

TITLE

How does Sensory Brand Experience influence Brand Equity? Considering the roles of Customer Satisfaction, Customer Affective Commitment, and Employee Empathy

KEYWORDS

Sensory brand experience; banking industry; brand equity; employee empathy; customer affective commitment; customer satisfaction.

ABSTRACT

Building a favorable sensory brand experience is crucial in services settings to strengthen the competitive position of a brand and its equity. However, little empirical research exists in this area. Additionally, and surprisingly, most of the research on service brand experience neglects the importance of employees. This study investigates the effect of sensory brand experience on brand equity in the banking industry, through customer satisfaction and customer affective commitment. It also examines whether employee empathy moderates the impacts of sensory brand experience on customer satisfaction and customer affective commitment. Based on data collected through a panel of 1739 customers, the hypothesized structural model is tested using path analysis. Results show that sensory brand experience has a positive indirect impact on brand equity, through customer satisfaction and customer affective commitment. Customer satisfaction positively influences customer affective commitment, and employee empathy negatively moderates the relationship between sensory brand experience and customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

In an ever more competitive, interconnected and transparent business environment, brands must offer memorable experiences to their customers if they want to differentiate themselves and build a solid competitive position (Berry et al., 2002; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999). This challenge is especially relevant in the services sector (e.g., Markovic et al., 2018) because of the distinctive nature of a service (i.e., intangible, heterogeneous, inseparable, and perishable) (Berry, 1980; Zeithaml et al., 1985), and the numerous touch-points that exist between services brands and their customers (Grönroos, 2006). A favorable brand experience increases customer satisfaction, enhances customer affective commitment, improves the quality of the brand-customer relationships, and strengthens brand equity (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Lin, 2015; Yao et al., 2013).

According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experience is composed of four distinct dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral. However, some researchers suggest that the sensory dimension is particularly relevant in services settings (e.g., Goldkuhl and Styvén, 2007; Lin, 2015), and even more specifically in the banking industry (Chahal and Dutta, 2015). This industry is currently immersed in a profound revolution (Bennett and Kottasz, 2011), because the recent financial crisis undermined the industry's reputation, and obliged banks to provide better customer experiences in order to regain customer trust (Johnson and Peterson, 2014). On one side, most banks are closing many branches and enhancing online customer service channels in search of more agile and personalized experiences (Gilbert et al., 2013). For example, the five largest British banks closed around 1700 branches in the period 2011-2016 (Treanor, 2016), and Wells Fargo recently announced plans to close more than 400 American branches by the end of 2018 (Gray, 2017). On the other, banks are also trying to improve the experience they offer

customers in a much more selective network of offices. In order to achieve this, many banks are paying special attention to building sensory brand experiences that enable them to connect with the various senses of their customers (Hultén, 2011). For example, Santander Bank is opening new offices with an innovative design that includes intelligent lighting and air conditioning systems to improve customer experience and heighten comfort. Likewise, the bank is also developing visual and auditory systems to improve the experience of older people, as well as people with disabilities. Also with the aim of improving the sensory brand experience in its offices, Lloyds Bank has developed a white tea and thyme perfume. Other banks, including the National Australia Bank and China Merchants Bank, also have their own fragrances. Overall, one of the key strategies of financial services brands to strengthen their competitive position, regain customer trust and satisfaction, and increase their equity is building a superior sensory brand experience in their branches (Lin, 2015). Unfortunately, from an academic perspective, there are still few theoretical proposals on how to build and manage sensory brand experiences, as this is an emerging field (e.g., Hultén, 2011). Similarly, little empirical research exists on the impact of sensory brand experience on key customer outcomes (e.g., customer satisfaction and customer affective commitment) (e.g., Moreira et al., 2017) and brand outcome variables (e.g., brand equity) in the services sector (e.g., Chahal and Dutta, 2015).

In parallel to building a better sensory brand experience, a services brand should also place special emphasis on recruiting, training, and developing employees (Berry, 1981; Grönroos, 2011) because they are the ones that can make or break the brand (Roper and Davies, 2007) in each of their personal interactions with customers. Employees are the main stakeholders in services settings (e.g., Balmer, 2010; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001), and consequently, the provision of a superior experience will depend on employees believing and sharing the values of

the brand (Ind, 2007) and acting accordingly (Morrisson and Crane, 2007). This also means that employees must have high levels of empathy so that they can understand customer expectations and react quickly and effectively to their demands (Davis, 1996; Homburg et al., 2009).

Surprisingly, despite the emphasis that traditional services literature places on the central role of employees (e.g., Berry, 1981; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001), most of the research on service brand experience neglects the key importance of employees (e.g., Ding and Tseng, 2015; Nysveen et al., 2013).

This article addresses the above-discussed shortcomings in the current literature by investigating the effect of sensory brand experience on brand equity in the banking industry, considering the roles of customer satisfaction, customer affective commitment, and employee empathy. Data are collected in Spain, by means of an online panel composed of 1739 customers. Structural equation modeling via partial least squares is used to simultaneously test the hypothesized relationships. The following sections present the theoretical background and hypotheses development, the methodology, the data analysis and results, and the discussion and conclusion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The effect of sensory brand experience on brand equity

In the last decade, several scholars have acknowledged that managing experiences ought to be a key concern for any brand (Berry et al., 2002; Brakus et al., 2009; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt 1999). Experiences are different from goods and services (Iglesias et al., 2011; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). From the branding perspective, experiences are the takeaway impressions created in the minds of customers because of their interactions with brands (e.g., Carbone and

Haeckel, 1994; Klaus and Maklan, 2007). These interactions can be direct or indirect. Direct interactions generally occur when customers purchase, consume, or use the brand's goods or services; whereas indirect interactions mainly take place when customers experience the brand's advertising, marketing communications, word-of-mouth recommendations, news reports, and reviews (Brakus et al., 2009; Meyer and Schwager, 2007).

Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) define brand experience as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) as well as behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments.” From this standpoint, brand experience contains four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral (Brakus et al., 2009). The sensory dimension of brand experience is the focus of this study, and comprises the tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory stimulations generated by brands in customers (Hultén, 2011). The sensory dimension captures the degree to which the brand appeals to the five senses of the customers, and also the extent to which these customers find the brand interesting in a sensory way (Brakus et al., 2009). Although the brand's sounds (e.g., in-store signature music) and smells (e.g., in-store perfumes, candles, product scent) can rapidly boost the sensory experience of customers (e.g., Hultén, 2011), the brand's colors, shapes, typefaces, and designs can also stimulate customer senses (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997). An element that is part of the brand environment (e.g., the product) can stimulate diverse customer senses at the same time (e.g., visual and gustatory). Accordingly, researchers have highlighted the importance of studying brand experience from a multi-sensory perspective (i.e., capturing all five human senses) and argue that a multi-sensory brand experience can boost the brand's value-generation processes and equity (e.g., Hultén, 2011; Hultén et al., 2009; Lin, 2015; Moreira et al., 2017).

Regarding the other three dimensions of brand experience, the affective dimension relates with sentiments, feelings, and emotions that brands induce in customers. Hence, it captures the degree to which customers perceive the brand as an emotional brand (Brakus et al., 2009). The intellectual dimension has to do with the imaginative and analytical thinking that brands trigger in customers. Namely, it captures the extent to which the brand makes customers think and stimulates their curiosity and problem-solving capabilities (Brakus et al., 2009). Finally, the behavioral dimension encompasses customer attitudes and actions caused by brands. It relates to the degree to which customers engage in physical behavior and bodily experiences when using the brand (Brakus et al., 2009).

Not all brand experiences are equal in terms of strength and intensity (Brakus et al., 2009; Zarantonello and Schmitt, 2013). While some brand experiences can be ordinary and commonplace (Caru and Cova, 2003), others may be strong and memorable (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). For instance, Macy's and Dell are considered as ordinary, or even weak, experiential brands (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009), while Starbucks and Apple are among the most cited brands in academic marketing research for providing strong and memorable brand experiences (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009; Hultén, 2011; Morrison and Crane, 2007). Strong and memorable brand experiences are likely to produce many organizational advantages, including enhanced customer satisfaction, loyalty, brand-customer relationships, brand personality, and brand equity (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Lin, 2015; Sahin et al., 2011; Yao et al., 2013). Accordingly, researchers argue that in an increasingly competitive business environment, organizations must focus on improving brand experiences (e.g., Frow and Payne, 2007; Haeckel et al., 2003).

Brand equity is one of the most important constructs within the field of brand management, from both academic and managerial perspectives (Yang et al., 2015). Traditionally, brand equity is defined as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers,” (Aaker 1991, p. 15). More recently, however, several scholars conceptualize brand equity as a relational market-based asset generated by means of interactions and relationships between brands and their customers (e.g., Davcik et al., 2015; Hooley et al., 2005; Srivastava et al., 2001).

The link between brand experience and brand equity is fundamentally studied in the services sector. For instance, in a business-to-business services setting, Biedenbach and Marell (2010) provide empirical evidence for a positive influence of customer experience on brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, which are the four dimensions of brand equity proposed by Aaker (1991). In an online retailing context, Chen (2012) shows that brand experience has a positive effect on brand equity, measured by brand strength, attractiveness, uniqueness, and likeability. In the mobile phone industry, Sheng and Teo (2012) provide empirical evidence for a positive effect of customer experience (sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral) on brand equity. In the hotel industry, Xu and Chan (2010) propose that the quality of customer experience is a key determinant of overall brand equity. In a study on event marketing, Zarantonello and Schmitt (2013) find that sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral brand experiences are positively related to brand equity. In an empirical study on Starbucks, Cleff et al. (2014) show that sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral, and relational brand experiences have a positive influence on brand equity, and that the sensory and affective dimensions have an especially large positive influence. Similarly, in the airline industry, Lin

(2015) finds that, although affective, behavioral, and intellectual brand experiences have a positive impact on brand equity, the main type of innovative brand experiences positively affecting the brand equity of Cathay Pacific, EVA Airways, and Korean Air are sensory experiences. Likewise, in a catering services context, Moreira et al. (2017) show that sensory-stimulated brand experiences have a positive effect on brand equity. In accordance with these findings from various services settings, including the banking industry, the authors hypothesize that:

H1: Sensory brand experience has a positive effect on brand equity

The effect of sensory brand experience on customer affective commitment

Developing customer commitment is essential for any brand, because committed customers are less sensitive to price (Hess and Story, 2005) and to punctual episodes of poor brand performance (Story and Hess, 2010). Scholars identify two types of customer commitment – continuance and affective (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Fullerton, 2003; Evanschitzky and Wunderlic, 2006). Continuance commitment conceptualizes the need by the customer to maintain a relationship with a brand, due to a lack of alternatives, or high switching costs (Evanschitzky and Wunderlic, 2006); while affective commitment is defined as an emotional response that originates from the psychological identification and attachment of customers to a brand (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Fullerton, 2003).

Managers have traditionally used brand communications and advertising as the key tools to elicit strong emotional responses from customers (Frow and Payne, 2007). However, in the current hyper-competitive environment, several scholars argue that brands need to deliver strong, memorable, and unique experiences if they want customers to develop positive emotions and

feelings toward the brand (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009; Mosley, 2007). Surprisingly, scant empirical research exists relating brand experience to customer affective commitment. Among this scant research, Iglesias et al. (2011) show that sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual brand experiences are positive determinants of customer affective commitment. Similarly, Jung and Soo (2012) find that affective and behavioral brand experiences are positive antecedents of customer affective commitment.

In accordance with the above-presented scant empirical findings and the conceptual line of argument, and focusing on the sensory dimension of brand experience, which is crucial in the services sector (Lin, 2015), and especially in the banking industry (Chahal and Dutta, 2015), the authors postulate that:

H2: Sensory brand experience has a positive effect on customer affective commitment

The effect of sensory brand experience on customer satisfaction

Since the mid-1980s, the topic of customer satisfaction has been increasingly researched, especially in the fields of marketing and services (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Churchill and Suprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980). Traditionally, customer satisfaction is conceptualized as the post-consumption evaluation of the firm/brand and/or its offerings, dependent on the perceived value, quality, and expectations (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Oliver, 1980). More recently, however, several authors argue that customer satisfaction is the key outcome of brand experience (e.g., Chahal and Dutta, 2015). Accordingly, Meyer and Schwager (2007) conceptualize customer satisfaction as the accumulation of multiple customer experiences with the brand. Similarly, Lin (2015) proposes that customer satisfaction is the emotional and

psychological result of individual customer experiences, and White and Yu (2005) argue that customer satisfaction is an affective summary response to brand experiences.

Following these more modern approaches to the conceptualization of customer satisfaction, many scholars are now examining the link between brand experience and customer satisfaction from an empirical perspective. For example, in the context of product brands, Baser et al. (2015) find that sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual brand experiences have a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Similarly, in the retailing sector, Ha and Perks (2005) show that a consumer who enjoys impressive brand experiences becomes a highly satisfied consumer; and Ishida and Taylor (2012) find that sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual brand experiences have a positive indirect impact on customer satisfaction through brand personality. Considering brands from both the goods and services sectors, Brakus et al. (2009) provide empirical evidence for the same indirect impact as Inshida and Taylor (2012), but also for a direct influence of sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual brand experiences on customer satisfaction. Similarly, Kim et al. (2015) find that the sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experiences of customers with a shopping mall brand determine their satisfaction with the brand. Likewise, in the automotive industry, Sahin et al. (2013) show that sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual brand experiences have a positive influence on brand satisfaction. In the airline industry, Lin (2015) obtains the same results, and Kim et al. (2016) find that sensory brand experience is positively related to customer satisfaction. In a similar vein, in the banking industry, Khan et al. (2016) find that online brand experience is a positive antecedent of customer satisfaction; and Chahal and Dutta (2015) show that sensory experience significantly determines customer experience with the brand, which in turn has a positive effect on customer satisfaction. In line with these previous results from the banking industry and other contexts, and

with the aim of gaining further empirical insight into the effects of the sensory dimension of brand experience, which is key in the banking industry (Chahal and Dutta, 2015), the authors hypothesize that:

H3: Sensory brand experience has a positive effect on customer satisfaction

The moderating influence of employee empathy on the effects of sensory brand experience on customer affective commitment and customer satisfaction

Empathy is a relevant construct in the literature on services and is crucial for a mutual understanding between social actors (e.g., Davis, 1996; Kenny and Albright, 1987). More precisely, in services settings, empathy is a core determinant of favorable customer-employee interactions (Aggarwal et al., 2005; Giacobbe et al., 2006), and therefore a fundamental skill for service employees (Ahearne et al., 2007; Pilling and Eroglu, 1994).

Empathy is widely conceptualized as the ability to understand and react to the thoughts and feelings of others (Barrett-Lennard, 1981; Goldstein and Michaels, 1985; McBane, 1995; Pilling and Eroglu, 1994). Several scholars propose that employees with high levels of empathy can more easily identify and address customer needs and desires (e.g., Dawson et al., 1992; Homburg et al., 2009) and are more likely to be helpful – so producing experiences that are rich in interpersonal concern and emotional contagion (e.g., McBane, 1995). The concept of emotional contagion is introduced in the literature on social psychology (Gump and Kulik, 1997) and suggests that feelings and emotions can be transmitted from person to person – even through short interactions – and leave an enduring memory (e.g., Rozin and Royzman, 2001).

Employees can transfer positive feelings and emotions to customers (Howard and Gengler, 2001) and these feelings are likely to create an affective commitment in customers (Mende and

Bolton, 2011) if employees are sufficiently empathic during these interactions (Lee et al., 2011; Wieseke et al., 2012). This is especially important in services settings, due to the greater amount of employee-customer interactions that such settings entail when compared to goods contexts (Gronroos, 2006). Considering that the customer orientation of service employees involves developing empathy toward customers, which is essential for understanding their needs and desires (e.g., Giacobbe et al., 2006; Stock and Hoyer, 2005), researchers from the field of services suggest that when service employees have a strong customer orientation, customers develop greater affective commitment toward the services brand or company (e.g., Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Markovic et al., 2018). Accordingly, Hennig-Thurau (2004) proposes that developing affinity and familiarity with customers can increase affective commitment to the service provider. Similarly, Daniels et al. (2014) show that perceived empathy has a positive impact on affect.

Apart from relating employee empathy to customer feelings and emotions, scholars also argue that when employees portray an empathic attitude, customers will be more satisfied with the brand (e.g., Markovic et al., 2018). As empathic employees are concerned about and better understand customer needs and desires (Saxby et al., 2015), they can better personalize the service for each customer and so improve customer satisfaction (Giacobbe et al., 2006; Jones and Shandiz, 2015). Accordingly, Stock and Hoyer (2005) and Hennig-Thurau (2004) find that those service employees with a strong customer orientation can make customers more satisfied.

Finally, in addition to associating employee empathy with customer affective commitment and satisfaction, scholars also relate empathy to brand experience. Employees are key stakeholders in services brands (e.g., Balmer, 2010; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Iglesias et al., 2017), as they can make or break the brand (Roper and Davies, 2007) when interacting with

customers and shaping their brand experience (Iglesias et al., 2011). When customers perceive that employees behave in an empathic manner (i.e., trying to understand and address their needs and desires) during their interactions, they tend to assess employee performance more positively and have a better brand experience (Wieseke et al., 2012). Being able to understand and address customer needs and desires enables employees to deliver a quality service (Puccinelli et al., 2013), and thereby improve customer experience with the brand (Markovic et al., 2018). This is especially true in services contexts, where some scholars argue that employee empathy is an important determinant of customer brand experience (e.g., Markovic et al., 2018; Rust and Oliver, 1994; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988).

Although previous research has either directly or indirectly associated employee empathy with brand experience, customer affective commitment, or customer satisfaction, few researchers are examining employee empathy as a moderator of the impacts of brand experience on customer affective commitment and customer satisfaction. This gap is surprising because when employees behave in an empathic manner, favorable customer experience with the brand can plausibly be expected to turn into even greater customer affective commitment to and satisfaction with the brand. In line with this rationale, based on the above-discussed literature, and focusing on the sensory dimension of brand experience because of its key importance in the services sector (Lin, 2015), and specifically in the banking industry (Chahal and Dutta, 2015), the authors posit that:

H4: The greater employee empathy, the stronger the effect of sensory brand experience on customer affective commitment.

H5: The greater employee empathy, the stronger the effect of sensory brand experience on customer satisfaction.

Inter-relationship between customer affective commitment, customer satisfaction, and brand equity

Even if historically customer satisfaction is one of the most researched topics within the discipline of marketing (Oliver, 1997) and the antecedents of customer satisfaction are widely researched (e.g., brand experience) (e.g., Baser et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2016), scholars are paying less attention to its consequences. More specifically, when empirically studying the consequences of customer satisfaction, researchers primarily focus on behavioral outcome variables, such as customer purchase intentions (e.g., Mai and Ness, 1999; Martenson, 2007) and customer loyalty (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009; Chang and Tu, 2005). Unexpectedly, however, customer satisfaction has not been widely related from an empirical standpoint to affective outcome variables, such as customer affective commitment.

This scant research includes studies primarily developed in the services sector. For example, in a restaurant setting, Lai (2015) finds that customer satisfaction boosts customer affective commitment. Similarly, in the travel industry, Richard and Zhang (2012) show that customer satisfaction with a travel agency increases customer affective commitment to that agency. Likewise, in the banking industry, Saxby et al. (2015) provide empirical evidence for a positive effect of customer satisfaction on customer affective commitment. In a study encompassing four services settings (i.e., retailing, entertainment, banking, and transport), Dimitriades (2006) operationalizes customer commitment by only including its affective component, and finds a positive consequence for customer satisfaction. Similarly, in a theater company, Johnson et al. (2008) show that customer satisfaction has a positive influence on customer affective commitment. In line with these results from diverse services settings, including the banking industry (Saxby et al., 2015), the authors hypothesize that:

H6: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer affective commitment

Scholars do not widely link customer satisfaction with customer affective commitment from an empirical standpoint, but satisfaction is repeatedly related to brand equity. For instance, in a business-to-business services setting, Geigenmüller and Bettis-Outland (2012) propose that customer satisfaction with a service boosts service brand equity. Similarly, in banking and discount store services, Ha et al. (2010) highlight that customer satisfaction is crucial and has a strong and positive influence on brand equity. In the same vein, Hsu (2012) argues that customer satisfaction in the life insurance industry plays a central role and has a positive effect on brand equity. Likewise, in a study on winery experience, Nella and Christou (2014) show that the higher the level of visitor satisfaction, the greater the winery brand equity.

In a study on hospital marketing, Kim et al. (2008) find a positive indirect effect of customer satisfaction on brand equity, through brand awareness, which is a dimension of brand equity (Aaker, 1996). In the context of retail brands, Pappu and Quester (2006) show a positive influence for customer satisfaction with the retailer on retail brand equity. Likewise, in higher education, Dennis et al. (2016) find that student satisfaction with a university has a positive effect on the university's brand equity. Similarly, in a study on environmentally-responsible information and electronics products, Chen (2010) finds a positive effect of green customer satisfaction on green brand equity. Finally, in a cross-cultural study involving multiple brands from different sectors, Torres and Tribo (2011) find that customer satisfaction is a positive antecedent of brand equity. In accordance with these previous empirical results from diverse fields, the authors postulate that:

H7: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on brand equity

In addition to relating customer satisfaction to brand equity, some scholars either directly or indirectly associate customer affective commitment with brand equity (e.g., Baumgarth and Schmidt, 2010; Dwivedi and Johnson, 2013; Sierra et al., 2017). For example, Fullerton (2005) finds that affective commitment decreases switching intentions, and Gundlach et al. (1995) suggest that positive feeling toward a specific brand can prevent searching for alternative brands. Customers who have low switching intentions and who do not search for alternative brands can be considered brand-loyal customers (Gundlach et al., 1995). This traditional understanding of loyalty as a continuous act of repurchase of a specific brand's products and/or services constitutes its behavioral dimension (Moliner-Velázquez et al., 2011; Oliver, 1997; Zins, 2001). More recently, however, scholars have also recognized the attitudinal (or intention-based) dimension of loyalty (Kumar and Advani, 2005; Moliner-Velázquez et al., 2011; Zins, 2001), and defined brand loyalty in terms of customer desire to recommend the brand to others, customer preference for one brand over other brands, and customer feeling of attachment to a brand (e.g., Fournier, 1998; Mattila, 2001; Mitra and Lynch, 1995; Moliner-Velázquez et al., 2011; Seric et al., 2013). Moreover, many scholars acknowledge that brand loyalty is a dimension of brand equity (e.g., Aaker, 1996; Biedenbach et al., 2011; Pappu et al., 2005, 2006).

Apart from brand loyalty, academics also propose that affective commitment (Martin and Brown, 1990; Matthews et al., 2014) and attachment/identification (Lassar et al., 1995) are dimensions of brand equity. For instance, Burmann et al. (2009) introduce a model of brand equity that integrates external and internal brand strength perspectives, where commitment is considered a component of internal brand strength. Correspondingly, Feldwick (1996, p. 11) proposes a conceptualization of brand equity as “a measure of the strength of consumer attachment to a brand.” Although previous research has primarily linked affective commitment

with brand equity through the dimensions of brand equity, some recent empirical studies have investigated affective commitment as an antecedent of brand equity (e.g., Seric et al., 2016; Sierra et al., 2017), as it is plausible to expect that when customers feel identified with a specific brand and develop a strong emotional attachment to that brand, brand equity will increase (Seric et al., 2016). This is aligned with the recent suggestions about studying brand equity dimensions as brand equity antecedents (Wang et al., 2006), which is a natural step in advancing the understanding of the brand equity construct (Seric et al., 2016).

Among the scant empirical research causally relating affective commitment (i.e., a dimension of brand equity) to brand equity, in the field of corporate services brands, Sierra et al. (2017) find that customer affective commitment to a brand has a positive effect on brand equity. Similarly, in the context of higher education, Jillapalli and Jillapalli (2014) show that student commitment positively influences brand equity. Finally, in the hotel industry, Seric et al. (2016) find that affective commitment has a positive impact on brand equity. In line with scant previous research, and aiming to gain further empirical insights into this relationship, the authors posit that:

H8: Customer affective commitment has a positive effect on brand equity

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire and measures

The questionnaire was based on constructs that were measured using and adapting existing scale items in the literature (see Table 1). All responses were recorded by means of an ordinal 7-point Likert scale, that ranged from “completely disagree” to “completely agree.” A double-blind back-translation process was applied to the questionnaire to translate the items into Spanish.

----- INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE -----

In addition, the questionnaire was pre-tested in two ways. Firstly, to avoid potential misinterpretation by respondents, 3 professors and 3 practitioners from the areas of brand management and brand experience were asked to assess the adequacy of the questions from the conceptual standpoint, and the way in which they were posed. Secondly, 10 target respondents were asked to evaluate the questionnaire's ease of comprehension.

Data collection and sample

Data collection was conducted in Spain in 2016, using an online customer panel for the banking industry. All Spanish regional states were represented in the sample. Regarding the sampling procedure method, a non-probabilistic sampling by quotas was implemented. The quotas established in the socio-demographic variables were representative of the Spanish population.

Respondents answered several filtering questions that proved their engagement in the use of banking services. This approach resulted in a sample of 1739 customers, whose ages ranged from 18 to 65, with an average age of 40.46, a median age of 40, and 50.1% of respondents were female. Some 30% of respondents had a high-medium/high social status, 51.1% a medium social status, and 18.9% a medium/low-low social status. Table 2 depicts the sample profile in detail, including the distribution of respondents across the Spanish regional states.

----- INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE -----

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The authors used structural equation modeling via partial least squares (PLS-SEM) to simultaneously test the hypothesized relationships in Smart PLS 3.0 software. PLS-SEM is a variance-based estimation procedure based on a set of multiple regressions and ordinary least square estimators. The procedure is an iterative algorithm that first solves the blocks of the measurement models, and then estimates the path coefficients in the structural model. Several scholars have argued that PLS-SEM is a suitable procedure to test complex models and complex relationships between constructs (e.g., Chin et al., 2003; Eggert et al., 2006; Henseler et al., 2009; Sarkar et al., 2001). In addition, scholars have proposed that PLS-SEM is an appropriate procedure when the research objectives are exploratory in nature (e.g., Peng and Lai, 2012). Thus, PLS-SEM is suitable to analyze the hypothesized model in this study, because (1) the model is complex (i.e., it involves 16 items for 5 constructs), (2) it contains complex relationships (i.e., mediators and moderator), and (3) several hypothesized relationships that are part of the model are under-researched from an empirical standpoint.

Measurement assessment

Table 3 includes the basic indexes of central tendency (i.e., mean and median) and variability (i.e., standard deviation). To assess the adequacy of the measures, the authors estimated the convergent validity through: item reliability, construct reliability, and average variance extract (AVE) (see Table 3). Firstly, item reliability was evaluated based on the factor loadings of the items (i.e., observed variables) on their respective constructs. As all the factor loadings were higher than the threshold value of 0.6, convergent validity was supported. Secondly, construct reliability was assessed through both composite reliability (CR) values and Cronbach alpha

coefficients. As all the CR values and Cronbach alpha coefficients were higher than the threshold value of 0.7, convergent validity was supported. Thirdly, the AVE was assessed because it is the summary indicator of convergence. As all the AVE values were higher than the threshold value of 0.5, convergent validity was supported. The authors also conducted a cross-loadings analysis, which shows that the items load more on the construct that they measure than on the other constructs, further supporting convergent validity (see Table 4).

-----INSERT TABLES 3 AND 4 ABOUT HERE -----

The authors also estimated discriminant validity to further ensure the adequacy of the measures. Discriminant validity is evaluated by comparing the square root of the AVE of each construct with the bivariate correlations among constructs. A measurement model is considered to have acceptable discriminant validity if the square root of the AVE of each construct is higher than any of the bivariate correlations among the constructs. As all the square roots of AVE were higher than the bivariate correlations among the constructs, discriminant validity was supported. Table 5 depicts the assessment of discriminant validity.

-----INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE -----

Measurement equivalence

The authors tested for measurement equivalence to assess whether the constructs (via their scale items) were invariant across gender and social status. In the literature, there are two widely recognized techniques to test for measurement equivalence: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998) and generalizability theory (Cronbach et al., 1972). As the subsample size for gender and social status is large enough (i.e., greater than 75), the authors used CFA to assess the structural invariance of the constructs across gender and social status (see

Table 6). Results show that the structure of the constructs is the same for men and women, and for the three social status groups. Constraining the measurement weights for the different groups of gender and social status does not suppose a worse fit (i.e., p-values > 0.05).

-----INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE -----

Common method variance

A potential problem of common method variance (CMV) arises in this research as data were collected from the same respondents (i.e., customers). The authors implemented construct level correction (CLC) to address this potential common method variance issue (Chin et al., 2013). CLC involves creating as many CMV control constructs as constructs in the model. Each CMV control uses the same entire set of measured latent marker variables. The CMV construct is modeled as impacting each construct present in the hypothesized model. The authors used the latent marker variable of psychological risk, which contains the following three items (Keh and Pang, 2010): (1) the thought of using the services of this brand makes me feel psychologically uncomfortable, (2) the thought of using the services of this brand causes me to experience unnecessary tension, and (3) I would worry a lot when buying the services of this brand.

A high correlation between this latent marker variable and any other construct present in this study would confirm an issue of CMV. The lowest absolute correlation between the latent marker variable and the other constructs present in this research (r_s) is the CMV estimate (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). The r_s is a conservative estimate because an unadjusted correlation is influenced by the true covariance and by the CMV (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). In this study, the r_s is 0.111, which is associated with an R^2 of 0.012, indicating a low common source effect shared between constructs (see Table 7).

-----INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE -----

To control for CMV, all the correlations among constructs were adjusted using $r_s = 0.111$. All the correlations remained significant after adjusting for CMV, and therefore the authors concluded that the estimations of the parameters of the hypothesized model are not biased by CMV.

Structural model evaluation

The evaluation of the structural model contains the estimation and the statistical test of the hypothesized relationships. As the scores of the constructs in PLS-SEM analysis are aggregates of the observed variables, a degree of measurement error can influence the estimation of the path coefficients (i.e., PLS-SEM bias). To check for this kind of bias effect, bias corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence intervals (Efron, 1987; Streukens et al., 2010) were added for every path coefficient of the structural model (see Table 8). The authors created 5000 bootstrap resamples (with replacement) from the original dataset to compute the standard error of the path coefficients. For the outcomes of the bootstrap procedure, no inconsistent results were obtained regarding the population inference using two procedures: (1) the point estimate, and (2) the bias-corrected interval estimation, which proposes that estimator bias does not highly influence estimations.

At a significance level of 0.05, the estimated values of the path coefficients empirically support all the direct effects that are part of the hypothesized model, except the direct effect of sensory brand experience on brand equity ($\hat{\beta}_1 = -0.01$; $p = 0.628$) (see Table 8). Specifically, sensory brand experience has a positive and direct effect on customer affective commitment ($\hat{\beta}_2 = 0.35$; $p = 0.000$) and customer satisfaction ($\hat{\beta}_3 = 0.29$; $p = 0.000$), which empirically supports

H2 and H3, respectively. In addition, customer satisfaction has a positive and direct influence on brand equity ($\hat{\beta}_7 = 0.52$; $p = 0.000$) and customer affective commitment ($\hat{\beta}_6 = 0.55$; $p = 0.000$), which in turn has a positive and direct impact on brand equity ($\hat{\beta}_8 = 0.41$; $p = 0.000$), thereby empirically supporting H7, H6, and H8, respectively. Finally, although employee empathy does not influence the relationship between sensory brand experience and customer affective commitment ($\hat{\beta}_4 = 0.01$; $p = 0.278$), such employee empathy has a negative direct effect on the relationship between sensory brand experience and customer satisfaction ($\hat{\beta}_5 = -0.02$; $p = 0.001$). Thus, while H4 is not empirically supported, H5 is statistically significant with negative sign.

-----INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE -----

After estimating the direct effects, the authors analyzed the indirect effects using the bootstrap procedure described by Preacher and Hayes (2004) and implemented in the SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2013). Table 9 shows the indirect effects, standard errors, and the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals obtained by applying bootstrap estimation. The three indirect effects studied are statistically significant (i.e., different from zero in the population), as the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval of their estimates does not contain zero. Thus, as the direct effect of sensory brand experience on brand equity is not significant, the authors concluded that customer affective commitment and customer satisfaction fully mediate the impact of sensory brand experience on brand equity. In addition, as the direct effect of customer satisfaction on brand equity is significant, the authors concluded that customer affective commitment is a partial mediator of the impact of customer satisfaction on brand equity.

-----INSERT TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE -----

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical contributions

In broad terms, this paper contributes to the literature by advancing knowledge of the brand equity formation process, which is especially relevant and requires further academic attention in services settings (e.g., Iglesias et al., 2017; Seric and Gil-Saura, 2012; Sierra et al., 2017). More specifically, this article contributes to the literature by showing that the direct effect of sensory brand experience on brand equity is not significant in the context of banking services. This finding is interesting and relevant, because previous research found that the direct effect of sensory brand experience on brand equity is significant in other services contexts – including catering services (Moreira et al., 2017) and the airline industry (Lin, 2015). This implies that in the banking industry, relevant mediators for transferring positive sensory brand experience into enhanced brand equity are required. Accordingly, this research has shown that developing customer satisfaction with the brand, and affective commitment to the brand, is indispensable if brands want to turn positive sensory brand experience into improved brand equity in the banking industry. This is consistent with previous research that shows that customer evaluations of brand experience (e.g., Berry, 2000; Sierra et al., 2017) and their emotional responses (Haeckel et al. 2013; Morrisson and Crane, 2007) are key to building brand equity.

This article also shows that, in the banking industry, customer satisfaction with the brand has a positive effect on customer affective commitment to the brand, which in turn positively influences brand equity. These findings further reinforce the central role of customer satisfaction in building brand equity within the context of brand experience in the services sector (e.g., Ha et al., 2010; Hsu, 2012). Additionally, these results emphasize the notion that customer satisfaction

is a key outcome of brand experience (e.g., Chahal and Dutta, 2015), which is aligned with the conceptualization of customer satisfaction as the accumulation of experiences that a given customer has with a specific brand (Meyer and Schager, 2007).

Moreover, this research also suggests that high levels of customer affective commitment may be especially relevant in the context of services (Markovic et al., 2018; Sierra et al., 2017) since services are intangible and heterogeneous (Zeithaml et al., 1985), and so the task of providing a homogeneous quality experience is more challenging than in the field of products/goods (Booms and Bitner, 1981). Consequently, when customers affectively commit to a brand, they are more likely to blame occasional service failures on external factors that are not directly linked with the service brand itself (Story and Hess, 2010). Brand equity levels, therefore, are likely to remain less sensitive to such failures (Iglesias et al., 2017; Sierra et al., 2017).

Another key theoretical contribution of this research is that employee empathy negatively moderates the relationship between sensory brand experience and customer satisfaction. This finding implies that the higher the level of employee empathy, the lower is the impact of sensory brand experience on customer satisfaction. This finding is counterintuitive, as empathic employees tend to have a better understanding of customer needs (Saxby et al., 2015), which allows them to deliver better and more personalized experiences (Giacobe et al., 2006; Jones and Shandiz, 2015), and therefore achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Markovic et al., 2018). Thus, one would expect that the higher the level of employee empathy, the greater the impact of sensory brand experience on customer satisfaction. However, the counterintuitive moderating effect of this research implies that, if brands want to boost customer satisfaction, a positive sensory brand experience becomes less relevant when employee empathy is high than when it is low. This finding, although initially counterintuitive, resonates

with previous literature from the field of services that argues that employees represent the key interface for successful customer-brand interactions (e.g., Gummesson, 1991; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Iglesias et al., 2013) and can make or break the brand when interacting with customers (Ind, 2007; Markovic and Bagherzadeh, 2018; Roper and Davies, 2007). In essence, when employees are empathic (i.e., when they understand customer needs and desires and deliver experiences accordingly), they become the key driver to customer satisfaction. Consequently and comparatively, when evaluating the brand experience, customers then pay less attention to the positive sensory cues. Interestingly enough, from the opposite perspective, this also means that sensory brand experiences can be an extremely valuable tool to compensate for and deal with the consequences of the heterogeneous nature of services caused, for instance, by the variability of employee empathy levels (Zeithaml et al., 1985). When employee empathy levels are low, the impact of positive sensory brand experience on customer satisfaction is higher, and therefore a positive sensory brand experience can help compensate for low levels of employee empathy. This is in line with suggestions from the literature on store atmospherics (e.g., Turley and Milliman, 2000) and claims that atmosphere and its sensory cues can play a very significant role in enhancing service assessment, and thereby in creating customer satisfaction. Overall, this research further reinforces the relevant role that the sensory dimension of brand experience plays in services contexts (Goldkhun and Styvén, 2007; Lin, 2015), and especially in the banking industry (Chahal and Dutta, 2015), in complementing and enriching service performance assessment by customers, especially when there is variability in employee performance due to a lack of empathy.

In contrast, this research has not found empirical evidence to support the moderating effect of employee empathy on the relationship between sensory brand experience and customer affective

commitment. A potential reason can be found in the fact that while customer satisfaction is a post-consumption evaluation of the brand experience that takes into consideration several dimensions, including the perceived value, quality, or initial expectations (Anderson, 1994; Churchill and Suprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1980; White and Yu, 2005), customer affective commitment is instead an emotional response (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Fullerton, 2003). In fact, previous research shows that sensory cues are capable of eliciting strong and instantaneous emotional responses (Chebat and Michon, 2003; Turley and Milliman, 2000) because they directly impact the limbic system, which is the part of the brain that processes and manages emotions (Spangenberg et al., 1996). This means that positive sensory cues can elicit strong and fast emotional responses, and thus higher levels of customer affective commitment, that are not contingent on the evaluation of employee empathy levels.

Managerial implications

Brands in the banking industry are increasingly moving a relevant part of their operations into the online channel to provide a simpler, faster, and more convenient experience to their customers. However, in parallel, some of these brands are also investing significantly in improving the experience in a more selective number of branches. This is because there are some target customers, such as the elderly (i.e., the most relevant users of bank branches) who still appreciate the possibility of personally interacting with brand employees. From this perspective, banking brands should invest in employee training, as front-line employees are the key drivers for customer satisfaction and customer affective commitment in the bricks and mortar context.

However, if banking brands want to increase their equity, they should also invest in designing a superior sensory brand experience. Accordingly, managers should pay special attention to the

visual, auditory and olfactory brand-customer interfaces, in order to adapt or redesign them to address customer requirements effectively. This is especially important when dealing with the requirements of specific customer segments, such as the elderly or people with disabilities, who can take more advantage of an improved sensory brand experience. Improving customers' sensory experience with the brand is essential in the banking industry, as it can boost the levels of customer satisfaction and customer affective commitment, which in turn are likely to increase brand equity.

Finally, brands in the banking industry should also leverage on the potential of music and fragrances to build an ecosystem of sensory cues capable of creating a more pleasant atmosphere and experience. These sensory cues, such as signature fragrances and music lists, should be designed in line with the brand identity and aim at boosting brand equity. The presence of positive sensory cues is important because, even if employees have a crucial role in building service brands (Iglesias et al., 2017; Ind, 2007) and in achieving high levels of customer satisfaction and customer affective commitment, their performance cannot be constantly homogeneous. This is because service employees' attitudes, organizational commitment and/or empathy levels inevitably vary over time. In this regard, managers in service industries should understand that designing and orchestrating a superior sensory brand experience can compensate for and address the variability of customer service levels derived, for instance, from the heterogeneity of employee empathy when interacting with customers.

Limitations and future research

Notwithstanding its theoretical contributions and managerial implications, this research also has some limitations. First, this study is limited to the banking industry, and therefore the

external validity of the findings is an issue. Future research should replicate this investigation and widen the diversity of services settings in the sample to discover if the results are consistent across the whole services sector. Testing the model in the field of goods and comparing the results across services and goods sectors would also be interesting. This approach could reveal some key particularities of services brands and how they ought to be managed compared to product brands. The second limitation is because the sample is only representative of the Spanish target population. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is a concern. Future studies should include surveys from other nations. Evaluating the sensorial experiences from nations with differing cultures (Imrie, 2005) would be interesting. For example, the Chinese are believed to pay more attention to intangible cues than American customers (Mattila, 1999). Thirdly, all the data for this research were collected through surveys, and therefore mono-method bias is an issue. Future research should triangulate this data source by gaining qualitative insight into the sensory brand experience framework (e.g., through focus groups or in-depth interviews).

In addition, future research could try to understand from an omni-channel perspective the impact of offline sensory brand experience on generating positive word-of-mouth in online environments. Another relevant line of research would be to test, through an experimental design, the impact of each type of sensory brand experience (i.e., sight, smell, taste, touch and sound) on consumer behavior, and more specifically, on evaluating the experience. Finally, in line with recent suggestions (e.g., Huang and Cai, 2015; Seric et al., 2016), future research could extend the model of this article by examining whether brand loyalty performs well as a consequence of brand equity.

REFERENCES

Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Aaker, D. A. (1996). Measuring brand equity across products and markets. *California Management Review*, 38(3), 102-120.

Aggarwal, P., Castleberry, S. B., Ridnour, R., & Shepherd, C. D. (2005). Salesperson empathy and listening: Impact on relationship outcomes. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 13(3), 16–31.

Ahearne, M., Jelinek, R., & Jones, E. (2007). Examining the effect of salesperson service behavior in a competitive context. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 35(4), 603–616.

Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 63(1), 1-18.

Anderson, E. W. (1994). Cross-category variation in customer satisfaction and retention. *Marketing Letters*, 5(1), 19-30.

Anderson, E. W., & Sullivan, M. W. (1993). The antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction for firms. *Marketing Science*, 12(2), 125-143.

Balmer, J. M. (2010). Explicating corporate brands and their management: Reflections and directions from 1995. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(3), 180-196.

Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1981). The empathy cycle: Refinement of a nuclear concept. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 28(2), 91–100.

Başer, İ. U., Cintamür, İ. G., & Arslan, F. M. (2015). Examining the effect of brand experience on consumer satisfaction, brand trust and brand loyalty. *Marmara University Journal of Economic & Administrative Sciences*, 37(2), 101-128.

Baumgarth, C., & Schmidt, M. (2010). How strong is the business-to-business brand in the workforce? An empirically-tested model of ‘internal brand equity’ in a business-to-business setting. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(8), 1250-1260.

Bennett, R., & Kottasz, R. (2011). Strategic, competitive, and co-operative approaches to internationalisation in European business schools. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11-12), 1087-1116.

Berry, L. L. (1980). Services marketing is different. *Business*, 30(3), 24–29.

Berry, L. L. (1981). The employee as customer. *Journal of Retail Banking*, 3(1), 33-40.

Berry, L. L. (2000). Cultivating service brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(1), 128-137.

Berry, L. L., Carbone, L. P., & Haeckel, S. H. (2002). Managing the total customer experience. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 43(3), 85-89.

Biedenbach, G., Bengtsson, M., & Wincent, J. (2011). Brand equity in the professional service context: Analyzing the impact of employee role behavior and customer–employee rapport. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(7), 1093-1102.

Biedenbach, G., & Marell, A. (2010). The impact of customer experience on brand equity in a business-to-business services setting. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(6), 446-458.

Booms, B. H., & Bitner, M. J. (1981). Marketing strategies and organization structures for service firms. *Marketing of Services*, 25(3), 47-52.

Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(3), 52-68.

Brodie, R. J., Whittome, J. R., & Brush, G. J. (2009). Investigating the service brand: A customer value perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(3), 345-355.

Burmann, C., Jost-Benz, M., & Riley, N. (2009). Towards an identity-based brand equity model. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(3), 390-397.

Carbone, L. P., & Haeckel, S. H. (1994). Engineering customer experiences. *Marketing Management*, 3(3), 9-19.

Carù, A., & Cova, B. (2003). Revisiting consumption experience: A more humble but complete view of the concept. *Marketing Theory*, 3(2), 267-286.

Chahal, H., & Dutta, K. (2015). Measurement and impact of customer experience in banking sector. *Decision*, 42(1), 57-70.

Chang, C. H., & Tu, C. Y. (2005). Exploring store image, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty relationship: evidence from Taiwanese hypermarket industry. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 7(2), 197-202.

Chebat, J. C., & Michon, R. (2003). Impact of ambient odors on mall shoppers' emotions, cognition, and spending: A test of competitive causal theories. *Journal of Business Research*, 56(7), 529-539.

Chen, Y. S. (2010). The drivers of green brand equity: Green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93(2), 307-319.

Chen, L. S. L. (2012). What drives cyber shop brand equity? An empirical evaluation of online shopping system benefit with brand experience. *International Journal of Business and Information*, 7(1), 81-104.

Chin, W. W. (2010). How to write up and report PLS analyses. In V. Esposito Vinzi, W. W. Chin, J. Henseler, & H. Wang (Eds.), *Handbook of partial least squares: Concepts, methods and applications in marketing and related fields* (pp. 655–690). Berlin: Springer.

Chin, W. W., Marcolin, B. L., & Newsted, P. R. (2003). A partial least squares latent variable modeling approach for measuring interaction effects: Results from a Monte Carlo simulation study and an electronic-mail emotion/adoption study. *Information Systems Research*, 14(2), 189-217.

Chin, W. W., Thatcher, J. B., Wright, R. T., & Steel, D. (2013). Controlling for common method variance in PLS analysis: the measured latent marker variable approach. In H. Abdi, W. W. Chin, V. Esposito Vinzi, G. Russolillo, & L. Trinchera (Eds.), *New perspectives in partial least squares and related methods* (pp. 231-239). New York, NY: Springer.

Churchill Jr, G. A., & Surprenant, C. (1982). An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction. *Journal of marketing research*, 19(4), 491-504.

Cleff, T., Lin, I. C., & Walter, N. (2014). Can You Feel It?-The Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Equity. *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(2), 7.

Cronbach, L. J., Gleser, G. C., Nanda, H., & Rajaratnam, N. (1972). *The dependability of behavioral measurements: Theory of generalizability for scores and profiles*. New York: Wiley.

Daniels, K., Glover, J., & Mellor, N. (2014). An experience sampling study of expressing affect, daily affective well-being, relationship quality, and perceived performance. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 87(4), 781–805.

Davcik, N. S., Vinhas da Silva, R., & Hair, J. F. (2015). Towards a unified theory of brand equity: conceptualizations, taxonomy and avenues for future research. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(1), 3-17.

Davis, M. H. (1996). *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.

Dawson, L. E., Soper, B., & Pettijohn, C. E. (1992). The effects of empathy on salesperson effectiveness. *Psychology and Marketing*, 9(4), 297–310.

Dennis, C., Papagiannidis, S., Alamanos, E., & Bourlakis, M. (2016). The role of brand attachment strength in higher education. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 3049-3057.

Dimitriades, Z. S. (2006). Customer satisfaction, loyalty and commitment in service organizations: Some evidence from Greece. *Management Research News*, 29(12), 782-800.

Ding, C. G., & Tseng, T. H. (2015). On the relationships among brand experience, hedonic emotions, and brand equity. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(7/8), 994-1015.

Dwivedi, A., & Johnson, L. W. (2013). Trust–commitment as a mediator of the celebrity endorser–brand equity relationship in a service context. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 21(1), 36-42.

Efron, B. (1987). Better bootstrap confidence intervals. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 82(397), 171–185.

Eggert, A., Ulaga, W., & Schultz, F. (2006). Value creation in the relationship life cycle: A quasi-longitudinal analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35(1), 20-27.

Evanschitzky, H., & Wunderlich, M. (2006). An examination of moderator effects in the four-stage loyalty model. *Journal of Service Research*, 8(4), 330-345.

Feldwick, P. (1996). Do we really need ‘brand equity’?. *Journal of Brand Management*, 4(1), 9-28.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50.

Frow, P., & Payne, A. (2007). Towards the ‘perfect’ customer experience. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(2), 89-101.

Fullerton, G. (2003). When does commitment lead to loyalty?. *Journal of Service Research*, 5(4), 333-344.

Fullerton, G. (2005). How commitment both enables and undermines marketing relationships. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(11/12), 1372-1388.

Geigenmüller, A., & Bettis-Outland, H. (2012). Brand equity in B2B services and consequences for the trade show industry. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 27(6), 428-435.

Giacobbe, R. W., Jackson, D. W, Jr, Crosby, L. A., & Bridges, C. M. (2006). A contingency approach to adaptive selling behavior and sales performance: Selling situations and salesperson characteristics. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 26(2), 115–142.

Gilbert, R. A., Meyer, A. P., & Fuchs, J. W. (2013). The future of community banks: Lessons from banks that thrived during the recent financial crisis. *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, 95(2), 115-43.

Goldkuhl, L., & Styvén, M. (2007). Sensing the scent of service success. *European Journal of Marketing*, 41(11/12), 1297-1305.

Goldstein, A. P., & Michaels, G. Y. (1985). *Empathy: Development, training, and consequences*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gray, A. (2017). Wells Fargo sets out plans to close 400 branches. *Financial Times*.
<https://www.ft.com/content/16dd7e0e-d995-11e6-944b-e7eb37a6aa8e>

Grönroos, C. (2006). Adopting a service logic for marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 6(3), 317–333.

Grönroos, C. (2011). A service perspective on business relationships: The value creation, interaction and marketing interface. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(2), 240-247.

Gummesson, E. (1991). Marketing-orientation revisited: the crucial role of the part-time marketer. *European Journal of Marketing*, 25(2), 60-75.

Gump, B. B., & Kulik, J. A. (1997). Stress, affiliation, and emotional contagion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(2), 305–319.

Gundlach, G. T., Achrol, R. S., & Mentzer, J. T. (1995). The structure of commitment in exchange. *The Journal of Marketing*, 59(1), 78-92.

Ha, H. Y., Janda, S., & Muthaly, S. (2010). Development of brand equity: evaluation of four alternative models. *The Service Industries Journal*, 30(6), 911-928.

Ha, H. Y., & Perks, H. (2005). Effects of consumer perceptions of brand experience on the web: Brand familiarity, satisfaction and brand trust. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4(6), 438-452.

Haeckel, S. H., Carbone, L. P., & Berry, L. L. (2003). How to lead the customer experience. *Marketing Management*, 12(1), 18-18.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2014). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Harris, F., & De Chernatony, L. (2001). Corporate branding and corporate brand performance. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(3/4), 441-456.

Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Hennig-Thurau, T. (2004). Customer orientation of service employees: Its impact on customer satisfaction, commitment, and retention. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 15(5), 460-478.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C.M., & Sinkovics, R.R. (2009). The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. *Advances in International Marketing*, 20, 277-319.

Homburg, C., Wieseke, J., & Bornemann, T. (2009). Implementing the marketing concept at the employee-customer interface: the role of customer need knowledge. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(4), 64–81.

Hooley, G. J., Greenley, G. E., Cadogan, J. W., & Fahy, J. (2005). The performance impact of marketing resources. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(1), 18–27.

Howard, D. J., & Gengler, C. (2001). Emotional contagion effects on product attitudes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(2), 189–201.

Hsu, K. T. (2012). The advertising effects of corporate social responsibility on corporate reputation and brand equity: Evidence from the life insurance industry in Taiwan. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 109(2), 189-201.

Huang, Z., & Cai, L. A. (2015). Modeling consumer-based brand equity for multinational hotel brands: When hosts become guests. *Tourism Management*, 46, 431–443.

Hultén, B. (2011). Sensory marketing: the multi-sensory brand-experience concept. *European Business Review*, 23(3), 256-273.

Hultén, B., Broweus, N., & van Dijk, M. (2009). *Sensory Marketing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Iglesias, O., Ind, N., & Alfaro, M. (2013). The organic view of the brand: A brand value co-creation model. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(8), 670-688.

Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., Singh, J. J., & Sierra, V. (2017). Do customer perceptions of corporate services brand ethicality improve brand equity? Considering the roles of brand heritage, brand image, and recognition benefits. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-19. doi:10.1007/s10551-017-3455-0

Iglesias, O., Singh, J. J., & Batista-Foguet, J. M. (2011). The role of brand experience and affective commitment in determining brand loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(8), 570-582.

Imrie, B. C. (2005). Beyond disconfirmation: The role of generosity and surprise. *International Marketing Review*, 22(3), 369–383.

Ind, N. (2007). *Living the brand: How to transform every member of your organization into a brand champion*. London: Kogan Page.

Ind, N., Iglesias, O., & Schultz, M. (2013). Building brands together. *California Management Review*, 55(3), 5-26.

Ind, N., Iglesias, O., & Markovic, S. (2017). The co-creation continuum: from tactical market research tool to strategic collaborative innovation method. *Journal of Brand Management*, 24(4), 310-321.

Ishida, C., & Taylor, S. A. (2012). Retailer brand experience, brand experience congruence, and consumer satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 25, 63-79.

Jillapalli, R. K., & Jillapalli, R. (2014). Do professors have customer-based brand equity?. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 24(1), 22-40.

Johnson, D. S., & Peterson, M. (2014). Consumer financial anxiety: US regional financial service firms' trust building response to the financial crisis. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 32(6), 515-533.

Johnson, M. S., Sivadas, E., & Garbarino, E. (2008). Customer satisfaction, perceived risk and affective commitment: an investigation of directions of influence. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 22(5), 353-362.

Jones, J. L., & Shandiz, M. (2015). Service quality expectations: Exploring the importance of SERVQUAL dimensions from different nonprofit constituent groups. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 27(1), 48-69.

Jung, L. H., & Soo, K. M. (2012). The effect of brand experience on brand relationship quality. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, 16(1), 87-98.

Keh, H. T., & Pang, J. (2010). Customer reactions to service separation. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(2), 55–70.

Kenny, D., & Albright, L. (1987). Accuracy in Interpersonal Perception: A Social Relations Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 102(3), 390–402.

Khan, I., Khan, I., Rahman, Z., Rahman, Z., Fatma, M., & Fatma, M. (2016). The role of customer brand engagement and brand experience in online banking. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 34(7), 1025-1041.

Kim, H. C., Chua, B. L., Lee, S., Boo, H. C., & Han, H. (2016). Understanding airline travelers' perceptions of well-being: The role of cognition, emotion, and sensory experiences in airline lounges. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 33(9), 1213-1234.

Kim, K. H., Kim, K. S., Kim, D. Y., Kim, J. H., & Kang, S. H. (2008). Brand equity in hospital marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, 61(1), 75-82.

Kim, J. W., Lee, F., & Suh, Y. G. (2015). Satisfaction and loyalty from shopping mall experience and brand personality. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 36(1), 62-76.

Klaus, P., & Maklan, S. (2007). The role of brands in a service-dominated world. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(2), 115-122.

Kumar, S. R., & Advani, J. Y. (2005). Factors affecting brand loyalty: A study in an emerging market on fast moving consumer goods. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 4(2), 251-275.

Lai, I. K. (2015). The roles of value, satisfaction, and commitment in the effect of service quality on customer loyalty in Hong Kong-style tea restaurants. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 56(1), 118-138.

Lassar, W., Mittal, B., & Sharma, A. (1995). Measuring customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 12(4), 11-19.

Lee, S., Comer, L. B., Dubinsky, A. J., & Schafer, K. (2011). The role of emotion in the relationship between customers and automobile salespeople. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 23(2), 206-226.

Lin, Y. H. (2015). Innovative brand experience's influence on brand equity and brand satisfaction. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(11), 2254-2259.

Lindell, M. K., & Whitney, D. J. (2001). Accounting for common method variance in cross-sectional designs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(1), 114-124.

Lindfelt, L. L., & Törnroos, J. Å. (2006). Ethics and value creation in business research: comparing two approaches. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(3/4), 328-351.

Mai, L. W., & Ness, M. R. (1999). Canonical correlation analysis of customer satisfaction and future purchase of mail-order speciality food. *British Food Journal*, 101(11), 857-870.

Malhotra, M. K., & Sharma, S. (2008). Measurement equivalence using generalizability theory: An examination of manufacturing flexibility dimensions. *Decision Science*, 39(4), 643–669.

Markovic, S., & Bagherzadeh, M. (2018). How does breadth of external stakeholder co-creation influence innovation performance? Analyzing the mediating roles of knowledge sharing and product innovation. *Journal of Business Research*, 88, 173-186.

Markovic, S., Iglesias, O., Singh, J. J., & Sierra, V. (2018). How does the Perceived Ethicality of Corporate Services Brands influence Loyalty and Positive Word-Of-Mouth? Analyzing the roles of Empathy, Affective Commitment, and Perceived Quality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148(4), 721-740.

Martenson, R. (2007). Corporate brand image, satisfaction and store loyalty: A study of the store as a brand, store brands and manufacturer brands. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 35(7), 544-555.

Martin, G. S., & Brown, T. J. (1990). In search of brand equity: the conceptualization and measurement of the brand impression construct. *Marketing theory and applications*, 2(1), 431-438.

Matthews, D. R., Son, J., & Watchravesringkan, K. (2014). An exploration of brand equity antecedents concerning brand loyalty: A cognitive, affective, and conative perspective. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, 9(1), 26-39.

Mattila, A. S. (1999). The role of culture in the service evaluation process. *Journal of Service Research*, 1(3), 250–261.

McBane, D. A. (1995). Empathy and the Salesperson: A Multidi-mensional Perspective. *Psychology and Marketing*, 12(4), 349–370.

Mende, M., & Bolton, R. N. (2011). Why attachment security matters how customers' attachment styles influence their relationships with service firms and service employees. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 285–301.

Meyer, C., & Schwager, A. (2007). Understanding customer experience. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(February), 117 – 126.

Moliner-Velázquez, B., Gil-Saura, I., & Ruiz-Molina, M. E. (2011). Conceptualizing and measuring loyalty: Towards a conceptual model of tourist loyalty antecedents. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 17(1), 65-81.

Moreira, A. C., Fortes, N., & Santiago, R. (2017). Influence of sensory stimuli on brand experience, brand equity and purchase intention. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 18(1), 68-83.

Morrison, S., & Crane, F. G. (2007). Building the service brand by creating and managing an emotional brand experience. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(5), 410-421.

Mosley, R. W. (2007). Customer experience, organisational culture and the employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(2), 123-134.

Nella, A., & Christou, E. (2014). Linking service quality at the cellar door with brand equity building. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 23(7), 699-721.

Nysveen, H., Pedersen, P. E., & Skard, S. (2013). Brand experiences in service organizations: Exploring the individual effects of brand experience dimensions. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(5), 404-423.

Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17(4), 460-469.

Oliver, R. L. (1997). *Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the customer*. New York: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.

Pappu, R., & Quester, P. (2006). Does customer satisfaction lead to improved brand equity? An empirical examination of two categories of retail brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 15(1), 4-14.

Pappu, R., Quester, P. G., & Cooksey, R. W. (2005). Consumer-based brand equity: improving the measurement—empirical evidence. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 14(3), 143-154.

Pappu, R., Quester, P. G., & Cooksey, R. W. (2006). Consumer-based brand equity and country-of-origin relationships: some empirical evidence. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(5/6), 696-717.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. *The Journal of Marketing*, 49(Fall), 41–50.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: a multiple item scale for measuring customer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1994). Alternative scales for measuring service quality: a comparative assessment based on psychometric and diagnostic criteria. *Journal of Retailing*, 70(3), 201–230.

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1-17.

Peng, D. X., & Lai, F. (2012). Using partial least squares in operations management research: A practical guideline and summary of past research. *Journal of Operations Management*, 30(6), 467-480.

Pilling, B. K., & Eroglu, S. (1994). An empirical examination of the impact of salesperson empathy and professionalism and merchandise salability on retail buyers' evaluations. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 14(1), 45-58.

Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 76, 97-105.

Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. *Behavior research methods, instruments, & computers*, 36(4), 717-731.

Puccinelli, N. M., Andrzejewski, S. A., Markos, E., Noga, T., & Motyka, S. (2013). The value of knowing what customers really want: The impact of salesperson ability to read non-verbal cues of affect on service quality. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(3-4), 356-373.

Richard, J. E., & Zhang, A. (2012). Corporate image, loyalty, and commitment in the consumer travel industry. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28(5-6), 568-593.

Roper, S., & Davies, G. (2007). The corporate brand: Dealing with multiple stakeholders. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(1-2), 75-90.

Rozin, P., & Royzman, E. B. (2001). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(4), 296-320.

Rust, R. T., & Oliver, R. L. (1994). Service Quality: Insights and Managerial Implications from the Frontier. In R. T. Rust & R. L. Oliver (Eds.), *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice* (pp. 1–19). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Şahin, A., Turhan, G., & Zehir, C. (2013). Building behavioral intentions in automotive industry: Brand experience, satisfaction, trust, direct mail communication and attitudes toward advertising. *Business Management Dynamics*, 4(3), 45-61.

Sahin, A., Zehir, C., & Kitapçı, H. (2011). The effects of brand experiences, trust and satisfaction on building brand loyalty; an empirical research on global brands. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 1288-1301.

Saleem, F. Z., & Iglesias, O. (2016). Mapping the domain of the fragmented field of internal branding. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(1), 43-57.

Sarkar, M. B., Echambadi, R. A. J., & Harrison, J. S. (2001). Alliance entrepreneurship and firm market performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 22(6-7), 701-711.

Saxby, C., Celuch, K., & Walz, A. (2015). How employee trustworthy behaviors interact to emotionally bond service customers. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 28, 75-89.

Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1-3), 53-67.

Schmitt, B. H., & Simonson, A. (1997). *Marketing aesthetics: The strategic management of brands, identity, and image*. New York: The Free Press.

Šerić, M., & Gil-Saura, I. (2012). ICT, IMC, and brand equity in high-quality hotels of Dalmatia: An analysis from guest perceptions. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 21(8), 821-851.

Šerić, M., Gil-Saura, I., & Mollá-Descals, A. (2013). Loyalty in high-quality hotels of Croatia: From marketing initiatives to customer brand loyalty creation. *Journal of Relationship Marketing, 12*(2), 114-140.

Šerić, M., Mikulić, J., & Gil-Saura, I. (2016). Exploring relationships between customer-based brand equity and its drivers and consequences in the hotel context. An impact-asymmetry assessment. *Current Issues in Tourism, 1-23*. doi: 10.1080/13683500.2016.1209163

Shaw, C., & Ivens, J. (2002). *Building Great Customer Experiences*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sheng, M. L., & Teo, T. S. (2012). Product attributes and brand equity in the mobile domain: The mediating role of customer experience. *International journal of information management, 32*(2), 139-146.

Sierra, V., Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., & Singh, J. J. (2017). Does ethical image build equity in corporate services brands? The influence of customer perceived ethicality on affect, perceived quality, and equity. *Journal of Business Ethics, 144*(3), 661-676.

Spangenberg ER, Crowley AE, Henderson PW. (1996) Improving the store environment: do olfactory cues affect evaluations and behaviors? *Journal of Marketing, 60*, 67-80.

Srivastava, R. K., Fahey, L., & Christensen, H. K. (2001). The resource-based view and marketing: The role of market-based assets in gaining competitive advantage. *Journal of Management, 27*(6), 777–802.

Steenkamp, J. E. M., & Baumgartner, H. (1998). Assessing measurement invariance in cross-national consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research, 25*(1), 78–90.

Stock, R. M., & Hoyer, W. D. (2005). An attitude-behavior model of salespeople's customer orientation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(4), 536–552.

Story, J., & Hess, J. (2010). Ethical brand management: Customer relationships and ethical duties. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 19(4), 240–249.

Streukens, S., Wetzels, M., Daryanto, A., & De Ruyter, K. (2010). Analyzing factorial data using PLS. In V. Esposito Vinzi, W. W. Chin, J. Henseler, & H. Wang (Eds.), *Handbook of partial least squares. Springer handbooks of computational statistics* (pp. 567–587). Berlin: Springer.

Torres, A., & Tribó, J. A. (2011). Customer satisfaction and brand equity. *Journal of Business Research*, 64(10), 1089-1096.

Treanor, J. (2016). Bank branch closures trigger high street alarm bells. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/aug/21/bank-branch-closures-trigger-high-street-alarm-bells>

Turker, D. (2009). How corporate social responsibility influences organizational commitment. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 89(2), 189–204.

Turley, L. W., & Milliman, R. E. (2000). Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior: a review of the experimental evidence. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 193-211.

Wang, Y., Kandampully, J. A., Lo, H. P., & Guicheng, S. (2006). The roles of brand equity and corporate reputation in CRM: A Chinese study. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 9, 179–197.

White, C., & Yu, Y. T. (2005). Satisfaction emotions and consumer behavioral intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(6), 411-420.

Wieseke, J., Geigenmuller, A., & Kraus, F. (2012). On the role of empathy in customer-employee interactions. *Journal of Service Research*, 15(3), 316–331.

Xu, J. B., & Chan, A. (2010). A conceptual framework of hotel experience and customer-based brand equity: Some research questions and implications. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 22(2), 174-193.

Yang, Y., Liu, X., & Li, J. (2015). How customer experience affects the customer-based brand equity for tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 32(sup1), S97-S113.

Yao, J., Wang, X., & Liu, Z. (2013). Identification System. *Journal of Applied Sciences*, 13(21), 4477-4482.

Yasin, N. M., Noor, M. N., & Mohamad, O. (2012). Does image of country-of-origin matter to brand equity? *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 16(1), 38–48.

Yoo, B., Donthu, N., & Lee, S. (2000). An examination of selected marketing mix elements and brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 195–211.

Zarantonello, L., & Schmitt, B. H. (2013). The impact of event marketing on brand equity: The mediating roles of brand experience and brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 32(2), 255-280.

Zeithaml, V. A., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). Problems and strategies in services marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 49(2), 33–46.

Zins, A. H. (2001). Relative attitudes and commitment in customer loyalty models: Some experiences in the commercial airline industry. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 12(3), 269-294.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. Hypothesized model

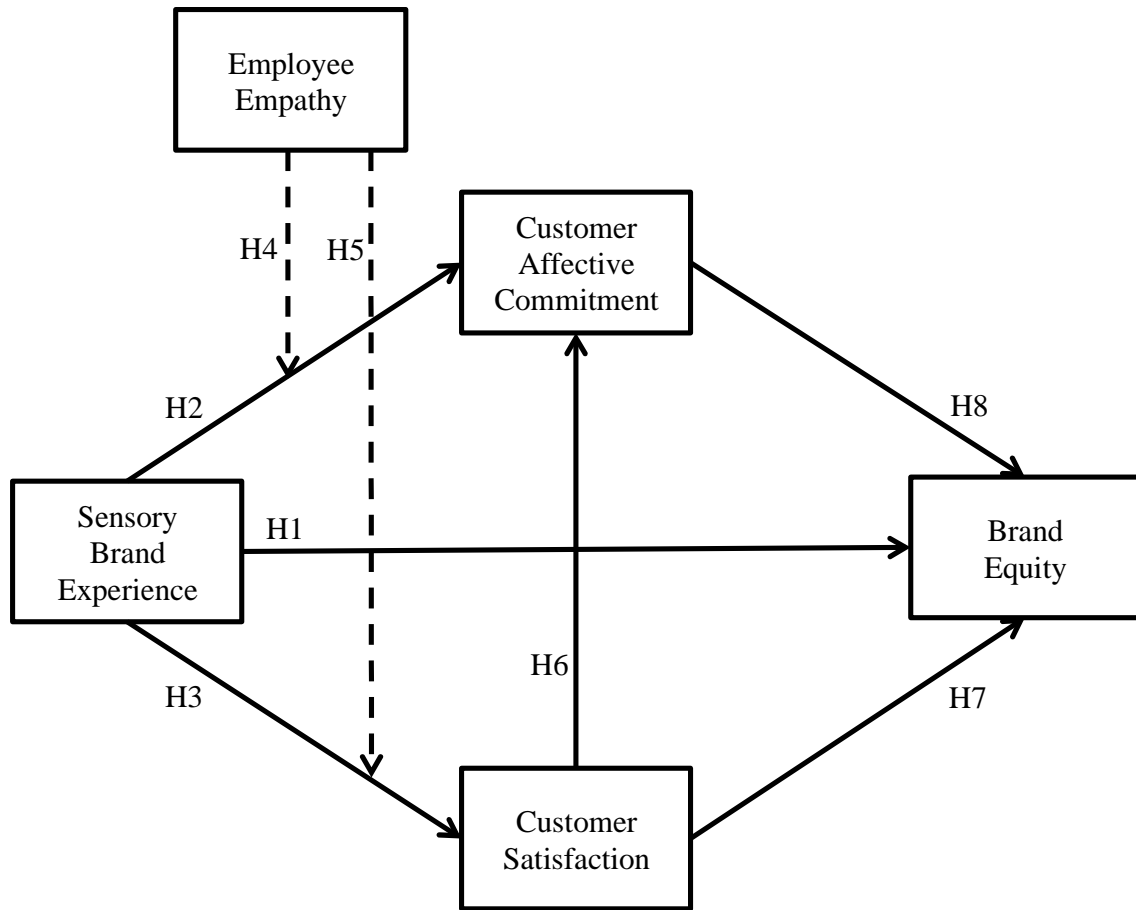


Table 1. Constructs and items used in the questionnaire

Constructs	Items	Reference(s)
Sensory Brand Experience	This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	Brakus et al. (2009)
	I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.	
	This brand appeals to my senses.	
Customer Affective Commitment	I enjoy being a customer of this brand.	Mende and Bolton (2011)
	I have positive feelings about this brand.	
	I feel attached to this brand.	
Customer Satisfaction	All in all, I am very satisfied with this brand.	Homburg et al. (2009)
	The touch-points with this brand meet my expectations of the ideal touch-points with this type of brands.	
	The performance of this brand has fulfilled my expectations.	
Employee Empathy	The brand employees give customers individual attention.	Parasuraman et al. (1994)
	The brand employees deal with customers in a caring fashion.	
	The brand employees have the customer best interest at heart.	
	The brand employees understand the needs of their customers.	
Brand Equity	Even if another brand has the same features as this brand, I would prefer to buy this brand.	Yasin et al. (2012)
		Yoo et al. (2000)
	If I have to choose among different brands offering the same type of service, I would definitely choose this brand.	
	Even if another brand has the same price as this brand, I would still buy this brand.	

Table 2. Sample profile

		%
Gender	Male	49.9
	Female	50.1
Age	18-29	19.8
	30-49	56.4
	50-65	23.8
Social status	high-medium/high	30.0
	medium	51.1
	medium/low-low	18.9
Spanish regional states	Andalucía	16.4
	Aragón	4.0
	Principado de Asturias	2.9
	Islas Baleares	1.7
	Islas Canarias	3.6
	Cantabria	1.5
	Castilla- La Mancha	3.9
	Castilla-León	6.9
	Catalunya	14.1
	Comunidad Valenciana	10.7
	Extremadura	1.9
	Galicia	6.8
	La Rioja	0.3
	Comunidad de Madrid	15.5
	Comunidad Foral de Navarra	0.5
País Vasco	5.2	
Región de Murcia	4.1	

Table 3. Item descriptive and convergent validity

Construct	Item	Mean	Median	SD	Loadings	Cronbach Alphas	CR	AVE
BE	BE1	4.88	5.00	1.65	0.94	0.92	0.95	0.86
	BE2	4.87	5.00	1.64	0.93			
	BE3	4.93	5.00	1.65	0.91			
CAC	CAC1	4.55	5.00	1.70	0.92	0.89	0.93	0.82
	CAC2	4.85	5.00	1.61	0.92			
	CAC3	4.62	5.00	1.70	0.88			
CS	CS1	5.09	5.00	1.59	0.95	0.95	0.97	0.90
	CS2	4.92	5.00	1.53	0.94			
	CS3	5.02	5.00	1.55	0.95			
EE	EE1	5.26	5.00	1.41	0.89	0.91	0.94	0.79
	EE2	5.10	5.00	1.47	0.89			
	EE3	5.43	6.00	1.41	0.87			
	EE4	5.02	5.00	1.49	0.90			
SBE	SBE1	4.01	4.00	1.72	0.93	0.93	0.95	0.87
	SBE2	4.08	4.00	1.73	0.94			
	SBE3	4.04	4.00	1.73	0.93			

Table 4. Convergent validity: cross-loadings analysis

	BE	CAC	CS	EE	SBE
BE1	0.941	0.780	0.802	0.648	0.557
BE2	0.928	0.809	0.820	0.648	0.583
BE3	0.913	0.722	0.750	0.634	0.519
CAC1	0.751	0.917	0.760	0.629	0.688
CAC2	0.818	0.924	0.819	0.668	0.636
CAC3	0.690	0.881	0.667	0.583	0.654
CS1	0.823	0.793	0.954	0.729	0.565
CS2	0.802	0.784	0.940	0.730	0.577
CS3	0.806	0.782	0.953	0.727	0.560
EE1	0.597	0.593	0.666	0.893	0.437
EE2	0.645	0.639	0.710	0.885	0.483
EE3	0.557	0.537	0.614	0.869	0.368
EE4	0.655	0.676	0.726	0.904	0.528
SBE1	0.542	0.661	0.532	0.463	0.934
SBE2	0.569	0.688	0.576	0.490	0.936
SBE3	0.563	0.682	0.565	0.490	0.930

Note: In bold, the loadings between the items and the constructs they measure.

Table 5. Discriminant validity

	BE	CAC	CS	EE	SBE
BE	0.93a				
CAC	0.83b	0.91			
CS	0.85	0.83	0.95		
EE	0.69	0.69	0.77	0.89	
SBE	0.60	0.73	0.60	0.52	0.93

a Square root of AVE in the diagonal

b Pearson correlations among constructs

Table 6. Measurement equivalence through CFA

Gender (men: 868; women: 871)				
	χ^2	df	p	
Unconstrained	689.54	188		
Constraining measurement weights	705.51	199		
<i>Difference</i>	15.97	11	0.142	
Social status (high: 521; medium: 889; low: 329)				
	χ^2	df	p	
Unconstrained	750.23	282		
Constraining measurement weights	765.54	304		
<i>Difference</i>	15.31	22	0.849	

Table 7. Correlation coefficients and R² between marker and constructs

Construct	Correlation coefficient	R ²
SBE	0.111	0.012
EE	-0.243	0.059
CAC	-0.111	0.012
CS	-0.264	0.069
BE	-0.224	0.050

Table 8. Path coefficients results

	Estimate coefficients	Standard error	p-value	95% CI bias corrected	Result
<i>Direct effects</i>					
H1: SBE → BE	-0.01	0.020	0.628	[-0.049; 0.029]	Not supported
H2: SBE → CAC	0.35	0.020	0.000	[0.308; 0.388]	Supported
H3: SBE → CS	0.29	0.022	0.000	[0.246; 0.331]	Supported
H6: CS → CAC	0.55	0.028	0.000	[0.496; 0.604]	Supported
H7: CS → BE	0.52	0.027	0.000	[0.471; 0.575]	Supported
H8: CAC → BE	0.41	0.032	0.000	[0.343; 0.468]	Supported
<i>Moderating effects</i>					
H4: SBExEE → CAC	0.01	0.004	0.278	[-0.004; 0.013]	Not supported
H5: SBExEE → CS	-0.02	0.006	0.001	[-0.032; -0.009]	Supported

Table 9. Assessing the indirect effects

Mediation effects	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Standard error	95% CI bias corrected	Result
SBE → CS → BE	Not significant	0.313	0.020	[0.275; 0.353]	Full mediation
SBE → CAC → BE	Not Significant	0.145	0.014	[0.120; 0.174]	Full mediation
CS → CAC → BE	Significant	0.330	0.025	[0.283; 0.380]	Partial mediation