

The effect of brand experience on brand loyalty and brand perceived value with the mediating factors

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ABSTRACT

In the apparel industry, this study examines the link between brand experience, brand loyalty, and perceived brand value. It focuses on the mediating roles of perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand association. A total of 384 customers aged over 20, who have made clothing purchases from five major shopping centers in Tehran capital of Iran (Kurush, Seven Center, Sana Center, Palladium, and Arg) during the second half of 2022, were included in this research. The research methodology employed is theoretical and exploratory, utilizing a questionnaire as the data collection tool. Random sampling was used to determine the sample size using Cochran's formula. Appropriate metrics for each research variable were designed in the form of questionnaire questions. Software such as SPSS 22 and Smart PLS 3 were used for data analysis. In the end, the research showed that brand experience has a major impact on perceived brand value and brand loyalty, with perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand association playing a mediating role in the apparel industry. Other results are discussed and concluded in the research through the discussion and conclusion sections.

Keywords: Brand experience, brand loyalty, perceived brand value, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality

Introduction

Continuous studies and research over the past 20 years have proven the undeniable role of brands in value creation, risk reduction, and business longevity. Establishing a long-term consumer-brand connection between a seller and a customer is made possible by a brand (Lindgreen et al., 2000); (Fournier, 1998); (Keller, 1993); (Keller et al., 1998); (Ruekert & Rao, 1994). Whenever customers are faced with choices and decisions among various options, brands that hold a special value in customers' minds can play a crucial role in this process. Despite the fact that the value of each brand is annually measured by reputable global institutions, the customer's perspective on this valuation holds great importance for businesses, as their ultimate success and sustainability lie in the hands of customers. In essence, brand commitment or customer loyalty involves an attitude that leads to the establishment of a strong connection between individuals and a brand. Loyalty is expressed through repeated purchases or choosing to become a customer again for a product or service in the future.

Previous studies have looked at a variety of brand loyalty factors. But it should be remembered that, depending on various temporal and geographical circumstances, these drivers and

causes may change. Brand experience describes a portion of brand design, personality, packaging, communications, and brand-encompassing settings. It includes emotions, thoughts, cognitions, and behavioral reactions generated by brand-related stimuli. Customer loyalty and satisfaction are impacted. In general, the criterion of brand experience includes four dimensions: sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions.

Moreover, an individual's experience with a specific brand can significantly impact their decision to repurchase from that business. In other words, if a person has satisfactory experience with the offered product or service, they will, under unchanged circumstances, return to make purchases from the same business. Likewise, in a study, by Aaker (2006) referencing research conducted by Aaker (1997), a model was proposed that paid significant attention to the presence of three variables: perceptions of quality, brand affiliation, and brand awareness. This methodology is known as the Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model. Despite numerous studies in the past on personality, commitment, loyalty, positioning, strategy, architecture, resonance, awareness, and brand image, there is still no specific criterion for measuring the concept of brand experience. It's worth noting that the CBBE model signifies a

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relationship between brand loyalty and perceived value, or the satisfaction resulting from meeting potential customer needs through a product or service. This is influenced by three key factors: association brand, which refers to the mental reconstruction of brand effects upon encountering any brand-related stimuli; brand awareness, encompassing brand recall and recognition among various brands; and perceived quality.

Therefore, considering the presented content, as well as the importance and necessity of brand experience and the factors contributing to it, researching and investigating brand experience, and uncovering its relationship with the Aaker model, seems essential. Due to the lack of studies conducted in Iran, particularly in Tehran, on the relationship between brand experience, brand loyalty, perceived value, and the mediating function of brand awareness, association brand, and perceived quality among clothing buyers in shopping centers like Kourosh, Seven Center, Sana Center, Palladium, and Arg, within a specific time frame, the main question of this research arises: Is there a relevant link between brand experience and brand equity and loyalty, taking into account the mediating functions of brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality? This question will be answered by field research carried out in this project.

Research literature

1-Brand Experience and Brand Awareness

The notion of experience has been explored in marketing literature across a number of sectors, such as shopping, product, and beauty experiences, as well as customer and consuming experiences. In addition to the customer's behavioral reaction to brand stimuli, brand experience also encompasses the internal (cognitive, affective, and emotional) reaction of the consumer. Brand experience may influence customer satisfaction and loyalty and can be either favorable or negative (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010).

This concept has different dimensions, including emotional, affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Brand equity is largely dependent on brand awareness (Sürücü et al., 2019). It displays how prominent a brand is in the eyes of the consumer (Pappu et al., 2005).

Furthermore, Valkenburg and Buijzen (2005) note that brand awareness refers to a person's understanding of a specific brand and goes beyond consumers' familiarity with the brand name and prior exposure to it. Instead, it entails associating the brand—including its name, logo, symbol, and other elements—with specific memory associations (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003).

2-Brand Perceived Quality and Brand Association

Based on their anticipated objectives, the term "perceived quality" describes how a consumer evaluates the overall quality or superiority of a product or service relative to alternatives. It

encompasses a general, intangible perception of a brand. Perceived quality is often built on key dimensions that include product specifications such as reliability and performance, somewhat intertwined with the brand. To comprehend perceived quality, identifying and measuring its main dimensions can be helpful, though it's important to remember that perceived quality is a general perception. According to Kirmani and Zeithaml (1993), perceived quality is the degree to which a client believes a product or service is better than those of its rivals, without taking into account technical factors.

A significant portion of the research that takes a cognitive approach to brands is predicated on "generally acknowledged conceptualizations of memory structures involving some kind of associative model formulation" (Anderson, 1983; Srull & Wyer, 1989; Keller, 1993). Experiences with brand-related stimuli lead to brand associations, which may be expressed vocally or nonverbally in stakeholders' thoughts (including multi-modal and emotional representations; Keller, 1993; Koll et al., 2010; Von Wallpach & Kreuzer, 2013).

3- Brand Loyalty and Perceived Brand Value

The level of customer attachment and commitment towards a specific brand name and symbol is defined by their attitude and behavior. Loyalty is an important concept in marketing strategies. Loyalty leads customers to search for information less among solutions. Solomon (1992) indicates that loyalty-based purchasing decisions may become habitual, possibly stemming from brand satisfaction. Moreover, loyalty can provide a company with an opportunity to respond to threats like competition, as more loyal consumers are less price-sensitive, leading to potential price increases (Graham et al., 1994).

Value is what the customer realizes and understands upon purchasing a product. Customers perceive the difference between the benefits received and the costs incurred. Pananond and Zeithaml (1998) defines perceived value as the consumer's overall evaluation of product benefits based on their perceptions of what they receive and what they pay.

Literature review

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic's uncertainty, research by Wongsansukcharoen (2022) looks at the impact of relationship management, market orientation, customer contact, and brand trust on brand loyalty in the banking and financial industries. This study looks into how a Thai commercial bank uses four success characteristics to grow its clientele, increase brand loyalty, and accomplish business efficiency. These results could enhance the effectiveness of sustainable performance in the banking industry currently and in the future."

Tourism firms have included gamification in their marketing strategies to increase consumer engagement, build brand recognition, and foster loyalty. Using the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, this study (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021) looks at the adoption intention of gamification by tourism firms, its antecedents and effects, and the mediating role

of consumer engagement. The results of the data analysis using structural equation modeling showed that gamification is something that tourism firms are eager to use in order to boost consumer engagement and raise brand knowledge and loyalty for their locations.

Scholars and professionals in the field of marketing have recognized that businesses that offer distinctive and noteworthy experiences are sought after by customers. Consequently, marketers are now very interested in the idea of brand experience. This current field study carried out with real customers, investigates if experiential appeals are preferred by various consumers and whether experiential kinds establish the connections between brand experiences, satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. Experiences with a brand are defined as feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and sensations sparked by stimuli associated with the brand and included in its settings, communications, packaging, and design. The brand experience has an impact on loyalty, trust, and satisfaction. From the perspective of the consumer, brands foster relationships. In the current study, we suggest that brand experiences have a lasting impact on customer happiness, brand loyalty, and brand trust. There were 258 respondents in the survey. According to this study, brand loyalty is favorably impacted by brand experiences, satisfaction, and trust (Sahin et al., 2011).

Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis

- In the garment business, brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality play a major mediating role in the interaction between brand experience, brand loyalty, and perceived brand value.

Subsidiary Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Brand experience significantly influences brand awareness.
- Hypothesis 2: Brand experience significantly influences brand association.
- Hypothesis 3: Brand experience significantly influences perceived quality.
- Hypothesis 4: Brand awareness significantly affects perceived brand value.
- Hypothesis 5: Brand association significantly affects perceived brand value.
- Hypothesis 6: Perceived quality significantly affects perceived brand value.
- Hypothesis 7: Brand experience significantly affects perceived brand value, mediated by brand awareness.
- Hypothesis 8: Brand experience significantly affects perceived brand value, mediated by brand association.

- Hypothesis 9: Brand experience significantly affects perceived brand value, mediated by perceived quality.
- Hypothesis 10: Brand awareness significantly influences brand loyalty, mediated by perceived brand value.
- Hypothesis 11: Brand association significantly influences brand loyalty, mediated by perceived brand value.
- Hypothesis 12: Perceived quality significantly influences brand loyalty, mediated by perceived brand value.
- Hypothesis 13: Perceived brand value significantly affects brand loyalty.

Materials and Methods

Research Method

The present study is conducted as applied research with a survey method. The target population of this research includes all individuals above the age of 20 who have made purchases from five major shopping centers, in Tehran capital of Iran country, namely Kourosh, Seven Center, Sana Center, Palladium, and Arg Shopping Mall. 30 days, including weekdays and weekends, from "December 23 to March 19, 2022," were used to conduct the study. Surveys of patrons were conducted at the retail complex's entrances.

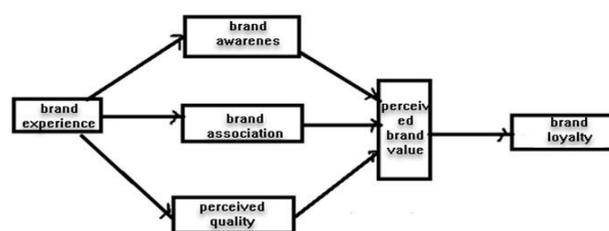


Figure 1. Research model

The Cochran formula is used to estimate the sample size for a limited population size while utilizing simple random sampling as the sampling method in this study. Out of the 410 surveys that were found, 384 (93.7%) were judged suitable for study and were not included in the analysis of the other surveys. Using the SPSS program, descriptive statistics like percentages and frequencies were used to examine the data from the questionnaire. The gathered data were rigorously examined for normality, outliers, skewness, and kurtosis before the final analysis. The multivariate normality of the data was assessed in this study, and normality checks revealed that the values of skewness and kurtosis for all variables were included (West et al. 1995).

In the inferential level, for testing the validity and reliability of the model, confirmatory factor analysis, hypothesis testing using the Cronbach's alpha test, measurement model test, and structural model test were conducted. The PLS3 software was used to perform these tests. Cronbach's alpha value for the entire questionnaire is 0.8. . An alpha of 0.8 suggests a good level of internal consistency, meaning that the items are reasonably correlated and the instrument is reliable for research purposes.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample shows that the majority of the respondents are female. Additionally, the age of most respondents (45.31%) falls between 30 to 50 years, while the smallest proportion (25.53%) is aged above 50. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents (36.72%) have a bachelor's degree, and the lowest proportion (26.82%) have education levels below associate's degree.

Research instrument

The sensory, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual components that make up the constructs of brand awareness, brand association/image, perceived quality, perceived value, and brand loyalty are the nine factors that make up this study. The 12 items, three each element, that made up the four variables in brand experience were taken from Brakus et al. (2009), Cachero-Martínez and Vázquez-Casielles (2017), and Choi et al. (2011). Four components made up brand awareness among the elements influencing brand equity; these sources were taken from Atilgan et al. (2005), Ding and Tseng (2015), and Yoo and Donthu (2001). Three components make up brand association; these were taken from Huang and Cai (2015). Four components make up perceived quality, according to Ding and Tseng (2015) and Huang and Cai (2015). Five components that were collected from Anselmsson et al. (2017), Lassar et al. (1995), and Yoo et al. (2020) made up brand value. According to Anselmsson et al. (2017), Huang and Cai (2015), and Jeon et al. (2020), brand loyalty is also made up of five components. Okay, based on Huang and Cai (2015), Jeon et al. (2020), and Anselmsson et al. (2017). After doing a literature analysis, this study arranged the survey questions and changed them to better fit the retail environment. Following the completion of the initial survey, a panel of statistics professors and three shopping operators were interviewed about the questionnaire's form and content. Harkness (2011) was used to update the survey.

Data analysis and results

Measurement model

Any model that analyzes the connections between the independent (exogenous) and dependent (endogenous) variables is referred to as structural. The structural model solely investigates latent variables along with their relationships. In Figures (2) and (3), the standardized path coefficients and the results of the t-test can be observed.

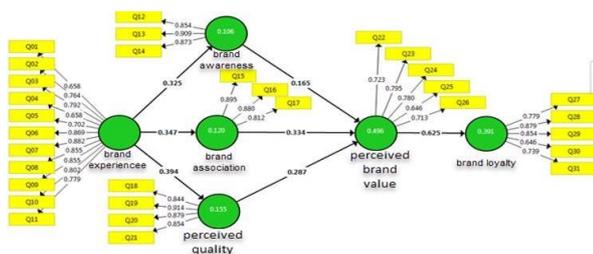


Figure 2. Path coefficients of the standard model in conceptual research.

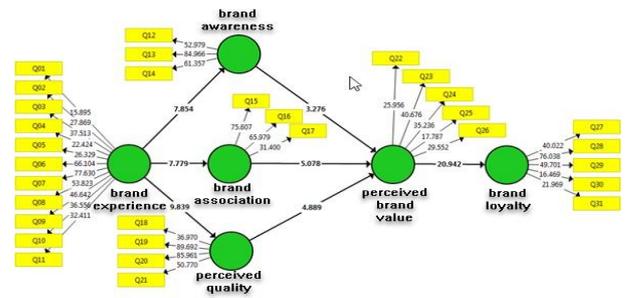


Figure 3. Student's t-test Results for Examining the Significance of Path Coefficients.

Before delving into the discussion and conclusion of the extracted model, the goodness of fit of the model was examined.

A) Criterion R²

The model's latent endogenous variables are the subject of the criteria. It represents the impact of an external variable on an internal variable, with benchmark values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 denoting mild, moderate, and significant impacts, respectively. Brand awareness is 0.106, perceived brand value is 0.496, brand association is 0.120, brand loyalty is 0.391 and perceived quality is 0.155. The value confirms the suitability of the structural model fit.

B) Criterion Q²

The criteria establish the predictive strength of the model; if its value is 0.20, 0.15, or 0.35 for an endogenous construct, it denotes poor, moderate, or strong predictive power for the exogenous construct or constructs that are associated with it, accordingly. Brand awareness is 0.176, perceived brand value is 0.356, brand association is 0.184, brand loyalty is 0.391 and perceived quality is 0.209. The value indicates the model's suitability for predicting the endogenous constructs of the study and validates the structural model's fit.

Examination of the Overall Hypothesis Model:

The measurement model and the structural model are included in the overall model, and after the fit of each is verified, the evaluation of the fit will be done in a complete model. GOF (goodness of fit) is the sole criterion used to evaluate the whole model's fit. The formula shown in the table is used to determine the GOF criteria, which was created by Tenenhaus et al. (2004).

Figure 4. Results of Overall Model Fit with GOF Criterion

R ²	Communalities	GOF = $\sqrt{\text{Communalities} \times R^2}$
0.254	0.461	0.358

As seen in Figure 4, the average values of communalities are 0.461, and the average values of R² are 0.254. According to the formula, the GOF criterion value is calculated to be 0.358, which is greater than the benchmark value of 0.30, indicating the appropriate capability of the overall research model. The high GOF criterion confirms the overall model's adequacy and allows us to proceed to the hypothesis testing section.

Table 1. Results of Structural Model Evaluation for Hypothesis Testing.

Row	Path	Path coefficient(β)	Significant Number	Test Result
1	brand experience \longrightarrow brand awareness	0.325	7.854	Confirmation
2	brand experience \longrightarrow brand association	0.347	7.779	Confirmation
3	brand experience \longrightarrow perceived quality	0.394	9.839	Confirmation
4	brand awareness \longrightarrow perceived brand value	0.165	3.276	Confirmation
5	brand association \longrightarrow perceived brand value	0.334	5.078	Confirmation
6	perceived quality \longrightarrow perceived brand value	0.287	4.889	Confirmation
7	perceived brand value \longrightarrow brand loyalty	0.625	20.942	Confirmation

Hypothesis 1: Brand experience has a significant impact on brand awareness.

Table 1 shows that, at a 95% confidence level, the association between brand experience and brand awareness is significant. The significant statistic between brand experience and brand awareness is 854.7, which is more than the value of 96.1. There is a positive correlation between brand experience and brand awareness, as indicated by the path coefficient of 325.0 between these two variables. Put another way, a 325.0-unit rise in brand awareness will follow a 1-unit shift in brand experience. This indicates that brand awareness is directly and favorably impacted by brand experience. Consequently, the study's premise is validated.

Hypothesis 2: Brand experience has a significant impact on brand association.

With a 95% confidence level, the link between brand experience and brand resonance is significant, as shown by Table 1's significant statistic of 779.7, which is higher than the value of 96.1. Brand experience has a positive impact on brand association, as indicated by the path coefficient of 347.0 between these two factors. This indicates a direct and positive relationship between brand association and brand experience. The study hypothesis is therefore validated.

Hypothesis 3: Brand experience has a significant impact on perceived quality.

Table 1 shows that, at a 95% confidence level, the association between brand experience and perceived quality is significant. Specifically, the significant statistic between brand experience and perceived quality is 839.9, which is more than the value of 96.1. Put another way, a 394.0 unit rise in perceived quality will follow a one-unit improvement in brand experience. This indicates that perceived quality is directly and favorably impacted by brand experience. Consequently, the study's premise is validated.

Hypothesis 4: Brand awareness has a significant impact on perceived value.

The association between brand awareness and perceived value is significant at a 95% confidence level, as shown by Table 1's

significant statistic between brand awareness and perceived value, which is 276.3, which is more than the value of 96.1. The relationship between these two variables' path coefficient, which is 165.0, shows that perceived value is positively influenced by brand awareness. Stated differently, a one-unit shift in brand awareness will translate into a 165.0-unit rise in perceived value. In other words, perceived value is positively and directly impacted by brand recognition. Thus, the study's hypothesis is verified.

Hypothesis 5: Brand association has a significant impact on perceived value.

Table 1 shows that the association between brand resonance and perceived value is significant at a 95% confidence level. The significant statistic between brand association and perceived value is 785.5, which is more than the value of 96.1. Otherwise, a one-unit shift in brand association will translate into a 334.0-unit rise in perceived value. This indicates that perceived value is positively and directly impacted by brand association. Thus, the study's hypothesis is validated.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived quality has a significant impact on perceived value.

Table 1 shows that, at a 95% confidence level, the association between perceived quality and perceived value is significant. Specifically, the significant statistic between perceived quality and perceived value is 889.4, which is more than the value of 96.1. There is a positive correlation between perceived quality and perceived value, as evidenced by the path coefficient of 287.0 between these two variables. As stated otherwise, a unit rise in perceived value corresponds to a one-unit change in perceived quality. This indicates that perceived value is directly and favorably impacted by perceived quality. Consequently, the study's premise is validated.

Hypothesis 13: Perceived value has a significant impact on brand loyalty.

According to Table 1, the significant statistic between perceived value and brand loyalty is 942.2, which is greater than the value of 96.1, indicating that the relationship between perceived value and brand loyalty is significant at a confidence level of 95%. The

path coefficient between these two variables is 625.0, indicating a positive influence of perceived value on brand loyalty. In other words, a one-unit change in perceived value will result in a 625.0 unit increase in brand loyalty. This means that perceived value has a positive and direct impact on brand loyalty. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 2. Results of bootstrap method for testing the significance of indirect effects

Independent variable	Path	Mediating variable	Dependent variable	Indirect effect	Bootstrap Value		t	Std.Err	Sig.*
					Upper	Lower			
Brand experience	Brand awareness	perceived value	perceived value	0.054	0.095	0.020	2.75	0.020	0.006
Brand experience	Brand association	perceived value	perceived value	0.116	0.181	0.062	3.74	0.031	0.001
Brand experience	Brand quality	perceived value	perceived value	0.113	0.170	0.064	4.15	0.027	0.001

* The significance level is 0.05

Hypothesis 7: Brand experience significantly affects perceived brand value with the mediating role of brand awareness.

According to Table (2); the significance level is 0.006 or less than 0.05, and the confidence interval does not include zero.

Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted. This means that brand experience has a statistically significant effect on perceived brand value with the mediating role of brand awareness.

Hypothesis 8: Brand experience significantly affects perceived brand value with the mediating role of brand association.

As per Table 2, the confidence interval excludes zero, and the significance level (P value) is 0.001 or less than 0.05. This indicates that, thanks to brand association's mediating function, brand experience has a statistically significant impact on perceived brand value.

Hypothesis 9: Brand experience has a significant impact on perceived value with the mediating role of perceived quality.

According to Table 2, the significance level (P value) is 0.0010. This means that brand experience has a significant impact on perceived value with the mediating role of perceived quality.

Table 3. Results of bootstrap method for testing the significance of indirect effects

Independent variable	Path	Mediating variable	Dependent variable	Indirect effect	Bootstrap Value		t	Std.Err	Sig.*
					Upper	Lower			
Brand awareness	Perceived value	Brand loyalty	Brand loyalty	0.103	0.167	0.043	3.27	0.032	0.001
Brand association	Perceived value	Brand loyalty	Brand loyalty	0.209	0.292	0.121	4.70	0.044	0.001
Perceived quality	Perceived value	Brand loyalty	Brand loyalty	0.180	0.251	0.108	4.85	0.037	0.001

* The significance level is 0.05

Hypothesis 10: Brand awareness has a significant impact on brand loyalty with the mediating role of perceived value.

The study hypothesis is accepted, as shown by Table 3, where the significance level (P value) is less than 0.05 at 0.0010. That being said, it can be inferred from the bootstrap method results that

brand awareness has a major indirect impact on brand loyalty through perceived value and brand experience has a big indirect impact on perceived value through perceived quality.

According to Table 3, the significance level (P value) is 0.0010, which is smaller than 0.05, indicating that the research hypothesis is accepted.

Therefore, based on the results of the bootstrap method, it can be concluded that brand experience has a significant indirect effect on perceived quality through brand awareness.

Hypothesis 11: The impact of brand association on brand loyalty with the mediating role of perceived value has a significant effect.

According to Table (3); the significance level (P value) is equal to 0.001 or smaller than 0.05, and the confidence interval does not include zero. This means that the influence of brand salience on brand loyalty with the mediating role of perceived value is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 12: The impact of perceived quality on brand loyalty with the mediating role of perceived value has a significant effect.

According to Table (3); the significance level (P value) is equal to 0.001 or smaller than 0.05, and the confidence interval does not include zero. This means that the influence of perceived quality on brand loyalty with the mediating role of perceived value is statistically significant.

Results and Discussion

In this study, we have examined the impact of brand experience on customer loyalty and perceived value with the mediating role of brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality in the clothing sector. Through studying, classifying, and analyzing this information, we can better manage individual customer and seller profitability. By understanding the customer's experience, we can attract a certain level of experience by employing a customer-centric definition.

Conclusion

Throughout the research, questionnaires with 31 items were distributed among individuals who had purchased clothing in Sana, Palladium, Seven Center, Argo, and Kouros shopping centers in 30 days between "December 23 to March 19, 2022, including weekdays and weekends". After obtaining and entering the information into tables and using statistical tests to determine the significance of the hypotheses mentioned, we concluded that all hypotheses are effective, and we can focus enough and necessary attention on increasing brand awareness and imagery and improving quality to enhance the customer's brand experience. In this way, we can increase customer loyalty and sales of clothing and apparel.

Limitation

The study has several drawbacks. First off, there may be limited room for generalization of the survey's findings because it was carried out in Tehran, Iran. Tehran's retail complexes are still in

their infancy, therefore extrapolating the study's conclusions to other nations would be inappropriate. Secondly, we did not ask participants about their preferences, spending amounts, or number of visits, which may have had an impact on the study's findings.

Suggestions

Based on the comprehensive findings of this study, it is evident that enhancing brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality are crucial components in improving the overall brand experience for customers and ultimately increasing customer loyalty in the clothing retail sector in Tehran, Iran. By strategically investing in activities that boost brand recognition and create positive brand imagery, such as targeted marketing campaigns and influencer collaborations, retailers can successfully attract and retain customers. With ample opportunities to establish a strong brand presence and foster customer loyalty through exceptional shopping experiences, retailers can differentiate themselves in a competitive market and build lasting relationships with customers. To propel growth and success in the future, retailers in Tehran should consider the following recommendations:

1. Create a distinctive physical environment within shopping centers by focusing on interior design, space arrangement, and packaging to evoke emotional connections with consumers.
2. Offer entertainment services or unique programs for customers of all ages within shopping malls to enhance engagement and drive sales.
3. Provide opportunities for customers to try on all clothing items, particularly light-colored garments, to improve the shopping experience.
4. Implement online sales channels and individualized websites for each store to expand reach and accessibility to customers.

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