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Instructor Branding and Learner Relationship Outcomes: Satisfaction, Trust, and Loyalty

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships among instructor branding, learner satisfaction, trust, and learner loyalty in beauty professional education. Data were collected from 308 learners with actual experience in beauty-related professional courses or training programs and analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results indicate that instructor branding is positively associated with learner satisfaction, while learner satisfaction is positively related to both trust and learner loyalty. Trust is also positively associated with learner loyalty. In contrast, the direct relationships of instructor branding with trust and learner loyalty are not statistically significant. These findings suggest that favorable instructor branding contributes primarily to learners' evaluations of their learning experiences, whereas trust and loyalty are more closely associated with learners' experiential and relational evaluations of course participation. The study extends personal branding research to beauty professional education by distinguishing brand perceptions from subsequent learner relationship outcomes. Practically, the findings suggest that beauty instructors should align professional brand positioning with course quality, instructional interactions, and reliable professional guidance to strengthen learner satisfaction, trust, and long-term loyalty.

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Keywords: Instructor branding, Learner satisfaction, Trust, Learner loyalty, Beauty professional education.

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1. Introduction

As consumer demand for personal appearance, individual style, and professional beauty services continues to grow, the beauty industry has developed into a diverse professional sector encompassing skincare and beauty care, hairdressing, nail care, eyelash services, makeup, body care, spa services, aromatherapy, and overall styling (Aksoy, 2018; Yeh et al., 2021). Given the industry's emphasis on technical expertise, hands-on practice, and rapidly changing trends, beauty professionals must continually update their knowledge and practical skills (Bredlöv, 2017; Hsu and Chen, 2021). Professional courses, technical workshops, and advanced training have therefore become important avenues for their continuing professional development (Yeh et al., 2021).

Unlike conventional knowledge-based education, beauty professional education emphasizes the demonstration and application of professional techniques and the transfer of practical experience (Bredlöv, 2017; Yeh et al., 2021). Learners participate in such courses not only to acquire professional knowledge but also to apply newly acquired skills to their work and career development. Beauty instructors therefore serve not merely as providers of knowledge and technical skills; their professional competence, teaching characteristics, industry experience, and personal image may also influence how learners evaluate and select courses. Previous research suggests that instructors can develop distinctive professional images with brand-like characteristics that shape students' perceptions and evaluations of both instructors and their educational offerings (Jillapalli and Wilcox, 2010; Jillapalli and Jillapalli, 2014). Such differentiation becomes particularly important when multiple instructors offer similar professional courses.

Personal branding reflects the differentiated professional perceptions and value that an individual establishes among a particular audience (Gorbatov et al., 2018, 2021). In beauty professional education, instructors are highly individualized professional service providers. Their distinctive professional characteristics, brand recognizability, positive professional image, and overall value may therefore collectively shape learners' perceptions of instructor branding. A clearly positioned and distinctive instructor brand may help learners recognize an instructor's professional value and shape their subsequent evaluations of both the instructor and the course (Casidy, 2013; Jillapalli and Jillapalli, 2014).

However, whether instructor branding is further associated with learner satisfaction, trust, and loyalty remains insufficiently understood. Learners may form initial perceptions of an instructor before selecting a course and subsequently reassess the instructor based on whether the actual learning experience meets their expectations. Satisfaction reflects learners' overall evaluation of this experience, whereas trust concerns their confidence in the instructor's professional competence, reliability, and commitments (Schlesinger et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2023). Satisfactory experiences and trust are important for developing and sustaining long-term relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003; Schlesinger et al., 2017). These relationships are particularly relevant in beauty professional

education because learners rely heavily on instructors' professional knowledge, technical demonstrations, and practical experience.

Learner loyalty represents another important outcome of the learner–instructor relationship. In educational settings, loyalty encompasses intentions to choose the same provider again, recommend the provider to others, and maintain that preference despite available alternatives (Schlesinger et al., 2017; Todea et al., 2022). This is especially relevant in beauty professional education, where learners may repeatedly participate in advanced technical training, certification programs, and specialized courses. Although previous studies have examined personal branding, instructor or professor branding, student satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, these concepts have largely been investigated separately. Relatively little empirical attention has been devoted to their structural relationships within beauty professional education. Consequently, it remains unclear whether a favorable instructor brand is directly associated with learners' trust and loyalty or whether learners' evaluations of their actual learning experiences play a more prominent role in subsequent relationship outcomes.

To address this gap, this study examines learners who have participated in beauty-related professional courses and uses structural equation modeling (SEM) to investigate the relationships among instructor branding, learner satisfaction, trust, and learner loyalty. Specifically, the study examines the relationships of instructor branding with satisfaction, trust, and loyalty; the relationships of learner satisfaction with trust and loyalty; and the relationship between trust and learner loyalty. By integrating these constructs within a unified framework, this study extends personal branding research to beauty professional education and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how instructor branding is associated with learner relationship outcomes. The findings also offer practical implications for beauty instructors seeking to align professional brand development with course management, learning experiences, and long-term learner relationships.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Instructor Branding

Personal branding refers to the process through which individuals establish recognizable and differentiated perceptions among a target audience by communicating their professional competence, distinctive characteristics, values, and personal image (Shepherd, 2005; Labrecque et al., 2011). Rather than merely increasing visibility, personal branding represents a strategic process through which individuals shape audience perceptions of their professional attributes and value (Gorbatov et al., 2018). Accordingly, effective personal branding enables individuals to establish recognizability, differentiation, and perceived value within the minds of their target audience.

From a brand equity perspective, customer-based brand equity suggests that brand knowledge and associations influence audience responses to a brand (Keller, 1993). Clear and consistent brand characteristics can strengthen recognition and favorable

associations, while credible brand signals can reduce information uncertainty during the choice process (Erdem and Swait, 2004). These perspectives suggest that brand value depends not only on visibility but also on how audiences perceive a brand's distinctiveness, consistency, and overall value.

Extending personal branding to educational contexts, instructors may similarly develop professional images with brand-like characteristics. Research on professor branding indicates that instructor-related brand perceptions can shape students' evaluations and relationships with instructors (Jillapalli and Wilcox, 2010; Jillapalli and Jillapalli, 2014). Moreover, personal brand equity emphasizes the appeal, differentiation, and recognition associated with an individual's brand (Gorbatov et al., 2021), providing a useful basis for understanding how learners perceive instructors as professional brands.

This perspective is particularly relevant to beauty professional education, where technical expertise, practical application, and the individualized role of instructors are central to the learning experience. When selecting courses, learners may evaluate not only course content but also an instructor's distinctive professional characteristics, recognizability, and professional image. Beauty instructor branding can therefore be viewed as an extension of personal branding to professional skills education. Accordingly, this study defines instructor branding as "learners' overall perceptions of the distinctive professional characteristics, brand recognizability, positive professional image, and overall value exhibited by a beauty instructor."

2.2 Learner Satisfaction

Satisfaction represents an individual's overall evaluation of an experience based on the comparison between prior expectations and actual outcomes. According to Oliver (1980), satisfaction is more likely to occur when actual experiences meet or exceed prior expectations. Thus, satisfaction reflects not merely an emotional response to a specific aspect of an experience but an overall judgment formed through actual experience and evaluation.

In educational and training contexts, learner satisfaction reflects learners' evaluations of course content, instructor performance, and the overall learning experience. Because educational services are inherently experiential, learners typically evaluate satisfaction after determining whether a course meets their expectations and learning needs. Previous studies have shown that satisfaction with educational experiences is closely associated with subsequent loyalty and the maintenance of long-term relationships with educational providers (Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2017). Learner satisfaction therefore represents both an important evaluation of the learning experience and a relevant basis for understanding subsequent learner relationships.

In beauty professional education, learners commonly participate in courses to acquire technical knowledge, improve practical skills, and enhance professional competence. Their satisfaction therefore reflects whether the course meets their expectations, provides a positive overall learning experience, and represents an

appropriate course choice. Accordingly, this study defines learner satisfaction as "the extent to which learners positively evaluate their experience after participating in a beauty instructor's course, based on whether the course meets their expectations and their overall learning experience."

2.3 Trust

Trust refers to an individual's positive beliefs regarding the competence, reliability, and benevolence of a relationship partner. Morgan and Hunt (1994) identified trust as a fundamental basis for establishing and maintaining long-term relationships, particularly when exchange partners are perceived as reliable and possessing integrity. From a brand relationship perspective, trust also reflects confidence in a brand's ability to fulfill its promises and deliver expected value, thereby reducing uncertainty and perceived risk (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001). Trust therefore encompasses evaluations of whether a relationship partner is competent, reliable, considerate of one's interests, and capable of fulfilling its commitments.

Trust is particularly important in educational and professional training contexts because knowledge and information asymmetries require learners to rely on instructors' professional expertise, technical guidance, and experiential judgment. Trust in an instructor's competence and reliability can therefore provide an important foundation for positive and enduring instructor–learner relationships. Previous research has similarly linked trust with students' evaluations of educational providers and the development of long-term relationships (Schlesinger et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2023).

In beauty professional education, where learning relies heavily on technical demonstrations, hands-on practice, and professional experience, trust encompasses confidence in an instructor's professional knowledge and skills, consideration of learners' needs and interests, and reliability in providing professional information and fulfilling commitments. Accordingly, this study defines trust as "the extent to which learners have confidence in a beauty instructor's professional knowledge and skills, consideration of learners' learning needs and interests, and the reliability of the professional information and commitments provided."

2.4 Learner Loyalty

Loyalty refers to an individual's enduring preference for and support of a particular brand, product, or service, typically reflected in behavioral intentions such as repeat choice, continued use, and positive recommendation. Unlike satisfaction derived from a single experience, loyalty emphasizes an individual's willingness to maintain a relationship with the same provider over time, even when alternatives are available. It therefore represents an important outcome for assessing long-term relationships between individuals and service providers (Caruana, 2002; Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003).

In educational settings, learner loyalty reflects learners' intentions to continue choosing and supporting a particular educational provider and to recommend that provider to others. Previous research has identified loyalty as an important outcome of educational relationships, particularly in terms of continued choice, recommendation, and relationship maintenance (Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2017). Learner loyalty therefore extends beyond a favorable evaluation of a single learning experience and reflects a willingness to sustain the relationship in the future.

In beauty professional education, learners may repeatedly participate in advanced training, certification programs, or specialized courses to enhance their professional skills. Loyalty toward a particular instructor may therefore be reflected in learners' willingness to prioritize the same instructor for future training, recommend the instructor to others, and maintain their preference even when alternative instructors or similar courses are available. Accordingly, this study defines learner loyalty as "the extent to which learners are willing to give priority to a beauty instructor in future course choices, recommend the instructor to others, and maintain their preference for the instructor despite the availability of alternative instructors or similar courses."

2.5 Relationships Among Constructs and Hypotheses Development

Instructor branding reflects learners' perceptions of an instructor's distinctive professional characteristics, brand recognizability, positive professional image, and overall value. Customer-based brand equity theory suggests that favorable brand knowledge and associations shape audience responses to a brand (Keller, 1993), while credible and consistent brand signals can reduce uncertainty during the choice process (Erdem and Swait, 2004). Extending these perspectives to personal branding, distinctive professional characteristics and perceived brand value can shape audience evaluations of an individual's professional brand (Gorbatov et al., 2018, 2021). In educational settings, instructor-related brand perceptions may similarly influence students' evaluations of instructors and their educational offerings (Jillapalli and Wilcox, 2010; Jillapalli and Jillapalli, 2014).

In beauty professional education, favorable instructor branding may extend beyond initial course choice to learners' evaluations of their subsequent learning experience and relationship with the instructor. Distinctive professional characteristics, strong recognizability, and a positive professional image may contribute to more favorable course evaluations and greater satisfaction. Such brand perceptions may also strengthen learners' confidence in the instructor's competence and reliability and increase their willingness to choose and recommend the instructor in the future.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Beauty instructor branding has a significant positive effect on learner satisfaction.

H2. Beauty instructor branding has a significant positive effect on trust.

H3. Beauty instructor branding has a significant positive effect on learner loyalty.

Learner satisfaction develops through evaluations of actual course participation and learning experiences, particularly when these experiences meet or exceed prior expectations (Oliver, 1980). Positive learning experiences may reduce uncertainty regarding an instructor's competence, reliability, and fulfillment of commitments, thereby contributing to trust. Previous research has identified satisfaction and trust as important factors in maintaining long-term relationships and has demonstrated a close relationship between satisfaction and trust in educational settings (Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003; Schlesinger et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2023).
Satisfaction is also closely associated with loyalty. Individuals who are satisfied with a service experience are more likely to choose the same provider again and maintain their support (Caruana, 2002). Similarly, satisfaction in educational settings has been associated with loyalty, recommendation intentions, and sustained relationships (Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2017). In beauty professional education, learners whose course experiences meet their expectations may therefore develop greater trust in the instructor and stronger intentions to choose and recommend that instructor in the future. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4. Learner satisfaction has a significant positive effect on trust.

H5. Learner satisfaction has a significant positive effect on learner loyalty.

Trust provides an important foundation for maintaining long-term relationships. When individuals perceive a relationship partner as reliable and possessing integrity, stable and enduring relationships are more likely to develop (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Trust can also reduce relational uncertainty and encourage continued patronage and positive word-of-mouth (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001; Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003). In educational settings, greater trust in an educational provider has similarly been associated with stronger intentions to maintain support and loyalty (Schlesinger et al., 2017).
This relationship is particularly relevant in beauty professional education, where learners rely heavily on instructors' professional knowledge, technical skills, and practical experience. When learners trust an instructor's professional competence, consideration of their learning needs, and reliability of professional information and commitments, they may be more willing to continue choosing and recommending that instructor. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. Trust has a significant positive effect on learner loyalty.

Based on these theoretical relationships, this study proposes a structural framework in which instructor branding is linked to learner satisfaction, trust, and loyalty; learner satisfaction is linked to trust and loyalty; and trust is linked to learner loyalty. These six hypothesized relationships are subsequently examined using structural equation modeling (SEM).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Framework

Based on the theoretical foundations and hypotheses developed above, this study proposes a structural framework comprising Instructor Branding (IB), Learner Satisfaction (SAT), Trust (TRT), and Learner Loyalty (LOY). Instructor branding serves as the primary antecedent, with learner satisfaction, trust, and loyalty representing subsequent learner relationship outcomes. The proposed structural relationships are presented in Figure 1.

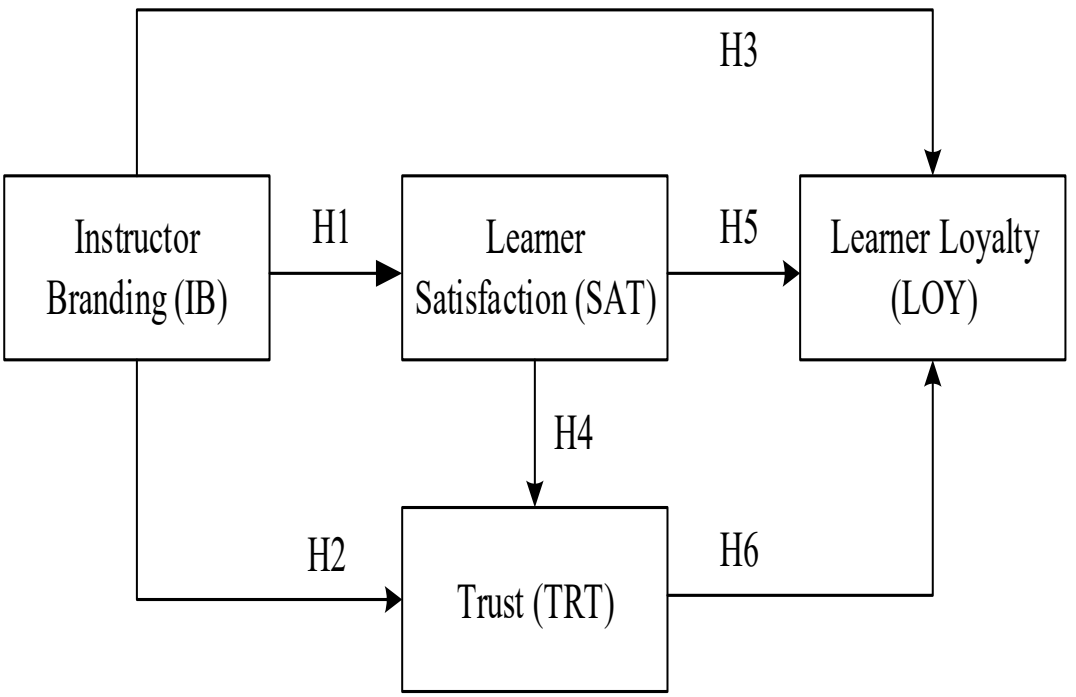

Figure 1: Research Framework

3.2 Questionnaire Design

This study employed a structured questionnaire developed from the research framework and relevant literature, with item wording adapted to the context of beauty professional education. Respondents were instructed to answer the items based on their actual experience with a beauty instructor whose course they had attended. The questionnaire measured four latent constructs—Instructor Branding (IB), Learner Satisfaction (SAT), Trust (TRT), and Learner Loyalty (LOY)—using a total of 14 items.

Instructor branding was measured using five items adapted primarily from research on personal branding and personal brand equity (Labrecque et al., 2011; Gorbatov et al., 2018, 2021), together with the concept of brand equity (Keller, 1993).

The items assessed professional distinctiveness and recognizability, positive professional image and associations, differentiated professional style, professional brand value, and identification with the instructor's personal brand.

Learner satisfaction was measured using three items adapted from satisfaction and educational research (Oliver, 1980; Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2017), covering overall learning experience, fulfillment of expectations, and perceived appropriateness of course choice. Trust was measured using three items based on relationship trust and educational research (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Schlesinger et al., 2017), assessing the instructor's professional competence, consideration of learners' needs and interests, and reliability of professional information and commitments. Learner loyalty was measured using three items adapted from service and educational loyalty research (Caruana, 2002; Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2017), covering future priority choice, recommendation intentions, and continued preference despite available alternatives.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first contained the 14 measurement items for the four constructs, all assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The second collected respondents' demographic and background information, including gender, age, educational level, years of beauty-related work or learning experience, primary area of beauty-related work or study, and experience participating in beauty professional courses. The constructs and measurement items are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire items

Constructs	Measurement Item
Instructor Branding (IB)	IB1: I believe that this instructor has distinctive professional characteristics and is highly recognizable in the beauty industry. IB2: I believe that this instructor exhibits a positive professional image and evokes favorable associations. IB3: I believe that this instructor has a professional style that is distinct from that of other beauty instructors. IB4: I believe that the personal brand established by this instructor has professional value. IB5: Compared with other beauty instructors, I identify more strongly with this instructor's personal brand.
Learner Satisfaction (SAT)	SAT1: I am satisfied with my overall learning experience in this instructor's course. SAT2: Overall, this instructor's course met my expectations. SAT3: Overall, I believe that choosing this instructor's course was the right decision.
Trust (TRT)	TRT1: I believe that this instructor possesses sufficient professional knowledge and skills. TRT2: I believe that this instructor considers learners' learning needs and interests. TRT3: I believe that the professional information and commitments provided by this instructor are reliable.
Learner Loyalty (LOY)	LOY1: If I have related professional development needs in the future, I will give priority to this instructor's courses. LOY2: I am willing to recommend this instructor to friends, colleagues, or other beauty professionals. LOY3: Even if other instructors offer similar courses, I will still give priority to this instructor.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through a questionnaire survey of learners with actual experience in beauty-related professional courses or training programs. The fields covered included skincare and beauty care, hairdressing, nail care, eyelash services, makeup, body care, spa services, aromatherapy, and overall styling. Eligible respondents were required to have participated in professional courses, technical workshops, certification training, or other continuing professional development activities offered by beauty instructors.

Because learners in beauty professional education are dispersed across professional fields and training channels and no comprehensive sampling frame was available, convenience sampling was employed. Respondents were recruited through beauty-related training institutions, professional training studios, instructor-led courses, and relevant learning communities. To ensure a consistent reference across all

constructs, each respondent was asked to select one beauty instructor whose course they had actually attended and to evaluate instructor branding, learner satisfaction, trust, and learner loyalty based on their experience with that instructor.
A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, of which 308 valid responses were obtained, yielding a valid response rate of 77.0%. These responses were used for subsequent statistical analyses. Demographic and background information was also collected to characterize the sample, including gender, age, educational level, years of beauty-related work or learning experience, primary area of beauty-related work or study, and experience participating in beauty professional courses.

4. Empirical Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 308 valid responses were included in the analysis. Regarding age, 155 respondents (50.32%) were aged 20–29, 114 (37.01%) were aged 30–39, 22 (7.14%) were aged 40 or older, and 17 (5.52%) were under 20. Overall, respondents aged 20–39 accounted for 87.34% of the sample. Regarding gender, 211 respondents (68.51%) were female and 97 (31.49%) were male. In terms of educational attainment, 182 respondents (59.09%) had a college or university education, 86 (27.92%) had a senior high school or vocational high school education, and 40 (12.99%) had a graduate-level education or higher. Regarding years of beauty-related work or learning experience, 105 respondents (34.09%) reported 3–4 years of experience, 90 (29.22%) reported 1–2 years, 72 (23.38%) reported 5 years or more, and 27 (8.77%) reported less than 1 year. An additional 14 respondents (4.55%) reported no prior beauty-related work experience. Overall, 267 respondents (86.69%) had at least one year of beauty-related work or learning experience, indicating that most participants had prior experience in the beauty field.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement quality of Instructor Branding (IB), Learner Satisfaction (SAT), Trust (TRT), and Learner Loyalty (LOY). Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR), while convergent validity was assessed using standardized factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). In addition, the square roots of AVE were compared with composite-score Pearson correlations to examine construct distinctiveness. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.
As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's α values ranged from 0.799 to 0.889, while CR values ranged from 0.882 to 0.918, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.810 to 0.876, and AVE values ranged from 0.692 to 0.759, exceeding the recommended thresholds of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively. These results indicate satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity across all four constructs.
The relationships among the four constructs were further examined by comparing the square roots of AVE with the Pearson correlations calculated from their

composite scores. As shown in Table 3, the square roots of AVE were 0.832 for Instructor Branding, 0.871 for Learner Satisfaction, 0.844 for Trust, and 0.847 for Learner Loyalty. All values exceeded the corresponding composite-score correlations, which ranged from 0.306 to 0.600. These results suggest that the four constructs exhibit a reasonable degree of distinctiveness based on the observed composite-score correlations.

Overall, the results indicate satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity across the four constructs. The comparison between the square roots of AVE and composite-score correlations also provides preliminary evidence of construct distinctiveness, supporting the subsequent examination of the proposed structural relationships.

Table 2: Results for factor loadings, reliability, and validity

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Instructor Branding (IB)	IB1	0.810	0.889	0.918	0.692
	IB2	0.825			
	IB3	0.845			
	IB4	0.825			
	IB5	0.855			
Learner Satisfaction (SAT)	SAT1	0.876	0.841	0.904	0.759
	SAT2	0.876			
	SAT3	0.861			
Trust (TRT)	TRT1	0.817	0.799	0.882	0.713
	TRT2	0.864			
	TRT3	0.852			
Learner Loyalty (LOY)	LOY1	0.864	0.804	0.884	0.718
	LOY2	0.858			
	LOY3	0.820			

Note: CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted.

Table 3: Composite-Score Correlations and AVE Comparison

Constructs	IB	SAT	TRT	LOY
IB	**0.832**			
SAT	0.600***	**0.871**		
TRT	0.318***	0.465***	**0.844**	
LOY	0.306***	0.398***	0.428***	**0.847**

Note: Diagonal values in bold represent the square root of AVE; off-diagonal values represent Pearson correlations calculated from the composite scores of the corresponding constructs. These observed-score correlations are distinct from the standardized latent-variable path coefficients estimated in the SEM. ***$p < .001$.

4.3 Structural Equation Modeling and Hypothesis Testing

Following the assessment of measurement quality, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the relationships among Instructor Branding (IB), Learner Satisfaction (SAT), Trust (TRT), and Learner Loyalty (LOY) and to test the six hypotheses.

The structural model demonstrated good overall fit. The chi-square value was 137.868 with 71 degrees of freedom, yielding a χ^2/df ratio of 1.942. The RMSEA (0.055) and SRMR (0.034) were below the recommended threshold of 0.08, while the NFI (0.953), TLI (0.970), CFI (0.976), IFI (0.976), GFI (0.942), and AGFI (0.915) all exceeded 0.90. Taken together, these indices indicate that the proposed structural model adequately fit the observed data.

The standardized path coefficients and hypothesis-testing results are presented in Table 4. Instructor branding had a significant positive effect on learner satisfaction ($\beta = 0.694$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. This was the strongest direct relationship in the model, indicating that favorable perceptions of an instructor's brand were strongly associated with greater satisfaction with the learning experience.

In contrast, the direct effect of instructor branding on trust was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.026$, $p > .05$); therefore, H2 was not supported. The negative coefficient should not be interpreted as evidence that instructor branding reduces trust; rather, instructor branding exhibited no significant direct relationship with trust after accounting for the other relationships in the model. Similarly, instructor branding had no significant direct effect on learner loyalty ($\beta = 0.052$, $p > .05$), and H3 was not supported. These results suggest that favorable instructor branding alone may not directly translate into learner trust or loyalty.

Learner satisfaction had a significant positive effect on trust ($\beta = 0.578$, $p < .001$), supporting H4, indicating that more favorable learning experiences were associated with greater trust in the instructor. Learner satisfaction also had a significant positive effect on learner loyalty ($\beta = 0.229$, $p < .05$), supporting H5. Thus, learners who were more satisfied with their course experience reported stronger intentions to continue choosing and recommending the instructor.

Finally, trust had a significant positive effect on learner loyalty ($\beta = 0.388$, $p < .001$), supporting H6. The coefficient for trust was larger than that for learner satisfaction in predicting loyalty, indicating that trust exhibited the stronger of the two direct relationships with learner loyalty.

Overall, four hypotheses (H1, H4, H5, and H6) were supported, whereas H2 and H3 were not. The results indicate that instructor branding was strongly and positively related to learner satisfaction, while satisfaction was positively related to both trust and loyalty, and trust was positively related to loyalty. However, instructor branding showed no significant direct relationship with either trust or loyalty. These findings highlight the importance of learners' evaluations of their actual learning experiences and subsequent trust in understanding learner relationship outcomes.

Table 4: SEM analysis results and hypothesis verification

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Path coefficient (β)	t-value	Results
H1	IB→SAT	0.694***	11.619	Supported
H2	IB→TRT	-0.026	-0.305	Not Supported
H3	IB→LOY	0.052	0.629	Not Supported
H4	SAT→TRT	0.578***	6.208	Supported
H5	SAT→LOY	0.229*	2.356	Supported
H6	TRT→LOY	0.388***	5.072	Supported

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between beauty instructor branding and learner satisfaction, trust, and loyalty from the learners' perspective. The findings showed that instructor branding was positively associated with learner satisfaction, while learner satisfaction was positively related to both trust and loyalty, and trust was positively related to loyalty. In contrast, the direct relationships of instructor branding with trust and learner loyalty were not statistically significant. These findings suggest that the value of instructor branding is primarily reflected in learners' evaluations of their learning experiences, whereas trust and loyalty are more closely associated with learners' experiential and relational evaluations of course participation.

The findings highlight instructor branding as an important factor associated with learner satisfaction. In beauty professional education, learners evaluate not only course content and technical instruction but also instructors' distinctive professional characteristics, brand recognizability, professional image, and overall brand value. Favorable instructor branding may therefore contribute to more positive evaluations of courses and learning experiences. However, its nonsignificant direct relationships with trust and loyalty indicate that favorable brand perceptions alone may be insufficient to generate confidence in an instructor or sustained intentions to choose and recommend that instructor. Brand perceptions and long-term learner relationship outcomes thus appear to represent distinct levels of evaluation.

Learner satisfaction plays an important role in this relationship framework. When courses meet learners' expectations and provide positive learning experiences, learners tend to report greater trust in instructors and stronger loyalty intentions. Trust was also positively associated with learner loyalty, suggesting that learners' confidence in instructors' professional competence, consideration of their needs, and reliability is important for sustaining future relationships. Taken together, these findings suggest that instructor branding is more closely associated with learners' initial experiential evaluations, whereas satisfaction and trust are more directly related to subsequent loyalty intentions. Instructor branding contributes to favorable learning evaluations, whereas satisfaction and trust are more directly associated with subsequent loyalty.

From a practical perspective, beauty instructors should therefore view branding as more than image building or market exposure. Clear professional positioning, distinctive teaching characteristics, and a consistent professional image can strengthen brand recognition, but these attributes should be supported by actual course quality and learning experiences. Instructors should ensure that course content, technical demonstrations, instructional interactions, and learning outcomes are consistent with the professional value communicated through their brands. Particular attention should also be given to reliable professional information and responsiveness to learners' needs, as these elements can strengthen trust and support longer-term instructor–learner relationships. Thus, effective instructor branding requires alignment between the professional value communicated before enrollment and the value learners actually experience during course participation.

From an academic perspective, this study extends personal branding research to beauty professional education by integrating instructor branding, learner satisfaction, trust, and learner loyalty within a structural framework. The findings show that instructor branding does not exhibit uniformly direct relationships with learner relationship outcomes: it was positively related to satisfaction but showed no significant direct relationship with trust or loyalty. This distinction suggests that personal branding in professional education should not be conceptualized solely in terms of visibility, image, or attractiveness. In contexts characterized by professional expertise, technical instruction, and experiential learning, learners' evaluations of actual learning experiences and their trust in instructors are also important for understanding longer-term relationship outcomes. By distinguishing brand perceptions from experiential and relational evaluations, this study provides additional empirical insight into the role of instructor branding in professional education and skills training.

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