



**Experiential Marketing Dynamics: Multiple mediator analysis  
of the experiential marketing - purchase intentions relationship**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This paper aims to test the claimed influence of Experiential Marketing (EM) on consumers' purchasing intentions of smartphones. The study also examines the mediating roles of customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand advocacy, and brand resonance on the EM-Purchase intentions assumed relationship.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study follows a positivist quantitative approach, in which an online survey was administered to a non-probable convenient sample of smartphone users. 238 valid questionnaires were received, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was used for data analysis and hypotheses testing.

**Findings:** The findings report a clear and statistically significant influence of EM on purchase intentions. Customer satisfaction, brand advocacy, brand loyalty, and brand resonance are found to mediate the assumed EM-Purchase intentions relationship with different degrees of strength, with brand advocacy having the strongest mediation.

**Originality/novelty/value:** The study is among the first to examine Middle Eastern consumers' purchase intentions of smartphones in relation to EM. This study is also among the first to examine the mediating role of customer satisfaction, brand advocacy, brand loyalty and brand resonance on the EM-Purchase intentions relationship.

**Research implications/limitations:** The results have many implications for marketing academics and practitioners. The findings indicate that EM is effective in stimulating and triggering favourable purchase intentions. Nevertheless, the findings are relevant to the context of the study, i.e. Middle Eastern smartphone market. Thus, the findings should be carefully generalised.

**Keywords:** Experiential Marketing, Purchase Intentions, Brand Management, Smartphones, The Middle East.

## **Introduction**

Experiential Marketing (EM) has become a hot topic in marketing terminology in recent years. The concept focuses primarily on providing consumers with pleasant experiences. Academics and practitioners' interest in EM is growing as numerous studies (Schmitt, 1999; 2010; 2011; 2012; Öztürk, 2015; Wahyuningtyas & Zainul, 2017; Alias, 2020) report significant influence of EM on multiple facets of organisational performance, including both financial and non-financial, as well as other desirable outcomes such as consumer satisfaction and loyalty, and several brand management constructs (e.g. brand loyalty, brand relations, brand advocacy, and brand switching).

Similarly, smartphones have been an integral part of the lives of billions of people in the last two decades. Smartphone manufacturers are relentless in attempting to improve the capabilities of their devices in order to fulfil customers' demands. In this regard, billions are spent annually on R&D, and on other marketing activities (Muzumdar, 2015; Appiah et al., 2019; Wilson & Makmud, 2019). A smartphone is a "*cell phone that performs many of the functions of a computer, typically having a touchscreen interface, Internet access, and an operating system capable of running downloaded apps*" (Oxford Dictionary, 2019).

The smartphone industry has grown dramatically in size over the last decade. Amid increasing competitive pressures, marketing professionals are considering innovative ways to get consumers more engaged in the buying process, to create more meaningful experiences and to help them develop lasting brand relationships. In this respect, EM is believed to be used in marketing smartphones, to communicate with existing, potential and prospective consumers (Machado et al., 2014; Muzumdar, 2015; Appiah et al., 2019; Wilson & Makmud, 2019).

This research is concerned with testing existing theories regarding EM influence on one of the most important marketing objectives, i.e. purchase intentions. Therefore, the problem of the research could be stated as: "*Does EM influence consumers purchase intentions? And if it does, what factors/variables might mediate such influence?*"

Accordingly, the research aims to examine the influence of EM on consumers purchase intentions suggested by numerous previous studies (e.g. Schmitt, 1999; 2010; 2011; 2012; Machado et al., 2014; Öztürk, 2015; Muzumdar, 2015; Wahyuningtyas & Zainul, 2017; Appiah et al., 2019; Wilson & Makmud, 2019; Alias, 2020) in the highly competitive smartphone market. Furthermore, the authors believe that a knowledge gap exists as to whether relevant theories consistently apply in the Middle Eastern context alike other emerged and emerging economies? The Middle East is a vast market with substantial numbers of consumers and substantial financial abilities that create diverse demand for smartphone brands.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous studies have tackled the research problem in the Middle East smartphone market. Moreover, the mediating role of customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, identity and resonance have not been examined altogether in a single study. These variables have significant importance in brand management literature and practice and are found to trigger many desirable business performance outcomes (Schmitt, 2012; Machado et al., 2014; Shieh & Lai, 2017; Zainul, 2017; Barnes et al., 2020).

In terms of the research method, this research is positivist in nature. It employs a quantitative survey technique by administering a structured questionnaire to a sample of smartphone users located across the Middle Eastern market. Our findings report a clear indication of experiential

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marketing influence on consumers' purchase intentions of smartphone. With regard to mediator variables, customer satisfaction, brand advocacy, brand loyalty, and brand resonance are found to mediate the experiential marketing – purchase intentions relationship with different degrees of strength, with brand advocacy having the strongest mediation. The research is sought to contribute to marketing literature and profession by demonstrating the roles that several variables play in triggering and stimulating favourable organisational performance outcomes in the form of positive purchase intentions.

### **Literature overview**

The marketing strategy has moved from the conventional viewpoint, which focuses solely on goods, brand promotion and advertising, to a more emotional approach, where pleasant relationships, interactions and connections are encouraged, with the goal of generating experiential impressions for consumers (Batat, 2019). Conventional marketing views consumers as sensible decision-makers who consider the risks and advantages of the offer, whereas experiential marketing considers consumers as logical and sentimental decision-makers (Khan & Rahman, 2014).

EM emphasises the development of goods, services and activities that are focused on a balanced understanding of the customer's experience (Machado et al., 2014; Alias, 2020), As a consequence, EM is translating the meaning of the product through a series of measurable physical and mental interactions that help the product and prompt desired receptive actions (emotional reaction) of the user (Schmitt, 1999; 2011; Chen et al., 2008; Oetomo, 2017).

According to EM literature, various studies have examined the foundations of the concept and its influence on diverse variables such as: customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Öztürk, 2015; Wahyuningtyas & Zainul, 2017); customer satisfaction and customer commitment (Alkilani et al., 2013; Nurcahyo, 2013); behavioural intentions (Rokhsati, 2016); purchase intentions (Yang & He, 2011); brand loyalty (Sugiyarti, 2017); brand experience, brand resonance, and brand loyalty (Shieh & Lai, 2017); Brand image (Oetomo, 2017); customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Araci et al., 2017); brand advocacy (Machado, 2014); customer value (Danurdara et al., 2017); and brand switching (Appiah et al., 2019).

Despite this plethora of studies, more research is yet expected to take place to enrich our knowledge of the EM concept and its functionality in different settings. Specifically, further development of the dynamics of EM and its assumed relations with financial and non-financial organisational performance is demanded. In this regard, the following section discusses a sample of previous studies that are profound in the relevant literature. These studies are widely cited EM research, published in recognised periodicals, and cover a variety of empirical application industries such as hospitality, consumer goods, banking services, and smartphones.

One corner stone in the development of EM literature, and the brand experience concept is the seminal conceptual work of Bernd Schmitt (1999; 2010; 2011; 2012); Brakus et al., (2009); and Zarantonello & Schmitt (2010). We find that Schmitt's conceptualisation of EM became widely adopted in numerous subsequent researches, and EM scholars consider it the most resilient EM theory to date. Schmitt and his colleagues contrasted traditional marketing (product-oriented) to EM (customer-

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oriented). The former focuses on the attributes and rewards of measurable goods, while the latter (consumer-oriented) EM focuses on the customer experience that happens as customers observe, perform or witness circumstances that cause social, cognitive, sensory and behavioural outcomes (Schmitt, 1999; 2010; Shieh & Lai, 2017; Barnes et al., 2020). Product marketing stresses the specific types of goods and services, while experiential marketing focuses on the wider circumstance wherein the commodity/service could be used. For example, rather than concentrating on advertising a hotel room, experiential advertisers highlight the role played by staying at a specific hotel in the entire experience of visiting a tourist destination. (Machado et al., 2014).

Broadly, there are two forms of customer experiences, these are the direct and indirect (Rokhsati, 2016). Physical encounters between users and the commodity are known to be direct experiences, whereas indirect encounters arise as a result of reviewed associations between two subjects (Schmitt 1999; 2010). Nevertheless, customers are not simply searching for the realistic attributes of the product/service, but physiological and provocative desires are rooted in the buying behaviour, which is reflected in a variety of experiential structures around the product/service (Schmitt, 1999; 2010). Pine et al., (1999) define good interaction as an exciting unique encounter by the consumer of the product/service that contributes to beneficial results, such as optimistic expectations, an optimistic word of mouth and a desirable buying behaviour.

Schmitt (1999:53) argues that the transformation from product-oriented marketing towards customer-oriented marketing is facilitated by three simultaneous developments, they are "the omnipresence of information technology, the supremacy of the brand, and the ubiquity of communication and entertainment". He further proposed the widely

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adopted conceptualisation of EM to include five main elements, these are: sense, feel, think, act, and relate. This experiential philosophy is implemented by means of "experience providers" (Schmitt, 1999: 63). They include communications, visual and verbal identity and signage, product presence, co-branding, spatial environments, electronic media, and people. We pursue EM in this study in this former manner, as addressed below based on Schmitt's profound notion:

**Sense:** Sense marketing is a way to touch the consumers emotions through consumer experience that can be gained through the senses (eyes, ears, tongue, skin and nose) that they have to product and service.

**Feel:** Sensation is not only a matter of appearance, but also the disposition and feelings of the spirit that can cause joy or sorrow. Feel marketing is aimed towards the thoughts and emotions of customers, with the goal of manipulating the interaction that starts from such a soft state, with heavy emotions, to enjoyment and confidence.

**Think:** Humans typically function in two ways: convergent and divergent. Convergent thought allows businesses to limit the customer's perspective so the business will direct consumers to a customer-oriented theme. Accordingly, marketing is the technique of the business to engage the buyer by offering problem-solving feedback and enabling consumers to connect cognitively or creatively with the company or product.

**Act:** Act marketing is structured to build customer perception in relation to the human environment, attitudes, and relationships with others. For example, in hospitality services, greeting visitors with a warm, happy face, etc. This should provide consumers with the feeling they need to feel at home. The act element of EM has to deal with actual behaviour and lifestyle by getting people to act and share their lifestyle.

**Relate:** Marketing is linked to one's own society and a comparison community that can establish a social identity. A marketer should be able to establish a social image for its consumers by the goods or services provided. Related marketing is the primary draw to consumers ' greatest desire to develop self-improvement, social and economic status and self-image.

The former discussion of EM points out that earlier research was either conceptual in nature (e.g. Schmitt's) or they were empirically applied in other settings than the smartphone and Middle Eastern ones (e.g. Alkilani et al., 2013; Nurcahyo, 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2014; Oetomo, 2017). They provided significant contribution to knowledge and to our understanding of EM, however, further research is still expected. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is presented in our study to test whether existing theories of EM are consistent if empirically validated in a new setting:

*Hypothesis 1: Experiential Marketing will have a positive influence on purchase intentions.*

### **Customer satisfaction**

Satisfaction is described by Oliver & Swan (1989: 374); as "a decision that a product/service function or a product/service itself offers a satisfying fulfilment of the associated consumption". Oliver (1999) suggests that happiness provides a major difference to the buying and decision-making process.

Experiential marketing is mainly concerned with enhancing customer service mainly due to its involvement in generating brand interest in the minds of consumers and whether that perception is expressed in consumer behaviour and brand loyalty. Many researchers affirm these arguments, such as Yazici (2013), which conclusively identified the positive influence of experiential marketing on satisfaction.

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Other scholars, for example: (Zena & Hadisumarto, 2012; Öztürk, 2015; Nurcahyo, 2016; Wahyuningtyas et al., 2017; Shieh & Lai, 2017; and Yeh et al., 2019) through their evidence-based research, have also found a strong correlation between experiential marketing strategies and activities and consumer loyalty. Despite this agreement, the suggested partnerships need to be further explored in other ways, as well as by mediating the effect of customer retention and other factors on other beneficial marketing results, such as brand advocacy, brand resonance, brand engagement and purchasing intentions. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are presented:

*Hypothesis 2: Customer Satisfaction will have a positive influence on purchase intentions.*

*Hypothesis 3: Customer Satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between experiential marketing and purchase intentions.*

### **Brand Advocacy**

One of the presumed advantages of experiential marketing in brand management seems to be the growth of brand activism (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). As consumers derisively recall and share memorable encounters with their friends and their families, they are creating a rise in revenue thanks to their constructive word of mouth, engagement and advocacy. (Machado et al., 2014). Simultaneously with the principles of the business relationship, the length of brand satisfaction is the foundation for long-term profitability for the company. The rewards of brand loyalty are also cumulative. Organizations need to convey simply, professionally and emotionally, the relationship, purpose and attitude of the profitable product / service brand. As a consequence, brand loyalty is successfully created

and preserved by the five dimensions of experiential marketing, i.e. sense, think, feel, act and relate (Fransisca, 2007). When the degree of loyalty grows, customers become brand advocates (Pickton & Masterson, 2010; Machado et al., 2014). Brand advocates are customers who "... choose a single provider from among everyone else that they can find, give the supplier the highest possible share of spending, and informally—without any reward—informing them how good the partnership is and how important and profitable they benefit from it." (Lowenstein, 2011, p. 112).

Despite the evidence that EM stimulates brand advocacy, and both constructs initiate favourable purchase intentions, it is questionable whether brand advocacy mediates the EM-Purchase intentions relationship. As noted earlier, no previous research has examined such mediation and therefore it is examined in our study. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are presented:

*Hypothesis 4: Brand Advocacy will have a positive influence on purchase intentions.*

*Hypothesis 5: Brand Advocacy mediates the positive relationship between experiential marketing and purchase intentions.*

### **Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty is interconnected with the value of the company. The above refers to the intrinsic benefit or cumulative benefit of the product that comes with the company (Aziz & Yasin, 2010). Brand equity occurs as consumers voluntarily spend as much for the same amount of service due to the appeal of the label added to the product. Brand loyalty has always been at the heart of brand value (Shieh & Lai, 2017). It is important to consider how the importance of the brand is generated in the perceptions of the consumers or how this interest leads to beneficial consumer behaviour and brand loyalty.

Although earlier studies have indicated that EM positively influences brand loyalty, and both constructs cause favourable purchase intentions, we found it reasonable to question if brand loyalty mediates the EM-Purchase intentions relationship. As noted earlier, no previous research has examined such mediation and therefore it is examined in our study. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are presented:

*Hypothesis 6: Brand Loyalty will have a positive influence on purchase intentions.*

*Hypothesis 7: Brand Loyalty mediates the positive relationship between experiential marketing and purchase intentions.*

### **Brand Resonance**

Shieh & Lai (2017: 61) refer to Keller (2009) the idea that Brand Resonance is a term that is suggested to draw a connection between the brand and the brand and relates to "the essence of the relationship between the consumer and the brand and, more precisely, the degree to which a person experiences that he / she resonates or interacts with or feels in harmony with the brand". Brand resonance emphasises the importance of recognising the intellectual and emotional principles of brand relationships, i.e. through recognising how consumers hear, perceive and respond (Keller, 2009).

Despite the evidence that EM stimulates brand resonance, and both constructs initiate favourable purchase intentions, it is questionable whether brand resonance mediates the EM-Purchase intentions relationship. As noted earlier, no previous research has examined such mediation and therefore it is examined in our study. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are presented:

*Hypothesis 8: Brand Resonance will have a positive influence on purchase intentions.*

*Hypothesis 9: Brand Resonance mediates the positive relationship between experiential marketing and purchase intentions.*

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### **Purchase Intentions**

The concept of buying decisions, according to Oetomo (2017:177), is "*to define all potential alternatives for systematically and objectively breaking down and evaluating choices, and perhaps even the priorities that decide their individual risks*".

Assael (1998) indicates that the contact between organisations and their customers will lead to a cycle of detecting, assessing goods, contemplating whether potential goods will satisfy customer desires, and eventually agreeing to buy. Buying decision is a decision-making process to decide what should or should not be bought. Such a conclusion is usually related to past and ongoing experiences. Purchase decision is a problem-solving method to the actions of people purchasing products and services in order to satisfy their wants and needs as a result of their quest for facts, evaluation of alternative options, purchase decisions, and more behaviour (Kotler, 2002; Pelletier & Collier, 2018).

A further implication of purchasing choices by Durrani et al. (2015) is the preference between two or more alternatives. even in other words, a person would have alternate options when making decisions. Market purchasing decisions should buy the most desired commodity, but two considerations that emerge between the buying goal and the purchasing decision. Consumers can plan to purchase on the basis of wages, demand and benefits of the drug. Nonetheless, there could be factors that may affect the buyer's decision to purchase the product, for example, the customer decides like he / she needs to buy more valuable products, or that there are rivals that sell the merchandise at a lower price.

Likewise, behavioural intent is among the most significant consequences of the consumer service process. In particular, it is important to avoid the defection of consumers whilst at the same time attempting to draw new customers through a variety of marketing activities. The cost of attracting a new customer is estimated to be higher than the expense of retaining a current client, resulting in various endeavours to minimize customer dissatisfaction (Gronroos, 2002). Major impacts of variables such as customer retention and brand loyalty are also apparent in the literature (Onaran et al., 2013). In consideration of the major impact on happiness and commitment of the experiential marketing variables, these aspects influence the behavioural purpose, both directly and indirectly (Wang et al., 2004).

### **Research Model**

The above literature discussion has illustrated how significant EM is in contemporary marketing practices. An evident knowledge gap exists in terms of scarcity of research tackling the influence of experiential marketing on purchase intentions as well as the mediation role of customer satisfaction, brand advocacy, brand loyalty, and brand resonance on such influence. Research variables have been discussed in relation to relevant literature, and justifications of why our research contributes to consolidation current theories of EM have been discussed. The following research model (Figure 1) depicts the proposed hypotheses and relationships among research variables.

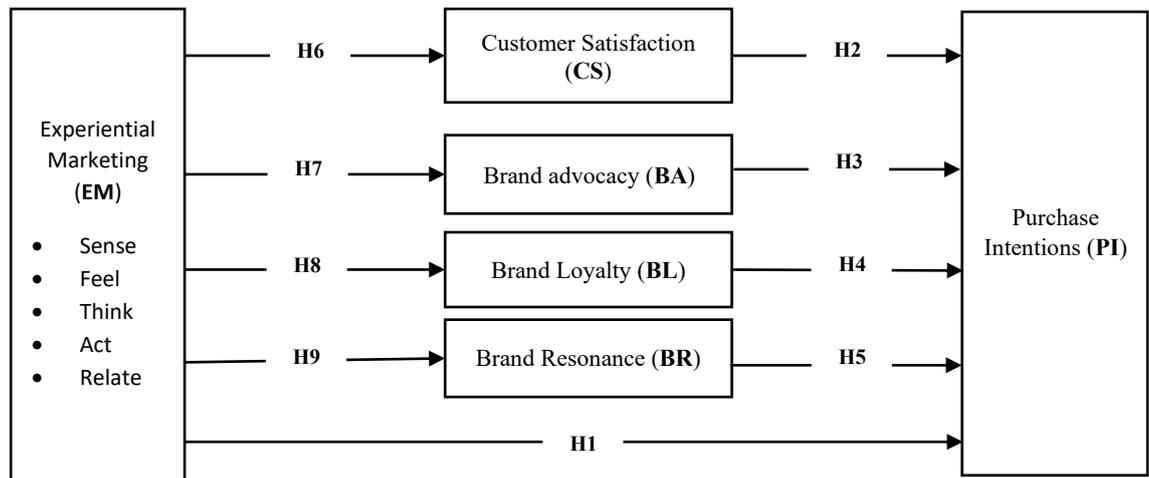


Figure (1): Proposed Research Model and hypotheses

### **Research Methods**

This study is a quantitative research, employing hypotheses testing to explain and describe a phenomenon. It is descriptive in nature (Malhotra, 2010), since it aims to examine the influence of experiential marketing as an independent variable on a dependent variable (i.e. purchase intentions) and examine the mediation role of several variables (i.e. customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand advocacy, and brand resonance) on the initial relationship between Experiential marketing and purchase intentions. The study was conducted once (cross-section), and data were collected through electronic survey questionnaire filled-in and completed by individual respondents. Data were statistically analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which is used for testing and estimating causal relationships between variable. Hair et al., (1998); and Garver & Mentzer (1999) stated that in (SEM) studies, sample size should be more than 200. The study applied the non-probability convenient

sampling method and data were collected through online survey application (Google forms) by emailing the survey link to email address book of 3 Universities in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Data collection took place between October 10<sup>th</sup> 2019 and November 30<sup>th</sup> 2019. After omitting incomplete and invalid responses, 238 complete questionnaires out of 251 originally submitted ones were coded for data analysis.

### **Operationalisation of variables**

To measure experiential marketing, the study adopts scales developed and operationalised by earlier research (Yang, 2011: 5; Nadiri & Gunay, 2013). To measure customer satisfaction the study adopts the scale used by Wang et al., (2004) and Araci et al., (2017). For measuring brand advocacy, the study adopts Machado et al., (2014) and Kemp et al., (2012) scales. Brand loyalty measurement is adopted from the work of Brakus et al., (2009: 64). Brand resonance measurement is adopted from Huang et al., (2014). Finally, purchase intentions measurement is adopted from Zeithaml et al (1996) and Araci et al., (2017). Table 1, summarises the scale used for the study.

Table (1): Scales

<b>Concept Measures</b>	<b>Scale Items</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Sense	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. My smartphone looks attractive</li><li>2. The design of my smartphone is traditional and not special</li><li>3. The Accessories of my smartphone are attractive</li><li>4. The design and features of my smartphone match my expectations</li></ol>	Yang, 2011: 5); Nadiri & Gunay, (2013).
Feel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Owning my smartphone triggers positive feelings</li><li>2. I feel that my smartphone is very attractive</li><li>3. I feel that my smartphone deserves the effort and money spent to get it</li><li>4. I feel happy to own this smartphone</li><li>5. I feel comfortable using the apps and accessories of my smartphone</li></ol>	
Think	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The features of my smartphone make me think of how unique and different it is</li><li>2. The various uses of my smartphone encourage me to think of how best to utilize it</li></ol>	
Act	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. I always follow the news of my smartphone brand</li><li>2. My smartphone adds a lot of positive aspects to my life style</li></ol>	

	3. My smartphone enables me to do a lot of activities	
Relate	1. My friends prefer the same brand 2. I feel I have done the right thing to buy this mobile brand 3. Owning this smartphone enhances my social status	
Customer Satisfaction	1. The services offered by this brand matches my expectations 2. Based on my experiences in owning other brands, I am completely satisfied with my smartphone 3. The performance of this brand's products exceeds my expectations 4. The brand of my smartphone offers better and higher quality than other brands 5. The brand of my smartphone is more durable and reliable compared to other brands 6. The services associated with this brand match my expectations 7. The price I paid for my smartphone is worthy	Wang et al., (2004) and Araci et al., (2017)
Brand Advocacy	1. I enjoy being part of this brand's community 2. The brand of my smartphone is unique and different than other brands 3. I trust the brand of my smartphone and I am committed to its products 4. I am generally not interested in other smartphone brands 5. I speak positively about my smartphone brand 6. My smartphone meets my expectations 7. My smartphone exceeds my expectations	Machado et al., (2014) and Kemp et al., (2012)
Brand Loyalty	1. I don't want to buy other smartphone brands 2. I will recommend new models of this smartphone brand in the future 3. I feel loyal to my smartphone's brand 4. This brand will be my first smartphone brand in the future	Brakus et al., (2009: 64)
Brand Resonance	1. I talk positively about my smartphone to other people 2. I encourage my friends to buy this brand 3. I didn't mind paying more than other brands, in return for the benefits that I get from my smartphone 4. I always follow news updates about my smartphone brand 5. My smartphone reflects positive image for me	Huang et al., (2014) and Shieh & Lai (2017)
Purchase Intentions	1. When I need a smartphone, I consider this brand as my first choice 2. I will buy the same brand for my family members and my friends 3. I say positive things about this brand to others 4. I do not intend to switch to other smartphone brands in the future 5. I don't mind paying more in the future if this brand increases its prices compared to other brands	Zeithaml et al (1996) and Araci et al., (2017)

## **Data analysis**

### Descriptive findings

58.4% of participants were males and 41.6% were females. The majority of respondents aged between 31-40 years (40.3%), followed by 41-50 years (28.1%), and 21-30 years (22.2%). 74.7% were married, while 21.4% of the participants were singles. The majority of responses came from Egypt (44.9%), followed by Kuwait (31.9%), then Saudi Arabia (20.1%), and about 3% of responses were scattered among participants from Jourdan, UAE, Canada, Germany, Oman, and Libya.

50.8% of participants indicated that their primary smartphone brand is iPhone, followed by 25.2% using Samsung, and 11.3% using Huawei. The remaining 13% was divided among other brands such as HTC, Motorola, BlackBerry, Microsoft, Google, and Oppo. The majority of respondents (69.3%) indicated that they have owned the same brand in the past. 60.5% of respondents selected iPhone as their most preferred smartphone brand, followed by Samsung (26%), and Huawei (7.1%). Finally, 73.5% of respondents indicated that when they went to the store, they were already decided on the exact smartphone they will buy, followed by 5.4% who have bought another model of the same brand, and 3.7% ended up buying a different brand. 10.5% of respondents indicated that they didn't buy their smartphones but got it somehow (a present, a business phone ...etc).

### Measurement model analysis:

To analyse the proposed research model, structure equation modelling (SEM) with maximum likelihood method is carried out using AMOS 21 software to examine the hypothesized causal relationships.

Before testing these hypotheses, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement scales.

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The study utilized the most common indices to evaluate the model fit. The index of CMIN/DF is 1.240 which is acceptable being less than 5 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). The value of SRMR index is 0.081 which is deemed acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The value of GFI (0.516) as well as CFI (0.638) are considered to be accepted as they lie in the 0 to 1 range (Hooper et al., 2008). RMSEA (0.072) is deemed acceptable as well (Steiger, 2007). Accordingly, the measurement model appears to have a good fit.

Additionally, the measurement model was analysed for evaluating its reliability (the construct measure's indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability) and validity (convergent validity and discriminant validity). As shown in table 2, the results of the model's reliability and validity indicated that all indicator item loadings of constructs' indicators were more than 0.50, representing a good reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Only two statements were removed due to low loadings. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and Composite Reliability (CR) values were all above 0.7 indicating good internal consistency of each construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of each construct were all above 0.50 supporting the convergent validity.

Table (2): Measurement statistics of construct scales

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STDV</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<b><i>Experiential Marketing</i></b>					<b><i>0.911</i></b>	<b><i>0.944</i></b>	<b><i>0.502</i></b>
<b><i>(EM)</i></b>							
	EMs1	4.41	0.661	0.623			
	EMs2	4.28	0.624	0.691			
	EMs3	4.05	0.692	0.728			
	EMs4	4.34	0.615	0.751			
	EMf1	4.17	0.699	0.726			
	EMf2	4.08	0.742	0.717			
	EMf3	4.06	0.758	0.804			
	EMf4	4.18	0.689	0.823			
	EMf5	4.37	0.587	0.662			
	EMt1	4.08	0.775	0.709			
	EMt2	4.29	0.638	0.708			

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EMa1	3.91	0.891	0.664			
EMa2	4.11	0.682	0.655			
EMa3	4.35	0.553	0.636			
EMr1	4.23	0.758	0.676			
EMr2	4.02	0.768	0.691			
EMr3	4.33	0.677	0.748			
<b>Customer Satisfaction (CS)</b>				<b>0.869</b>	<b>0.919</b>	<b>0.619</b>
CS1	4.26	0.660	0.713			
CS2	4.31	0.666	0.765			
CS3	4.29	0.755	0.773			
CS4	3.95	0.739	0.725			
CS5	4.29	0.704	0.849			
CS6	4.28	0.722	0.828			
CS7	4.17	0.746	0.842			
<b>Brand Advocacy (BA)</b>				<b>0.885</b>	<b>0.911</b>	<b>0.596</b>
BA1	4.23	0.728	0.843			
BA2	4.29	0.626	0.833			
BA3	4.20	0.680	0.851			
BA4	3.80	0.890	0.648			
BA5	3.97	0.782	0.767			
BA6	4.06	0.700	0.727			
BA7	4.17	0.746	0.710			
<b>Brand Loyalty (BL)</b>				<b>0.861</b>	<b>0.906</b>	<b>0.707</b>
BL1	3.95	0.884	0.793			
BL2	4.15	0.821	0.880			
BL3	4.23	0.728	0.875			
BL4	3.97	0.782	0.811			
<b>Brand Resonance (BR)</b>				<b>0.869</b>	<b>0.906</b>	<b>0.659</b>
BR1	4.23	0.728	0.831			
BR2	4.29	0.626	0.839			
BR3	4.20	0.680	0.874			
BR4	4.03	0.731	0.800			
BR5	3.80	0.890	0.706			
<b>Purchase Intentions (PI)</b>				<b>0.847</b>	<b>0.891</b>	<b>0.622</b>
PI1	3.95	0.884	0.796			
PI2	4.15	0.821	0.843			
PI3	4.29	0.755	0.807			
PI4	3.80	0.890	0.704			
PI5	3.97	0.782	0.786			

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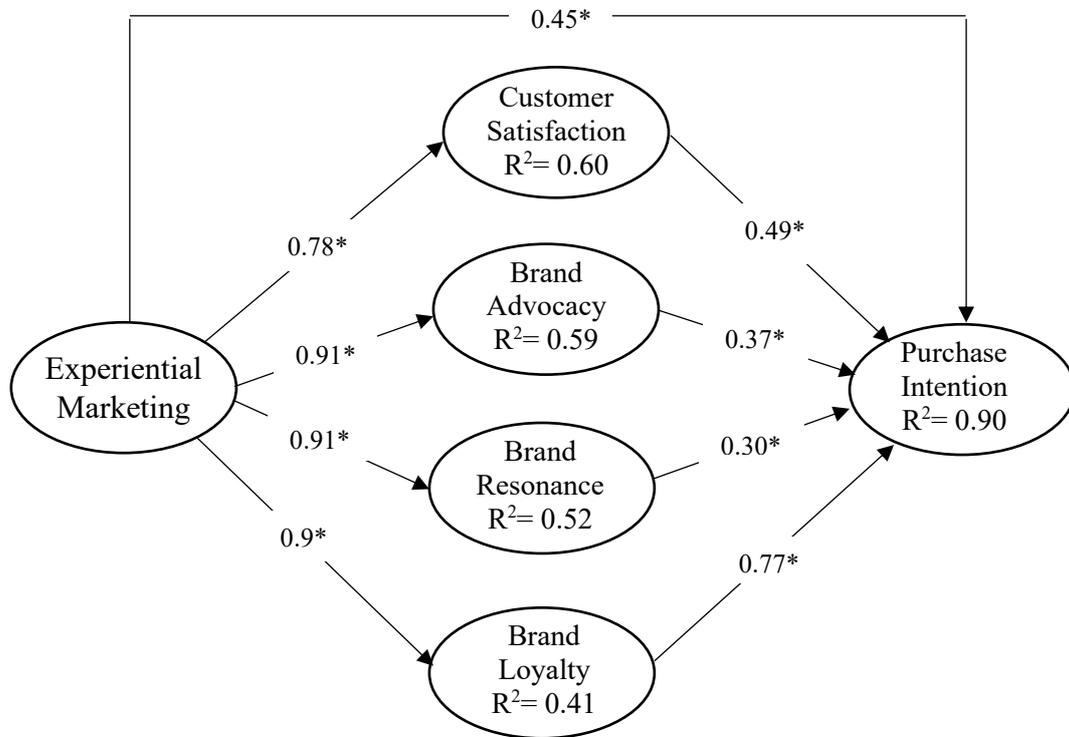
**Table 3** shows that the discriminant validity was confirmed as the (AVE) square root for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs. Consequently, the research proposed model has an appropriate reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity. Finally, Harman's single factor test was used to examine absence of common method bias, the results of that test shows that a single factor extracted explained 35.1% of total variance which is a value far less than 50%. Accordingly, there is no common method bias of the data.

Table (3): Discriminant validity of the correlations between constructs

	<b>EM</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>BA</b>	<b>BR</b>	<b>BL</b>	<b>PI</b>
<b>EM</b>	<b>(0.709)</b>					
<b>CS</b>	0.603	<b>(0.787)</b>				
<b>BA</b>	0.556	0.766	<b>(0.772)</b>			
<b>BR</b>	0.701	0.779	0.752	<b>(0.812)</b>		
<b>BL</b>	0.504	0.749	0.672	0.727	<b>(0.841)</b>	
<b>PI</b>	0.602	0.765	0.679	0.753	0.747	<b>(0.789)</b>

Hypotheses Testing:

The structural model (**Figure 2**) describes the causal relationships between constructs and facilitates examining the stated hypotheses from 1 to 9. Firstly, the direct relations between constructs (H1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) were examined. Then the indirect relations were examined revealing the role of mediator variables (H6, 7, 8 and 9).



**Figure (2): SEM Model**

**Table 4** shows the path coefficients and the significant levels of direct paths relations. While **table 5** shows the indirect and total effects in the model.

Table (4): The results of direct paths

Hypothesis	Direct Relationship	Standardized $\beta$	P-value	Result
H1	EM $\rightarrow$ PI	0.45	0.01	Accepted
H2	CS $\rightarrow$ PI	0.49	0.01	Accepted
H4	BA $\rightarrow$ PI	0.37	0.03	Accepted
H6	BR $\rightarrow$ PI	0.30	0.01	Accepted
H8	BL $\rightarrow$ PI	0.77	0.01	Accepted

As shown in **table 4**, hypotheses 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8 were all supported by the results. Experiential marketing has significant direct positive effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.45, P < 0.05$ ). Customer satisfaction also has significant direct positive effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.49, P < 0.05$ ). Brand advocacy has significant direct positive effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.37, P < 0.05$ ) as well. Furthermore, brand resonance has significant direct positive effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.30, P < 0.05$ ). finally, brand loyalty has significant direct positive effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.77, P < 0.05$ ). The path coefficients representing direct relations indicate that brand loyalty has the highest effect on purchase intention followed by customer satisfaction, then experiential marketing, then brand advocacy and finally the brand resonance.

**Table (5): The results of indirect relationships**

H	Indirect Relation	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Result	VAF	Mediation
H3	EM → CS → PI	0.151*	0.513*	0.664*	Supported	0.773	Partial
H5	EM → BA → PI	0.069*	0.720*	0.789*	Supported	0.913	Full
H7	EM → BR → PI	0.039*	0.585*	0.642*	Supported	0.911	Full
H9	EM → BL → PI	0.06*	0.581*	0.641*	Supported	0.906	Full

\*  $P < 0.05$

As exhibited in **table 5**, hypotheses 3, 5, 7 and 9 were all supported by the results. The (VAF) calculations were utilized to investigate the type of mediating effects of (CS, BA, BR & BL) in the relation between experiential marketing and purchase intention. Customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between experiential marketing and purchase intention, whereas brand advocacy, brand resonance and brand loyalty fully mediate the relationship between experiential marketing and purchase intention.

### **Discussion of findings**

Several insights emerge from the results presented above. The results support Keller (2009); Lin (2012); Nurcahyo (2016); Artanti (2016); Smilansky (2017); and Yeh et al., (2019) notions that experiential marketing positively influences customer satisfaction, and word of mouth. Word of mouth is part of the purchase intentions construct as stated by Keller (2009). Furthermore, the results referred to positive influence of customer satisfaction on word of mouth concurring to Artanti (2016) findings. Consistent with Chen et al., (2008); Yang & He (2011); and Araci et al., (2017) findings, this study accepts the hypotheses proposing a positive association between relationship marketing, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. As for brand management variables, the results are consistent with Sugiyarti (2017) theory that experiential marketing leads to successful brand loyalty; Shieh & Lai (2017) that experiential marketing is positively associated with brand resonance and brand loyalty; Ding & Tseng (2015) on brand equity; and Machado et al., (2014) on brand advocacy.

Based on the above presentation and discussion of findings, experiential marketing is found to have a significant positive influence on purchase intention. Additionally, the variables of customer satisfaction; brand loyalty; brand advocacy; and brand resonance also are found not only to positively influence purchase intentions but also to mediate the relationship between experiential marketing and purchase intentions.

### **Conclusions**

#### **Research contribution**

In order to face the severe competition, marketers need to adopt innovative marketing strategy in order to attract new customers as well as to retain existing ones. EM has proved to be an effective marketing strategy that stimulated customers feelings and triggers desirable purchasing intentions.

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The majority of previous studies have examined EM dimensions and investigated the relation between them and favourable organisational performance. EM is composed of sensory, affective, emotional and behavioural dimensions (Schmitt, 2012). However, most studies have focused on how EM influences customer satisfaction and loyalty, and few have examined the effect of EM, customer satisfaction, brand advocacy, loyalty, and resonance on purchase intentions. Our study fills this gap.

### **Research implications**

Several suggestions are offered to practitioners for their endeavours to favourably influence consumers' purchase behaviours. These suggestions are two-fold; one relates to the experience philosophy by focusing on creating and enhancing its 5 aspects, i.e. sense; feel; think; act; and relate to improve customers' experience and achieve customer satisfaction. The other fold is related to brand management conceptualisations augmentation, including brand loyalty, advocacy, and resonance that are all found to positively influence purchase intentions.

### **Research limitation and future works**

For academics, several recommendations are presented bearing in mind the limitations of the current study. First of all, this study is limited by its contexts, hence the findings and results should be generalised with cautious. The study is conducted within the Middle Eastern market and is applied to three of the biggest and highest incomes societies, i.e. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. The findings are related to the smartphone industry and are based on customers perceptions and evaluations. Future studies are encouraged to examine the same relationships based on organisation's perceptions and evaluations. Use of a rather qualitative approach of research is highly encouraged to help discover and explore additional perspectives of the proposed relationships among variables.

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Other variables could be included in future research models, such as organisational financial performance as a dependent variable. Finally, a comparative cross-industry studies could take place to compare the influence of experiential marketing in different sectors/industries.

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