



**ONLINE STORE BRAND EXPERIENCE IMPACTING  
ON ONLINE BRAND TRUST AND ONLINE REPURCHASE  
INTENTION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF  
ONLINE BRAND ATTACHMENT**

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**Abstract:**

The scope of this research is to examine the impact of online store brand experience on online brand trust and online repurchase intention. Additionally, the study tests whether online brand attachment moderates these influences. Data was gathered in two cities in Pakistan and path relationships in the theoretical model were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling. The study results confirm that online brand attachment and online brand experience have a direct relationship with online brand trust and online repurchase intention. Conclusively, online brand attachment significantly moderates the two relationships between a) online brand experiences and online brand trust and b) online brand experiences and online repurchase intention. The study provides insights for online retail store managers to focus on improving the online experience for its customers in order to promote online brand trust and online repurchase intentions.

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## 1. Introduction

With the advancement in technology consumers are becoming more aware of the products and services (Kaatz, Brock, and Figura, 2019). As a result, brand experience has gained a lot of attention from marketing researchers as it is an important element of marketing strategies (Choi, Ok, and Hyun, 2017). Brand experience is the “*defining stage or stage of events in which a company contact in such manners that it creates chain of events, and those chain of event than creates a memorable experience for the customers*” (Fransen, Rompay, and Muntinga, 2013, p. 38). Similarly, with in online context it is important for marketers to understand brand experience and its relationship with brand loyalty and repurchase intention. Previous studies show that online brand experience has emerged as a result of technological advancement (Foroudi et al., 2018; Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013). It is vital for retailers to create and provide a unique brand experience that is developed quickly as the online environment and technology changes (Khan, Rahman, and Fatma, 2016; Khan and Rahman, 2016). Moreover, it is a challenge for marketers to overcome the problem of intangibility in a way that customers may overlook the tangible aspects of the products, yet still experience the brand positively online (Bilgihan, Kandampully, and Zhang, 2016; Castañeda, Del Valle Galindo, and Martínez, 2018).

The influence of online experience tends to leave a positive impact on consumer online brand experience and online buying behaviour (Iglesias, Markovic, and Rialp, 2019; Wirtz et al., 2013). However, previous studies focus mainly on the physical environment rather than online brand experiences (Ishida and Taylor, 2012). Research that resolves how important the creation of online brand trust and online repurchase intention is required. Previous research has identified that whenever a customer is exposed to negative information about a brand to which the customer is highly attached, the perception of that information moves towards mistrust or expects deception (Chiou, Hsu, and Hsieh, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand what happens when customers experience online stores and negative information is available in terms of reviews regards to their favourite online stores; especially, whether or not brand attachment could still mediate that effect between brand experiences, brand trust and repurchase intention (Saleem, Zahra, and Yaseen, 2017; Trivedi, and Yadav, 2018).

Samy and Behi (2010) note that in a physical environment if brand attachment is high then consumers rely on the positive information and maintain the brand relationship which results in repeat buying: as *Attachment Theory* recommends that an individual’s level of emotional attachment can easily predict the future interactions with that object of that particular individual (Bowlby, 1980). Similarly, consumers who are shows any attachment to a brand of their choice, will go the distance to and will keep building on relationship with the brand even to they have to pay premium prices in order purchase, whilst they remain loyal (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). Furthermore,

*The Broaden and Build Theory* explains that positive information affects peoples' scope of attention, cognition and action. When consumers develop cognitive association with their brands, they can see the bigger picture and even develop a stronger association with them (He et al., 2016).

This study will investigate the direct effects of brand attachment and brand experience with in online context on brand trust and repurchase intention, and we address missing gaps in the research where brand attachment as a moderator on online brand experience and online repurchase intention. We follow the work of He et al. (2016) and examine how consumers attached themselves to a brand when experiencing the brand online, which then affects, and moderates, consumers' purchasing intentions. Similarly, we address Ammari et al.'s (2016) suggestion that brand attachment is a moderator of brand trust and repurchase intention.

Brand experience and brand attachment in an online context has been lacking. So importantly, this research fills the research gaps and highlight some important role of brand attachment when it comes to online brand experience, brand trust and repurchase intentions. Hence, the purposes of the current study will be to i) inspect the effect of online brand experience on online brand trust and online repurchase intention; and ii) explore the moderating role of online brand attachment in the brand relationships. The study highlights practical information for marketing managers engaged in the online shopping industry; which will guide them in order plan and implement sustainable marketing strategies.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Online Brand Experience**

Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) conceptualize brand experience as *"a set of sensations, feelings, and cognitions and behavioural responses evoked by brand related stimuli that are part of a brand's design, identity, packaging, communications, and environments"* (p. 53). Brand experiences is a process in which consumers imply or associate their feelings and cognitions towards a brand (Xie, Poon, and Zhang, 2017). Furthermore, brand experience can also be defined as the consumer's first interaction or repetitive interaction through different sources, such as images, physical possession or through online medium with the brand (Alloza, 2008). The emergence of online shopping has become a more important channel for marketers to fully understand and deliver a quality experience for customers (Shankar and Jebarajakirthy, 2019). While shopping online stores has increased and now provide opportunities for customers to shop easily, many challenges for marketers to understand the online shopping behaviour of consumer and to offer a positive online brand experience have been brought (Konus, Verhoef, and Neslin, 2008).

### **2.2 Online Brand Experience and Online Brand Trust**

Trust is an important factor in the online retail environment. As identified by Khan and Rahman (2016, p. 591) *"trust is the corner stone of the relationship between buyer and seller"*

and in Berry (2000, p.128) “*trust ... enables [online customers] to understand the offering and to face the perceived risk associated with buying and consuming the product*”. Furthermore, Chinomona and Maziriri (2017) state that brand trust is the willingness of customers to have confidence in the reliability and honesty of a specific brand. It is the level of confidence shown by customer on a specific brand website to deliver promised services or products (Raml and Kenning, 2012). So, it is difficult for online stores to reach their potential without gaining the trust of their customers (Pengnate and Sarathy, 2017; Stouthuysen et al., 2018) and research has indicated that trust could be considered as an important component for online based companies (Winch and Joyce, 2006).

### **2.3 Online Brand Experience and Online Repurchase Intention**

Zhang et al. (2011) define two stages of online shopping behaviour. In the first stage the customer completes the initial purchase online through their preferred store. In the second stage the repurchase intention is followed up from the same online store, if the first experience was satisfactory. Hellier et al. (2003) define repurchase intention as “*the individual’s judgments about buying again a designated service from the same company, taking into account his or her current situation and likely circumstances*” (p. 1763). However, online customers can search for relevant information before they make a purchase for the first time from a specific online store (Matute, Redondo, and Utrillas, 2016). Izogo (2016) indicates that repurchase intention goes beyond loyalty and the customer becomes inclined toward a particular brand. Similarly, it is important for marketers to come up with strategies to increase customers repurchase intention because acquiring one new customer is five times more costly than keeping one old customer (Yan, 2006).

*Self-perception theory* describes that whenever consumers acquire new information or experiences about a product, they change their perceptions of the product (Johnson et al., 2001). Repurchasing becomes a habitual process whenever it is repeated in terms of online stores. Lin and Lekhawipat (2014) claim that “*if the product or service brings the customer a high level of pleasure and satisfaction, then we can assume prior expectations are highly [aligned]*” (p. 600). The success of online stores is dependent on what sort of experiences they provide to customers. Therefore, online experiences become an important concept for marketing managers to understand in order to increase the online repurchase intention and online sales. E-marketers needs to understand the importance and evaluate the concept of experience in order to increase the online web performance, which could result in an increase in online sale (Rose, Hair, and Clark, 2011).

### **2.4 Online Brand Attachment and Online Brand Trust**

Park, MacInnis, and Priester (2006) define brand attachment as “*the strength of the cognitive and affective bond connecting the brand with the self*” (p. 195). Brand attachment can be referred as the concept, in which consumer or individual seeks a sense of security from or relationship with a brand (Ammari et al., 2016). The attachment itself is the process of relationship between the brand and the consumer (Japutra, Ekinici, and Simkin, 2018). The relationship is in result of some sort of memory network, which usually involves

certain thought and feeling about the particular brand and its relationship with a consumer (Park et al., 2010). Similarly, online brand attachment plays an important role when it comes to online brand trust. Trust is regarded as key component when it comes to development of brand attachment (Chinomona, 2013). Online brand trust in other words is a concept which can go beyond satisfaction between a consumers and brand (Samy and Behi, 2010). A strong online brand attachment can create a strong link with online brand trust (Frasquet, Mollá Descals, and Ruiz-Molina, 2017; Huang et al., 2014; Sahi, Sekhon, and Quareshi, 2016). Brand attachment is both cognitive and affective in nature (Shabani Nashtae et al., 2017). Brand attachment reinforces brand trust (Frasquet et al., 2017). Thus, customers rely on the brand that fulfils promises and when a consumer is attached to a brand, they believe that brand will not lie and will not break its promises about the product and the brand will not take any advantage of any consumer's vulnerability.

### **2.5 Online Brand Attachment and Online Repurchase Intention**

As *Attachment Theory* may account for individuals tending to seek attachment with specific brands, figures and celebrities, which is their way of acquiring protection from threats in both physical and psychological forms (Pedeliento et al., 2016). Thomson et al. (2005) argue that every consumer when they are emotionally attached tries to fulfil basic human needs. Furthermore, online brand attachment has been referred to as the consumer bond which connects a brand and consumer with each other in way that feelings are involved. Hence, that is the reason why online brand attachment is important and the main driver of repurchase intention, because it provides a link between the consumer and the brand (Kaufmann et al., 2016; Lin, Chen, and Hung, 2011). Wu, Anridho, and Liao (2015) suggest that whenever a consumer who is attached to a certain brand, develops feelings of association and they have more willingness to make repurchases from that brand. Therefore, online brand attachment influences online repurchase intention.

### **2.6 The Moderating Role of Online Brand Attachment on the relationship between Online Brand Experience and Online Brand Trust**

Previous studies suggest that brand attachment pushes a consumer to make biased decisions, when it comes to purchasing a specific brand (Vredeveld, 2018). Moreover, personal attitude and behaviour are important factors in brand attachment (Japutra et al., 2018). Similarly, when it comes to online shopping the absences of physical environment and store brand experiences can create a different atmosphere for consumers. The question is whether a consumer will still experience the product and trust that brand if they are already attached to the brand or not. Chiou et al. (2013) used the brand attachment as a moderator in which the results showed that "*brand attachment affects consumers' brand evaluation and perceived brand risk when facing negative online information*" (p. 921). We need to investigate to what extent online brand trust is affected the when consumers go through negative online experiences, whilst they are highly attached. As

*Affect Infusion Model* suggest that affect influences both what people usually think and how they think, and attachment comes when people are exposed to certain information (Forgas and George, 2001). In online shopping context consumer online brand attachment is important, because both online brand trust and experience are play a key role in for building customer loyalty, and furthermore, structure a strong relationship between the buyer and the seller (Huang, 2017; Reichheld and Schefter, 2000). Just like brand experience, brand trust is a control mechanism that facilitates exchange relationships characterised by uncertainty, vulnerability and dependence (Bradach and Eccles, 1989; Kassim and Abdullah, 2010; Menidjel, Benhabib and Bilgihan, 2017). As described Grabner-Kraeuter (2002) in the online shopping context consumers seek to reduce the uncertainty and sometimes the complexity of shopping and for that reason they seek and create mental shortcuts, including brand trust.

### **2.7 The Moderating Role of Online Brand Attachment between the Relationship Online Brand Experience and Online Repurchase Intention**

Researchers believe that online shopping behavior can be divided into two stages. The first one is, where a customer is concerned about buying the product for the first time online from a new store, such as forged information or payment risk. The second one is related to repurchase intention from the same online store (Xie et al., 2017). Similarly, the moderating role of online brand attachment on online brand experience and online repurchase intention is important to study, as literature on this phenomenon is very little. As Lin et al. (2010) believe when “*brands offer sensory organ pleasures, enjoyment or beauty to meet consumer egos and transform to repurchase intention*” (p. 5918). *Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory* suggests that consumer goes through a process of brand attachment and satisfaction that satisfied customer will buy the product again in the future and dissatisfied consumers will not (Yen and Lu, 2007). Recent studies indicate that online consumer tends to enjoy shopping, which in future encourage them to make a repurchase from the same store. Also, these experiences can only be enjoyed in the virtual stores, thus making brand experiences an important element (Chiu et al., 2009; Yoon and Park 2018). Online brand experience can create enjoyable experiences for consumer, which will then lead to online repurchase intention mediated by online brand attachment. (Assiouras et al., 2015).

### **2.8 Research Hypotheses**

Following from the literature review, we propose the six hypotheses:

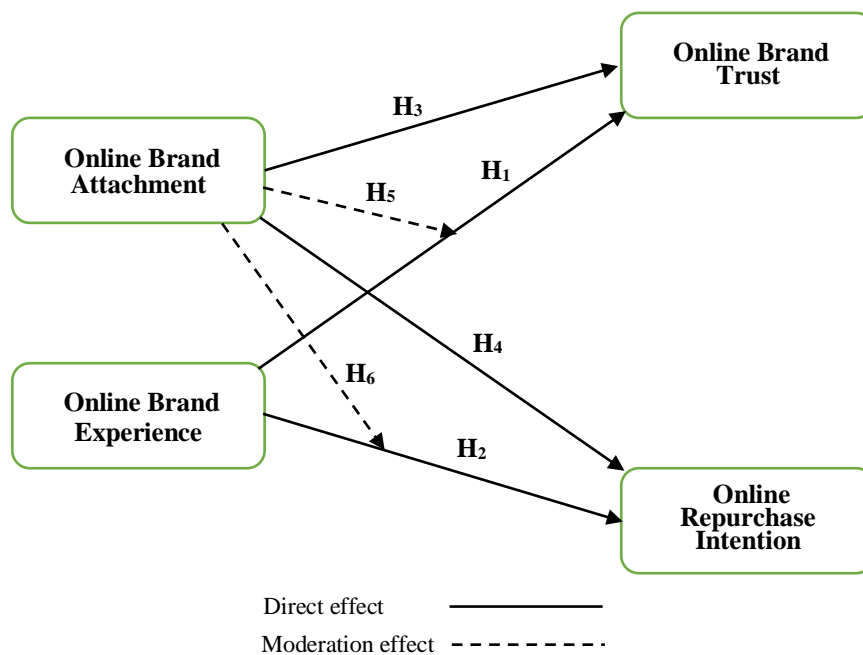
- H<sub>1</sub>**. Online Brand Experience has a positive relationship on Online Brand Trust.
- H<sub>2</sub>**. Online Brand Experience has a positive relationship on Online Repurchase Intention.
- H<sub>3</sub>**. Online Brand Attachment has a positive relationship on Online Brand Trust.
- H<sub>4</sub>**. Online Brand Attachment has a positive relationship on Online Repurchase Intention.

**H<sub>5</sub>.** Online Brand Attachment moderates the relationship between Online Brand Experiences and Online Brand Trust in a way such that the relationship will become stronger if the Online Brand Attachment is high.

**H<sub>6</sub>.** Online Brand Attachment moderates the relationship between Online Brand Experiences and Online Repurchase Intention in such a way that the relationship will become stronger if the Online Brand Attachment is high.

The hypotheses are represented in Figure 1 in which four direct relationships and two moderating effects are to be investigated.

**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 The Survey Instrument and The Sample

To evaluate the proposed model, empirical data was gathered by using the street intercept method in two cities of Pakistan (Rawalpindi and Islamabad). The main reason for selecting of those cities is that higher density of Internet usage compared to other cities in Pakistan. Previously, many studies find the street intercept method effective in terms of time, cost and dynamic nature of respondents (Chandra and Chen, 2019; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013; Ye, 2017). The survey instrument was adapted from existing sub-scales (see the Appendix) the instrument used five different responses anchors (from strongly agree = 1 to strongly disagree = 5.).

In total, 210 responses received three weeks of data collection. However, 16 questionnaires were not used due to incomplete responses. Thus, 194 responses retained for the data analysis and the respondents' demographics are shown in Table 1. Different ex-ante and ex-post strategies have used to minimize the common method variance in

the data collected (Fuller et al., 2016; Malhotra, Kim and Patil, 2006). Harman's single factor test was performed to verify no single factor exceeded 50% of variance under ex-post analysis. As a result, the unrotated factor analysis revealed that only 42.5% variance accounted for the single factor in the dataset. Therefore, no common method variance was found in the study. The composition of the initial survey instrument is shown in Table 2 with means and standard deviations for the sample's responses.

**Table 1: Respondents Demographic Profiles**

Demographic Factor	Classification	Frequency (194)	Percentage
Gender	Male	121	62.4%
	Female	073	37.6%
Age	18 - 24 years	083	42.8%
	25 - 34 years	065	33.5%
	35 - 44 years	029	14.9%
	45 - 54 years	010	05.2%
	55 - < years	007	03.6%
Education	Ordinary Level	023	11.9%
	Advanced Level	032	16.5%
	Diploma	072	37.1%
	Undergraduate Degree	058	29.9%
	Postgraduate Degree	009	04.6%
Visit	Once a week	059	30.4%
	Two times a week	071	36.6%
	Three times a week	031	16.0%
	Four times a week	019	09.8%
	More than four times a week	014	07.2%
Purchase	Consumer electronics	043	22.2%
	Fashion apparel	075	38.7%
	Home appliances	031	16.0%
	Books	013	06.7%
	Miscellaneous	032	16.5%



**Table 2:** The Composition of the Scales

Items	Mean	SD
Online Brand Experience (based on Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013)		
OBE1	2.54	1.07
OBE2	2.54	1.03
OBE3	2.68	1.05
OBE4*	2.68	1.09
OBE5*	2.43	1.12
OBE6	2.38	0.97
Online Brand Attachment (based on Park et al., 2010)		
OBA1	2.41	1.12
OBA2	2.40	1.16
OBA3	2.36	1.02
OBA4	2.31	1.00
OBA5*	2.34	0.95
OBA6	2.33	0.99
OBA7*	2.43	1.15
Online Brand Trust (based on Horppu et al., 2008)		
OBT1	2.33	1.13
OBT2	2.21	1.01
OBT3*	2.34	0.98
OBT4	2.17	1.04
OBT5	2.36	1.06
OBT6	2.35	1.07
OBT7	2.23	0.98
OBT8	2.55	1.04
Online Repurchase Intention (based on Hsu et al., 2006)		
ORI1	2.19	0.94
ORI2	2.22	0.97
ORI3	2.25	0.90

Notes: all items were measured by five-point Likert scales. \* items were deleted in the main analysis due to low factor loadings. SD: Standard Deviation.

## 4 Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Assessment of Measurement Model

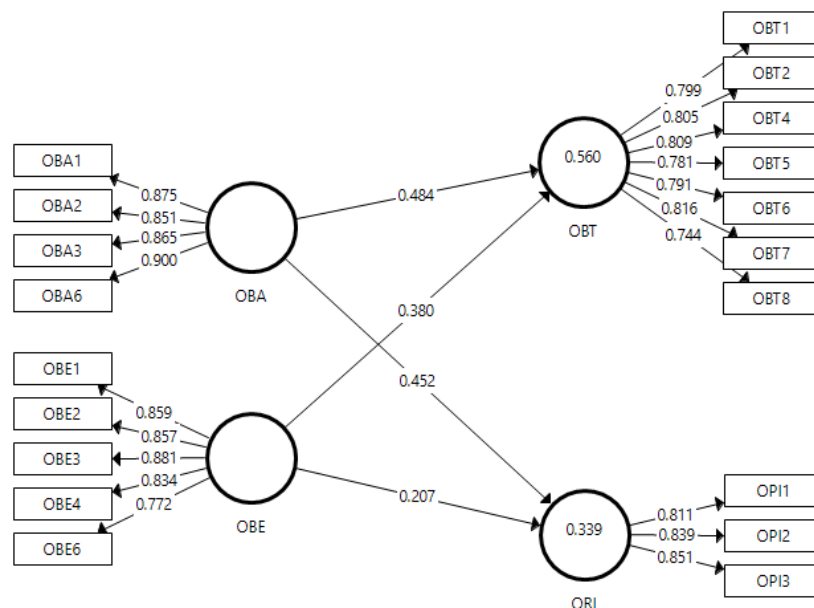
The collected data were analysed by using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in which uses a two-stage approach: a) analysis of the measurement model and b) structural modelling. PLS-SEM considers as one of the popular second-generation multivariate analyses that attracts attention for predicting the relationships among unobserved latent constructs (Hair et al., 2018). Under the measurement model analysis, indicator reliability, composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were tested. PLS-SEM is used here to predict the relationships among proposed path model. Specifically, SmartPLS 3.2.8 was used to test model specifications. Following the initial data cleaning process, five items were dropped from the original subscales because of the factor loadings were far below the minimum threshold. Table 2 indicates the composition and origins of the initial survey instruments

and table 3 demonstrates the main reliability and validity criteria of the path model. Figure 2 shows the path coefficients obtained from the analysis of the measurement model.

**Table 3: Reliability and Validity Criterion**

	$\lambda$	$\alpha$	rho_A	CR	AVE
Online Brand Experience					
OBA1	0.875	0.896	0.902	0.928	0.762
OBA2	0.851				
OBA3	0.865				
OBA6	0.900				
Online Brand Attachment					
OBE1	0.859	0.896	0.898	0.924	0.708
OBE2	0.857				
OBE3	0.881				
OBE4	0.834				
OBE6	0.772				
Online Brand Trust					
OBT1	0.799	0.901	0.902	0.922	0.628
OBT2	0.805				
OBT4	0.809				
OBT5	0.781				
OBT6	0.791				
OBT7	0.816				
OBT8	0.744				
Online Repurchase Intention					
ORI1	0.811	0.781	0.781	0.873	0.696
ORI2	0.839				
ORI3	0.851				

Notes: OBA: Online Brand Experience, OBE: Online Brand Attachment, OBT: Online Brand Trust, ORI: Online Repurchase Intention,  $\lambda$ : Factor Loadings,  $\alpha$ : Cronbach's Alpha, CR: Composite Reliability, AVE: Average Variance Extracted



**Figure 2: Assessment of the Measurement Model: Path Coefficient**

#### **4.1.1 Indicator Reliability**

Hair et al. (2017) claim that the accepted threshold for indicator outer loadings should be greater than 0.708. In this particular model, five items (OBE4, OBE5, OBA5, OBA7 and OBT3) were deleted due low factor loadings and the deletion leads to improve in composite reliability and AVE in the measurement model (Hair et al., 2017). Once those items deleted from the measurement model, all indicators show higher indicator reliability.

#### **4.1.2 Internal Consistency**

Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability were used to test the internal consistency reliability of the instruments (Hair et al., 2017). The standard accepted level of Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability should be greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017; Nunnally, 1978). In this research, all the Cronbach's Alpha values of the sub-scales were greater than 0.7: OBE (0.896), OBA (0.896), OBT (0.901), and ORI (0.781) and hence internal consistency is confirmed. Additionally, composite reliability scores of the sub-scales also fulfil the required minimum threshold of 0.7: OBE (0.928), OBA (0.924), OBT (0.922) and ORI (0.873). In order to meet the required threshold in both Cronbach's Alpha and CR, psychometric scale adaption, multiple Likert scale items and the clarity of the questionnaire were helped (Taber, 2018). The researchers adapt existing scales to reflect the main four dimensions of the proposed model namely OBE, OBA, OBT and ORI that aid to build psychometrically viable instruments. Multiple Likert scale items anchoring strongly agree to strongly disagree also support. Moreover, the clarity of the items was enhanced by piloting the questionnaire in which reduces the ambiguity of responses in the main study.

#### **4.1.3 Convergent Validity**

Convergent validity refers to *"the extent to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct"* (Hair et al., 2017, p. 112). Average variance extracted (AVE) was examined to confirm convergent validity as shown in table 3. According to Hair et al. (2017), the standard value for the AVE should be greater than 0.5. Here, all the latent constructs of the measurement model show acceptable levels for AVE: OBE (0.762), OBA (0.708), OBT (0.628), and ORI (0.696). This means that each construct (OBE, OBA, OBT and ORI) positively correlates with items in the same construct. Therefore, it can be concluded that items in each construct relate uniquely in relevant construct measured.

#### **4.1.4 Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity indicates that uniqueness of the scales used in the measurement model and is generally assessed using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion compares the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable correlations (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, the square root of each construct's AVE should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct (Hair et al., 2017). Table 4 shows the

results for the Fornell-Larcker Criteria showing the discriminant validity of the model is established. With the growing acceptance of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) as a discriminant validity measure reduces limitations of the Fornell-Larcker Criteria (Henseler et al., 2015). The abstract meaning of HTMT refers to “the ratio of the between-trait correlations to the within-trait correlations” (Hair et al., 2017, p. 118). Even though the maximum threshold for HTMT is arguable, Henseler et al. (2015) recommend that HTMT ratio should be below 0.9. Table 5 shows that HTMT ratios of the measurement model are below 0.9 and so here the discriminant validity is confirmed. This reflects the argument that each construct is unique among other constructs and no overlapping between.

**Table 4:** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	OBA	OBE	OBT	ORI
OBA	<b>0.873</b>			
OBE	0.492	<b>0.841</b>		
OBT	0.671	0.618	<b>0.792</b>	
ORI	0.554	0.430	0.523	<b>0.834</b>

Notes: OBA: Online Brand Experience, OBE: Online Brand Attachment, OBT: Online Brand Trust, ORI: Online Repurchase Intention

**Table 5:** HTMT Ratio

	OBA	OBE	OBT	ORI
OBA				
OBE	0.548			
OBT	0.733	0.682		
ORI	0.661	0.508	0.618	

Notes: OBA: Online Brand Experience, OBE: Online Brand Attachment, OBT: Online Brand Trust, ORI: Online Repurchase Intention.

#### 4.2 Assessment of the Structural Model

As the measurement model has been shown to be reliable and valid and so the next step is to assess the structural model of the derived model. The structural model explains the interaction among latent variables that were proposed in the research model (Hair et al., 2018). The main purpose of PLS-SEM is to predict the model estimation where the strength of the relationship depends on the size of the path coefficient and coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of its exogenous constructs (Chin, 1998). However, before analysing the structural model estimation, it is advisable to determine if there are any collinearity issues among latent variables. The key measurement under collinearity assessment is VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) value in which the threshold value of the VIF value should be below 5. Table 6 indicates the VIF values of the inner model all of which are less than 2. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no significant collinearity issues among the predictor variables.

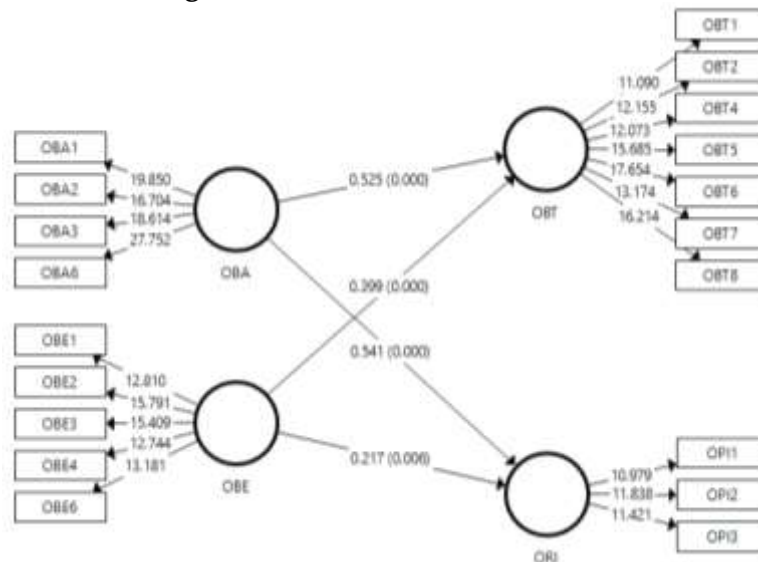
**Table 6:** Inner VIF Values

	OBA	OBE	OBT	ORI
OBA			1.524	1.426
OBE			1.647	1.678
OBT				
ORI				

Notes: OBA: Online Brand Experience, OBE: Online Brand Attachment, OBT: Online Brand Trust, ORI: Online Repurchase Intention

Having confirmed that there are no collinearity issues, model estimation further assesses the strength of hypothesized relationships in the model by using path coefficients. As a general rule, the size of path coefficients should be greater than 0.1 at the significant level 0.05 (2-tailed) and t-values which must be greater than 1.96. Figure 3 demonstrates the t-values for the structural model. Figure 3 also illustrates that OBA has a significant positive relationship between ORI ( $\beta = 0.541$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ) and OBT ( $\beta = 0.525$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). Moreover, figure 3 illustrates that OBE has a significant positive relationship between OBT ( $\beta = 0.399$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ) and ORI ( $\beta = 0.217$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ). It can be concluded that the magnitude of the impact of OBA to ORI is almost double compared to the result of the relationship between OBE and ORI. However, the gap between the magnitude of OBA to OBT and OBE to OBT relatively similar.

**Figure 3:** Structural Model: t-values



**4.2.1 Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)**

PLS-SEM aims to maximize the explained variance of the endogenous latent constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Falk and Miller (1992) propose that the explained variance ( $R^2$ ) for the endogenous variables should be greater than 0.1. However, there is not an agreed accepted threshold value for  $R^2$  in which the determination of the value depends on the “model complexity and research discipline” (Hair *et al.*, 2017, p. 199). Generally,  $R^2$  values of 0.75, 0.50 or 0.25 for the endogenous constructs can be described as respectively

substantial, moderate, or weak. Here, the  $R^2$  values for OBT (0.560) and OBR (0.339) are acceptable but weak to moderate.

#### 4.2.2 Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

Cohen (1988) suggests the accepted levels of effect size of the exogenous variables as 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium) and 0.35 (large). Here, mainly large effects were found in the OBA  $\rightarrow$  OBT (0.578) and OBA  $\rightarrow$  ORI (0.387). However, moderate effects were emerged from the OBE  $\rightarrow$  OBT (0.334) and OBE  $\rightarrow$  ORI (0.162). The effect sizes are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Effect Size  $f^2$

	OBA	OBE	OBT	ORI
OBA			0.578	0.387
OBE			0.334	0.162
OBT				
ORI				

Notes: OBA: Online Brand Experience, OBE: Online Brand Attachment, OBT: Online Brand Trust, ORI: Online Repurchase Intention.

#### 4.2.3 Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) by Chin (1998) measures how well observed values are reconstructed by the model and its parameter estimates.  $Q^2$  values greater than 0 for endogenous latent variable establishes the model's predictive relevance (Hair *et al.*, 2017): Table 8 shows the  $Q^2$  values for OBT (0.320) and ORI (0.219).

**Table 8:** Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
OBA	776	776	
OBE	970	970	
OBT	1,358.00	922.963	0.320
ORI	582	454.679	0.219

Notes: OBA: Online Brand Experience, OBE: Online Brand Attachment, OBT: Online Brand Trust, ORI: Online Repurchase Intention

#### 4.2.4 Model fit

Hair *et al.* (2017) claim that model fit indices show how well a hypothesized model fits the empirical data and detects any model misspecifications. Though there is no universally accepted model fit indices are readily available for PLS-SEM, the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) has taken much popularity among researchers. SRMR quantifies how strongly the empirical correlation matrix differs from the implied correlation matrix, therefore the lower the SRMR, the better the fit of the theoretical model (Henseler, 2017). As a by-product the PLS Bootstrapping procedure with 5000 sub-samples, SRMR has found as 0.068 which is lower than the threshold of 0.08 suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999) and the 0.10 by Ringle (2016). Here the model fit is assured. Table 9 shows the model fit indices.

**Table 9: Model fit indices**

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.06700	0.06800
d_ULS	0.85600	0.88900
d_G1	0.88200	0.89100
d_G2	0.77400	0.77900
Chi-Square	721.624	723.816
NFI	0.73700	0.73700

### 4.3 Hypotheses Results

Since, all the indicators are reflective in nature, consistent PLS bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples are drawn from the original sample with replacement (Hair et al., 2017). Two interaction terms were assigned to test the moderation effect and the interaction terms were set based on the PLS-SEM default two-stage moderation approach to maximize the significance of the moderating effects (Henseler and Chin, 2010). Table 10 shows the effect size ( $\beta$ ) and the significance level ( $p$ ) for the six hypotheses.

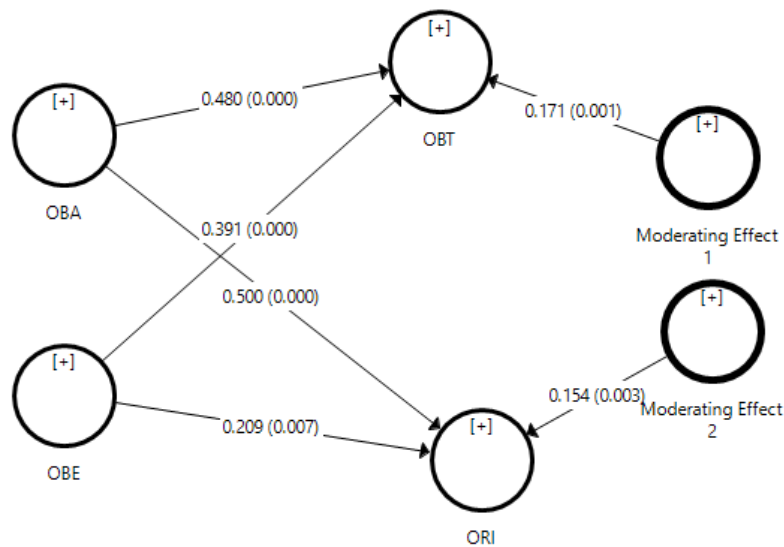
**Table 10: Hypotheses Results**

Hypothesis Relationship	Effect	t Statistics	p Values	Decision
H <sub>1</sub> : OBA → OBT	0.525	6.132	0.000	Supported
H <sub>2</sub> : OBA → ORI	0.541	6.616	0.000	Supported
H <sub>3</sub> : OBE → OBT	0.399	4.448	0.000	Supported
H <sub>4</sub> : OBE → ORI	0.217	2.746	0.006	Supported
H <sub>5</sub> : Moderating effect 1 (OBE * OBA) → OBT	0.171	3.411	0.001	Supported
H <sub>6</sub> : Moderating effect 2 (OBE * OBA) → ORI	0.154	2.976	0.003	Supported

Notes: OBA: Online Brand Experience, OBE: Online Brand Attachment, OBT: Online Brand Trust, ORI: Online Repurchase Intention.

As hypothesized, OBE has a significant positive effect on OBT ( $\beta = 0.525$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) and on ORI ( $\beta=0.541$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ): supporting  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ . The findings are consistent with the respective previous studies of Bilgihan (2016) and Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou (2013) and Rose, Hair, and Clark (2011) and with the studies of Fazal-e-Hasan *et al.* (2019) and Ling, Chai and Piew (2010). Further, the analyses supported  $H_3$  and  $H_4$ , such that OBA has a significant positive effect on OBT ( $\beta = 0.399$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) and on ORI ( $\beta = 0.217$ ,  $p < 0.006$ ).

The moderation effect of this particular research study can be considered as continuous moderation rather than categorical moderation in which a demographic factor or multigroup analysis is considered. The continuous moderation occurs the “one specific relationship between two latent variables” (Hair et al., 2017, p. 246). Therefore, in this research study, OBA moderates the relationship between OBE and OBT whilst OBA moderates the relationship between OBE and ORI. Even though the product indicator approach is recommended to calculate the moderation effect in many PLS-SEM related studies, Hair et al. (2017) prescribe the two-stage approach as the default option in which shows a higher level of statistical power and represents the significance of the moderating effect precisely.



**Figure 4:** Moderation Effect

The moderation effect of OBA on the relationship between OBE and OBT is significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.171, p < 0.001$ ) and  $H_5$  is supported. Therefore, the higher level of OBE leads to higher OBT ( $0.391 + 0.171$ ) due to the moderation effect of OBA. This phenomenon has depicted in Figure 4. Additionally, the moderation effect of OBA on the relationship between OBE and ORI is also significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.154, p < 0.004$ ). Therefore, the higher level of OBE leads to higher levels of ORI ( $0.209 + 0.154$ ) due to the moderation effect of OBA in which depicted in Figure 4. Significant interactions for high and low values of the moderator are shown in Figure 5 in which illustrates the relationship between OBE and OBT was strong when OBA was high, which supports our hypothesis 5. Similarly, when OBA was high the relationship between OBE and ORI was also strong, thus it supports our hypothesis 6 as well.



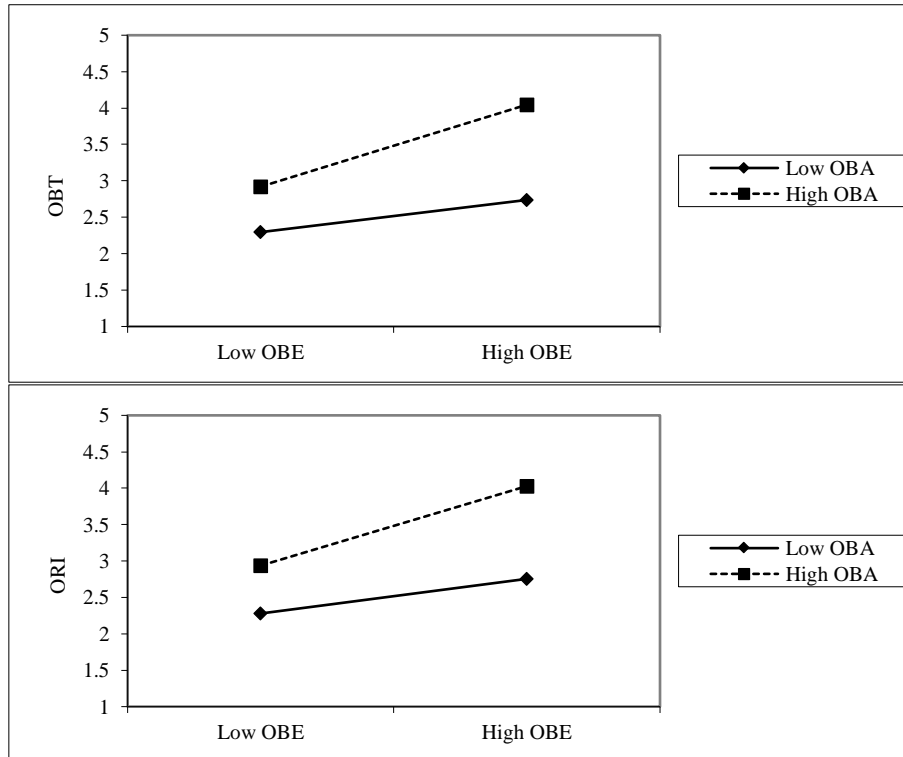


Figure 5: Simple Slope Plots

## 5. Discussion

The results of this research add contribution to the existing marketing literature. The study provides a clear view and understanding on OBA and OBE on both OBT and ORI with the moderating effect of OBA on the relationship between OBE and OBT and the relationship between OBE and ORI. Brand experience is an important element for marketers to understand along with the effect of brand attachment. OBE was found to have a positive effect on OBT, this may be since customers feel more secure, when they already have experience of the brand. These findings support those of Cheskin and Sapien (1999) and Winch and Joyce (2006) indicating that trust is important. However, OBE has a significant positive effect on ORI. Our findings support the *Self-perception Theory* proposed by Johnson et al. (2001) that any new or old experience connected with a brand helps consumers to form strong perceptions; which then leads to a habitual process, where those experiences are positive. Our findings are supported by Lin and Lekhawipat (2014): customers who have high levels of pleasure and satisfaction associated with the online store then have intentions to repurchase. In line with Chinomona (2013) and Samy and Behi (2010, here OBA was shown to have a strong positive and significant relationship with OBT. This is because individuals usually attach the sense of security with their favourite brand(s). Consumers think that a certain store or brand is a part of their own identity and so they have strong personal connections with that online brand. The strong bond ultimately leads towards trust.

Similarly, OBA was shown to have a strong positive and significant relationship with ORI, supporting the findings of Wu et al. (2015) The findings align with Attachment Theory: when the consumers are more attached, they tend to go back to their favourite store. Furthermore, we support Hew *et al.* (2016) showing that consumers have positive associations with their favourite stores. This study tested OBA as a moderator in the relationship with OBE shares separately with OBT and ORI. The first moderation effect of OBA raises the relationship between OBE and OBT. This finding supports the studies of Chiou et al. (2013), and Reichheld and Scheffer (2000): OBA and OBE can combine to influence the consumers' perceptions towards a product. In the case of online retail store, where there no evidence of physical environment so that consumers must rely on the attachment they have with the brand and any past experiences in order to build any trust. Our findings support *The Affect Infusion Model* of Forgas and George (2001): consumers will attach themselves to products if they have positive information about them. The second moderation effect of OBA raises the relationship between OBE and ORI. Our findings support the *Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory* of Yen and Lu (2007): consumers who are most satisfied will form strong brand attachments and become most likely to buy the product again. Additionally, the findings align with Lin et al. (2010) and Chiu et al. (2009). The reason is that the brands usually offers sensory pleasures to consumers and when that meets their expectations, they strengthen their brand attachment which then leads towards brand repurchase intentions. On the other hand, the online store website with good functionality (appearance, design, utility and ease of use) that promotes positive customer experiences will promote repurchase intentions for the online brand. Overall our study confirmed He et al. (2016) work as well.

### **5.1 Managerial Implications**

Our present study has some important implications for managers. Using the finding of the study, managers can provide a good OBE to promote OBT which may ultimately lead to repurchase intention. The ultimate goals for managers should be to provide consistent and better OBE for customers and find new ways to deliver superior experiences and build strategies around those online experiences. That would lead to a strong and positive online brand store and company image as well as reputation. If the companies maintain a good online brand experience the reward for them will be in the form of increased brand trust and repurchase intentions of customers, which will ultimately become a competitive advantage in the online store environment. OBA has also important implications for managers. Our results suggest that OBA influences OBE, OBT and ORI. Our findings revealed that when customers are attached to a certain brand their perceptions of the quality of experiences will be increased and their trust will be strong which will then lead towards repurchase intention. The findings emphasise that marketing managers should acknowledge the importance of the role of brand attachment in influencing customer's repurchase decisions, and to design the initial online experience in a way that it leads to a strong brand attachment.

## 5.2 Limitations

Just like any other research, this research has some limitations which on the other hand represent opportunities for future research on this topic. The collected data using a single survey instrument from a specific sample from in two cities in Pakistan, future research should draw information from samples in different contexts using multi-source data collection, experimental as well as longitudinal design. This study was conducted in a generalized manner for “online brands”, future investigation should incorporate several real and specific brands from multiple sectors such as banking or telecoms. Here we used just one moderator acting on two relationships, further research can examine other moderating and mediating effects.

## 5.3 Future Research Orientations

This study examines the prediction effects of online brand experience on online brand trust and online purchase intention, where online brand attachment acted as moderator. The study didn't go into a great detail about specific product or service. Future research may look into the proposed relationships in context of online brands of specific product categories (e.g. clothing, grocery, jewellery etc. or brands such as Nike, Samsung, Apple, D & G etc.). Second, it is also suggested age should be examined as a moderating variable, reason being young population's familiarity with internet and related application. Furthermore, we will recommend that the current study should be conducted in first world countries such the UK, USA etc. because of the awareness level of respondent compare to Pakistani population. Finally, this research is more focusing on the positive of online brand experience, future research could try to examine the negative experience effects on online purchase intention and online brand trust.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The study's main objective was to find the link of online brand experience with online brand trust and repurchase intention. The study also used brand attachment as moderator in order to find relationship between online brand experience, online brand trust and online repurchase intention. The study proposed six proposed six hypotheses and empirically examined them. The results of the current study suggest significant impact of online brand experience on online purchase intention and online brand trust. The study also confirms that online brand attachment acts as a moderator in the relationship that online brand experience has with online purchase intention and online brand trust.

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