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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM**

**THE ROLE OF BRAND FAMILIARITY AND TRUST IN
CONSUMER BUYING DECISION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF
BRAND LOYALTY IN LEADING SOAP AND DETERGENT
COMPANIES IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

BY:

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ADVISOR:

YOHANNES WORKAFERAHU (PhD)

JUNE, 2025

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA



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ETHIOPIA**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OF
BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS, FOR THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION.**

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**JUNE, 2025
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “The Role of Brand Familiarity and Trust in consumer buying decision: The mediating role of Brand Loyalty in leading soap and detergent Companies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia”, has been carried out by me under the guidance and supervision of Yohannes Workaferahu (Ph. D). The thesis is original and has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma to any university or institutions.

Researcher’s Name

Date

Signature

Selamawit Tigabu

June 18 / 2025



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “The Role of Brand Familiarity and Trust in consumer buying decision: The mediating role of Brand Loyalty in leading soap and detergent Companies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia”, submitted to Addis Ababa University College of business and economics for the award of the Degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a record of bona fide research work carried out by Selamawit Tigabu under my guidance and supervision.

Therefore, I hereby declare that no part of this thesis has been submitted to any other university or institutions for the award of any degree or diploma.

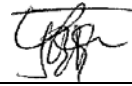
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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Selamawit Tigabu, entitled " The Role of Brand Familiarity and Trust in consumer buying decision: The mediating role of Brand Loyalty in leading soap and detergent Companies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia" was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Lists of Abbreviations

CSA	Central Statistical Agency (Ethiopia)
EIC	Ethiopian Investment Commission
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
MBA	Master of Business Administration
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

Abstract

In Ethiopia's competitive soap and detergent market, there is limited empirical research on how brand familiarity and trust influence consumer buying decisions, especially in the context of emerging markets. This study aimed to address that gap by examining the role of brand familiarity and brand trust on consumer buying decision and assessing the mediating role of brand loyalty. A quantitative approach was employed using a descriptive and explanatory research design, with data collected through structured questionnaires from 359 consumers in Addis Ababa. Analysis was conducted using SPSS and the PROCESS Macro, applying descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and mediation analysis. The results revealed that brand familiarity had a stronger direct effect on purchase decisions, while brand trust exhibited a greater indirect effect through brand loyalty, with 35% of its impact mediated compared to 14% for familiarity. Differences between global (Unilever) and local brands (Repi and Samanu) were also evident across familiarity, trust, and loyalty dimensions. The findings suggest that while brand familiarity plays a key role in driving initial purchase intent, building brand trust is more critical for fostering long-term loyalty. Based on this, it is recommended that local brands invest more in trust-building strategies and consistent consumer engagement to strengthen their competitiveness against multinational brands.

Keywords: Brand Familiarity, Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Buying Decision, Mediation, Ethiopia

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In Ethiopia's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, branding has become a critical factor especially in the soap and detergent market where both global and local brands compete for consumer attention. While studies in developed countries show that brand familiarity and trust shape consumer behavior, little is known about how these factors influence decisions in the Ethiopian context. This opening chapter presents the background and motivation for the study, followed by a clear statement of the problem, research objectives, and questions. It also highlights the study's significance, scope, limitation and relevance within the Ethiopian market.

1.1 Background of the Study

The soap and detergent industry represent a vital segment of the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, contributing significantly to public health and hygiene. Globally, the market was valued at \$133.3 billion in 2020 (Market Research Future, 2020), with developing countries like Ethiopia showing high growth potential. This growth is driven by rapid urbanization, rising health consciousness, and increased demand for basic hygiene products. In Ethiopia, the sector is characterized by the presence of both multinational companies like Unilever and strong local players such as Repi and Samanu, creating a competitive environment shaped by diverse consumer preferences.

In such low-involvement product categories where purchases are routine and made with minimal effort consumer decisions are often guided more by brand-related perceptions than by detailed product evaluations. One of the most influential of these perceptions is brand familiarity, which (Aaker, 1991) defines as a consumer's awareness and recognition of a brand. Familiarity helps reduce perceived risk and simplifies decision-making, especially for household products. Keller (1993) emphasizes that for everyday items like soap, where consumers do not invest much time in evaluating alternatives, brand familiarity can heavily influence initial purchase decisions.

Alongside familiarity, brand trust plays an equally critical role in shaping consumer behavior. Trust reflects the extent to which consumers believe a brand will fulfill its promises (Chaudhuri

& Holbrook, 2001). It develops through consistent product performance, customer experience, and clear brand communication. In categories related to health and hygiene, trust becomes particularly important as consumers prioritize quality, safety, and reliability (Jacoby, 1971; Doney & Cannon, 1997). A brand that earns trust is more likely to be chosen repeatedly and recommended to others.

These perceptions familiarity and trust often influence behavior not only directly but also through the formation of brand loyalty. Loyalty is both an emotional and behavioral commitment to a brand, leading to repeat purchases and advocacy. The relationship between these constructs is well supported by Brand Equity Theory, which suggests that strong brand associations and trust enhance loyalty and contribute to long-term consumer value. Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a behavioral framework, when consumers have positive beliefs and feelings toward a brand, they are more likely to develop intentions that lead to buying behavior.

The ultimate outcome of interest in this study is the consumer buying decision, which refers to the choice to purchase or repurchase a product. This decision is not only influenced directly by brand familiarity and trust, but also indirectly through brand loyalty. The study aims to explore both of these pathways direct and mediated providing a more complete picture of what drives consumer behavior in the Ethiopian FMCG context.

From a practical standpoint, understanding these dynamics is crucial for both local and international companies. For Ethiopian brands like Repi and Samanu, building brand familiarity and trust can help level the playing field against well-established global competitors. Strengthening brand loyalty can increase customer retention and reduce the pressure of price-based competition. For multinational brands like Unilever, the challenge lies in maintaining trust and loyalty in a market where consumer preferences are evolving and local alternatives are gaining traction.

Despite extensive research in developed markets, Ethiopia's unique market conditions remain understudied. The coexistence of local manufacturers like Repi and Samanu with multinational corporations such as Unilever creates a distinctive competitive environment. However, as (Hoyer

and Brown, 1990) observed in similar emerging markets, "consumer decision-making processes often differ significantly from those in developed economies," particularly regarding the balance between brand preference and price sensitivity.

This study seeks to address these research gaps by examining the specific dynamics of brand familiarity and trust within Ethiopia's soap and detergent market. The findings aim to provide actionable insights for both domestic and international brands competing in this growing consumer sector.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In well-established consumer markets, brand perception variables such as familiarity, trust, and loyalty are known to significantly influence consumer buying decisions. The ideal situation is that consumers develop brand preferences based on long-term trust and recognition, leading to repeat purchases and emotional loyalty. In such settings, brands are not just purchased they are chosen because of meaningful associations. Given Ethiopia's rapid urbanization, rising incomes, and increasingly brand-aware population, a similar trend would be expected to emerge locally, especially in major cities like Addis Ababa.

However, the current reality in Ethiopia's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector specifically within the soap and detergent industry presents a more fragmented picture. Consumers often make purchase decisions based on price, habit, or convenience rather than brand familiarity or trust. While brands like Unilever, Repi, and Samanu are actively competing for market share, there is limited empirical understanding of how consumers perceive these brands, or how these perceptions actually influence their buying decisions. This lack of clarity creates a serious challenge for both local and multinational firms. Without knowing what truly drives consumer behavior, marketing efforts risk being misaligned, leading to wasted advertising budgets, weak customer retention, and missed opportunities to build brand equity. Despite the competitive landscape and growing consumer base, brand loyalty in this category remains underdeveloped and largely unmeasured.

Existing Ethiopian studies touch on relevant areas but do not provide an integrated understanding. For example, Tesfaye and Kitaw (2017) examined brand awareness but did not connect it to actual consumer decisions. Gebreselassie and Zewdie (2018) investigated trust

perceptions but overlooked their impact on loyalty or purchase behavior. Studies like Assefa and Teka (2020) focused on rural price sensitivity but failed to examine urban consumer preferences, which are increasingly influenced by lifestyle and brand exposure. Furthermore, while Tadesse (2021) explored local vs. global brand competition, there has been no in-depth investigation of how key brand perception variables familiarity and trust interact with loyalty to shape consumer decisions in the urban Ethiopian context.

This lack of integrated research presents both theoretical and practical gaps. To date, there is no known study in the Ethiopian context that combines brand familiarity, brand trust, brand loyalty, and consumer buying decision within a single framework using mediation analysis. Most prior research has focused on individual variables or partial relationships, leaving the full consumer decision-making process underexplored. Practically, marketing managers lack data-driven insights to guide brand positioning. Local manufacturers struggle to identify competitive advantages beyond pricing, and policymakers lack evidence to support brand development within the local FMCG sector. Therefore, this study aims to fill those gaps by examining how brand familiarity and trust affect consumer buying decisions in Ethiopia's soap and detergent industry, and how brand loyalty mediates those relationships. The findings will contribute both to academic literature and to real-world branding strategies in emerging markets.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What is the role of brand familiarity in consumer buying decisions for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia?
2. How does brand trust influence consumer buying decisions for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia?
3. How does brand loyalty contribute to brand familiarity for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa?
4. How does brand loyalty contribute to brand trust for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the role of brand familiarity and trust in consumer buying decisions a case study of Leading soap and detergent Companies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

1. To examine the role of brand familiarity in shaping consumer buying decisions for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.
2. To assess the influence of brand trust on consumer buying decisions for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.
3. To identify the contributions of brand loyalty to brand familiarity for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.
4. To identify the contributions of brand loyalty to brand trust for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.

1.5. Hypotheses of the study

HA1 Brand familiarity has a significant positive influence on consumer buying decisions.

HA2 Brand trust has a significant positive influence on consumer buying decisions.

HA3 Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand familiarity and consumer buying decisions.

HA4 Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand trust and consumer buying decisions.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study makes several important contributions across multiple domains. Academically, it breaks new ground by analyzing how brand recognition and consumer confidence influence buying patterns in Ethiopia's household cleaning products market an area that has received scant attention in previous studies of developing economies. The work builds on foundational

consumer behavior models while adapting them to reflect Ethiopia's distinctive commercial landscape, offering fresh perspectives on established theories.

For corporate decision-makers, the practical applications are immediate and substantial. Global brands with existing market presence can use these insights to reinforce their position through strategic marketing that capitalizes on existing consumer awareness. Domestic producers, on the other hand, gain valuable intelligence about how to strengthen their market position by cultivating reliability and transparency in their customer relationships. The research provides concrete guidance for optimizing marketing expenditures between awareness campaigns and credibility-building measures.

At the policy level, the study reveals systemic obstacles preventing local manufacturers from competing effectively, particularly regarding market access and brand exposure. These findings can inform government initiatives to nurture homegrown industries through measures like:

- Production subsidies
- Distribution network improvements
- Small business development programs

The analysis also sheds light on how Ethiopia's cultural context and economic realities influence purchasing decisions, information that can guide more effective industrial policies. By connecting academic theory with real-world business challenges and policy considerations, this study creates a knowledge base that supports both commercial strategy and national economic planning. The implications extend beyond immediate applications, establishing a foundation for subsequent research into emerging market consumer dynamics.

1.7. Scope of the Study

This study established clear boundaries to ensure meaningful and manageable analysis. The geographical parameters centered exclusively on Addis Ababa, selected for its status as Ethiopia's primary commercial hub and most representative consumer market. The capital's diverse socioeconomic landscape provided an optimal environment to assess how urban shoppers interact with both domestic and international cleaning product brands.

The temporal framework examined purchasing behaviors during 2020-2023, a transformative period that witnessed substantial economic fluctuations and pandemic-driven shifts in household

cleaning habits. This specific window captured contemporary market realities while avoiding outdated consumer data. Field research activities occurred throughout 2024 to guarantee findings reflected current market conditions.

Conceptually, the analysis prioritized three fundamental dimensions: brand recognition, consumer confidence in brands, and their combined impact on purchase choices. While acknowledging that additional elements like cost and advertising influence decisions, these were intentionally excluded to permit concentrated examination of the primary variables under study.

Theoretical underpinnings came from two seminal consumer behavior models: The Theory of Planned Behavior and Brand Equity framework. These established constructs provided appropriate lenses for evaluating decision-making processes in Ethiopia's developing economy. The research deliberately concentrated on individual household purchasers rather than bulk buyers, maintaining alignment with typical fast-moving consumer goods consumption patterns.

These carefully considered limitations enabled focused yet comprehensive analysis while ensuring practical applicability of results. The structured approach balanced depth of insight with research feasibility, producing findings with both academic and commercial relevance.

1.8. Limitations of the Study

While this research provided valuable insights into brand familiarity and trust in Ethiopia's soap and detergent market, several limitations should be acknowledged:

- The study focused solely on Addis Ababa's urban consumers and three major brands (Repi, Unilever, Samanu), excluding rural populations and smaller competitors, which may limit applicability to Ethiopia's diverse markets and other product categories.
- The cross-sectional design captured brand perceptions at a single point, missing potential shifts over time, while self-reported data may have introduced recall or social desirability biases.
- While brand loyalty was tested as a mediator, other factors like perceived value, satisfaction, or digital/sustainability influences were not examined, despite their growing relevance in consumer decisions.

- Results are tied to low-involvement purchases (soap/detergents) and may not extend to high-involvement products or other emerging markets with distinct cultural or economic conditions.
- Macroeconomic trends (inflation, supply chains) and digital marketing's role critical in Ethiopia's evolving FMCG sector were not investigated, potentially overlooking key behavioral drivers.

1.9. Definition of key Terms

- **Brand Familiarity:** The level of awareness and knowledge that consumers have about a brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993).
- **Brand Trust:** The confidence consumers have in a brand's reliability and integrity (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).
- **Consumer Buying Decision:** The process by which consumers choose which products or services to purchase (Jacoby, 1971).
- **Brand Loyalty:** The tendency of consumers to continue buying the same brand's products or services over time (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

1.10. Organization of the Study

There were five chapters in this study. The study's history, problem statement, purpose, research questions, significance, scope, definition of important words, and organizational structure were all covered in the first chapter of the article. The second chapter evaluated previous research that was relevant to the topic at hand. This included reviews of theoretical and empirical works as well as conceptual frameworks for the study's important variables, gaps in the literature, and conclusions drawn from the literature. The research study's methodology was covered in the third chapter. It covered research methodologies and designs, data sources and collection techniques, selecting the target population sample plan, data analysis techniques, dependability, and validity. The data presentation, analysis, and interpretation from the study were presented in the fourth chapter. The last and fifth chapters provided recommendations, conclusions, and a summary of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

A strong understanding of brand-related consumer behavior begins with clear definitions of the core variables: brand familiarity, brand trust, brand loyalty, and consumer buying decision. Each concept is explored based on previous literature, setting the foundation for the theoretical discussion that follows. Several established models including the Theory of Planned Behavior, Brand Equity Theory, Consumer Decision-Making Process, and Trust-Based Marketing Theory are reviewed to explain how these concepts are connected. The chapter also presents prior studies conducted internationally, across Africa, and within Ethiopia, and identifies key gaps particularly the limited use of integrated mediation models in local FMCG research. These insights help shape the conceptual framework used in the study.

2.2. Concepts and Definitions

2.2.1 Brand Familiarity

Consumers navigating store aisles often gravitate toward familiar brands, a tendency extensively studied by Hoyer and Brown (1990). Brand familiarity represents a shopper's ability to recognize and recall specific brands, simplifying decision-making for routine purchases. When Ethiopian consumers spot Unilever's distinctive packaging, their immediate recognition stems from accumulated brand knowledge about product quality and reliability. This familiarity automatically includes such brands in their mental shortlist of potential purchases.

Keller's research (1993) demonstrates how brand familiarity builds marketplace visibility, creating competitive advantages for well-known products. In the soap and detergent sector, where many products appear similar, familiar brands like Repi gain preference even at slightly higher prices. Consumers willingly pay this premium because familiarity reduces their perceived risk - they trust known quantities for household essentials (Hoyer & Brown, 1990).

Contemporary research reveals familiarity's extended benefits beyond mere recognition. Erdem and Swait's findings (2004) show familiar brands enjoy greater consumer trust, making them more resilient against competitors' marketing efforts. For Ethiopian shoppers selecting cleaning products, familiar brands provide psychological comfort which is the assurance of predictable performance outweighs potential savings from unknown alternatives. This dynamic becomes particularly powerful in markets with limited product differentiation, where brand recognition often determines shelf space and sales.

2.2.2 Brand Trust

Consumers develop trust in brands through consistent positive experiences, forming beliefs about a company's reliability and honesty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This trust becomes particularly valuable when shoppers evaluate household essentials like cleaning products. A customer confident in Samanu's quality will choose its detergents repeatedly, believing the brand will deliver consistent results with each purchase. This confidence lowers the perceived risk that often accompanies buying decisions.

Research demonstrates how trust influences shopping behavior significantly. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) established that trusted brands benefit from stronger customer commitment and higher repurchase rates. Ethiopian consumers frequently demonstrate this pattern when selecting Unilever products despite higher prices - their established trust outweighs potential savings from lesser-known alternatives. The certainty provided by trusted brands simplifies decision-making for routine purchases.

Contemporary studies reveal trust's lasting impact on customer relationships. Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001) identified how trust creates emotional connections that transcend individual transactions. In Ethiopia's detergent market, this explains why familiar brands only succeed when backed by genuine consumer trust. While brand recognition gets products noticed,

trust determines whether they stay in shopping baskets long-term. This distinction proves crucial for manufacturers in competitive markets where customer retention matters most.

2.2.3 Consumer Buying Decisions

Consumers make final purchase decisions after evaluating multiple factors, with brand familiarity and trust playing pivotal roles (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006). When Ethiopian shoppers select cleaning products, those familiar with Repi detergent and confident in its quality will likely choose it repeatedly, especially when perceiving good value. These decisions involve complex mental calculations about quality expectations versus price paid.

The Theory of Planned Behavior explains how attitudes guide purchasing (Ajzen, 1991). Positive brand perceptions developed through familiarity and trust create favorable attitudes that increase purchase likelihood. A shopper recognizing Unilever's Sunlight soap with past satisfactory experiences will instinctively reach for it again, demonstrating this behavioral pattern. Such habitual purchases reflect established trust overcoming the uncertainty of trying unfamiliar brands.

Additional psychological factors strengthen these purchase decisions. Aaker's research (1991) revealed how perceived quality and brand loyalty amplify the effects of familiarity. In Ethiopia's detergent market, consumers choosing Samanu products despite higher prices demonstrate this phenomenon that their loyalty stems from recognized quality and positive experiences that outweigh cost considerations. These mediating factors create powerful purchase motivations that transcend simple brand recognition.

2.2.4 Brand Loyalty

Customers develop strong attachments to certain brands, repeatedly choosing them over competitors a phenomenon marketer call brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991). This loyalty emerges when consumers trust a brand like Unilever, creating resistance to competing products despite attractive promotions or lower prices. Such committed customers not only repurchase consistently but also become informal brand ambassadors, recommending products to friends and family.

Research reveals brand loyalty operates on multiple levels (Oliver, 1999). Rational appreciation of a brand's quality combines with emotional connections and conscious repurchase intentions.

Ethiopian consumers demonstrating loyalty to Repi products often exhibit all three dimensions they recognize the brand's value, feel connected to its local identity, and plan continued purchases. These layered attachments explain why loyal customers weather market fluctuations and new competitive entries.

Quality perception and satisfaction serve as crucial building blocks for loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 1996). When shoppers believe in Samanu's product excellence and have satisfying experiences, they transition from occasional buyers to devoted patrons. This progression highlights why manufacturers must maintain consistent quality standards - each positive experience reinforces the loyalty cycle. In Ethiopia's competitive detergent market, brands cultivating such loyalty enjoy stable sales regardless of economic conditions or new market entrants.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Understanding the relationships between brand familiarity, brand trust, brand loyalty, and consumer buying decisions requires a solid theoretical foundation that captures both the psychological and behavioral aspects of consumer choice. This study draws upon four interrelated theories to frame the conceptual relationships among the variables: The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Brand Equity Theory, Trust-Based Marketing Theory, and the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model. These theories offer complementary perspectives that explain how consumer attitudes, perceptions, and experiences influence their purchasing decisions, particularly in low-involvement product categories such as soaps and detergents.

2.3.1. Consumer Decision-Making Process

The journey consumers take when making purchases involves multiple thoughtful steps, beginning with recognizing a need and ending with reflecting on their choice. Research shows these decision-making patterns often stem from childhood experiences that shape adult purchasing habits (Sokolowski, O., 2011). This complex process varies significantly between individuals, as each person's unique needs and circumstances influence their approach to buying products.

Marketing experts have identified several consistent phases in consumer decision-making. Most models follow a similar pattern where shoppers first identify what they need, then gather

information, compare options, make a purchase, and finally evaluate their decision (Tyagi, C.L. & Kumar, A., 2004). The five-stage model developed by Cox, Anthony and colleagues in 1983 remains particularly influential because it clearly breaks down this process into understandable components: recognizing a need, searching for information, evaluating choices, making the purchase, and assessing satisfaction afterward (Cox, D. et al., 1983).

The decision-making process begins when consumers notice a difference between their current situation and what they desire. This gap can arise from internal factors like physical needs or external influences such as advertising (Arnould, E. et al., 2002). Marketing professionals find it valuable to distinguish between practical needs and emotional desires when understanding what drives purchases (Solomon, M. et al., 2006).

After identifying a need, shoppers typically seek information through various channels. They consult friends and family, notice advertisements, read media reports, and when possible, test products themselves (Majumdar, R., 2010). The internet has become increasingly important for product research, with many consumers relying on online reviews and discussion forums before making decisions (Winer, R.S., 2009). Finally, consumers carefully compare options based on price, quality, and features before selecting a product (Blythe, J., 1997).

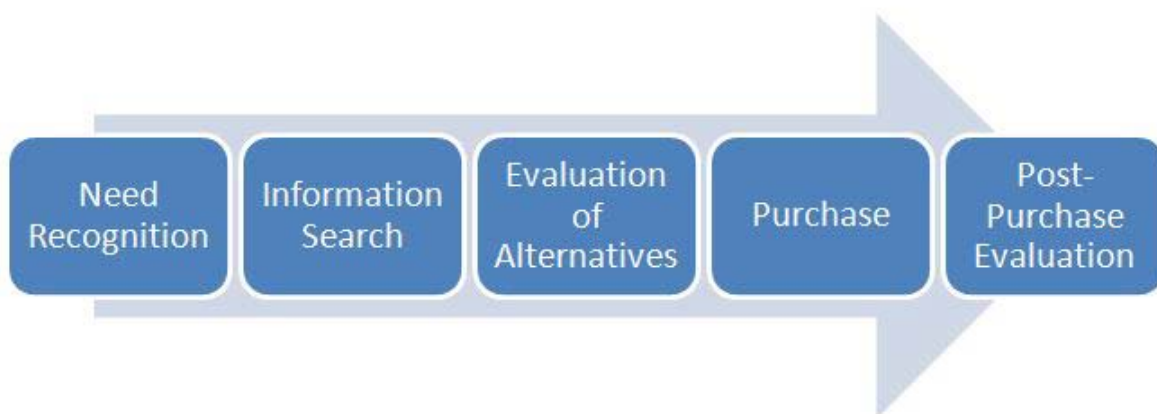


Figure 1: Model of Consumer Decision Making Process

Source: Tyagi and Kumar (2004)

2.3.2. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior offers valuable insights into how people make purchasing decisions. Developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, this psychological framework explains that three main factors shape buying intentions: personal attitudes about a product, social influences, and practical considerations about obtaining the item. When applied to brand purchases, this theory suggests that familiarity with a brand and trust in its quality create positive attitudes that increase purchase likelihood. For instance, consumers acquainted with Unilever products who believe in their quality demonstrate stronger buying intentions toward those brands.

Social influences significantly impact shopping decisions through what Ajzen termed "subjective norms." These represent the perceived expectations of friends, family members, and social networks regarding product choices. In Ethiopia's detergent market, personal recommendations often outweigh advertising messages. A shopper might select Samanu detergent based on neighbors' endorsements, even without previous experience with the brand. Practical factors like product availability and price also matter - consumers frequently choose Repi products when they're both affordable and easy to find in local stores.

Purchase intentions serve as the critical link between attitudes and actual buying behavior according to this theory. Ajzen (2020) research updates confirmed that strong intentions typically predict eventual purchases when consumers have positive brand associations, social approval, and confidence in their ability to obtain the product. For household goods like soap and detergent, brand familiarity and trust build these purchase intentions over time through repeated satisfactory experiences and word-of-mouth recommendations within communities.

2.3.3. Brand Equity Theory

The concept of brand equity explains why certain products command premium prices and loyal customers. Developed by marketing scholars David Aaker and Kevin Keller in the early 1990s, this theory identifies four pillars that create brand value: recognition in the marketplace, perceived excellence, positive mental connections, and customer commitment. When examining household cleaning products, brand familiarity represents the first pillar - consumers notice familiar brands like Unilever more quickly on store shelves. Trust contributes to the second pillar, as shoppers assume known brands maintain consistent quality standards.

Product quality perceptions significantly influence purchasing choices, particularly for everyday items like detergents where quality isn't immediately visible. Aaker's research demonstrated that consumers rely on brand trust as a quality indicator when direct evaluation proves difficult. For instance, Ethiopian shoppers who trust the Samanu brand often assume its products meet high standards before trying them. Beyond functional quality, emotional connections also build brand value. Repi's association with local manufacturing and fair pricing creates positive associations for cost-conscious consumers, strengthening its market position.

Customer loyalty represents the ultimate measure of brand equity according to Keller's findings. Familiar, trusted brands like Unilever enjoy repeat purchases even when cheaper alternatives exist. This loyalty stems from accumulated positive experiences that reduce the perceived risk of trying new products from the same brand. The theory underscores how consistent brand building creates competitive advantages that extend beyond individual products to entire brand portfolios.

2.3.4. Trust-Based Marketing Theory

Building lasting connections with customers requires establishing genuine trust, as explored in the foundational work of Morgan and Hunt (1994). Their Trust-Based Marketing Theory reveals how confidence in a brand lowers consumers' fears about purchases, making them more willing to choose and stick with familiar products. When shoppers trust a company like Samanu, they'll often pay slightly more for its detergents, believing in the brand's consistent quality without needing to test every purchase.

For everyday household items like cleaning products, trust becomes especially crucial. Consumers can't easily judge a detergent's effectiveness before buying, so they rely on brand reputation as a quality guarantee (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). This explains why Ethiopian households repeatedly purchase trusted brands - each satisfactory experience strengthens the relationship, making shoppers less likely to switch to unknown competitors (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Authentic trust develops through transparent business practices and ethical behavior. Brands like Repi cultivate this by consistently delivering on their promises of affordable, locally-made products (Grayson et al., 2008). When companies demonstrate reliability over time through product performance and honest communication, consumers reward them with loyalty that

withstands competitive pressures. This dynamic creates a virtuous cycle where trusted brands gain long-term customers who become informal ambassadors through positive word-of-mouth.

2.4. The Soap and Detergent Industry in Ethiopia

The soap and detergent industry in Ethiopia are a vital component of the country's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. It plays a significant role in meeting the daily hygiene and cleaning needs of households and businesses (EIC, 2021). This section provides an in-depth overview of the industry, including its market size, key players, consumer trends, competitive landscape, and the role of branding. It also highlights the relevance of studying selected companies such as Repi, Unilever, and Samanu in Addis Ababa.

2.4.1. Market Size and Growth

Ethiopia's cleaning products market has shown remarkable progress in recent years, with several key factors driving this upward trend. Government reports indicate that rapid urban migration, combined with population increases and growing health consciousness, has created strong demand for hygiene products nationwide (Ethiopian Investment Commission, 2021). The fast-moving consumer goods segment, where cleaning products play a major role, currently ranks among Ethiopia's most dynamic economic sectors. This growth appears most pronounced in cities like Addis Ababa, where improved retail infrastructure and rising household incomes have made quality cleaning products more accessible to consumers.

Industry analysts estimate the current market value exceeds \$200 million, with projections suggesting 8-10% annual expansion in coming years (Ethiopian Investment Commission, 2021). Several developments contribute to this positive outlook, including the spread of modern shopping formats like supermarket chains and better product distribution to provincial areas. However, market research reveals persistent obstacles in rural regions, where economic constraints and logistical difficulties continue to limit product availability and consumer purchasing power (Assefa & Teka, 2020).

The entry of global consumer brands has significantly influenced market development. Companies like Unilever have introduced innovative product ranges and marketing approaches

that have raised quality standards across the industry (Tesfaye & Kitaw, 2017). While these multinationals have helped improve hygiene awareness in urban centers, rural communities still struggle with basic infrastructure limitations that restrict market potential (Gebreselassie & Zewdie, 2018).

2.4.2. Key Players in the Industry

Ethiopia's soap and detergent market tells a story of global meets local. Picture this: multinational giant Unilever sits alongside homegrown brands like Repi and Samanu, each carving out their space in Ethiopian households. Unilever's Omo and Sunlight products have become familiar sights in stores nationwide, thanks to their strong distribution networks and marketing power (Keller, 1993).

The real local heroes emerge when looking at brands like Repi Soap and Detergent Factory. Having served Ethiopian families since 1966, Repi has earned trust through generations by delivering affordable, reliable cleaning products (Tesfaye & Kitaw, 2017). Meanwhile, Samanu Detergent has made waves in city markets, offering quality alternatives that don't break the bank (Gebreselassie & Zewdie, 2018).

But the market's not just about the big players. Countless small manufacturers try to serve rural communities, though they face tough hurdles. Limited production capacity and spotty distribution make it hard to compete with the established brands (Assefa & Teka, 2020). These smaller operations often become the go to choose in remote areas where price matters most, even if consistency sometimes suffers.

2.4.3. Consumer Trends

Walk through any market in Addis Ababa and you'll notice something interesting - shoppers carefully examining detergent packages, comparing brands before making their selection. Research confirms this growing preference for trusted names like Unilever's Omo, where consumers associate the familiar blue packaging with reliable cleaning power (Keller, 1993). Venture outside the capital though, and the story changes completely. In rural villages, price tags often outweigh brand loyalty, with families opting for whichever product fits their tight budgets (Assefa & Teka, 2020).

Something remarkable is happening in urban households across Ethiopia. More families are asking shopkeepers about "green" cleaning options, showing unprecedented concern about what goes down their drains. Studies tracking this shift note particularly strong interest in plant-based formulas among educated urban consumers (Donkor et al., 2018). These eco-conscious buyers don't seem to mind paying extra, viewing it as an investment in their family's health and Ethiopia's environment.

Meanwhile, smartphone screens are becoming the new storefronts for cleaning products. Young professionals in particular now compare prices and read reviews online before heading to physical stores (Mekonnen & Abebe, 2021). This digital revolution has forced even traditional brands to rethink their marketing, with colorful social media campaigns replacing old-fashioned radio jingles.

2.4.4. Competitive Landscape

The soap and detergent aisles in Ethiopian stores tell a story of fierce competition between global giants and homegrown brands. On one shelf, Unilever's premium products command higher prices, their familiar logos and consistent quality justifying the extra cost for many urban shoppers (Keller, 1993). These multinationals benefit from decades of international experience and distribution networks that reach deep into both cities and rural areas.

Across the aisle, local favorites like Repi and Samanu hold their ground with affordable alternatives that appeal to budget-conscious families (Tesfaye & Kitaw, 2017). These Ethiopian brands have learned to compete by offering smaller package sizes, multi-use formulas, and special value bundles that make quality cleaning products accessible to low-income households (Gebreselassie & Zewdie, 2018).

The competition has sparked innovation across the board. Companies now race to develop eco-friendly options to meet growing demand from environmentally aware urban consumers (Donkor et al., 2018). While modern supermarkets in Addis Ababa showcase these new products, rural markets present different challenges - here, affordability and availability often determine which brands succeed (Assefa & Teka, 2020). The result is a dynamic marketplace where global and local brands continually adapt to Ethiopia's diverse consumer needs.

2.4.5. Role of Branding in the Industry

In Ethiopia's bustling supermarkets and neighborhood shops, brand names tell a powerful story. Multinational players like Unilever have built strong connections with consumers through consistent quality - when shoppers see the Omo or Sunlight logo, they expect reliable cleaning performance (Keller, 1993). These companies pour resources into television commercials and eye-catching displays that keep their products top-of-mind (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Homegrown brands take a different approach. Repi's packaging proudly displays "Made in Ethiopia" while Samanu's advertisements feature local families - subtle reminders that these products understand Ethiopian cleaning needs (Gebreselassie & Zewdie, 2018). Market research shows this local connection resonates strongly, especially when Repi emphasizes its fifty-year history serving Ethiopian households (Tsfaye & Kitaw, 2017).

The branding game has moved beyond store shelves to smartphone screens. Clever social media campaigns now show up between family WhatsApp messages, with influencers demonstrating product benefits in Amharic (Mekonnen & Abebe, 2021). Even traditional brands now run Tiktok challenges showing creative uses of their detergents, proving that in Ethiopia's competitive market, strong branding requires both heritage and digital savvy.

2.4.6. Relevance of Studying Selected Companies in Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa's crowded markets and busy households tell an important story about Ethiopia's soap and detergent industry. As the nation's capital with over 5 million residents and growing disposable incomes, the city serves as a crucial testing ground for both international and local brands (EIC, 2021). Observing how companies like Unilever, Repi and Samanu compete here reveals key lessons about what Ethiopian consumers truly value.

The gleaming supermarket shelves stocked with Unilever products demonstrate how global brands leverage their reputation for consistent quality to attract city dwellers (Keller, 1993). Meanwhile, the steady sales of Repi and Samanu in neighborhood shops show how local manufacturers win customers through affordable pricing and culturally relevant marketing (Tsfaye & Kitaw, 2017). Market analysts note these competing approaches reveal the complex factors influencing Ethiopian shopping habits (Gebreselassie & Zewdie, 2018).

By focusing on Addis Ababa's diverse retail landscape, researchers gain critical insights into the strategies that work in urban Ethiopia - from premium brand positioning to locally-adapted value offerings. These lessons help explain why some brands succeed while others struggle in one of Africa's fastest-growing consumer markets.

2.4.7. Challenges and Opportunities

The path to success in Ethiopia's cleaning products industry comes with both roadblocks and open doors. Rural areas present particular difficulties, where poor road networks and sparse retail options make distribution challenging (Assefa & Teka, 2020). Families in these regions often stretch tight budgets, carefully comparing prices before selecting the most affordable detergent option (Tadesse & Kebede, 2020).

Yet exciting possibilities emerge, especially in bustling urban centers. A new generation of environmentally aware shoppers in cities like Addis Ababa increasingly seeks out plant-based and chemical-free alternatives, creating fresh market niches (Donkor et al., 2018). Meanwhile, the digital revolution transforms how products reach consumers - from social media promotions to online ordering platforms that bypass traditional retail bottlenecks (Mekonnen & Abebe, 2021). Industry reports confirm these urban opportunities continue expanding as Ethiopia's middle class grows (EIC, 2021).

The contrast between rural challenges and urban potential creates a complex but dynamic marketplace. Companies that navigate this duality - addressing affordability concerns while meeting premium urban demands - stand to gain in Africa's second-most populous nation.

2.5. Empirical Literature Review

The empirical literature review examines previous empirical studies conducted internationally, across Africa, and within Ethiopia on the themes of brand familiarity, brand trust, brand loyalty, and consumer buying decisions. Each study is briefly summarized in terms of its objective, method, findings, and its relevance to the current research. The review not only highlights existing knowledge but also clarifies how the present study addresses unresolved issues or gaps in earlier work.

2.5.1. International Empirical Literature

Research across international markets reveals consistent patterns in how consumers interact with brands, particularly in fast-moving consumer goods like soap and detergent. A foundational U.S. study by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) examined the relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty using survey data. The study found that brand trust significantly predicts both purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty, especially for low-involvement products. It highlighted that trust enhances emotional commitment and repurchase intentions, even in the presence of lower-priced alternatives. However, while this study demonstrated the importance of trust, it did not examine brand familiarity as a precursor to trust, nor did it test consumer purchase decision as a behavioral outcome; gaps that the current study addresses by integrating all three.

Erdem and Swait (2004) further explored how brand credibility, incorporating both familiarity and trust, reduces information costs and perceived risk in the buying process. Using experimental designs across U.S. and French markets, they confirmed that credible brands are more likely to be chosen, especially in product categories with minimal functional differentiation such as laundry detergents. Yet, their research focused on choice probability rather than brand loyalty or repeated buying, and it did not include mediation analysis, an element central to this thesis.

The Brand Equity perspective has also been central to understanding consumer-brand relationships. Keller (1993) and Aaker (1996) established that brand familiarity and trust both contribute to positive brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Their models suggest that familiar and trusted brands enjoy higher brand equity, allowing firms to charge premium prices and retain customers. These frameworks influenced global branding strategies, but empirical tests of these models often focused on premium, high-involvement products, rather than everyday goods. The current study applies these theoretical principles to the more price-sensitive and habit-driven context of soap and detergent purchases in an emerging market.

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001) conducted a structural equation modeling (SEM) study in the Spanish retail sector, exploring how brand trust contributes to brand loyalty. Their results showed a significant mediating effect of perceived quality between trust and loyalty. This study is methodologically relevant, but it focused on a European context and did not test how trust and loyalty jointly influence purchase decisions. In contrast, the present

research tests a full mediation model where brand loyalty acts as an intermediary between both trust and familiarity and buying behavior.

Studies have also considered the psychological and cultural context influencing brand interactions. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions framework showed how consumers in individualistic cultures are more driven by personal preference and brand identity, while those in collectivist cultures rely heavily on social influence and trust built through community norms. These cultural dynamics suggest that brand trust may play an even more prominent role in countries like Ethiopia, where collectivist norms prevail. However, most cross-cultural studies have not specifically examined this effect within Ethiopia's urban consumer landscape.

The rise of digital media has further transformed brand-consumer relationships. Kumar and Mirchandani (2012) found that social media engagement strengthens emotional brand attachment and fosters both trust and familiarity. Their findings are especially relevant for emerging urban markets where digital adoption is growing. However, their focus was on digital engagement metrics, not behavioral outcomes such as consumer buying decisions, which this study explicitly investigates.

Economic factors also influence consumer-brand relationships. Quelch and Jocz (2007) found that during financial downturns, consumers tend to rely more heavily on trusted brands, using them as a psychological "safe choice." This is particularly relevant for Ethiopia's price-sensitive market, where perceived risk plays a significant role. Yet, this study lacked variable-level analysis (e.g., no focus on brand loyalty), limiting its ability to explain how trust translates into repeat buying in economic uncertainty. The current research adds this missing layer by combining behavioral theory and brand equity principles within a structured mediation model.

In summary, international research confirms the individual importance of brand familiarity, trust, and loyalty in shaping consumer behavior. However, most prior studies focused on single-variable relationships or specific contexts such as digital engagement, developed markets, or high-involvement products. There remains a lack of studies that examine all four variables together within a single mediation framework, particularly in the context of everyday consumer goods in emerging economies. This study addresses these gaps by testing how familiarity and

trust influence buying behavior, both directly and indirectly through loyalty, among detergent consumers in urban Ethiopia.

2.5.2. African Empirical Literature

Consumer behavior in African markets presents unique patterns shaped by economic realities, social structures, and growing digital influence. Several regional studies offer insights into how brand familiarity, trust, and loyalty operate within this complex environment. However, gaps remain, particularly in combining these variables into a unified behavioral model and applying them to low-involvement product categories like detergents.

A study by Abratt and Pitt (2012) examined how brand trust and loyalty function in South Africa's competitive FMCG sector. Using survey methods across urban retail environments, the study found that consumers remain loyal to trusted brands even when less expensive alternatives are available. This trust-based loyalty was especially strong in product categories where quality differences are not easily evaluated, such as cleaning supplies. However, the study did not explore how brand familiarity contributes to trust or how loyalty mediates the relationship between brand perceptions and actual purchasing decisions issues this study seeks to clarify through mediation analysis.

In Nigeria, Ndubisi (2007) explored how brand familiarity affects consumer choice in price-sensitive markets. The research involved structured questionnaires distributed to a sample of urban consumers. Findings showed that familiar brands often outperform less-known ones, even when priced higher. Consumers viewed familiarity as a proxy for quality and reliability. However, Ndubisi's study did not investigate whether this familiarity translated into long-term loyalty or actual purchase behavior, nor did it consider brand trust as a potential influencing factor. By contrast, the current study tests a full model involving both familiarity and trust, along with loyalty as a mediator and consumer decision as the outcome.

Cultural influence on brand behavior was a key focus in the work of Burgess and Steenkamp (2013), who studied consumers across several African countries. Their study highlighted that social norms, family influence, and community endorsement play a large role in brand selection often more than advertising. African consumers frequently rely on peer recommendations, especially in low-trust environments. While their findings support the importance of subjective

norms, the study lacked a quantitative framework to test how brand trust and familiarity are formed, and how these perceptions influence loyalty and purchase decisions. The current study partially addresses this by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain how attitudes (influenced by familiarity and trust) and norms (e.g., word-of-mouth) lead to buying decisions.

Economic factors also shape loyalty dynamics in African markets. Kuada and Buatsi (2005) studied Ghanaian households and found that brand loyalty is often moderated by affordability. Consumers in lower-income brackets tend to oscillate between trusted brands and cheaper alternatives, depending on budget constraints. However, the study's focus was limited to economic trade-offs and did not examine the psychological variables (like trust or familiarity) influencing consumer commitment. This study builds on that by integrating both economic and perceptual factors in an Ethiopian urban context, where affordability and brand attachment often coexist.

Another relevant Nigerian study by Adeola (2016) investigated how local branding strategies build loyalty through cultural relevance. The study found that brands that aligned with local identity and values were more successful in building customer attachment. While insightful, the study focused on qualitative interviews and did not test causal relationships among branding variables. In contrast, this research uses a quantitative approach to examine how brand trust and familiarity influence loyalty and ultimately buying decisions.

Finally, Donkor et al. (2018) studied how digital media influences urban African consumers. Their study found that brand awareness and trust are increasingly shaped by online platforms, especially among younger consumers in cities. This is especially relevant to Ethiopia, where digital usage is growing among urban consumers. However, Donkor's study focused on digital behavior patterns, not purchase decisions or mediating loyalty mechanisms. The present research incorporates the role of trust and familiarity formed both online and offline, and connects these perceptions directly to buying decisions.

In summary, African empirical studies confirm that brand familiarity, trust, and loyalty are key drivers of consumer behavior, often shaped by local culture, economic pressure, and peer influence. However, most of these studies treat the variables in isolation or use qualitative

methods. The present study fills this gap by examining these relationships in an Ethiopian urban context, offering a structured and data-driven contribution to regional consumer behavior research.

2.5.3. Ethiopian Empirical Literature

Ethiopian consumer behavior research on the soap and detergent industry is still emerging, though several important studies have begun to explore how brand-related perceptions influence purchasing patterns. These studies provide valuable local insights, yet few of them examine all the brand perception variables within a single model, nor do they apply mediation analysis. This section reviews key Ethiopian contributions and explains how the current study builds upon and expands them.

Gebreselassie and Zewdie (2018) conducted a study focused on brand trust in domestic detergent brands, using structured surveys administered to urban households in Addis Ababa. The objective was to understand why families continue to purchase certain local brands over time. Their findings confirmed that trust, built through consistent product performance, plays a central role in building brand loyalty. Consumers were shown to repeatedly choose brands like Repi based on their past satisfactory experiences. However, the study did not analyze the mediating role of brand loyalty nor measure how trust translates into actual buying decisions, which are central to this study's framework.

Tesfaye and Kitaw (2017) examined brand awareness and preference in Addis Ababa. Their research involved a survey of urban detergent consumers and revealed that familiarity with brands like Unilever and Samanu strongly influenced consumer preferences, especially among middle-income groups. However, the study focused more on awareness than on trust or loyalty, and it did not establish whether that familiarity converted into repeat purchasing or deeper brand commitment. In contrast, the present study tests the full behavioral sequence on how familiarity leads to trust, how loyalty mediates, and how all of this affects actual buying behavior.

Assefa and Teka (2020) explored brand choice and price sensitivity in rural Ethiopia, using qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. Their findings showed that price and availability often override brand perception in rural areas. While this research provided an

important comparison between rural and urban buying behavior, it did not focus on urban consumers nor examine brand familiarity, trust, or loyalty as formal constructs. The current study focuses on urban consumers in Addis Ababa, where brand exposure and media influence are stronger, and where branding variables play a more central role in decision-making.

Abebe (2019) investigated how cultural alignment influences consumer brand relationships in Ethiopia. The study found that consumers often prefer local brands that reflect Ethiopian values, language, and customs. While this supports the relevance of local identity in brand trust, the study relied on qualitative insights and did not test measurable relationships between familiarity, trust, and loyalty. The present research incorporates this cultural insight by comparing local (Repi, Samanu) and international (Unilever) brands within a quantitative model that includes all four variables.

Mekonnen and Abebe (2021) explored the impact of digital marketing on consumer awareness in Ethiopia's urban areas. Using online surveys, the study found that social media is increasingly shaping brand familiarity and influencing trust, particularly among younger, educated consumers. Although timely, the study focused on media exposure and did not track whether these digital perceptions influence brand loyalty or purchase decisions. The current study builds on this by including both digital and traditional familiarity sources and measuring their impact on loyalty and buying behavior.

Tadesse and Kebede (2020) compared consumer perceptions of local vs. international brands. Their findings suggested that Ethiopian consumers tend to trust domestic brands more, as they are seen as more attuned to local needs and values. However, this comparison was not connected to behavioral outcomes or formal statistical modeling. The present study addresses this by comparing perceptions of Unilever, Repi, and Samanu using a structured framework and testing behavioral outcomes through regression and mediation analysis.

In summary, Ethiopian empirical studies have explored brand trust, awareness, cultural alignment, and price sensitivity. However, most of these works either focus on one or two variables in isolation, rely on qualitative methods, or exclude key behavioral outcomes like brand loyalty and consumer buying decisions. This study addresses those gaps by examining how

brand familiarity and trust influence buying behavior, both directly and indirectly through brand loyalty, using a quantitative approach within Ethiopia's largest urban consumer market.

2.6. Gaps in the Literature

Although brand perception has been widely studied in marketing literature, clear empirical gaps remain particularly in the context of Ethiopia's fast-moving consumer goods sector. Much of the existing research in Ethiopia has focused either on brand awareness (Tesfaye & Kitaw, 2017), brand trust in isolation (Gebreselassie & Zewdie, 2018), or price sensitivity in rural areas (Assefa & Teka, 2020). However, these studies do not offer an integrated understanding of how brand familiarity and trust interact to influence actual consumer buying decisions nor do they examine the role of brand loyalty as a mediating factor in this process.

At the international level, several studies have analyzed trust and loyalty in developed markets (e.g., Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Erdem & Swait, 2004), but their findings may not be directly transferable to emerging markets like Ethiopia, where price sensitivity, brand access, and cultural influences differ significantly. Similarly, studies in other African countries, such as Nigeria and South Africa, have explored brand familiarity and trust (Ndubisi, 2007; Abratt & Pitt, 2012), yet very few have tested these variables within a single quantitative model, or within low-involvement product categories like soap and detergent.

Furthermore, while some local research has acknowledged the presence of brand loyalty, it is typically treated as an outcome of brand trust not as a mediator that links trust and familiarity to consumer decision-making. To date, no known study in Ethiopia has tested a mediation model involving all four variables: brand familiarity, brand trust, brand loyalty, and consumer buying decision.

There are also methodological limitations in the literature. Most existing Ethiopian studies are either qualitative, descriptive, or focused narrowly on one aspect of consumer perception. Very few apply regression analysis, and none have used mediation testing tools like PROCESS Macro to examine the indirect effects between variables. Additionally, most research does not distinguish between local and international brands, even though this competitive dynamic is central to Ethiopia's FMCG market.

In response to these gaps, the current study uses a quantitative explanatory design to test how brand familiarity and trust influence consumer buying decisions both directly and indirectly through brand loyalty. It also compares the perceptions of global (Unilever) and local (Repi, Samanu) brands within the Addis Ababa urban market. By doing so, it contributes new insights into consumer behavior in emerging markets and provides practical value for both marketers and policy stakeholders.

2.7. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates the key variables brand familiarity, brand trust, consumer buying decisions, and mediating factors such as brand loyalty into a cohesive model. This framework is grounded in the Consumer Decision-Making Process, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Brand Equity Theory, and Trust-Based Marketing Theory. Below is a visual representation of the conceptual framework for the study.

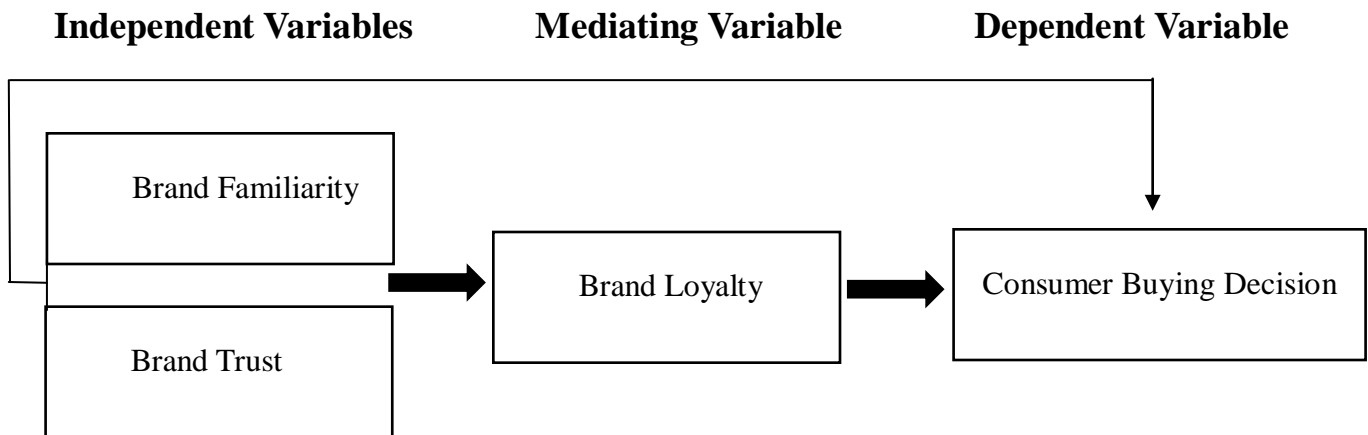


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Source: *Author's Design (2025).*

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This section presented the framework guiding the investigation into how brand familiarity and brand trust influence purchasing choices in Ethiopia's cleaning products market. The chapter details the systematic procedures implemented to ensure rigorous, ethical research practices.

Following established academic protocols, the methodology covers multiple critical components. The research blueprint specifies the combination of descriptive and explanatory approaches used to examine consumer behaviors. Participant selection methods outline the quota sampling technique employed to capture diverse consumer perspectives across Addis Ababa.

Measurement tools and analytical procedures receive detailed explanation, including the validated survey instruments and statistical tests applied to the collected data. Ethical safeguards implemented throughout the research process demonstrate compliance with institutional review standards. Together, these methodological elements ensure the study's findings meet academic rigor while providing practical insights into Ethiopian consumer behavior patterns.

3.2 Background of the Companies

Repi Soap and Detergent S.C.

Founded in 1974 as a state-owned enterprise, Repi has grown into one of Ethiopia's most established cleaning product manufacturers. The company survived early challenges, including outdated equipment that nearly caused bankruptcy in the 1970s, by innovating with new product lines like the Ajax detergent bar. After privatization in 2014 when Wilmar International acquired a 50% stake, Repi modernized its operations while maintaining its reputation for quality. The company produces a range of cleaning products under brands like ROL powder detergent and Largo liquid detergent, distributed nationwide to households and businesses. Environmental responsibility remains a priority, with investments in energy-efficient technologies and waste reduction systems (Ethiopian Manufacturing Journal, 2022).

Unilever Ethiopia

The global consumer goods giant established local production in 2014 at its Dukem facility, manufacturing adapted versions of international brands for the Ethiopian market. Products like Omo detergent and Lifebuoy soap are customized to local preferences, such as the Knorr Mitin Shiro stock cube fortified with essential nutrients. Unilever's operations combine business objectives with social programs, including the Shakti initiative that trains rural women as sales agents and various environmental projects targeting carbon neutrality. The company has responded to economic pressures by introducing smaller, more affordable product sizes and increasing local sourcing (Unilever East Africa Annual Review, 2023).

Samanu (54 Capital FMCG Group)

Since its 2013 launch, Samanu has become a major force in Ethiopia's FMCG sector through brands like 555 detergents and Chef Luca food products. The company's vertically integrated model supports local agriculture while meeting consumer demand for affordable, quality products. A recent \$21 million investment from Norway's Norfund aims to expand edible oil production and Agro-processing, potentially benefiting 200,000 smallholder farmers. Samanu's growth strategy focuses on import substitution, quality improvement, and community

development programs that support rural livelihoods (Ethiopian Investment Commission Report, 2024).

3.3. Research Design

The investigation utilized a dual-method framework combining descriptive and explanatory elements to thoroughly examine consumer behavior patterns. The descriptive component systematically documented existing market conditions, capturing essential characteristics of brand recognition, consumer trust levels, and purchasing habits within Ethiopia's cleaning products sector (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach provided a comprehensive snapshot of current market dynamics, establishing baseline measurements for key variables.

Building upon these foundational observations, the explanatory component analyzed the interconnected relationships between these factors. This analytical dimension specifically explored how brand awareness and credibility influence customer purchase choices, revealing the underlying mechanisms driving consumer decisions in this market segment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The combination of these complementary approaches allowed for both broad observation and focused analysis of the Ethiopian soap and detergent marketplace.

3.4. Research Approach

The study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between brand familiarity, brand trust, and consumer buying decisions. Structured questionnaires were used to collect numerical data from consumers, which were analyzed using statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and mediation analysis. The quantitative approach enabled the testing of hypotheses about the influence of brand familiarity and trust on purchasing behavior, while mediation analysis assessed the role of brand loyalty in these relationships. This methodological approach provided objective, measurable evidence about consumer behavior patterns in the soap and detergent industry, ensuring reliable and generalizable findings (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.5. Target Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Procedure

3.5.1. Population

The research focused on cleaning product shoppers in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, chosen for its unique position as the nation's commercial and cultural hub. This urban center provided an

ideal setting to examine purchasing behaviors, with its mix of modern supermarkets and traditional markets attracting diverse consumer groups (Ethiopian Statistical Service, 2021). The study population included adult shoppers across different socioeconomic backgrounds - from young professionals in condominiums to multigenerational households in older neighborhoods - all making regular detergent purchases for household use.

Demographic diversity was carefully considered, ensuring representation across age brackets, income levels, and gender categories (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 2020). This approach captured the full spectrum of urban consumer experiences, from university students buying their first detergent to grandmothers maintaining decades-old brand preferences. The capital's unique blend of urban and semi-urban characteristics made it particularly suitable for understanding evolving consumption patterns in a rapidly modernizing African city.

3.5.2. Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the study was determined using Cochran's formula (1963). Cochran's formula is widely used in research to calculate the minimum sample size required for a given population, ensuring the results are statistically significant. The formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times q}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n = Sample size
- Z = Z-value (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)
- p = estimated proportion of the population (0.5, assuming maximum variability)
- $q = 1-p$ = Complement of the estimated proportion.
- e = margin of error (0.05, or 5%)

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times q}{e^2}$$
$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} \approx 384.16 \approx 384$$

Thus, the minimum sample size required for the study was 384 respondents.

3.5.3. Sampling Procedure

This study employed a quota sampling technique, a type of non-probability sampling method. The target population was consumers of soap and detergent products residing in Addis Ababa. Since obtaining a complete list of all detergent users in the city was not feasible, the researcher established quotas based on key demographic characteristics specifically age, gender, and income level to ensure that the sample reflected a range of consumer profiles relevant to the study objectives.

Participants were approached in various public and retail settings, including supermarkets, mini-marts, and household supply stores, until the required quotas for each demographic category were met. This approach allowed the researcher to collect data from a sample that was diverse and relevant, while remaining practical within the limitations of time and access.

3.6. Data Type and Data Source

The investigation drew upon multiple numerical data streams to ensure comprehensive analysis. First-hand consumer insights came from carefully designed survey tools featuring standardized rating scales (1-5 agreement levels) that quantified brand awareness, consumer confidence, product allegiance, and purchase patterns (Central Statistical Agency, 2020). These survey instruments allowed precise measurement of consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Existing numerical records supplemented original findings through three key sources. Academic publications contributed established measurement tools and previous study results, while corporate disclosures revealed marketing investment patterns and sales performance metrics

(Nielsen, 2021). Government census records and economic reports provided essential contextual data about market conditions and demographic trends (Ethiopian Investment Commission, 2021). Market intelligence firms supplied specialized industry analyses containing sales figures, market share statistics, and growth projections for the cleaning products sector (Euromonitor International, 2022). This multi-source approach, combining fresh consumer data with established industry metrics, created a robust foundation for drawing valid conclusions about market dynamics.

3.7. Data Collection Method

The research team implemented a dual-mode survey strategy to capture consumer perspectives across Addis Ababa. Structured questionnaires, featuring standardized rating scales (1-5 importance levels), measured four key dimensions: brand recognition, consumer confidence, repeat purchase likelihood, and decision-making factors (Central Statistical Agency, 2020). A preliminary trial run with thirty participants identified unclear phrasing and technical issues, leading to refined question formulations before full deployment.

Trained field assistants conducted face-to-face interviews at selected retail locations across different city districts, while simultaneous digital surveys reached tech-savvy respondents through online platforms (Ethiopian Marketing Research Association, 2021). This blended approach ensured representation from both traditional and modern shopping populations. Fieldworkers received standardized training to maintain uniform questioning techniques and response recording procedures throughout the data collection period.

3.8. Model Specification

The study employed a multiple regression model to examine the relationships between the independent variables (brand familiarity and brand trust) and the dependent variable (consumer buying decisions). The analysis incorporated brand loyalty as a mediating variable to assess its role in these relationships. The regression model was specified as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 M + \epsilon$$

Where:

- Y = Consumer Buying Decision (dependent variable).

- X_1 = Brand Familiarity (independent variable).
- X_2 = Brand Trust (independent variable).
- M = Brand Loyalty (mediating variable).
- β_0 = Intercept (the value of Y when all independent variables are zero).
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Regression coefficients (representing the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable).
- ϵ = Error term (accounts for variability in Y not explained by the independent variables).

3.9. Validity and Reliability

3.9.1. Validity

The investigation implemented robust verification methods to ensure measurement tools captured intended concepts. Survey development began by adapting proven question sets from previous consumer behavior studies, modified for Ethiopian market conditions (Keller, 2013). Five independent experts, three university researchers and two retail industry specialists evaluated whether each question accurately measured its target concept (Churchill, 1979).

All survey items demonstrated strong alignment with their intended measurement dimensions, with correlation coefficients exceeding 0.60 (Hair et al., 2014). This comprehensive validation approach ensured the research instruments properly assessed brand awareness, consumer trust, and purchasing behaviors in the Ethiopian context.

3.9.2. Reliability

The research tools demonstrated strong performance in producing stable results across multiple tests. Internal consistency metrics surpassed academic standards, with all measured concepts showing Cronbach's alpha values between 0.74 and 0.90 (Nunnally, 1978). Brand recognition questions proved particularly reliable ($\alpha=0.90$), while consumer trust items also performed well ($\alpha=0.74$). Purchase decision and brand loyalty measures achieved alpha scores of 0.86 and 0.90 respectively, indicating highly consistent response patterns.

A follow-up assessment with 35 participants after three weeks produced similar results, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.79 to 0.86 for all measurement scales (Streiner, 2003). This temporal stability testing confirmed that the instruments generated reproducible data over time. The comprehensive reliability evaluation, combining internal consistency and test-retest methods, provided confidence in the measurement tools' ability to yield dependable findings throughout the study period.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha analysis

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Brand Familiarity	9	0.897	Excellent
Brand Trust	9	0.742	Acceptable
Consumer Buying Decision	12	0.859	Good
Brand Loyalty	9	0.903	Excellent
Overall Cronbach's Alpha	39	0.943	Excellent

Source: own survey, 2025

The study's rigorous validity and reliability testing procedures ensured the collected data were both accurate and consistent, supporting the robustness of the research findings. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26, with significance levels set at $p < 0.05$. The high reliability coefficients and strong validity evidence confirmed the measurement instruments were appropriate for examining the hypothesized relationships in this quantitative study.

3.10. Data Processing and Analysis Methods

The investigation applied systematic numerical evaluation techniques to explore connections between brand awareness, consumer confidence, product allegiance, and purchase choices. Following data collection, response patterns underwent thorough cleaning procedures to identify and address missing or contradictory entries (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). The refined dataset then progressed to statistical software for detailed examination.

Initial analysis focused on fundamental descriptive metrics - average scores, variation ranges, and response distributions - to outline participant demographics and brand perception trends (Field, 2017). Advanced analytical techniques subsequently tested the core research propositions. Relationship modeling assessed direct influences between brand awareness and purchase behavior, while intermediary effect analysis revealed how brand allegiance connected these elements (Hayes, 2018). Verification procedures, including factor examination and consistency measurements, confirmed the stability of assessment tools throughout the investigation period. All statistical evaluations maintained rigorous 95% confidence thresholds to ensure dependable conclusions.

Mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro examined the indirect effects through brand loyalty. The study also conducted validity and reliability tests, such as Correlation and Cronbach's alpha, to ensure the robustness of the measurement scales. All analyses were performed at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$), ensuring statistically sound conclusions.

3.11. Ethical Consideration

The investigation followed stringent ethical protocols throughout all study phases. Before participation, individuals received clear explanations about research objectives and procedures, with written agreement confirming their voluntary involvement (World Medical Association, 2013). Participant identities remained protected through coded identification systems, with all personal details separated from response data immediately after collection (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Survey instruments underwent careful screening to eliminate potentially distressing content, with preliminary testing confirming appropriate question wording (Addis Ababa University Research Ethics Committee, 2021). Electronic data received password protection and encryption, while physical documents remained secured in locked facilities accessible only to primary investigators. These safeguards maintained participant confidentiality while enabling rigorous analysis of consumer behaviors in Ethiopia's cleaning products market.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the study, beginning with a demographic profile of the respondents. It then provides detailed descriptive results for the main variables: brand familiarity, brand trust, brand loyalty, and consumer buying decision. The relationships among these variables are examined through correlation and regression analyses, along with mediation analysis to explore the role of brand loyalty in influencing buying decisions. The analysis reveals that brand familiarity has a stronger direct impact on consumers' purchasing choices, while brand trust influences buying decisions more indirectly through loyalty. The results are interpreted in light of well-established consumer behavior theories, such as Keller's brand equity model and Morgan and Hunt's trust-commitment theory, offering valuable insights for brand managers in Ethiopia's soap and detergent market and contributing to the broader marketing literature in emerging markets.

4.2. Respondent Rate

The response rate refers to the proportion of participants who returned completed questionnaires out of the total number distributed. A strong response rate contributes to the credibility of a study by improving the consistency and coverage of the target population, especially when using non-probability methods such as quota sampling. It helps reduce non-response bias and strengthens the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the data.

Table 2: Response Rate

General	Frequency	Percent
Filled and returned	359	93.5
Unreturned	25	6.5
Total	384	100.0

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The research achieved exceptional engagement levels, with 359 completed questionnaires returned out of 384 distributed, representing a 93.5% response rate (Dillman, Smyth & Christian,

2014). Only 25 potential participants (6.5%) did not complete the survey. Such a high response rate indicates strong willingness among Addis Ababa consumers to share their preferences and experiences related to cleaning product brands.

Several strategic elements contributed to this successful engagement. Respondents were clearly informed of the study's purpose and relevance during initial contact, helping build trust and cooperation (Fowler, 2014). The questionnaire was designed to be accessible, with both paper-based and digital formats offered to accommodate different literacy levels, technology access, and convenience preferences (Couper, 2017). Additionally, gentle follow-up reminders through phone calls and in-person visits maintained respondent motivation over the data collection period (Edwards et al., 2009).

Although the sampling method was non-probabilistic, the high response rate enhances the internal validity of the findings. Since quota sampling was used to intentionally include participants across various demographic strata such as age, gender, and income. This strong participation helps reduce the risk of leaving out critical consumer perspectives. As a result, the dataset reflects a broad cross-section of Addis Ababa's urban population, strengthening the reliability of insights drawn from the subsequent analysis.

4.3. Descriptive Analysis

4.3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents provides important context for interpreting consumer behavior and brand-related perceptions. The analysis considered variables including gender, age, education level, occupation, and monthly income. These attributes offer insight into the composition of Addis Ababa's detergent consumer base and help explain potential differences in familiarity, trust, loyalty, and purchase decisions across population segments.

Table 3: Demographic Data Summary

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	99	27.6	27.6	27.6
	Male	260	72.4	72.4	100.0
	Total	359	100.0	100.0	
Age	26–35 years	44	12.3	12.3	12.3
	36–45 years	153	42.6	42.6	54.9
	46–55 years	76	21.2	21.2	76.0
	Above 55 years	51	14.2	14.2	90.3
	Below 25 years	35	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	359	100.0	100.0	
Education Level	Bachelor's degree	135	37.6	37.6	37.6
	Diploma	90	25.1	25.1	62.7
	High school or below	63	17.5	17.5	80.2
	Master's degree or higher	71	19.8	19.8	100.0
	Total	359	100.0	100.0	
Occupation	Government employee	83	23.1	23.1	23.1
	Private sector employee	115	32.0	32.0	55.2
	Self-employed	161	44.8	44.8	100.0
	Total	359	100.0	100.0	
Monthly Income	ETB 10,000–ETB 20,000	150	41.8	41.8	41.8
	ETB 20,001–ETB 30,000	89	24.8	24.8	66.6
	Less than ETB 10,000	90	25.1	25.1	91.6

	More than ETB 30,000	30	8.4	8.4	100.0
	Total	359	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The research successfully captured a broad cross-section of Addis Ababa’s consumer base. Male respondents dominated the sample (72.4%), which may reflect the market reality that men are often the primary buyers of soap and detergent products in retail settings a finding that aligns with feedback from shopkeepers during fieldwork and data from the Central Statistical Agency (2021). This also challenges the assumption that cleaning product purchases are driven mainly by women, and highlights the importance of targeting male buyers in marketing strategies.

The largest age group was 36–45 years (42.6%), typically associated with household responsibility and purchasing power. This group’s prominence implies that middle-aged consumers are a key decision-making segment in the detergent market. Older consumers (above 55), while smaller in share, still form a significant market with potentially strong brand loyalty based on experience and habit.

In terms of education, the sample included a diverse academic background, with most respondents holding at least a diploma. Bachelor’s degree holders formed the largest group (37.6%), suggesting that consumer understanding of brand quality and trust may be shaped by formal education; an important factor when designing communication strategies.

Occupationally, the dominance of self-employed individuals (44.8%) suggests a high level of economic independence among respondents. This group may demonstrate unique brand preferences based on entrepreneurial lifestyles or daily time constraints. Private and public sector employees also formed substantial portions of the sample, representing salaried consumers with potentially stable purchasing patterns.

Income levels were fairly distributed, with the majority of respondents earning ETB 10,000–20,000 per month (41.8%). This group likely represents Ethiopia’s growing urban middle class, which is critical for brand-driven marketing strategies. Meanwhile, 25.1% earned less than ETB

10,000, suggesting a considerable presence of price-sensitive consumers who may prioritize trust and familiarity over premium brand positioning.

These demographic insights provide a strong foundation for interpreting variation in brand familiarity, trust, loyalty, and consumer buying decisions. For instance, education and income levels may correlate with brand trust and loyalty, while age and gender could influence brand familiarity and buying behavior. As such, the demographic profile not only supports the relevance of quota sampling but also reinforces the study's objective to explore brand-related behavior across different consumer segments in Addis Ababa.

4.3.2. Brand Familiarity

The study analyzed respondents' awareness and recognition of three major soap and detergent brands (Repi, Unilever, and Samanu) using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Table 5 presented the aggregated results, which revealed distinct patterns in brand familiarity across the sample population.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Brand Familiarity

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am familiar with Repi soap and detergent products.	359	3.59	.685
I am familiar with Unilever soap and detergent products.	359	3.81	1.020
I am familiar with Samanu soap and detergent products.	359	3.59	.685
I can easily recognize Repi products in the market.	359	2.81	1.185
I can easily recognize Unilever products in the market.	359	3.54	1.135
I can easily recognize Samanu products in the market.	359	3.77	1.026
I know the key features and benefits of Repi products.	359	3.23	1.166
I know the key features and benefits of Unilever products.	359	3.57	.946
I know the key features and benefits of Samanu products.	359	3.67	.904
Overall	359	3.51	

Source: Own Survey, 2025

Market research data reveals distinct patterns in brand recognition across Ethiopia's soap and detergent sector. Unilever leads in consumer awareness with a 3.81 average familiarity score, outpacing local competitors Repi and Samanu (both scoring 3.59) (Keller, 1993). The wider response variation for Unilever ($SD=1.02$) suggests uneven brand exposure between urban centers and regional areas, reflecting the multinational's concentrated marketing in major cities (Aaker, 1991).

Product identification tests yielded surprising results. Samanu detergent packages proved most recognizable to shoppers (3.77), surpassing even Unilever's established branding (3.54) (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Repi's comparatively low recognition score (2.81) indicates potential packaging redesign opportunities to improve shelf visibility and consumer recall.

Consumer understanding of product benefits followed similar patterns. Samanu maintained its lead (3.67), suggesting effective communication of its value proposition, while Repi trailed (3.23) in conveying its competitive advantages (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). These findings highlight how brand awareness operates at multiple levels - from basic recognition to detailed product knowledge - each influencing purchase decisions in Ethiopia's competitive FMCG market.

Overall, the results suggest that while Unilever leads in general brand awareness, Samanu stands out in product recognition and perceived product benefits, showing effective local communication. Repi, despite its longstanding presence, appears to lag in visibility and perceived differentiation, suggesting a need for rebranding or packaging innovation. From a consumer behavior perspective, these patterns indicate that brand familiarity is not uniform; consumers may know of a brand but not associate it with specific benefits or visual cues. These results directly address one of the study's objectives: to explore how familiarity influences consumer decision-making in a market with both local and international players.

4.3.3. Brand Trust

The study examined consumers' perceptions of trustworthiness for three soap and detergent brands (Repi, Unilever, and Samanu) using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The analysis revealed distinct patterns in brand trust across the sample population. Table 6 presented the aggregated results, including:

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for Brand Trust

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I trust Repi to deliver high-quality products.	359	3.50	.932
I trust Unilever to deliver high-quality products.	359	3.62	.947
I trust Samanu to deliver high-quality products.	359	3.51	1.041
I believe Repi is an honest and ethical brand.	359	3.78	.896
I believe Unilever is an honest and ethical brand.	359	3.31	1.160
I believe Samanu is an honest and ethical brand.	359	3.04	1.189
I am confident that Repi will meet my expectations.	359	3.70	1.034
I am confident that Unilever will meet my expectations	359	3.78	.969
I am confident that Samanu will meet my expectations.	359	3.69	1.024
Overall	359	3.55	

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The research uncovered nuanced differences in how Ethiopian consumers perceive major detergent brands. Unilever maintains a slight edge in product quality trust (3.62), likely benefiting from its international reputation, though local brands Samanu (3.51) and Repi (3.50) show impressive gains (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The narrow score margins reveal that Ethiopian manufacturers are closing the trust gap through consistent performance, with response variations suggesting urban-rural differences in brand experiences.

Ethical perception patterns tell a different story. Repi's top score (3.78) for honesty reflects strong community connections built over decades, outperforming even global giant Unilever (3.31) (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Samanu's third-place showing (3.04) indicates opportunities to strengthen its ethical branding through transparent business practices and community engagement initiatives.

Consumer confidence levels show remarkable parity, with Unilever (3.78) only slightly ahead of Repi (3.70) and Samanu (3.69). This near-equivalence suggests local brands successfully compensate for smaller marketing budgets with cultural relevance and affordability (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001). The findings demonstrate how different trust dimensions -

quality reliability, ethical standing, and performance consistency - collectively shape brand preferences in Ethiopia's evolving consumer market.

These trust patterns reveal that no single brand dominates across all trust dimensions. While Unilever benefits from international quality perceptions, Repi leads in ethical perception, which may reflect its cultural proximity and local legacy. Samanu, though trailing in ethics, shows competitive confidence ratings indicating growing consumer belief in its consistency. The diversity of these scores reflects how brand trust is multi-dimensional, shaped by both performance and perceived values. This supports the theoretical model of the study, where brand trust is hypothesized to directly influence consumer buying behavior and indirectly through brand loyalty.

4.3.4. Consumer Buying Decision

The study analyzed respondents' purchasing behavior across four key dimensions: purchase intentions, brand preferences, willingness to pay premium prices, and brand-switching tendencies for Repi, Unilever, and Samanu products. The quantitative assessment utilized a standardized 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with complete results presented in Table 7.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for Consumer Buying Decision

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am likely to purchase Repi in the next month.	359	3.12	1.174
I am likely to purchase Unilever in the next month.	359	3.58	.992
I am likely to purchase Samanu in the next month.	359	3.58	.677
I prefer Repi over other brands of soap and detergent.	359	3.58	.770
I prefer Unilever over other brands of soap and detergent.	359	3.63	.769
I prefer Samanu over other brands of soap and detergent.	359	3.57	1.103
I am willing to pay a premium for Repi products.	359	3.77	1.029
I am willing to pay a premium for Unilever products.	359	3.76	1.029
I am willing to pay a premium for Samanu products.	359	3.59	.843

I have switched from another brand to Repi in the past six months.	359	3.58	.754
I have switched from another brand to Unilever in the past six months.	359	3.48	1.035
I have switched from another brand to Samanu in the past six months.	359	3.61	.688
Overall	359	3.57	

Source: Own Survey, 2025

Market data reveals distinct purchasing tendencies among Ethiopian consumers. Unilever and Samanu products show equal purchase intent (3.58), outperforming Repi (3.12), reflecting stronger brand equity for these competitors (Keller, 1993). The gap suggests Repi could enhance its market position through improved product visibility and clearer communication of its value proposition (Aaker, 1991).

Brand preference analysis shows Unilever maintaining a narrow lead (3.63) over local alternatives Repi (3.58) and Samanu (3.57). This near-parity indicates Ethiopian consumers increasingly value domestic brands that combine affordability with cultural relevance (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). The moderate variation in responses suggests different consumer segments weigh brand attributes differently when making purchase decisions.

Premium pricing potential shows interesting contrasts. While Unilever's quality perception supports its premium position (3.76), Repi's surprising lead (3.77) may reflect its strong local heritage and long-term customer relationships (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Samanu's relative weakness in this dimension (3.59) suggests opportunities to better articulate its unique value to justify higher price points.

The findings show relatively balanced consumer buying behavior, with no brand having absolute dominance. Unilever and Samanu appear equally strong in near-term purchase intent and brand preference, while Repi shows surprising strength in willingness to pay a premium, possibly due to local loyalty or affordability perceptions. The high level of brand switching across all three brands also reveals a lack of deep brand entrenchment, implying that functional benefits and pricing still play a strong role in buying decisions. These insights are critical for brands

attempting to foster long-term relationships and help fulfill the research aim of understanding how brand perceptions drive purchase behavior.

4.3.5. Brand Loyalty

The study measured brand loyalty across three dimensions: repurchase intention, willingness to recommend, and emotional attachment for Repi, Unilever, and Samanu brands. The analysis utilized a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with complete quantitative results presented in Table 8.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for Brand Loyalty

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I consider myself loyal to Repi products.	359	3.65	.755
I consider myself loyal to Unilever products.	359	3.83	1.006
I consider myself loyal to Samanu products.	359	3.64	.749
I would recommend Repi products to others.	359	2.98	1.200
I would recommend Unilever products to others.	359	3.63	1.096
I would recommend Samanu products to others.	359	3.76	1.011
I feel a strong connection to Repi products.	359	3.45	1.079
I feel a strong connection to Unilever products.	359	3.61	.822
I feel a strong connection to Samanu products.	359	3.70	.848
Overall	359	3.58	

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The research uncovered fascinating insights about customer allegiance to different detergent brands. Unilever maintains a slight edge in loyalty scores (3.83), benefiting from its global reputation, but Ethiopian brands Repi (3.65) and Samanu (3.64) show impressive retention rates (Oliver, 1999). This near-parity suggests local companies successfully counter multinational advantages through cultural connections and competitive pricing (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2013). The consistent variation in responses indicates different consumer segments form brand attachments for different reasons.

Samanu leads in customer recommendations (3.76), revealing an interesting dynamic where practical value drives word-of-mouth promotion (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Repi's surprisingly low recommendation score (2.98) despite decent loyalty suggests customers may view it as a practical choice rather than a brand they enthusiastically endorse (Reichheld, 2003). Emotional connection metrics show Samanu (3.70) outperforming even Unilever (3.61), while Repi (3.45) could strengthen its emotional appeal (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

These findings challenge traditional brand equity models by showing how emerging markets create unique loyalty dynamics (Aaker, 1996). Successful Ethiopian brands demonstrate that combining functional benefits with cultural resonance can compete effectively against global giants (Kumar et al., 2013). The results suggest multinationals should emphasize quality consistency, while local brands benefit from deepening emotional connections and encouraging customer advocacy.

Loyalty results show a surprisingly tight race, with Unilever slightly ahead, but Samanu outperforming in customer recommendation and emotional connection. Repi's loyalty appears stable, but its low advocacy score suggests a more transactional relationship than emotional. This confirms that loyalty in Ethiopia's detergent sector may stem from different factors than in Western markets such as practical value, cultural affinity, and brand access. These outcomes reinforce the study's theoretical proposition that brand loyalty plays a mediating role, influenced by both familiarity and trust, and subsequently shaping purchasing outcomes.

4.4. Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses and examine the relationships between the key variables: brand familiarity, brand trust, brand loyalty, and consumer buying decisions. The analysis included correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and mediation analysis to determine the strength and significance of these relationships. The results are presented below.

4.4.1. Correlation Analysis

The study measured connections between key brand perception elements using statistical relationship analysis. Pearson correlation coefficients quantified the strength of associations between variables, with established benchmarks guiding interpretation (McGowan, Lee, & Wilson, 2020). Coefficients below 0.20 suggest negligible relationships, while values between

0.20-0.39 indicate weak connections. Moderate associations fall within 0.40-0.59, strong relationships range from 0.60-0.79, and coefficients exceeding 0.80 demonstrate very powerful linkages.

This analytical approach revealed how brand awareness, consumer confidence, product allegiance, and purchase decisions interact within Ethiopia's cleaning products market. The correlation matrix provides empirical evidence of these interconnected relationships, showing which factors most significantly influence consumer behavior patterns. Clear interpretation guidelines ensure proper understanding of both the strength and practical importance of each identified relationship.

Table 8: Pearson correlation analysis

Correlations					
		Brand Familiarity	Brand Trust	Consumer Buying Decision	Brand Loyalty
Brand Familiarity	Pearson Correlation	1	.622**	.861**	.684**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	359	359	359	359
Brand Trust	Pearson Correlation	.622**	1	.704**	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	359	359	359	359
Consumer Buying Decision	Pearson Correlation	.861**	.704**	1	.683**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	359	359	359	359
Brand Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.684**	.604**	.683**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	359	359	359	359
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Source: Own survey, 2025

Statistical analysis uncovers powerful connections between how consumers perceive brands and their actual purchasing habits. Brand familiarity shows an exceptionally strong link to buying decisions ($r = .861$), suggesting Ethiopian shoppers heavily rely on well-known names when selecting cleaning products (Keller, 1993). This correlation exceeds what is typically seen in more saturated markets, possibly because consumers in emerging markets like Ethiopia rely more on brand recognition to reduce uncertainty (Burgess & Steenkamp, 2013).

Brand trust also strongly influences purchase decisions ($r = .704$). This supports existing research indicating that trust reduces consumer anxiety and increases confidence during purchase evaluations (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). When shoppers perceive a brand as trustworthy, they are more likely to repeatedly purchase it, especially in product categories like detergents where outcomes (cleanliness, scent, safety) are not instantly observable.

A strong correlation also exists between brand familiarity and brand trust ($r = .622$). Consumers often equate recognition with reliability an idea supported by Erdem and Swait (2004), who emphasized that familiar brands benefit from inferred quality. This linkage suggests that marketing campaigns aimed at increasing brand recognition can indirectly build trust, particularly when followed by consistent product performance.

The relationship between brand loyalty and consumer buying decision ($r = .683$) further reinforces that repeat purchase behavior is tied not only to familiarity and trust but also to emotional and habitual attachment (Oliver, 1999). Similarly, the correlations between brand loyalty and both familiarity ($r = .684$) and trust ($r = .604$) highlight how strong brand experiences contribute to long-term allegiance (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001).

The correlation results validate the theoretical framework of the study, showing that brand familiarity and brand trust are not isolated perceptions but dynamically linked to brand loyalty and buying behavior. These relationships provide preliminary support for the study's hypotheses and demonstrate how consumer behavior in Ethiopia is shaped by a unique blend of cognitive shortcuts (e.g., familiarity), performance expectations (e.g., trust), and relationship-based loyalty.

From a marketing perspective, the findings carry important implications. The dominant role of brand recognition suggests that companies should prioritize visibility through packaging, placement, and promotion especially in retail environments with low product differentiation (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). However, long-term success will depend on pairing this visibility with trust-building efforts, such as consistent product quality, transparent communication, and cultural relevance. These results challenge some assumptions from Western literature, reinforcing that emerging markets require localized strategies tailored to consumer trust-building mechanisms and familiarity patterns.

4.4.2. Multiple Linear Regression Assumptions

Prior to interpreting the regression results, the study verified that the data met all key assumptions of multiple linear regression to ensure the validity of the statistical analysis. The following diagnostic procedures were conducted:

Linearity

The research implemented rigorous testing to confirm the fundamental assumption of straight-line relationships between study variables. Scatterplot visualizations and statistical tests examined three crucial connections: how brand awareness and product allegiance relate to purchase choices, how these factors influence consumer confidence, and how trust subsequently affects buying decisions (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018).

Diagnostic procedures assessed whether changes in one variable produced proportional changes in another across their entire range of values. Residual plots provided visual confirmation that data points clustered randomly around straight trend lines without systematic curvature (Field, 2017). This comprehensive verification ensured the statistical models accurately represented the underlying relationships between brand perceptions and consumer behavior in Ethiopia's detergent market.

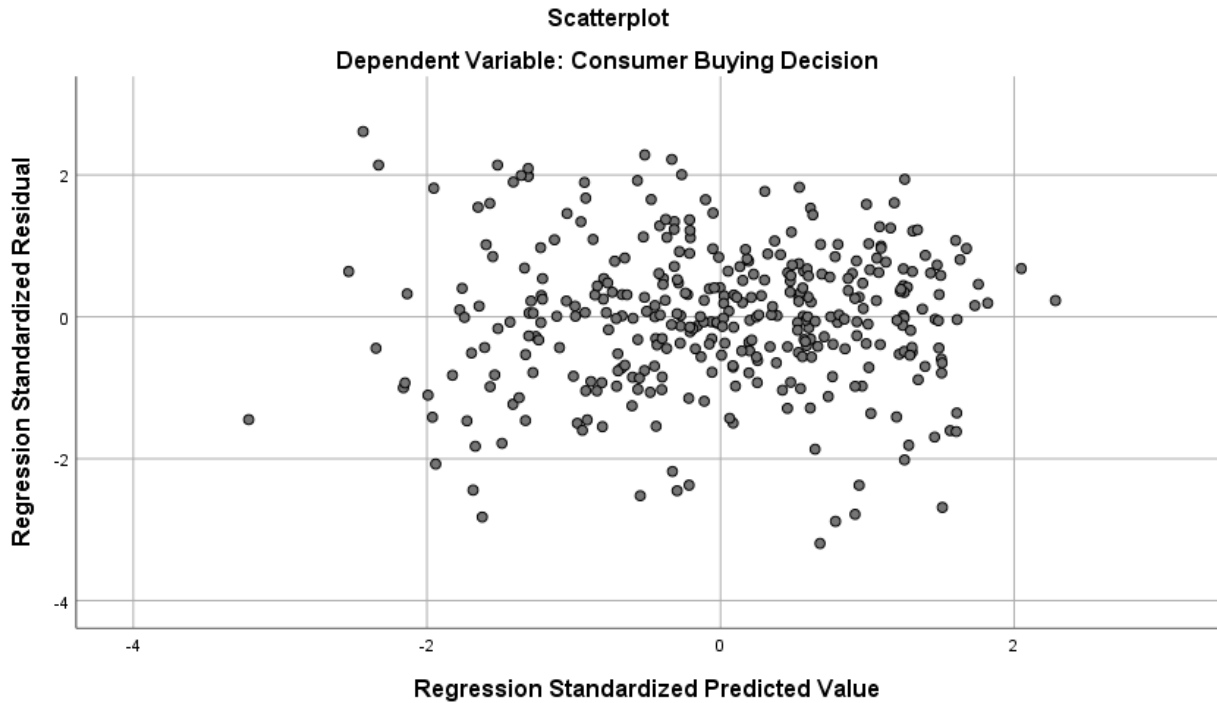


Figure 3: Scatter plots

Source: Own Survey, 2025

Visual examination of scatterplot diagrams revealed consistent straight-line patterns across all analyzed variable relationships (Cohen et al., 2013). The data points followed clear linear trajectories without curved or irregular distributions, satisfying a fundamental requirement for mediation analysis. This graphical validation proved particularly important for establishing that brand awareness influences purchasing decisions through trust in a direct, proportional manner (Hayes, 2022).

The verification process carefully assessed whether changes in brand perception measures produced corresponding changes in consumer behavior that remained consistent across all measurement levels. Such confirmation was necessary because mediation analysis depends on these proportional relationships existing at every stage - from initial brand recognition through to final purchase decisions (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity occurs when independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated with each other, making it difficult to assess their individual effects on the dependent variable. To diagnose multicollinearity, two key metrics were used: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance. A VIF above 10 or a Tolerance below 0.1 indicates problematic multicollinearity (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019). The results were summarized below:

Table 9: Collinearity Statistics

Collinearity Statistics		
Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Brand Familiarity	0.462	2.156
Brand Trust	0.553	1.809
Brand Loyalty	0.481	2.081

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The study conducted multicollinearity diagnostics to assess potential issues with predictor variables in the mediation model, which included brand loyalty as a mediator. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all variables fell between 1.809 and 2.156, while tolerance levels ranged from 0.462 to 0.553. These results indicate no significant multicollinearity concerns, as they remain well below established thresholds (VIF < 5; tolerance > 0.2) as recommended by Field (2018). The analysis confirms that brand loyalty maintains appropriate independence despite its expected correlation with brand trust, which aligns with standard mediation analysis requirements where some association between variables is anticipated (Hayes, 2022).

Normality of Residuals

The normality assumption requires that the residuals (errors) of the regression model follow a normal distribution, particularly for small sample sizes. This was assessed using a histogram of residuals (Figure 3).

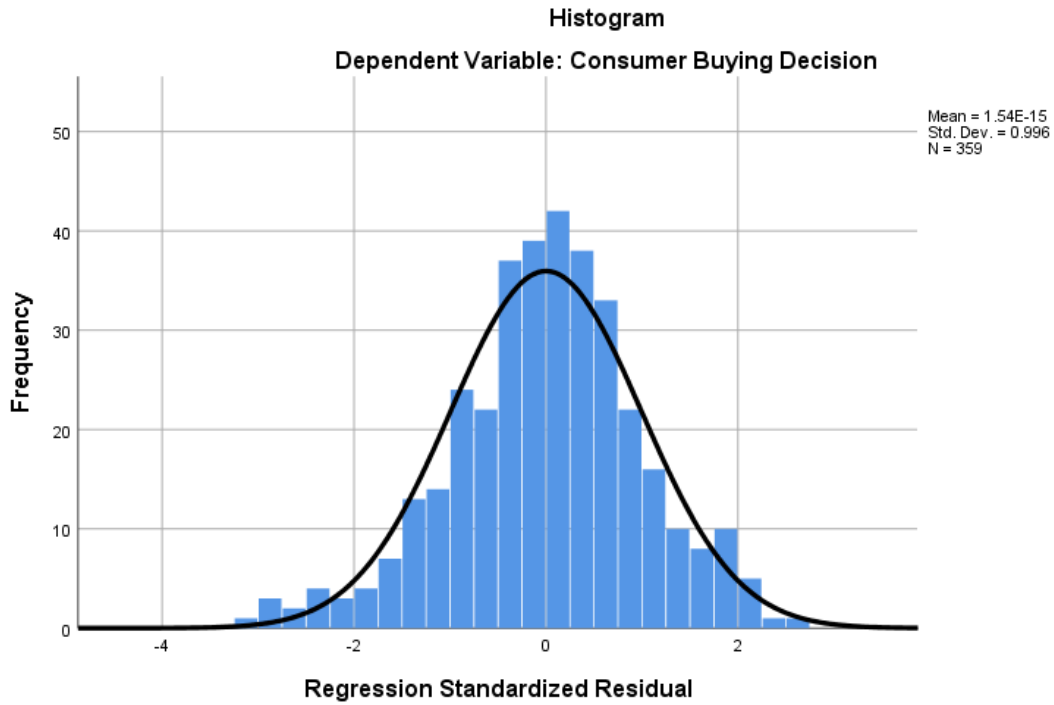


Figure 4: Histogram

Source: Primary Survey data, 2025

Histogram of standardized residuals for the regression of Consumer Buying Decisions on Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty. The distribution approximates normality (Mean ≈ 0 , $SD \approx 1$), with no severe deviations in skewness or outliers.

4.4.3. Multiple Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the combined and individual effects of brand familiarity, brand trust, and brand loyalty on consumer buying decisions in Ethiopia's soap and detergent market. The results are presented in three key components: Model Summary, ANOVA, and Regression Coefficients.

Model Summery

The regression analysis yielded key metrics that assessed the model's overall performance and explanatory power. The results indicated:

Table 10: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.890 ^a	.792	.790	.26388
a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Trust, Brand Familiarity				
b. Mediator: Brand Loyalty				

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The regression model demonstrated excellent predictive power, with an R value of 0.890, indicating a very strong linear relationship between the independent variables (brand familiarity and brand trust) and the dependent variable (consumer buying decision) when brand loyalty is included as a mediating factor. This shows that these brand-related constructs move closely in tandem with purchasing behavior.

The R² value of 0.792 indicates that approximately 79.2% of the variation in consumer buying decisions is explained by the model. This is a remarkably high value for social science research, where R² values above 0.60 are generally considered strong (Field, 2018). The adjusted R² of 0.790 confirms that this level of explanation holds even after adjusting for the number of predictors included in the model, reducing the risk of overfitting.

The standard error of the estimate (0.26388) reflects how closely the actual data points cluster around the predicted values from the model. A lower standard error indicates greater precision, meaning the model's forecasts about consumer behavior are reliable and consistent.

However, 20.8% of the variation remains unexplained by the model. This residual could be attributed to other variables not included in the current study, such as product availability, price promotions, packaging appeal, or psychological and cultural factors. Future research may explore these influences for a more comprehensive understanding.

These findings provide strong empirical support for the study’s theoretical framework and hypotheses, which proposed that brand familiarity and brand trust significantly shape consumer behavior directly and indirectly through brand loyalty. The results align with previous work in brand equity and consumer decision-making theories (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993), reaffirming the importance of building both recognition and credibility in driving consistent purchase behavior in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) market.

All statistical procedures were conducted using SPSS Version 26, with a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$), ensuring rigorous standards of validity and reliability throughout the analysis.

ANOVA

The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test evaluated the overall statistical significance of the regression model. The analysis revealed:

Table 11: ANOVA Table

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	93.976	3	31.325	449.854	.000 ^b
	Residual	24.720	355	.070		
	Total	118.696	358			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Decision						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Loyalty, Brand Trust, Brand Familiarity						
d. Mediator: Brand Loyalty						

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The ANOVA results in Table 12 confirm that the regression model is statistically significant overall. The F-value of 449.854 and p-value $< .001$ indicate that the likelihood of this result occurring by chance is extremely low. In other words, the model’s predictors brand familiarity, brand trust, and brand loyalty together explain a statistically meaningful amount of variation in consumer buying decisions.

The regression sum of squares (93.976) reflects the portion of variation in the dependent variable explained by the model. In contrast, the residual sum of squares (24.720) represents the unexplained variation. Since the explained variance far exceeds the residual, it confirms that the model performs well in capturing the actual behavior of consumers.

The degrees of freedom (df) indicate how many variables were involved in the model. The model df of 3 corresponds to the three predictors, and the residual df of 355 relates to the number of participants ($N = 359$) minus the number of predictors. These values contribute to calculating the Mean Square, which is used to generate the F-statistic.

The significant F-statistic ($p = .000$) supports the earlier model summary findings, reinforcing that the relationship between the set of predictors and the outcome variable is not due to random chance. This adds confidence to the model's validity and to the next step: analyzing individual contributions via regression coefficients.

The ANOVA results support the theoretical model drawn from Aaker's (1991) Brand Equity Theory and Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation framework, confirming that the independent and mediating variables collectively influence consumer buying decisions. The significant F-test validates the progression to detailed coefficient-level analysis and justifies the inclusion of brand loyalty as a key mediating construct.

Practically, this suggests that marketing strategies aimed at influencing buying behavior should not rely on a single factor, but rather integrate efforts to boost brand recognition, enhance consumer trust, and strengthen emotional loyalty. Together, these levers contribute meaningfully to consumer decision-making in Ethiopia's competitive FMCG market.

Multiple Regression Coefficients

The multiple regression analysis quantified the relationships between predictors and outcomes through three key coefficients, as presented in Table 13:

Table 12: Multiple Regression Coefficients

Model		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.646	.091		7.123	.000
	Brand Familiarity	.505	.028	.643	18.070	.000
	Brand Trust	.243	.032	.247	7.582	.000
	Brand Loyalty	.081	.030	.094	2.704	.007
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Decision						
b. Mediator: Brand Loyalty						

Source: Own Survey, 2025

The unstandardized coefficients (B) represent the change in the dependent variable (consumer buying decision) for a one-unit increase in each predictor, holding the other variables constant. For instance, a 1-point increase in brand familiarity is associated with a 0.505-point increase in purchase likelihood.

The standardized coefficients (Beta, β) are scale-free and show which predictor has the strongest influence. Here, brand familiarity ($\beta = 0.643$) is the strongest predictor, followed by brand trust ($\beta = 0.247$) and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.094$). This makes direct comparison between variables possible.

The intercept (B = 0.646) indicates the predicted value of the dependent variable when all predictors are equal to zero essentially serving as the model's baseline purchase level. It provides a starting point for the regression line, although in practice, consumers rarely have zero familiarity, trust, or loyalty.

Brand familiarity has the largest and most significant influence on consumer buying decisions ($\beta = 0.643$, $p < .001$), affirming Keller's (1993) claim that brand recognition reduces decision-making effort. This is particularly relevant in Ethiopia, where quick purchasing decisions are common in retail kiosks and small shops.

Brand trust, while less influential than familiarity, is still a statistically significant contributor ($\beta = 0.247$, $p < .001$), consistent with Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) model of trust as an emotional and functional construct. Its role may reflect perceptions of product reliability and ethical conduct important in FMCG markets where trial and error are costly.

Brand loyalty plays a modest but significant role ($\beta = 0.094$, $p = .007$), supporting the partial mediation hypothesis outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). This suggests that while loyalty strengthens the relationship between brand perceptions and purchase behavior, it is not the only mediating mechanism. Routine buying, availability, or price may also drive behavior (Oliver, 2010).

The tight standard errors across predictors indicate high precision in the estimation of coefficients, and the high t-values confirm that all predictors have meaningful explanatory power.

The findings emphasize that in Ethiopia's consumer market, visibility and cognitive recognition (familiarity) are the most powerful levers for influencing purchase decisions. However, trust and loyalty add emotional and relational depth that encourages repeat purchases and brand advocacy. Brands like Repi or Samanu can use this insight to enhance packaging and visibility while simultaneously building long-term trust through consistent quality and community-centered messaging.

These results also reinforce the importance of multi-dimensional brand strategies not simply awareness campaigns, but approaches that combine recognition, reputation, and emotional connection. This echo contemporary frameworks in brand equity management (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020), and suggests that future studies could explore moderating factors such as culture, digital exposure, or price sensitivity.

Mediation Analysis

This study examined whether brand loyalty mediates the relationships between brand familiarity and brand trust (as independent variables) and consumer buying decision (as the dependent variable). The analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) in SPSS, which estimates both direct and indirect effects, along with their statistical significance using bootstrap confidence intervals.

Table 13: Mediation Analysis

Predictor	Path a (Predictor→ Brand Loyalty)	Path b (Loyalty→ Consumer Buying Decision)	Direct Effect (c')	Indirec t Effect	Total Effec t	% Mediate d	R ² (Full Model)
Brand Familiarity	0.626***	0.152***	0.582***	0.095*	0.677	14.0%	75.8%
Brand Trust	0.691***	0.349***	0.451***	0.241*	0.692	34.8%	60.0%

Source: Research Data, 2025

The analysis reveals a meaningful mediating role of brand loyalty in both relationships, though the strength of mediation differs between the two predictors:

For brand trust, the indirect effect via brand loyalty is 0.241 ($p < 0.05$), accounting for 34.8% of the total effect. This indicates that trust influences consumer behavior both directly and significantly through emotional attachment and repurchase intent. The strong pathway from trust to loyalty ($a = 0.691$) and loyalty to buying decisions ($b = 0.349$) aligns with Morgan and Hunt's (1994) relational marketing theory, and supports Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) view that trust leads to brand commitment.

For brand familiarity, the indirect effect is 0.095 ($p < 0.05$), with 14.0% of the effect mediated through loyalty. The majority of its influence remains direct ($c' = 0.582$). This is consistent with Hoyer and Brown (1990) and Keller (1993), who argue that familiarity works through cognitive

mechanisms such as recognition and recall, reducing the mental effort required for everyday purchases. Loyalty plays a weaker but still significant role in supporting familiarity's influence.

These results confirm that both direct and indirect mechanisms are at play. While trust translates into behavior through emotional connection, familiarity drives quicker cognitive decisions a distinction long supported by consumer psychology research (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Erdem & Swait, 2004).

The findings reinforce Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria for partial mediation and empirically validate Keller's (2003) framework on brand knowledge structures. Trust and familiarity not only shape consumer preferences but also channel their effects through loyalty highlighting the multi-layered nature of brand influence in emerging markets.

Notably, the higher explanatory power of the familiarity model ($R^2 = 75.8\%$) suggests that in price-sensitive, low-involvement contexts like Ethiopia, consumers tend to rely more on mental shortcuts and visibility than on affective trust, as proposed by Burgess and Steenkamp (2013).

From a managerial perspective, this means global brands like Unilever should continue leveraging their reputational strength to build trust and deepen loyalty and local brands like Repi and Samanu can gain competitive ground by increasing brand visibility (to boost familiarity) and communicating consistent quality to build trust that leads to long-term loyalty.

These results align with Lemon and Verhoef's (2016) multi-touchpoint brand equity model, suggesting marketers should simultaneously invest in both trust-building (quality, transparency) and familiarity tactics (repetition, visibility) to move consumers through the loyalty funnel.

4.5. Hypothesis Test Analysis

This section presented the findings from testing the study's hypotheses regarding the influence of brand familiarity and brand trust on consumer buying decisions, with brand loyalty as a mediator. The analysis employed Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) in SPSS, utilizing 5,000 bootstrap samples to generate robust estimates and 95% confidence intervals for all effects.

Table 14: Hypothesis Test Analysis

Hypothesis	Predictor Relationship	Coefficient (B)	p-value	Result
HA1	Brand familiarity has a significant positive influence on consumer buying decisions.	.505	< 0.001	Supported
HA2	Brand trust has a significant positive influence on consumer buying decisions	.243	< 0.001	Supported
HA3	Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand familiarity and consumer buying decisions.	0.095	0.007	Weak Mediation (14%)
HA4	Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between brand trust and consumer buying decisions.	0.241	< 0.001	Strong Mediation (35%)

Source: Research Data, 2025

The analysis reveals several key findings about how brand perceptions shape consumer purchasing behavior. Brand familiarity demonstrates a substantial and statistically significant impact on purchase decisions ($\beta=0.505$), confirming that consumers tend to choose products from easily recognizable brands. This finding supports Hoyer and Brown's (1990) observation that familiar brands simplify the decision-making process, particularly for routine purchases like household detergents. The tight confidence interval around this estimate indicates a high degree of measurement precision, underscoring the fundamental importance of brand visibility in driving sales.

Brand trust also shows a significant, though comparatively smaller, influence on purchasing behavior. This pattern aligns with Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) conceptualization of trust as reducing perceived purchase risk, though the results suggest its primary value lies in fostering long-term customer relationships rather than triggering immediate purchases. The relatively

smaller coefficient size indicates that trust functions most effectively when combined with strong brand recognition.

Examination of mediation effects reveals important differences between the two constructs. Brand loyalty mediates only 14% of familiarity's total effect, suggesting that most of its impact occurs through direct cognitive pathways rather than through emotional attachment. This partial mediation corresponds with Keller's (1993) distinction between brand awareness and deeper brand relationships in his brand equity framework. In contrast, loyalty mediates 35% of trust's total effect, with a substantial indirect path coefficient (0.241) that validates Morgan and Hunt's (1994) trust-commitment theory. This stronger mediation indicates that trust operates significantly through relationship-building mechanisms, converting satisfied customers into loyal brand advocates.

These findings collectively suggest that while both familiarity and trust influence purchasing decisions, they do so through different psychological processes. Familiarity primarily facilitates easier brand selection through cognitive accessibility, while trust works more through affective bonds that develop over time. The results imply that effective brand management requires both visibility-building tactics to enhance recognition and trust-building strategies to cultivate lasting customer relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This concluding chapter brings together the major findings of the study and aligns them with the research objectives. It summarizes how brand familiarity, trust, and loyalty influence consumer buying decisions in Ethiopia's soap and detergent market. Based on the statistical results, clear conclusions are presented, followed by specific and actionable recommendations tailored to both local and international brands. The chapter also offers future research directions to support continued exploration of consumer behavior in similar emerging market settings.

5.2. Summary of Findings

This study sought to investigate how brand familiarity and trust influence consumer buying decisions, and how brand loyalty contributes to these relationships, within the context of selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa. Data was collected from 359 consumers and analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and mediation analysis through Hayes' PROCESS macro. The following findings address each research objective.

Objective 1: To examine the role of brand familiarity in shaping consumer buying decisions for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.

The analysis found that brand familiarity had the strongest direct effect on consumer buying decisions ($\beta = 0.643$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that consumers are more likely to purchase products they already recognize, especially in routine product categories like soap and detergent. Unilever's high familiarity score ($M = 3.81$) illustrates how repeated exposure and strong presence in the market can directly influence decision-making. In Ethiopia's competitive retail environment, where time and product information are often limited, consumers tend to rely on recognition and ease of recall rather than detailed comparisons.

Objective 2: To assess the influence of brand trust on consumer buying decisions for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.

Brand trust also showed a significant direct effect on consumer buying decisions ($\beta = 0.247, p < 0.001$), although its influence was weaker than that of familiarity. While recognition may drive the initial purchase, trust plays a critical role in shaping consumers' confidence in their buying decisions. Among the brands studied, Repi had the highest score in perceived ethical behavior ($M = 3.78$), indicating that consumers value integrity, quality, and reliability especially in local brands. Trust encourages not only product selection but also continued use over time.

Objective 3: To identify the contributions of brand loyalty to brand familiarity for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.

Brand loyalty was found to partially mediate the relationship between brand familiarity and consumer buying decision, with 14% of the total effect passing through the loyalty pathway. This means that while most consumers buy familiar brands based on recognition and convenience, a portion of them form deeper connections over time. Familiarity alone may trigger the first purchase, but consistent satisfaction, emotional attachment, and routine use can gradually evolve into brand loyalty.

Objective 4: To identify the contributions of brand loyalty to brand trust for selected soap and detergent companies in Addis Ababa.

Brand loyalty had a stronger mediating role between brand trust and consumer buying decisions, accounting for approximately 35% of the total effect. This finding shows that when consumers develop trust in a brand's reliability and performance, they are more likely to stay with that brand and recommend it to others. Trust encourages repeated buying, and over time, these repeated experiences can solidify into strong brand loyalty. This is especially important for brands like Repi and Samanu, which may not match multinational competitors in marketing, but win customer confidence through consistent performance and value.

5.3. Conclusions

This study offers important insights into how brand familiarity and brand trust shape consumer buying decisions in Ethiopia's soap and detergent market. The results confirm that while both factors influence behavior, they do so through different psychological paths. Familiarity tends to prompt quicker, recognition-based decisions, whereas trust builds longer-term emotional commitment, particularly when supported by brand loyalty. These findings support key marketing theories by showing that brand equity is not built through awareness alone; the presence of trust and loyalty is equally critical. Moreover, the mediating role of loyalty reveals that consumer relationships evolve over time, transitioning from surface-level recognition to deeper brand connection. The study also affirms that consumers in low-involvement categories like household cleaning still engage in meaningful brand evaluation, especially when brands align with their values and expectations.

From a business perspective, the research highlights the need for companies to design more layered brand strategies. Brands that are already well-known, such as Unilever, must go beyond visibility to maintain consumer trust and emotional relevance. Local competitors like Repi and Samanu, on the other hand, have a chance to capitalize on their cultural closeness and community perception, but must invest more in brand visibility and loyalty-building initiatives. The results suggest that even in a price-sensitive market, consumers are not solely driven by cost they also respond to consistency, transparency, and trustworthiness over time. Effective brand building, therefore, is not just about being present in the market, but about being chosen repeatedly and remembered favorably.

Beyond individual brand tactics, the study makes a broader contribution to understanding consumer behavior in emerging markets. Much of the global literature assumes that trust and loyalty are functions of high-involvement categories, yet this research shows these dynamics also matter in everyday purchases. In Ethiopia's rapidly urbanizing and media-exposed environment, even basic product categories are shaped by emotional, cultural, and relational factors. This challenges the assumption that branding plays a limited role in such contexts. The study offers a localized perspective that can help marketers, researchers, and policymakers recognize the

complex factors that influence Ethiopian consumers and perhaps those in similar markets across Africa and beyond.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the study's key findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed for local and international soap and detergent brands operating in Addis Ababa. Each recommendation identifies what action should be taken, by whom, and how it can be implemented.

- Boost brand visibility to increase familiarity: Local brands like Repi and Samanu should increase exposure through neighborhood billboards, radio ads, Tv ads and branded shelves in small shops. Partnering with informal retailers can help close awareness gaps, especially in low-income areas.
- Strengthen trust through quality consistency: All manufacturers, especially Samanu, should reinforce consumer trust by maintaining consistent product performance. This can be supported through visible quality seals, honest messaging, and local testimonials in advertising.
- Build loyalty through reward programs: To retain existing customers, Repi and Samanu should implement simple loyalty programs and giveaways. These strategies encourage repeat purchases while fostering brand attachment.
- Use emotional storytelling to connect with consumers: Local brands should highlight Ethiopian identity and values in their messaging. Short video stories on social media or radio can build emotional bonds that drive loyalty.
- Improve availability across formal and informal markets: All manufacturers should work with local distributors to ensure presence in both supermarkets and kiosks. Using mobile vendors and small-format packaging will also increase reach in underserved areas.
- Encourage government support for local brands: The Ministry of Trade and EIC should promote domestic production by offering tax incentives, enforcing quality standards, and launching a national "Buy Ethiopian" campaign to support homegrown brands.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Studies

To build on this research and address its limitations, the following areas warrant further investigation:

- Future studies should compare urban (Addis Ababa) and rural consumer behavior across Ethiopia's diverse regions (Amhara, Oromia, Tigray), examining how media access, distribution gaps, and cultural differences impact brand perceptions.
- Research could test if current findings apply to other FMCG categories (snacks, electronics) or service industries (banking, telecoms), revealing whether familiarity-trust dynamics are context-dependent.
- Investigate social media's role in shaping youth brand preferences, e-commerce's impact on loyalty, and how eco-labels/ethical sourcing influence trust amid rising environmental awareness.
- Employ field experiments (packaging redesigns, in-store promotions) and neuroscientific tools (eye-tracking) to move beyond self-reported data and capture subconscious or real-world consumer behaviors.
- Conduct longitudinal studies on economic shocks (inflation, supply chains) or policy changes (tariffs, subsidies) to assess their effects on brand trust and local-vs-global competition dynamics.

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Appendix



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Dear Respondent;

My name is Selam Tigabu. I am currently pursuing my Masters of Business Administration (MBA) at Addis Ababa University. As partial fulfillment towards the completion of my postgraduate degree, I am conducting a research study titled “The Role of Brand Familiarity and Trust in Consumer buying decision: The mediating role of brand loyalty in Leading soap and detergent Companies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia” Through this research, I aim to examine the roles of brand familiarity, trust and the mediating role of brand loyalty in influencing consumer purchase decisions for soap and detergent products across multiple companies in Ethiopia. The findings of this study will contribute to fulfilling the requirements for the degree of Masters of Business Administration from Addis Ababa University.

PART 1 Instruction

- ✓ Please answer all items in the following questionnaire to the best of your ability and knowledge.

Section A: Demographic characteristics

Section 1: Demographic Questions in the Questionnaire

The demographic section of the questionnaire was structured as follows:

1. Age:

- Below 25 years
- 26–35 years
- 36–45 years
- 46–55 years
- Above 55 years

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other _____

3. Education Level:

- High school or below
- Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree or higher

4. Occupation:

- Government employee
- Private sector employee
- Self-employed
- Student
- Other (please specify)_____

5. What is your monthly income range?

- Less than ETB 10,000
- ETB 10,000–ETB 20,000
- ETB 20,001–ETB 30,000
- More than ETB 30,000

Section B: Close Ended Questionnaires

Instruction

For each statement, please indicate your level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 5 by selecting the number that best corresponds to how strongly you agree or disagree, with 5 representing 'Strongly Agree' and 1 representing 'Strongly Disagree'.

Sections	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Section B Brand Familiarity (BF)						
1.	I am familiar with Repi soap and detergent products.					
2.	I am familiar with Unilever soap and detergent products.					
3.	I am familiar with Samanu soap and detergent products.					
4.	I can easily recognize Repi products in the market.					
5.	I can easily recognize Unilever products in the market.					
6.	I can easily recognize Samanu products in the market.					
7.	I know the key features and benefits of Repi products.					
8.	I know the key features and benefits of Unilever products.					
9.	I know the key features and benefits of Samanu products.					
Section C Brand Trust (BT)						
10.	I trust Repi to deliver high-quality products.					

11.	I trust Unilever to deliver high-quality products.					
12.	I trust Samanu to deliver high-quality products.					
13.	I believe Repi is an honest and ethical brand.					
14.	I believe Unilever is an honest and ethical brand.					
15.	I believe Samanu is an honest and ethical brand.					
16.	I am confident that Repi will meet my expectations.					
17.	I am confident that Unilever will meet my expectations					
18.	I am confident that Samanu will meet my expectations.					

Section D Consumer Buying Decisions (CBD)

19.	I am likely to purchase Repi in the next month.					
20.	I am likely to purchase Unilever in the next month.					
21.	I am likely to purchase Samanu in the next month.					
22.	I prefer Repi over other brands of soap and detergent.					
23.	I prefer Unilever over other brands of soap and detergent.					
24.	I prefer Samanu over other brands of soap and detergent.					
25.	I am willing to pay a premium for Repi products.					
26.	I am willing to pay a premium for Unilever products.					
27.	I am willing to pay a premium for Samanu products.					
28.	I have switched from another brand to Repi in the past six months.					

29.	I have switched from another brand to Unilever in the past six months.					
30.	I have switched from another brand to Samanu in the past six months.					
Section E Brand Loyalty (BL)						
31.	I consider myself loyal to Repi products.					
32.	I consider myself loyal to Unilever products.					
33.	I consider myself loyal to Samanu products.					
34.	I would recommend Repi products to others.					
35.	I would recommend Unilever products to others.					
36.	I would recommend Samanu products to others.					
37.	I feel a strong connection to Repi products.					
38.	I feel a strong connection to Unilever products.					
39.	I feel a strong connection to Samanu products.					

THANK YOU!