



Volume and Issues Obtainable at Center for Business Research and Consulting,  
IBMAS, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur Pakistan

## South Asian Review of Business and Administrative Studies

ISSN: 2710-5318 ; ISSN (E): 2710-5164

Volume 4, No.1, June 2022

Journal homepage: <https://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/sabas>

### Brand Experience and Brand Commitment: Chartering New Directions

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#### ARTICLE DETAILS

#### ABSTRACT

##### History

*Revised format:*

*May 2022*

*Available Online:*

*June 2022*

##### Keywords

*Brand image, brand experience, brand passion, and brand commitment.*

The marketplace is gradually becoming more competitive and dynamic nowadays. In this scenario, the ultimate goal for brand managers is to achieve brand commitment. Considering the significance of brand commitment, this study explores the impact of brand experience on brand commitment via mediating influence of brand passion in light of the Stimulus-Organism Response Model. Moreover, this study evaluates the impact of brand image on brand experience and brand passion. The theoretical framework has been analyzed via structural equation modeling using AMOSS 22.0 by using data from 390 smartphone users. For the data collection, a structured questionnaire was used. The result indicates that brand passion mediates the relationship between brand experience and brand commitment. The existence of this mediation validates the application of the S-O-R model. Moreover, this research proves that brand image has a positive linkage with brand passion. Lastly, this research depicts that brand image plays the role of the antecedent of brand experience.



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52461/sabas.v4i1.1023>

#### Introduction

The Market place nowadays is becoming hyper-competitive due to rapidly changing customers' needs (Varna, Varna, Bulgaria & Dyankov, 2020). In the context of the pandemic crisis, many firms lost their competitive factor by overlooking two major elements i.e. customer knowledge and experience management (Mocanu, 2020). These elements resulted in an interesting contradiction for marketers, where consumers are available with ample choices to switch over instead of staying committed to one brand (Martillo Jeremías & Polo Peña, 2021). In this scenario, marketers are focusing heavily on building and nurturing consumer-brand relationships (Kumar & Kaushik, 2020). Offerings from different firms pull customers from brand commitment at negligible switching costs (Das, Agarwal, Malhotra, & Varshneya, 2019). In this rivalrous and constantly changing marketplace, one of the eventual goals for firms is to develop brand

commitment. Literature in this domain has analyzed numerous determinants for brand commitment such as attitude, attachment, love, personality, and identification.

The use of brand experience in creating consumer and brand relationships has garnered the attention of numerous scholars in recent years. Zha et al. (2020) also argued that there is widespread agreement that the brand experience literature lacks conceptual works. Brand experience consists of subjective consumer experiences, emotions, cognitions, or behavioural responses elicited by brand-related stimuli (Martillo Jeremías & Polo Peña, 2021).

Against this background and considering the importance of brand experience, the present research investigates the impact of brand experience on brand commitment through brand passion by applying Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) model. Moreover, this study also observes the impact of brand image on brand experience as well as on brand passion. The construct of brand experience has been conceptually and empirically validated as an important concept that holds the main part in building brands (Kumar & Kaushik, 2020; Zha et al., 2022)

The association among the two constructs i.e. brand experience and brand commitment has remained questionable in intuitive terms, favorable brand experience must portray brand commitment as an outcome. Despite the fact, that in literature, there are contradictory opinions about this relationship. Marmat (2021) suggested a direct relationship among these constructs. Whereas, Paik and Lee (2021) argued about an indirect relationship between them via mediators representing cognitive and hedonic features. The interest in the concept of passion has flourished in recent years (Gilal et al., 2021). Brand passion is supposed to be a significant part of this missing linkage, which offered a powerful relational link to brands that individuals value. Brand passion seems to be an intense feeling possessed by a customer and directed to the brand (Wang et al., 2021). These feelings indicate the inclination of the customer to establish an intimate relationship with the brand and imply a customer's physiological arousal by possession of that brand. An effective and highly positive attitude for a certain brand that directs the customer towards an emotional attachment and impacts the related behavioral factors is known as brand passion (Bauer, Heinrich, & Martin, 2007). Swimberghe, Astakhova, and Wooldridge (2014) have introduced the approach of dualistic brand passion by translating the work of Vallerand et al. (2003) (on dual approach to passion activities) into consumer and brand environment context. There are two different dimensions for brand passion based on a brand's internalization in an individual's identity (Wang et al., 2021).

Based on these conceptualizations, this research uses the S-O-R model for testing the proposed relations between brand experience and brand commitment in presence of brand passion i.e. Obsessive Brand Passion (OBP) and Harmonious Brand Passion (HBP). The S-O-R model is based upon three elements stimulus, organism, and response. The first element is stimulus, it is an influence that arouses the person (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001). The second element is the organism, it conceptualized as the intrinsic processes which intervene in the stimuli and final action (Chang, Eckman, & Yan, 2011). The last element is a response, it is a behavioral outcome of an individual which could be an approach behavior or avoidance behavior (Robert & John, 1982; Sherman, Mathur, & Smith, 1997). The present study proposes brand experience as a stimulus that triggers the organism in form of brand passion and this organismic state eventually leads to a response of brand commitment (i.e., a behavioral outcome).

Antecedents of brand experience were investigated by different scholars including Nysveen and Pedersen (2014), Ghorbanzadeh et al. (2020), and Roswinanto and Strutton (2014). The present study explores a brand's image impact on brand experience as an antecedent. Literature has shown that this impact needs more clarity and could offer a prospective avenue for upcoming research as

mandated by Das et al. (2019). Moreover, this study also explores the impact of brand image on brand Passion i.e. OBP and HBP. Previous studies on brand image propose that consumers might designate human qualities to the brands consumed by them, which leads them the love thousands. Brand love comprises different components. One of the components of brand love is brand passion. By inferring from this relationship, this study proposes a positive impact of brand image on brand passion (OBP and HBP).

## **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

### **Stimulus Organism Response Model**

In this study, the theoretical backbone is the S-O-R model. Mehrabian and Russell (1974), presented this model. It comprises three main components i.e. stimulus, organism, and response. Stimulus is the first component, It is an influence that evokes an individual (Eroglu et al., 2001). The second component is Organism, that defines as the internal structures or processes which intervene in the external stimuli and emitted responses (Chang et al., 2011). It is an emotional response by a customer towards the stimuli (Bagozzi, 1986). The response is the final component; it represents the outcome or final decision of the customer. A response could be in form of approach or avoidance behavior. This model states that stimulus affects a customer's emotions which then influence her behavior in turn. In this research, stimuli are brand experiences of customers that affect the brand's passion for working as an organism which eventually causes a response in form of brand commitment.

### **Brand Image and Brand Experience**

Keller defines brand image as "perceptions of the brand that reflect consumer associations in the mind of the consumer" (Keller, 1993, p. 3). The brand image involves brand associations, that are obtained from customers' memory and perception (Anggraeni & Rachmanita, 2015). Brand image is a phenomenon that is been investigated since the start of the 1950s, but still, it lacks consensus in views about its conceptualization and measurement (Iglesias, Markovic, Singh, & Sierra, 2019). Brand experience defines as "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, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009, p. 53). As the customers consume the brand, discuss the brand with others, look for information about the brand, through events or promotions, etc. the brand experience is generated (Nadzri, Musa, Muda, & Hassan, 2016). Brand experience is an experiential construct (Singh, Bajpai, & Kulshreshtha, 2020). It exhibits all the consumers' experiences relevant to the brand.

Brand image is considered a customer-based phenomenon (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). It helps in understanding the features, functional benefits, and customers' individual experiences connected to a certain product or service. When there is stability in the image of the brand, it helps the consumers to choose the product with no hesitancy. Therefore, marketers are heavily focused on aggressive positioning of brand image in consumers' minds so the brand's name remains stored in their minds. A brand image helps the consumer in differentiating the brand from other competitive brands. The strong brand image seems to influence the brand experience. In the past lesser amount of research has explicitly examined the relationship between brand image and brand experience (Othman, Musa, Muda, & Mohamed, 2016). Das et al. (2019), proposed in their study that brand image should be explored as an antecedent of brand experience. All this evidence from past literature indicates that there could be a possible relationship between the constructs. Hence, it is hypothesized that

*H1: There is a positive impact on brand image and on-brand experience.*

### **2.3 Brand Image and Brand Passion**

According to the literature on branding, brand image defines a summation of whole perceptions (such as emotional and rational) connected by consumers towards particular brands (Pourazad et al., 2019). Consumers desire to groom themselves so that, they can convey their self-image. Consumers are expected to build strong emotional ties with the brands which possess an image compatible with their self-concept of the consumers (Aaker, 1997; Malhotra, 1988). As a brand's personification, the brand image exhibits an individual's self-image.

In past, Rageh Ismail and Spinelli (2012) have observed a positive linkage between brand image and brand love. Literature on brand image proposes that consumers might allocate human traits to the brands used by them. So, as an emotional outcome, this allocation of human traits to brands lead the customers to love these brand (Islam & Rahman, 2016; Pourazad et al., 2019). A positive brand image is a source of inspiring passion in consumers to love these brands. Brand passion is conceived to be the element of brand love (Thomson, MacInnis, & Whan Park, 2005). Hence present research expands on the potential impact of brand image on brand passion (HBP and OBP) and it's hypothesized,

*H2a: There is a positive impact of brand image on harmonious brand passion.*

*H2b: There is a positive impact of brand image on obsessive brand passion.*

### **Brand Experience and Brand Commitment**

The experience concept comes into sight in several consumer or marketing contexts like customer experience, consumption experience, service experience, online experience of a customer, and finally brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009; Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Homburg, Jozić, & Kuehnl, 2017; Jain, Aagja, & Bagdare, 2017; Lanier Jr & Rader, 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; McLean & Wilson, 2016).

A Psychological attachment toward a brand is classified as brand commitment (Beatty & Kahle, 1988; Lastovicka & Gardner, 1979). It links with a higher level of brand trust and a positive brand image (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002; Kim, Morris, & Swait, 2008). In relevance to social exchange theory, Mbango (2018) states: that the more often a customer experience a larger return (in term of satisfaction) through their branded products more they are expected to show commitment towards those products.

Literature provides proof of a direct connection between brand experience and brand commitment. It evokes pleasing outcomes and therefore consumers want to repeat these favorable experiences. Customers with positive brand experience are expected to repeat purchases and hardly switch to alternate brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Perhaps, customers are motivated to give high value to a brand that makes them more committed and loyal to it. A positive brand experience may cause buyers to develop an emotional or cognitive attachment to the brand as well as repeat purchase behaviour (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010).

In consumer brand relationships brand commitment is an essential element (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). One of the positive outcomes of commitment is the intention of a consumer to repurchase (Fullerton, 2005; Hur, Ahn, & Kim, 2011; Kim et al., 2008; Lacey, 2007; Shuv-Ami, 2012) defines using repeat patronage. About interpersonal relationship theory, people's commitment towards their partners is relative to their experiences in the past. Keeping in view the similarities between humans and customer brand relationships, it could be claimed that consumers turn out to be more committed to the brands with which they observed positive brand experiences. Moreover, when customers consider the brand stimuli pleasing, they want a repetition of these experiences (Brakus et al., 2009). Consequently, the customer shows a strong commitment to the

brand. Therefore, it is assumed that brand experience influences brand commitment positively. So, it is hypothesized that

*H3: There is a positive impact of brand experience on brand commitment.*

### **Brand Experience and Brand Passion**

The brand experience involves “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). It comprises primarily of four dimensions, namely emotive, cognitive, sensory, and behavioural. Brand experience's affective dimension represents emotions. The intellectual dimension communicates the competence of a brand to inspire analytical and imaginative thoughts. The sensory dimension is about the aesthetic and sensory abilities which are attractive to the senses. Lastly, the behavioral dimension is about actions and bodily experiences associated with the brand (Nysveen, Pedersen, & Skard, 2013).

Brand experience is the bunch of responses evoked in customers at each touchpoint along with the brands (Alloza, 2008; Klein, Falk, Esch, & Gloukhovtsev, 2016). Four forms of responses are there is a brand experience sensory, intellectual, affective, and behavioral (Kang, Manthiou, Sumarjan, & Tang, 2017). Research in the area of brand experience has thrived from the start of the 2000s, it was an inborn result of an experiential focus on market and research in areas of consumer behavior and marketing (Andreini, Pedeliento, Zarantonello, & Solerio, 2019).

Brand passion defines as “a strong emotional connection to a brand that people value, find important, desire to own and/or use, incorporate into their identity, and invest resources in over some time” (Swimberghe et al., 2014, p. 2659). According to identity theory, an individual's self-brands are essential in the way that people consume brands to socially exhibit their identity. The goal of the sensory brand experience is to entice consumers by appealing to the stimulation dimension of the self through the induction of sensory pleasure. The behavioural experiences of a brand try to attract consumers by appealing to the self-efficacy dimension. Intellectual brand experiences strive to captivate consumers by appealing to the symbolic meaning dimension of the self, allowing them to transmit a superior self and social identity. Hence, brand experiences aroused by stimuli (associated with the brand) can affect different dimensions of self-identity and by that means fulfilling the several needs of consumers.

Park et al. (2013), described the connection between consumers and brands in the light of attachment aversion theory. The consumers feel more connected to the brand as the distance between self and perceived brand is closer and when the thoughts related to the brand are more influential. As an outcome of this connection, a strong and tempting desire for the brand is generated this led the consumers to have an emotional attachment in form of brand passion. Brands' autonomous internalization of an individual's identity results in HBP. However, a brand's controlled internalization of an individual's identity results in obsessive brand passion. In the context of the S-O-R model, the present research postulates that brand experience is a stimulus that influences the internal organismic state of consumers in form of brand passion. Hence we hypothesized that, H4a: There is a positive impact of brand experience on harmonious brand passion, and H4b: There is a positive impact of brand experience on obsessive brand passion.

### **Brand Passion and Brand Commitment**

According to the literature available on branding, brand passion is defined as “a strong emotional connection to a brand that people value, find important, desire to own and/or use, incorporate into their identity, and invest resources over some time” (Swimberghe et al., 2014, p. 2659). Brand



passion arouses intense emotions that describe the customer and brand relationship, it encourages the consumers to invest resources, establish an intimate bond along with the brand, and stay around for a longer run. In a variety of scenarios, the brand's harmonious passion provides an internal drive that encourages consumers to preserve their relationship with the brand in harmony with their other life aspects (Albert et al., 2013). Moreover, in obsessive brand passion cases, consumers might anticipate suffering when they could not be with their desired brand. Hence, they stay committed to that particular brand. Therefore, in light of the S-O-R model and the above-mentioned reasoning, the present study postulates that brand passion acts as an organism that eventually leads to the behavioral response by consumers in form of brand commitment. Hence, this study hypothesizes that,

*H5a: There is a positive impact of harmonious brand passion on brand commitment.*

*H5b: There is a positive impact of obsessive brand passion on brand commitment.*

### **Brand Passion as Mediator between Brand Experience and Brand Commitment**

Mehrabian and Russell (1974), presented the S-O-R model. The first component of this model is stimulus, it defines as an influence that evokes an individual (Eroglu et al., 2001). The second component is the organism, it is an emotional response by the customer towards the stimuli (Bagozzi, 1986). It defines as the internal structures or processes which intervene between the external stimuli and emitted responses (Chang et al., 2011). The third and final component is the response, it represents the outcome or final decision of the customer (Bagozzi, 1986). The response could be in form of approach or avoidance behavior (Bagozzi, 1986).

In the context of the S-O-R model, the present study proposes that brand experience acts as a stimulus that triggers an organism in form of brand passion and this organismic state eventually leads to a behavioral response by the consumer in form of brand commitment. Hence, this study hypothesizes that H6a: Harmonious brand passion mediates between brand experience on brand commitment and H6b: Obsessive brand passion mediates between brand experience on brand commitment.

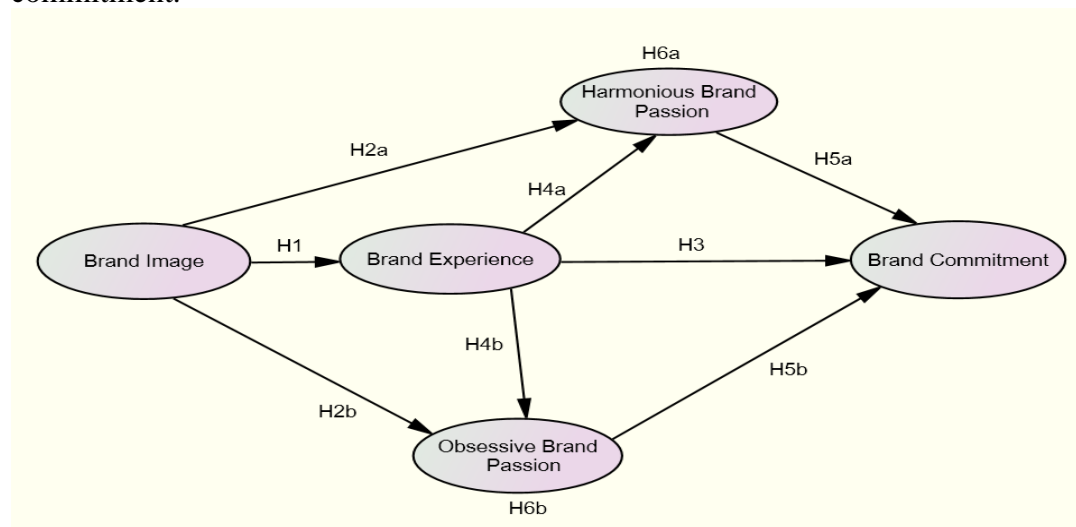


Figure1 Research Model

## **Methodology**

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

The present study used a non-probability sampling method. The data collection was made from smartphone users. For data collection, respondents were personally contacted as well as an online link to the questionnaire was also provided. Firstly, respondents have written the name of

smartphone brand name in their use on the questionnaire. After that, the survey questionnaire was presented to them. The calculated sample size by using the formula is 400. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed from which 410 were received back. After data cleaning the data 390 were used in further analysis.

### Measures

This study follows the five-point Likert scale. Wherein, the scale falls within the bracket of 1 to 5. 1 symbolizes strongly agree and 5 symbolizes strongly disagree. Already tested items have been adopted from previous literature to measure each construct. In this study, brand image is measured by an adopted scale by Martínez and de Chernatony (2004). It is measured by using 6 items. Brand experience is measured through an adopted scale by Brakus et al. (2009) by using 12 items. Brand passion is measured via the adopted scale of Vallerand et al. (2003) by using 12 items. Brand Commitment is measured via the adopted scale of Shukla et al. (2016) by using 11 items.

### Analysis and Results

The assumptions of normality for multivariate analysis are fulfilled by using the results of correlation, skewness kurtosis, and Q-Q plots

Table 1  
Data Normality Statistics (N=390)

Constructs	Min	Max	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE	Tolerance	VIF
BI	10.00	25.00	-0.40	0.12	-0.31	0.24	0.69	1.44
BE	5.00	25.00	0.02	0.12	-0.34	0.24	0.61	1.62
HBP	7.00	30.00	-0.30	0.12	-0.31	0.24	0.55	1.80
OBP	6.00	30.00	0.15	0.12	-0.87	0.24	0.64	1.54
BC	10.00	50.00	-0.00	0.12	-0.43	0.24	Dependent Variable	

*Notes: BI=brand Image; BE= Brand Experience; HBP= Harmonious Brand Passion; OBP= Obsessive Brand Passion; BC= Brand Commitment; SE=Standard Error; VIF=Variance Inflationary Factor*

### Descriptive of Demographics

The data from 390 smartphone users were collected. In terms of gender, 60.5% were female and 39.2 % were male. In terms of education, 15.4 % of the respondents have high school certification, 64.9 % of respondents have bachelor's degree, 17.7 % of the respondents have master's degrees and 2.1% were others. In terms of occupation, 75.1 % were students, 6.7 % were self-employed, 16.4 % were professional and 1.5 % of respondents were others. In terms of smartphone brand, 29.6% of respondents own SAMSUNG, 25.6% of respondents own Huawei, 13.1% of respondents have iPhone, 10.8% of respondents own OPPO, 3.6% of respondents have NOKIA, 1.8% of respondents have Xiaomi, and remaining 15.4% own other brands.

### Reliability and Unidimensionality

The validation of the items of each latent variable was checked for unidimensionality. Individual Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was done using AMOS 22.0. Few items were deleted after an initial run of individual CFA because of lower factor loadings like for brand image item BI 5, for brand experience items number BE1, BE 2, BE 3, BE 5, BE 7, BE 9 and BE 11 were deleted. In the case of brand commitment item number, BC 1 was deleted due to lower factor loading.

The second run of CFA confirmed the significant loading of items into their latent variables. In this run of CFA few error terms were correlated to get more accurate fit indices like in the case of brand image  $e1 \leftrightarrow e5$  and  $e2 \leftrightarrow e5$  were correlated, for HBP  $e2 \leftrightarrow e4$  and  $e3 \leftrightarrow e4$ , for OBP  $e4 \leftrightarrow e5$ ,  $e1 \leftrightarrow e6$ ,  $e2 \leftrightarrow e4$ ,  $e5 \leftrightarrow e6$ ,  $e4 \leftrightarrow e6$  and in case of brand commitment  $e1 \leftrightarrow e2$  were

correlated to get the accurate fit indices. Cronbach's Alfa scores in Table 1 show that values are  $\geq 0.7$ , which confirms that the items are error-free. The Normal Fit Index (NFI) also showed acceptable values  $\geq 0.90$ . The results of this process indicated that the data was overall fit to move further for five factors nested CFA.

Table 2  
Results of Individual CFA (N=390)

Constructs	Items	Unidimensionality					Convergent Validity		Reliability
		$\chi^2/df$	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	FL (min-max)	$\alpha$
BI	5	1.48	0.99	0.99	0.02	0.03	0.98	0.50-0.72	0.72
BE	5	2.50	0.98	0.97	0.04	0.06	0.95	0.50-0.65	0.70
HBP	6	2.30	0.98	0.97	0.04	0.06	0.96	0.53-0.67	0.80
OBP	6	2.51	0.98	0.99	0.03	0.05	0.98	0.69-0.87	0.90
BC	10	2.49	0.96	0.97	0.05	0.06	0.95	0.52-0.78	0.89

Notes: BI=brand Image; BE= Brand Experience; HBP= Harmonious Brand Passion; OBP=Obsessive Brand Passion; BC= Brand Commitment; GFI= Goodness of fit index; CFI= Comparative fit index; RMR= Root mean square residual; RMSEA= Root mean square error approximation; NFI= Normed fit; FL= Factor loadings;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha

The overall nested model shows the acceptable model fit indices. Table 2 also shows that all factor loadings are greater than 0.50, which supports the convergent validity.

Table -3  
Five Factors Nested CFA (N=390)

Indicators	Unidimensionality					Convergent Validity		Reliability
	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	$\alpha$
32	1.94	0.90	0.92	0.05	0.05	0.91	[0.54-0.78]	0.93

Notes:  $\chi^2$ = Chi Square; df= Degree of freedom; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMR= Root mean square residual; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; FL= Factor Loadings;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha.

Convergent validity has been explained by Bagozzi and Phillips (1982) as the level of agreement of results if the same construct is measured multiple times. The NFI was calculated to fulfill the first method of finding a model fit. Table 3 shows the NFI value of 0.91 and the second method recommends that estimates of factor loadings should be  $\geq 0.5$ . Table 3 shows that all factor loadings are greater than 0.50, which supports the convergent validity.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended analyzing the discriminant validity which is the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. If this square root is larger in comparison to the correlation coefficient value of the individual constructs, the model is fit to run a path analysis for testing the hypotheses. Table 4 shows the reliability of the results as the values of correlation is smaller than the square roots values of AVEs in the diagonal.

Table 4  
Discriminant Validity (Covariance among Latent Variables) (N=390)

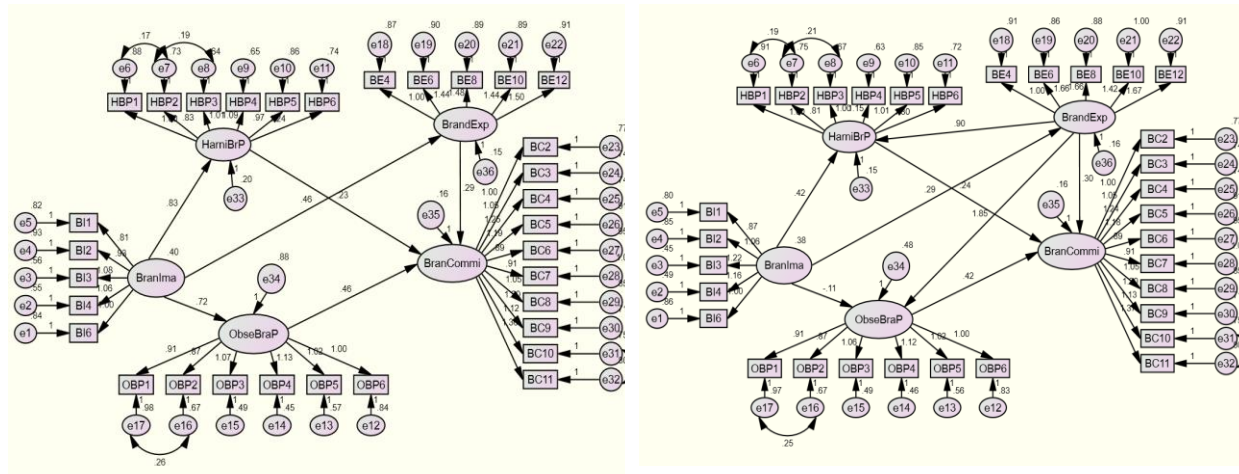
Constructs	BI	BE	HBP	OBP	BC	Mean	SD
BI	<b>0.59</b> †	0.35**	0.53**	0.23**	0.28**	19.40	3.53
BE		<b>0.6</b> †	0.49**	0.54**	0.54**	15.47	3.81
HBP			<b>0.57</b> †	0.47**	0.51**	21.08	4.68
OBP				<b>0.75</b> †	0.72**	16.08	6.52
BC					<b>0.76</b> †	30.21	8.86



**Notes:** BI=brand Image; BE= Brand Experience; HBP= Harmonious Brand Passion; OBP=Obsessive Brand Passion; BC= Brand Commitment; \*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed);  $\sqrt{AVE}$  Values in the Diagonal

**Hypotheses Testing**

To provide empirical relationships between variables SEM model is estimated. The direct effect and indirect effect structural models have been fitted to evaluate the hypotheses. To estimate the fit of both structural models, numbers of indices i.e. goodness of fit indices are used as recommended by the literature on Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) e.g. (Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2005) such as  $\chi^2 / df$ ; GFI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA.



Figur2 Direct and Indirect Effect Models

In the direct-effect model, we connected the direct path from BI to BE, BI to HBP, BI to OBP, and BE to BC. In this model, no path stems from BE to HBP and from BE to OBP (mediator variables). In an indirect model, we linked the path between BE and HBP and BE to OBP, this procedure to test mediation was based on guidelines provided by Shrout and Bolger (2002) for testing mediation in SEM.

The direct effect model (without the path from BE to HBP and BE to OBP) was compared to the indirect effect model (with the path from BE to HBP and BE to OBP). The fit indices for the direct effect model are  $\chi^2 = 1098.11$ ,  $df = 454$ ,  $\chi^2 / df = 2.41$ , GFI= 0.85, NFI= 0.83, CFI= 0.89 and RMSEA= 0.05. Indirect effect model that incorporates path BE to HBP and BE to OBP (mediating variables) demonstrated fit indices i.e.  $\chi^2 = 900.44$ ,  $df = 452$ ,  $\chi^2 / df = 1.99$ , GFI= 0.90, NFI= 0.93, CFI= 0.92 and RMSEA = 0.05 and indicating an improvement in fit indices over the direct effect model. The indirect impact model established unambiguously the function of HBP and OBP (mediating variables) in elucidating the hypothesised correlations.

Table 5  
Results of Structural Equation Analysis for Two Competing Models

The relationships between variables	Direct effect model		Indirect effect model	
	$\beta$	S.E	$\beta$	S.E
H1: BI→ BE	0.60***	0.07		
H2a: BI→ HBP	0.76***	0.10		
H2b: BI→ OBP	0.43***	0.11		
H3: BE→ BC	0.19***	0.08		
H4a: BE→ HBP			0.58***	0.15
H4b: BE→ OBP			0.77***	0.27

H5a: HBP→ BC	0.21***	0.05	Significant
H5b: OBP→ BC	0.64***	0.04	Significant
H6a: BE→ HBP → BC			
H6b: BE→ OBP → BC			
$\chi^2$		1098.11	900.44
df		454	452
$\chi^2 / df$ ratio		2.41	1.99
GFI		0.85	0.90
NFI		0.83	0.93
CFI		0.89	0.92
RSMEA		0.05	0.05
R <sup>2</sup> (BE)		0.36	0.16
R <sup>2</sup> (OBP)		0.19	0.55
R <sup>2</sup> (HBP)		0.58	0.68
R <sup>2</sup> (BC)		0.69	0.72

*Notes: BI=brand Image; BE= Brand Experience; HBP= Harmonious Brand Passion; OBP=Obsessive Brand Passion; BC= Brand Commitment;  $\chi^2$ = Chi Square; df= Degree of freedom;  $\chi^2/df$ = Chi-square ratio; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$*

H<sub>1</sub> states that BI positively impacts the BE. Results from Table 5 reveal that BI has a positive influence on BE (H<sub>1</sub>:  $\beta = 0.60$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) hence H<sub>1</sub> is accepted. H<sub>2a</sub> states that BI and HBP are positively related. Results from Table 5 validates that BI positively impacts HBP (H<sub>2a</sub>:  $\beta = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) So, H<sub>2a</sub> is accepted. H<sub>2b</sub> states that BI and OBP are positively related. Results in Table 5 validates the positive relationship among BI and OBP (H<sub>2b</sub>:  $\beta = 0.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), consequently H<sub>2b</sub> is also accepted.

H<sub>3</sub> states that BE and BC are positively related. Results from Table 5 confirm the positive relationship between BE and BC (H<sub>3</sub>:  $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), so H<sub>3</sub> is accepted. H<sub>4a</sub> states that BE positively influences HBP. The results of Table 5 verify the positive influence of BE on HBP (H<sub>4a</sub>:  $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), hence H<sub>4a</sub> is accepted. H<sub>4b</sub> stated that BE positively influences OBP. Results also verifies the positive influence of BE on OBP (H<sub>4b</sub>:  $\beta = 0.77$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hence H<sub>4b</sub> is accepted.

H<sub>5a</sub> states that HBP impacts BC positively. Results confirms the positive impact of HBP on BC (H<sub>5a</sub>:  $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), consequently H<sub>5a</sub> is accepted. H<sub>5b</sub> states that OBP impacts BC positively. Results also confirms the positive impact of OBP on BC (H<sub>5a</sub>:  $\beta = 0.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), so H<sub>5b</sub> is accepted.

H<sub>6a</sub> and H<sub>6b</sub> with regards to the mediating role of HBP and OBP; state that HBP and OBP significantly mediate the relationship between BE and BC. Results in Table 5 demonstrate an improvement in indices in the indirect effect model in comparison to the direct effect model. The indirect impact model identified the function of HBP and OBP (mediating variables) in elucidating the postulated associations. Hence, based on the results both H<sub>6a</sub> and H<sub>6b</sub> are accepted.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Using the S-O-R model, the current study aimed to examine the effect of brand experience on brand commitment as mediated by brand passion (split into HBP and OBP). Moreover, it was intended to study the effect of brand image on experience and brand passion (when divided into HBP and OBP). The findings of the study suggest that brand passion mediates the impact of brand experience on brand commitment, the result is consistent with the study by Wang et al. (2021) and Chen and Qasim (2021). The existence of this mediation justifies the S-O-R model's applicability to the relationship between brand experience and brand commitment via the mediating influence of brand passion. The brand image has a beneficial influence on brand experience and brand loyalty. In addition, research indicate that brand image is a precursor to brand experience. The

study's findings provided persuasive conclusions on brand image, brand experience, brand passion (HBP and OBP), and brand loyalty. According to the findings, brand image has a direct, positive effect on brand experience. This conclusion aligns with the research conducted by Nadzri et al. (2016) and Othman et al. (2016). The acceptance of this relationship answers the first research question of this study that brand image influences brand experience. This finding suggests that a strong and positive brand image positively impacts the customer's brand experience.

The result portrays a positive connection between brand image and HBP. Moreover, the result of H2b portrays a positive connection between brand image and OBP. The acceptance of H2a and H2b suggests that a positive brand image triggers brand passion among customers. This finding suggests that brand image is a potential source of inducing passion among consumers. The result of H3 shows a positive association between brand experience and brand commitment. The finding of this hypothesis is consistent with the study of Ramaseshan and Alisha Stein (2014) depict that a positive brand experience makes the customer committed to the brand. By moving on, the result of H4a shows a positive linkage between brand experience and HBP. The result of H4b portrays a positive linkage between brand experience and OBP. Overall, the findings depict that a positive brand experience generates brand passion (OBP and HBP) among the consumers, it proves that brand experience is a stimulus that influences the consumers' emotions positively and generates brand passion (organism) in them. The result of H4a and H4b is consistent with the study of Das et al. (2019).

The result of H5a represents a positive relationship between HBP and brand commitment. The result of H5b shows a positive linkage between OBP and brand commitment. Overall, the result of both the hypotheses is consistent with the study of Das et al. (2019) and indicates that brand passion acts as an organism that leads toward the behavioral outcome of brand commitment. The existence of mediation validates the application of the SOR model on the association between brand experience and brand commitment through brand passion. It depicts that brand passion is acting as the organism that intervenes in the effect of brand experience (stimulus) on brand commitment (response).

### **Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

This research work offers some findings which are significant contributions to the literature on marketing. First of all, it validates the application of the S-O-R model on the connection between brand experience and brand commitment via brand passion. This model states that stimulus affects a customer's emotions which then influence her behavior in turn. In the S-O-R model by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) brand passion being the organism mediates the relation between the brand experience (acting as stimulus) and brand commitment (the behavioral response). Moreover, this study proves a positive link between brand image, and brand experience and through which it proves that brand image is an antecedent of brand experience. This study fills the literature gap by proving a positive relationship between brand image and brand passion, previously this relationship was vague in the literature. Nowadays managers are hugely concerned about how to convert consumers' experience of a brand into brand commitment. The findings of this study highlight the solution for that, these findings suggest that brand experience is a key predictor of brand passion, which eventually directs towards brand commitment. Brand passion when split into two halves it behaves differently. Brand's autonomous internalization in an individual's identity results in HBP. In HBP people use and purchase the brand without any social or external pressure and they are not compelled to use it. This motivation (internal) to follow the brand allows people to hold a relationship with a brand that is in harmony with additional activities in life.

Whereas, the brand's controlled internalization of an individual's identity results in OBP. Controlled internalization happens when people find the brand important, like it, and possess a

desire to get or use it or invest in it due to social and internal pressures. However, the findings of this research validate that both types of brand passion OBP and HBP lead the consumer towards strong brand commitment. This study provides positive linkages between brand image and brand experience. This positive linkage guides the practitioners about the importance of strong brand image development. It highlights how consumers in this competitive environment opt for a brand with a strong brand image in comparison to other brands with a weak brand image. Moreover, this study also proves a positive relationship between brand image and brand passion and it indicates that a positive brand image is a source of inspiring passion in the consumers. So again managers should focus on strategies for building a strong brand image.

This research highlights the importance of brand image for practitioners on which they are not focusing. Developing a positive brand image can help the brand managers in generating brand love as a brand image is a source of inspiring passion among consumers which can lead them to love that brand. Furthermore, the findings of the study show that brand passion mediates the relation between brand experience and brand commitment. So managers should focus on developing and enhancing brand passion by designing some passion-oriented strategies and making a strong emotional bond with consumers. Managers can also allure the consumers to be a part of the brand's social media and offline brand communities to maintain a long-term bond with their customers. As brand passion is an appealing desire, managers can use consumers' feelings of distress, anxiety, and anticipated separation, particularly in the case of consumers with OBP. But it brings up the debate of whether it is ethical or not. Moreover, this mediation also suggests that practitioners should distinguish the consumers by the type of brand passion they hold for the brand. It will help them in developing different strategies for consumers with different types of brand passion such as OBP and HBP. Lastly, findings also portray a positive direct link between brand experience and brand commitment. So managers should also wisely allocate some resources to build brand experience along with brand passion.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Future studies must address the limitations of this study. In the future researchers should opt for a longitudinal research setting, it will help them in getting more precise (cause and effect) results. Apart from the smartphone brands industry, other industries should be investigated so that this research could be generalizable to other fields as well. This research explores the influence of only brand image on brand experience as an antecedent, in the future various other antecedents should also be explored. In the future, researchers can replicate this study by collecting samples from only female or only male respondents, considering feminine and masculine smartphone brands This will help in assessing the results of the study in gender-specific settings. Future researchers can also choose a certain age group to replicate this study. In the future, more research is needed to recognize the antecedents and consequences of two types of brand passion i.e. OBP and HBP.

### **Conclusion**

This research was executed to explore the role of the S-O-R model in exploring the impact of brand experience on brand commitment via mediating effect of brand passion. Moreover, this research is also meant to examine the impact of brand image on brand experience (as its antecedent) and brand passion. The problem marketers are facing nowadays is that customers are available with ample choices to switch to other brands instead of staying committed to one brand. The present study provides a solution to this problem. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that consumers' positive brand experience can massively help the marketers as it triggers brand passion which directs the behavioral response of brand commitment. The existence of mediation validates the application of the S-O-R model as brand experience acts as a "stimulus" that evokes the customer's emotions and generates brand passion in them. Brand passion here acts as an "organism" which in turn causes a "response" in the form of brand commitment. The outcomes of



this research also highlight the existence of a positive relationship between brand image and brand experience and brand image and brand passion. The acceptance of these relationships highlights the importance of a strong positive brand image. It guides the practitioners to develop a strong brand image by making strategies and investing resources.

The study concludes that a strong brand image can lead to a positive brand experience and can also generate brand passion. This finding is a significant contribution for managers because brand passion and positive brand experience both lead the consumer towards brand commitment. By following this path practitioners can also get rid of the problem associated with customer retention.

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