Brand Experience on the Website: Its Mediating Role between Perceived Interactivity and Relationship Quality

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Online Brand Experience: Its Mediating Role between Perceived Interactivity and Relationship Quality

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This study examined the mediating effect of brand experience on the linkage between perceived interactivity of a website and relationship quality with the brand in the online marketplace. The proposed mediation model was tested with online survey data collected from 265 college students. With the use of a mediation test, this study found that active control and two-way
communication features of interactivity led to more positive brand experience, which
subsequently influenced relationship quality with the brand. Contrary to our expectation,
perceived synchronicity feature was not found to be related to either brand experience or
relationship quality with the brand. This study highlights the important role of brand experience
on the website in enhancing the consumer-brand relationship building, and aids e-marketers to
develop digital strategies in designing more interactive brand websites, which improve brand
experience on the website and relationship quality with the brand.

Keywords
Perceived Interactivity, Brand Experience on the Website, Relationship Quality
One of the significant changes that digital technology brings to a brand’s marketing activities is consumers’ active participation in communications and transactions with the brand. Consumers control their exposure to commercial messages and actively experience with the brand due to the interactive features of the website. Interactivity is the key quality of a website, which enables consumers to experience the brand in engaging ways, including user-friendly navigational tools, advergames, and virtual experiences of the product. Thus, the interactive function of a brand website enriches and facilitates consumers’ direct and indirect brand experience in the e-marketplace (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou 2013; Van Noort, Voorveld, and Van Reijmersdal 2012).

A bulk of studies on website interactivity have shown the critical role of a website in building and enhancing relationships with consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010; Thorbjornsen et al. 2002; Voorveld, Van Noort, and Duijn 2013; Yoon, Choi, and Sohn 2008). In an attempt to better understand the effects of website interactivity, scholars have endeavored to disentangle the underlying processes in how website interactivity works. Many boundary conditions, as mediators and/or moderators, have been taken into consideration to explain interactivity in a website: prior brand usage (Voorveld, Van Noort, and Duijn 2013), task type: search vs. complaining (Song and Zinkhan 2008), online flow experience (Van Noort, Voorveld, and Reijmersdal 2012), and need for cognition (Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera 2005).

Building on these research efforts, the current study investigates the mediating role of *brand experience* as the underlying mechanism that explains the effects of website interactivity on the consumer-brand relationship building. Brand experience on a website is important in the e-marketplace because a website, as a channel with high in information richness, empowers
consumers to experience the brand at different levels (Levy and Gvili 2015; Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera 2005). To our knowledge, prior research on brand experience has been conducted in the offline marketing context and has primarily explored the consequences of brand experience, such as relationship quality and brand loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet 2011; Nysveen, Pedersen, and Skard 2013). However, consumers’ online activities on a website enrich their experience with the brand in a unique and distinctive way, therefore both academic researchers and practitioners need to examine the role of brand experience as a possible mediator to explain the effects of interactivity on consumers’ relationship-building in the e-marketplace. By doing so, this study extends our knowledge about the antecedents and consequences of brand experience and elaborates how website interactivity works. In addition, it is imperative to study the link between the interactive nature of a brand’s website and consumers’ brand experience because brand experience contributes to enhancing consumer relationship management (CRM) (Voorveld, Van Noort, and Duijn 2013).

In this study, brand experience is not general collective responses to the brand, but the consumers’ personal and subjective responses to the brand, which are triggered by different brand-related stimuli, including websites (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). Consumers’ brand experience encompasses their internal responses such as sensations, feelings, and cognitions, as well as behavioral responses (Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010). Among various brand contact points, this study views brand websites as one of the most resourceful and powerful forms of interactive advertising because they provide consumers with rich brand experiences ranging from sensorial gratifications to bodily experiences (Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera 2005; Sohn 2011).
By incorporating theories of interactivity and brand experience, the current study adapted and expanded the online relationship-building model of Yoon, Choi, and Sohn (2008), which examined the role of perceived interactivity in the relationship-building process of e-retailers. In the current study, a theoretical model is developed to test the mediating role of brand experience between perceived interactivity of the website and relationship-building with the brand. This study investigates three following research objectives: (1) how does consumers’ perception of website interactivity have an impact on their brand experience?; (2) how does consumers’ perception of website interactivity influence the relationship-building with the brand?; and (3) how does consumers’ brand experience mediate the link between consumers’ perception of website interactivity and their relationship-building with the brand?

This study makes several contributions to the field. Managerially, the findings of this study will assist practitioners in developing effective website strategies to provide a variety of brand experience opportunities to consumers. By delving into the effects of website interactivity on brand experience and relationship quality, the current study will provide useful implications about digital marketing strategies to enhance brand experience. Theoretically, the results of this study will advance our knowledge about consumers’ brand experience and its decisive role in building the relationship between consumers and the brand in the consumer-lead digital marketing landscape. So far, the majority of prior studies have examined the consequences of brand experience in the relationship-building process (Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet 2011; Lee and Kang 2012; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou 2013). However, there are a limited amount of studies that attempted to examine the mediating role of brand experience between website interactivity and the relationship with the brand in the e-marketplace. This study fulfills Brakus,
Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s (2009) call for research that explores the antecedents and consequences of brand experiences.

**Literature Review**

**Relationship Marketing**

Relationship marketing deals with the company’s marketing efforts to develop and maintain connections with diverse parties such as employees, stakeholders, media, and customers. Among various relationships, the consumer-brand relationship is of the utmost interest for the company for long-term growth (Buttle 1996). The company establishes, develops, and enhances the relationship with consumers by exchanging reciprocal benefits and fulfilling its promises (Fournier 1998; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Peterson 1995). Relational exchanges occur when the company keeps stimulating and motivating consumers to respond to its marketing message by offering customized products or services to the targeted consumers, not the masses (Bulger 1999).

Once the positive relationship with the brand is established from relational exchanges, consumers display high levels of satisfaction, trust, and commitment with the brand, which may lead to an increase in brand loyalty (Bowden 2009; Sanchez-Franco 2009; Valta 2013). Prior studies have investigated antecedents of building the consumer-brand relationship, highlighting affect-based brand relationships (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012; Fournier 1998; Park and MacInnis 2006; Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005). Park and his colleagues (2010) valued the role of brand attachment, which is defined as “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self,” and found that consumers who are strongly attached to a brand were more likely to commit to and invest their resources (e.g., time, money, and energy).
for that brand to deepen a brand relationship. Similarly, Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) discovered that consumers’ emotional attachment to a brand—which consists of connection, affection, and passion—predicted brand loyalty and their willingness to pay a price premium to strengthen a brand relationship. More recently, Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi (2012) found consumers’ feeling of “brand love” to be related to a long-term relationship with the brand, which is one of multiple aspects of highly loved brands. These studies offer marketers diverse techniques to maintain consumer-brand relationships over time in both offline and online marketing contexts (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012). Especially, as a continuously evolving platform for building relationships, the website provides versatile opportunities for the company to fulfill relational exchanges with consumers (Keller 2009).

**Online Relationship Marketing**

Interactivity of Web 2.0 allows consumers to actively engage in marketing activities to build the consumer-brand relationship online (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Rappaport 2010; Sawhney, Verona, and Prandelli 2005). The website enables consumers to find product-related information with speedy, two-way communication and to actively control the search and use of information (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010). The development of online communication helps the brand foster a close relationship with consumers by monitoring and capturing open, spontaneous, up-to-date consumer insights about the brand (Forrester Research 2011). Plenty of the literature on relationship marketing supports that online communication is an effective tool to build the consumer-brand relationship and increase consumer satisfaction (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010; Thorbjørnsen et al. 2002; Yoon, Choi, and Sohn 2008). The notable development in building the consumer-brand relationship is the
increased power of consumers in information search and decision-making processes. Consumers’ active control of websites or mobile contents creates different levels of consumer experience with the brand (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou 2013; Voorveld, Van Noort, and Duijn 2013). In the traditional marketing environment, consumers are well treated by the brand’s marketing efforts, either in retail stores or in traditional communication methods (e.g., direct mail, advertising). However, in the online marketing environment, consumers are no longer passively receiving messages by the brand but controlling the brand message to fit their needs and playing with the brand in the way they want to. The brand becomes an experience through multi-dimensional ways and various contact points the brand provides. The interactive nature of the website enables the company to improve brand experience to consumers, which may facilitate the consumer-brand relationship.

Consumers’ Brand Experience in Marketing

The concept of “experience” has been explored in the context of consumption experience in marketing (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). In line with this, Pine and Gilmore (1999) introduced Economy of Experience and Schmitt (1999) discussed Experiential Marketing and Customer Experience Management (CEM). Since then, several studies have conceptualized the consumer experience (Chang and Horng 2010; Schmitt 2008) as well as examined the effects of consumer experience on loyalty behavior (Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel 2002) and direct versus indirect product experiences (Hoch and Ha 1986; Hamilton and Thompson 2007).

Pine and Gilmore’s work on the Experience Economy (1999) viewed experience as the next level beyond economic values which commodities, goods, and services can provide the consumer. The difference between experience and economic values lies in the level of acceptance by the
consumer. While commodities, goods, and services are equally provided to all consumers, experience is individually perceived by the consumer. Experience is invisible, but it exists in each consumer’s mind and interacts with his or her psychological states (e.g., emotional and intellectual). Thus, the degree of experience is not the same to all consumers (Pine and Gilmore 1999). From this perspective, they defined experience as “events that engage individuals in a personal way” (p. 12).

Furthermore, Schmitt (1999) approached experience from a consumer-centric perspective. He stated that experiences “involve the entire living being,” and are usually obtained from “direct observation and/or participating in the event – whether they are real, dreamlike or virtual” (p. 60). Unlike other studies, which concentrated on product or shopping experiences (Hamilton and Thompson 2007; Kerin, Jain, and Howard 1992), Schmitt primarily focused on brand experience due to the finite amount of knowledge available on consumers’ experience with brands (Schmitt 2008). Building on prior research, Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) conceptualized brand experience as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (p. 53). They developed the scale to measure four sub-constructs encompassing a wide range of brand experience – sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experience.

Consumers experience the brand through their five senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. This sensory brand experience is the first level of experience, which mostly relies on consumers’ perception of senses. Affective brand experience occurs when the brand stimulates consumers’ emotions and feelings and fosters the emotional bond with consumers. Consumers’
affective experience of the brand ranges from “mildly positive moods” to “strong emotions of joy and pride” (Schmitt 2008). Behavioral experience refers to consumers’ physical activities caused by the brand, which is bodily engagement to the brand and action-oriented characteristic of the brand. Intellectual experience of the brand involves all aspects of consumers’ cognitive and problem-solving experience with the brand (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Schmitt 2008; Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010).

Using Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s (2009) approach to brand experience, the current study adopts their scale to assess brand experience and predicts that interactivity of brand websites enriches consumers’ brand experience, which then influences the consumer-brand relationship in the online marketing environment. It should be discussed that other scholars argue for the role of “brand engagement” in explaining the relationship-building process, instead of “brand experience.” Studies on brand engagement primarily emphasize “a cognitive and emotional commitment to an active relationship with the brand,” which contributes to building a long-term consumer-brand relationship (Mollen and Wilson 2010, p.923). Yet the current study employs the concept of Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s (2009) brand experience for two reasons. The concept of brand experience is more comprehensive in that it encompasses all aspects of psychological (sensations, emotions, and cognitions) and behavioral responses to brand-related stimuli. It is also theoretically more relevant because the four dimensions of brand experience lend a closer linkage with the multiple dimensions of website interactivity, which will be discussed shortly.

Proposed Mediation Model of Brand Experience and Hypotheses

This study posits that the interactive nature of brand websites enables marketers to
provide virtual brand experience to consumers, and subsequently consumers’ brand experience on the website is expected to influence the consumer-brand relationship building (Berry, Carborne, and Haeckel 2002; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou 2013; Voorveld, Van Noort, and Duijn 2013). Embracing three constructs—website interactivity, brand experience, and consumer-brand relationship—the theoretical model is proposed to test the mediating role of brand experience in the effects of interactivity on relationship quality in the e-marketplace.

Revisiting Brand Website Perceived Interactivity

Although the concept of website interactivity has received considerable attention from scholars, it is still an enigmatic concept. Various definitions of interactivity exist, therefore its operational definition contains limited systematic consensus (Tremayne 2005). Some scholars propose that interactivity be viewed as a unique feature of the communication medium itself (Sundar 2004). If one website adds more interactive design features and structures (e.g., clickable links, customized feedback mechanisms), it is judged to have higher interactivity. On the other hand, others contend that interactivity should be defined as a perceptual characteristic varying across website users because users have different perceptions of the medium depending on their online experiences (Song and Zinkhan 2008). Interactivity is explained by how site users navigate and whether they actually use potential features that stimulate interactivity (Tremayne 2005). Scholars argue for differentiating perceived interactivity from actual, feature-based interactivity, placing more emphasis on users’ active engagement in using interactive features (Liu and Shrum 2002; Liu 2003; McMillan and Hwang 2002; Song and Zinkhan 2008). The current study focuses on users’ perceived interactivity than on sites’ actual interactivity, when examining the effects of website interactivity.
The number of studies has conceptualized perceived interactivity and developed the scale to measure it. Among others, Liu’s (2003) work is widely used in studies because it captures multidimensional aspects of perceived interactivity in a more extensive manner: (1) two-way communication; (2) active control; and (3) synchronicity. Two-way communication refers to reciprocal or bidirectional flow of the information on the website. This dimension is well explained with two concepts: personal relevance of information and recognition by the website (Sohn 2011). Users perceive the website more interactive when they find information personally relevant or when the website recognizes users by sending customized messages (Song and Zinkhan 2008). Two-way communication is considered to be more like text-based interactivity, which requires cognitive efforts to process information (Sohn 2011). The following features facilitate such a semantic aspect of interactivity: feedback mechanisms (e.g., chat rooms, bulletin boards), message type (e.g., personalized vs. standardized), transaction facilitation (e.g., online orders), information collection (e.g., survey, registration) (Song and Zinkhan 2008; Van Noort, Voorveld, and Reijmersdal 2012).

Active control refers to users’ perception of their ability to voluntarily decide where to go, with whom to converse, what to use, and how to use contents of the website (Liu 2003). Several scholars value the perception of active control for compelling online experiences, which is considered a behavioral aspect of interactivity (Sohn 2011). Active control can be viewed as an outcome of reciprocal or bidirectional communication and reflects users’ perception to allow them to do various things to interact with companies or other users (Sohn 2011). In a similar vein, active control is explained by users’ psychological sense of efficacy to represent their ability to control their website use at their own pace. This is called “internally based efficacy” (Song and
Zinkhan 2008; Wu 1999). Interactive features to facilitate active control include navigational tools, search options, site maps, and language options (Song and Zinkhan 2008; Voorveld, Van Noort, and Duijn 2013).

Synchronicity represents users’ perception of the website speed which quickly responds to users’ requests (Liu 2003). The speed of interacting with the website is related to the technological features used in the website, which is named “externally based system efficacy” (Song and Zinkhan 2008; Wu 1999). Steuer (1992) posits that interactivity contributes to an increase in telepresence—which feels “being there” in the computer-mediated environment—and speed is important for enhancing users’ perception of medium interactivity. Guided by insights of telepresence theory, Song and Zinkhan (2008) observed two speed-related features—the number of clicks and response time—as antecedents of perceived interactivity and found faster interactive features to enhance users’ perception of interactivity.

In addition to these three dimensions of perceived interactivity, a few studies have pointed out a sensory aspect of interactivity (Sohn 2011; Song and Zinkhan 2008; Sundar and Kim 2005). The sensory aspect of perceived interactivity may include aesthetic and sensory qualities such as visual, aural, tactile, and haptic features, often referred to as vividness (Steuer 1992). If users perceive an object to be more vivid through multiple senses, they are more likely to judge it to be more interactive (Coyle and Thorson 2001; Fortin and Dholakia 2005). Features such as animation and audio may facilitate sensory experiences to augment users’ perceptions of interactivity.

The discussion about the multidimensionality of interactivity provides us with a theoretical linkage that users’ perception of website interactivity may influence their brand
experience on the website. As mentioned prior, a brand website is one of the resourceful channels where consumers virtually engage in a wide array of brand experience, including sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009). Thus, it is expected that consumers’ brand experience on a website is evoked by brand-related interactive features that facilitate two-way communication, active control, and synchronicity. In the next section, why consumers’ perception of brand website interactivity influences their brand experience on the website is explained.

Perceived Interactivity and Brand Experience

Due to the multidimensional aspects of perceived interactivity, the effects of website interactivity on brand experience are needed to explore diverse consumer responses to a brand. Prior studies found that the level of perceived interactivity in websites is influential in accounting for sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to website interactivity (Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera 2005; Song and Zinkhan 2008; Van Noort, Voorveld, and Van Reijmersdal 2012). Sicilia and her colleagues (2005) tested the effects of interactivity in a website by varying the capacity to interact with the message (e.g., hyperlinks), which augments active control. Their study discovered the interactive website to elicit more information processing (e.g., website-related thoughts), more favorable attitudes toward the product, and a more intense flow state, compared to the non-interactive website. In a study examining the effects of speed (e.g., number of clicks, response time) and message type on perceptual and behavioral responses, Song and Zinkhan (2008) found both speed and personalized messages to have a positive impact on site effectiveness (e.g., satisfaction, loyalty, attitude, and quality) and found personalized messages to lead to a more positive WOM behavior and patronage behavior as compared with speed.
For a more complete understanding of the effects of website interactivity, Van Noort, Voorveld, and Reijmersdal (2012) examined affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to high vs. low interactive websites, which manipulated two-way communication and control interactive features. They assessed consumers’ online flow experience as a mediator of website interactivity effects and uncovered that higher interactivity led to a more intense flow experience on brand websites, which subsequently increased product-related thoughts (cognitive), favorable attitudes toward the website and the brand (affective), and intentions to revisit the website and to refer it to friends (behavioral). Taken together, these findings suggest that the multiple dimensions of brand website interactivity have an effect on consumers’ brand experience on the website that encompasses sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses. When consumers perceive the brand website more communicative, controllable, and responsive, they have more opportunities to actively interact with the brand displayed on the website. Consequently, consumers’ perceptions of website interactivity are more likely to trigger stronger brand experience on the website in sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral ways. Thus, the current study develops the following research hypotheses:

**H1a:** A higher level of perceived control associates with a more positive brand experience on the website.

**H1b:** A higher level of perceived two-way communication associates with a more positive brand experience on the website.

**H1c:** A higher level of perceived synchronicity associates with a more positive brand experience on the website.

*Perceived Interactivity and Relationship Quality*
As an important outcome of relationship marketing, scholars value the relationship quality, which is conceptualized with three sub-dimensions: trust, satisfaction, and commitment (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci 2001; De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Kenhove 2003; Dorsch, Swanson, and Kelly 1998; Garbarino and Johnson 1999; Henning-Thurau and Klee 1997). Trust is considered a successful basis in relationship marketing and is defined as “the acceptance of vulnerability in order to reduce social complexity” (Welch 2006, p.141). Trust is particularly important in the online marketplace because of the absence of the physical contact and the perceived risks of e-transactions (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou 2013).

A consumer’s satisfaction with a brand refers to “a consumer’s affective state resulting from an overall appraisal of his or her relationship with a retailer” (Liang and Wang 2007, p.33). It plays a pivotal role in building and maintaining the relationship with the brand (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci 2001; De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Kenhove 2003). A consumer’s commitment with a brand, defined as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued partnership” (Morris, Bames, Lynch. 1999, p.659), assesses a consumer’s belief to retain the relationship with the brand (Dorsch, Swanson, and Kelly 1998; Henning-Thurau and Klee 1997; Morgan and Hunt 1994). This study encompasses all three dimensions to measure the relationship quality with the brand.

As digital technology continues to progress, marketing activities directed toward building and maintaining the consumer-brand relationship quality have also evolved. Newer digital technology, such as social media and mobile apps, allows consumers to participate in online conversations about the company and brand to express their values, emotions, and opinions (Rappaport, 2010). As discussed before, interactive website features that facilitate two-way
communication, active control, and synchronicity enable consumers to vigorously engage in interactions with the brand (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci 1998; Voorveld, va Noort, and Duijn 2013). With the use of emerging technology, marketers create and develop closer relationships with consumers by obtaining constant and up-to-date consumer insights in a real-time setting (Abela and Sacconaghi 1997; Rappaport 2010). The literature on relationship marketing indicates that online communication with consumers is an effective tool to establish the brand-consumer relationship quality, leading to an increase in brand loyalty (Krishnan et al. 1999; Schultz and Bailey 2001; Thorbjørnsen et al. 2002; Yoon, Choi, and Sohn 2008).

Several studies empirically found that interactive features of a brand’s website played a critical role in building the relationship with consumers (Lee and Park 2013; Voorveld, Van Noort, and Duijn 2013; Yoon, Choi, and Sohn 2008). Brand website interactivity facilitates dialogical communication between the brand and consumers and empowers consumers to control the communication process. Consequently, consumers perceive the company to make an effort to build the relationship with consumers and value the quality of the relationship with the brand. In line with this argument, Yoon, Choi, and Sohn (2008) found two interactive dimensions of two-way communication and synchronicity to have a significant impact on the relationship building process of e-retail brands. Similarly, Voorveld, van Noort, and Duijn (2013) observed that perceived interactivity in a brand’s website exerted a direct effect on consumers’ perceptions of brand relationship quality. As a key driver of trust in the online marketplace, Vernuccio et al. (2012) showed that perceived interactivity had a direct effect on trust toward the site as well as an indirect effect on trust toward the site via personalized experience with the site. In the domain of public relations, Lee and Park (2013) examined the effects of message interactivity to respond
to users’ comments posted on the website and discovered that dialogic two-way communication is an instrumental tool to foster trust, satisfaction, and commitment. Therefore, the following research hypotheses are developed:

**H2a:** A higher level of perceived control associates with the positive relationship quality with the brand.

**H2b:** A higher level of perceived two-way communication associates with the positive relationship quality with the brand.

**H2c:** A higher level of perceived synchronicity associates with the positive relationship quality with the brand.

**Brand Experience on the Website and Relationship Quality**

Brand experience is viewed as a set of brand-consumer interactions that are evoked by different brand-related stimuli (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009; Schmitt 1999). These interactions can be real or virtual. If consumer-brand interactions are experienced in a positive and distinctive way, it suggests logically that consumers are more likely to trust the brand, have a satisfactory relationship with the brand, and have commitment to the brand. In other words, building the favorable relationship with consumers represents an important outcome of brand experience (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou 2013). Thus, this study predicts the positive linkage between brand experience on the website and relationship quality.

Recent studies demonstrate findings that support the central role of brand experience in the relationship-building process (Iglesias, Signh, and Batista-Foguet 2011; Lee and Kang 2012). First, Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s study (2009) to develop the scale of brand experience revealed its relationship with brand personality and two behavioral outcomes: consumer
satisfaction and loyalty. This is consistent with the findings of Lee and King (2012)’s study, which exhibited that affective and behavioral dimensions of brand experience were positively associated with commitment and trust. In a study applying the concept of Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s (2009) brand experience, Iglesias, Signh, and Batista-Foguet (2011) showed that superior brand experience exerted an indirect effect on brand loyalty through affective commitment. They highlighted affective bonds with consumers in developing a long-term brand relationship.

All in all, these studies mostly tested the effects of brand experience with physical product brands such as cars, laptops, sneakers, and clothing. Nysveen, Pedersen, and Skard (2013) argued for the importance of studying brand experience in a service brand context. They reasoned that service brand experiences are different than product brand experiences in that services are characterized by greater interpersonal complexity and relationship quality. Thus they added “relational experience” to Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s (2009) four dimensions and explored the effects of all five dimensions on brand personality, satisfaction, and loyalty. The results shed light on the importance of relational experience for service brands.

It should be noted that the majority of prior studies on brand experience have examined the consequences of brand experience in the offline context. Beyond this research line, the current study extends knowledge of brand experience by investigating it in the context of online marketing environment and by looking at its mediating role between perceived interactivity of a brand’s website and relationship quality with the brand. Yoon, Choi, and Sohn (2008) examined the effects of perceived interactivity on consumers’ perception of e-retailers’ efforts to build the relationship, which in turn affects relationship quality. Likewise, the current study expects that
perceived interactivity of the website influences brand experience on the website, which has an impact on relationship quality. This postulate implies an indirect effect of perceived interactivity on relationship quality through brand experience. To support the mediating role of brand experience, this study needs to find the positive relationship between brand experience on the website and relationship quality. Building on prior studies on the effects of brand experience on relationship quality in the offline marketplace, the following hypothesis is developed:

**H3:** A higher level of brand experience on the website associates with a more positive level of relationship quality.

A proposed conceptual mediation model of brand experience between perceived interactivity and relationship quality is visualized in Figure 1.

**Method**

**Procedure and Sample**

A self-administered, online survey was conducted at a large public university in the Southwestern United States. A total of 3,000 email addresses were randomly selected from the directory of students enrolled. After an initial invitation and multiple follow-up emails were sent out, a total of 453 students took part in the survey. Two levels of data screening were conducted. All incomplete responses of 153 were deleted in initial screening. Then, Mahalonibis D test was conducted to screen out multivariate outliers (Tabachnick and Fidell 1996). All responses with p < .05 were deleted. A total of 265 respondents were included in the final data analysis.

Participating students were given the website address directing them to log onto the first page of the survey site that included general instructions. If the student agreed to participate in the survey, they were asked to type the name of the brand website they most frequently visit and the product
category of the brand. Participants were then instructed to fill out an online survey regarding their opinions about the brand and the website they listed. All participants were entered into a drawing for a $25 cash prize in return for their participation. Among a total of 265 respondents, 62% were female. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 39 years old with an average age of 24 years old. The average hours of using the Internet were 22.5 hours per week.

**Measures**

The scales to measure major constructs were borrowed from the literature and adapted to reflect the topics under study. All measures were rated with multiple items on a 7-point Likert scale. For each construct, exploratory factor analysis was performed to ensure the uni-dimensionality of the construct. Cronbach’s alpha was analyzed to investigate the internal consistency. Participants’ perception of website interactivity was assessed with Liu’s Perceived Interactivity Scale (2003), which is composed of active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity. All three sub-constructs appeared to be uni-dimensional (total variance explained [hereafter referred to as tve] = 61% for activity control; tve = 62% for two-way communication; tve = 57% for synchronicity) and internally consistent (α = .66 for active control; α = .82 for two-way communication; α = .77 for synchronicity).

Participants’ brand experience on the website was measured by Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s (2009) Brand Experience Scale, which consists of four sub-constructs: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral. All four sub-constructs turned out to be uni-dimensional (tve = 65% for sensory; tve = 67% for affective; tve = 67% for intellectual; tve = 59% for behavioral) and internally consistent (α = .72 for sensory; α = .75 for affective; α = .74 for intellectual; α = .62 for behavioral). In this study, overall brand experience that encompasses the
four sub-constructs was used to test the research hypotheses. Cronbach’s alpha for all items included was .84.

Relationship quality with the brand promoted on the website was estimated with the Relationship Quality Scale developed by De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci (2001). This scale consists of three sub-constructs: satisfaction, trust, and commitment. All three sub-constructs showed the uni-dimensionality (tve = 78% for satisfaction; tve = 83% for trust; tve = 85% for commitment) and the internal consistency (α = .86 for satisfaction; α = .90 for trust; α = .91 for commitment). Overall relationship quality, comprised of the three sub-constructs, showed an alpha of .94.

For subsequent analysis, raw scores of each construct were aggregated. The specific item wordings, along with scale means and standard deviations, were presented for each construct in Table 1. Correlations and covariances of the constructs were presented in Table 2.

**Data Analysis**

To evaluate the proposed mediation effect, three different regression models recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) were examined. Supposing that there is an independent variable (A), a mediator (B), and a dependent variable (C), the researcher would regress B on A in model 1, regress C on A in model 2, and regress C on A and B in model 3. An examination of such three separate regression analyses helps understand a two-step process in which perceived interactivity of the website (A) affects online brand experience (B), which subsequently explains relationship quality with the brand (C).

This study also conducted the Sobel test to assess the statistical significance of the mediation effect (Sobel 1982). When the independent variable and the mediator are analyzed
together in model 3, the effect of the independent variable needs to be decreased, compared to the one in model 2, and the effect of the mediator should be significant. The Sobel test thus investigates whether the effect difference of the independent variable between model 2 and model 3 is statistically significant.

**Results: Hypotheses Testing**

This study asked participants to choose and evaluate the website they most frequently visit. This data collection method relies on participants’ memory of website experience. Thus, the different types of websites (e.g., web portals, e-commerce sites, and brick-and-mortar sites) and the frequency of visiting the website were measured and controlled in all regression analyses. For this, the website type was converted to dummy variables. Regression analyses revealed that the frequency of visiting the website, but not the type of the website, was significantly related to all dependent variables. Yet including these two covariates did not affect the major results of the study.

H1a to H1c were examined by using regression model 1 (A => B). All three independent variables accounted for 15.1% of the variance in brand experience on the website. Among three sub-constructs of perceived interactivity, active control and two-way communication appeared to be significant predictors of brand experience, with regression coefficients of .202 ($p < .01$) and .307 ($p < .001$), respectively. Unexpectedly, synchronicity did not show a significant impact on brand experience ($\beta = -.129$, ns). Thus, the findings provided support for H1a and H1b, but not for H1c.

Regression model 2 (A => C) was examined to test H2a to H2c, which stated the relationship between perceived interactivity of the website and relationship quality with the brand. As the
dependent variable, overall relationship quality was included in model 2. Afterwards, three sub-constructs of relationship quality—satisfaction, trust, and commitment—were also analyzed individually in model 2, to see differential impacts of perceived interactivity, if any, on each sub-construct. Similar to H1, active control and two-way communication turned out to be significant predictors of overall relationship quality (β = .260, p < .01 for active control; β = .162, p < .05 for two-way communication). Synchronicity was not found to be related with relationship quality with the brand (β = .101, ns). Perceived interactivity explained 31.0% of the variance in overall relationship quality. Separate regression analyses on three sub-constructs of relationship quality revealed similar patterns with overall relationship quality, although two-way communication approached significance in explaining trust (p < .10) and synchronicity appeared to be related to satisfaction (β = .162, p < .05). The models accounted for 36.2% of the variance for satisfaction, 25.7% for trust, and 23.6% for commitment. Altogether, the results provided strong support for H2a and H2b and partial support for H2c.

Model 3 (A + B => C) was used to test H3, which expected the positive relationship between brand experience and relationship quality with the brand. The findings showed that brand experience was positively related to overall relationship quality (β = .397, p < .001). Three separate models were also performed for each sub-construct of relationship quality. Consistently, brand experience was found to have a significant impact on satisfaction (β = .288, p < .001), trust (β = .347, p < .001) and commitment (β = .445, p < .001). The models, including both the independent variables and the mediator, accounted for 44.4% of the variance for overall relationship quality and 43.2% to 36.0% for each sub-construct of relationship quality. Thus, H3 received strong support.
Test for Mediation

To determine significant mediation, Baron and Kenny (1986) argued that the four conditions should be met among the independent variable (A), the mediator (B), and the dependent variable (C). As for first three conditions, three different regression models should reveal a significant relationship between A and B in model 1, A and C in model 2, and B and C in model 3. The last condition is to show that the effect of the independent variable (A) on the dependent variable (C) needs to be reduced, compared with the one in model 2, when the mediator (B) is included in model 3. In other words, the regression coefficient of the independent variable (A) in model 3 must be significantly smaller than the one obtained in model 2.

As shown in Table 3, a review of three regression analyses confirmed the first three conditions specified by Baron and Kenny (1986). The fourth condition was examined with the Sobel test (see Table 4). The results showed the statistical significance of the mediation effect, confirming that brand experience mediated the effects of perceived interactivity (active control and two-way communication) on overall relationship quality with the brand.

Discussion

Integrating theories of website interactivity and brand experience and drawing insights from prior research (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, and Iacobucci 2001; Yoon, Choi, and Sohn 2008), this study tested a theoretical model that explains the mediating effect of brand experience on the linkage between perceived interactivity of a brand’s website and the consumer-brand relationship building. The mediation test revealed strong support for the mediating role of brand experience in explaining the effects of website interactivity on relationship quality with the brand. Among three dimensions of perceived interactivity, it appeared that active control and two-way
communication led to stronger brand experience as well as better relationship quality, whereas synchronicity did not. Brand experience was shown to increase relationship quality with the brand. More importantly, the Sobel test demonstrated that active control and two-way communication indirectly influenced relationship quality through brand experience.

**Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study make theoretical contributions to our knowledge of brand experience in the e-marketplace. As a relatively recent construct in the literature, prior studies on brand experience have heavily examined its consequences in the offline marketing context. Extending this research line, the current study delved into the antecedents and consequences of brand experience in the online marketing context by highlighting its mediating role when accounting for the effects of perceived interactivity on relationship quality. Perceived interactivity exerted a direct effect on relationship quality as well as an indirect effect on relationship quality via brand experience. This finding helps untangle the underlying mechanism in which perceived interactivity has an impact on consumers’ responses to the website and sheds light on brand experience as one of the boundary conditions to explain how website interactivity works.

The literature on perceived interactivity of the website offers valuable insights for a theoretical linkage with brand experience. Empirically, the multiple dimensions of perceived interactivity were found to heighten brand experience on the website and relationship quality. This finding underlines the applicability of brand experience, which was built upon the offline marketing context, within the online marketing environment. Furthermore, as Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello’s (2009) indicated, this finding acknowledges the importance of indirect brand experience occurring when consumers are virtually exposed to brand websites. Specifically, it is
worthy of discussing which dimensions of perceived interactivity enrich (or do not enrich) brand experience and relationship quality.

Two dimensions of active control and two-way communication appeared to be key determinants in enhancing both brand experience and relationship quality with the brand. Active control is characterized by the human-machine interaction (Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Liu, 2003), in which consumers can choose the contents of the website based on their motivation and preference or maneuver the way of using the website. Consumers’ perceived control over website contents or online activities is also explained by “internally based efficacy,” which represents consumers’ psychological sense of capability to navigate the website at their own pace (Song and Zinkhan 2008; Wu 1999). Such a psychological aspect of control in using the website is more likely to lead to enjoyable feelings of experiencing the brand displayed on the website and subsequently facilitate the consumer-brand relationship building. Two-way communication is considered the human-human interaction through the machine (Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Liu, 2003). Consumers can receive feedback on brand-related issues, express complaints and furies about the brand and deliver compliments to the brand. It seems plausible that such interactions, through reciprocal communication, offer consumers opportunities to experience the brand in a more engaging manner and help build the better relationship with the brand.

It is notable that perceived synchronicity did not appear to improve either brand experience or overall relationship quality in the e-marketplace. It seems that perceived quality of website speed, which facilitates faster interactions with the brand, does not serve as a determinant to foster more positive brand experience or build the relationship with the brand. It is speculated that synchronic features currently used in the website is valued less than active
control and two-way communication because the rapid advancement of information technology enables the website to respond to consumers’ requests quicker than ever. Even when consumers experience a lower level of synchronicity on the website, they may think that it is not only related to the complexity of website design, but also to the technical issues (e.g., buffering) from their Internet service provider. Alternatively, consumers may consider synchronicity as one of system features relating to the medium, instead of their ability to control website use. This is called “externally based system efficacy,” which reflects consumers’ perception of how fast the website as a system is to their requests (Song and Zinkhan 2008; Wu 1999). Such a system-related feature may be less important for shaping brand experience and relationship quality.

Brand experience on the website was found to subsequently spill over to relationship quality with the brand. As found in the current study, key drivers of brand experience on the website are active control of website use and two-way communication. Interactive features promoting these dimensions provide various brand contact points (e.g., advergames, virtual product trials), which consumers actively interact and play with on the stage provided by the brand (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The state of full immersion with the brand (e.g., play) would enhance sensorial, emotional, and/or behavioral brand experience, resulting in strengthening the relationship with the brand (Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera 2005; Van Noort, Voorveld, and Van Reijmersdal 2012). In addition, the amount and type of brand information displayed on the website are immense and diverse, which require extensive cognitive efforts to process information (Liu and Shrum 2002). In the online marketing environment, such sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral brand experiences may make a contribution to an increase in relationship quality because of a deep and rich consumer engagement with the brand. This finding is consistent with Fournier’s (1998)
argument that brand relationships result from the cumulative outcomes of positively interacting with the brand.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study shed light on the importance of brand strategies to diversify and enhance consumer experience with the brand for relationship marketing. A wide array of brand experiences, ranging from sensations, feelings, cognitions, to behavioral responses, help marketers improve the consumer-brand relationship in the e-marketplace. Given the importance of virtual brand experience in customer relationship management, it is critical to develop digital strategies that stimulate or appeal to the sensory, emotional, intellectual, or behavioral aspects of brand experience. The interactivity of websites would serve as a key initiator for enhancing brand experience.

Marketers benefit from the findings of this study by designing more interactive and engaging websites. In designing a brand’s website, marketers need to make strenuous efforts to develop newer and more creative devices to facilitate active control and two-way communication, which can ultimately enrich brand experience. Strategic matches can be considered between interactive features and specific aspects of brand experience. For example, two-way communication features, such as personalized messages or chat rooms, may appeal to a cognitive dimension of brand experience. Active control features, such as user-friendly navigation tools, search options, or customized product, may trigger consumers’ behavioral aspect of brand experience. Interactive features for product presentation in a multimodal form (e.g., fashion show video) may satisfy sensory or emotional desires of brand experience. Strategic uses of website’s
interactive features are needed to increase satisfactory brand experience in the online marketing context, which in turn build a trustworthy consumer-brand relationship.

Limitations and Future Research

Like other studies, some limitations of this study exist. This study applied the brand experience scale (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009), which was developed in the offline marketing context, to the online marketing context. This application may cause the low reliability of behavioral brand experience because it is somewhat improbable to interact with the brand online at the behavioral level. However, it is unlikely that this limitation would seriously alter the major findings because this study used the brand experience scale as a whole in the regression analyses. More importantly, the brand website utilizes the action-oriented interactive features such as “click now,” “buy now,” or “share it,” so that consumers are likely to feel behavioral aspects of brand experience in the website.

Another limitation is brand websites studied in this research. Participants were asked to self-select the brand website they most frequently visit. Although brand websites included in this study are diverse and thus help generalize the findings, there may be some possible confounding variables to attenuate relationships between variables. Alternatively, researchers can choose certain product categories and website types (e.g., hedonic versus utilitarian products or high-involving vs. low-involving products) and control the impact of a self-selected website on relationships. This way, researchers can identify clearer relationships between perceived interactivity of the website, brand experience, and relationship quality with the brand. In addition, this study relied on participants’ memory when evaluating their perception of website interactivity, brand experience, and relationship quality. This study did not use an experiment
which asks participants to use and then evaluate the website under study. Self-report measures stemming from a survey method may have some limitation for claiming casual relationships between variables. Thus caution should be made against arguing for causal relationships and we can at best discuss correlational relationships between variables. The participants used in the study are mainly college students. Although they are millennials who grow up with brand websites for communication, entertainment, and transactions, there is the limited generalizability. Future research should include a diverse range of consumer groups including more mature consumers.

**Conclusion**

Using the mediation test, the current study found the mediating role of brand experience in explaining the effects of perceived interactivity on relationship quality with a brand. As key determinants of brand experience, active control and two-way communication appeared to be crucial aspects of interactivity in enhancing strong brand experience and relationship quality with the brand. In closing, it is hoped that this study provides useful information to digital brand strategists who recognize the important role of brand experience as a driver for creating and maintaining the consumer-brand relationship in the e-marketplace.
References


Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Control</strong> <em>(α = .66)</em></td>
<td>I felt that I had a lot of control over my visiting experiences at this website.</td>
<td>5.79 (0.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>While I was on the website, I could choose freely what I wanted to see.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>While surfing the website, my actions decided the kind of experiences I got.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two-way Communication</strong> <em>(α = .82)</em></td>
<td>The website is effective in gathering visitors’ feedback. The website facilitates two-way communication between visitors and the site.</td>
<td>4.72 (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is difficult to offer feedback to the website. (reversed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website makes me feel it wants to listen to its visitors. The website gives visitors the opportunity to talk back.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synchronicity</strong> <em>(α = .77)</em></td>
<td>The website processed my input very quickly. Getting information from the website is very fast. I was able to obtain the information I want to without any delay.</td>
<td>5.57 (0.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I clicked on the links, I felt I was getting instantaneous information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website was very slow in responding to my request. (reversed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Experience</strong> <em>(α=.84)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.32 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensory</strong> <em>(α = .72)</em></td>
<td>This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses. I found this brand interesting in a sensory way.</td>
<td>5.14 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This brand does not appeal to my senses. (reversed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective</strong> <em>(α = .75)</em></td>
<td>This brand induces feelings and sentiments. This brand is an emotional brand. I do not have strong emotions for this brand. (reversed)</td>
<td>4.18 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual</strong> <em>(α = .74)</em></td>
<td>I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.</td>
<td>4.08 (1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral (α = .62)</td>
<td>I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand.</td>
<td>3.89 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This brand results in bodily experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This brand is not action oriented. (reversed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality (α = .94)</td>
<td>I am satisfied with the relationship I have with this brand.</td>
<td>5.38 (1.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am happy with the efforts this brand is making towards regular customers like me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As a regular customer, I have a high-quality relationship with this brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction (α = .86)</td>
<td>I am satisfied with the relationship I have with this brand.</td>
<td>5.57 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am happy with the efforts this brand is making towards regular customers like me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As a regular customer, I have a high-quality relationship with this brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust (α = .90)</td>
<td>This brand gives me a feeling of trust.</td>
<td>(5.58) 1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This brand gives me a trustworthy impression.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have trust in this brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment (α = .91)</td>
<td>Even if this brand would be more difficult to reach, I would still keep buying or consuming it.</td>
<td>(4.98) 1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am willing “to go the extra mile” to remain a customer of this brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel loyal towards this brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 Correlation, Variance, and Covariance of the Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Active Control</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td>.275</td>
<td>.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Two-way Comm.</td>
<td>.488</td>
<td>1.332</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.318</td>
<td>.358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Synchronicity</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Brand Experience</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>1.140</td>
<td>.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Relationship Quality</td>
<td>.424</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>.411</td>
<td>.656</td>
<td>1.349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Variances are on the diagonal. Correlations are in the upper triangle and covariances are in the lower triangle.
Table 3 Hypotheses Testing and Test for Mediation (N = 265)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Experience</th>
<th>Overall Relationship Quality</th>
<th>Relationship Quality</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Only Sites</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>-.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On and Offline Sites</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Frequency</td>
<td>.176**</td>
<td>.348***</td>
<td>.375***</td>
<td>.297***</td>
<td>.305***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total R²</td>
<td>.033*</td>
<td>.119***</td>
<td>.144***</td>
<td>.094***</td>
<td>.102***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model 1

H1a: Active Control .202*
H1b: Two-way Communication .307***
H1c: Synchronicity -.129
Total R² .151***

Model 2

H2a: Active Control .260** .243** .224** .255**
H2b: Two-way Communication .162* .155* .121† .169*
H2c: Synchronicity .101 .162* .136 .014
Total R² .310*** .362*** .257*** .236***

Model 3

Active Control .180* .185* .154* .165*
Two-way Communication .040 .066 .015 .032
Synchronicity .153 .198** .181* .071
H3: Brand Experience .397*** .288*** .347*** .445***
Total R² .444*** .432*** .360*** .388***

Model 1: Independent variable (A) => Mediator (B)

Model 2: Independent variable (A) => Dependent variable (C)

Model 3: Independent variable and Mediator (A and B) => Dependent variable (C)

Note: † < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Table 4 Mediation Test (Sobel Test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediation Test</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Control – Brand Experience – Relationship Quality</td>
<td>2.273*</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way Comm – Brand Experience – Relationship Quality</td>
<td>3.542***</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Control – Brand Experience – Satisfaction</td>
<td>2.184*</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way Comm – Brand Experience – Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.231*</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Control – Brand Experience - Trust</td>
<td>2.219*</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Control – Brand Experience - Commitment</td>
<td>2.289*</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-way Comm – Brand Experience – Commitment</td>
<td>3.511**</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: † < .10

* p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001
Figure 1 Proposed Mediation Model of Brand Experience

- **Perceived Interactivity**
  - Active Control
  - Two-way Communication
  - Synchronicity

- **Brand Experience**
  - Sensory
  - Affective
  - Intellectual
  - H1s
  - H2s

- **Relationship Quality**
  - Satisfaction
  - Trust
  - Commitment
  - H3