Brand Experience in the Ski Industry Brand: Does Environmental Concern Matter?

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Abstract:

Purpose: Consumers' experiences are important in their evaluations of brands. Previous research shows that brand experience has a positive influence on consumer evaluations of brands, such as brand knowledge, brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand personality, word of mouth and revisit intention. A critical question for brand managers, therefore, is how to stimulate brand experiences

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research context is the Norwegian ski brand SGN skis, a company focusing on touring and freeride skis. Quantitative data were collected through an online survey sent to a sample of SGN's customers. A total of 386 responses were analysed and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Findings: The survey results confirm that, for SGN skis, the sensory, affective, behavioural and relational experience dimensions have a positive and significant impact on brand attitude and word of mouth. However, the cognitive dimension has a negative impact on brand attitude. Finally, this study shows that when the sample is divided into two groups (low vs high on environmental concern), affective brand experiences positively influence brand attitude and word of mouth in the high environmental concern group, while the effect is not significant in the low environmental concern group.

Practical Implications: This paper contributes to the literature in four ways. First, it shows how the strength of different brand experiences varies for a brand in the skiing category. Second, the study shows how these strengths might differ between customer groups high (vs low) on environmental concern. Environmental issues are important in the context of winter sports products given the vulnerability of this industry to the consequences of climate change, such as fewer days with snow, higher temperatures and less stable weather conditions.

Originality/value: Identifying relevant antecedents of brand experience or moderators of the impact of brand experience on consumer evaluations might provide us with insight into how to strengthen a brand's position in the marketplace. Our study shows that consumers have significantly stronger sensory and behavioural brand experiences if they are high (vs low) on environmental concern. Third, the study shows that four out of five experiences regarding a brand in the winter sports industry positively impact consumer evaluations.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, marketing has focused on promoting the physical characteristics of a product or service, such as functionality, price, availability and quality (Iglesias *et al.,* 2011). However, due to increasing competition and consumers increasingly making choices based on the experience aspects of a brand, brands need to differentiate themselves from their competitors by delivering great customer experiences that create long-lasting customer–brand relationships (Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2010). This is also the case for brands in the sports industry, where customer experiences become increasingly important (Akoglu and Özbek, 2021).

Although the sports industry in general and producers of winter sports goods have experienced growth in the past decade (Statista, 2023), this sector is also facing challenges related to climate change, such as shorter winters, increasingly unstable weather conditions and fewer places with snow. For example, during the 2022/2023 winter season, several events in the Alpine and Cross-Country World Cup were cancelled (FIS, 2023) due to a lack of snow.

In such situations, building strong relationships and experiences with customers becomes even more important for brands. Previous research shows that brand experience has a positive influence on consumer evaluations, such as brand knowledge, brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand personality, word of mouth and revisit intention (Brakus *et al.,* 2009; Khan and Rahman, 2017; Manthiou *et al.,* 2016). In recognising these positive influences of brand experience, a critical question for brand managers is how to stimulate a strong consumer experience of their brand.

Examining the antecedents of brand experience—the strength of brand experiences or moderators of the impact of brand experience on consumer evaluation—is also in line with Khan and Rahman's (2017) and King's (2017) recommendations. Furthermore, brand experience has mostly been studied in the context of product brands, while service brands have received comparatively less attention (Nysveen *et al.,* 2013; 2018). Moreover, to our knowledge, there are limited studies exploring the effect of brand experience in the sports industry (Akoglu and Özbek, 2021; Chung and Welty Peachey, 2021; Mokhtaran and Bakhtiyari, 2014).

None of these contributions addressed the role of brand experiences in contexts such as winter sports brands, which is important in understanding the consequences of

climate change for brand managers. To test the possible influence of environmental concern on the relationship between brand experiences and customer evaluations, such as brand attitude and word of mouth, we chose a context in which the environmental issue should be highly present the winter sports equipment industry.

Increased global average temperatures have led to shorter cold seasons, warmer and wetter climates and loss of seasonal snow cover. The ski industry is naturally dependent on snow and is therefore directly affected by the negative effects of climate change.

Therefore, this context is highly relevant for studying the consequences of climate change. This paper contributes to the literature by showing how consumer experiences might vary for a brand in the winter sports category and how their strength might vary across customers with high vs low environmental concerns. The third contribution is to study the impact of brand experience on consumer evaluations of a winter sports brand.

The final contribution is to document how environmental concern influences the effect of brand experience on attitude towards and word of mouth about a brand. In this study, we investigated the relationship between brand experience, brand attitude and word of mouth. The relationship between these constructs was also analysed in light of customers' environmental concerns.

Therefore, the research questions in this paper are as follows: 'Do brand experiences have an effect on brand attitude and word of mouth for a brand in the ski industry?' and 'How does environmental concern influence the impact of brand experiences on consumer evaluations?'

This study improves managers' understanding of how environmental concerns influence consumers' experiences with brands and the consequences of their evaluations of the brand. Thus, the findings of this study should be relevant to brand managers' decisions on how to position their brands in the market. We continue with a presentation and discussion of the relevant literature. In the 'Method' section, we describe and validate the measures. Finally, we present the results, along with a discussion of the implications and future research directions.

2. Literature Review

In line with Brakus *et al.* (2009), we define brand experience 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' (p. 53). Sensory brand experience is the degree to which a brand makes a strong impression on and is interesting and appealing to customers' senses.

Affective brand experience is about the emotions, feelings and sentiments induced by a brand. Cognitive brand experience captures how a brand stimulates curiosity, thinking and problem solving among customers. Furthermore, Brakus *et al.* (2009) explained that the behavioural dimension of brand experience taps into the degree to which a brand engages customers in physical actions and behavioural responses.

We also included relational experience as a brand dimension that expresses customers' feelings of being part of a brand family or community (Nysveen *et al.,* 2013). The brand experience literature has evolved since 2009 when the seminal article by Brakus *et al.* (2009) was published. Brakus *et al.* (2009) argued that strong brand experiences positively impact customers' evaluations.

The authors identified the positive influences of brand experience on brand satisfaction and brand loyalty for 12 different brands. In contrast, Nysveen *et al.* (2013) revealed the negative impact of brand experience on brand satisfaction and obtained mixed results for the influences of various brand experience dimensions (sensory, cognitive, affective, behavioural and relational) on brand satisfaction.

However, most studies have found positive impacts of brand experience (Baser *et al.,* 2015; Dolbec and Chebat, 2013). Başer *et al.* (2015) found positive impacts of brand experience on satisfaction, loyalty and trust for four brands, while Dolbec and Chebat (2013) revealed positive impacts of brand experience on brand attitude, brand attachment and brand equity for flagship and brand stores. Our literature review showed a significant focus on research studies in product-related contexts, with a relatively limited emphasis on service-related contexts (Nysveen *et al.,* 2018).

However, to our knowledge, little has been done in the context of sports equipment, although some exceptions exist (Akoglu and Özbek, 2021; Chung and Welty Peachey, 2021; Mokhtaran and Bakhtiyari, 2014). In a study conducted in South Korea, researchers tested the brand experience scale on brands that produce golf clubs (Chung and Welty Peachey, 2021). The authors aimed to find connections between brand experiences and the three concepts of satisfaction, loyalty and uncertainty.

However, the study did not distinguish between the different dimensions of brand experience. Regarding Brakus *et al.* (2009) and Nysveen *et al.* (2013), the different dimensions of brand experiences may lead to different consumer evaluations of a brand. Therefore, it is important for brand managers to understand how these mechanisms function to operate their brands in an optimal way. Chung *et al.* (2021) tested the impact of brand experiences on the three concepts of satisfaction, loyalty and uncertainty at an aggregated level.

The authors were unable to find significant correlations between brand experience and the concepts of satisfaction and loyalty, arguing that customers do not feel satisfied or establish bonds of loyalty by simply experiencing a brand in the sports

industry. Chung *et al.* (2021) believe that a brand's products must be tested and used in order for satisfaction and loyalty to be established, and for this reason, the authors recommended using demonstration events where customers can test and experience the products in their intended surroundings. In contrast to the findings of Chung and Welty Peachey (2021), Akoglu and Özbek (2021) found strong correlations between brand experiences and loyalty in a survey of customers who purchased sports apparel in Turkey.

Furthermore, they pointed out the importance of brand experience for a sports apparel manufacturer, emphasising its vital role in building brand loyalty. Mokhtaran and Bakhtiyari (2014) also confirmed the viability of the scale in another study on sports clothing conducted in Iran. Here, the authors found a connection between brand experience, brand value and attitude.

Our literature review reveals that the number of studies investigating the impact of brand experiences on brand evaluation variables is sparse, with diverging results for brands in the sports industry.

When it comes to brands in the winter sports segment, we could not find any studies on brand experience. Contexts such as winter sports brands are important in order to understand the consequences of climate change for brand managers. Increased global average temperatures have led to shorter cold seasons, warmer and wetter climates and loss of seasonal snow cover. The climate change causes challenges for the ski industry, as the industry depends on snow and stable winter conditions.

Therefore, the mechanisms behind establishing a strong brand experience and the impact of this experience on consumer evaluations in an environmentally vulnerable setting are also unknown. We suggest that environmental concerns may function as a variable that can explain this mechanism.

Environmental concern has been treated as an evaluation of one's own or others' behaviours with consequences for the environment (Fransson and Gärling, 1999). The concept captures an individual's concerns on both an individual and social level. The individual level deals with how personal consumption and behaviour affect the environment, and the social level pertains to how changes in policy, society and legislation collectively affect the environment. Environmental concern has been shown to be an important factor in environmentally friendly behaviour (Maichum *et al.,* 2016).

According to Maichum *et al.* (2016), environmental concern is an important factor in consumer decision-making and has a significant and positive impact on attitudes and purchase intentions for environmentally friendly products. Hines *et al.* (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of over 100 studies on sustainable behaviour and found strong support for a positive moderate correlation between environmental considerations and environmentally friendly behaviour.

In a Dutch study (Poortinga *et al.,* 2004) on environmentally friendly behaviours, such as using public transport and recycling, environmental considerations were found to be the strongest predictor of individual environmental behaviour.

These mechanisms are also important in consumers' evaluations of brands. For example, Jeong *et al.* (2014) found that consumers' interpretations of a brand's green image positively influence brand attitudes. However, our literature review did not uncover any studies that specifically examined the relationship between environmental concern and brand experience together.

3.   Research Methodology

The research context is the Norwegian ski brand SGN skis, a small company that focuses on touring and freeride skis. The brand has a strong relationship with its core customers and is well known for its iconic designs. The brand's marketing communication consists of many images and videos freeride downhill skiing, and the skis feature designs inspired by well-known Norwegian mountain peaks (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Examples of marketing communications and designs for the SGN ski brand.*

Source: *Photo: Bård Basberg.*

3.1 Sample

Quantitative data were collected through an online survey sent to a sample of SGN's customers, who were reached via the company's email list, which contained 2206 email addresses. The e-mail addresses were from people who had previously bought or contacted SGN skis. We held a lottery offering a pair of skis worth 8,000 NOK as an incentive for respondents to complete the questionnaire. To increase the response rate, a reminder e-mail was sent to respondents three days after the first e-mail. Of the invited respondents, 490 completed the questionnaire.

We removed one respondent who completed the questionnaire in less than two minutes and three respondents who took over three hours. This gave us a net sample of 486 accepted responses, which were analysed and processed using the SPSS software. Thus, we had a response rate of 22%. Table 1 shows the sample characteristics. More than 83% of the respondents were men, and 52% of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54 years, with an average age of 39.3 years. Close to 70% of the respondents had a higher education.

Table 1. *Sample demographics*

	%
Gender	
Male	82.7
Female	17.3
Age	
19–24	12.6
25–34	23.3
35–44	30.2
45–54	21.8
55–64	8.8
64+	3.3
Education	
Primary	4.7
Secondary	25.5
University/college <4 years	33.7
University/college ≥4 years	35.4

Source: *Own study.*

3.2 Measures

The measures used in the study were based on previously validated measures. The sensory, affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions of brand experience were constructed based on the work of Brakus *et al.* (2009), and the relational dimension was based on the studies by Nysveen *et al.* (2013) and Nysveen and Pedersen (2014). We used four items measuring environmental concern (Maichum *et al.,* 2016), three items measuring brand attitude—with three out of four items from

Nysveen *et al.* (2005)—and one item measuring word of mouth (Homburg *et al.,* 2015).

The scores of the four items measuring environmental concern were averaged to establish an aggregated measure of environmental concern, and the same procedure was followed for the other multi-item concepts. Following the reasoning by Homburg *et al.* (2015), we used a single-item measure of word of mouth to keep the questionnaire as short as possible and because research indicates that single-item measures of this type of intention have been found to be both valid and reliable.

We used 7-point Likert scales (1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree) to measure sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioural and relational brand experiences, word-of-mouth and environmental concerns. We assessed brand attitude using three 7-point semantic differential scales (bad/good, unfavourable/favourable and negative/positive), as in Oklevik *et al.* (2018). The Cronbach's alpha and construct reliability (CR) levels reported in Table 2 were acceptable for all constructs. We report the item wording in Table 2.

Table 2. *Item wording, means and standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha. SGN = SGN skis.*

Dimension	Items	Mean	Std	α
Sensory	SGN makes a strong impression on my senses.	5.45	1.23	0.91
	Using SGN gives me interesting sensory experiences.	5.44	1.16	
	SGN appeals strongly to my senses.	5.63	1.20	
Affective	SGN induces my feelings.	5.48	1.17	0.86
	I have strong emotions for SGN.	5.28	1.25	
	SGN often strongly engages me emotionally.	5.16	1.28	
Cognitive	I engage in a lot of thinking as a user of SGN.	3.37	1.55	0.75
	Being a user of SGN stimulates my thinking and problem solving.	4.23	1.44	
	SGN often challenges my way of thinking.	4.08	1.42	
Behavioural	I often engage in action and behaviour when I'm using SGN.	6.21	1.12	0.82
	As a user of SGN, I am rarely passive.	5.96	1.20	
	SGN activates me.	5.95	1.18	
Relational	As a user of SGN, I feel like I am part of a community.	5.33	1.28	0.83
	I feel like I am part of the SGN family.	5.22	1.40	
	As a user of SGN, I never feel like I'm being left alone.	4.63	1.37	
Environmental concern	I am very concerned about the state of the world's environment.	5.80	1.18	0.86

	I am willing to reduce my consumption to help protect the environment.	5.68	1.24	
	Major social changes are necessary to protect the natural environment.	6.14	1.09	
	Major political change is necessary to protect the natural environment	6.15	1.25	
Word of mouth	I would be happy to recommend SGN to my friends.	6.45	0.91	
Attitude toward SGN	Bad/good	6.49	0.82	0.94
	Undesirable/desirable	6.37	0.89	
	Negative/positive	6.52	0.81	

Source: *Own study.*

4. Results and Discussion

Table 3 reports the mean scores on the five dimensions of brand experience, word of mouth and attitude towards SGN skis. While the mean scores of word of mouth and attitude towards SGN skis are almost the same at 6.45 vs 6.46 ($p>0.10$), the opposite is true for the five brand experience dimensions. All five dimensions have a significantly different mean than the other four dimensions (all $p<0.01$). For example, the mean score of the sensory dimension is significantly different from the mean scores of the affective, cognitive, behavioural and relational brand experience dimensions ($p<0.01$).

Previous findings from the literature show that the five dimensions of brand experience have different impacts on consumer evaluation variables such as satisfaction, loyalty, attitude and word of mouth for different brands (Nysveen *et al.,* 2013; 2018; Oklevik *et al.,* 2018; 2022). To our knowledge, few studies have attempted to discuss the strength of brand experiences, with a few exceptions (Brakus *et al.,* 2009; Oklevik *et al.,* 2022). The strength of brand experience is important because it is much easier for a brand owner to build a strong experience for a brand if the mean score of a dimension is above a certain level.

For example, Table 3 shows that the mean score for the cognitive dimension for SGN skis is 3.89 and that for the behavioural dimension is 6.04. This means that it is much easier for the brand to invest in marketing activities related to behaviour than in those related to the cognitive aspects of the brand. In other words, it will be much more difficult for the consumer to learn about the cognitive aspects than about the behavioural aspects of the brand.

Thus, the results have direct implications for brand managers. Customers and consumers might have very different experiences with different brands, which makes it important for brand managers to be aware of these differences in order to know how to invest in their brands and differentiate them from the competition. To our

knowledge, this has not been previously demonstrated in the literature and is therefore one of the contributions of the study (Table 3).

Table 3. *Mean scores of the aggregated variables in the study.*

Variable	Whole sample (N = 486)
Sensory	5.51[b,c,d,e]
Affective	5.31[a,c,d,e]
Cognitive	3.89[a,b,d,e]
Behavioural	6.04[a,b,c,e]
Relational	5.06[a,b,c,d]
Word of mouth	6.45
Attitude	6.46

Note: [a]: *Significantly different from the mean score of the sensory dimension.* [b]: *Significantly different from the mean score of the affective dimension.* [c]: *Significantly different from the mean score of the cognitive dimension.* [d]: *Significantly different from the mean score on the behavioural dimension.* [e]: *Significantly different from the mean score of the relational dimension. p<0.01 in all cases.*
Source: *Own study.*

To test whether there are differences in the sample between customers with high vs low environmental concern, we performed a median split analysis on the aggregated environmental concern variable. The sample was rather high on environmental concerns, with a median of 6.00. We used 6.00 as the split point for the median split, which gave a subsample of 293 (194) respondents high (vs low) on environmental concern (HEC vs LEC).

Table 4 shows the mean scores of the variables in the study for the two sub-samples. The results show that the mean scores of the sensory and behavioural dimensions of brand experiences are significantly higher in the HEC group compared to the LEC group (mean sensory$_{HEC}$ = 5.59, mean sensory$_{LEC}$ = 5.39, p<0.05; mean behavioral$_{HEC}$ = 6.17, mean behavioral$_{LEC}$ = 5.85, p<0.05). Furthermore, our study shows that consumer evaluations, such as word of mouth and attitudes towards the SGN brand, are significantly higher in the HEC group than in the LEC group (mean word of mouth$_{HEC}$ = 6.52, mean word of mouth$_{LEC}$ = 6.34, p<0.01; mean attitude$_{HEC}$ = 6.57, mean attitude$_{LEC}$ = 6.30, p<0.01).

Table 4. *Mean scores of the aggregated variables in the study.*

Variable	LEC (N = 194)	HEC (N = 293)
Sensory	5.39[**]	5.59[**]
Affective	5.22	5.36
Cognitive	3.87	3.91
Behavioural	5.85[***]	6.17[***]
Relational	4.96	5.13
Word of mouth	6.34[**]	6.52[**]
Attitude	6.30[***]	6.57[***]

Note: [**]: *Significantly different means between the two groups, p<0.05.* [***]: *p<0.01.*
Source: *Own study.*

Our results show that the respondents in the HEC group also had stronger experiences with the SGN brand on the sensory and behavioural dimensions than respondents in the LEC group.

This is a novel finding in our study. To our knowledge, this study is the first attempt to demonstrate how environmental concerns might impact the strength of brand experiences.

Earlier research has shown that consumer interactions, such as co-creation, might influence brand experience strength (Hollebeek, 2011; Oklevik *et al.,* 2022). This finding has practical implications for brand managers. Building market communication targeting focal experiences together with associations that might evoke environmental consideration could be a way of amplifying experiences with brands.

The survey results confirm that, for SGN skis, the sensory ($\beta = 0.18$, p<0.01), affective ($\beta = 0.04$, p<0.05), behavioural ($\beta = 0.24$, p<0.05) and relational ($\beta = 0.18$, p<0.01) brand experience dimensions have a positive and significant impact on brand attitude, while the cognitive dimension ($\beta = -0.07$, p<0.10) negatively influenced attitude. The sensory ($\beta = 0.11$, p<0.05), affective ($\beta = 0.17$, p<0.01), behavioural ($\beta = 0.37$, p<0.05) and relational ($\beta = 0.14$, p<0.01) brand experience dimensions also have positive and significant impacts on word of mouth.

However, the cognitive dimension did not have any impact on word of mouth (Table 5 for further details). We also controlled for age and gender effects (both not significant, p>0.10). The regression analysis supported the findings from the brand experience strength analysis performed in two ways.

First, the negative impact of the cognitive dimension on attitude and the nonsignificant impact on word of mouth support the findings from the brand experience strength analyses and confirm that the brand should not focus on building on the cognitive elements in its marketing communications, as this might hurt the brand.

Second, it is clear that the sensory and behavioural dimensions are important for the brand, as both have a positive and significant impact on attitude and word of mouth. Because these two dimensions have the highest mean scores in the sample, it is easier for the company to continue building on these associations among its customers and consumers rather than building on the affective and relational dimensions.

However, the affective and relational dimensions are still relevant for the brand but require larger investments in terms of marketing communications than the sensory and behavioural dimensions.

Table 5. *Regression analysis of the aggregated sample. Standardised regression coefficients.*

Variable	Attitude	Word of Mouth
Sensory	0.18^{***}	0.11^{**}
Affective	0.04^{**}	0.17^{***}
Cognitive	-0.07^{*}	$-0.05^{n.s}$
Behavioural	0.24^{**}	0.37^{**}
Relational	0.18^{***}	0.14^{***}
Age	$0.05^{n.s}$	$0.04^{n.s}$
Gender	$-0.04^{n.s}$	$-0.03^{n.s}$
Adjusted R^2	0.30	0.37

Note: ***: *Significant at the 1% level (p<0.01).* **: *Significant at the 5% level (p<0.05).* *: *Significant at the 10% level (p<0.10).* $^{n.s}$: *not significant.*
Source: *Own study.*

To test the role of environmental concern, we conducted a split analysis similar to the strength analysis case, with 6.00 as the split point for the median split. This gave us a subsample of 293 (193) respondents in the HEC (LEC) group. We then ran regression analyses for both groups, with the results reported in Table 6.

Table 6. *Regression analysis in the split samples. Standardised regression coefficients.*

Variables	Attitude LEC	Attitude HEC	Word of mouth LEC	Word of mouth HEC
Sensory	0.20^{**}	0.14^{**}	$0.09^{n.s}$	$0.09^{n.s}$
Affective	$0.09^{n.s}$	0.20^{**}	$0.09^{n.s}$	0.21^{***}
Cognitive	$-0.06^{n.s}$	$-0.07^{n.s}$	$-0.03^{n.s}$	$-0.05^{n.s}$
Behavioural	0.22^{***}	0.23^{***}	0.49^{***}	0.30^{***}
Relational	0.17^{**}	0.18^{***}	$0.11^{n.s}$	0.17^{***}
Age	$-0.09^{n.s}$	$-0.01^{n.s}$	$-0.07^{n.s}$	-0.10^{**}
Gender	0.14^{**}	$-0.01^{n.s}$	0.02^{**}	$-0.06^{n.s}$
Adjusted R^2	0.27	0.30	0.41	0.34

Note: ***: *Significant at the 1% level (p<0.01).* **: *Significant at the 5% level (p<0.05).* *: *Significant at the 10% level (p<0.10).* $^{n.s}$: *not significant.*
Source: *Own study.*

The results confirmed some of the findings of the aggregated sample analyses. First, the impact of the cognitive dimension on both attitude and word of mouth as dependent variables is negative and non-significant for the LEC and HEC groups (β range = −0.03–−0.07, all p>0.10). Second, the impacts of the behavioural dimension on the two dependent variables are positive and significant for both the HEC and LEC groups (β range = 0.22–0.49, all p<0.01). Third, the impacts of the affective brand experience dimension on attitude and word of mouth follow the same pattern.

The impact of affective experiences on brand attitude and word of mouth is non-significant in the LEC group ($\beta = 0.09$, both p>0.10) but positive and significant in the HEC group (β range = 0.20–0.21, both p<0.01).

However, we obtained diverging results for the two other dimensions. The sensory dimension has a positive impact on attitude and word of mouth in both the HEC and LEC groups (β range = 0.14–0.20, both p<0.05) but a non-significant impact on word of mouth in both the HEC and LEC groups ($\beta = 0.09$, both p>0.10). Furthermore, the impact of the relational dimension on attitude is positive and significant for both the HEC and LEC groups (β range = 0.17–0.18, both p<0.01).

This contradicts the results on the effect of the relational dimension on word of mouth: the effect is non-significant in the LEC group ($\beta = 0.11$, p>0.10) but positive and significant in the HEC group ($\beta = 0.17$, p<0.01). Finally, the influence of age on word of mouth is negative and significant in the HEC group ($\beta = -0.10$, p<0.05) but not significant in the LEC group ($\beta = -0.07$, p>0.10), nor in the LEC and HEC groups for the regression on attitude (β range = -0.01 - -0.09, both p>0.10).

This means that there is a tendency among HEC respondents to reduce word-of-mouth activities when age increases. For the LEC group, we found a positive significant impact of gender on both attitude and word of mouth (β range = 0.02–0.14, p<0.05).

This means that male respondents with low environmental concern evaluated the brand more positively than their female counterparts. However, for the HEC group, gender had no significant influence on word of mouth (β range = -0.01–-0.06, p>0.10).

This work expands the theoretical basis within the brand experience field and validates the brand experience scale in an industry not previously researched. The results of this study have a number of practical implications. The findings show that, on the one hand, the sensory, affective, behavioural and relational dimensions have a positive effect on attitudes towards the brand and word of mouth. The cognitive dimension, on the other hand, has a significant negative impact on both brand attitude and word of mouth.

Marketers should be aware and conscious of this and facilitate actions that may influence the first four dimensions of brand experiences and avoid actions that may influence the fifth (cognitive) dimension of brand experience. Additionally, we tested whether environmental considerations affected the relationship between brand experience and brand attitude and word of mouth, respectively.

Our results show that in a situation where a brand is targeting highly environmentally concerned consumers, it could be beneficial to play on affective elements in the marketing communication of the brand, as this is a driver that will

strengthen consumers' attitudes towards the brand and word-of-mouth activities. However, if the brand has a customer base (or potential customer base) with low levels of environmental concern, it is important not to use this kind of element in the marketing communication of the brand, as it will not pay off in terms of attracting more positive evaluations of the brand among the consumers.

Our results show that the impact of the sensory brand experience dimension on brand attitude is positive and significant in both the HEC and LEC groups, but the effect is not significant on word of mouth. This contradicts our findings regarding the behavioural dimension because this dimension has positive and significant impacts on both attitude and word of mouth. For brand managers, this means that the behavioural dimension is relatively more important than the sensory dimension because it elicits broader consumer evaluations.

The results confirm earlier research contributions to some degree. Nysveen et al. (2018) found positive significant impacts of the sensory and behavioural dimensions on brand satisfaction and negative significant impacts of the cognitive dimensions when the study context was a nature-based sporting event.

Our context is a nature-based ski brand, so the context partially overlaps. The fact that the cognitive dimension has consistently negative (or non-significant) effects on consumer evaluations like word-of-mouth or attitude across studies indicates that consumers in nature-based industries are not interested in being involved in problem solving or challenged in their ways of thinking.

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