

EXAMINING THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF WEB BRAND EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

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| <p>Abstract</p> <p>The recent and ongoing innovations and digitization have transformed the relationship between brands and consumers. The role of brand websites, brand experiences, and brand outcomes has gathered notable interests from the scholarship yet the studies on the relationship of websites and brand experiences has remained in its infancy.</p> <p>The objectives set for this study were to contribute to the on-going debate on the role of brand experiences creating and affecting favourable brand and behavioral outcomes in online setting, and to further investigate the role of web qualities as antecedents of brand experience. Based on the objectives and aim of this study, the current literature on brand experience and web quality was investigated and based on the literature review, a research model was developed and proposed. The constructs for the model were adopted from previous studies, and the multidimensional brand experience construct used in the model was based on the study from Brakus et al (2009), and the web quality dimensions were adopted from the study by Aladwani (2006)</p> <p>This study was conducted as quantitative research and the data were collected via online questionnaire. The sample collected ($n = 202$) was first analyzed using the SPSS followed by the Partial Least Squared structural equation modeling using SmartPLS 3.0.</p> <p>The results provided by the PLS-SEM testing supported majority of the hypotheses set in the research model. Appearance web quality dimension had significant effect on evoking brand experiences, whereas the relationship between technical quality dimension and brand experience was found non-significant. Brand trust, eWOM-intentions and behavioral intentions were identified as outcomes of brand experiences evoked by appearance web quality. Hypothesis of appearance quality's direct positive effect on behavioral intentions was not supported by the results.</p> <p>This study supports the previous understanding of brand experiences as strong predictors for success outcomes, applicable also to online context. The results produced by this study implicate the marketers and managers to emphasize the website's appearance attributes in order to create strong brand experiences predicting favorable behavioral and brand outcomes and call out for further studies to create unified conceptualization of brand experiences in online context.</p> | |
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| <p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Nykyiset innovaatiot sekä jatkuva digitalisaatio ovat muuttaneet kuluttajien ja brändien välistä suhdetta. Brändien verkkosivujen ja brändikokemusten rooli on saavuttanut merkittävää kiinnostusta tutkijoiden parissa, mutta silti tutkimus niiden saralla on toistaiseksi vähäistä. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli osallistua käynnissä olevaan keskusteluun brändikokemusten roolista ja vaikutuksesta brändeille otollisten lopputulosten syntyyn ja kulutuskäyttäytymiseen verkkokokontekstissa, ja tutkia tarkemmin verkkosivujen laadullisten tekijöiden vaikutusta brändikokemusten syntyyn.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin sille asetettujen tavoitteiden mukaista jo olemassa olevaa kirjallisuutta brändikokemuksista ja verkkosivujen laadullisista tekijöistä, ja tutkimusmalli kehitettiin aiempiin tutkimuksiin ja kirjallisuuteen perustuen. Mallissa käytetyt muuttujat ja rakenteet brändikokemukseen osalta omaksuttiin Brakuksen ja muut (2009) tutkimuksesta, ja verkkosivujen laadullisten tekijöiden muuttujat Aladwanin (2006) tutkimuksesta.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin määrällisenä tutkimuksena, ja siinä käytetty aineisto kerättiin käyttäen verkkokyselylomaketta. Kerätty näyte (n = 202) analysoitiin ensin käyttäen SPSS-ohjelmaa, ja sen jälkeen tutkimusmalli rakennettiin ja analysoitiin käyttäen SmartPLS 3.0 ohjelmaa.</p> <p>Tulokset tukivat suurinta osaa tutkimuksessa ja tutkimusmallissa esitetyistä olettamista. Verkkosivujen esteettisyys vaikutti merkittävästi brändikokemusten syntyyn, kun taas verkkosivujen teknillisen laadun ja brändikokemusten välistä suhdetta ei todettu merkittäväksi. Verkkosivujen estetiikan todettiin korreloivan brändikokemusten kanssa, ja näiden tulemana havaittiin luottamus brändiin, eWOM aikomukset ja kulutusaikomukset.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus tukee aiempaa ymmärrystä brändikokemuksesta vahvana indikaattorina yrityksille suotuisten lopputulosten suhteen. Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että markkinoinnin ammattilaisten sekä johtajien olisi suositeltavaa painottaa verkkosivujen esteettisten osa-alueiden kehitystä, jotta ne voisivat luoda vahvoja brändikokemuksia, jotka taas voisivat enteillä yritykselle suotuisia lopputuloksia. Tutkimus peräänkuuluttaa myös tarvetta brändikokemusten jatkotutkimuksille verkkokokontekstissa, ja brändikokemuksen käsitteen yhtenäistämiseksi.</p> | |
| Avainsanat Brändikokemus, Verkkosivujen laatu, brändiluottamus, käyttäytymisaikomukset, eWOM aikomukset | |
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1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital environment, mobile technology, and proliferation of handheld devices have evolved the consumer behaviour as well as increased the share of online shopping among the consumers taking over the traditional retailing forms (Ha & Perks, 2005). Consequent to these developments, the emphasized role of digital advertising strategies has provided new opportunities for practitioners and academics (Jankowski et al., 2016). The constantly ongoing evolution of digital environment provides not only opportunities for marketers but also challenges in captivating the consumers' attention from the constant flow of information and experiences. In such a versatile and diverse environment, branding can be considered as a highly effective element for attracting the consumer's attention (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013) and retaining their loyalties.

This digital transformation has changed the role of company websites and marketing communications extensively. Digital consumers are not depended on the brands in finding the information to support their consumption and decision making. Instead of consumers now proactively seek information online to evaluate the suitability of the services or products to their personal needs (Rowley, 2004), and the profound nature of modern customers has, therefore, shifted from passive to proactive. However, brands have recognized this shift and company official websites have become a crucial part of creating competitive advantage (Ha & Perks, 2005). Moreover, companies have recognized the urgent need for understanding the consumer behaviour online, and prior research (Ha & Perks, 2005) has suggested that experiences have a major effect on the selection of website and positive experiences will ultimately lead to increased consumption behaviour.

The role of experiences has been emphasized among the marketing academics, and practitioners as the nature of economy and marketing has shifted from the previous focus on functionality and benefits of product/service towards emphasizing experiences as the core of marketing strategy as well as communications and economy (Schmitt, Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2015). Understanding the role of experiences in the digital environment has become a crucial aspect for companies (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) of different size and business volume. The importance of experiences in digital or online context highlights as the companies need to recognize the importance of providing valuable experiences in various online channels (Bilgihan, Kandampully, & Zhang, 2016). Online experiences from the consumers perspective include all of the points of contact chosen for interaction with the company, highlighting the importance of holistic experience (Bilgihan et al., 2016).

Although, the importance of online experience and the factors creating it has been widely recognized by academics in the marketing field, the same has also been recognized in the information systems (IS) field (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). BAs observed, there is still a lack of unified and understanding of experiences outcomes to online or digital marketing (Taylor & Strutton, 2010).

1.1 Research motivation and gaps

As previous research related to experiences has mainly revolved around the utilitarian aspects of products and services, the focus on experiences evoked and provided by the brands has received a relatively low amount of attention (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). In brand consumption process the consumers are exposed not only to utilitarian product attributes but also brand-related stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009). Previous studies on the consequences and outcomes of Brand Experience identify customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand attitude, brand credibility, brand equity, word-of-mouth and brand purchase intentions as outcomes of brand experience (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010; Hepola et al., 2017; I. Khan & Rahman, 2015; M. I. Khan & Fatma, 2018). Khan & Rahman (2015) reviewed the previous research on brand experience in their article "A review and future direction of brand experience research", and the study implicated that the previous studies on the brand experience have been conducted majorly in the empirical means and based on the quantitative data, 49 out of 73 studies (I. Khan & Rahman, 2015). Authors concluded that Brand experience is still lacking academic attention and due to its "practical relevance" (Khan & Rahman, 2015, p. 10) and call out for further research on the topic, still emphasizing the previously acknowledged outcomes of brand experience, e.g. brand credibility and purchase intentions. As the previous studies on brand experience have been mostly based on offline settings, the need for studying brand experiences in an online context is justified (Hamzah, Syed Alwi, & Othman, 2014). Ha & Perks (2005, p. 450) also conclude in their study that there is a need for further studies emphasizing the role of context and environmental factors that and for the brand-related customer behaviour. Torres & Augusto (2018) also emphasize the need for *deepening the understanding of the drivers of consumer behaviour in digital environments* (p. 7). Bilgihan & Kandampully (2016) encourage the future studies to empirically investigate the antecedents and outcomes of experiences customers have in brand interaction, and Rahman & Mannan (2018, p. 415) call out for further studies on online brand experiences and its relationship to intentional outcomes and purchasing behaviour;

"Furthermore, future researchers may also take other antecedents like the website design."

1.2 Research Aim & objectives

The aims of this study are multifold. First, it contributes to the on-going debate on the role of brand experiences creating and affecting favourable outcomes such as behavioural intentions in an online context. Second, it investigates the relationship of website aesthetics and technical qualities and responses of experience dimensions in an online context. Third, it creates and test a research model based on previous literature and investigates the relationship between proposed website attributes and the dimensions of brand experience model. Fourth, investigates the effect and outcomes of these relationships on brand trust, behavioural intentions and eWOM intentions to gain further insights into the role of brand experience in the online context.

1.2.1 Research questions

The thesis addresses following research questions (and sub-questions):

| Main Research Question | Sub-research Question |
|--|---|
| RQ: How does the website quality make a fundamental difference by way or improving (or distorting) the consumer website experience? | |
| RQ: How does the website experience develop consumer brand trust as well as motivates the usage behavior and e-word of mouth? | |
| RQ1: 1. Which of the proposed elements and attributes of website evoke the most experiential processing among customers leading to enhanced brand trust and behavioral intentions? | RQ1.1: How has the research conceptualized the terms 'online brand experience' in contemporary and historic research? |
| | 1.2 What are the implications of this research in terms of theory development, practice/management, and society in general? |
| RQ2: In the context of this study, which experiential dimensions is stimulated the most? | |
| RQ3: Is the current state of brand experience concept suitable and adaptable to online context? | |

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The following chapter introduces a theoretical framework for the study context. A theoretical framework for the study is constructed with concepts of brand experiences and the concept of website quality and its ascendants. Also, behavioural intentions, eWOM intentions and concept of Brand trust in online context are presented. As the concepts are presented, they are utilized for building hypotheses, and a research model is developed and presented at the end of this chapter by inserting the presented concepts into a nomological network supported by the literature. First, the most crucial concepts for this study are presented, then the chapter discusses the web quality dimensions as antecedents of Brand Experience, and the outcomes are presented and hypotheses proposed based on this justified framework.

2.1 Brand Experience - Definition and conceptualization

2.1.1 Introduction

According to Cleff et al. (2018), the concept of *brand experience* was first introduced by Holbrook & Hirschman in 1982. Holbrook & Hirschman (1982, p. 132) described the phenomena as consumption experience “*directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun.*”. Brand experience as phenomena, however, was identified by Brakus et al. in 2009 (I. Khan & Rahman, 2015a) and measurement model for the phenomena was introduced. Brand experience as a concept has received notable attention among the marketing practitioners, and understanding how the consumers experience the brand has become a crucial aspect of creating marketing strategies (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 52) and in building a consumer-brand relationship (Khan & Rahman, 2015, p. 1). Brand experiences evoked in customers are highly engaging and can lead to an emotional connection between the brand and consumer as they appeal to customers in emotional and in sensorial ways (Cleff et al., 2018). Brand experience is often aligned with the concepts of *customer experience* and *online brand experience* in academic literature (Cleff et al., 2018). In the online context, Rose et al. (2012, p. 309) define *online customer experience* as affective and cognitive processing of the sensory stimuli evoked by the brand’s website with the outcome of memory impression. Even though the nature of these concepts is highly similar as they are formed of cognitive responses and affective responses (Cleff et al., 2018, p. 10), brand experience as concept can be interpreted as much wider construct than customer experience as brand experiences can be evoked also among non-customers by the brand-related stimuli (Nysveen, Pedersen, & Skard, 2013) and

they can form perceptions of the brand based on the stimuli they are exposed (Daset al., 2018).

2.1.2 Brand Experience conceptualization

Brakus et al. (2009) identified the Brand Experience as a multidimensional concept and introduced a measurement model for these dimensions that the brand experience consists of. The measurement model was created to measure offline brand experiences, but since the source of experiences doesn't significantly affect to the experiences nature the model can be adopted for measuring the phenomena in an online context (Cleff et al., 2018, p. 11). Brakus et al. (2009, p. 52) define brand experience as;

“sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments”.

In this conceptualization, the brand-related stimuli are recognized as the foundation for the consumer responses that are defined as brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009). The brand-related stimuli can occur within various environments and situations evoking brand-related experiences. Brand related stimuli consist of visual and cognitive aspects of the brand's identity that can be observed and perceived by the consumers during the process of searching, consuming and shopping brand. According to Brakus et al. (2009), these brand-related stimuli are tied to brands design and identity (e.g. logo), packaging and marketing communications (e.g. advertising material, web presence) and environment where the brand is marketed and sold (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). In the online context, brands provide these brand-related stimuli in several interactive touchpoints and wide range of channels, for example in websites, social media and blogs (Cleff et al., 2018) and these online channels are in the very core of marketing communications.

2.1.3 Dimensions of Brand Experience

In their study, Brakus et al. (2009) constructed four-factor model for brand experience dimension scale, and in their study, the dimensions were validated within product and service brand context (Nysveen et al., 2013). The factors that the model introduces as for measuring brand experience in its different aspects are *sensory, affective, intellectual* and *behavioural* dimensions (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 52).

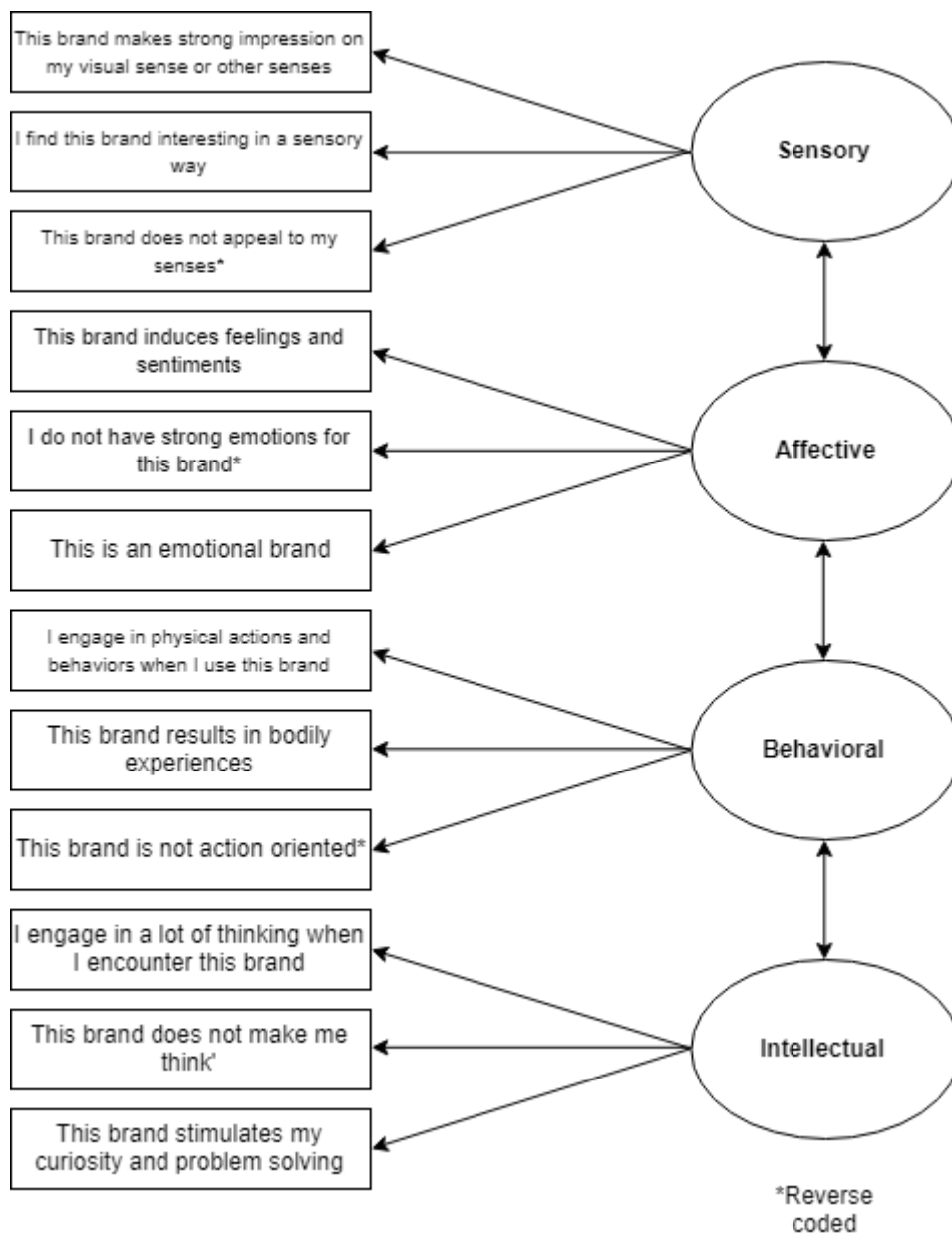


Figure 1 Brand Experience Dimensions (Brakus et al., 2009)

Sensory brand experience relates to experiences evoked by the brand in sensory level, e.g. by visual stimuli such as typography or brand colour schemes. *Affective* dimensions refer to the emotional experiences evoked by the brand. *Behavioural* dimension of the scale is linked with the intentions and actions, and bodily experiences (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 60). *Intellectual* dimension is related with the cognitive experiences brand evokes and stimulates, e.g. level of thinking and problem-solving stimulations. Brakus et al. (2009) emphasize that specific brand stimuli can evoke more than one of the dimensions at once, and the authors argue

that for example, visual stimuli that evoke sensory experiences can also lead to emotional and intellectual experiences.

Brakus et al. developed the measurement scale by conducting six separate studies, and during their first study authors generated the items for measuring the specific experimental states. The second study's purpose was to reduce the items provided by the first study, and to answer two questions;

1. *How many brand experience dimensions are there?*
2. *What experiences are captured by these dimensions?*

(Brakus et al., 2009, p. 57)

The third study was conducted by using exploratory factor analysis, and it revealed and validated the four dimensions of brand experience. The fourth study validated the scale and tested its reliability even further, and the fifth study implied that the brand experience is a distinctive scale among the other brand related factors (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 63). After creating and validating the brand experience scale, authors used the model for studying brand experience's effects and concluded that as a phenomenon it could be considered as predicting element for consumption behaviour, and the intensity and strength of the experience is related to the predictions and brand-related outcomes such as brand loyalty and brand satisfaction. (Schmitt, Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2015).

2.1.4 Brand Experience in an online context

Brand experience has been discussed among the academics with several different conceptual terms, yet these conceptualizations remain relatively similar by their characteristics. Novak et al. (2000) discussed the importance and effects of experiences in an online environment. To examine the experience in an online context, the authors proposed a conceptualization of *flow* in online settings as:

"cognitive state experienced during navigation that is determined by (1) high levels of skills and control; (2) high levels of challenge and arousal; (3) focused attention and (4) is enhanced by interactivity and telepresence" (Novak et al., 2000, p. 22)

Authors stated that the elevated experience and concentration of the consumer could distract the evaluation of time and physical space of the consumer. Outcomes of positive online experience were positively related to the consumption behaviour of online users, such as intentions of using web again and the time consumers were willing to spend online.

Ha & Perks (2005) researched brand experiences in website context defining brand experience as *"a consumer's positive navigations and perceptions with a specific website"* (p. 440). The study investigated whether there is a direct connection between brand experience, brand familiarity and customer satisfaction which the authors argued to be constituted of emotional and cognitional components. The hypotheses were supported, and the authors emphasized the distinction between brand familiarity and experiences as they differ by their outcomes and consequences. The study proposed that experience as a construct directly affects brand trust, and this relationship was mediated by brand familiarity to some extent. Authors argue that positive website experiences lead to higher consumption of the site.

In their study, Thomas & Veloutsou (2013) approached the brand experience phenomena by combining studies from the academic field of marketing and information systems. The study was conducted in the search engine context that discussed online brands identifying them as brands operating solely in an online environment and lacking the traditional characteristics of the brand, such as direct sales (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013a). The study identified and defined the online brand experience as *"online brand experience as a holistic response to the stimuli within a website environment."* (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013, p. 22) Authors presented a research model in which they used the technology acceptance model and combined its elements to the online brand experience model. The study aimed to gain insights for the outcomes of online brand experience and proposed that positive online brand experiences will enhance behavioural intentions and satisfaction. These outcomes were stated to have a positive impact on the online brand relationship. The study confirmed the presented hypotheses, and satisfaction, behavioural intentions and online brand relationship were identified as outcomes of positive online brand experience. Thomas & Veloutsou (2013) also implied that evoked online brand experiences are outcomes of brand-related emotional deliberation.

Khan et al. (2016) studied brand experience in corporate and online concept. The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between online corporate brand experience and brand satisfaction and loyalty. Authors justified the scope and context of the study by arguing that as the previous academic studies on brand experience were mostly conducted in offline context, and they were examining the brand experience concept in product level (Khan et al., 2016). Authors also emphasized the importance of their study by highlighting the different approach between product and corporate brand experience as a concept. Khan et al (2016) adopted the dimensions of online corporate brand experience from the study by Hamzah et al (2014b), and the instrument used in the conducted study consisted from 5 dimensions and 26 sub-themes (Khan et al., 2016).

| Dimension | Components |
|---------------------------|--|
| Corporate visual identity | Corporate colour, corporate design, corporate logo, corporate name, corporate slogan |
| Emotional experience | Confidence, disappointed, frustrated, happy, relieved, worried |
| Functionality | Control, focused attention, freedom, interactivity, knowledge, skill |
| Lifestyle | Changed personal banking, right place, right time, simplify lifestyle |
| Corporate/self-identity | Feel related, important in life, modern impression, prestige, self-image |

Table 1 Online Corporate Brand Experience by Hamzah et al. (2014)

Authors suggested that the conducted study has major contributions to the research on the online corporate brand experience concept:

“First, this study confirms 19 measurement items of OCBE that can be broken down into five dimensions, which are differently evoked by corporate brands in an online context” (Khan et al., 2016, p. 723)”

The study also confirmed that the dimensions of online corporate brand experience had a positive impact on brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. Authors emphasized the importance and impact of the *corporate visual identity* dimension as it had a notable positive effect on the studied outcomes of brand satisfaction and loyalty and suggested the practitioners to allocate resources on building visually appealing brand content in an online environment (Khan et al., 2016). Another significant dimension the authors noted in their study was *functionality*-dimensions. Functionality-dimension enhanced the brand satisfaction and brand loyalty and emphasizing the *utilitarian aspects* (Khan et al., 2016, p.723), and usability in online context was suggested to be favourable for business operations as they built up the confidence of the user is leading to desired outcomes.

As mentioned, the concept of *online brand experience* is often related to brands that operate only in online environments (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013a), thus leaving more traditional brands with physical presence out of this conceptualization (Cleff et al., 2018). Even though this study is conducted in online context, this dissertation is not aligned with such limitation of in the data collection and the brands are not limited to have only online presence, we adapt the definition and concept of Brand Experience by Brakus et al., and investigate the phenomena from the dimensions introduced by Brakus et al. due this model's validity in not only in offline but also in online context (Cleff et al., 2018).

2.2 Web site quality

This chapter introduces the concept of Web Quality by reviewing previous academic literature.

Websites are nowadays a remarkable asset and part of the companies' marketing communications mix and sales operations. From the customer perspective, internet has become the primary source for seeking information to support and ease their decision making on consuming goods and services (Duarte et al., 2018; Lorenzo-Romero et al., 2013) and the consumers tend to spend substantially less time on brand websites evaluating its offerings (Duarte et al., 2018). The role of experiences has emphasized among the academics and managers and created a demand for professionals capable of creating and enhancing the customer and user experience not only in consumable products and services but in building brand websites, and according to Ha & Perks (2005)

"Creating a customer experience that is synonymous with a particular (website) brand is becoming increasingly recognised as a vital driver of e-performance" (p. 438)

Aladwani & Palvia developed an instrument for measuring the concept of web quality in their research "Developing and validating an instrument for measuring user-perceived web quality" (Aladwani & Palvia, 2002). In their research the authors claimed that the previous studies on web quality were fragmented and not focused on measuring the concept and its dimensions but rather "*discusses the meaning of some aspects of web quality*"(Aladwani & Palvia, 2002, p.468)

Authors argued that due the complexity of the web quality as concept the measurement instrument should be multi-dimensional, and they pointed out the gap in web quality research as there were no multi-dimensional scale to investigate and measure the perceived web quality especially from the user's perspective (Aladwani & Palvia, 2002). Authors also discussed the lack of

definition for the web quality as concept among the academics, and defined web quality as:

“Users’ evaluation of a web site’s features meeting users’ needs and reflecting overall excellence of the website” (Aladwani & Palvia, 2002, p. 469)

In their study the authors conceptualized a scale consisting of three separate web quality dimensions. At the conceptualizing phase the web quality dimensions recognized by the authors were *technical adequacy*, *web content* and *web appearance* (Aladwani & Palvia, 2002).

Major web quality dimensions

| Dimension | Sample items |
|--------------------|---|
| Technical adequacy | Security; ease of navigation; broadcast services; limited use of special plug-ins; search facilities; anonymity; availability; valid links; reliability; browser sniffing; personalization or customization; speedy page loading; interactivity; ease of access; multi-language support; protected content; bookmark facility |
| Web content | Usefulness of content; completeness of content; clarity of content; uniqueness of content; broadness of content; originality of content; finding contact info; currency of content; conciseness of content; accuracy of content; finding contact info; finding people without delay; finding site maintainer; finding links to relevant sites; finding firm’s general info; finding products/services details; finding customer’s policies; finding customer support; finding FAQ list; finding free services; using limited registration forms; finding online help; diversity of content; finding free info |
| Web appearance | Attractiveness; distinctive hot buttons; changing look; organization; proper use of fonts; proper use of colors; proper use of graphics; graphics-text balance; proper use of multimedia; style consistency; proper choice of page length; good labeling; text only option; proper use of language/style; color consistency |

Table 2 Web quality dimensions by Aladwani & Palvia (2002)

After conducting a research and testing the scale, the authors recognized a fourth dimension for their instrument. The previously set dimension *web content* was identified as consisting of two different dimensions, *specific content* & *content quality* (Aladwani & Palvia, 2002). The final and validated measurement instrument consisted of 25-items and 4 dimensions (*technical*, *general content*, *specific content* and *appearance quality*), and differentiated from the previous instruments as measuring the perceived web quality from the users’ perspective.

In his next study of web quality, Aladwani (2006) investigated the relationship and correlation of web quality elements and users’ attitudes and purchasing intentions. By using the four-dimensional web quality framework validated in his previous study, Aladwani discovered that only one of the dimensions, *technical dimension*, had a direct and indirect effect on the purchasing behavior of the user. However, study showed that whereas the *specific content quality* and

appearance quality didn't affect the consumer's purchasing behavior, they had a notable impact on consumers attitude towards the website.

Hasan & Abuelrub (2011) studied the web quality concept and implicated that the measurement criteria proposed by previous studies correlated with the services and business goals that the websites underlined. Authors also claimed that the previous academic research were lacking the proper amount of quality factors (Hasan & Abeulrub, 2011).

In their literature review Hasan & Abeulrub investigated the web quality and measuring its dimensions by categorizing the previous studies in subsets based on their services and business goals. As the measurement instruments were identified as service-related, the authors proposed a framework for measuring web quality and its dimensions without being affected by the nature of the service or industry of the website. Authors stated their objective as to "*identify measurable features and indicators that currently comprise a successful website*" (Hasan & Abeulrub, 2011, p.17) and based on their findings, Hasan & Abeulrub proposed a framework including four dimensions; *content quality, design quality, organization quality* and *user-friendly quality* (Hasan & Abeulrub, 2011).

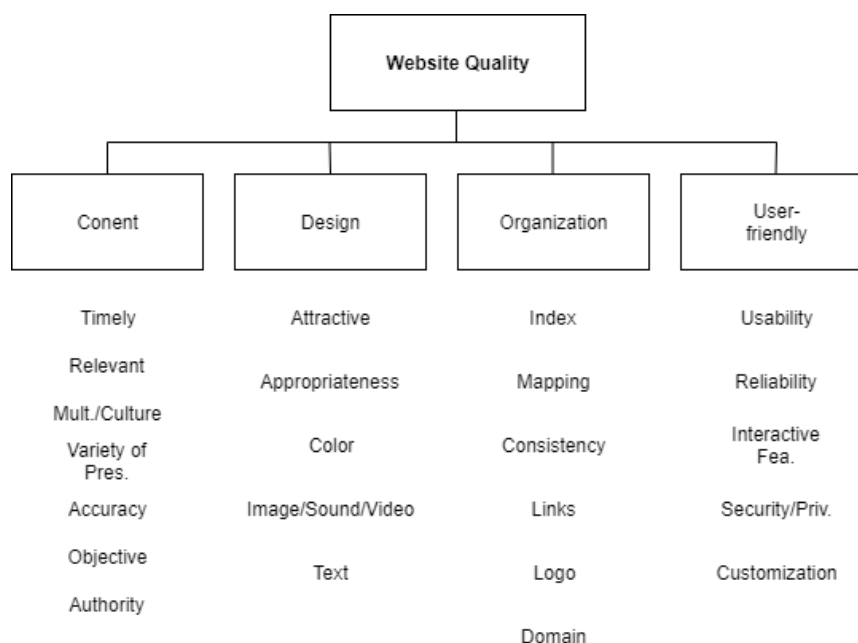


Figure 2 Website Quality hierarchy by Hasan & Abeulrub, 2011

Al-Qeisi et al (2014) studied the usage behaviour of consumers related to web quality dimensions and their attributes by introducing the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) as premises of their study. The study was set and conducted in online banking context and the objective was to understand:

“how website design elements and the quality of interaction experience influence consumer behavior by means of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology” (Al-Qeisi et al. 2014, p. 2282).

The web quality dimensions for the study were adapted from the framework by Aladwani (2006); *Technical dimension, general content, specific content and appearance*. The study revealed that web quality dimensions and users’ perceptions of them had both direct and indirect relationship with the usage behavior (Al-Qeisi et al., 2014). The most influential dimensions for the users’ perception were *technical, general content and appearance* dimensions. Authors discovered that there was an interrelationship between the dimensions and the impact they had on the users’ perception of the website was named as *Halo effect* (Al-Qeisi et al., 2014). Study also revealed that the integration of UTAUT model was suitable in studying usage behaviour in an online context and provided insights on the relevancy of website quality elements in users’ perception of the website.

2.3 Web Quality Dimensions

After reviewing the web quality literature, this study adopts the definition of web quality and its 4-dimensional framework from the study Aladwani & Palvia (2002) as it can be suggested to be the most unified and validated framework on capturing the relevant dimensions of web quality.

2.3.1 Technical quality

Technical quality dimension is related to the technical aspects of the website. These aspects include *security, ease of navigation and search facilities* of the website for example (Al-Qeisi, 2014, p. 2285) and according to Aladwani (2006), the technical quality has a major impact on user behaviour of the website.

2.3.2 General content quality

General content quality refers to the quality website in a more general level. How the website is perceived in terms of *usefulness, clarity and accuracy* (Al-Qeisi, 2014, p. 2285). Aladwani (2006) discusses the importance of contents’ quality in a website as seeking information from a website to support their purchasing intentions and decisions is a vital stage of the purchasing process. By failing to deliver and communicate proper and supportive information to meet the consumers’ expectations might affect negatively to the purchase intentions and usage behaviour of the consumer.

2.3.3 Specific content quality

Specific content quality refers to the specific company related information (i.e. contact information & company's general information) and information concerning its offerings in more detail, such as product or service information (Al-Qeisi et al., 2014). By providing the relevant and specific information website can attract customers in higher degree than websites with lower level information, and websites with a high level of specific company related information are more likely to generate favourable outcomes as seeking for product/service related information is a well-established predictor of consumer behaviour in online context (Aladwani, 2006)

2.3.4 Appearance Quality

Appearance quality dimension includes the visual design aspect of the website and how the visual elements and their usage in website design correlate with the customers emotional and behavioral responses (Chang et al, 2014). These aspects include the composition of the website elements, proper use of colors, proper use of fonts, proper use of multimedia (i.e. images, video) and other visual elements included in website design (Al-Qeisi et al., 2014). Appearance quality is discussed as one of the most influential web quality elements as it has major impact on customer related outcomes such as satisfaction, perceived service quality (Wang et al., 2010), intentions and purchasing behaviour (Chang et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2010), activation of search (Wang et al., 2010) and attitudes towards the website (Aladwani, 2006).

2.4 Research model development

This chapter introduces the antecedents and outcomes of brand experience based on previous studies. Based on these parts of the nomological network that brand experience can be associated with, hypotheses and research model is proposed.

2.4.1 Antecedents of Brand Experience

To further understand brand experience as a concept and the outcomes of it, it is crucial to understand the antecedents and their nature. Brakus (2009) defined the 4-dimensions of brand experience, and these dimensions reflect the subjective experiential state of an individual. The antecedents that create subjective experiences impact the outcomes, thus highlighting the importance of the individual's perception of the variables that evoke the brand-related experiential states. Subjectivity is an important factor in measuring and studying the different experiential states among the consumers, as their preferences regarding the valued and appealing experiential states vary. Zarantonello & Schmitt (2010)

suggest that the characteristics of the consumer can be used for predicting the consumer behaviour these evoked experiential states can lead to, and authors identify five consumer types using the brand experience dimensions; *hedonistic, action-oriented, holistic, inner-directed* and *utilitarian* customers.

To meet the expectations of this study, the relevant antecedents of brand experience in online context can be identified as the **brand-related stimuli, marketing communications and perceived usefulness** as they can argued to be closely related to brand websites by consisting of brand cues and stimuli and as being a well-established part of marketing communications of modern businesses. Perceived usefulness can be tied to this study as the usage of and usability of the website affects the consumer's perception of the website user, and in online context, the usability aspect is connected to utilitarian aspect of websites (Bilgihan et al., 2016) thus related to intellectual brand experience dimension. As this study aims for understanding the relationship of selected web quality dimensions and brand experience dimensions, introducing these antecedents can be argued to be in line with the study.

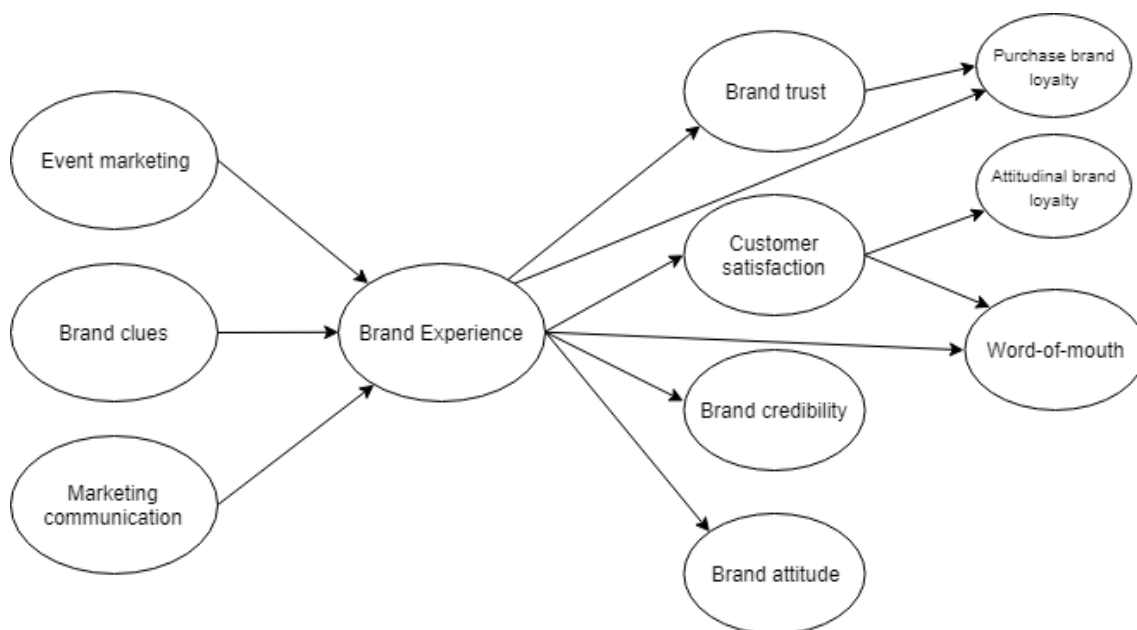


Figure 3 Antecedents & Outcomes of BE by I. Khan & Fatma (2017)

Brand related websites consist of brand-related cues as the aesthetic features of the website design often integrates several recognized brand-related stimuli such as colour-schemes, shapes, typefaces, designs and logos. *Appearance quality* dimension by Aladwani (2006) can be justified as being used as part of the research model as it consists of almost identical variables and characteristics as the Brakus uses in defining the criteria for brand-related stimuli; *attractiveness, organization, proper use of fonts, proper use of colors, and proper use of multimedia* (Aladwani, 2006, p.183). The brand related cue can evoke experiential states that

are not constrained to only one dimension of the framework (Brakus, 2009) and can stimulate multiple experience dimensions. Wang et al (2010) suggest that the website's aesthetic qualities also affect the consumer's informational processing route and can also produce positive emotional, experiential states. Dennis et al (2014, p. 2251) also suggest that experience evoked by aesthetic elements can affect the affective and cognitive responses. Whereas appearance quality dimension can be argued to evoke brand experiences with brand-related stimuli and clues, it is recognized as an important part of the marketing communications mix (I. Khan & Fatma, 2017). Brand websites as part of the marketing mix are capable of evoking brand experiential states (Thomas & Veloutsou 2013). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Appearance Quality influences Brand Experiences

According to Wang (2010, p. 126) web aesthetics and its evoked affective and positive experiential states can enhance the purchase intentions, and Wang et al. (2010) argue that web aesthetics affect user's perception of the web service quality and satisfaction and as an outcome enhancing the brand-related behavioural outcomes. Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2013) argue that in online context impulsive shopping is the outcome from experiential processing and emotions that the web aesthetics and design elements create. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed

H3: Appearance Quality directly influences behavioural intentions

Technical Quality dimension can be tied to cognitive experiential state in online context as it consists the similar utilitarian aspects that affect the cognitive information processing (Hamzah et al., 2014). *Technical Quality* dimension includes aspects such as usability, security and interactive feature of the website, and according to Hasan & Adeulrub (2011, p. 22) "*This dimension concerns with the logical grouping, categorization, or structure of websites' elements in order to help the user to reach the required information quickly*". Hamzan et al. (2014) identify *functionality* as one of the dimensions of brand experience in an online context and argue that this utilitarian experiential state consists of usability and interactivity. These aspects relate to intellectual brand experience dimensions as the functionality in this context translates to cognitive experiences (Khan & Rahman, 2015). Chan et al. (2014) also suggest based on their study that the evoked experiences correlate on the user's perception of the ease of use and usefulness. Following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Technical Dimension influences Brand Experiences

2.4.2 Outcomes of Brand Experience

Brand experience as a concept can be associated as part of the nomological network as there are recognized antecedents and outcomes of it. The outcomes of brand experience have been widely studied and the most recognized outcomes are brand related concepts such as brand trust, brand credibility, brand attitude, satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009; Ha & Perks, 2005; Iglesias, Markovic, & Rialp, 2019; M. I. Khan & Fatma, 2018) and behavioral intentions (Beckman et al., 2013; Bilgihan et al., 2016; Brakus et al., 2009; I. Khan & Rahman, 2015b; Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013b; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010b). For this study, the studied outcomes of Brand Experience are purchase intentions, e-WOM intentions and brand trust.

2.4.3 Brand Trust

Brand trust is one of the six behavioural outcomes related to brand experience (Khan & Fatma, 2017; Khan & Rahman, 2015a; Ha & Perks, 2005) and in particular, has a strong relationship with evoked sensory brand experiences (Huang, 2017). Ha & Perks (2005, p. 443) define brand trust as:

“a feeling of security held by the consumer in his/her interaction with the brand, such that it is based on the perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer”.

Brand trust is a vital link between the consumer and success of the brands as consumers tend to purchase from the companies, they have formed a trust relationship, and in the online environment, this aspect has a major effect as it includes several factors that influence the generation of brand trust (Ha, 2004). Kabadayi & Alan (2016, p. 85) implicate that *“It is essential to understand that brand trust and brand effect is generated through consumers experiences with the brand”*. The experiences creating a brand trust can be evoked by the proper use of marketing communications elements (Kabadayi & Alan, 2016). Ha & Perks (2005) argue that in online context brand trust can be formed by positive experiences evoked by a website. From a company perspective brand trust is a crucial element in building competitive advantage, and according to Ha & Perks (2005), positive experiences that generate brand trust have a major influence on their online purchasing behaviour. By generating brand trust, the brand experience can be suggested as an antecedent for building brand trust between company and consumer. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Brand experience influences Brand trust

2.4.4 Behavioural Intentions

Behavioral intentions and predictions are proposed often related as brand experience outcomes (Moreira et al., 2017; Risitano et al., 2017; Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018; Brakus, 2009; Dennis et al., 2014, Khan & Rahman 2016, Zaranotello & Schmitt, 2010) and brand outcomes in the literature, and these outcomes are discussed as i.e. purchase and repurchase intentions, willingness to pay (Risitano et al., 2017), eWOM intentions (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2017) and brand-related outcomes such as brand satisfaction and loyalty (Khan & Rahman, 2016; Serra-Cantalops et al., 2017). In brand experience studies, Zaranotello & Schmitt (2010) examined the relationship between behavioural outcomes and brand experiences by identifying five customer types based on their preferences on experiential appeals (Zaranotello & Schmitt, 2010). Authors conclude that “*the relationship between attitudes and intentions is strongest for holistic consumers and weakest for utilitarian consumers*” (Zaranotello & Schmitt, 2010, p. 532) and argue that strongly affecting brand experiences can create impulsive customer behaviour and reduce the time and efforts of consumer’s decision making. Van Noort et al. (2012) studied the flow-experience immersed by website’s interactivity and they concluded that the website’s interactivity has a positive effect on the flow experience with behavioural intentions towards the brand (i.e. purchase intentions & referral intentions), cognitive and affective responses as outcomes. Dennis et al. (2014) examined the relationship between emotional and cognitive content of advertisements with intellectual and affective brand experiential states they evoke, and in their study, the authors conclude that the consumer behavioural intentions are outcomes of these relationships. Rahman & Mannan (2018) studied brand experiences relationship to online purchase intentions and authors concluded their study by arguing that brand experiences positively influence the purchasing intentions in the online context.

Based on the previous literature presented in this section and earlier in this study, the following hypotheses is proposed;

H5: Brand experience influences behavioural intentions.

2.4.5 e-Wom

The Internet has given the modern customer the ability to interact with the brands, and the social networking has empowered the consumer even more as they can communicate their experiences with brands with not only with their networks but also with a wider audience of consumer (Bilgihan & Kandampully, 2015). Consumer’s brand experiences are easily reflected their messages about the brands in various digital channels, i.e. social media and product reviews and recommendations (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2017). According to Bigihan & Kandampully (2015), the experiences customers have in the web are highly

related to their behaviour and intentions, and eWOM and WOM are one of the identified outcomes that the authors recognize in their study.

In the context of this study, we examine WOM in online context. Thus, we refer to it as eWOM (*electronic word-of-mouth*) instead of WOM. These concepts are often discussed as similar entities. However, as eWOM as a concept operates in the web, it can reach and impact notably larger audiences in a relatively shorter time compared to traditional WOM (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2017). Chen et al. (2013) define WOM (word-of-mouth) as “*informal communication relating to the characteristics of a business or product occurring between consumers*” (p.582). eWOM can affect significantly to consumers perception of the brand both positively and negatively, and directly affect the performance of the brand (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2017). Word-of-mouth as a behavioural construct is affected by the emotions and motives of the customer, thus emphasizing the importance of customer satisfaction as satisfied customers are likely to produce favourable word-of-mouth related to brands offerings (Chen et al., 2013). Positive brand experiences can produce eWOM and intentions to eWOM i.e. in the form of referrals (Bilgihan & Kandampully, 2015; Noort et al., 2012; Serra-Cantalops et al., 2017).

Following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: *Brand Experience has an influence on eWOM intentions*

2.4.6 Research Model

As the purpose of this chapter was to develop a research model based on the previous literature and studies, after reviewing the literature and presenting the hypotheses the following research model is presented:

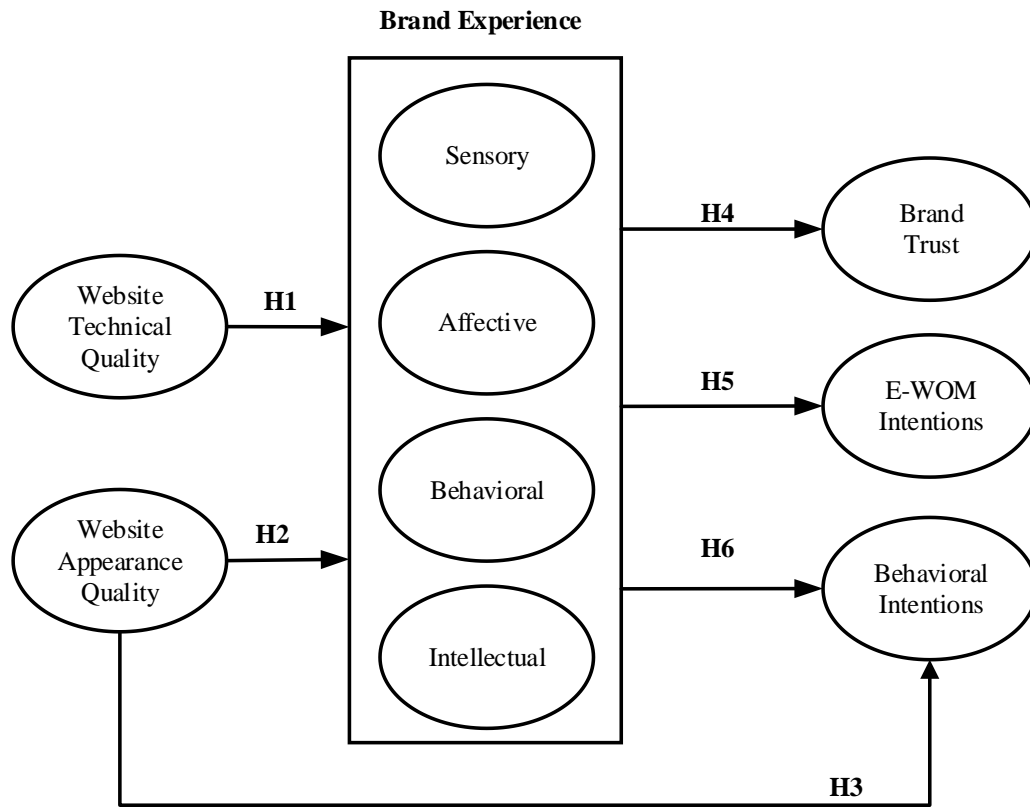


Figure 4 Research Model

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology and stages included in this study. Selected methods for conducting the research, data collection and items and scales used are discussed, and this chapter also aims to justify the usage of these methods to be in line with meeting the objectives set for this study.

3.1 Quantitative research

To meet the objectives, set to this study, this study is conducted by using quantitative research design and an online survey as the data collection tool. Quantitative research aims to explain the studied phenomena and its causalities by estimating the effects and relationships of selected variables (Mahoney & Goerts, 2006) with constructing a research model based on previous theories and testing hypotheses in the selected settings. According to Vilka (2007, p. 13), the quantitative research clarifies the relationships of measurable features of the variables by using numerical data collected via surveys or other experiments conducted in isolated settings (Allen et al., 2013). Researcher's mission in quantitative research is not to *interpret* the results but merely to analytically examine the data in the outlines set for the conducted study (Allen et al., 2013) and the results of quantitative research if conducted accordingly are replicable, providing more credibility to the claimed results and conclusions of the study. Allen et al. (2013, p. 4) define the main purpose of quantitative research as

"Create, expand and refine theory through systematic observation of hypothesized connections among variables."

Quantitative research design meets the objectives and aim of this study as the research questions of this study are conducted to investigate relationships between the presented variables and their outcomes, and as line with the nature of quantitative research this study aims to produce results that can be generalized to some extent within larger populations (Allen et al., 2013). The previous studies on the topics discussed in this study have been conducted majorly in quantitative settings (Khan & Rahman, 2015b) thus providing validated framework and measurement scales for conducting this study.

3.2 Data collection

In this research the data collection was conducted by using online survey. Using survey for data-collection is beneficial when the sample needed for reliable and

generalized results is relatively large by its nature (Vilkka, 2007). Survey followed the self-administrated method where the participants fill in the survey without observation or presence of the researcher (Punch, 2003) and researcher's presence won't distract the participant and distort the results (Valli, 2015). Due the limited resources allocated for this study the survey is identified as *small scale* and *cross-sectional* survey. Cross-sectional survey collects the data from the participants once, opposed to longitudinal survey where the responses are collected in different occasions (Punch, 2003, p. 3). Problems that can occur with using survey are often related to the questions and their design, and questions in the survey can be misinterpreted or misunderstood by the participant thus affecting the reliability of the data (Valli, 2015).

The participants were asked to visit IKEA's website for briefly before proceeding to fill in the questionnaire. IKEA is a furniture and home appliance producer from Sweden with well-established and recognizable brand. The study, however was not conducted in co-operation with the brand, and the brand was chosen for the data collection due its brand recognition and familiarity.

The survey was distributed to respondents by using social media channels and email newsletter. In addition to social media and email, the questionnaire was distributed by research company specialized on research and collecting research data online. Taking the scope and scale of this study, using online survey is beneficial and efficient data-collection method with notable technical advantages for investigating and refining the data further in chosen data-software.

3.3 Measurement scales & Survey development

The questions measuring the web quality dimensions (WQ) appearance quality and technical quality were adopted from Aladwani (2006) and Hasan & Abeulrub (2010). Each dimension was measured with 5 questions, totalling 10 questions for web quality items. Measuring brand experience (BE) included 4 dimensions (sensorial SBE, affective ABE, behavioural BBE and intellectual IBE). Questions for measuring brand experience were adopted from Brakus (2009), and this section included 12 questions, 4 per each individual brand experience dimension.

The outcome variables of the research model included brand trust (BT), behavioural intentions (BI) and E-WOM intentions (EWOMI). Five questions measuring brand trust were adopted from Fischer & Gärtner (2015). Three behavioural intentions questions were adopted from Jiang et al. (2013)

and E-WOM intentions were measured with 4 questions adopted from study by Hur et al. (2011). All the items and questions are presented in this chapter in table 3.

Table 3 Measurement items

| Item | Adapted from |
|--|--|
| <p>TECHNICAL QUALITY TQ1: Website looks secure for transactions. TQ2: Website is easy to use, understand, and operate. TQ3: Website has proper search functions. TQ4: Website loads fast, TQ5: Website URL is clear and easy to remember.</p> | <p>Aladwani 2006; Hasan & Abuelrub, 2010</p> |
| <p>APPEARANCE QUALITY AQ1: Website looks attractive. AQ2: Website looks organized. AQ3: Website uses fonts & text properly. AQ4: Website uses colors properly. AQ5: Website uses images properly.</p> | <p>Aladwani 2006; Hasan & Abuelrub, 2010</p> |
| <p>BRAND EXPERIENCE SBE1: This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses. SBE2: I find this brand interesting in a sensory way. SBE3: This brand does not appeal to my senses.</p> <p>ABE1: This brand induces feelings and sentiments. ABE2: I do not have strong emotions for this brand. ABE3: This brand is an emotional brand.</p> <p>IBE1: I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand. IBE2: This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving. IBE3: This brand does not make me think.</p> <p>BBE1: I engage in physical actions and behavior when I use this brand. BBE2: This brand results in bodily experiences. BBE3: This brand is not action oriented.</p> | <p>Brakus (2009)</p> |
| <p>E-WOM INTENTIONS EWOM1: I often tell others about this brand in my online networks. EWOM2: I am proud to say to others that I am this company's customer. EWOM3: I strongly recommend people buy products online from this company. EWOM4: I have spoken favorably of this company to others.</p> | <p>Hur et al. (2011)</p> |
| <p>BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS BI1: I will continue to shop online at this retailer BI2: I encourage others to shop online at this retailer BI3: I will use this retailer website more often for online purchases</p> | <p>Jiang et al. (2013)</p> |
| <p>BRAND TRUST BT1: I am confident in brand's ability to perform well. BT2: I trust brand. BT3: I rely on brand. BT4: Brand is safe. BT5: I expect brand to deliver on its promise.</p> | <p>Fischer & Gärtner (2015)</p> |

3.3.1 Online Questionnaire

The data for this research was collected by using an online questionnaire. Participants were asked to visit proposed website and briefly investigate the site before proceeding to the questions. The questions in the survey were adapted from the previous quantitative studies on the subjects studied in this research (Brand experience, Web Quality, Brand Trust, Behavioural Intentions and E-WOM intentions) in order to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data and this study. Likert 7-point scale was used to measure the items (1. Strongly Disagree \Rightarrow 7 Strongly Agree). At the end of the questionnaire the participants were asked some demographic questions in order to investigate the possible control variables such as age and gender. Questionnaire was conducted in English only.

Questionnaire included total amount of 34 questions to measure the items and their relationship in the presented research model, and 9 questions for collecting the demographic and consumer behaviour related data (*Gender, Age, Profession, Education, Previous internet shopping, Frequency of online shopping, Online shopping preferences and Familiarity with the brand*). All the questions were mandatory, thus reducing the efforts needed in the data analysing stage.

3.4 Data analysis

The data received from the online questionnaire was first exported from the Webropol 3.0 platform as .SAV file in order to start the pre-analyzing phase of the data in IBM SPSS Statistics. The amount of received answers for the survey was 212, thus succeeding the suggested limit of validity in social sciences, 100 responses (Karjaluoto, 2007). First IBM SPSS was used to investigate the data and in the case of invalid responses and missing values, compressing the data and to present the demographics of the participants. Secondly and foremostly, SPSS was used for the exploratory factor analysis and preparing the data for the confirmatory factor analysis that was conducted by using structural equation (SEM) modeling in SmartPLS software. As this study was based on research model supported by previous theoretical findings, confirmatory factor analysis was used in order to either support or debunk the suggested hypotheses (Karjaluoto, 2007).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Demographic information

The amount of answers the questionnaire received was 214. However, after reviewing the dataset in order to find missing values, 12 answers were excluded from the dataset, thus the used dataset consisted of 202 answers. Among the participants 67,3% were female and 32,7% males. Most of the participants were 26-35-year-old (58.9%), and the smallest age group of the participants were 56-65-year-old (0.5%).

| Gender | N | % |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Female (1) | 136 | 67.3 |
| Male (2) | 66 | 32.7 |
| Total | 202 | 100% |
| Age | | |
| 15-25 | 41 | 20.3 |
| 26-35 | 119 | 58.9 |
| 36-45 | 28 | 13.9 |
| 46-55 | 13 | 6.4 |
| 56-65 | 1 | 0.5 |
| Total | 202 | 100% |
| Profession | | |
| Student | 65 | 32.2 |
| Employee / Professional | 111 | 55.0 |
| Unemployed | 14 | 6.9 |
| Entrepreneur | 10 | 5.0 |
| Retired | 2 | 1.0 |
| Total | 202 | 100% |

Table 4 Demographic Profile of the respondents

The level of education of the participants was mostly Bachelor's & Master's Degree (63.4%), and most of the participants were employees and professionals (55%) and also students represented large amount of the sample (32.2%). Also, the Online shopping habits were asked in the questionnaire, and the sample consisted of people with relatively notable history in online shopping (6-10 years 40.6%, over 10 years 32,7%). Another question related to online shopping concerned the frequency of online shopping, and 48.5% of the participants did internet shopping <1 per month, and 40.1% 2-4 times per month. Questionnaire

also asked whether the participants were familiar with the brand (IKEA), and 97.5% did recognize the brand.

4.2 Factor Analysis

The Keiser-Meier Olkin (KMO) test was initiated to examine if the data was suitable for factor analysis (Yong & Pearce, 2016). The KMO values are presented from a scale of .60 to .90 (Karjaluoto, 2007). KMO value of .6 presents very poor preconditions for the factor analysis, whereas the .90 indicates excellent preconditions to proceed with the analysis (Karjaluoto, 2007). The KMO value the test produced was 0.879, thus providing excellent preconditions for the factor analysis. Bartlett's test is used for providing a factor score (Yong & Pearce, 2016), and if the Sig. value given by the test is <0.1-0.5 the preconditions for factor analysis are good due the reasonable amount of correlations between the variables (Karjaluoto, 2007, p. 44-45). Bartlett's test provided Sig.value of <0.000, thus the preconditions for the factor analysis were sufficient.

| | |
|---|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | 0.879 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | |
| Approx. Chi-Square | 4742.188 |
| df | 703 |
| Sig. | .000 |

Table 5 KMO & Bartlett's Test

Communalities chart was investigated in order to see if the variables were suitable for the factor analysis (Karjaluoto, 2007). Communality estimates are used to "reflect the variance of a variable in common with all others together" (Young & Pearce, 2013, p. 82). If the communality value of variable is <0.3 it is advisable to remove the variable from data set (Karjaluoto, 2007). In the dataset, the smallest communality value was found to be 0.337 (Technical Quality, item 5) and the largest 0.821 (Brand Trust, item 2), thus all the items were included in the dataset. The preconditions for proceeding to the confirmatory factor analysis were fulfilled, and the confirmatory factor analysis was then initiated in SmartPLS

4.3 Measurement model assessment

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) has been widely adopted in marketing and business research (Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, &

Hair, 2014). The usefulness of SEM in the marketing research stems from its ability to measure the relationships between multiple variables in depth (Sarstedt et al., 2014). Sarstedt et al. (Sarstedt et al., 2014, p. 106) argue the benefits of PLS-SEM due its ability to “*allow researchers to model, simultaneously estimate and Test complex theories with empirical data*”. PLS-SEM model has also received critique from the researchers, and for example its ability to run simulations based on relatively small sample has been questioned (Sarstedt et al., 2014)

The evaluation process of PLS-SEM results consists of two steps (Sarstedt et al., 2014). First, in the SEM process the measurement model must be assessed in order to ensure the validity between the set constructs and their variables (Abdul-Hamid, Shaikh, Boateng, & Hinson, 2018, p. 9), thus evaluating the theory of the measurement model (Sarstedt et al, 2014, p. 109). In the second phase, the structural model is evaluated by observing the significance of the presented factors and variables, and testing the hypotheses set for the study (Sarstedt et al, 2014, p. 109). To conclude, the overall process investigates whether the presented theory correlates with the gathered data (Joseph F. Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017)

The PLS-SEM was initiated by building the research model to SmartPLS with the proposed relationships of the variables adapted from previous literature. As the model included a multidimensional construct (Brand Experience, 4 dimensions), the model presented the Brand Experience construct as second order construct (Duarte & Amaro, 2018) in order to study the individual effects of the dimensions to the main construct. As suggested by the Duarte & Amaro (2018), using the same measurement metrics with first- and second order constructs is valid and the produced results in path coefficients, predictive relevance and explained variance (p.295).

The model was built in the SmartPLS and the factors were named based on the theoretical frameworks they were adopted from. Web quality dimensions ‘Appearance Quality = AQ(1-5)’ and ‘Technical Quality = TQ(1-5)’. The brand experience items were named based on the brand experience dimension they represented: ‘Sensory Brand Experience = SBE(1-3)’, ‘Affective Brand Experience = ABE(1-3)’, ‘Intellectual Brand Experience = IBE(1-3)’ and ‘Behavioural Brand Experience = BBE(1-3)’. eWOM intentions were named as eWOM (1-4), behavioural intentions were named BI (1-3) and brand trust BT (1-5).

To assess the model, the reliability and validity of the model were measured by investigating the reliability of the indicators (factor loadings), the internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha), composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE).

4.4 Internal consistency reliability

Both Cronbach's Alpha and CR are measuring the internal consistency reliability, but due to the limitations and tendency for underestimations of Cronbach's Alpha, CR is suggested to be a more favourable metric for measuring the internal consistency reliability. CR and Cronbach's Alpha are similarly measured from 0-1 whereas 1 represents a higher degree of reliability (Hair et al., 2017, p. 136). In measuring CR, values from 0.70 to 0.90 are considered desirable. In this study, both Cronbach's Alpha and CR-values were within the desired limitation of 0.7-0.9. The lowest value in Cronbach Alpha was found 0.798 and in CR 0.982. Some of the CR values exceeded the suggested limit of 0.9 but remained under the >0.925 thus being accepted as reliable in the terms of internal consistency.

Factor loadings are commonly used for measuring the indicator reliability and evaluating the convergent validity, and according to Hair et al. (2017), in order to gain reliability all the indicators need to meet the minimum value of significance. The suggested threshold for accepted reliability is 0.708. In this study, only 2 of the 34 loadings scored values under the suggested limit (TQ, 0.597 and IBE3, 0.615). Other loading values were mostly above 0.8, and the highest loading was found in Brand Experience item SBE2 with the value of 0.919. Given the values, the indicator reliability can be stated as valid. The significance of the relationships of the indicators and factors were measured by using t-value as a metric. In order to gain significance, the t-value must be >1.96. All of the t-values were notably higher than the suggested limit (smallest value 6.922 and highest 89.422) thus proving the significance.

4.5 Convergent validity

To evaluate the convergent validity of the constructs of the studied model, a common metric used is average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2017). In measuring and demonstrating the convergent validity of the constructs the suggested minimum AVE-value is suggested to be 0.5 (Abdul-Hamid et al., 2018). The only second order construct of the model, Brand Experience, was found to be only construct with <0.5 value thus not passing the validity limit. However, the AVE-values of the first order constructs of brand experience were all <0.5 (0.660-0.803), thus gaining validity. The other constructs in the research model succeeded the suggested limit.

| CONSTRUCT | CRONBACH'S ALPHA | CR | ITEM | STANDARDIZED LOADINGS | T-VALUE |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Appearance Quality | 0.865 | 0.902 | AQ1 | 0.820 | 25.725 |
| | | | AQ2 | 0.822 | 26.342 |
| | | | AQ3 | 0.782 | 19.243 |
| | | | AQ4 | 0.800 | 22.564 |
| | | | AQ5 | 0.800 | 19.192 |
| Technical Quality | 0.798 | 0.856 | TQ1 | 0.733 | 13.027 |
| | | | TQ2 | 0.824 | 29.222 |
| | | | TQ3 | 0.808 | 24.620 |
| | | | TQ4 | 0.711 | 9.928 |
| | | | TQ5 | 0.597 | 6.922 |
| Brand Experience | 0.886 | 0.905 | SBE1 | 0.899 | 46.370 |
| | | | SBE2 | 0.919 | 89.442 |
| | | | SBE3 | 0.849 | 28.850 |
| | | | ABE1 | 0.702 | 10.302 |
| | | | ABE2 | 0.873 | 36.037 |
| | | | ABE3 | 0.859 | 40.525 |
| | | | BBE1 | 0.902 | 45.939 |
| | | | BBE2 | 0.911 | 55.447 |
| | | | BBE3 | 0.615 | 7.063 |
| | | | IBE1 | 0.799 | 25.054 |
| | | | IBE2 | 0.857 | 33.767 |
| | | | IBE3 | 0.615 | 15.604 |
| | | | Brand Trust | 0.886 | 0.916 |
| BT2 | 0.916 | 61.885 | | | |
| BT3 | 0.779 | 20.688 | | | |
| BT4 | 0.802 | 20.552 | | | |
| BT5 | 0.851 | 26.227 | | | |
| eWOM Intentions | 0.838 | 0.892 | eWOM1 | 0.764 | 20.587 |
| | | | eWOM2 | 0.851 | 42.155 |
| | | | eWOM3 | 0.857 | 42.199 |
| | | | eWOM4 | 0.810 | 29.808 |
| Behavioural Intentions | 0.878 | 0.925 | BI1 | 0.893 | 50.532 |
| | | | BI2 | 0.901 | 42.312 |
| | | | BI3 | 0.895 | 49.523 |

Table 6 ALPHA, CR, Loadings & T-values

Discriminant validity was measured with Fornell-Lacker criterion. In this method, the square root of the AVE-values and variable correlations is compared, and the square root of the AVE-values should surpass the correlation values between other constructs (Hair et al., 2017, p. 138). In this study, all the values of square roots of AVE are found higher than the correlation values, thus achieving the discriminant validity. See table 7

| | AVE | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Appearance Quality (1) | 0.649 | 0.805 | | | | | | | | |
| Technical Quality (2) | 0.546 | 0.728 | 0.739 | | | | | | | |
| Affective Brand Experience (3) | 0.664 | 0.295 | 0.256 | 0.815 | | | | | | |
| Sensory Brand Experience (4) | 0.791 | 0.552 | 0.468 | 0.547 | 0.889 | | | | | |
| Behavioral Brand Experience (5) | 0.803 | 0.132 | 0.139 | 0.367 | 0.315 | 0.821 | | | | |
| Intellectual Brand Experience (6) | 0.660 | 0.284 | 0.285 | 0.584 | 0.529 | 0.486 | 0.813 | | | |
| eWOM Intentions (7) | 0.674 | 0.321 | 0.231 | 0.461 | 0.496 | 0.395 | 0.505 | 0.821 | | |
| Behavioral Intentions (8) | 0.803 | 0.363 | 0.294 | 0.358 | 0.496 | 0.269 | 0.362 | 0.690 | 0.896 | |
| Brand Trust (9) | 0.687 | 0.422 | 0.466 | 0.428 | 0.545 | 0.342 | 0.403 | 0.536 | 0.473 | 0.829 |

Table 7 AVE & Fornell-Lacker

4.6 Structural model assessment

Based on the measurement model analysis and the satisfactory results it produced, the next stage of PLS-SEM is structural model assessment. In structural model assessment the structural relationships and their significance are estimated, and the hypotheses set for the study are tested (Sarstedt et al., 2014). As the significance results from the previous measurements cannot be applied due to their lack of normality, a bootstrapping is run in order to test the hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017). Bootstrapping procedure produces valid p- and t-values for the path coefficients of the model (Hair et al., 2017). In this study, bootstrapping calculations were run with 1000 subsamples, with the significance level of 0.05 (5%). With the 5% significance level, the p-values between the constructs should be <0.05 in order for significant relationship between the studied variables (Hair et al., 2017). The number of subsamples represents the amount of PLS path models being estimated in the calculation process (Hair et al., 2017).

The path coefficients (β) represent the relationships between the constructs in the proposed model (Hair et al., 2017), and the variance of this value ranges from -1 to +1. The negative values represent weak relationships, and values close to +1 indicate positive relationships (Hair et al., 2017). To measure evaluate the structural model, Hair et al. (2017) suggest using the R2 value (coefficient of determination). This measures the predictive capabilities of the model and indicates how much of the variance in the outcome constructs can be explained by the other variables linked to them (Hair et al., 2017). R2-value is measured with scale of 0-1, where values closer to 1 are interpret as high level of predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2017). The values 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 are commonly referred

as “substantial”, “moderate” and “weak” (Hair et al., 2017). However, according to Hair et al. (2017) the values vary depending on the complexity of the studied model and the studied phenomena, and in studies that investigate behavioural aspects and success drivers such as the present study, value 0.20 can be interpreted as high R2 value (Hair et al., 2017, p. 209). See table 6 for path coefficients, t-statistics and hypotheses acceptance / rejection.

| Hypothesis | β | f^2 | T-statistics | Supported |
|--|----------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| H1: Appearance Quality → Brand Experience | 0.368*** | 0.084 | 3.923 | Yes |
| H2: Appearance Quality → Behavioral Intentions | 0.046 ns | 0.003 | 0.671 | No |
| H3: Technical Quality → Brand Experience | 0.153 ns | 0.014 | 1.628 | No |
| H4: Brand Experience → Brand Trust | 0.626*** | 0.629 | 12.773 | Yes |
| H5: Brand Experience → eWOM Intentions | 0.683*** | 0.938 | 17.168 | Yes |
| H6: Brand Experience → Behavioral Intentions | 0.701*** | 0.787 | 11.821 | Yes |
| R² | | | | |
| Brand Trust | 0.512 | | | |
| Behavioral Intentions | 0.533 | | | |
| eWOM Intentions | 0.388 | | | |

***: $p < 0.01$, **: $p < 0.05$, ns = not significant

Table 8 Hypotheses, Path Coefficient, T-Statistics

The strongest path coefficient value was found between Sensory Brand Experience → Brand Experience (BE) ($\beta = 0.819$, $p < 0.01$, t-value 29.461). All the path coefficients between the Brand Experience and its dimensions were significant with the lowest β of 0.588 ($p < 0.01$, t-value 9.472) between the Behavioural dimension and Brand Experience.

When examining the path coefficients related to the hypotheses, the highest β -value was found between the BE → Behavioural Intentions (0.701, $p < 0.01$), thus supporting the hypothesis 6 of this study. Other path coefficients between BE and the proposed outcomes eWOM intentions ($\beta = 0.683$, $p < 0.01$) and Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.626$, $p < 0.01$) were also found notably significant thus *supporting the hypotheses 4 and 5*.

The effects of the web quality dimensions, Appearance Quality (AQ) and Technical Quality (TQ) on Brand Experience were found both significant and not-significant with the path coefficients 0.368, $p < 0.01$ (AQ) and 0.152, $p > 0.05$ (0.098) (TQ). AQ had a significant effect on BE, yet the TQ did not produce significance levels that would support the hypotheses TQ → BE. Thus, *hypotheses H1 was supported whereas H3 was rejected*.

Lowest path coefficient value was found between the AQ → Behavioural Intentions ($\beta = 0.046$, $p = 0.484$). This β and p-value indicate that there is no

significant relationship between these constructs, and thus the *hypotheses 2 (AQ → Behavioural Intentions)* is rejected.

The coefficient of determination values (R2) were determined for explaining the predictive accuracy of BE to outcome constructs (EWOM, BI, BT). Brand Experience predicted the outcomes with notably strong values. eWOM intention variance was explained by Brand Experience with the value of $r^2=0.512$ (51,2%), Behavioural Intentions variance with $r^2=0.533$ (53,3%) and Brand Trust variance with $r^2=0.388$ (38,8%).

As Brand Experience was measured as a second order construct, the effects of the four dimensions of Brand Experience were also measured in order to gain insight to the construct. Sensory Brand Experience dimensions explained the BE with notably high r^2 value of 0.670 (67%). Lowest of the values among the dimensions was found in Behavioural Brand Experience Dimension, with r^2 value of 0.345 (34,5%). Intellectual and Affective Brand Experience dimensions explained 61,7% ($r^2=0.617$) and 54,9% ($r^2=0.549$) of the variance of brand experience.

| DIMENSION | BRAND EXPERIENCE (R2) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sensory Brand Experience | 0.819*** |
| Affective Brand Experience | 0.741*** |
| Intellectual Brand Experience | 0.785*** |
| Behavioral Brand Experience | 0.588*** |

***: $p < 0.01$, **: $p < 0.05$

Table 9 BE Dimensions & BE R2 Value

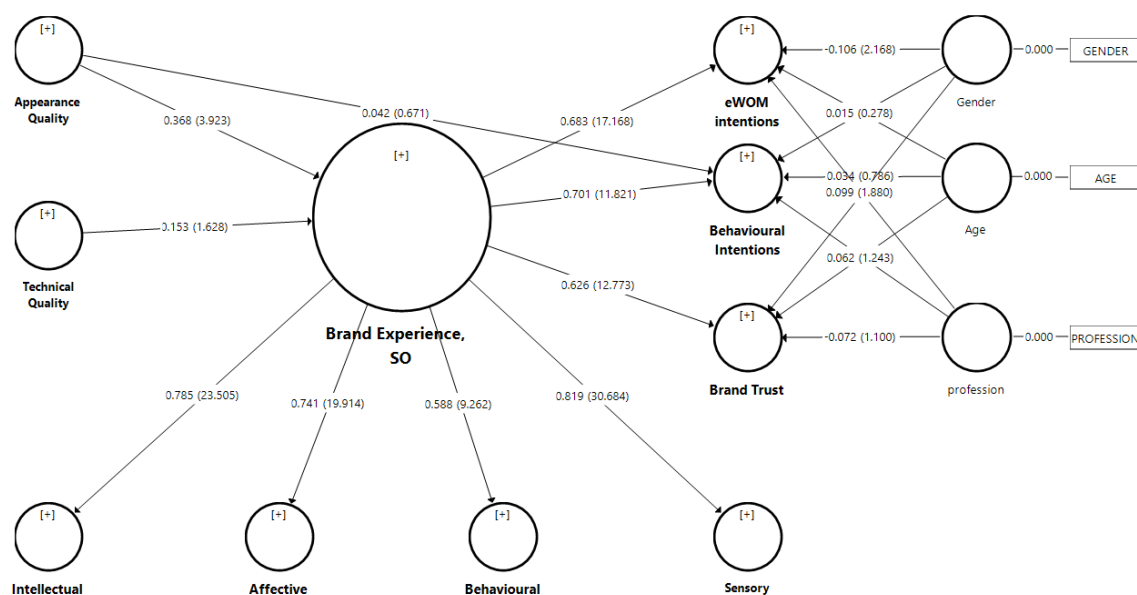


Figure 5 Structural Model

5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of brand experiences and the proposed outcomes within online context, and to gain insights to the aesthetics and technical attributes of website and their relationship in evoking brand experience. In order to investigate these relationship, one objective of this study was to introduce a research model based on previous studies on brand experience and web qualities.

This chapter discusses the aims of this study in the light of results provided by the empirical model tested. The research questions of this study are answered, the results are reflected and compared with the previous studies and theory introduced in this study. In addition to presenting the theoretical contributions of this study within its context, the managerial implications are discussed and suggestions for directions of the future research in the presented context are presented.

5.1 Theoretical implications

Brand Experience studies have been in the favour of marketing academics, and due the variance of brand experiences in different settings, previous studies have conceptualised brand experiences according to the settings and environment they have been studied in (Schmitt et al., 2015). In the current status-quo online environment is established as a major source, instead of uprising new media, of brand related consumption in terms of media and products. This shift encourages academics and managers to investigate brand experiences in online settings, and to further understand how the settings affect to the different brand experience dimensions and how to evoke the most favourable experience in the chosen settings (Schmitt et al., 2015). In online context, the attributes of website and their direct effects to success outcomes (e.g. purchasing intentions) have been widely studied, yet their role on brand experiences and indirect effects on favourable outcomes haven't been studied with similar magnitude.

Firstly, this study contributes to existing brand experience literature and research field by examining the web quality dimensions and brand experience with its related outcomes, and by investigating which attributes evoke the most experiential processing related to brand experience. The results from the empirical model suggest that the website aesthetics (appearance quality) had a strong effect ($\beta=0.368$, $p<0.01$) on evoking brand experiences, whereas the technical qualities of had no significant impact on brand experiences ($\beta=0.153$, $p = 0.104$). The website aesthetics had also significant total indirect effects on the

outcome constructs (AQ → Brand Trust, $\beta = 0.230$, $p < 0.01$, AQ → Behavioural intentions, $\beta = 0.258$, $p < 0.01$, AQ → eWOM intentions, $\beta = 0.251$, $p < 0.01$). In the light of the results, the role of website aesthetics can be stated as most influential when investigating the outcomes of the research model presented in this study. This contrasts with the previous studies where the websites' technical qualities and usability related attributes have outperformed the aesthetic properties as stronger predictor (Wang et al., 2010), and yet the aesthetics attributes have been stronger predictors in attitudes related to website (Aladwani, 2006). However, these studies have been mostly investigating the relationship of website attributes and outcomes such as behavioural intentions. The results of this study suggest that website aesthetics evoke brand related experiential states leading to favourable outcomes thus being significant predictor, whereas the technical attributes have no significant effect on the outcomes.

Secondly, this study contributes to the existing literature on web quality. The results of this study implicate that the studied technical qualities of website do not translate to experiential and behavioural responses, whereas the websites' appearance was found to simulate the experiential dimensions leading to behavioural outcomes. In respect of the research question 1 (Which of the proposed elements and attributes of website evoke the most experiential processing among customers leading to enhanced brand trust and behavioural intentions?), the results indicate that Appearance Qualities of website evoke the most processing, having significant positive effect on Brand Trust, Behavioural Intentions and eWOM intentions. This study also included a secondary research question related to brand experience dimensions: "In the context of this study, which experiential dimensions is stimulated the most?". From the brand experience dimensions, the sensory dimensions were the most strongly affected and stimulated by the other variables of the research model. Appearance quality's specific and total indirect effect on sensory dimension was found the most significant.

Lastly, this study aimed to evaluate whether the brand experience as in its current state is suitable and adaptable construct to the context of online studies. As stated by Schmitt et al (2015), this aspect can be seen as highly valuable question as the settings where brand experiences occur are expanding constantly, and it is important for academics and marketers to understand these settings and create experiences based on their requirements. In order to investigate brand experience in a more complex model, this study proposes that the most favourable and reliable option for studying multi-dimensional model as Brand Experience, the construct is most suitable to investigate and run as second order construct. As part of this study, the brand experience construct was constructed firstly as first order construct whereas all the dimension related items (12) were acting as indicators. In the second model tested, the brand experience was translated to second order structure and the brand experience dimensions (4) were adopted as

first order components, thus making the brand experience construct a multidimensional higher order construct. Based on found results, examining the model with brand experience as second order construct was found producing results that were most suitably investigated in the light of the objectives set for this study.

5.2 Managerial implications

The results of this study can be extended not only to theoretical contributions but also to managerial implications related to the attributes of website qualities and their effect on brand experiences in online context. The implications of this study emphasize the role of brand experiences as a wider concept and its predictive capabilities on consumer behaviour in online settings. Previous studies on web quality have emphasized the need for building websites with the emphasis on technical quality and usability (Wang et al., 2010) in order to gain outcomes favourable for the brands. The role of aesthetics has been arguably seen as a supportive entity for enhancing the purchasing behaviour and intentions (Wang et al., 2010). However, this study implies that managers should consider website aesthetics not because its direct effect on these outcomes, but as an enhancing attribute for brand experiences.

The effect of sensory brand experiences should be considered as an important aspect in web design among the brands due its strong and significant relationship to behavioural & eWOM intentions, and to Brand Trust. Schmitt et al (2015) emphasized the need for understanding the influence of settings and context in order to stimulate proper brand experiences and based on the results of this study it is suggested that in online context and website settings the sensory brand experience can be identified as a factor with major influence.

The usage of brand websites is correlated with the experiences it evokes (Ha & Perks, 2005), and according to Brakus et al (2009) favourable outcomes of brand experiences can be repeatable as consumers are expected to willingly repeat these experiential states created by the brand related stimuli. By enhancing the information processing routes stimulated by pleasurable brand experiences and building technically solid websites with direct effect on behavioural intentions, companies may utilize the favourable relationships and their outcomes of these constructs.

By evoking several of the brand experience dimensions companies can enhance the probability of behavioural intentions and brand trust. As the dimensions of brand experiences were found to be strong indicators of holistic brand experience leading to positive outcomes, the brand related stimuli should be in line with the

preferences of brands' consumer base to utilize its effect on desired brand outcomes.

Lastly, the effect of brand experience on eWOM intentions can be emphasized. Previous studies have found the relationship between positive emotional experiences and eWOM (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018), yet understanding and discussion of the specific emotions affecting the eWOM and its intentions have remained in its infancy. This study identifies the experiences occurred from brand related sensory stimuli as a significant aspect and effector to eWOM intentions. For brands with online presence, eWOM-intentions can be stated as highly valuable outcome as eWOM can ultimately affect positively to brand loyalty (Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018).

5.3 Evaluation of the research

The hypotheses of this study were developed and justified by combining the previous theories related to constructs in the research model. To increase the validity of this study, all the items related to studied concepts were adopted from previous studies and were not modified. As the items were originally validated in studies conducted by using English as a primary language, the questionnaire was composed only as using English. The constructs and their indicators have been rarely used as part of the same model, the validity and reliability of this study should be observed (Joe F. Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2015).

In order to observe the reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability (CR) values of the constructs were inspected. The Cronbach's Alpha values varied from 0.798 to 0.886. The CR values varied 0.902 to 0.925, thus achieving validity by exceeding the suggested minimum limit of 0.7. The CR value of behavioural intentions construct was the highest (0.925) yet still maintaining the validity as being ≥ 0.925 (Hair et al., 2017).

The brand experience construct was reflective-formative second order construct, and the AVE value extracted from SmartPLS calculation for brand experience was found 0.426. However, when investigating the first order constructs of Brand experience, the AVE values were found to achieve the suggested limit with lowest value 0.660 and highest 0.803 and can be considered as valid. The other constructs also achieved the convergent validity, and all the values of constructs used in the model were within the range of 0.545-0.803. Discriminant validity was tested by Fornell-Lacker criterion. In the light of this test, all the constructs in the studied model were found valid.

5.4 Limitations of the research

Even though the validity and reliability of the research model was validated by proper measures, this study comes with its' limitations. Firstly, this study was conducted in online context by using a very well-known brand and retail website. As the websites technical and usability related aspects may vary quite notably between the websites, the results found in this study may not be repeatable when using brand website with different offerings, services or SaaS for example. This study included only two of dimensions of web quality in the model, and by adding all the proposed web quality dimensions in the model the results are very likely to be differing from this study.

Second limitation is related to the brand used in the questionnaire of this study. Reputation of the brand has been found to affect brand experiences (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013b) and indirectly to behavioral outcomes, thus using very well-known and established brand might affect the results, and by using brand with lower degree of reputation and recognition the results are expected to vary from.

Thirdly, this study might have its limitations in the data it used. The data was collected via online questionnaire, and it was distributed mainly by using social media and email. The sample of this study fulfilled the validity criteria concerning its size (n=202), but as the answers came majorly from the researcher's personal networks, the age distribution and other demographic attributes of the sample do not represent large audience enough for generalizing the results.

Lastly, even though the model tested in this study was tested and accepted with proposed metrics to ensure its reliability and validity, the lack of unified conceptualization of brand experience might have produced limitations to some extent. The conceptualization of Brand Experience in online context studies is still relatively scattered among the academics and disciplines and according to Thomas & Veloutsou (2013b) this can be explained with the diversity of online brands, yet using the conceptualization by Brakus et al (Brakus et al., 2009) was justified by the previous literature and studies due its capability to capture experiential states by its dimensions suitable for the online settings.

5.5 Future research

The discussion of experiences in online settings is timely and ongoing among the academics and marketers, yet brand Experiences are often discussed misleadingly as customer experiences. As the conceptualization of brand

experience is still highly scattered, this study calls out for further studies in order to identify and establish unified conceptualization of Brand Experience in online context studies. As discussed in the previous chapter, the model lacked all the dimensions of web quality concept. The appearance quality of website was found as a significant predictor of brand experiences, yet this study didn't identify the aesthetic properties which are most appealing to the consumer and evoke the most brand related experiential states. Further studies are suggested to incorporate the other aspects of web quality dimensions with the research model in order to pursue more holistic understanding of the effects of web quality in evoking brand experiences.

As mentioned in this study, the effect of the offerings of website could be influencing the perceived web quality in such significance that it is encouraged to further discussions and studies. In this study, the relationship of technical qualities and brand experiences was found not significant. As the usability of website is well established concept related to direct behavioural outcomes, the relationship of brand experiences and usability is suggested as relevant topic of future studies.

The effect of brand reputation as predictor for brand experiences has been pointed out by previous studies and this relationship is suggested to be further investigated within similar settings as seen in this study. Further studies could also investigate the other brand related concepts as predictors of perceived qualities of the website.

Lastly, the relationship between Brand Experiences and eWOM intentions was found significant in this study and one suggested direction for further studies could investigate whether the positive or negative nature of brand experience can directly or indirectly translate to the nature of the eWOM and eWOM-intentions.

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6. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree to each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Disagree (1) | Quite Disagree (2) | Slightly Disagree (3) | Neutral (4) | Slightly Agree (5) | Quite Agree (6) | Strongly Agree (7) |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I am confident in this brand's ability to perform well | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I trust this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I rely on this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand is safe | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I expect this brand to deliver on its promise | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

7. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree to each of the following statements.

| | Strongly Disagree (1) | Quite Disagree (2) | Slightly Disagree (3) | Neutral (4) | Slightly Agree (5) | Quite Agree (6) | Strongly Agree (7) |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Individuals should stick with their families | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Family wellbeing is more important than individual rewards | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Family wellbeing is more important than individual success | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Being loyal to the family should be encouraged | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

8. Gender

- Female (1) Male (2)

9. Age

- 15-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- >76

10. Profession

- Student
- Employee / Professional
- Unemployed
- Entrepreneur
- Retired

11. Level of education (Completed)

- Uneducated
- Senior High School
- Teacher training
- Primary School
- O' Level / A ' Level
- Bachelor's / Masters
- Junior High School
- Polytechnic
- Ph.D

12. How long have you done internet shopping?

- <1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- >10 years

13. On average, how often you shop online?

- <1 per month
- 2-4 times / month
- 5-7 times / month
- 7-10 times / month
- > 10 times / month

14. Do you prefer shopping online versus brick & mortar stores?

- Yes
- No

15. Were you familiar with the Brand?

- Yes
- No