Effect of Brand Experience on Satisfaction and Loyalty: Linear and Curvilinear Relationship

Ridhwan Olatunji Olaoke

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Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

_____
Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration.

_____
Prof. Dr. Melek Şule Aker
Chair, Department of Business Administration

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration.

_____
Prof. Dr. Mustafa Tümer
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Prof. Dr. Güray Küçükkocaoğlu   _____

2. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Tümer   _____

3. Prof. Dr. Hakkı Okan Yeloğlu   _____

4. Asst. Prof. Dr. Murad Abdurahman Bein _____

5. Asst. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Islamoğlu   _____

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore two models: first, examining the nonlinear relationship between brand experience and outcome variables, i.e., consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty; second, the effect of consumer personality traits on the outcome variables. The aim is to demonstrate that increased brand experience does not always lead to positive responses from customers in terms of satisfaction and loyalty drawing from the "too much of a good thing" meta-theoretical principle. In addition, drawing from 3M Theory, to examine to what extent consumer personality traits influence their behaviours towards brands

Data were collected from 274 participants through questionnaires administered randomly in populated areas and further analysed using regressions. The results confirmed that there exists a nonlinear relationship between brand experience, consumer satisfaction, and brand loyalty. In other words, brand experience influences the outcome variables to a point where its effect begins to diminish and becomes negative. This makes it paramount for brand managers especially in the tourism and hospitality sector to remain aware that delivering a superior experience to their customers does not necessarily increase their level of satisfaction.

The study also confirmed that some of the big 5 personality traits have influence on consumer behaviour in terms of brand experience, satisfaction and loyalty. This further strengthens the 3M Theory as to how consumer personality traits play a significant role in shaping consumer experiences with brands.

This study also provides a fresh perspective on the brand experience construct in the service industry. It departs from mainstream brand experience studies by demonstrating that the relationship between brand experience, satisfaction, and loyalty is nonlinear, where increasing brand experience is associated with diminishing returns of satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Brand experience, consumer satisfaction, brand loyalty, curvilinear relationship, personality traits.

ÖZ

Yapılan araştırma iki modeli keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır: birincisi, marka deneyimi ve tüketici tatmini, marka bağımlılığı gibi değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri; ikincisi, tüketici kişilik özelliklerinin ve dış değişkenler üzerinde etkidi. Amacımız marka deneyiminin artmasının tatmin ve sadakat gibi değişkenler üzerine her zaman olumlu (pozitif) etki yapmadığını göstermek ve "çok fazla iyi bir şey" meta-teorisi ilkesi çıkarımını sağlamak. Ayrıca, 3M Teorisinden, tüketici kişilik özelliklerinin markalara yönelik davranışı etkilediğini ne kadar etkileyebileceğini incelemektir.

Veriler, nüfusun yoğun olduğu yerlerden rastgele seçilmiş 274 katılımcıdan elde edilmiş ve regresyon analizi yürütülmüştür. Sonuçlar bize marka deneyimi, tüketici tatmini ve marka bağımlılığı arasında doğrusal olmayan ilişki olduğunu teyit etmiştir. Diğer bir deyişle, marka deneyimi dış değişkenleri bir noktaya kadar olumlu etkileyip azalmaya başlar ve eksi (negatif) olur. Bu ise turizm ve konaklama sektöründeki marka yöneticileri için çok önemli kılar ve müşterilere yönelik üstün hizmet vermenin müşteri tatmin düzeyini çıkarmadığını gösterir.

Bu çalışma ayrıca 5 önemli kişilik özelliğinin tüketici davranışı üzerine marka deneyimi, memnuniyet ve sadakat açısından etkisi olduğunu teyit etmiştir. Bu 3M teorisini tüketici kişilik özelliklerinin tüketici deneyimini marka ile güçlendirmektedir.

Bu çalışma ayrıca hizmet sektöründe marka deneyimi kuramına yeni bir bakış açısı getirmiştir. Çalışma bilinen marka deneyimi çalışmalarından marka deneyimi, memnuniyeti ve sadakat arasındaki ilişkilerin doğrusal olmayan bir düzeyde olduğunu ortaya koyarak ayrılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marka deneyimi, müşteri memnuniyeti, marka sadakatı, doğrusal olmayan ilişki, kişilik özellikleri

To every underdog who was once looked down upon, this one's for you. You will

rise!

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My deepest gratitude goes to God for His grace that has led me through this process.

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And to Huios Community Network, I would forever be indebted for how much the family has been a huge source of motivation for me. God indeed has blessed you all!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BE   Brand Experience

BL   Brand Loyalty

CS   Consumer Satisfaction

SOR   Stimulus Organic Response

TMGT   Too Much of a Good Thing

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study (Model 1)

The understanding that brand consumption is far beyond a simple concept, rather a multifaceted phenomenon, that can be demonstrated via various experiences, is gradually being established today (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Hultén, 2011; Tynan et al., 2014; Dwivedi et al., 2018). As highlighted in the work of Zha et al. (2020), brands that have grown to be among the most valuable assets globally are brands that endeavour to provide the best experiences overall. In other words, brands that created and offered total experience gain more popularity with consumers and investors than brands that simply sold products or offered services (Zha et al., 2020).

The field of marketing is coming to a proper acknowledgment that turning attention to the experiential features of a service or product geared towards creating meaningful experiences with target customers is equally as important as developing the product or service itself (Ebrahim et al., 2016; Nysveen et al., 2013; Dwivedi et al., 2018). Hence, the advent of the brand experience construct, formally conceptualized by Brakus et al. (2009) who described the concept as consumer cognitions, feelings, behavioural responses, and sensations, stimulated by brand-related stimuli. As a means of gaining a competitive advantage, firms are also adopting effective strategies in creating a delightful brand experience that would fascinate consumers and stimulate repeat purchase behaviour and loyalty (Bapat, 2017).

Since the development of the brand experience construct, a bulk of the research conducted has focused on the positive relationship between brand experience on various outcomes like loyalty and satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Nysveen et al., 2013); repurchase intention (Ebrahim et al., 2016) and other types of behavioural outcomes. The concept of brand experience has also gained traction in the hospitality and tourism literature, although it is yet to receive considerable attention as compared to service management, customer relationship management, and consumer behaviour literature (Khan & Rahman, 2017a; Ong et al., 2018).

The practical relevance of brand experience in the tourism and hospitality industry is quintessential for at least two critical reasons. First, from a strategic perspective, brand experience provides organizations a framework to differentiate their offerings from other competitors and attain a competitive advantage, considering the stern competition and services homogeneity that characterize the industry (Ahn & Back, 2019; Barnes et al., 2014; Khan & Rahman, 2017a). Second, from a customer experience standpoint, scholars and practitioners agree that providing unique, memorable, authentic, and emotional experiences beyond the realm of tangible services contributes to customer desirable behaviours (Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020; Sukhu et al., 2018).

1.2 Research Gap

The existing empirical studies, in their attempts to unravel possible outcomes of brand experience, have relied on the assumption that more is better. However, as Pierce and Aguinis (2013) argued, "all seemingly positive monotonic causal relations … reach a context-specific inflection point … after which they cease to be positive, resulting in

an overall pattern of curvilinearity." (p. 317). Busse et al. (2016) in their study later stressed that although the linear modelling approach is a standard practice in research, one of the main shortcomings of this approach is that it does not account for curvilinearity. Furthermore, Ku et al. (2013) also demonstrated how over-performance of service subsequently influences customers negatively rather than positively.

Assuming therefore that furthering the boundaries of customers' brand experience would yield proportional returns may theoretically misinform us of the real impact of brand experience on both customers and businesses, and subsequently, corrupt the practical suggestions addressed to professionals and policymakers. Thus, there is a need to investigate the possible non-linear relationship between brand experience and its outcome variables.

1.3 Research Objectives

To address the research gap identified, the current study investigates whether there can be too much of a good thing effect when it comes to brand experience. Precisely, does linearity always explain the relationship between brand experience and other outcome variables i.e. customer satisfaction and loyalty?

1.4 Significance of the Study

By demonstrating the possibility of a curvilinear relationship respective to brand experience with consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty, this research provides two contributions to the experiential marketing literature in general and in the hospitality scholarship in particular. First, it extends the current body of knowledge on brand experience by showing its possible limitations in eliciting customers' desirable outcomes, which have been overlooked by hospitality scholars. The present research

therefore also aims at inciting new avenues for theoretical efforts on possible undesirable outcomes of brand experience.

Second, it offers new insights through a curvilinear mediation model in theorizing the relationship of brand experience with customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel, restaurant, and commercial aviation sectors where the creation of customer experience is a critical success factor (Nysveen et al., 2018). While enhancing brand experience has become an area of focus for academia and brand managers to stimulate positive outcomes like increased customer satisfaction, there is a need to exercise caution and moderation to avoid generating negative outcomes in the long run.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted within the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) which is a popular destination for tourists around the world. The country also boasts of about 100,000 foreign students from various countries of the world. This makes data gathered for the study cut across diversities of respondents.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Based on the classic stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework, consumers form perceptions and respond to external environmental factors (including various brand communication) in several ways. This model has been applied in various fields of research like advertising, consumer behavior, and brand experience (see Islam & Rahman, 2017; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Mostafa & Kasamani, 2020).

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) first introduced the S-O-R model which highlights the three focal points, i.e. stimulus organism and response. According to the model, stimulus connotes factors that can influence the internal state of an individual (Eroglu et al., 2001; Mostafa & Kasamani, 2020) in this case, brand experience. These factors are external to the individual and serve as objects of stimulation (i.e. stimuli). These include marketing mix elements and several other alternative environmental factors like design, ambience. (Bagozzi, 1986).

Organism, on the other hand, comprises the internal state of the individual, i.e. cognitive and affective (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2020). As defined by Bagozzi (1986), it is "the internal processes and structures intervening between stimuli external to the person and the final actions, reactions, or responses emitted" (p. 46). Consumer satisfaction is conceptualized as the organism in this study.

Finally, response (brand loyalty) highlights the behavioral response of the consumers as an outcome of the previous variables (Robert & John, 1982).

In addition, while several studies have used this model to affirm a linear relationship, we aim at exploring a curvilinear relationship between the variables. Drawing from the "too-much-of-a-good-thing" (TMGT) meta-theoretical principle, the currently established monotonic positive relationships between the study variables could reach inflection points after which they could turn negative (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013). An over-exposure to a stimulus could elicit a negative feeling and response from an individual. For instance, over-attentive service may produce an adverse effect on consumer satisfaction especially for consumers with a stronger tendency of reactance (Ku et al., 2013). Thus, this research aims to explore this curvilinear relationship by examining the possible adverse effect of brand experience on the other outcome variables.

2.2 Brand Experience

Recent research has demonstrated considerable attention to the brand experience construct as well as marketing practitioners (e.g. Prentice et al., 2019; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013; Das et al., 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2018) since its formal conceptualization by Brakus et al. (2009). However, its root can be traced to the concept of experiential consumption first introduced by Holbrook et al. (1982), which in turn garnered attention from different fields, i.e. economics (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), marketing (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009; Kumar & Kaushik, 2020) and consumer behavior (Addis & Holbrook, 2001).

Schmitt (1999) carefully examined the experience concept and demonstrated dimensions of experience that are superficial, i.e. feel, act, sense, think, from the viewpoint of consumers. Before this, the experience concept was majorly focused on product and service experience. According to Schmitt (1999), consumers were no longer just satisfied by the price and quality of products; however, their attention is retained by the product experiences created which appeal to their emotions and senses. Gentile et al. (2007) described the concept as the experience between a customer and a company, its product, or parts of its organization which includes consumer involvement at different levels (i.e. sensorial, spiritual, rational, emotional, and physical). Since this experience is majorly personal (Gentile et al., 2007), it consequently produces reactions that could be either positive or negative.

Researchers had continued to use various terms in experiential studies in terms conversely, i.e. consumer experience, brand experience, and experiential consumption without examining the peculiar differences that may exist between them (Zha et al., 2020). It was thus quite necessary for conceptual frameworks to be developed that highlight the differences. Caru and Cova (2003) in their research attempted to attend to these differences by highlighting the differences between customer experiences and consumption experience. They opined that customer experience is one, which can only be defined based on the customer–seller transaction in the market place. However, Brakus et al. (2009) demonstrated that experience for the consumer happens in various levels and settings, i.e. consumption experience—when using the product; product experience—occurs at interaction with the actual product; or shopping or store experience which occurs at the location of sale. As such, that experience can be context or situation-specific depending on the setting.

It should, however, be noted that experience goes beyond interaction with the product or service, it factors in consumer experiences with the brands as well. Thus, several authors have attempted to define the concept of brand experience. For instance, brand experience comprises a range of interactions between a customer and a brand which also includes their interaction with indirect touchpoints like brand images, promotion, events, and associations according to Cliffe and Motion (2005). Furthermore, according to Alloza (2008), brand experience encompasses the consumer's perception of the brand at each moment of interaction or contact, which could be in form of brand advertisements, treatment received at the point of service, or the initial first contact.

The concept goes far beyond the benefits and features of the product or service; it covers every stage of a consumer purchase decision process (Skard et al., 2011). As Verhoef et al. (2009) noted, customers having experience with a brand is in phases, which occurs from the search phase to the post-purchase phase highlighting the concept of total experience.

Amongst the several definitions for brand experience, Brakus et al.'s (2009) definition is one that conveys the dimensional nature of brand experience. They described it as a set of "sensations, feelings, and cognitions and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design, identity, packaging, communications, and environments" (p. 52). According to their empirical research and conceptual development, the dimensions consist of:

Intellectual experience - stimuli that evoke the consumer's creative sense, curiosity, and deep thinking (Schmitt, 1999). Brands that create a sense of intellectual appeal are often easily recalled by consumers (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2020; Hwang & Hyun, 2012; Brakus et al., 2009).

Affective experience - relates to the sentiments and emotions dimension of the consumer's experience (Hwang & Hyun, 2012). Various marketing stimuli may evoke positive feelings for consumers or negative feelings (Kang et al., 2017); thus, marketers should pay attention to those stimuli that produce positive feelings (Iglesias et al., 2011).

Sensory experience - this highlights those stimuli that can be perceived through the various body senses, i.e. touch, smell, sight, and hearing (Hultén, 2011).

Behavioral experience - concerned with marketing stimuli that stimulate certain behavioral reactions in consumers, either favorable or unfavorable (Brakus et al., 2009).

These four dimensions highlight the broad nature of brand experience and how it encompasses the various aspects of the experience for consumers that go beyond product or service interaction.

2.2.1 Brand Experience in The Hospitality Sector

While Brakus et al. (2009) empirically tested these dimensions of brand experience in the product sector, their applicability in the service sector has also been evaluated. In the hospitality industry, the relevance of experience cannot be overemphasized. Tourists seek destinations that would create lasting and exciting memories and experiences (Shang et al., 2020). This is why hospitality managers in the various sectors (e.g. airline, restaurants, hotel) endeavor to ensure superior experiences are created for customers to encourage a positive brand performance (Liu et al., 2020).

Previous researchers have empirically demonstrated that customers' brand experience contributes majorly to their loyalty to the brands and lasting memories developed thus influencing the brand image (Gilmore & Pine, 2002; Brakus et al., 2009; Martín-Santana et al., 2017; Rajaobelina, 2018; Liu et al., 2020). A burgeoning niche of tourism and hospitality studies on brand experience, specifically those extending its nomological network of consequences, has thus far provided a promising outlook on its importance for organizations. For instance, Barnes et al. (2014) found in their research that destination brand experience has its positive influence on tourists' satisfaction and their revisit intention. Lee and Jeong (2014) also showed the relationship between online brand experience and the willingness of customers to stay in a hotel. Other recent studies illustrated that the brand experience directly or indirectly predicted brand/destination trust, loyalty, satisfaction or word-of-mouth of hotels and restaurants (Gómez-Suárez and Veloso, 2020; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Nysveen et al., 2018), cruise customers (Ahn & Back, 2019) and cities' tourists (Beckman et al., 2013; Kumar & Kaushik, 2018).

The scholarship of brand experience in the hospitality and tourism literature is still scarce, although scholars underlined its implementation as a cornerstone to businesses' sustainability and competitive advantage (Ahn & Back, 2018; Khan & Rahman, 2017a; Ong et al., 2018). Gilmore and Pine (2002) opined that the concept of experience has its substantial impact within the hospitality industry and hence must be given adequate consideration. Hotel managers must ensure that beyond selling services, they must deliver high-caliber experiences to their guests to elicit more positive responses (Khan & Rahman, 2017b; Hwang & Seo, 2016).

Hospitality and tourism scholars have investigated the nomological network of antecedents and outcomes of brand experience through the lens of Brakus et al's (2009) model in the airlines (Lin 2015; Prentice et al., 2019), cruise (Ahn & Back, 2019), hotel (Ahn & Back, 2018; Kang et al., 2017), and restaurant sectors (Khan & Fatma, 2017; Ong et al., 2018).

While most of these studies seem to agree on relatively common attributes of Brakus et al.'s model of brand experience, few scholars (e.g. Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020; Khan & Rahman, 2017a) have departed from this mainstream by articulating a model of brand experience specific to the hotel sector. This model of hotel brand experience that Khan and Rahman (2017a) argued to be characteristic of a hotel brand comprises of five dimensions:

Hotel Stay and Ambience - which measures how guests feel residing at a hotel influences their senses which includes the hotel architecture, bathrooms, and clean rooms.

Hotel location - which measures how the location of the hotel brand influences the customer's senses.

Guest-to-guest experience - which measures how the presence of other guests in the hotel affects the individual guest.

Hotel website and social media experience - which measures how much correct information is provided on the hotel's website and how their social media presence influences the feelings of the customer.

Hotel staff competence - which measures the perception of the customer on the efficiency of the staff and how it stimulates their senses.

Whilst the dimensions indeed tend to capture the various aspects of experience for the customer, the majority of study on brand experience in the hospitality sector have relied on the dimensions proposed by Brakus et al. Thus, this present study employs the model of Brakus et al. because it has been validated across research in the hotel, restaurant, and airlines sectors.

2.3 Consumer Satisfaction

There exist several contrasting views in consumer satisfaction definition (Nam et al., 2011). However, two primary perspectives emerged - satisfaction as a result of consumption or as a process (Parker & Mathews, 2001). The most widely accepted description is consumer satisfaction as a process, i.e., an evaluation between what is expected and what is received (Parker & Mathews, 2001). Two popular formulations of consumer satisfaction exist among the various definitions and descriptions of the concept, i.e. transaction-satisfaction and overall satisfaction (Roth & Bösener, 2015). The former implies that satisfaction ensues after the product or service is consumed succeeding an encounter with the service provider (Jones & Suh, 2000). Overall satisfaction on the other hand is a judgement based on previous purchase and all interactions with a service provider (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994). Invariably, transaction-specific satisfaction differs from various experiences while overall satisfaction is a cumulative of all the satisfaction that are based on transactions.

Kotler (2000) further described consumer satisfaction as the feelings of pleasure or disappointment a consumer exhibits as a result of a comparison between their

expectations and the perceived performance (see also Armstrong, Adam, Denize, & Kotler, 2014; Beyari & Abareshi, 2018).

Invariably, consumer satisfaction mirrors the overall emotional response of the consumer towards a brand in terms of the experience (Su & Tong, 2016). This view is also adopted for the purpose of this research.

2.4 Brand Loyalty

The sales a brand would make, largely depends on the number of actual customers it has and the number of times they buy i.e. repeat-purchase (Uncles & Ellis, 1989). As an outcome of this, managers and marketers are deeply interested in ensuring that customers are attracted and their loyalty is maintained (Dawes et. al., 2015). This is the reason several brand owners invest much in various means of marketing communication to draw new customers and also enhance the current customer loyalty (Dawes et. al., 2015).

Scholars have extensively paid attention to this topic and described it in various ways. However, in previous years, loyalty has been viewed from two different viewpoints: attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. Some of the academic researchers contend that brand loyalty connotes the consumer's attitude (positive) towards the brand and also the tendency (behavioral) to purchase it (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Dick & Basu, 1994). Behavioral loyalty on the other hand, is more concerned with the frequency of purchase; time interval of purchase, the length of time the buyer remains a customer, the size of the repertoire and the ratio of brand customers who are actually loyal (Dawes et. al., 2015).

Furthermore, it has been argued that attitudinal approach to loyalty is more applicable to studying loyalty of travelers due to the fact that they can exhibit loyalty to a destination, though they may not have visited yet (Chen & Gursoy, 2001). Nam et al. (2011) adopted this approach and defined attitudinal loyalty as the intention of a consumer to visit a destination or his willingness to recommend the brand (service-dominant). Hence, this study also adopts this same approach.

2.5 Brand Experience, Consumer Satisfaction and Loyalty

People are sensation seekers (McAllister & Pessemier, 1982) and resultantly may trigger negative effects when deprived of these sensations (Goldberger, 1993). Individuals search for pleasure and avoid agony (Freud 1950), seeking an intelligent stimulus to escape ennui (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). As a result, experiences make good provision for efficacy and value (Brakus et al., 2008). In addition, the notion of observation is core in the practices of experience, as shown in previous research (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The reason for this is that value is mostly provided by experience; thus, it is expected that multiple experiences can be induced by a brand. It is generally believed that the more positive experience acquired, the more pleased a consumer will be with the brand. Besides, customers too want a repeat of these experiences because it results from stimulations and leads to pleasurable outcomes. Nonetheless, past experiences of satisfaction should not be the only coverage for brand experience, but can also be extended towards consumer loyalty in the future. Previous studies have established that the loyalty and satisfaction levels of consumers can be strongly affected by their experiences with a brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Nysveen et al., 2013). Ebrahim et al. (2016) have also demonstrated that dimensions of brand experience have a significant influence on consumer repurchase intention. Brakus et al. (2009) established a

behavioral influence direct from brand experience; it affects consumer devotion and consumer satisfaction.

Furthermore, in the service sector, creating brand experiences is equally relevant (Khan & Rahman 2017). This is because service experience stimulates customers' service value perception, and customers/tourists more than ever seek more experiential content and benefits than tangible services (Ahn & Back, 2019; Ong et al., 2018). Studies have shown in this sense that hospitality businesses that invest in providing their customers' unique experience improve their brand equity through for instance brand trust, credibility, knowledge, and attachment, (Kang et al., 2017; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Lin & Wong 2020a, b), and achieve and sustain success through customers' desirable attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Beckman et al., 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2017a, b; Kumar & Kaushik, 2018).

From an experiential consumption perspective, customers that benefit from superior and pleasurable experience throughout the service encounter tend to be more satisfied, are more likely to revisit the premises or repurchase the services, and engage in recommending the brand to others (Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Khan & Rahman, 2017a, b; Ong et al., 2018; Prentice et al., 2019) in the hotel, restaurants, and airlines sectors. Furthermore, Choi et al. (2017) in their research on coffeehouse brands demonstrated how brand experience is crucial in building consumer brand loyalty and satisfaction. The more positive experiences consumers gain with the brand the higher the possibility of loyalty and certainly stronger chances of satisfaction.

Various studies in the experiential marketing literature have continued to evaluate brand experience on the assumption that it produces a positive effect on outcome variables like customer satisfaction and loyalty (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Iglesias et al., 2011; Klein et al., 2016; Kumar & Kaushik, 2018; Nysveen et al., 2013; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014). The popular assumption is that the relationship between brand experience and the outcome variables follows a linear pattern. However, Palmer (2010) highlights an overlooked perspective of brand experience, suggesting that the concept has nonlinear features (Yu et al., 2020). Positive brand experiences are created for consumers for instance, in terms of novel factors; however, a repeated or continued exposure to these factors may result in a reduction in the value of such experience (Palmer, 2010; Skard et al., 2011; Yu et al., 2020). In other words, a consumer may have a positive experience in purchasing a new mobile phone, but the value of such experience is likely to reduce by the repeated exposure to the new stimuli.

Furthermore, findings in the work of Skard et al. (2011) highlighted a departure from the mainstream findings on brand experience—brand experience had a negative effect on satisfaction and a very low effect on brand loyalty. This is a major contrast to the findings of Brakus et al. (2009). The findings demonstrate that in the service context, the relationship between brand experiences, however strong, and satisfaction may be either positive or negative. In other words, it could be nonlinear as Palmer (2010) suggested. According to Skard et al. (2011), research on the brand experience concept has been based on the assumption that the dimensions of experience result in positive outcomes. However, findings in their empirical research suggested otherwise implying that brand experience is not always a positive concept. Nysveen et al. (2013) also in

their research on brand experience in service organizations found that brand experience had a negative association with satisfaction and low to insignificant (negative) association with brand loyalty. Further, Nysveen et al. (2018) revealed that while sensory and behavioral experience positively related to satisfaction, intellectual experience, on the other hand, was negatively associated with satisfaction (Nysveen et al., 2018; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014).

In addition, following the meta-theoretical principle of the TMGT, organizations paying excessive attention to providing exceptional brand experience could yield an adverse outcome on the consumer's perception and behavior. While certain marketing stimuli or a mix of marketing tools, e.g. brand image projected in an advertisement or a billboard, may evoke positive experiences for the consumer, repeated or increased exposure may not result in the same original level of response hence reaching a marginal point. Ku et al. (2013) demonstrated that "more is not necessarily better". They underscored that providing services or experiences that exceed customer expectations do not always lead to a positive response from the consumer. In addition, Saklani et al. (2000) demonstrated that there is a point where the effects of stimuli become marginal and do not necessarily increase the level of organism or response factors. Novel factors have a high potency in stimulating positive experiences within consumers, thus eliciting favorable responses or behaviors. It is, however, once such stimuli cease to be novel, the effect of such of positive experience declines in its capacity to elicit the previous original response.

Thus, in contrast to the mainstream brand experience research, this study proposes that relationship of brand experience with satisfaction and loyalty is curvilinear, such that

as the brand experience increases, its influence on related outcomes will increase until it reaches a plateau after which it will cease to increase. Therefore:

H1: The relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction is best described as a curvilinear function.

H2: The relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty is best described as a curvilinear function.

Numerous studies have illustrated customer satisfaction as a proximal antecedent of loyalty (e.g. Ahn & Back, 2019; Barnes et al., 2014; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Nysveen et al., 2013; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014). In this regard, brand experience scholars have proposed that brand experience could elicit brand loyalty by improving an individual's satisfaction (e.g. Barnes et al., 2014; Khan & Fatma, 2017). Khan and Fatma (2017) underlined significant sequential associations between brand experience, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty, while Barnes et al.'s (2014) revealed in three empirical studies that the relationship between brand experience and loyalty was mediated by satisfaction. The current study transcends these previous findings by suggesting that the indirect relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty via satisfaction is not as monotonic as earlier theorized. The paragraphs above underscored that the possible curvilinear relationship of brand experience with satisfaction and loyalty connoted diminishing returns. In other words, and consistent with the TMGT meta-theoretical principle, increasing brand experience will be associated with gradual waning of the marginal increase in satisfaction and brand loyalty, such that a greater amount of brand experience will not relate to a proportional, but an attenuated amount of satisfaction and loyalty. In this vein, this study proposes that the indirect relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty through

satisfaction will also reflect the pattern of diminishing returns. Specifically, the magnitude of the indirect relationship will be attenuated as brand experience increase. In contrast to previous studies assuming a static (linear) indirect effect (e.g. Barnes et al., 2014) and consistent with Hayes and Preacher (2010), this study projects that the indirect relationship will be stronger when brand experience level is low to average, but will diminish as brand experience reaches higher levels. Therefore:

H3: Customer satisfaction mediates the nonlinear indirect relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.
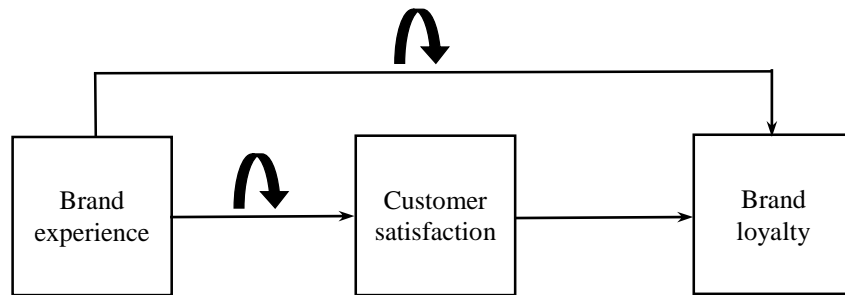
Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Overview

This research aimed to investigate two models i.e. the non-linear relationship between brand experience and its outcome variables (consumer satisfaction and loyalty); and the effects of consumer personality traits on brand experience, consumer satisfaction and loyalty. This chapter explains in the detail, the procedures followed in executing the research i.e. data collection, sample, research design and statistical analysis.

3.2 Sampling and Research Design

The research followed a quantitative research method thus gathering data via survey questionnaires. Considering each individual would exhibit various unique reactions to brand-related stimuli, each participant was considered as the unit of analysis (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010; Brakus et al., 2009). The data were collected through questionnaires administered randomly in populated areas like malls, restaurants, parks, and university campuses in North Cyprus. Interested participants were requested to fill the survey, and their voluntary participation at any point in the survey was assured.

The minimum sample size for this study was calculated with an a priori power analysis using G*Power 3 (Faul et al., 2009). For an anticipated medium effect, at a 95% confidence interval and an achieved minimum power $(1 - \beta)$ of 0.80, at least 136 participants were needed for this study. Kline (2011) also recommended that a sample size N>200 was large enough to investigate the variables studied.

The survey consisted of 3 sections. The first consisted of demographics—age, gender, and level of study. The second section required the respondents to select a brand they have recently (not more than a year) had an experience within the three major sectors of the hospitality industry, i.e. hotel, airline, and restaurant sectors. The third section contained items measuring brand loyalty, brand experience, consumer satisfaction and personality traits. Respondents were to respond to the questions in this section based on the brand they provided in the previous section.

The items used for measurement were adopted from previous research that has established their validity and reliability. To measure brand experience, 11 items were adopted from Brakus et al. (2009). One item "This brand is an emotional brand" was deleted from the finally adopted questionnaire scale. This is because, following an initial pilot study (n=15), the item failed to be understandable to the respondents hence making their responses to the item inconsistent and erratic. Brand loyalty was measured using 4 items adopted from Nam et al. (2011), 5 items were used to measure consumer satisfaction adopted from Grace and O'Cass (2005) and 15 items adopted from Mehmetoglu (2012) were used to measure consumer personality traits. A Likert scale from one to seven, i.e. strongly disagree (1)–strongly agree (7) was adopted for all the components.

Table 1: Measurement Instruments

Variable	Number of Items	Source
Brand experience	11	Brakus et al., 2009
Consumer satisfaction	5	Grace & O'Cass, 2005
Brand loyalty	4	Nam et al., 2011
Personality Traits	15	Mehmetoglu, 2012

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS (MODEL 1)

4.1 Data Properties

A total number of 300 adult respondents voluntarily participated in the survey. A screening of missing values and uncharacteristic responses (e.g. similar rating to all items) led to a final usable sample of 274. The percentage of participants who identified as females was 56.6 percent while the remaining 43.4 percent identified males. 74.1 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 27, 23.4 percent were between the ages 28 and 37, and the rest were aged 38 and above. In addition, the majority of the respondents (67 percent) were enrolled in or had a Bachelor's degree; 27.3 percent at a Master's level of study, and the rest were in a Doctorate program. Concerning the sectors within the hospitality industry, 43.4 percent of the respondents selected brands within the restaurant sector; 33.7 percent selected brands within the airline sector, and the remaining 22.6 percent of the respondents evaluated brands in the hotel sector.

4.2 Instrument Validation

The psychometric properties of the measurement model consisting of the four indicators of brand experience (factor—sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual), customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty were evaluated. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated an acceptable fit of the hypothesized 6-factor model: χ^2 (136) =336.24; χ^2 /df = 2.47; CFI = 0.961; TLI = 0.951; SRMR = 0.043; RMSEA=0.073. Likewise, there was sufficient evidence to support the

reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model (see Tables 2 and 3). Consistent with the previous literature (e.g. Singh et al., 2021; Brakus et al., 2009) and the objective of this study, a second-order factor of brand experience was also hypothesized. The results indicated adequate reliability (composite reliability =0.901) and convergent validity (average variance extracted=0.698), as well as a satisfactory ft: χ^2 (38) =89.16; χ^2 /df=2.35; CFI=0.98; TLI=0.97; SRMR=0.036; RMSEA =0.07. This model did not substantially differ from the correlated first-order factor—sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual—in terms of goodness-of-ft: χ^2 (38) =90.80; χ^2 /df=2.39; CFI=0.98; TLI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.033; RMSEA = 0.071. Since the overall measure of brand experience (with brand loyalty and customer satisfaction) was sought after, the composite score for each variable was determined via data imputation with AMOS 26 and used in the hypotheses testing.

Table 2: Confirmatory Analysis Results

	Loading
Brand experience	
Behavioural	0.8
Sensory	0.842
Affective	0.996
Intellectual	0.671
Behavioural	
B1	0.785
B2	0.784
B3	0.809
Sensory	
S1	0.821
S2	0.907
S3	0.914
Affective	
A1	0.860
A2	0.879
Intellectual	
I1	0.868
I2	0.896
I3	0.860
Brand Loyalty	
BL1	0.939
BL2	0.911
BL3	-
BL4	0.724
Customer Satisfaction	
CS1	0.947
CS2	0.929
CS3	0.925
CS4	0.937
CS5	0.900

Note. Model fit: χ^2 (136) = 336.237; χ^2/df = 2.47; CFI = 0.961; TLI = 0.951; SRMR = 0.043; RMSEA = 0.073. Standardized loadings are reported, all significant at p < 0.001.

Table 3: First-order Constructs' Reliability and Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Behavioural	0.835	0.628	0.612	**0.793**					
2. Sensory	0.913	0.777	0.728	0.699	**0.882**				
3. Affective	0.861	0.756	0.728	0.782	0.853	**0.870**			
4. Intellectual	0.907	0.765	0.566	0.752	0.514	0.688	**0.875**		
5. Customer Satisfaction	0.969	0.861	0.546	0.504	0.668	0.526	0.257	**0.928**	
6. Brand loyalty	0.897	0.745	0.546	0.490	0.635	0.505	0.236	0.739	**0.863**

Note. n = 274, CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; MSV = maximum shared variance. Bold values on the diagonal represent the square root values of AVE.

4.3 Normality and Common Method Variance

A scrutiny of the absolute values of skewness (0.394 to 1.357) and kurtosis (0.193–1.588) revealed that they were below Kline's (2011) guidelines of, respectively, three and eight. Thus, this provided support for the assumption of normality. The highest variance inflation factors the tolerance values were, respectively, 1.471 and 0.86, which suggested that multi-collinearity was not an issue. The literature indicates that quadratic effects cannot be artefacts of CMV (Siemsen et al., 2010). However, they may be attenuated by CMV. To control for common method variance (CMV), procedural remedies were observed as suggested by MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012). The participants (1) were asked to rate their most recent experience with the selected brand to lessen the burden of the retrieval process, (2) were informed of the importance and usefulness of their response accuracy to increase the personal relevance to the issue, and (3) were assured total compliance with the anonymous and confidential treatment of the information they would provide. These procedures were complemented with statistical controls. The survey items were constrained onto a single factor during the confirmatory factor analysis, which was compared with the

six-factor model during the CFA. The single factor was significantly inferior to the hypothesized six-factor model ($\Delta\chi2$ [16] =1875.54, p<0.001) and showed a significantly worse fit to the data: $\chi2$[152]=2211.78, $\chi2$ /df=14.55, CFI=0.598, TLI=0.548; SRMR=0.19, RMSEA=0.223.

Overall, these results indicated that common method variance did not pose a serious threat to this study (Table 4).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean	SD
1. Brand experience										4.27	1.20
2. Behavioural	.941**									3.90	1.17
3. Sensory	.881**	.748**								4.74	1.29
4. Affective	.958**	.870**	.891**							4.65	1.39
5. Intellectual	.862**	.821**	.576**	.728**						3.79	1.40
6. Customer Satisfaction	.530**	.480**	.631**	.538**	.290**					5.54	1.41
7. Brand loyalty	.527**	.484**	.610**	.543**	.291**	.722**				5.50	1.38
8. Gender	.046	.061	.045	.054	.012	-.055	.071			1.57	0.50
9. Age	.073	.077	.024	.076	.086	-.093	-.060	.033		-	-
10. Education	.008	.013	.018	.006	-.006	.002	.017	.163**	.277**	-	-

Note. n = 274, ** $p < 0.001$

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

Hierarchical regressions were employed to test the direct relationship hypotheses. To reduce potential multi-collinearity, brand experience was mean-centered before computing its square term (Cohen et al., 2003). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Results

	Customer satisfaction			Brand loyalty		
	b	95% CI	ΔR^2	b	95% CI	ΔR^2
Step 1			0.013			0.01
Gender	-0.176	-0.525, 0.173		0.193	-0.151, 0.536	
Age	-0.243	-0.545, 0.059		-0.154	-0.451, 0.143	
Education	0.096	-0.209, 0.400		0.056	-0.243, 0.356	
Step 2			0.291			0.282
BE	0. .641***	0.520, 0.761		0. .620***	0.500, 0.739	
Step 3			0.01			0.042
BE square	-0. 078*	-0.156, -0.001		-0. 155***	-0.230, -0.079	
Total			0.314			0.332

Note. n = 274. BE = brand experience. $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$

The square term of brand experience was associated with customer satisfaction (b=−0.078, p=0.05) above and beyond the first-order term and the controls and explained an additional one percent increase in the overall variance of customer satisfaction (R2=0.314), thus lending support for Hypothesis 1.
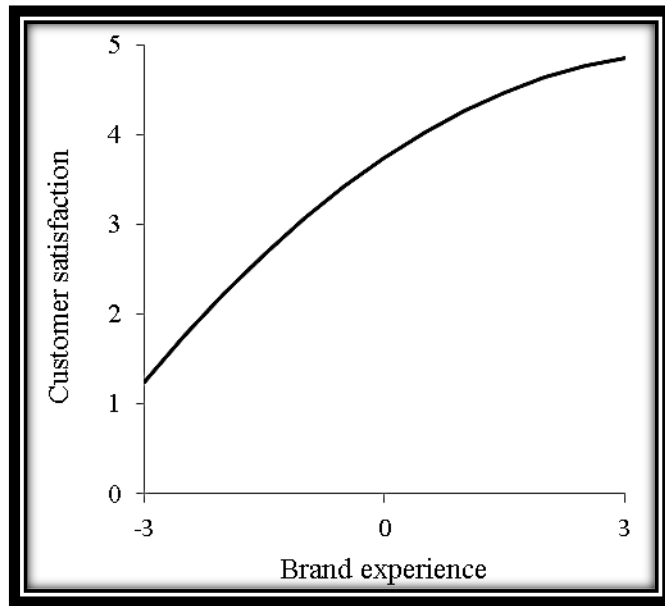
Figure 2: Curvilinear association between brand experience and customer satisfaction

The negative sign indicates an inverted U-shaped curve. The plot of the relationship (Fig. 2) indicated that the relationship became asymptotic at the highest end of the brand experience continuum.
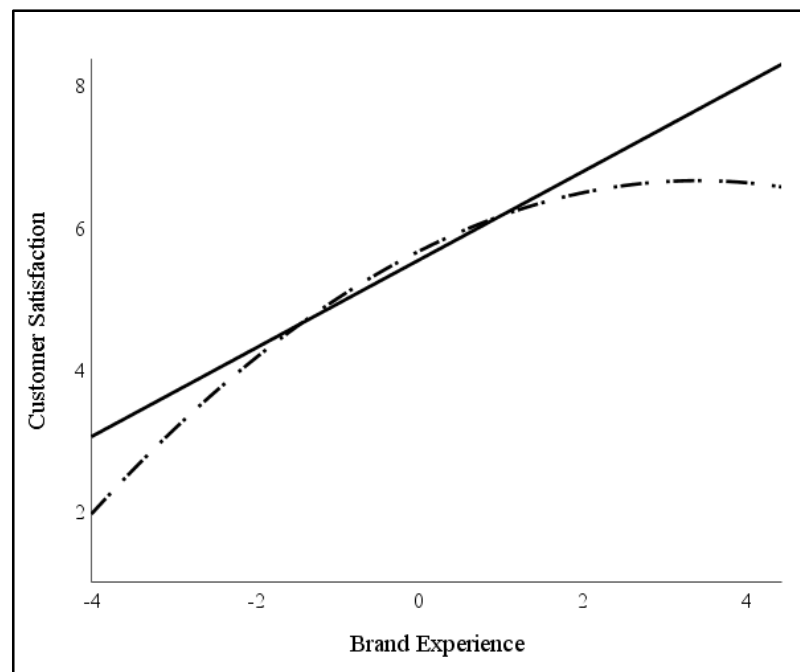
Figure 3: Linear vs Curvilinear model

Table 6: Linear vs Curvilinear model

	Outcome: customer satisfaction			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	t	β	t
Brand experience	.53***	10.30	.50***	9.28
Brand experience^2			-.116*	-2.18
R^2	.281		.293	
ΔR^2			.012	
F	106.05***		56.13***	

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

The results further indicated that the square term of brand experience was associated with brand loyalty (b=−0.155, p <0.001) above and beyond the controls and first-order effect and explained slightly above four percent of the incremental variance in brand loyalty (R2=0.332). The negative sign and the statistical significance of the squared term indicated the brand experience and brand loyalty had an inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationship, supporting Hypothesis 2. The turning point of the curve was 1.75 standard deviations above the mean score of brand experience.
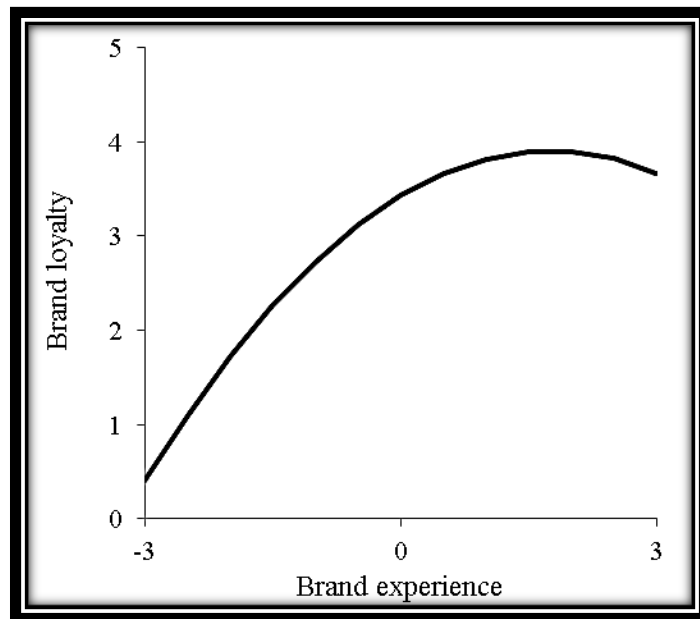
Figure 4: Curvilinear association between brand experience and brand loyalty
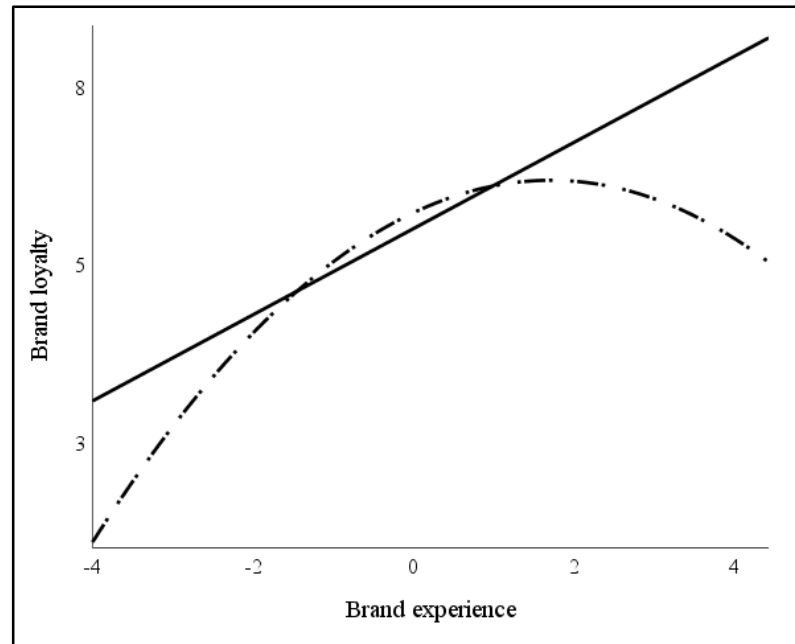
Figure 5: Linear vs Curvilinear relationship

Table 7: Linear vs Curvilinear model

	Outcome: brand loyalty			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	t	β	t
Brand experience	.53***	10.22	.46***	8.84
Brand experience^2			-.217***	-4.14
R^2	.277		.32	
ΔR^2			.04	
F	104.37***		63.84***	

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

To test the curvilinear indirect relationship of brand experience with brand loyalty through customer satisfaction, the SPSS macro MEDCURVE (Hayes & Preacher 2010) was employed. When the paths of the predictor (X) to the mediator (M) (path a) and mediator to the outcome (Y) (path b) are linear, the indirect effect (ab) is constant.

However, when X is nonlinearly associated with M or M has a nonlinear relationship with Y, the resulting indirect effect reflects the change in Y via M conditionally to the change at different levels of X, M, or both and is referred to as the instantaneous

indirect effect of X (θx) (Hayes & Preacher 2010). A 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) from 5000 replications was used to test the significance of θx at the mean and one standard deviation below (low) and above (high) the mean score of brand experience. The instantaneous indirect effects at low (θx = 3.07=0.47, SE=0.10, CI [0.28, 0.67]), average (θx = 4.27=0.36, SE=0.06, CI [0.26, 0.48]), and high (θx = 5.46=0.25, SE=0.07, CI [0.09, 0.42]) levels of brand experience were all significant since none of the CI indicated zero. This provided support for Hypothesis 3 (Fig. 3).

Chapter 5

FINDINGS FOR FIRST MODEL

5.1 Discussion

Drawing on the TMGT meta-theoretical principle and the S-O-R model, this research attempted at exploring the nonlinear relationship between brand experience and its outcome variables (i.e., consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty). The results from the study supported the proposed hypotheses. The findings indicated that brand experience does not always positively and linearly relate to customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hospitality sector. On the contrary, the positive relationship of brand experience with customer satisfaction and loyalty increases to a certain point where it plateaus and then ceases to increase. After this peak, any further increase in brand experience would relate to diminishing returns.

These findings are consistent with Palmer (2010), Skard et al. (2011), and Yu et al. (2020) who have demonstrated and opined that continuous exposure to positive experience can lead to a reduction in the value of such experience, thus declining to positively influence customer satisfaction and subsequently loyalty. Skard et al. (2011) in their research in the service sector, showed a negative influence of brand experience on satisfaction and very low influence on brand loyalty. Nysveen et al. (2013, 2018) also demonstrated that in service organizations, there was a negative association between brand experience and satisfaction along with brand loyalty. This emphasizes the fact that brand experience could influence either positively or negatively. The

findings in this study corroborate with the previous findings stated above and further establishes that brand experience could produce nonlinear effects on the outcome variables.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The study at hand offers a different perspective from prior literature on brand experience and customers' behaviors (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009; Ebrahim et al., 2016; Iglesias et al., 2019) that have enlightened our understanding of how brand experience reflects the satisfaction of customers and their loyalty to a brand they patronize. Most of existing experiential consumption studies have since confirmed the assumption that customers as sensation seekers (McAllister & Pessemier, 1982) exhibit positive responses such as repurchase intention, referrals, or loyalty (Nikhashemi et al., 2019; Prentice et al. 2019) to a brand that satisfyingly arouses their senses and cognitively engages them. Further scholars empirically evidenced some underlying processes (e.g. functional and wellness value, brand personality, brand love) and boundary conditions (e.g. employee empathy, service quality) that define the relationship between brand experience and customers' responses (Iglesias et al., 2019; Japutra & Molinillo, 2019; Prentice et al., 2019).

This study contributes to the foregoing brand experience literature by proposing some of the first empirical evidence on the curvilinear association of brand experience and customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Drawing from the S-O-R model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and the TMGT meta-theory (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013), the current work departs from existing research by revealing that customer attitudes and behaviors do not necessarily associate proportionally to an increase in brand experience. The findings suggest that despite an overall positive trend, the improvement rate of

customer satisfaction slowly declined to reach a plateau as brand experience increases. In other words, greater amounts of brand experience cease to have a positive association with customer satisfaction as the relationship becomes asymptotic (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013).

Although contemporary scholars have disregarded this perspective and have rather emphatically relied on the assumption of the more the better, the findings in this work are consistent with Saklani et al. (2000) who underscored that as stimuli reach their supraliminal level, they do not elicit the equivalent increase in the magnitude of the organism response. This study may also explain why a negative relationship between brand experience, satisfaction, and loyalty was discovered in the work of Nysveen et al. (2013).

Second, this study reveals that increasing amounts of brand experience not only relates to diminishing returns in customer loyalty but also that it may at the extreme positive end associates with an adverse role in loyalty. Thus, in contrast to the existing brand experience body of knowledge, this study shows that an overemphasis on maximizing customer brand experience may not proportionally strengthen their loyalty. In fact, it reveals an underlying paradox whereby excessive service experiences cease to content a customer and start to overwhelm a customer to the point of eliciting adversely anticipated outcomes (Ku et al., 2013).

Although the following explanation is beyond the scope of the study and data, a potential reason for diminishing loyalty could be attributed to customers' switching intentions and behaviors. Past scholars have demonstrated that variety-seeking can lead satisfied customers to still turn down a focal brand, thereby retrograding loyalty

as a less relevant measure of success in the hospitality sector (Cheng et al., 2016; Nysveen et al., 2018; Sang et al., 2018). Thus, despite its general positive association to brand loyalty, over-optimized brand experience may inadvertently arouse customers' need for variety and possibly curiosity for competitor's offerings, which could impede their loyalty.

Finally, this work proposed a curvilinear indirect relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty through customer satisfaction. The results suggested that increasing the experience of customers with a perception of low to moderate brand experience can make them more loyal to the brand through their satisfaction. For customers reporting a great brand experience, increasing their experience can still make them more loyal through their satisfaction, although at a lesser magnitude than those with a low experience. This indicates diminishing returns for improving experience when there is an already optimized customer brand experience. In other words, too much of a brand experience of customers can become less effective in satisfying and retaining customers. At the time of writing, there was no analog empirical study that could corroborate the current findings, which nonetheless supports and expand the scope of the TMGT meta-theory (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013) to the marketing and experiential consumption research.

5.3 Practical Implications

Based on the findings in this study demonstrating the nonlinear relationship between brand experience and the outcome variables (i.e., customer satisfaction and brand loyalty), brand managers especially in the hospitality sector must remain aware that delivering superior experience to their customers does not necessarily increase their level of satisfaction. In fact, as demonstrated in this study, continuous focus on

increasing positive experience will reach a point where the customer is no longer thrilled or delighted and subsequently result in a decline. As Ku et al., (2013) has shown in their research, over-performance of service can result in a negative influence on the customer. Thus, as managers continue to ensure they deliver positive experiences to customers, a balance must be maintained in ensuring they are not over-performing or over-indulging. Extreme attentiveness to service delivery to provide a higher level of experience to customers will in turn elicit a negative response especially in cases where customers feel trapped and feel like they have no choice (Ku et al., 2013). Considering this study focused on areas within the hospitality sector where the tendency to create customer experience is higher, it gives brand managers a fresh new perspective to consider when developing strategies to enhance customer brand experience.

Beyond the customer experiential perspective, it is also noteworthy that the findings of this study address marketing managers' and professionals' budgeting and spending over brand experience. Overspending to maximize brand experience on the premise that the more the better could be ill-informed decisions that could turn unprofitable. While this study does not imply frugality in customer experience spending, it suggests decision-makers in experiential marketing not to allocate excessive capital on brand experience that may turn out challenging and costly to sustain.

Chapter 6

PERSONALITY TRAITS ON BRAND EXPERIENCE, CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

6.1 Background of the Study (Model 2)

While consumer experiences with brands elicit some forms of consumer behaviors and responses, it is noteworthy to state that these responses may vary in kind, across different individual consumers. It is only logical not to expect all consumers to perceive, interpret and respond similarly to the same brand stimulation. As noted by Pullman and Gross (2004), there are factors outside of the organization's control that produce substantial effects on the consumer's experience. The way an individual responds or perceives a specific experience may be subject to various factors like public or personal perceptions, previous experiences, word of mouth, and especially personality traits. Research on brand experience since developed by Brakus et al. (2009) have largely considered the concept as a predicting variable with very little emphasis on possibilities of its antecedents.

6.2 Research Gap

This study focuses on consumer personality traits as one of the antecedents to brand experience. Personality traits have been adopted in marketing research to analyze a myriad of affect responses of consumers to products e.g. ad-evoked feelings (see Mooradian, 1996); customer satisfaction and emotions (see Matzler et al., 2005; Mooradian & Olver, 1997). Considering the established relationship between

individual affectional states and personality (see Mooradian, 1996; Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991), the consumption experience concept gives a valid reason to consider personality as a strong predictor (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Various conceptual models of consumer reactions to dissatisfaction and post-purchase processes have posited personality as a vital consumer antecedent (Singh, 1990). Mehmetoglu (2012), in his research, demonstrated this by showing how personality traits of consumers could predict their responses to various experiential activities (see also Costa & McCrae, 1980; Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Burke et al., 2006; Peeters et al., 2006; Barnett, 2006).

The concept of brand experience highlights the various areas of stimulation i.e. behavioral, intellectual, sensory and affective, however, for individuals; the mode of response may vary in these different areas. To the author's knowledge, since the conceptualization of the brand experience construct, there have been few or no research examining personality traits as a possible antecedent to brand experience. Mowen's 3M theory and the trait theory give grounds of implication that individuals would interpret or respond to stimuli based on their various personality traits. While a few research aforementioned have analyzed personality traits holistically with relations to experiential consumption, and a number have considered it as a moderating variable (see Garg et al., 2016), it is important to evaluate it as a salient predictor in the context of brand experience specifically.

This research aims to contribute to existing literature extending the 3M theory of motivation and personality to brand constructs by showing that consumers' interaction with brands are significantly influenced by consumers' personality traits. Beyond creating positive brand experiences for customers, it is important to take into

consideration, the underlying factors like personality traits that could largely influence the effect of such experience. The existing differences between individuals must be considered, as there can be no one size fit all approach when it comes to consumer behavior. Experiences do not occur in a vacuum, a number factors influence the nature of experience for the consumer, personality traits are among those factors.

Chapter 7

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

7.1 Personality Traits (The Big Five)

According to Cervone and Pervin (2013, pp. 8), personality consist of "psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving". Personality traits form part of the primary fundamental sources of evaluating individual behavior especially in the case of response to marketing stimuli initiated by brands (McCrae & Costa, 1990).

Till today, McCrae and Costa's (1987) Big Five model consisting of - extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience, is considered a point of reference in the trait theory of personality (Gosling et al, 2003). Based on the five traits, the model evaluates how various individuals rank on these personality traits. Every individual today has all five traits of personality but at unpredictable levels, so some may score low in one or more traits and high in several other dimensions (Nettle, 2009). The five personality-based traits include:

Openness to experience - attributed to being non-conforming, intelligent and imaginative, the openness to new ideas and experience (McCrae & Costa, 1997; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Individuals who are open have a higher tendency of trying new experiences (negative or positive) than those who are closed (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

While closed individuals choose familiarity and routine, open individuals appreciate variety (McCrae & Costa, 1997; Caliskan, 2019).

Neuroticism - associated with an individual's proneness to distress, state of volatility, despair, personal insecurity, depression and worry. On the opposite spectrum of this are individuals who are relaxed, calm, and secured (Ekinci & Dawes, 2009; Caliskan, 2019; Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Conscientiousness - attributed to being responsible, organized, dogged and largely reliable. These individuals are more achievement oriented and are more concerned about completing tasks efficiently (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Singh & Singh, 2009).

Agreeableness - measures the extent to which an individual is cooperative, courteous, caring, and empathetic. These individuals are considered forgiving, generous, helpful and highly tolerant (Ekinci & Dawes, 2009).

Extraversion -demonstrates the level of social interaction an individual possesses also including their level of assertiveness, control, ambitiousness and friendliness (McCrae and Costa, 1987; Judge et al., 1999; John and Srivastava, 1999; Mowen, 2000; Hong et al., 2008; Jani & Han, 2014; Islam et al., 2017).

7.2 Theoretical Framework

According to the "Trait Theory" by Gordon W. Allport (see Cervone and Pervin, 2013), personality traits largely influence an individual's expressions and behavior towards a specific object. The theory, which encompasses all of the "big five", indicate that consumers' reactions and perception of events and reality are largely predicted by their varying personality traits. Invariably, the implication within the marketing

context is that consumers would react and demonstrate certain behaviors towards brands (positive or negative) depending on their various personality traits.

Furthermore, based on Mowen's (2000) 3M Theory on motivation and personality traits, a framework is provided guiding the actions and behaviors of consumers. The framework sets a hierarchical model of personality traits consisting of 4 levels i.e. elemental traits, compound traits, situational traits and surface level traits (Fang & Mowen, 2009). This hierarchical model posits that behaviors in the higher order traits are influenced by the lower-order traits (Mowen & Spears, 1999).

Elemental traits which include the big five traits are underlying individual traits that arise from genetics and the individual's learning history (Mowen, 2000). These traits are considered lower-order traits because they exist at the base level. For instance, an individual high on openness to experience or extraversion provides a basis that this could lead the individual to desire to engage or patronize a brand even if the brand is relatively new.

Compound traits are as a result of the combination of elemental traits, culture and individual's learning history. These eventually stimulate the individual's tendency to perform an action (Mowen, 2000). Examples of compound traits include, need for learning, need for activity and need for play. As aforementioned, the elemental traits of "openness to experience" could influence the individual's compound trait of need for activity i.e. to patronize or interact with a brand.

Situational traits on the other hand, are a resultant effect of a combination of the above mentioned traits along with situational contexts. They define an individual's

disposition to act or respond in a certain way given the context of the situation. These traits exist at the third level of the hierarchical model. For instance, an individual who eventually engages or patronizes a brand is thus influenced to experience the brand positively or negatively depending on the situational contexts like infrastructure, sensory stimulation or intellectual stimulation.

In addition, consumer experiences with brands will be influenced by a number of situation specific factors and individual factors as noted by Palmer (2010). In the work of Verhoef et al. (2009), it was posited that individual and situational moderators significantly moderates the effects on the experience of consumers. These individual moderators include attitudes, socio-demographics and types of goals. The situational moderators on the other hand include season, store location, type of store, culture and economic climate. This model adds support to the stated fact that consumer experiences are behaviors exhibited at the situational level of the hierarchical model.

Surface traits like satisfaction tendency and brand loyalty are more visible in the higher hierarchy and also described as dispositions that are category-specific (Mowen. 2000). These traits emerge from a combination of the other three i.e. elemental, compound and situational traits. According to Mowen (2000), factors like the individual's interaction with the product or brand serve as triggers for these surface level traits.

Furthermore, according to Pullman and Gross (2004), there are factors beyond management control that influence consumer experiences with the brand or product. These factors included cultural background shaping individual perception, learning history, customer's prior experience and a number of other factors. This also adds credence to Mowen's (2000) 3M Theory as it further exhibits how experiences do not

emerge from a vacuum rather a function of a number of factors and combination of traits. According to Palmer (2010), an effective measure of consumer experiences would have to take into consideration these moderating influences.

This research focuses on the assumption that the perception and interpretation of experiences of customers with a particular brand would vary depending on their personality traits. Customers tend to choose or relate with features of brands that are congruent with their personality traits in terms of emotions and feelings (Singh et al, 2021). These personality traits invariably would have effects on their behavior, emotions, and feelings towards the brand (Chen et al, 2016; Kocabulut & Albayrak, 2019). In other words, brands are evaluated by customers based on the consumers' personality traits (Caliskan, 2019).

Previous studies (e.g. Walls et al., 2011) have found that consumer personality traits influence the experience dimension of different consumers. The study further highlighted that the sensitivity of customers in a hotel varied among different customers based on their personal characteristics which included personality. Sensory stimulation – a personality factor may sway customer's reaction to the service in their environment. Grossbart et al. (1990) highlighted that a sensation seeking customer is more likely be in harmony with the environment and draw more information from a greater number of sensory cues than one who is less sensation seeking. Hence, the more sensitive a person is able to process these cues, the more the informational value of environment.

Study that confirmed strong correlation between sensation seeking behavior and varying personality dimension supported the notion that personality dimensions may be significant for predicting experiential consumption (Aluja et al., 2003).

Several studies have also affirmed the significance of all of the five personality traits in influencing consumers' relationship and emotions towards a brand (Mann & Rawat, 2016; Roy et al., 2013).

A recent study by Smith (2020) adapting the 3M Theory to brand and marketing contexts also found that the lower-order elemental traits largely influenced higher-order surface traits of consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

Thus, the 3M Theory developed by Mowen (2000) along with the trait theory (Allport, 1961) gives good ground for the model proposed in this study. This study seeks to demonstrate that the big five traits categorized as elemental traits at the lower-order level has a considerable influence on the situational traits of brand experience which in turn influences the surface level traits of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

7.3 Effect of Extraversion Personality Trait

Prior research has demonstrated that extraversion is strongly correlated positively to positive emotions (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Watson & Clark, 1992). Similarly, other studies have also linked extraversion to positive reactions in terms of consumption and satisfaction (Matzler et al., 2005; Matzler et. al., 2007; Matzler et. al., 2006; Mooradian & Olver, 1997). A highly extraverted individual may exhibit positive behavior and relationship towards a brand (Garg et. al., 2016). Although some other research believes this influence could be either positive or negative (Rauschnabel et al., 2015). Thus, this research proposes that:

H1: Extraversion personality trait has a significant influence on brand experience

H2: Extraversion personality trait has a significant influence on consumer satisfaction

H3: Extraversion personality trait has a significant influence on brand loyalty

7.4 Effect of Openness to Experience Personality Trait

This trait is more attuned to the customer's imaginative and creative behavior (Singh et. al. 2020). It contributes largely to the development of customer relationship with the brand (Doss & Carstens, 2014). Individuals who score high on this are more willing to experience new ideas and have tendency to experience emotions (positive and negative) more keenly than individuals who score low on this (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They exhibit more flexible thinking, intellectual curiosity and creativity (Digman, 1990; Matzler et. al., 2007). Orth et al. (2010) observed that personality traits such as openness and extraversion have positive correlation with loyalty towards the brands. Individuals, who score high on this trait, tend to display more positive behavior towards a brand in terms of experience, satisfaction and loyalty. Also, in a study on students' life satisfaction, Ali (2019) found a positive correlation with this trait. Thus, the study hypothesizes that:

H4: Openness to experience has a significant influence on brand experience

H5: Openness to experience has a significant influence on consumer satisfaction

H6: Openness to experience has a significant influence on brand loyalty

7.5 Effect of Agreeableness Personality Trait

Research has shown that individuals high in the agreeableness personality trait tend to have control over their own emotions even when confronted with negative situations (Tobin et al., 2000). Thus, regardless of how the customer feels at the point of service interaction, the customer endeavors to maintain good social relations by controlling their emotions (Tan et al., 2004). A highly agreeable customer has a tendency to

display more positive behavior and emotions towards a brand (Shaw & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994; Pugh, 2001; Tsai, 2001; Seimiene, 2012). (Singh, 1990; & Tan et al., 2004). Lin (2010) argued that personality traits such as agreeableness and openness to experience have significant positive influence on affective loyalty and action loyalty.

Thus, given that this personality trait does exert a level of influence on reactions of customers to a brand and significantly impacts their emotions and relationship with the brand, this study therefore hypothesizes:

H7: Agreeableness personality trait has a significant effect on brand experience

H8: Agreeableness personality trait has a significant effect on consumer satisfaction

H9: Agreeableness personality trait has a significant effect on brand loyalty

7.6 Effects of Neuroticism

Individuals high on neuroticism have a higher tendency to express anxiety, frustration and depression (Rauschnabel et al., 2015). Thus the higher an individual ranks on this trait the more negative emotions they tend to exhibit towards a brand (Garg et al., 2016; Rauschnabel et al., 2015) whether in experience or consumption. Costa and McCrae (1980) also demonstrated that this trait correlates strongly with negative affect. In a research (Mooradian & Olver, 1997) conducted on the behaviors, feelings and attitudes of consumers towards automobiles, it was discovered that neuroticism as well as extraversion strongly correlate with consumer satisfaction and post-purchase behavior (see also Matzler et. al., 2005). Hence, this research proposes that:

H10: Neuroticism personality trait negatively influences brand experience

H11: Neuroticism personality trait negatively influences consumer satisfaction

H12: Neuroticism personality trait negatively influences brand loyalty

7.7 Effects of Conscientiousness Personality Trait

Individuals who rank high on the conscientiousness personality trait tend to be more organized, self-disciplined and pay more attention to work and meeting deadlines (Seimiene, 2012; Singh et. al., 2020). Hence, they plan their purchase properly and in detail. According to previous studies these individuals are less inclined to develop relationship with the brand (Islam et al., 2017) and therefore may impact their behavior towards the brand including their level of satisfaction. We therefore hypothesize thus:

H13: Conscientiousness has a significant effect on brand experience

H14: Conscientiousness has a significant effect on consumer satisfaction

H15: Conscientiousness has a significant effect on brand loyalty

7.8 Brand Experience Mediating Role

It has been established from the body of literature that personality traits directly influence consumer behaviors and attitudes towards various brands (Chen et al., 2016; Kocabulut & Albayrak, 2019) and personality traits are a strong basis of evaluation of brands by customers (Caliskan, 2019) which also includes their experiences with the brand. In addition, studies have also shown that brand experience has significant effects on consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Nysveen et al., 2013). This study, based on the 3M meta-theoretical model of motivation and personality, proposes that brand experience situational trait mediates the relationship between the lower-order elemental traits (big five) and the surface level traits:

H16: Brand experience mediates the relationship between the big 5 traits and satisfaction

H17: Brand experience mediates the relationship between the big 5 traits and brand loyalty.

7.9 Effects of Brand Experience

Previous studies have established that the loyalty and satisfaction levels of consumers can be strongly affected by their experiences with a brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Nysveen et al., 2013). Ebrahim et al. (2016) have also demonstrated that dimensions of brand experience have a significant influence on consumer repurchase intention. Brakus et al. (2009) established a behavioral influence direct from brand experience; it affects consumer devotion and consumer satisfaction.

Furthermore, in the service sector, creating brand experiences is equally relevant (Khan & Rahman, 2017). This is because service experience stimulates customers' service value perception, and customers/tourists more than ever seek more experiential content and benefits than tangible services (Ahn & Back, 2019; Ong et al., 2018). Studies have shown in this sense that hospitality businesses that invest in providing their customers' unique experience improve their brand equity through for instance brand trust, credibility, knowledge, and attachment, (Kang et al., 2017; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Lin & Wong, 2020), and achieve and sustain success through customers' desirable attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Beckman et al., 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2017; Kumar & Kaushik, 2018).

From an experiential consumption perspective, customers that benefit from superior and pleasurable experience throughout the service encounter tend to be more satisfied, are more likely to revisit the premises or repurchase the services, and engage in recommending the brand to others (Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Ong et al., 2018; Prentice et al., 2019) in the hotel, restaurants, and airlines

sectors. Furthermore, Choi et al. (2017) in their research on coffeehouse brands demonstrated how brand experience is crucial in building consumer brand loyalty and satisfaction. The more positive experiences consumers gain with the brand the higher the possibility of loyalty and certainly stronger chances of satisfaction.

Additionally, Brakus et al. (2009) established a behavioral influence direct from brand experience; it affects consumer devotion and consumer satisfaction.

Based on the tendency of brand experience to influence consumer behavior towards brands and the SOR model aforementioned, this research thus proposes:

H18: Brand Experience influences consumer satisfaction

H19: Brand Experience influences brand loyalty
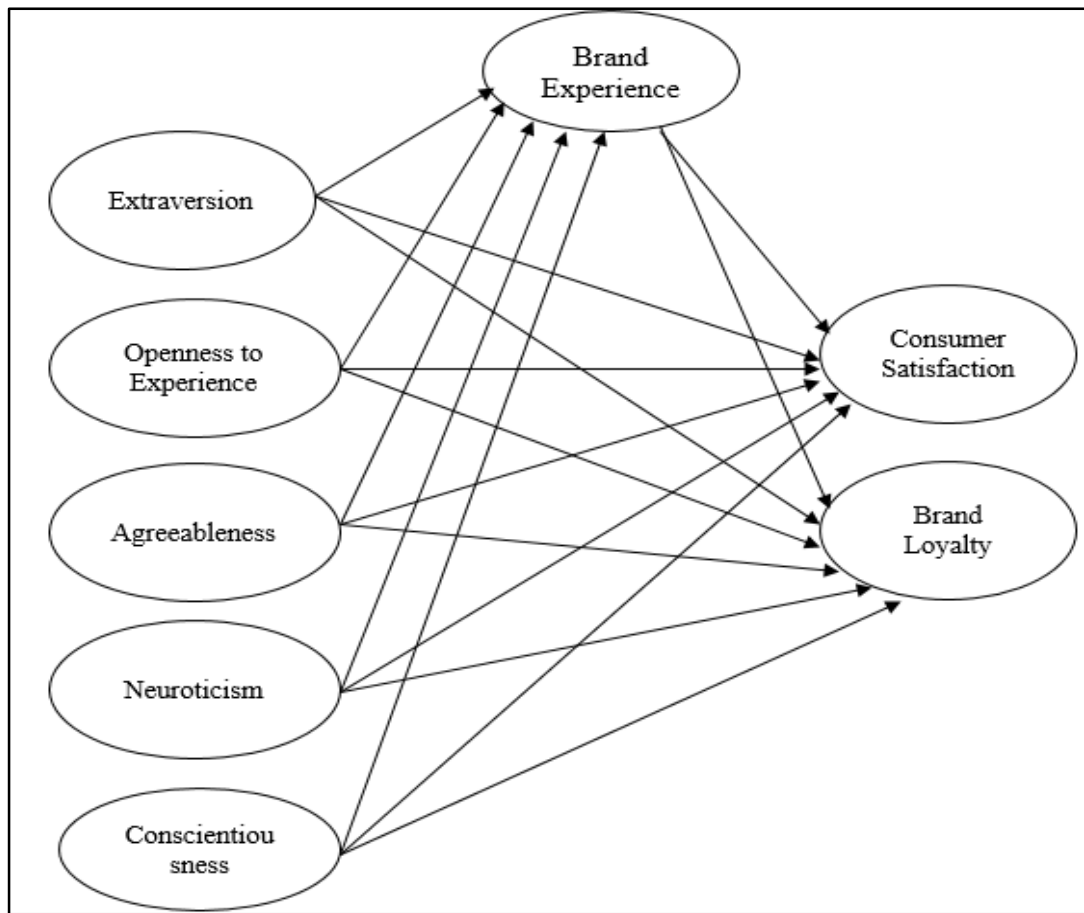
Figure 6: Conceptual Model

Chapter 8

ANALYSIS

8.1 Measurement Model

Previous literature (e.g. Singh et al., 2021; Brakus et al., 2009) conceptualized brand experience as a second-order construct. The second-order adequacy was confirmed in this study by three factors: (i) the goodness-of-fit indices of the second-order factor were overall acceptable: χ^2 (39) = 118.187; χ^2/df = 3.048; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.973; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.973; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.962; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.038; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.075; (ii) the values of composite reliability (CR = 0.897) and average variance extracted (AVE = 0.691) were above and beyond the conventional threshold of 0.7 and 0.5 respectively; (iii) the target coefficient (T) from the ratio of the first-order correlated factor chi-square to the higher-order factor chi-square was T = 0.923 (109.739/118.877) and was above the minimum of 0.9 Marsh and Hocevar (1985). Accordingly, this study applied brand experience as a higher order construct for further analyses.

The overall measurement model fit the data well: χ^2 (462) = 876.71; χ^2/df = 1.898; CFI = 0.955; IFI = 0.956; TLI = 0.949; SRMR = 0.054; RMSEA = 0.05. The observed variables factor loadings were significant ($p < 0.05$) and above 0.5 except one item of brand loyalty (λ = 0.279) and extraversion (λ = 0.101), respectively, which were dropped during the CFA. The AVEs and CRs of all constructs respectively exceeded

0.5 and 0.7 as depicted in Table 8. These findings suggested adequate constructs'
convergent validity and reliability (Kline, 2011; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).
Moreover, the correlations between the latent constructs were less than 0.85 and their
respective confidence interval did not contain the unity, while the square root of each
AVE was greater than each pair of constructs' correlations (Kline, 2011; Bagozzi, Yi,
& Phillips, 1991; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In all, the constructs satisfactorily
demonstrated discrimination between each other.

Table 8: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Loading	AVE	CR
Extraversion		0.562	0.707
E1	0.542		
E2	-		
E3	0.911		
Agreeableness		0.519	0.762
AG1	0.806		
AG2	0.701		
AG3	0.645		
Conscientiousness		0.676	0.862
CC1	0.83		
CC2	0.875		
CC3	0.757		
Openness		0.725	0.885
OP1	0.853		
OP2	0.894		
OP3	0.805		
Neuroticism		0.615	0.827
NM1	0.689		
NM2	0.84		
NM3	0.817		
Brand Loyalty		0.746	0.898
BL1	0.935		
BL2	0.895		
BL3	-		
BL4	0.751		
Customer Satisfaction		0.872	0.971
CS1	0.939		
CS2	0.942		
CS3	0.932		
CS4	0.944		
CS5	0.911		
Brand Experience		0.691	0.897
Sensory	0.918		
Intellectual	0.597		
Behavioral	0.822		
Affective	0.943		

Notes. Model fit: χ^2 (462) = 876.71; χ^2/df = 1.898; CFI = 0.955; IFI = 0.956; TLI = 0.949; SRMR = 0.054; RMSEA = 0.05. AVE: average variance extracted; CR: composite reliability; (-) dropped during CFA. Standardized loadings are reported, all significant at $p < 0.00$

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Discriminant Validity

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Brand Experience	4.48	1.24	**0.831**							
2. Extraversion	4.31	1.46	0.283***	**0.749**						
3. Agreeableness	5.39	1.29	0.503***	0.431***	**0.72**					
4. Conscientiousness	5.57	1.20	0.473***	0.306***	0.665***	**0.822**				
5. Openness	5.31	1.23	0.411***	0.271***	0.498***	0.586***	**0.851**			
6. Neuroticism	3.49	1.51	-0.257***	0.025	-0.193**	-0.172**	-0.191**	**0.785**		
7. Brand Loyalty	5.55	1.38	0.626***	0.284***	0.551***	0.573***	0.463***	-0.286***	**0.864**	
8. Customer Satisfaction	5.57	1.41	0.608***	0.304***	0.562***	0.563***	0.485***	-0.259***	0.709***	**0.934**

Notes. $N = 274$. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In addition, a χ^2 difference test between a single-factor model (χ^2 (460) = 3356.57, p < 0.01) compared to the proposed eight-factor model (χ^2 (462) = 878.71, p < 0.01) revealed that the single-factor model was significantly inferior to the proposed measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2$ (28) = 2479.86, p < 0.01), and had a poorer fit to the data as exhibited in Table 10. Further, an unrotated exploratory factor analysis indicated that the first emerging factor accounted for only 37.04% of the total variance. Thus, common method bias did not seem to pose a serious threat to the study.

Finally, the assumption of multivariate normality must not be violated when conducting SEM with MLE (Kline, 2011). To ensure the normal distribution of the data, the univariate normality was tested in first instance by a scrutiny of the absolute values of skewness (0.007 – 1.703) and kurtosis (0.069 – 2.387), which were below Kline's (2011) guidelines of respectively 3 and 8 and lend support for univariate normal distribution. Second, the Mardia's coefficient of multivariate kurtosis was employed to test the data multivariate normality (Mardia, 1970). A value of the Mardia's coefficient below p (p+2), where p is the amount of observed variables in the measurement model, suggests that the assumption of multivariate normality failed to be violated (Bollen, 1989). The proposed model included 38 observed variables and the Mardia's coefficient of multivariate kurtosis was 319.458. It was less than the product 38 (38+2) = 1,520, therefore suggesting multivariate normality of the data (Karatepe & Kim, 2020).

Table 10: CFA Model Comparison

Models	χ^2	$\Delta\chi^2$	df	Δdf	χ^2/df	CFI	IFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	Model comparison
1. Proposed model: 8 factors	876.709	-	462	-	1.898	0.955	0.956	0.949	0.054	0.05	-
2. Alternative model 1: 7 factors (BL and CS combined)	1287.14	410.431	469	7	2.74	0.912	0.913	0.901	0.066	0.069	1 and 2
3. Alternative model 2: 3 factors: Big 5, CS and BL combined)	2235.203	1358.494	486	24	4.599	0.812	0.813	0.793	0.089	0.1	1 and 3
4. Alternative model 3: Single factor	3356.569	2479.86	490	28	6.85	0.691	0.693	0.668	0.134	0.127	1 and 4

Notes. BL = brand loyalty, CS = customer satisfaction, Big 5 = extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism.

8.2 Structural Model and Test of Hypotheses

The structural model results indicated that the model had an adequate fit to the data: χ^2 (462) = 921.763; χ^2/df = 1.995; CFI = 0.951; IFI = 0.951; TLI = 0.943; SRMR = 0.06; RMSEA = 0.052. The model explained 33%, 53.4%, and 55.1% of the variance in brand experience, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty, respectively. Table 11 depicts the result of the structural model and the hypotheses testing decisions.

8.2.1 Direct Effects

Brand experience predicted customer satisfaction (β = 0.382, t = 7.034) and brand loyalty (β = 0.409, t = 7.269). From the 5 personality traits, only agreeableness (β = 0.266, t = 2.916), conscientiousness (β = 0.172, t = 2.008), openness (β = 0.134, t = 1.978), and neuroticism β = -0.148, t = -2.674) were significantly associated with brand experience. Regarding the personality traits influence on customer satisfaction, only agreeableness (β = 0.17, t = 2.288) and conscientiousness (β = 0.192, t = 2.784) were significant. Conscientiousness (β = 0.229, t = 3.205) and neuroticism β = -0.11, t = -2.362) were positively and negatively, respectively, predicted brand loyalty.

8.2.1 Indirect Effects

The indirect effects were examined using a 95 % bias corrected confidence interval from 10,000 bootstrap resamples, following the recommendations of Hayes & Scharkow (2013). A confidence interval that did not straddle zero indicated significant indirect effect. As depicted in Table 11, only three pairs of indirect effects were significantly different from zero. Brand experience significantly mediated the effect of agreeableness on customer satisfaction (*ab* = 0.128, CI [0.022, 0.314]), and brand loyalty (*ab* = 0.131, CI [0.024, 0.336]). Moreover, brand experience also mediated the effect of neuroticism on customer satisfaction (*ab* = -0.071, CI [-0.157, -0.014]) and brand loyalty (*ab* = -0.072, CI [-0.16, -0.016]). Lastly, openness indirectly predicted

customer satisfaction ($ab = 0.063$, CI [0.000, 0.166]) and brand loyalty ($ab = 0.064$, CI [0.001, 0.167]) through brand experience.

8.3 Post Hoc Analysis

Although not hypothesized, we probed a serial mediation of brand experience and customer satisfaction on the effect of openness, agreeableness, and neuroticism on customer loyalty. The PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) model 6 was utilized to estimate the 95% bootstrap confidence interval with 10,000 resamples of the indirect effect. The results indicated that the effects of openness, agreeableness, and neuroticism on brand loyalty were serially mediated by brand experience and customer satisfaction. The indirect effect of openness, agreeableness and neuroticism were respectively $ab_{Op} = 0.083$, CI [0.045, 0.128] $ab_{Agr} = 0.09$, CI [0.052, 0.135] and $ab_{Neur} = -0.06$, CI [-0.103, -0.027].

Table 11: Direct and Indirect Effects Estimation

Direct effects			β	t	Hypothesis	Decision
Brand Experience	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.382***	7.034	18	Supported
Brand Experience	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.409***	7.269	19	Supported
Extraversion	$\rightarrow$	BE	0.075	1.277	1	Not supported
Extraversion	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.037	0.796	2	Not supported
Extraversion	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.021	0.43	3	Not supported
Openness	$\rightarrow$	BE	0.134*	1.978	4	Supported
Openness	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.104	1.908	5	Not supported
Openness	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.062	1.088	6	Not supported
Agreeableness	$\rightarrow$	BE	0.266**	2.916	7	Supported
Agreeableness	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.17*	2.288	8	Supported
Agreeableness	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.148	1.932	9	Not supported
Neuroticism	$\rightarrow$	BE	-0.148**	-2.674	10	Supported
Neuroticism	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	-0.084	-1.878	11	Not supported
Neuroticism	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	-0.11*	-2.362	12	Supported
Conscientiousness	$\rightarrow$	BE	0.172*	2.008	13	Supported
Conscientiousness	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.192**	2.784	14	Supported
Conscientiousness	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.229**	3.205	15	Supported
Indirect effects (via Brand Experience)			ab	BC CI		
Extraversion	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.044	-0.041, 0.154	16a	Not supported
Extraversion	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.045	-0.041, 0.155	17a	Not supported
Openness	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.063	0.000, 0.166	16b	Supported
Openness	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.064	0.001, 0.167	17b	Supported
Agreeableness	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	0.128	0.022, 0.314	16c	Supported
Agreeableness	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	0.131	0.024, 0.336	17c	Supported
Neuroticism	$\rightarrow$	CSAT	-0.071	-0.157, -0.014	16d	Supported
Neuroticism	$\rightarrow$	Brand Loyalty	-0.072	-0.16, -0.016	17d	Supported

Conscientiousness	→	CSAT	0.08	-0.011, 0.211	16e	Not supported
Conscientiousness	→	Brand Loyalty	0.081	-0.011, 0.216	17e	Not supported

Notes. $N = 274$. $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$. 95% bias-corrected (BC) bootstrap confidence interval (CI) sample = 10,000. CSAT = customer satisfaction, BE = brand experience.

Chapter 9

FINDINGS FOR SECOND MODEL

9.1 Discussion

In this study, a research model of personality trait and its influence on brand loyalty and customer satisfaction using brand experience as a mediator was proposed and empirically tested via data gathered through questionnaires. The research drew on the meta-theoretic model of motivation and personality, and trait theory used in past and recent literatures to develop relationships between the observed variables. Some of the proposed relationships in the study were supported while some were rejected by the empirical data analysis. The findings of the research offer crucial insights as regards the consequences of personality trait and the underlying mechanism through which personality traits is related to the abovementioned outcomes.

9.1.1 Brand Experience Direct Effects

The influence of brand experience: in line with the study proposition, hypotheses 18 and 19 were supported based on the significant path coefficient for the suggested association in the direct and indirect effects estimation as shown in Table 9. This shows that brand experience is a significant factor that influences brand loyalty and customer satisfaction in this research context. These findings are in congruence with existing literature such as Ferreira et al. (2019); Sahin et al. (2011); Saragih et al. (2019). These findings give emphasis that, it is important to develop or improve experiential factors/brand experience features to create brand loyalty (Bıçakcıoğlu et al., 2018; Ong et al., 2018).

9.1.2 Extraversion Effects

Findings showed that extraversion did not have any significant relationship with neither brand experience, customer satisfaction, nor brand loyalty, thus hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were not supported. Extraverted individuals are characterized as adventurous, interactive and social (Itani et al., 2020; Ong et al., 2018) and are more inclined to display more positive affect and exude behavior that elicits congenial feelings (Dauvier et al., 2019). With these characteristics, the ideal expectation would be a positive relationship with customer satisfaction (Wu & Mursid, 2019), and brand loyalty (Matzler et al., 2006). The lack of significant effect of extraversion on the mediating and outcome variables might be due to the mixed finding in literature on the influence (positive and negative) of extraversion on customer brand-love (Rauschnabel et al., 2015; Singh et al., 2021) brand experience (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2018), brand loyalty (Drennan et al., 2015), and customer satisfaction (Tsai, 2014).

9.1.3 Openness Effects

This study found the existence of a significant relationship between openness trait and brand experience but not with brand loyalty and customer satisfaction, thus hypothesis 6 was supported, while 7 and 8 were not. The significant relationship found between openness to experience and brand experience is in line with the predictions of the 3M model that lower-order traits influence other higher-order traits. While other studies demonstrate that openness to experience is positively associated with customer satisfaction (Zhaleh, 2011; Smith, 2020) and brand loyalty (Mathews, 2019; Roy, 2019; Smith, 2020), this study found otherwise.

This may be attributed to the fact that individuals who are opened to experience can experience both negative and positive emotions (Matzler et al., 2006, pg. 428) which will invariably affect their satisfaction.

9.1.4 Agreeableness Effects

Results from the research revealed that agreeable personality trait is positively related to brand experience and customer satisfaction but negatively related to brand loyalty, thus hypotheses 9 and 10 were supported and 11 not supported. Individuals possessing agreeableness personality trait evaluates products based on their utilitarian attributes (Rawat & Mann, 2016, p. 21) which should lead to a positive brand experience and ultimately, satisfaction. Although review of past literature confirms that agreeable individuals have tendencies to show loyalty to brands, but this study showed otherwise.

This may be ascribed to the fact that even though the physiognomies of agreeableness i.e. cooperative nature and trust for the brand (Seimiene, 2012) will positively affect their experience or satisfaction in a brand, it might not necessarily translate to loyalty for our research context as other factors such as income can affect decision on loyalty to a brand.

9.1.5 Neuroticism Effects

Analysis showed that neuroticism positively influences brand experience and brand loyalty but negatively influences customer satisfaction, which supports hypotheses 12 and 14 but does not support hypothesis 13. While several studies have indicated that the negative affect of neuroticism will negatively affect brand experience (Ngo et al., 2016), loyalty (Ebrahimi et al., 2020) and customer satisfaction (Ciunova-Shuleska & Palamidovska-Sterjadovska, 2019), this study indicates otherwise. This might be because neurotic individuals often have a cognitive emotional attachment with the

brand (Mann & Rawat, 2016, p. 37), which means they forgo their personal resource to maintain loyalty and relationship to the brand which will positively affect their experience.

9.1.6 Conscientiousness Effects

There was a positive influence of conscientiousness personality trait on brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, and brand experience, which is in line with Mann and Rawat's (2016) research. This finding supports the hypothetical proposition on these relationships, thus hypotheses 15, 16. And 17 were supported.

This relationship is possible because conscientious people demonstrate emotional and connectional attachment to the brand (Moliner et al., 2018). With this type of attachment, positive affect, characteristic thought (Roberts et al., 2014), and behavior, conscientious individuals are proffered with emotional fulfilment that affects their experience with the brand and satisfaction, and have increased inclination to remain loyal to the brand.

9.1.7 Brand Experience Mediating Role

The mediating role of brand experience on the relationship between the five personality traits, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty was tested. The relationships between openness and brand loyalty, agreeableness and customer satisfaction, agreeableness and brand loyalty, neuroticism and customer satisfaction and, neuroticism and brand loyalty were all mediated by brand experience.

It is noteworthy to state that there was no direct relationship between openness and brand loyalty; agreeableness and brand loyalty; neuroticism and customer satisfaction but brand experience was able to mediate these relationships. Several studies (Khan & Rahman, 2015; Nysveen et al., 2013) have explicated the influence of brand

experience on brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. The reasoning for this mediation is that openness, agreeableness, and neuroticism can induce positive brand experiences, which will influence the outcome.

9.2 Theoretical Implications

This study effectively adds contributions to existing literature by mainly providing opportunities to recognize and understand the role of brand experience in influencing the relationship between customers' personality traits, brand loyalty and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Firstly, using the 3M Theory and trait theory as theoretical foci, this study adds to the existing knowledge of customer-brand relationship by showing the significant role the lower-order elemental traits play in influencing consumer responses to brands.

Secondly, till now, research in understanding brand loyalty has not explored customers' personality traits as its antecedent, this makes this study among the few that has explored the big five personality traits individually on the outcome variables, providing empirical support for the suggested hypotheses.

Thirdly, several studies have concluded that extraverted and open individuals are always sociable and have positive affect which leads to satisfaction and loyalty; however, this study finds otherwise. Also, neuroticism in previous studies have been found to be negatively related to customer satisfaction, brand experience, and brand loyalty, but this study demonstrated a different outcome. Thus, this further adds to existing literature by demonstrating that positive affect and behavioral responses does not necessarily lead to positive or negative outcomes. This also gives room for further research to affirm or debunk the findings.

9.3 Practical Implications

This study gives useful implications for organizations. Personality traits give a detailed understanding into the considerable and distinctive elements of customers' psychological states and feelings that shape their attitude and behavior towards a brand. These traits shows customers' propensity to behave, feel, think, and be affiliated to a brand (Roy, 2019). Hence, managers must understand that not all consumers will respond to brand or marketing stimuli in the same way. Necessary strategies should be adopted to address consumers taking into account their different personality traits and avoiding a "one size fit all" approach. An example could be employing various marketing or branding messages for different types of customers. Managers could also offer tailored experiences depending on consumers' preferences and interests.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

10.1 Summary of Findings

In summary, the importance of brand experience in stimulating consumer satisfaction and loyalty cannot be overemphasized. However, it is noteworthy for brand managers in the hospitality sector to be aware of the possible quadratic effects of brand experience as highlighted in this current study. The findings in this study demonstrate that the resultant effects of brand experience are not always positive.

Invariably necessary strategies should be adopted by managers to ensure consistent positive outcomes of brand experience on the dependent variables. This contributes to extant research and provides a fresh perspective on the brand experience construct in the hospitality industry.

In addition, the study found that brand experience mediated the relationship between four of the personality traits (except extraversion) and the brand loyalty - customer satisfaction framework. This further emphasizes that brand experience is a key factor. Therefore, managers should deliberately engage in all the aspects of brand interaction in order to enhance their customers' brand experience. Improving any/all of the components of the construct will improve customer satisfaction and consequently, brand loyalty.

10.2 Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

This study does not come without its share of limitations. First, the customers experience literature underlines that there is a passive and active form of experience (Campos et al. 2018). This study focused on brand experience as a form of passive experience. The other relevant aspect of experience is active or co-creation and involves customers' involvement and participation (Campos et al., 2018; Merz et al., 2018; Nobre & Ferreira, 2017; Yen et al., 2020) in the service encounter. Future research will certainly complement the present study and advance the experiential literature by examining whether co-creation as the active part of experience can also subject to excessive positivity as brand experience. Moreover, there are apparent conflicts in the empirical experience literature regarding the direction of causal links between brand experience and [value] co-creation. For example, Nysveen and Pedersen (2014) indicated that engagement in co-creation predicted brand experience. On the other hand, Lin and Wong (2020a, b) and Shamim et al. (2016) revealed that brand experience predicted customer value co-creation attitude, which in turn was related to customer value co-creation behavior. Such conflict may underpin a holistic view of customer experience comprising both brand experience (active) and co-creation (passive), which can predict customer satisfaction, retention, and brand equity. Most studies, particularly in the hospitality sector, have either focused exclusively on brand experience, or [value] co-creation, or have juxtaposed both constructs in a linear sequence. Research, however, has overlooked the incorporation of these two aspects of customer experience into one higher-order dimension. This is therefore an unexplored avenue for future research we invite scholars to investigate.

Second, the findings of the study cannot be generalized due to the sample and geographical location of the study. Further research should be done in other countries and a larger sample size considered confirming or disputing the study results. The study required respondents to select from three sectors of the hospitality industry (i.e., airline, hotel, and restaurant), and other areas of the hospitality industry could also be considered for future research.

It is also noteworthy that the three sectors included in the current study may be heterogeneous in certain aspects and thus beg for differences in brand experience perceptions, satisfaction, or loyalty. A one-way analysis of variance did not indicate significant differences across the three sectors regarding the research variables, which provided statistical grounds for holistic model estimation irrespective of any sector. Further research could emphasize each specific sector in the hospitality industry.

The cross-sectional nature of this study does not account for causality among the variables examined in this research, and a longitudinal or experimental study could be further carried out to inform us of the causality among the variables. Moreover, pending further empirical support of the present findings, future efforts in expanding the brand experience literature in the hospitality as well as the general experiential marketing research should consider theorizing and testing the association of brand experience and other desirable outcomes as nonlinear for methodological and theoretical robustness.

Thirdly, before any form of customer-brand relationship is established, trust must be established (He et al., 2012), therefore future research may consider trust, brand

personality, and brand self-connection as moderators for the customer personality traits and brand loyalty relationship.

Furthermore, several studies (e.g. Trudeau & Shobeiri, 2016) have established brand experience as a second-order construct with four fundamental components (intellectual, behavioral, affective, and sensory), therefore future research can consider each of these components of brand experience in relations to customer personality traits.

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APPENDIX

Personality and Brand Experience Survey

Dear Respondent,

This survey is being carried out to examine the effects of consumer personality on brand experience, loyalty and consumer satisfaction.

This survey is being carried out with full permission from the faculty administration and is for academic research purpose only. I fully assure you that all of the answers you provide in this survey will be kept confidential. The survey data will be reported in a summary fashion only and will not identify any individual person.

Participating in this survey is entirely voluntary, you are free to choose whether or not you wish to participate. You are also free to stop participating at any point in the course of filling out the survey.

1. **Gender**

Mark only one oval

◯ Male

◯ Female

◯ Other: _____

2. **Age**

Mark only one oval.

◯ 18 - 27

◯ 28 - 37

◯ 38 - 47

◯ 48 - 57

◯ 68 and above

3. Nationality

_____

4. Level of Study

Mark only one oval

◯ Bachelors

◯ Masters

◯ Doctorate

Brand Familiarity

5. Write **ONE** name of a brand you patronize below (Either Hotel, Restaurant or

Airline)

_____

Please respond to the following statements based on the brand name you wrote above.

1 Strongly Disagree   2. Disagree   3. Disagree Somewhat   4. Neutral   5.
Agree Somewhat   6. Agree   7. Strongly Agree

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Brand Loyalty							
1	I will recommend this brand to someone							
2	Next time I will use this brand							
3	I will switch to other brand if I have a problem with this brand							
4	This brand would be my first choice							
	Brand Experience							
1	This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other sense							
2	I find this brand interesting in a sensory way							
3	This brand appeals to my senses							
4	This brand induces sentiments and feelings							

5	I have strong emotions for this brand							
6	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand							
7	This brand results in bodily experiences (e.g. warmth, comfort							
8	This brand is action oriented							
9	I engage in a lot off thinking when I engage this brand							
10	This brand makes me think							
11	This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving							
	Consumer Satisfaction							
1	I am very satisfied with the service provided							
2	This brand does a good job of satisfying my needs							
3	The service provided is very satisfactory							
4	I believe that using this service is usually a very satisfying experience							
5	I made the right decision when I decided to use this service							