

A structural model of the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty through customer satisfaction

نموذج هيكلية لأثر تجربة العلامة التجارية على الولاء للعلامة التجارية بوساطة رضا الزبون

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ملخص:

الغرض من هذه الورقة هو التحقق من العلاقة بين تجربة العلامة التجارية والولاء للعلامة التجارية، وتأثير رضا الزبون كوسيط، حيث تم تحليل نموذج البحث المقترح باستخدام دراسة استقصائية لـ 231 عميلاً لعلامة الخدمة الجزائرية Mobilis. تشير النتائج إلى أن تجربة العلامة التجارية لها تأثير غير مباشر على ولاء العلامة التجارية من خلال رضا الزبون الذي يتوسط العلاقة بين المتغيرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تجربة العلامة التجارية، الولاء للعلامة التجارية، المعادلات الهيكلية، رضا الزبون.

تصنيف JEL: M31.

Abstract:

the purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty, and the effect of customer satisfaction as a mediator. The proposed research model is analyzed using a survey of 231 customers of the Algerian service brand Mobilis. The results indicate that brand experience has an indirect effect on brand loyalty through customer satisfaction who mediates the relationship between the two variables.

Key words: brand experience, brand loyalty, SEM, customer satisfaction.

JEL Classification Codes: M31.

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Introduction

“Retaining customers is cheaper than acquiring new ones” this statement must be mentioned hundreds of times whether in business or marketing literature, and even though the ratio differs from 3 times to four to five times cheaper, the idea stays the same. Retaining customers means having loyal customers to the firm or the brand, which is why brand loyalty is one of the most important assets a company can have and strive to maintain, and that’s because of all of the advantages it provides such as firm’s competitiveness and profitability, and this is why researchers over the years were studying different constructs that can lead to the brand loyalty which is the main goal to be achieved. Among these constructs appeared brand experience in the last years as a trending topic that many researchers tried to understand and find how to effect or improve it. Along with that there’s customer satisfaction which is used as a link that connects and strengthens both brand loyalty and brand experience which are the focus of this paper, in which we’re trying to study the effect of brand experience on both brand loyalty customer satisfaction. Therefore, this was the main hypothesis was suggested: **Does brand experience have a positive effect on brand loyalty?**

To answer it, four hypotheses were suggested in the following part of this paper which includes the theoretical background of this study that contains definitions of the constructs that are studied, and the relationship between them according to previous studies. Followed by an empirical study made using structural model analyzed by SmartPLS software.

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship of brand experience on brand loyalty in the Algerian community, and how they’ll react according to their experience with the services provided, more specifically in the telecommunication services, and see if it can be used to maintain loyal customers, in the other hand this paper tries to examine the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.

1-Theoretical framework and hypothesis development:

1-1- Brand experience:

The experience concept in marketing research have been said to occur when consumers search, shop, receive and when they consume the service or product. It was also linked to many fields such as product experience, shopping and service experience, and consumption experience (Brakus et al., 2009, pp. 52–53). Since both customers and non-customers can have brand experiences, we consider brand experience to be the broadest experience construct (Nysveen et al., 2013, p. 406). The brand experience concept was first introduced by Smith (1997) as a “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). In addition to that, Alloza (2008) explained the brand experience as “the perception of the consumer at every moment of contact they have with the brand, whether it is in the brand images projected in advertising, during the first personal contact, or the level of quality concerning the personal treatment they receive” (Alloza, 2008, pp. 373–374).

1-2- customer satisfaction:

The leading researcher of customer satisfaction Oliver portrays it as a key foundation of marketing success and recognizes it as a pleasurable outcome, a desirable end state of consumption or patronization (Oliver, 1997). Therefore, defining satisfaction as “pleasurable fulfillment. That is, the consumer senses that consumption fulfills some need, desire, goal, or so forth and that this fulfillment is pleasurable. Thus, satisfaction is the consumer's sense that consumption provides outcomes against a standard of pleasure versus displeasure” (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). meaning that a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment including levels of under- or over fulfillment (Başer et al., 2015, p. 106),

1-3- Brand loyalty:

The importance of brand loyalty has been recognized in the marketing literature for at least three decades(Howard & Sheth, 1969, p. 232). Many definitions were proposed In that time, and the current study defines brand loyalty according to Oliver (1999) who expressed it as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Oliver, 1999, pp. 34–35). Oliver proceeds to describe the consumer who "fervently desires to rebuy a product or service and will have no other." And on another level, he posits a consumer who will pursue this quest "against all odds and at all costs." These latter conditions define ultimate loyalty(Oliver, 1997, p. 392).

1-4- the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty:

Numerous researches have determined empirically that brand loyalty is driven by brand experience, whether by a direct effect like (Ong et al., 2018) who stated that different types of brand experience influence each customer's true brand loyalty differently. Or an indirect effect through mediators like brand satisfaction(Lacap & Tungcab, 2020), brand commitment(Hidayanti et al., 2018), or brand evaluation (Bapat & Thanigan, 2016). Hence, based on the above arguments, the following hypotheses was elaborated:

H1: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

In addition to the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty, researchers found that brand experience has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction in various service industries, such as in the restaurant industry(Hussein, 2018), banking sector (Iglesias et al., 2019), and the Airline Flight Service(Deneyimi et al., 2020).Therefore, it can be postulated that:

H2: Brand experience has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction has been discussed widely in marketing literature and recognized as one of the predictors for brand loyalty in various studies were made especially in the service industries, among those studies we find (Atulkar, 2020; Deneyimi et al., 2020; Iglesias et al., 2019; Javed et al., 2021). Thus; we hypothesize that:

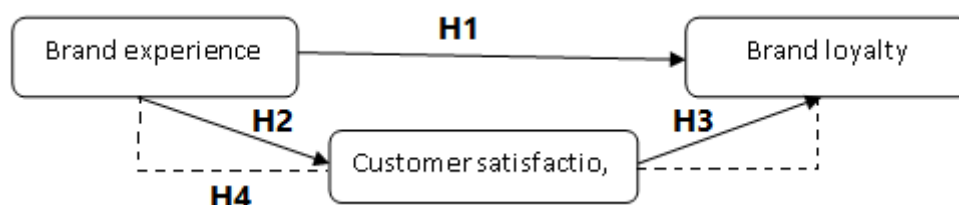
H3: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Other studies discussed brand experience in the service industry and found it to have positive direct effects on both customers' satisfaction and brand loyalty, also confirmed the indirect effect of brand experience on brand loyalty through customer satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009; Hassan & Benachenhrou, 2019; Hussein, 2018). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H4: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty.

Based on the above arguments, the following figure was proposed:

Figure1. Proposed Research Model



Source: Made by the researchers

Note: The connected lines are for the direct effect while the disconnected lines are for the indirect effect.

2- Metodologie:

2-1-Sample and data collection

The data collection was conducted between February and March of 2021 in Mascara, Algeria. An online survey was made and put on the facebook platform targeting only people who live in Mascara and are using Mobilis services. A totale of

231 forms were filled in that period, and since it was an online survey no missing data was found, meaning that the whole 231 responses were used for data analysis

2-2- measurement scale and questionnaire design:

The questionnaire was designed as a survey including all constructs of the proposed model to investigate the hypotheses of interest. The survey consists of four sections. The first section is designed to obtain sample characterization. The second section deals with the measurement of brand experience with five items following (Hassan & Benachenhoun, 2019), The third section deals with the measurement of customer satisfaction with four items adapted from (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019), and the fourth section is designed to measuring brand loyalty with five items following (Rather et al., 2018). The Respondents are asked to indicate their agreement level of each item of the sections on the 5-point Likert scale that starts with "strongly agree" at 1 to "strongly disagree" at 5.

2-3- Respondent profile:

Table 1. Respondent profile

Demographic characteristics	Demographic sub-characteristics	Frequency (n = 231)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	42.9
	Female	99	57.1
Age	25 or less	63	27.3
	26 - 35	81	35.1
	36 - 45	54	23.4
	46 or more	33	14.3
Education	BAC or less	57	24.7
	Bachelor	69	29.9
	master	63	27.3
	PhD or more	42	18.2
Occupation	Student	43	18.6
	Employee	117	50.7
	Self-employee	65	28.1
	Unemployed	6	2.6

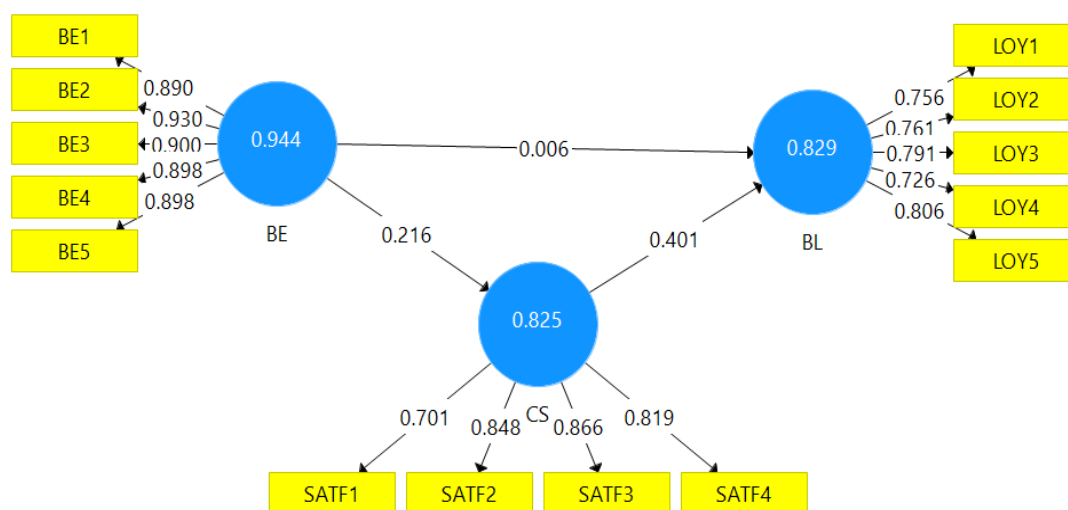
Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

Table 1 portrayed the profiles of the respondents for this study. From a total of 231 responses, the result shows that there were more male respondents at 57.1%. Also, most of the respondents have a bachelor's degree (41%), fall in an age range between 26–35 (35.1%), and are employed (49.4%).

2-4- Data analysis:

To examine the proposed relationships, this study analyzed the data employing a two-step approach suggested by (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), the first confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and the second, structural equation modeling (SEM), and to do so, the analytical method used in this research is PLS-SEM with two evaluation steps: the first would be evaluation of the outer model, while second step is focused on evaluation of the inner model (Hair et al., 2014).

Figure 2.research tested model in Smart-PLS software



Source:calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

2-4-1 Assessment of measurement model (outer model):

In this section we will evaluate the measurements scales used in the research, and to test the measurement model multiple tests on **construct validity and reliability** were performed.

◇ Construct reliability:

Starting with testing the Construct reliability using Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability (CR). As seen on table 2, the Cronbach's alpha values for all the constructs are greater than the guideline of 0.60 (Malhotra, 2010), and the composite reliability (CR) values exceed the recommended acceptable value of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1999).

Based on these assessments, measures used within this study have acceptable levels suggesting a good reliability of the constructs.

Table 2. Result of the measurement model.

Latent Variables	Items	Outer loading	AVE	C R	Cronbach Alpha
Brand Experience	The employees in Mobilis make sure to provide immediate services to customers.	0.890	0.816	0.957	0.944
	The employees are committed to respond to all customer complaints and inquiries	0.930			
	The administration strives to provide the 24-hour telecommunications services	0.900			
	Having suitable places for reception makes me never bored	0.898			
	Seeing the brand's reception buildings makes you feel like an important customer	0.898			
Customer Satisfaction	I did the right thing when I bought Mobilis	0.701	0.658	0.884	0.825
	I am satisfied with the services provided by Mobilis	0.848			
	Mobilis always meets my expectations	0.866			
	Choosing Mobilis was a wise choice	0.819			
Brand Loyalty	I would recommend Mobilis to someone who seeks my advice	0.756	0.690	0.878	0.829
	I would encourage friends to do business with Mobilis	0.761			
	I would do more business with Mobilis in the next few years	0.791			
	I am a loyal customer of Mobilis	0.726			
	I am willing to maintain my relationship with Mobilis	0.806			

Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

Note: AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite Reliability, CA= Cronbach's Alpha

◇ Construct validation:

As for the Construct validation, it includes both **convergent**, and **discriminate validities**. The **Convergent validity** can be evaluated by examining the factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE), and as seen on the table 2 the outer loadings of all the items exceeds 0.6 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1999), which means that that they explain

at least 60% of what they expected to measure, As for the AVE values, they are all above the suggested 0.5(Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

Moving on to testing the **discriminant validity** where square root of the AVE of each latent variable should be higher than the squared correlations between the latent variable and all other variables(Chin, 1998; Chin & Dibbern, 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981) which is shown in Table 3.As a result, the measurement model attains discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity of constructs.

	Brand experience	Brand Loyalty	Customer satisfaction
Brand experience	0.903		
Brand loyalty	0.306	0.768	
Customer satisfaction	0.421	0.591	0.811

Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

The next step was using cross loadings and correlation between variables and AVE root. The result of cross loadings shows that the correlation value (loading) of each item in its construct is higher than the correlation of the item with the other constructs. Therefore, the general model has met the cross loadings requirement.

Table 4. Cross loadings of constructs.

	BE	BL	CS
BE1	0.980	0.215	0.331
BE2	0.930	0.359	0.463
BE3	0.900	0.280	0.327
BE4	0.898	0.265	0.365
BE5	0.898	0.234	0.386
BL1	0.230	0.756	0.326
BL2	0.297	0.761	0.406
BL3	0.280	0.791	0.448
BL4	0.104	0.726	0.468
BL5	0.265	0.806	0.564
CS1	0.240	0.667	0.701
CS2	0.352	0.444	0.848
CS3	0.417	0.376	0.866
CS4	0.368	0.351	0.819

Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

Note: BE= brand experience, BL= Brand loyalty, CS= Customer satisfaction

All that being said, we can confidently say that both of the reliability and validity of the measurement used in this study are confirmed.

2-4-2- Assessment of structural model (inner model):

The structural model analysis aims to test the developed hypotheses in order to examine the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. The model consists of evaluation of R^2 value, effect size analysis (f^2), predictive assessment (Q^2), and goodness of fit assessment (GoF), which we will see next.

◇ Hypotheses testing:

Starting with This section that focusses on testing the hypotheses that were proposed. Using the PLS standard bootstrapping procedure to assess the significance of the path coefficients (Hair et al., 2014). Table 5 shows the estimates for the full structural model, which includes all the variables.

Table 5. Result of hypothesis testing.

	relationship	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard deviation	T Statistics	P -Value	Decision
H1	BE -> BL	0.070	0.059	0.120	0.585	0.559	rejected
H2	BE -> CS	0.421	0.434	0.107	3.919	0.000	supported
H3	CS -> BL	0.561	0.580	0.076	7.415	0.000	supported
H4	BE -> CS -> BL	0.236	0.253	0.070	3.398	0.001	supported

Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

Note: BE= brand experience, BL= Brand loyalty, CS= Customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 1 predicted that brand experience has appositve effect on brand loyalty. The findings revealed a non-significant positive relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. Thus, hypothesis 1 was rejected. As for hypothesis 2, the results indicated a significant positive bond between brand experience and customer satisfaction. Same for hypothesis 3 and as illustrated in table 5 a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty was found ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, both hypothesis 2 and 3 received empirical support.

Also, Table 4 demonstrates a significant mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the link between brand experience and brand loyalty, supporting hypothesis 4.

And since the hypothesis 1 was rejected, this indicates a complete mediation of the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty by customer satisfaction.

◇ **R² values:**

Moving on to evaluating the **R²** value. Based on our calculations the it is obtained that **R²** value is 0.706 for the brand loyalty variable which is considered high since it's higher than suggested value of 0.67, as for the **R²** for the customer value was 0.354 which is considered moderate since it was slightly above the suggested 0.33 according to (Chin, 1998).

Table 6. R² values

Latent Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Result
Brand loyalty	0.706	0.672	High effect
Customer satisfaction	0.354	0.332	Moderate effect

Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

◇ **The effect size:**

Next The effect size analysis (**f²**) was made, which is used to understand whether each independent construct and a dependent construct has a practical effect (Cohen, 1988), where the values between 0.02 and 0.14 are considered small, those between 0.15 and 0.34 medium, and those equal to 0.35 and above are large (Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 7. Effect size values **F²**

	Effect size	decision
BE - BL	0.006	small
BE - CS	0.216	medium
CS - BL	0.401	large

Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

Note: BE= brand experience, BL= Brand loyalty, CS= Customer satisfaction

From what is shown in table 7 we conclude that brand experience has a small effect on brand loyalty, and a medium effect on customer satisfaction which has a large effect on brand loyalty.

Even though brand experience's effect is small, it still means that there is an effect that can be improved by focusing on providing better experiences to customers, which leads to more effect on brand loyalty.

◇ Q² Values:

The following step of the structural model consists of the model's ability to make predictions. The main measure of predictive relevance is the Stone–Geisser Q-squared statistic (Q²)(Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974), which we can measure using blindfolding in the Smart PLS software. In order to provide predictive relevance, the Q² value for an endogenous latent variable must be greater than zero(Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 8. Q² values

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q ² (1-SSE /SSO)
Brand loyalty	358.000	317.201	0.176
Customer satisfaction	308.000	273.369	0.112

Source: calculated by researchers using SmartPLS

As we can see in Table 8 The Q-squared values presented are 0.176 and 0.112 and they're all higher than zero, which indicates the model's predictive relevance.

◇ Goodness of Fit:

Unlike AMOS, Smart PLS doesn't grant goodness of fit measures for the full path model, thankfully (Tenenhaus et al., 2004)proposed a method to calculate a global goodness-of-fit (GoF) measure which considers both the quality of the measurement model and the structural model using The average AVE and the average R²(Tenenhaus et al., 2005; van Dolen et al., 2008).Furthermore, the **GoF** index values that were suggested by(Wetzels et al., 2009)and they are: 0.1 (small), 0.25 (medium) and 0.36 (large).

The global goodness-of-fit (GoF) was calculated using the following equation:

$$GoF = \sqrt{(R^2 \cdot AVE)}$$

$$AVE = (0.816 + 0.658 + 0.590)/3 = 0.688$$

$$R^2 = (0.706 + 0.354)/2 = 0.53$$

$$\text{GoF} = \sqrt{0.688 \cdot 0.53} = \sqrt{0.364} = 0.603$$

The calculated global goodness of fit (GoF) is **0.603** exceeding the threshold of $\text{GoF} > 0.36$ suggested by (Wetzels et al., 2009), which indicates a **very good** model fit for the study.

Conclusion:

With markets nowadays are becoming more and more competitive, brands are doubling their efforts to not only gain the customer's attention, but to develop a long-term relationship, which is translated into brand loyalty making it the key to customers' heart that every brand is trying to obtain. This lead researchers everywhere to try to find the factor or the combination of factors that can drive them straight to customers loyalty to certain brands. This study is one of them, and despite its limitations, it makes three major contributions. First, the brand experience hasn't been given much attention in the Algerian research field even though its tremendous importance especially in the service sector which is the one studied by focusing on the Algerian customer's perspective on an Algerian brand. Second, this study provides an empirical evidence for the direct effect of both brand experience on customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction on brand loyalty, therefore, this study shows the strong mediating effect of customer satisfaction between brand experience and brand loyalty. Finally, this study shows that even though brand experience's major importance to customers, it doesn't have enough effect on brand loyalty unless customer satisfaction is achieved, which is what Algerian firms in general should focus more on attaining.

Therefore, to improve brand experience the following recommendations were made:

- More efforts should be made to know customers' needs and wants so they can provide better services.
- The employees must be trained to provide the best services to customers, and answer their questions and concerns.

- It is vital that the products or services provided for the customers should always be the same or better than the previous ones.
- For the customers feel important, there must be a door for communication between the customers and the brand whether it's online or in person. This leads to more satisfaction and therefore loyalty.
- in order to make customers loyal to a brand whether it's for product or service, it is required to obtain their interest via their experience, having a good experience leads to satisfied customers which leads to the wanted brand loyalty.
- Never underestimate the power of a good customer brand experience.

Limitations and future studies:

Concerning the limitations of the study, the brand experience was studied as a unidimensional variable which made it hard to know where exactly are the strength and weaknesses points of the experiences were so they can be focused on, and the second limitation is that even though mediator of this study had a strong effect on brand loyalty, it could be enhanced by incorporating other brand loyalty determinants such as brand trust, brand love, or even relationship quality. Therefore, three future research areas can be identified, firstly, the effect of brand experience dimensions on brand loyalty through brand trust, second, investigating the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty with the mediating effect of relationship quality, and lastly the effect of the different brand experience dimensions on the overall customer satisfaction.

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