

APPLICATION OF THE BRAND EXPERIENCE SCALE IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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The marketing literature has been underlining the importance of understanding brands as experiences by the academics as well as the practitioners. Still, one can feel a dearth of articles - conceptual and empirical- focussing on brand experience. Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) made an attempt to fill this gap and proposed a formal definition and scale for measuring brand experience. Since then, a handful of scholars have used this scale and validated its four dimensions. The authors applied this scale in the Indian context and found only three dimensions instead of four. The three dimensions were named as activity triggering, sensory and affective.

Key words: Brand Experience, Brand Experience Scale, Services Marketing, Dimensions of Brand Experience.

INTRODUCTION

Brands are the main interfaces between consumers and companies. Thus, it is no surprise, that marketing scholars keep on researching about various aspects of brands. One of the recently recognised aspects is to understand how consumers experience the brands. Though, the term “experiential view” encompassing fantasies, feelings and fun associated with the consumption of goods and services (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) dates back to early 1980s, the concept of brand experience still seems to be under researched. In fact, it has been expressed by well known management practitioners, to gain meaningful insights into the consumers' relationships with the brands; research should focus on relevant conceptualisation and ways of measurement of “brand experience”.

BRAND EXPERIENCE

Ramakrishnan and Vohra (2015a) critically reviewed the literature on brand experience till date and found that this concept has been holistically defined by Brakus, Schmitt and

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Zarantonello, 2009. They conceptualised brand experience as, “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli (such as brand-identifying colours, shapes, typefaces, background design elements, slogans, mascots, and brand characters) that are part of a brand's design and identity (e.g., name, logo, signage), packaging, communications (e.g., advertisements, brochures, Web sites), and environments in which the brand is marketed or sold (e.g., stores, events)”.

This concept of brand experience has also been suggested as the most comprehensive notion of experience, spanning across different contexts, by Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010). Additionally, Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard (2013) observed, “However, given that both customers and non-customers can have brand experiences, we consider brand experience (as conceptualised by Brakus *et al.*, 2009) to be the broadest experience construct”.

This concept of brand experience, as conceptualised by Brakus *et al.* (2009), identifies four dimensions of brand experience : a **sensory** dimension, which refers to the visual, auditory, tactile, gustative, and olfactory stimulations provided by a brand; an **affective** dimension, which includes feelings generated by the brand and its emotional bond with the consumer; an **intellectual** dimension, which refers to the ability of the brand to engage consumers ' convergent and divergent thinking; and a **behavioural** dimension, which includes bodily experiences, lifestyles, and interactions with the brand.

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL BRAND EXPERIENCE SCALE

In addition to providing the most comprehensive definition of “brand experience”, Brakus *et al.* (2009) developed a multidimensional brand experience scale. It consists of 12 items, 3 items each for the four dimensions of brand experience-sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioural. The **sensory** dimension refers to the visual, auditory, tactile, gustative, and olfactory stimulations provided by a brand; the **affective** dimension, includes feelings generated by the brand and its emotional bond with the consumer; the **intellectual** dimension, refers to the ability of the brand to engage consumers' convergent and divergent thinking; and the **behavioural** dimension, includes bodily experiences, lifestyles, and interactions with the brand. Since then, a handful of scholars (Iglesias, Singh and Batista-Foguet, 2011; Nysveen, Pedersen and Skard, 2013; Skard, Nysveen and Pedersen, 2011; Zarantonello and

Schmitt, 2010) have used this scale in various countries and validated that brand experience scale consists of these four dimensions. With this background, the authors decided to apply this scale in the Indian context and check whether these four dimensions hold true.

METHODOLOGY

The four-dimensional brand experience scale developed by Brakus *et al.* (2009) was primarily used. Two service categories and two brands each in these categories were used as the test brands for this study. Based on a two stage exploratory study, Diagnostic Laboratory and Telecommunications Service Provider emerged as the most suitable service categories for this study. Further, an analysis of the second stage exploratory research resulted in selection of Dr. Lal Path Labs and SRL Ranbaxy Labs (now known as Super Religare Laboratories Ltd.) in the Diagnostic Laboratory category and Airtel and Vodafone in the Telecommunications Service Provider category.

The data for this study was obtained by a field survey of the actual consumers. A total of 253 questionnaires were sent out of which 207 questionnaires turned out to be valid. This is an adequate sample size as Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) recommended a sample size of 200 as a 'critical sample size' that can be used in any common estimation procedure for valid results. The sample consisted of the individuals who were 18 years or older and had used or presently using any of the selected test brands and were willing to participate in the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Demographics

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of our final sample of 207 respondents. Out of these 207 respondents, 142 were males and 65 were females. This huge disparity can be attributed to the fact that in most Indian families, the males take the decision regarding the selection of service providers. So, Indian females probably feel uncomfortable answering questions about services as they might not be able to provide answers for certain aspects. Regarding age profile, 81 per cent of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18-38 years and the rest 19 per cent were above 38 years. Out of the total sample of 207 respondents, 133 respondents had monthly household

income above Rs. 50000 and 72 had below Rs. 50000. 2 respondents did not mention their income level. Further, regarding the education level, we found that 47 respondents were graduates, 159 were post graduates and only 1 respondent was an undergraduate.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

	Frequency	Per cent
Gender		
Male	142	68.6
Female	65	31.4
Age group (years)		
18-28	76	36.7
29-38	91	44.0
39-48	27	13.0
49-58	7	3.4
Above 58	5	2.4
Missing	1	0.5
Monthly Household Income (Rs.)		
Below 25000	29	14.0
25001-50000	43	20.8
50001-100000	62	30.0
Above 100001	71	34.3
Missing	2	1.0
Education		
School	0	0.0
Undergraduate	1	0.5
Graduate	47	22.7
Post Graduate	159	76.8
Missing	0	0.0

Reliability of the Scale Used

The most widely used measure of internal consistency of a measurement scale is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to one, the higher the reliability of the scale ((Nunnally, 1978; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for brand experience scale came out to be 0.890 indicating the scale used was highly reliable. At the second level, we checked the reliability of all

the four dimensions measured in brand experience scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for three dimensions – sensory, affective and behavioural – were 0.838, 0.843 and 0.816 respectively, suggesting the scales used were highly reliable. Only for *intellectual dimension of brand experience*, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.668 which was slightly below than the threshold level of 0.7.

Factor Analysis

Prior to performing Principal Components Analysis (PCA), the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. For this, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of sphericity were checked. The KMO index ranges from 0 to 1, with 0.50 suggested as the minimum value for a good factor analysis and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should be statistically significant ($p < .05$) for factor analysis to be considered appropriate (Hair *et al.*, 1998). As seen in Table 2, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)'s value 0.865 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p = .000$) both showed enough adequacies of data to support the factor analysis.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.865
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1491.537
	Df	91
	Sig.	.000

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) revealed the presence of three components with eigen values exceeding 1, explaining 24.234 per cent, 23.732 per cent and 17.191 per cent of the variance respectively. Collectively, the three factors accounted for 65.158 per cent of the total variance, as visible in Table 3.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix^a for Brand Experience

	Rotated Component Matrix ^a		
	Component		
	1	2	3
1.1.1		.825	
1.1.2		.801	
1.1.3		.744	
1.2.1		.576	.437
1.2.2			.826
1.2.3			.868
1.2.4		.563	.425
1.2.5		.450	.516
1.3.1	.690		
1.3.2	.763		
1.3.3	.471	.543	
1.4.1	.840		
1.4.2	.812		
1.4.3	.678		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Based on the results reported in the "Rotated Factor Matrix", as seen in Table 4, the following factor structure emerged:

- Factor 1: All the three items of behavioural dimension (I often engage in actions and behaviours when I use Brand X; Brand X engages me physically; Brand X is action-oriented) and all the three items of intellectual dimension (I engage in a lot of thinking when I use Brand X; Brand X does make me think; Brand X stimulates my curiosity and problem solving) clearly loaded on Factor 1. We named this factor as **activity triggering dimension**. Further, based on the nature of item, the third item of behavioural dimension (Brand X is action-oriented) which cross loaded on this factor and Factor 2 with only a negligible difference in the factor loadings, was included in this activity triggering dimension itself.
- Factor 2: All the 3 items related to sensory dimension (Brand X makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses; Being a customer of Brand X gives me

interesting sensory experiences; Brand X appeals to my senses) clearly loaded on this factor with very high loadings, with the minimum loading of 0.744. Thus, on theoretical grounds, the three items of affective dimension (Brand X induces my feelings and sentiments; I feel good when I use Brand X; Brand X makes me happy) which cross loaded on this factor with comparatively lower loadings were not included here. We named this factor as **sensory dimension**. All these three items had cross loaded on Factor 3 with almost similar factor loadings. Thus, we decided to include these three items in Factor 3 along with the other two items of affective dimension.

- Factor 3: The rest two items of affective dimension (I have strong emotions for Brand X; I am emotionally attached to Brand X) had clearly loaded on Factor 3. Additionally, as explained above, the other three items of affective dimension (Brand X induces my feelings and sentiments; I feel good when I use Brand X; Brand X makes me happy) which cross loaded on this factor and Factor 2, were included in this factor itself. Therefore, this factor was named as **affective dimension**.

Thus, factor analysis results clearly suggested that a model with three factors was adequate to represent the data. These three factors collectively accounted for 65 per cent of the variance in brand experience. The above results, thus, did not lend support to our original assumption that this 12-item scale was measuring four dimensions of brand experience.

Further, to ensure the reliability of the new scale consisting of three dimensions of brand experience instead of four, we recalculated their Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The new Cronbach's alpha coefficient for first factor, activity triggering dimension, which was a combination of intellectual and behavioural dimensions, was 0.840 which pointed towards a high internal consistency for this new subscale. This new value was a major improvement over the previous Cronbach's alpha coefficient for intellectual dimension (0.668) and behavioural dimension (0.816). The results were same for sensory and affective dimensions. Their Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.838 and 0.843 respectively, same as previous values. Thus, overall, factor analysis provided a more reliable solution for the brand experience scale.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The main objective of the paper was to apply the brand experience scale as developed by Brakus *et al.* (2009) in the Indian context. According to Brakus *et al.* (2009) and few other

marketing scholars, the brand experience scale consists of four dimensions- sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual. Thus, we measured brand experience on these four dimensions for 207 respondents for four service brands collectively. Exploratory factor analysis was applied to find out the dimensions of brand experience scale. Contrary to initially presumed four dimensions, the factor analysis in this study resulted in three dimensions. Collectively, the three factors (dimensions) accounted for 65.158 per cent of variance. Subsequent to a content analysis of the items loading on particular factors, we named the dimensions as **activity triggering, affective and sensory**.

The probable reasons for this new structure, consisting of three dimensions of brand experience, could be due to the demographic differences among the samples. Both the studies (Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Iglesias *et al.*, 2011) had used a sample of around 200 students, which probably made the samples homogeneous in terms of their responses because of the similarities of the age group and the education level. The use of a homogeneous student sample, while desirable for reducing extraneous variance, also limits the findings' generalizability (Hess, Ganesan and Klein, 2003). On the other hand, our sample of actual consumers, consisting of 207 individuals was quite heterogeneous in terms of age (ranging from 18 years to above 58 years), education level (school to post graduation) and an additional demographic variable of income level (below Rs. 25000 per month to above Rs. 100000 per month). Thus, the marketers should be careful while designing brand experience for the consumers in India. The Indian consumers seem to be more emotional and do not seem to distinguish between behavioural and intellectual dimensions. Their focus is on affective dimension. They cannot replicate the strategies used in the developed countries.

Directions for future research

The study can be strengthened by increasing the sample size and taking into consideration various brands in different product and service categories to validate our finding - three dimensions of brand experience as compared to four dimensions proposed by the brand experience scale founders (Brakus *et al.*, 2009) and validated by other researchers (Iglesias *et al.*, 2011).

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APPENDIX

S.No.	Item	Rating				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.1.1	This brand makes a strong impression on my senses (Sensory dimension).					
1.1.2	Being a customer of this brand gives me interesting sensory experiences (Sensory dimension).					
1.1.3	This brand appeals to my senses (Sensory dimension).					
1.2.1	This brand induces my feelings and sentiments (Affective Dimension).					
1.2.2	I have strong emotions for this brand (Affective Dimension).					
1.2.3	I am emotionally attached to this brand (Affective Dimension).					
1.2.4	I feel good when I use this brand (Affective Dimension).					
1.2.5	This brand makes me happy (Affective Dimension).					
1.3.1	I often engage in actions and behaviours when I use this brand's services (Behavioural Dimension).					
1.3.2	This brand engages me physically (Behavioural Dimension).					
1.3.3	This brand is action-oriented (Behavioural Dimension).					
1.4.1	I engage in a lot of thinking when I use this brand (Intellectual Dimension).					
1.4.2	This brand does make me think (Intellectual Dimension).					
1.4.3	This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving (Intellectual Dimension).					