

Sensory Brand Experience, Price Insensitivity, and Purchase Intention: Mediating Roles of Customer Affective Commitment

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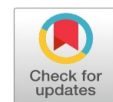
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Abstract: Pakistani retail business focuses on old retailing methods and does not employ innovative retailing concepts. This research aims to show how sensory brand experience affects price sensitivity and purchase intention. Consumer affective commitment mediates between sensory brand experience, price sensitivity, and purchase intentions. Self-administrated 204 responses were collected from consumers of apparel brands in Pakistan consumers through convenience sampling. Results reveal that sensory brand experience positively affects price insensitivity and purchase intention. Results also confirmed the mediating role of customer affective commitment between sensory brand experience and outcomes. Affective commitment is thus a significant factor in purchase intention and price sensitivity. This paper contributes to the body of knowledge on sensory brand experience in connection with price insensitivity and purchase intentions.

Keywords: Sensory brand experience, Affective commitment, Price sensitivity, Purchase intention

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INTRODUCTION

In a constantly competitive, consistent, and transparent business atmosphere, if the brands want to differentiate and create a favorable competitive position, they must offer a remarkable experience to their customers, building a strong competitive position in the consumers' minds. When the customers of the brands are satisfied, it will increase affective commitment (Lin, 2015). Experience has four distinctive dimensions, i.e., affective, sensory, intellectual, and behavioral" (Schmitt, Zarantonello, & Brakus, 2009). Pakistani apparel brands are trying to increase customers' brand experiences and provide them with more choices in their outlets. When brands emphasize the sensory brand experience, they can build a strong competitive position in customers' minds compared to their competitors (Lin, 2015). If the brands want to construct a good sensory brand experience, they can focus on hiring, educating, and developing workforces (Grönroos, 2011) as employees can build the brand wing to their personal interaction with the customer (Roper & Davies, 2007).

The textile industry in Pakistan is an important aspect of the country's economy. Pakistan exports the ninth most textiles in Asia. Pakistan's textile industry accounts for 8.5 percent of the country's GDP. This industry employs roughly 45 percent of Pakistan's workforce. Pakistan is the world's fourth-largest cotton producer and Asia's third-largest yarn manufacturer. The textile industry in Pakistan is the country's backbone and most important source of employment. In comparison to other industries, the textile sector has the greatest employment rate, i.e., 45 percent, while the retail industry employs 37 percent. The complete involvement of the services industry in recent years has been a particularly positive aspect of Pakistan's progress.

This study aims to demonstrate how consumer affective commitment influences price sensitivity and purchase intention. The primary purpose of this research is to see how sensory brand experiences affect price sensitivity and purchase intent via the mediating effect of customer affective commitment. The textile sector contributes significantly to Pakistan's economy, and textile brand retail stores are particularly important for the textile sector because these stores are directly linked to the customer; if the retail stores provide excellent customer service and

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high-quality products, the customer will become a loyal customer of that brand. The issue is that the Pakistani retail business focuses on old retailing methods and does not employ innovative retailing concepts. They do not provide good customer service, causing the customer to be dissatisfied with the retail store. Brand stores don't care about the customer's brand experience; they only care about their sales. The industry does not focus on hiring, training, and developing workers while creating a sensory brand experience because they do not realize that the employees are the ones who make or destroy the brand. The retail store does not pay attention to its brand experience, price sensitivity, and purchase intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Brand Experience

The notion of feelings has been researched in several ways in the past literature, including "consumption experiences," "product experiences," "aesthetic experiences," "service experiences," "shopping experiences," and "consumer experience." When a customer is looking for a new product, he examines all of the options. The term "product experience" refers to the testing as assessing items (Hoch, 2002). According to Hoch and Ha (1986), direct experience refers to when a consumer has actual contact with a product, whereas indirect experience refers to when a product is presented virtually. When the consumer has direct contact with the retail store's physical environment, it refers to the shopping experience. The brand experience is influenced by environmental factors and its sales force (Simonson, 2007). When a customer uses a product, this is referred to as an experience (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Brand awareness is a result of some sort of exposure exposition (Ha, 2005). The focus of a brand experience is consumers' affective, cognitive, social, and physical responses to a brand (Verhoef et al., 2009). "Sensations, sentiments, and memories" are all part of the brand experience. Brand-related stimuli elicit cognitions and behavioral responses that are part of a brand's "design and identity, packaging, communications, and surroundings" are some of the topics covered. When a customer is looking to buy a product, analyze its distinct aspects and how to buy, consume, or get after-sales service (Schmitt, 2009). These are three dimensions of brand experience: affective, behavioral, intellectual, and sensory (Zarantonello, 2009). According to PineII and Gilmore (1998), an effective experience makes the customer feel distinctive and memorable. Good experience stimulates the customer and develops a strong relationship with the customer (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013). The human experience includes emotions and cognitive and bodily sensations. When it comes to making decisions, emotions from earlier consumption experiences have influenced or guided them (Schmitt, 1999). Because emotions are conceptual states of willingness arising from evaluations of events that allow individuals to attach meaning to brands, emotions and senses play a vital part in the differentiation and offering of superior experiences. According to Palmer (2010), customers' perceptions of an experience are influenced by the circumstances in which services are provided.

Customer Affective Commitment

Customer affective commitment can be defined as customer assumptions that they have to stick to their brand and make a relationship in the long term (Evanschitzky & Wunderlich, 2006). Affective commitment is all about emotions (Fullerton, 2003), i.e., if the customer feels a sense of attachment to the brand, is involved in the brand's brand activities, and loves to enjoy company membership. In previous studies, the affective commitment concept was mostly used by organizational employees to describe their bonding to their work and for the organization and between consumer and brand (Gruen et al., 2000). It is about identifying a customer's sense of belonging, devotion, and resemblance with the brand. It brings an emotional sense of belongings to the brand and their partner. When a customer feels attached to the brand, affective commitment, trust and belongingness will be strong (Price & Arnould, 1999; Gremler & Gwinner, 2000).

Price Insensitivity

Price insensitivity can be defined as a product or service whose sales remain constant or rise despite a significant price change (Reichheld & Teal, 1996). Customers that are not price sensitive are vital to businesses, even critical because they are loyal (Reichheld & Teal, 1996). Furthermore, they make more purchases, purchase the company's other products, spread the favorable word of mouth, and bring in new customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). These customers are critical to the company's success and profitability (Eakuru & Mat, 2008). Price sensitivity is considered to be influenced by perceived value (Reichheld & Teal, 1996). "The customer's total judgment of the

consumption of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is supplied" (Zeithaml, 1988).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is the intention of the customer to rebuy the specific product of the same brand (Shah et al., 2012). The process of determining a customer's buying intentions is challenging. Consumer behavior, perceptions, and attitudes are all linked to purchase intention. Purchase intention is the most important aspect for customers when evaluating and accessing a specific brand. Purchase intention is a useful indicator for predicting the buying process (Ghosh, 1990). The customer's purchase intention may alter as a result of the price perceived quality and value. Furthermore, the customer may be influenced by internal or external impulses during the purchasing process. Purchase intention is the consumer's prediction of which brand he will choose to buy (Turney & Littman, 2003). Purchase intention can be determined as a reflection of purchase behavior. The desire to buy a product is directly related to the purchasing intention. The perceived value of a product by the customer will determine the length of the relationship with the brand and purchase intention (Monroe & Krishnan, 1985). The organization's good and acknowledged value will influence individual buying intentions (Zeithaml, 1988).

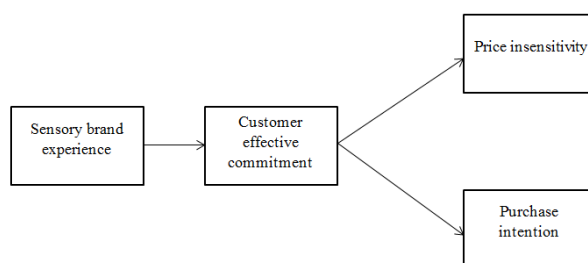


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

Hypotheses

H1: Sensory brand experience has a positive effect on consumer affective commitment.

Customers who are committed to the brand are less price sensitive (Hess & Story, 2005) and accept variations in brands' performances (Story & Hess, 2010). According to Evanschitzky and Wunderlich (2006), there are two types of commitments, continuance and effective. Continuance is about the customer's assumption that they must stick to their brand and have long-term relationships. Affective commitment is about the emotions created by using customers' psychological needs (Fullerton, 2003). Marketer pursues and attracts the customer's emotions by advertising and communicating the product features. In a competitive environment, brands use distinctive marketing strategies and experience strong messages and unique colors to develop a feeling of attachment and emotions (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Customers' affective commitment is affirmed by behavioral and affective brand experiences (Jung & Soo, 2012).

H2: Sensory brand experience has a positive effect on price insensitivity.

H3: Sensory brand experience has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Igbaria, Guimaraes, and Davis (1995) investigated the consumer experience and concluded that the customer experience has both an indirect and direct impact on purchase intent. Purchase intention is also influenced by degrees of consumer experience (Bellman, Loshe & Johnson, 1999). According to Yang and He (2011), brand experience has an impact on customers' preferences, which in turn generates purchase intention. Customer behavioral intentions were studied by Boyer and Hult (2006), and their findings revealed that behavioral intentions vary depending on the level of customer experience.

H4: Customer affective commitment has a positive effect on price insensitivity.

H5: Customer affective commitment has a positive effect on purchase intention.

H6: Customer affective commitment mediates between sensory brand experience and price insensitivity.

H7: Customer affective commitment mediates between sensory brand experience and purchase intention.

METHODOLOGY

To measure variables, the questionnaire was developed by adopting existing measures. All the variables were measured on a 5-point ordinal Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The sensory brand experience was measured by three items scale developed by Brake, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009). The six-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) measured customer affective commitment. Price sensitivity was measured by three items scale developed by Zeithaml et al. (1996). Purchase intention was measured by three items scale developed by Zeithaml et al. (1998).

Data were collected from apparel brand consumers of Pakistan living in a metropolitan city, Faisalabad. An instrument for the research has been received from past studies. For data analysis, SPSS and PLS smart were used. The study population was all those customers using apparel brands living in Faisalabad. For the survey, a questionnaire was distributed to customers of apparel brands. For the data collection, a self-administrated and convenient sampling technique was used, where the consumer purchasing power is good, and they are aware of the textile brands, the average income of these people was between sixty to one hundred thousand or above. The age of these respondents was twenty to fifty or above. In this study, the target population was those who use apparel brands and are well-educated, both male and female.

RESULTS

Correlations

To explore the relation of variables, the Pearson correlation is used to accomplish this. The Pearson correlation relationship is shown in the table. It is used to assess the strength and direction of a relationship (Tyrrell, 2009). It is represented by the letter 'r,' and its values range from -1 to +1.

Table 1: Correlations

		SBE	CEC	PI	PII
SBE	Pearson Correlation	1	.836**	0.041	0.329
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0.818	0.058
	N	178	34	178	34
CEC	Pearson Correlation	.836**	1	0.199	.379*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0.26	0.027
	N	178	34	34	34
PI	Pearson Correlation	0.041	0.199	1	.379*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.818	0.26		0.027
	N	178	34	178	34
PII	Pearson Correlation	0.329	.379*	.379*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.058	0.027	0.058	
	N	34	34	34	34

The above table correlation analysis results (Table 1) show a positive and moderate degree relationship between sensory brand experience and customer affective commitment Brand with a value of 0.836 and $p=0.000$. In the table correlation analysis results (Table 1), the value of the correlation coefficient is 0.041 and $P=0.818$, indicating no relationship between sensory brand experience and price intention. In the table correlation analysis results (Table 1), the value of the correlation coefficient is 0.329 and $p=0.058$, indicating a relationship between sensory brand experience and price insensitivity. In the table correlation analysis results (Table 1), the correlation coefficient is 0.199 and $p=0.260$, indicating a positive and moderate degree relationship between customer affective commitment and purchase intention. In the table correlation analysis results (Table 1), the correlation coefficient is 0.199 and $p=0.260$, indicating a positive and moderate degree relationship between customer affective commitment and price insensitivity.

Table 2: Simple linear regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.836a	0.698	0.689	0.24658	0.698	74.011	1	32	0	
2	.041a	0.002	-0.03	0.44842	0.002	0.054	1	32	0.818	
3	.329a	0.108	0.08	0.42385	0.108	3.877	1	32	0.058	
4	.199a	0.039	0.009	0.68933	0.039	1.315	1	32	0.26	
5	.379a	0.143	0.117	0.65093	0.143	5.36	1	32	0.027	

a. Predictors: (Constant), CEC

b. Predictors: (Constant), PI

c. Predictors: (Constant), PII

These results are from a linear regression analysis, and they show the performance of different models. The "Model" column refers to different versions of the model being tested. The "R" column shows the correlation coefficient between the predicted and actual values, with a higher value indicating a stronger correlation. The "R Square" column shows the coefficient of determination, which is the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables. The "Adjusted R Square" column is a modified version of R-Square that adjusts for the number of independent variables in the model. The "Std. Error of the Estimate" column shows the standard deviation of the residuals (prediction errors). The "change statistics" shows the incremental effect of each model on the R square value, *F*-change, degree of freedom, and significance of *F*-change. The results indicate that the model with the highest *R* square, adjusted *R* square, and *F* change values are the best fit for the data.

The results in Table 2 indicate that the first model (Model 1) has the highest *R*-square value of 0.698, which means that 69.8% of the variance in the dependent variable (i.e., the variable being predicted) is explained by the independent variables in the model. The adjusted *R*-square value of 0.689 is also relatively high, indicating that the model is a good fit for the data. The standard error of the estimate (0.24658) is relatively low, indicating that the predictions made by the model are accurate. The other models (Models 2-5) have lower *R*-square values, indicating that they do not explain as much of the variance in the dependent variable as the first model. Additionally, the adjusted *R*-square values for these models are negative, indicating that they actually perform worse than a simple mean model. The standard error of the estimate for these models is relatively high, indicating that their predictions are less accurate than the first model. The change statistics show that the first model is significantly better than the other models as it has the highest *F* Change, lowest *p*-value and significant *F* Change. Overall, the results suggest that Model 1 is the best fit for the data, as it has the highest *R*-square value and the lowest standard error of the estimate.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i> *	Sig.
		<i>B</i>	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.776	0.231		7.705	0
	CEC	0.533	0.062	0.836	8.603	0
2	(Constant)	3.642	0.372		9.788	0
	PI	0.036	0.155	0.041	0.232	0.818
3	(Constant)	3.011	0.37		8.133	0
	PII	0.241	0.123	0.329	1.969	0.058

a. Dependent Variable: SBE

b. Dependent Variable: CEC

Cont.....

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t*	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
4 (Constant)	3.015	0.572		5.272	0
PI	0.274	0.239	0.199	1.147	0.26
5 (Constant)	2.366	0.569		4.161	0
PII	0.436	0.188	0.379	2.315	0.027

a. Dependent Variable: SBE

b. Dependent Variable: CEC

In the coefficient table (Table 3), the value of the constant is 1.776, and the value represents a slight change in Sensory brand experience of 0.836 units on the average rise in consumer affective commitment. *t*-value is 8.603. Because $p=0.000$ and $\alpha=0.05$, *B* is significant. As a result, the H1 hypothesis is supported. In the coefficient table (Table 3), 3.64 is the constant value, and 0.036 is the PI value, indicating a slight change in Sensory brand experience of 0.041 units on the average rise in purchase intention. *t*-value is 9.788. Because $p=0.000$ and $\alpha=0.05$, *B* is significant. As a result, the H2 hypothesis is rejected.

3.011 is the value of the constant in the coefficient table (Table 3), and 0.241 is the value that depicts a slight change in sensory brand experience of 0.329 units on the average rise in price insensitivity. *t*-value is 8.133. Because $p=0.000$ and $\alpha=0.05$, *B* is significant. As a result, the H3 hypothesis is accepted. 3.015 is the value of the constant in the coefficient table (Table 3), and 0.436 is the value of PII, indicating that the H4 hypothesis is accepted. In the coefficient table (Table 3), 2.366 is the constant value, and 0.436 is the PII value, indicating a slight change in customer affective commitment of 0.379 units on the average rise in purchase intention. *t*-value is 2.315. Because $p=0.000$ and $\alpha=0.05$, *B* is significant. As a result, the H5 hypothesis is accepted.

Mediation Test

There are three conditions, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), must be fulfilled for mediation to complete the analysis. Here are the limitations:

1. Must be a positive relationship between the independent variable and the mediating variable.
2. Must be a positive relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable.
3. Must be a positive relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.836a	0.698	0.689	0.24658	0.698	74.011	1	32	0
2	.845b	0.714	0.696	0.24367	0.016	1.768	1	31	0.193
3	.836a	0.698	0.689	0.24658	0.698	74.011	1	32	0
4	.836b	0.698	0.679	0.25045	0	0.018	1	31	0.894

a. Predictors: (Constant), CEC

b. Predictors: (Constant), CEC, PI, PII

We hypothesized that the relationship between sensory brand experience and purchase intention is mediated by customer affective commitment. The mediation analysis is carried out after the three conditions of Baron and Kenny’s (1986) mediation approach have been met. The table results show that the value of the R-square has decreased.698 to.016 and is approaching zero, indicating that the first condition for mediation has been met. That result indicates that the model has a significant mediation effect. However, the next question is whether it is full mediation or partial mediation. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), full mediation occurs when the mediator is run between the independent and dependent variables and the relationship between the independent and

dependent variables becomes insignificant; partial mediation occurs when the relationship between the independent and dependent variables remains significant. The result table shows that after running the mediation test, the value of ($p=0.198$) is greater than 0.05, indicating that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables has become insignificant, indicating full mediation."

We hypothesized that customer affective commitment mediates the relationship between sensory brand experience and pricing insensitivity. Once the three conditions of Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation approach have been met, the mediation analysis is carried out. In the table results, the value of R² change is reduced from .698 to .000, which is close to zero, indicating that the first requirement for mediation is met. As a result, the model appears to have a significant mediation impact. Then there's the question of whether the mediation is complete or partial. According to Preacher and Hayes, full mediation occurs when the mediator is run between the independent and dependent variables, and the relationship between the independent and dependent variables becomes insignificant, whereas partial mediation occurs when the relationship between the independent and dependent variables remains significant (2008). The value of ($p=0.894$) is greater than 0.05 after the mediation test, indicating that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables has become insignificant, indicating full mediation.

CONCLUSION

Affective commitment is a key impact in generating positive word of mouth, purchase intentions, price insensitivity, and, to a lesser extent, compliant behavior. A sense of belonging, contentment with being a customer, and emotional attachment. It also has to do with establishing a positive and trusting relationship with the brand. Enhancing these aspects of affective commitment improves loyalty. This can be done by truly personalizing communication efforts and displaying attachment and personal significance to each and every customer. According to our findings, the relevance of sensory brand experience in fostering affective commitment should not be neglected. Sensory brand experience can be achieved by ensuring the brand's image and perceived value. Customers who are more inclined to build relationships have more affective commitment and, eventually, have more purchase intention.

Theoretically, this research explained the relationship between brand experience and purchase intention by placing brand experience as a self-verification process, an underlying mechanism from a consumer perspective. This paper contributes to the body of knowledge on sensory brand experience in connection with price insensitivity and purchase intentions. In short, this paper revealed affective commitment fully explained the relationship between brand experience and price insensitivity, thereby providing directions for brand managers for premium brands.

There are different methods to create commitment among customers, including the creation of a user's community or club through which customers can share their experiences with other customers and brand management. Affective commitment can be enhanced by offering programs with the objective of creating a provider's brand identity and incentives in the shape of loyalty programs which will increase purchase intentions. Brand experience is a subjective thing and can be different for each consumer according to their perspective. Brand experience can work as a mechanism through which brand managers can enhance purchase intentions, as proposed by Brakus et al. (2009). Brand managers can enhance their brand experience through emotional appeals that can be used in advertising campaigns to enhance purchase intentions.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study's limitation is that convenience sampling was used in this investigation; however, different sampling approaches could be applied in the future. The second constraint is that we solely collected data from the textile retailing industry for this study. As a result, additional industries, such as insurance, banking, and other services or products, may be considered in the future. The third constraint is that we picked a sample size of 204 for this study due to restricted resources; however, sample sizes can be raised in future research to improve outcomes. The fourth constraint is that this study was conducted only in a retail store in Faisalabad, Pakistan; however, this study could be replicated in other cities in Pakistan or other countries in the future.

The fifth restriction is that we only looked at the sensory aspect of brand experience in this study; however, future studies could look at other aspects of brand experience, such as intellectual, affective, and behavioral brand experience. The dependent variable can be loyalty. As a result, it would be able to look at longer purchase sequences and possibly integrate contextual data. In addition to emotional commitment, calculated and normative commitment can be seen as results of informational complexity, volitional choice, and position involvement, as

well as antecedents of word of mouth, purchase intention, price sensitivity, and complaining.

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