

Examining Digital Brand Experiences as a Predictor of Brand Relationship Quality and Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Experiences are getting increasingly common in digital platforms. Yet, there is a scant explanation of the impact of digital experiences on consumer behavior. The aim of this paper is to examine the quality of brand relations and brand experiences on satisfaction and loyalty of digital experiences in a new era of experience economy. A quantitative study is designed to explore the brand loyalty and brand satisfaction in association to brand relationship quality and brand experiences in digital worlds. Based on the responses of 154 people, mainly residing in the US, we found positive impacts of perceived brand relationship quality and brand experiences on brand satisfaction and loyalty. Our paper emphasizes the influence of perceived brand identity notion in digital experiences. By designing a blueprint for marketing experiences, companies can develop innovative processes to deliver more excellent experiential marketing to consumers on top of the existing features of their brand offers.

Keywords: Experience economy, digital experiences, interactivity, brand satisfaction, brand loyalty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing techniques and technologies are changing. The way people interact with products and brands has seen a drastic change over the past two decades. In today's new economic environment, experiences are rather unique components of marketing, signaling distinct contrasts from products and services. In a dynamic business environment, in which transactions are increasingly becoming digitalized, marketing companies have adapted new ways to provide innovative solutions to enrich customer experiences (Papa et al., 2020). This proposes the argument that experiences are not to be seen as an ethereal concept, but as real of a value offering of excellent service, or commodity (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

In the last two decades, particular attention has been paid by researchers to understand the changing nature of experiential marketing in the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Although the notion of the experience economy is not necessarily groundbreaking or new today, the vast majority of its application has been to brick and mortar shopping contexts where companies have a stage where they can create for interaction (Luo, Chen, Ching & Liu, 2011, Castellano & Dutot, 2017). New generations have been increasingly interacting with brands across a multitude of touchpoints. Every interaction makes an impact on potential prospects that set the stage for a relationship, making it crucial to ensure that every touchpoint is a positive one (Khelladi & Castellano, 2019). This creates an imperative for all brands to monitor and optimize every interaction on the prospect journey that is compelling and engaging from end to end with the brand. Brands now need to learn how to turn the "buyer's journey" into the "experience journey", before and after a transaction takes place. Leveraging their brands, products, services, and marketing efforts to track and optimize all interactions that create alignment and community between brand and consumer to deliver positive outcomes for both parties.

Marketing leaders are grasping what it means to be data-driven in meaningful, helpful, and

ethical ways. The growing use of engagement metrics often overlooks the experiences and relations of individual consumer, thereby overlooking the digital interaction (Partouche et al., 2020). Thus, it has become clear that the significance of delivering experiences does not pertain only the marketing department, even though they will be the key stakeholder responsible for strategizing, orchestrating, and executing them. It will become increasingly important that every customer touchpoint from origination to culmination, top of marketing funnel to customer service, be contributory to the customer in a personalized experience, which stretches far beyond "engagement", but promotes positive brand relations and excellent customer experiences (Bonchek & France, 2016; Österle, Kuhn & Henseler, 2018). Past research elaborated on the impacts of brand relationship quality and brand experience in relation to satisfaction and loyalty (Nysveen, Oklevik, & Pedersen, 2018; Youn & Youn, 2016; Lin, 2015; Lee & Kang, 2012). As many industries have been experiencing a digital transition in various ways in the experience economy, there is a need to understand the brand experience in the digital realm. Therefore, our study adds the *digital experience* perspective of brand relation to the existing literature by shedding light on the association with brand satisfaction and brand loyalty.

The aim of this research is to understand the impact of experiences with brands in the digital sphere and the influence of perceived relationship quality of brands on brand loyalty mediated by the relationship of brand satisfaction. While digital experiences with brands are increasingly prevalent, there is a greater need to understand whether these digital experiences and relations are translated into meaningful, concrete and tangible brand outcomes such as satisfaction and loyalty, which are considered as a prerequisite for repeated purchasing behaviors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Experience in marketing research

In the last decade, the digital transformation of industries has created new digital platforms. With this move, the experience economy has fully taken over and there are new demands on every brand interaction to deliver an experience and a relationship that is personalized to the individual, creating a sense of belonging to a community, and can be shared in the networks that people interact in. As a direct consequence for value creation in the marketing field, consumer behavior has moved towards a model that engagement plays a vital role in the relationship with the organizations that they interact with (Högberg, Ramberg, Gustafsson &

Wästlund, 2019). In this model, firms create value through building a continued engagement and a sense of identity from the interactions (Wilson, Macdonald, & Champniss, 2015; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). Virtuality, and its use in organizations are evolving (Orhan, 2017). With smartphones in consumer's pockets, newer technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual/augmented reality are becoming more and more prevalent making it much easier to deliver whole new breeds of unique experiences, further changing the interactions consumers expect from brands and products. Therefore, unpacking the importance of consumer experience and its increasing influence on behavior and marketing has become a key concern for market researchers, marketers and academics (Janiszewski, 2010; Antéblan, Filser & Roederer, 2013).

While the nature of experiences is getting highly digitalized, there is a need for understanding how experiences are created to influence consumer behavior. Experience is a "process/outcome of personally observing, encountering, or undergoing something" as per dictionary definitions. In relating to this directly to consumers, based on the definition of Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard (2013), Japutra and Molinillo, (2019, p.465) establish customer experience as "a function of a set of interactions between a customer and an organization, stimulated either through direct interactions (e.g., with a product) or indirect contact (e.g., communication) with company, in a personal and memorable way." Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) break down consumer experiences in regard to a business and marketing context into three distinct areas how people can interact with brand experiences: (1) product experience, (2) shopping and service experience, and (3) consumption experience. They go further in intertwining brand experience with five consumer experience dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral, and social. Sensory experience pertains to the five human senses (touch, taste, smell, feel, and hearing). Further sensory research has shown that "utilizing sensory brand experiences to build an ecosystem of sensory cues capable of creating a more pleasant atmosphere and experience" (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias, Markovic & Rialp, 2019). From a cognitive context, three areas that shape the experience of consumers are as follows; affective experience, intellectual experience, and behavioral experience. Affective experience corresponds to human emotions provoked (fun, sad, happy, etc.). Intellectual experience occurs when knowledge is gained and/or transferred, the imagination is provoked, or an analytical requirement is needed. Behavioral experiences involve activities that require some sort of movement or action taken by the consumer or responder. Finally, social experience

coincides with interactions with a group of people, family, and/or friends (Japutra & Molinillo, 2019; Brakus et al., 2009).

The convergence of the psychological, sociological, and business/marketing implications for experiences in pertaining to this paper are this: Consumers are making a judgment on when, where, and how they spend their money based on the five dimensions of experience: sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral, and social. People are interacting with brands across a multitude of touchpoints throughout the buyer's journeys each year, especially in product experience, shopping and service experience, and consumption experience. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) argue that the prevalent use of smartphones has created unique touchpoints resulting in enriching customer experiences. Each and every interaction makes an impact that sets the stage for experience and relationship, making it crucial to ensure that every touchpoint is optimized to be a positive one. Thus, today's technologies and platforms largely shape consumers' perceptions of experiences beyond the tangible and/or observable, direct features of products and services.

2.2 Digital brand experiences

The nature of how communication flows has undergone momentous changes in the past three decades with the widespread penetration of the internet. As an apparent result of this situation, the number of hours spent on mobile phones has been increasing steadily, which also boosted the volume of digital experiences for shoppers (Lee & Kim, 2019). In order to deliver exceptional marketing and brand experience, marketers recognized the need to interact in several digital touchpoints where they can reach people with much ease effectively and efficiently; not only with consumers but as well as with potential ones. For many brands today, multichannel touchpoints in the digital marketplace take a significant portion of the total encounters with a brand. This requires a shift where all brands will have to think about the experience they are delivering not only in real life but in the realm of binary, bits, and bytes. The marketing experience will necessitate an automatic flow that utilizes the full realm of time, space, and matter but also no-time (autonomous), no-space (virtual), and no-matter (bits) (Pine & Korn, 2011). Maximizing and leveraging exceptional experiences across new and ever-fluid communication channels will be a primary goal of marketers moving forward.

Using Pine and Korn's (2011) multiverse as the playing field for which experiences can happen in the physical and digital, we can start looking at (Brakus et al., 2009) three areas of interaction between people and brands to deliver experiences. In addition to these

experiences, product experience, shopping and service experience, and consumption experience, companies begin conceptualizing and engineering exceptional experiences, build meaningful brand relationships, and provide positive social outcomes that are shaped by the five consumer experience dimensions (sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral, and social). In consumer behavior research, brand experience has been operationalized as a multifaceted construct that defines the level of customer loyalty (Nysveen et al., 2013). Becoming thoughtful about how technology can either enhance or diminish brand experience will be of prime importance in the success of brands moving forward. With rapid advancements in technology happening at an exponential rate, pioneering the digital realm for marketing, sales, and brand purposes is going to be instrumental. Utilizing the digital world opens up a more robust world that, according to the work by Erdem, Keller, Kuksov and Pieters (2016), opens up new platforms of participation for brand experiences that can increase value and relationship. In short, the digital realm opens up new ecosystems for building active involvement and brand communities like never before, making it necessary to have fluid brand transitions between the digital and real at will. Consequently, beyond traditional channels, digital channel use affects brand relations, including satisfaction, loyalty and attitude (Nysveen, Pedersen, Thorbjørnsen, & Berthon, 2005; Brakus et al., 2009, Chang & Cheng, 2006).

Research by Foroudi, Gupta, Sivarajah and Broderick (2018) suggests that there could be significant benefits from delivering exceptional customer experiences that return the action of deepened customer participation, especially in the realm of using smart technologies. Instead of having disengaged, uninformed, and uncaring customers, rich customer experiences can help develop a community of people around the brand who are actively advocating for the brand and products. Moreover, studies revolving around the future and directions of brand experience (Khan & Rahman, 2015) show that there is a significant lack of research into conceptual context of brand experience constructs. Although Pine and Gilmore (1998) and Pine and Korn (2011) theorize the constructs of experiences in the real and digital realm, Brakus and colleagues (2009) break down the areas of delivery for consumer experiences and introduce us to the cognitive science for senses and emotions of consumer experience. This paper seeks to introduce practical development of brand relationships in regard to the new concept of the digital experience economy that has yet to be constructed.

Zealley, Wollan and Bellin (2018) paint a picture for reimagining the conventional four P's

of marketing (product, price, place, promotion) in the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. They theorize that brands can become a "living business" by becoming more relevant and personalizing experiences. The evolution of technology and big data now allows companies insight into assessing the needs of consumers in the moment. Studies looking directly into the value emerging digital technologies on customer experience show clear increases in value delivered. By purposefully actualizing architected technologically-enhanced experience, brands can enhance brand-perception, customer loyalty, and perceived value (Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús, 2019).

Interactive brand experiences are also found to be associated with brand engagement both from cognitive and emotional perspectives so that marketers can design strategies that lead to desired engagement levels (Merrilees, 2016; Partouche et al., 2020). Brands, which could interact with customers in the digital sphere using personalized, data-driven interactive services, not only enjoys higher engagement levels due to improved customer experiences for existing products and services, but they also ensure that the accuracy of products and services to be offered in the future will be maintained (Kabadayi et al., 2019). As a result, meaningful brand experiences in the digital environments, accompanied with the increased quality of the experiences with the brand can be translated into higher brand satisfaction.

2.3 Consumer satisfaction and loyalty driven by brand relationship and experience

The personification of brands is something consumers have perceived for a long time (Aaker, 1997). Consumers assign brand personality traits and characteristics to the brands they interact with, thus giving brands the ability to harness those traits favorably to deliver a brand personality with favorable outcomes (Japutra & Molinillo, 2019). Brand relationships are evolving beyond the one-way, asymmetrical, provider/consumer relationships that have existed in the past and moving towards a more collaborative and symmetrical relationship.

According to the most recent data from the CMO Survey conducted in February 2019, marketing leaders reported they expect "Customers [to] prioritize price and trusting relationships over product quality in 2019". These results relating to customers prioritizing relationship jumped up nearly 44% from only 6 months earlier in August 2018. This is closely aligned with the study of branding in the digital worlds by Erdem et al. (2016) who propose that communities are fervent about brands and seek out like-minded members. The data and previous studies suggest that consumers are looking for a less transactional approach to business and want to be more personally aligned with labels.

Marketers are consistently optimizing the way that they connect, communicate, and

coordinate marketing efforts towards consumers. Research by Foroudi et al. (2018) into the use of smart technologies on consumer experience suggests how the importance and gravity in which experiences can influence consumers' purchase attention, satisfaction, and loyalty. The implications from a managerial and business perspective could be clear that as products, goods, and services become more commoditized what will set brands apart moving forward is shifting into the experience economy (Luo et al., 2011). This insinuation brings forward even more potential for courses of action as the capabilities and prevalence of digital technologies has drastically increased the potential for how experiences can be constructed. Experiences, then bring a range of emotions and familiarity. In regards to making choices, positive or negative experiences can impact consumption choices. Delivering exceptional experiences can help brands and firms gain immense power to help mold and cast consumer mind frames and emotions (Luo et al., 2011; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Experiential marketing in the digital realm is going to be intragyrally moving forwards in the ability to stay competitive and keeping consumers loyal (Luo et al., 2011)

2.4 Research problem

Digital experience economy has still not seen its full potential and that there were serious implications for it in the digital realm that have yet to be explored. These implications directly influence marketing practices of digital experiences. The first aim of this study is to investigate how brand loyalty is achieved in digital experiences by understanding the nature of brand experience and relationship. Another aim of this study is to illuminate the mechanism of brand satisfaction in digital experiences. To address these questions, we developed the following research questions.

RQ1: What is the impact of brand relationship quality on brand satisfaction?

RQ2: What is the impact of brand experience on brand satisfaction?

RQ3: Does brand satisfaction mediate the linkage between brand experience, relationship and brand loyalty?

RQ4: Does brand satisfaction lead to brand loyalty in digital experiences?

2.5 Research model

Under the light of the literature review, we have developed our research model as depicted in Figure 1 in order to answer the research questions. Our model demonstrates the influences of brand relationship quality, experience dimensions on satisfaction.

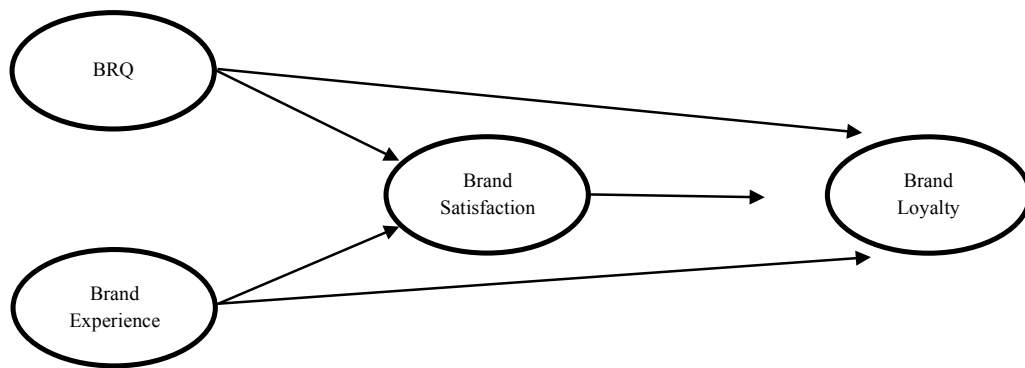


Figure 1. Hypothesized Conceptual Model

The model also includes influences of brand relationship quality and brand experience dimensions on brand loyalty mediated by brand satisfaction.

H1: Brand relationship quality positively influences brand satisfaction.

H2: Brand experience positively influences brand satisfaction.

H3: Brand satisfaction positively influences brand loyalty.

H4: Brand relationship quality positively influences brand loyalty.

H5: Brand experience positively influences brand loyalty.

3. METHOD

The research procedure chosen to study the effects of how marketers deliver exceptional experiences in the digital realm is based on quantitative research format. The primary research methodology is based on an integration of quantitative methods in order to provide real world examples of the state-of-the-art currently and its implications towards the future. Although the quantitative approach is being used as the predominant methodology to uncover prevalent trends, thoughts, and opinions, this research will also attempt to blend in secondary qualitative marketing and social data from existing sources to try to best support and offer a more conclusive picture of the data and hypotheses.

3.1 Sample and measures

For our survey, we collected primary data using the responses of 152 people using a snowball sample. Due to the nature of our study, we were interested in reaching smartphone users, who are below their 40s and possess some experience with digital products or services.

The non-probabilistic nature of this population led us to employ the snowball sampling method, as suggested by Handcock and Gile (2011). We distributed an online questionnaire consisting of twenty-nine questions. The first six questions gathered primary demographic data such as age, gender, education level, as depicted in Table 1, as well as questionnaire qualifying questions ensuring participants were owners and users of smartphones and average daily use of smartphones. Respondents were then given an introductory statement setting up the survey, asking participants to think of an interaction they had recently with a brand on your smartphone, tablet, or computer that was a great or memorable experience. The respondents had an open response opportunity to tell us about the brand and what made the experience memorable. It is important to note, that while the survey was designed to ask respondents to own a smartphone, which was a criterion that was important from a demographic perspective, we allowed participants to respond using digital experiences from smartphones, tablets, and computers, in order not to overly limit response experiences. After these initial questions, respondents indicated to what extent they agree with the statements that assess the measurement constructs of the study. Namely, their digital experience with the brand they identified, relationship quality, satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 1. Demographics of the Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Ratio
Age	18-24	20	13.2%
	25-34	70	46.0%
	35-40	62	40.8%
Gender	Male	34	22.3%
	Female	118	77.7%
Education	High School	28	18.4%
	University	85	55.9%
	Graduate	32	24.3%
	PhD	2	1.4%
Hours Spent on Smartphone	0-1	11	7.2%
	2-3	65	42.8%
	4-5	44	28.9%
	5+	32	21.1%

The questionnaire items used in our paper were based on previously validated measures in the marketing literature. Five Brand Experience (BX) questions were adapted from the scale developed by Brakus et al. (2009). The item “I have at least one fond memory that involves interacting with the brand on my smartphone, tablet, or computer” from BX measure has been removed due to poor factor loading. To improve the validity statistics, BX measure contained four items. Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) dimension was based on the study of Thorbjørnsen, et al. (2002) containing ten items. To measure Brand Satisfaction (BSAT) and Brand Loyalty (BLOY), we modified the items used in prior research of Iglesias et al., 2019; Japutra & Molinillo, 2019; Şahin et al., 2011. Both scales included four items. We used a five-point Likert scales; 1 indicating 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 'Strongly Agree'. All items used in the questionnaire are provided in Table 2. We also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of our measurement model ($\chi^2=592.71$, $df=203$, $\chi^2/df=2.92<3$) indicating an acceptable fit as suggested by Barrett (2007). The loadings of factors, Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) are also provided in Table 2. All factor loadings are found as significant at the 0.01 level. All measurement scales' Cronbach's alpha scores are found to be over 0.8. Composite reliability scores for all constructs are calculated above 0.7. Convergent validity is satisfied for all measures ($CR>AVE$ and $AVE\geq 0.5$). We also conducted a single factor Harman test in order to address to the potential common method variance issue. We ran an exploratory factor analysis of all 22 items. The total variance explained was measured as 48.38%, expected to be below 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This indicates that the bias arising from common method variance is minimized. Table 3 demonstrates the correlation matrix, CR, AVE and square roots of AVEs, as well as means and standard deviations of each construct measured. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 2. Measurement items by Construct and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results with Cronbach's alpha, CR and AVE scores

Scale	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Brand Experience (BX)	The brand appealed to my senses	0.741	0.86	0.78	0.50
	This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	0.718			
	This brand induces feelings and sentiments.	0.685			
	The digital experience of purchasing/interacting this brand brought me joy.	0.671			
Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ)	This brand reminds me of someone in my life.	0.613	0.92	0.93	0.56
	This brand and I have a lot in common.	0.715			
	This brand's image and my self-image are similar in a lot of ways.	0.746			
	This brand says a lot about the kind of person I am or want to be.	0.789			
	Using this brand somehow makes me feel at home.	0.791			
	This brand adds a sense of stability in my life.	0.716			
	Using this brand somehow makes me feel safe and secure.	0.712			
	I want to contribute to this brand.	0.722			
	How excited did the process of interacting with the brand make you?	0.902			
	When I see another person, who purchases/use the same brand, I feel like we have something in common.	0.741			
Brand Satisfaction (BSAT)	I have purchased or interacted with this brand specifically because of my digital experience.	0.678	0.83	0.84	0.57
	I consider this brand the first choice in this category.	0.859			
	The next time I need this product or something similar, I will go first to this brand.	0.777			
	Because of the experience, I am willing to pay a price premium over competing products to be able to purchase this brand again.	0.686			
Brand Loyalty (BLOY)	I am willing to recommend this brand to others.	0.806	0.88	0.90	0.70
	I intend to buy more from this brand in the future.	0.854			
	I have unprompted told at least one other person to buy products from this brand because of my experience.	0.893			
	Because of my experience with this brand, I am more likely to continue to interact with it.	0.790			

Table 3. Correlation Matrix, CR, AVE and square roots of AVEs

	CR	AVE	BX	BRQ	BSAT	BLOY	Mean	S.D.
BX	0.80	0.50	<i>0.705</i>				3.98	0.750
BRQ	0.93	0.56	0.705*	<i>0.748</i>			3.45	0.781
BSAT	0.84	0.57	0.596*	0.659*	<i>0.754</i>		3.83	0.824
BLOY	0.90	0.70	0.705*	0.708*	0.735*	<i>0.837</i>	4.06	0.879

All correlations: * $p < 0.01$. The square roots of AVEs are on the diagonal

4. RESULTS

4.1 Direct effects

To analyze the study results and to test the hypotheses, we used open-access, free statistical software jamovi (The jamovi project, 2019). Based on the results of our general linear mediation model, as demonstrated in Table 4, all positive relations have been evidenced.

In support to H1 and H2, we find significant and positive effects of brand experience and brand relationship quality on brand satisfaction. The standardized estimate (β) for the effect of BRQ on BSAT is measured as 0.476 ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, the BX has also found to be positively and significantly associated ($\beta = 0.260$, $p < 0.01$).

Consistent with H3, our results indicate that brand satisfaction has a significant and positive effect on loyalty ($\beta = 0.404$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, this hypothesis is also supported by our data.

4.2 Total effects

In addition to the direct effects, the table 4 also summarizes total effects of the independent variables in our study, namely BRQ and BX, on BLOY. According to the results, the statistical relationship between BRQ and BLOY is also fully supported. The standardized estimate (β) of the total effect for this relationship is measured as 0.420 ($p < 0.01$). Thus, we find support for H4 as well. Furthermore, it was also evident that higher the quality of brand experience in the digital sphere, the higher the brand loyalty mediated by brand satisfaction. The total effect for this relationship is measured as 0.409 ($p < 0.01$), concurring the H5.

These results fully confirm with our hypothesized conceptual model, as illustrated in Figure 1. The next section provides a detailed discussion and conclusion of our study.

Table 4. Mediation Model Results

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	β	Z
Indirect	BRQ \Rightarrow BSAT \Rightarrow BLOY	0.216	0.051	0.192	4.24*
	BX \Rightarrow BSAT \Rightarrow BLOY	0.123	0.044	0.105	2.80*
Component	BRQ \Rightarrow BSAT	0.502	0.088	0.476	5.71*
	BSAT \Rightarrow BLOY	0.431	0.068	0.404	6.34*
	BX \Rightarrow BSAT	0.286	0.092	0.260	3.12*
Direct	BRQ \Rightarrow BLOY	0.256	0.081	0.227	3.15*
	BX \Rightarrow BLOY	0.356	0.079	0.304	4.49*
Total	BRQ \Rightarrow BLOY	0.473	0.083	0.420	5.68*
	BX \Rightarrow BLOY	0.480	0.087	0.409	5.53*

*p < 0.01

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Theoretical implications

In an increasingly digitized world, retailers should attribute an enormous emphasis on how brands communicate, serve, establish relations, and provide value for customers for seamless experience (Kabadayi et al., 2019). The designing of brand experience in the digital experience economy starts with marketing departments and its influence across the organization, including aspects pertaining to consumer research, product design, product-market fit, external marketing communications, sales process, customer service/success, as well as society (Hunt, 2019). The compelling evidence that goes as far back as Pine and Gilmore's (1998) seminal topic of the Experience Economy combined with updated and intersecting research into brand experiences and relationships are evident that innovation in leveraging technology in conjunction with marketing practices has to be thoughtfully designed and executed because of its influence on consumer behavior and society.

Based upon the literature review, data collected, secondary data, and case studies, our study offers the following insights into the importance marketing's influence of experience design in the digital realm. Marketing efforts have a definite effect on brand loyalty, brand relationship quality, brand satisfaction, brand related strategies, and the ethical importance pertaining to society in how we think about these designs. The results provide marketers with data this is pivotal in thinking about brand constructs and how to build brand equity in the Digital Experience Economy moving forward.

Metrics measuring consumer engagement is a cumbersome job. Solely measuring aspects of digital marketing efforts such as email clicks, open rates, click throughs, website bounces, social media interactions, etc., is not going to be enough for marketers to hang their hats on. Those insights, albeit, they can be useful, show only a limited piece of the picture and in no way convey the whole story of marketing goals or efforts.

Marketing techniques and technologies are indeed changing and will continue to evolve and more rapidly over time. Marketing in the digital experience economy is not only a better way to build brand loyalty and bolster positive business outcomes but can also deliver more ethical societal outcomes. The correlations of the relational dynamics between brands and consumers, through marketing are apparent. Although the overall marketing messaging is the same, the methods have changed. Thriving in the Digital Experience Economy is paramount for all companies to adapt to. For businesses and marketers, designing excellent experiences should be engrained and permeate every aspect of the company culture.

The key findings of the study are as follows: (1) digital brand experience is a crucial step for ensuring customer satisfaction. This goes beyond the value and functionality of the product and the service offered. The continuous interaction through various online platforms contribute how the relation with the brand is established, how the experience is provided, and how the quality of the relationship is perceived. As a result, more engaged customers are sustain the relationship because of satisfying digital experiences along with the product and services offered (2). This also confirms the results of the recent study conducted by Högberg et al. (2019). And, finally, the brand relationship quality and brand experience do not only increase satisfaction, but they also contribute to the increase in loyalty, which is also empowered by higher satisfaction.

5.2 Managerial implications

Increased digital experiences with the products or services no matter whether they are purchased online or through traditional channels will change the nature how companies could integrate their marketing and communication strategies. Our findings indicate that digital sphere is no longer a distinct, separate place than our daily lives, and thus, how brand relations are built, developed and maintained matter more. This study is here to show the importance of digital experiences by emphasizing the role of brand relationship quality and brand experience. As our conceptual model proposes, building seamless digital experiences is an imperative for marketers, and improving digital, interactive experiences would pay off for increased engagement, satisfaction and loyalty

5.3 Limitations

This article explains the impact of digital experiences with the brand on relationship quality, satisfaction and loyalty. In addition to this, our study provides empirical evidence on the changing dynamics of the brand relationship and experience. However, all our findings should carefully be assessed considering the constraints and limitations that come with methodological procedures.

As the first limitation of our study, we would like to underline the nature of the sample. As the demographic data illustrated, majority of our respondents were female. Additionally, more than half of the respondents (59.2%) participated in this study were between 18 and 34 years old, that are also classified as Millennials. Even though previous research indicated that millennials are more exposed to digital marketing Serazio (2015), additional research could examine the experience and relationship in the digital realm for more comprehensive segments of the markets that capture wider generational segments and inclusive gender balances. Next, our data capture the experiences of American consumers, which may be considered as another limitation that affects the generalizability of our study.

We also note that the measurement of experiences purely from a self-reported survey as a limitation. To have an enriching data that explains the full spectrum of brand experiences a qualitative study might be more suitable. Schmitt (1999) proposed that sense experience includes aesthetics and sensory qualities, which are rather difficult to measure with a Likert scale questionnaire. Although Brakus et al. (2009) develop the actual scale based on the results of an exploratory, qualitative study, experiences could be more accurately identified if we gave respondents a chance to provide open-ended, opinion-based responses. Future studies could overcome this issue by developing a triangulation method in research.

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