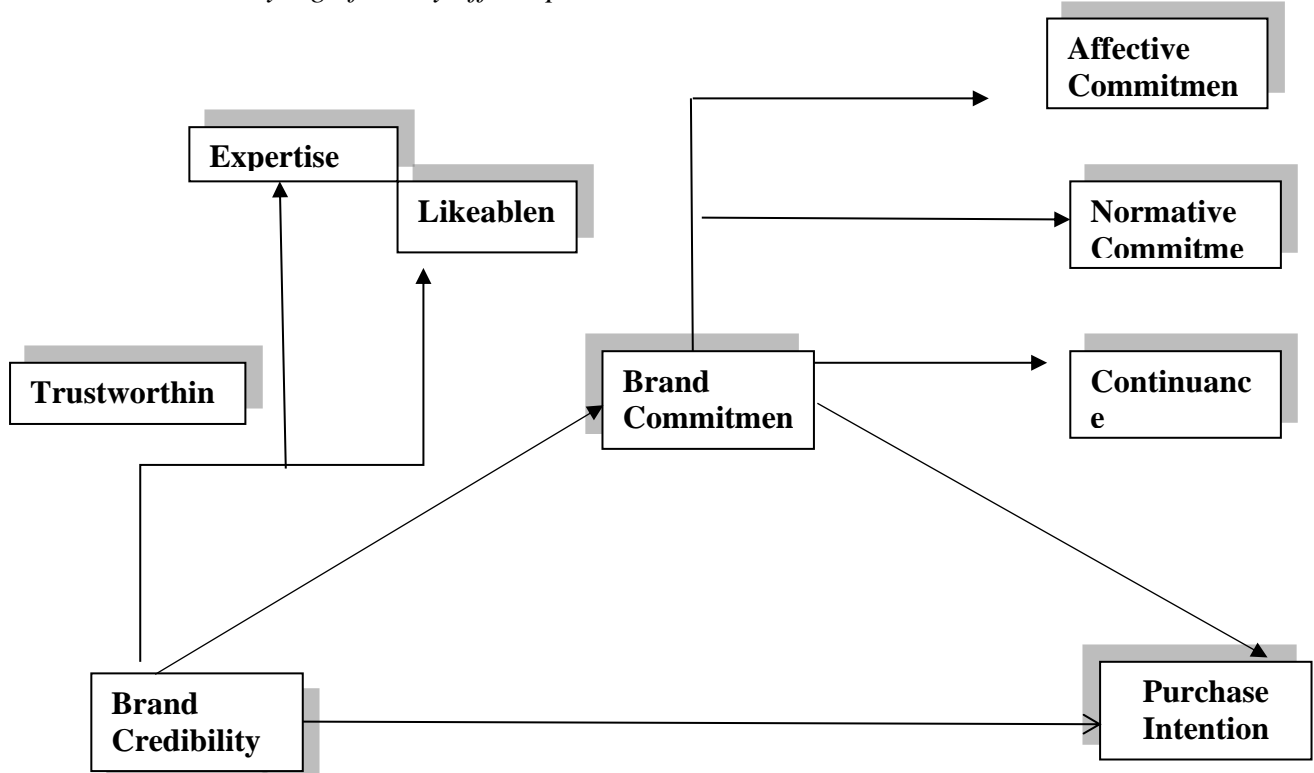
### **Brand Commitment as the mediating variable**

This study examines the brand commitment role as a mediating variable between credibility of brand and intention to purchase for a few reasons. Firstly, brand commitment depends on the consumer's evaluation (Buil *et al.*, 2009). Secondly, consumers' brand commitment is influenced by the brand's reputation which enhances the positive attitude towards the brands (Kemp *et al.*, 2011). Brand commitment mediates the relationship between brand assessment and consumers' intention (Gruen *et al.*, 2000). Thirdly, brand credibility significantly and positively affects brand commitment (Mathew, Thomas, & Injodey, 2012). as brand credibility enhances the consumer's commitment (Casalo *et al.*, 2007), eventually increases the positive word of mouth and repeats purchases (Malik *et al.*, 2014) which leads to purchase intention (Kim *et al.*, 2008), whereas purchase intention is the predecessor to consumer's brand commitment (Kazemi *et al.*, 2013) as committed consumers are more loyal which positively affects the buying behaviour (Harrison-Walker, 2001)

Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggested that brand commitment provide key intervention plays a key mediating that is central to relational exchange and has been identified as the most influential factor in relationship quality. According to Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT), commitment provides a foundation to develop long-term marketing relationships (Anderson *et al.*, 2018) that leads towards customer intention (Veloutsou *et al.*, 2002 p. 437). Empirical studies have shown that brand commitment is displayed as a practical and critical mediating variable (Tang, 2018). In light of the above contentions, it is suggested that brand commitment

effectively intercedes the connection between aircraft brand credibility and the purchase intention of carrier customers.

*H4: Brand credibility significantly affects purchase intentions via brand commitment.*



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## Research Method

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among national and international airlines operating in Pakistan. Air transport is highly developed and essential industry (Zhang & Graham, 2020) and is classified as the intangible service industry (Archana & Subha, 2012). For economic development transport sector is necessary to deliver excellent services (Lim & Tkaczynski, 2017; Bellizzi, Eboli, Forciniti & Mazzulla, 2018) to the passengers to attain the competitive advantage (Chen & Chang, 2008; Gilbert & Wong, 2003; Suki, 2014) especially following the SOPs in COVID-19 era. Following the importance of air transport in economic development as contended by literature, we selected the air transport sector for data collection. Airlines companies are competing with each other due to which consumers need to evaluate airline brand credibility.

### Methodology

The study is intended to study the direct impact of brand credibility on purchase intentions and indirectly through the intervening role of brand commitment through developing and testing the hypothesis, for this deductive and positivist approach is adopted. In addition, explanatory research is employed to describe the situation or variables.

For data collection, purposive sampling is implied as limited people use airlines in covid and can share the in-depth experience. The questionnaire was distributed in airport areas and hotels where international passengers were quarantined after flights to Lahore. The targeted airlines were Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Air Blue, Shaheen Airlines, Qatar Airways, Emirates Airlines, and Turkish Airlines. Three hundred thirty-six valid questionnaires were received out of 380 questionnaires. Standard psychometric procedures were used to develop the scale of this study (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Multi item scales were utilized to gauge

the model builds. A five-point Likert scale was embraced for all things. The poll was isolated into two sections. The initial segment contains segment data and the subsequent part comprises of 40 inquiries in regards to brand credibility, brand commitment, and purchase intentions.

Brand credibility was measured by adopting the six items scale Baek and King (2011) and Jeng (2016) developed. The term "favourite brand" has been applied to all itmes (Kim et al. 2008) as it was expected to ensure response validity. Respondents were requested to choose their favourite airline brand from the list provided and headed to the survey's questions keeping in mind their selected brand. Cronbach's alpha's value is .924

Allen and Meyer (1990) scale is used to measure brand commitment using twenty four items. this multifaceted variable encompasses three dimensions: affective, normative, and continuance. 0.976 is the value of Cronbach alpha.

Jin-Woo Park, Rodger Robertson, Cheng-Lung (2004) developed scale is used to measure the purchase intention. 2 items measured purchase intention. Items ranging from " 1 to 6" in the questionnaire measured brand credibility, while "7 to 30" represented brand commitment and "31 to 32" depict purchase intention. Cronbach's alpha is 0.891.

### Data Analysis

The Analysis of data of this study has done by embracing two measurable devices, SPSS and AMOS. Table one shows the data connected with enlightening insights of socioeconomics factors, including gender, age, education, occupation, income, and airlines.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (N=336)**

<b>Demographics Measures</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Male</b>	180	53.6
<b>Female</b>	156	46.4
<b>Age Limit</b>		
<b>17-25</b>	54	16.1
<b>26-30</b>	107	30.1
<b>31-40</b>	101	30.1
<b>41-50</b>	64	1.0
<b>51 &amp; above</b>	10	3.0
<b>Education</b>		
<b>Intermediate</b>	48	14.3
<b>Bachelors</b>	145	43.2
<b>Masters /M. PHIL</b>	108	32.1
<b>Others</b>	35	10.4
<b>Occupation</b>		
<b>Student</b>	54	16.1
<b>Housewife</b>	51	15.2
<b>Employee</b>	110	32.7
<b>Private business</b>	100	29.8
<b>Other</b>	21	6.3
<b>Income</b>		

<b>Less than 40,000</b>	38	11.3
<b>40,000-80,000</b>	89	26.5
<b>81,000-120,000</b>	119	35.4
<b>121,000-200,000</b>	61	18.2
<b>Above 200,000</b>	29	8.6

#### **Airlines**

<b>PIA</b>	65	19.3
<b>Shaheen Airlines</b>	28	8.3
<b>Air Blue</b>	43	12.8
<b>Qatar Airways</b>	49	14.6
<b>Emirates Airline</b>	101	30.1
<b>Turkish Airline</b>	17	5.1
<b>Others</b>	33	9.8
<b>Total</b>	336	100

Cronbach's alpha has been measured to compute the reliability of loaded items by using SPSS. The value ranges from 0.891 to 0.976, higher than the minimum level of 0.07; it represents the adequacy of constructs and can proceed with further analysis.

Table three shows the weight of the factor for each item ranging from 0.737 to 0.930 and established an acceptable level (Hair et al. 2010). Items less than 0.50-factor loadings are deleted from the analysis to provide a solid convergent validity, while remaining items are mentioned in the table.

**Table 2: Reliability statistics summary**

	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Items</b>
<b>1</b>	Brand Credibility	.924	6
<b>2</b>	Brand Commitment	.976	24
<b>3</b>	Purchase Intention	.891	2

**Table 3: Summary Of Standardized Factor Loadings**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Measurement of Variables</b>	<b>Standardized Factor Loadings</b>
<b>Brand Credibility</b>	BC1	.872
	BC3	.761
	BC4	.768
	BC5	.863
	BC6	.863
	CBC1	.819
<b>Brand Commitment</b>	CBC2	.792
	CBC3	.807
	CBC4	.778
	CBC5	.789
	CBC6	.786
	CBC7	.801
	CBC8	.808
	CBC9	.801
	CBC10	.786
	CBC11	.825
	CBC12	.765
	CBC13	.875
	CBC14	.835

<b>Purchase Intention</b>	CBC15	.796
	CBC16	.748
	CBC19	.805
	CBC20	.737
	CBC21	.808
	CBC22	.804
	CBC23	.793
	CBC24	.764
	PI1	.930
	PI2	.866

**Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Gender</b>	1.46	049	1								
<b>Age</b>	2.1	1.17	.133*	1							
<b>Eduction</b>	2.40	0.85	.267**	.490**	1						
<b>Occupation</b>	2.29	1.29	.125**	.662**	.466**	1					
<b>Income</b>	2.87	1.14	-1.09	.107	0.88	.084	1				
<b>Airline</b>	3.85	1.88	.251**	-.061	-.055	.005	.120*	1			
<b>Brand Credibility</b>	3.62	0.91	0.70	.051	-.015	.011	-.025	-.065	1		
<b>Brand Commitment</b>	3.70	0.97	-.009	.015	-.012	.028	.000	.063	.300**	1	
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	3.35	0.92	.056	.007	-.002	.100	.052	-.009	.359**	.276**	1

Table four shows the average, standard deviation, and relationship among the factors utilizing SPSS. The table shows a difference in the mean value of the data set ranging from 1.46 to 3.85. A high standard deviation has been observed as the values are dispersed below the data set's mean ranging from 0.49 to 1.18. A significant and positive relationship has been found among the variables depicts that the variables of the data are highly correlated.

**Table 5: Skewness and Kurtosis**

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Gender</b>	.123	-1.997
<b>Age</b>	.738	-.571
<b>Level of Eduction</b>	.165	-.572
<b>Occupation</b>	.434	-1.162
<b>Income</b>	.242	-.465
<b>Airline</b>	-.129	-1.002
<b>Brand Credibility</b>	-1.217	.144
<b>Brand Commitment</b>	-1.405	.536
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	-1.676	1.597

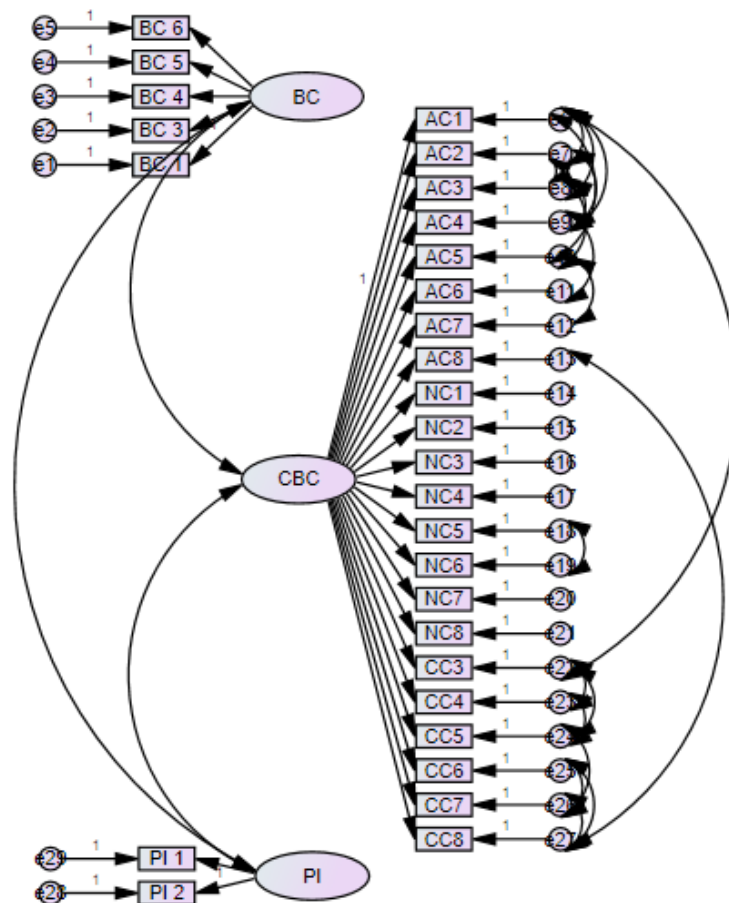
Table 5 shows the skewness and kurtosis. The value of skewness ranges from -1.676 to .738. The skewness within 0.5 shows that the data is symmetrical, while values greater than 0.5 show moderately skewed data. The values less than -1 depict highly skewed data (Reineke, Baggett, & Elfessi, 2003). The value of kurtosis ranges from -1.997 to .144. The negative values show the platykurtic distribution, while the positive values depict the leptokurtic distribution or positive kurtosis (Hoskins, 2018).

SEM was performed by utilizing Amos (22.0), and a two-stage approach is embraced to break down the information (Hair et al., 2014, 2010); in the principal stage inspecting the estimation model has done by taking on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and in the subsequent stage, assessment of the proposed model by dissecting the relationship of the speculation by utilizing SEM. Results address that Composite Reliability (CR) lies between 0.893 to 0.974, more noteworthy than 0.07 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). While the AVE ought to be more noteworthy than 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and the outcomes show that the AVE goes from 0.627 to 0.808, higher than the critical worth. Merged legitimacy of the builds is upheld as AVE is more noteworthy than the 0.50.

In the proposed model, Variables (BC, BCB, PI) are positively correlated with each other and the correlation among BC and BCB is 0.283 whereas BC and PI are 0.266. In general there is a positive relationship among the factors. All relationships are huge at 0.01 level (two-followed). Validity results and correlations are figured in table 4.

**Table 6: Summary of Validity figures and Correlations**

	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>MSV</b>	<b>ASV</b>	<b>CBC</b>	<b>BC</b>	<b>PI</b>
<b>CBC</b>	0.974	0.627	0.080	0.075	0.792		
<b>BC</b>	0.915	0.683	0.109	0.094	0.283	0.827	
<b>PI</b>	0.893	0.808	0.109	0.090	0.266	0.330	0.899

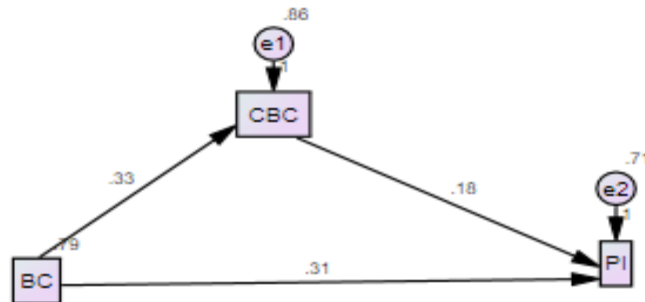


**Figure 2 Path Diagram**

Joreskog and Sorborn developed the Goodness of Fit (GFI) model as an alternative option for the Chi-square test. This study's structure equation model (SEM) yielded a solid match that inspected the connection between brand credibility and purchase intention while intervening through brand commitment addressed by the fit insights displayed in table five. The value of chi-square, p-value represents the probability level indicates the normality of the measurement model. The value of CMIN/DF is  $2.122 < 3$  (Kline, 2010), RMSEA is  $0.59 \leq 0.08$ . The results lets us know how well the model, with obscure however ideally picked boundary appraisals would fit the populace covariance framework (Byrne, 1998). CFI  $0.954 \geq 0.90$  (Bentler.,1990) and depicts that all latent variables are uncorrelated (Fornell&Larcker, 1981). While the value of TLI is  $0.947 > 0.9$  (Bentler&Bonett.,1980), which compares the model to baseline by adjusting the degree of freedom (Fornell&Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, value of GFI is  $0.855 > 0.8$  and AGFI is  $0.821 > 0.8$ . (Baumgartner &Hombur, 1996). AGFI changes the GFI in light of levels of opportunity, with more immersed models decreasing fit (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The qualities are under the satisfactory level addressing an OK model fit.

Byrne (2010) portrays the structural model as a linkage among the abstract variables and depicts the path analysis within these variables. The proposed model of this study check the intervening role of brand commitment and association between brand credibility and purchase intentions. The disturbance terms of the variables were allowed to covary. Covariance strategy was done among the variables of concern. Furthermore, AMOS modification indices highlighted an excellent model fit. The relationship of variables provided in hypotheses (H1 to H4), and their validity and significance is tested by standardized regression loadings and p-values shown in the table shown in figure 1.

The findings depicted that the model fit is acceptable. In Table 5, values of  $\beta$  standardized regression coefficients and p-values explain the impact of variables on one another and show the results and acceptance of empirically tested hypothesis developed.



**Figure 3 Standardized Regression Model performed in AMOS**

**Table 7: Goodness-of-Fit**

	Chi-square	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
<b>Value</b>	751.256	2.122	.855	.821	.954	.947	.05
<b>Suggested values</b>		< 3	> 0.8	> 0.8	> 0.9	> 0.9	< 0.08

**Table 8: Estimates and standardized loadings of regression**

	$\beta$	P-value	Decision
<b>Purchase intention &lt; ---- Brand credibility</b>	.304	***	Accepted
<b>Brand commitment &lt; ---- Brand credibility</b>	.300	***	Accepted
<b>Purchase intention &lt; ---- Brand commitment</b>	.185	***	Accepted

Notes: \*P < 0.05, \*\*P < 0.01 and \*\*\*P < 0.001

H1 anticipated that credibility straightforwardly influences buy objective of purchasers. The model proposed to this speculation represented a positive and critical impact of brand believability on buy expectation ( $\beta = 0.304$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) hold H1, displayed in table 5. H<sub>2</sub> suggested that brand credibility significantly affects brand responsibility. The primary model connected with this speculation demonstrated that the impact of validity on responsibility is profoundly and positively critical ( $\beta = 0.300$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), H<sub>2</sub> is accepted. Though H<sub>3</sub> suggested that brand responsibility significantly affects buy aim, the model applicable to this speculation affirmed a profoundly critical and positive effect of brand responsibility on buy expectation ( $\beta .185$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which is steady with H<sub>3</sub>. H<sub>4</sub> anticipated that brand commitment effectively intervenes in connecting brand credibility and purchase intentions. The acknowledgement of the above speculation upheld the presence of intervention (Barren and Kenny 1986). The bootstrapping system has been led to testing the intercession and the meaning of models (Preacher and Hayes., 2008). The two-followed importance examines factors' immediate and roundabout consequences for one another.

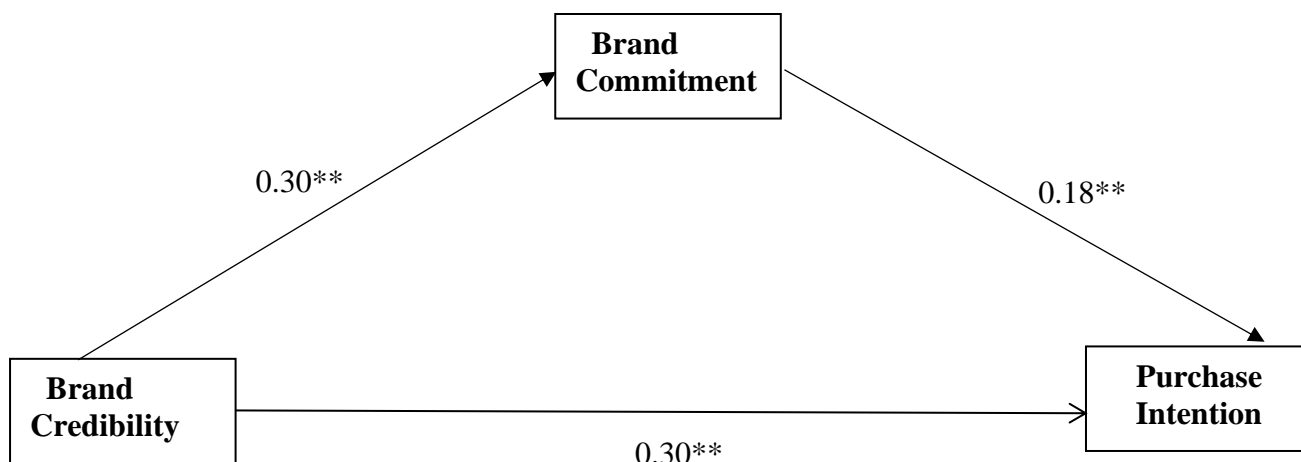
Table six explains the prompt effect of brand believability on purchase objective is 0.001, which is exceptionally critical. Interestingly, the immediate impact of brand credibility on brand commitment and brand commitment on purchase intention shows that an immediate relationship exists among the build factors. Table 6 shows that brand credibility's backhanded impact on purchase intention is 0.002, which is exceptionally huge subsequent to presenting brand commitment as a mediator. Results upheld the incomplete intercession (Barren and Kenny,1986). Results of bootstrapping showed that the connection between brand credibility and purchase intention are somewhat interceded by brand commitment.

**Table 9: Estimation of standardized direct and indirect effect – a two-tailed significance**

	Standardized direct effects	Standardized indirect effects
<b>BCB &lt; ---BC</b>	-----	-----

BCB --->PI	.002	-----
BC --->PI	.001	.002***

Notes \*P < 0.05, \*\*P < 0.01 and \*\*\*P < 0.001



**Figure 4 Standardized Regression in hypothesized model**

## Discussion

The airline sector is one of the few service industries where the services provided are highly intangible (Shostack, 1977). As a result, the appealing features that customers have with airline services establish their brand commitment through various experiences over an airline journey. With the understanding of airline customers' importance in the airline industry's brand performance, the current review explores brand credibility's flagging job by expanding purchase intention. The discoveries of this study agree with the experimental aftereffects of different analysts (Baek and King, 2011; Jeng, 2016; Mathew et al., 2014; Shah et al., 2020). Concentration on discoveries shows that brand credibility fundamentally influences the purchase intention of aircraft shoppers. The concentrate additionally examines that brand credibility emphatically and fundamentally influences shoppers' brand commitment. Besides, COVID -19 has posed an enormous impact on the hospitability, tourism and air industry which is likely to impel a historical dilemma, even after the pandemic recedes (Antonio & Rita, 2021). Our study intends to serve the purpose by highlighting the vital role of brand commitment as a mediator. The airline line industry is experiencing severe economic restrictions. Many countries had clothier borders entirely, and dees that led to bankruptcy (Nižetić, 2. This020) would be overcome by adopting effective administrative strategies by changing business plans to rate irregular flight schedules (Maneenop & Kotcharin, 2020). To adapt to serious difficulties, our review discoveries are of a lot of significance in an emergency like COVID-19 in the future by inspecting the interceding impact of brand commitment on brand credibility and purchase intention. The current review's discoveries upheld the halfway intercession due to the immediate effect of brand credibility on purchase intention in the wake of presenting customer brand commitment as a mediator. Our review acts hypothetical like well administrative ramifications in the field of brand execution in the aircraft area explicitly examined as follows:

## Research and Theory Implications

The research findings provide theoretical insight into how brand credibility influences purchase intention. Our study attempts to draw the attention of researchers in the area of tourism and aviation transport that brand credibility is a valuable construct that contributes

towards the configuration of consumer's purchase intention (Kim, Morris, & Swait, 2008; Tiamiyu et al. 2020).

Secondly, this study empirically tested brand commitment as an underlying mechanism on the connection between brand validity (credibility) and buy intention of aircraft purchasers. A review of the literature demonstrated that although extant literature is available on the consequences of brand credibility, little consideration has been paid to the fundamental mechanism(s) behind the connection between brand validity and its results in the South Asian setting in the carrier business explicitly. By recognizing the commitment of the brand as a fundamental mediator, the current review places how credibility is decidedly connected with intentions in the air transport industry in Pakistan.

Brand's power depends on the consumer's consistency and perceptions. They get emotionally attached to a specific brand, repeatedly buy it and feel committed; the brand would have great meaning for the customer (Keller, 2001). Our study adds to the succeeding research in the area of hospitality and service industries, suggesting that brand commitment affects consumers' buying behaviour and enhances their purchase intention when they perceive the brand to be credible enough (Limbu et al., 2012). As brand credibility strongly affects the consumer's purchase intention by enhancing perceived quality and decreasing perceived risk (Erdem & Swait, 2007; Pratihari & Uzma, 2018), our study findings can be generalized to other service sectors organizations whereby brand credibility is the subject matter. Our study sets a precedent in its correlation of the brand credibility of airline companies to purchase intention. Moreover, partial mediation of our study findings poses a theoretical implication to empirically test other extraneous factors besides brand commitment in the association between purchase intention and brand credibility.

### **Practical implications**

This study draws attention of marketing managers of the airline sector and service industries towards an imperative situation of credibility of brand and its impact on intentions to purchase directly or indirectly through brand commitment. The airline industry's marketing managers and policymakers Drawing on signalling theory, the current study's findings clearly show the positive consequences of brand credibility. Various numbers of factors have been considered by the passengers while choosing an airline which includes the monthly income, purpose of travel, age, and flying frequency (Gilbert & Wong, 2003); while focusing on these factors, brand credibility of the airline sector can be enhanced among its consumers. Airline companies measure the consumer's perceptions without enough information of consumers' expectations about the services provided and misinterpreting consumers' expectations to create decisions issues for airlines (Chen & Chang, 2008). Customers' choices influenced managers to design distinct strategies and provide different services apart from competitors (Ukpere et al. 2012; Aksoy et al. 2003). However, the current study's findings suggest that airline customers' purchase intention can be achieved by enhancing their brand credibility by delivering information to the consumers about the quality of service attributes (Baek et al., 2010; Jeng, 2016).

Besides, the intervening job of brand responsibility (i.e., full of feeling, regulating and responsibility) exhibited in our review presents suggestions for aircraft advertising supervisors and policymakers and the carrier business to broaden the effect of brand credibility of carrier customers towards the goal to buy. For instance, research revealed that brand commitment is influenced by solid brand credibility (Shah et al., 2020; Wang, 2014). Committed consumers develop positive relationships with a brand, resulting in multiple purchases (Nobar et al., 2020) that makes an airline withhold competition and crisis (Jara & Cliquet, 2012; Lee et al., 2018) especially in the current COVID-19 situation. Due to a lack of physical attributes, it is tough for consumers to evaluate the services before consumption (Berry, 2000), and consumers are

more likely headed towards credible brands because of the brand's goodwill and position in the market. This matter is related explicitly to airline companies, as consumers' uncertainty is very high in purchasing airline services (Boksberger et al., 2007). Brand of airline encounters have worked on travelers' perspectives on aircraft brand value and buy ways of behaving (Lu & Siao, 2019; Seo & Park, 2018; Shah et al., 2020).

### **Limitations**

The current review portrays critical experiences into the effect of brand believability on buy goal in the aircraft area, yet it isn't liberated from specific constraints. This study is cross-sectional due to time and cost constraints. A longitudinal design would strengthen direction of research in future. The study scope would be applied by including cross-cultural and cross-strait flights response of foreigners and national customers so that research would be generalized. The sample number would be increased, which leads to better results. Airline company sells several products and services to their customers, but this research only investigated the brand credibility influence on consumers' brand purchase intentions. It might be valuable for the future study to understand and analyze the brand credibility's impact on consumers' cross buying intention, including flight schedules, flight safety, price, punctuality, seating comfort, and consistent flyer program.

This research is limited to only two variables that influence consumers' purchase intention. Future research can investigate the additional factors like governments' policies, risk management, and international regulations that directly affect the consumer's outcome that affects the buying intention. On customers' side the study did not cover the airlines' performance. If an airline's performance had been evaluated in the future, it would be helpful to analyze and compare themselves with their competitors, allocate resources, and strengthen their operational strategy to enhance customer satisfaction. The importance of brand credibility is questioned due to the advancement of e-business in an online context. Consumers think a high level of uncertainty in online brand purchasing than offline. According to Bougoure et al. (2016), online availability of information reduces the importance of brand credibility in online market trends compared to other markets. Additional research might update the generalizability of the present research that accounts for e-business.

### **Conclusions**

One of the critical factors that effect the consumer's purchase intention is the service quality. Air travel is classified as the intangible service industry, and their survival and growth need to deliver excellent services to their passengers and transport them to their destination. The present research study examines the relationship of credibility and purchase intention in the presence of other factors with its outcomes. The results show that the significant and positive association between intention to purchase and brand credibility. Commitment to brand intervenes the relationship. Airlines companies aim to serve their customers with superior services, and brand credibility is the keystone of brand management of the airline sector. Airlines companies face very tough competition and work very hard to attain a competitive edge. Companies need committed consumers for the profitable running of their business in the wake of outbreak of COVID 19 and its staggering effect across the worldwide economy. Brand believability assumes an indispensable part in acquiring an upper hand and shopper responsibility. Credible and reliable airline brand has a strong influence on consumers' buying behaviour as it will make airline consumers more conscious of their choices about airline brands.

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