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Does brand experience translate into brand commitment?: A mediated-moderation model of brand passion and perceived brand ethicality

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ABSTRACT

In today's increasingly competitive and dynamic marketplace, achieving brand commitment is one of the ultimate goals for brands. Considering the heightened importance and relevance of brand's ethical perception and its symbolic benefits, the present research examines the impacts of perceived brand ethicality on brand passion and brand commitment. A conceptual framework was tested using structural equation modeling with responses from 273 apparel shoppers collected by using a structured questionnaire. We find evidence of mediating-moderation effect in which the moderating power of perceived brand ethicality is eliminated in the presence of full mediator, brand passion. Interestingly, in studying the “mediated-moderation” links, we also find the dampening effects of perceived brand ethicality at play. The results of this paper have theoretical contributions and implications for managers.

1. Introduction

Now-a-days customers are more empowered to choose among various brand options (Broniarczyk & Griffin, 2014; Camacho, De Jong, & Stremersch, 2014). The proliferation of brands in the marketplace has resulted in an interesting paradox for marketers wherein customers have ample options to switch rather than to commit to a particular brand (Shukla, Banerjee, & Singh, 2016). That is, while marketers attempt to design brand strategies to allure customers into a long-term relationship, ready availability of competitive brand offerings pulls customers away from brand commitment at no or little switching cost. Hence, resolving this paradox and successfully achieving brand commitment is one of the ultimate goals for brands in today's increasingly competitive and dynamic marketplace. While past research has examined various drivers of brand commitment, e.g., brand attitude, brand attachment, brand personality, brand love, and brand identification to name a few (Johnson, Morgeson, & Hekman, 2012; Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010), in this study we focus on brand experience and perceived brand ethicality. Brand experience provides critical touchpoints for multisensory stimulations that pull customers toward a brand; yet, we do not fully understand its role, in conjunction with perceived brand ethicality, in influencing brand commitment (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Brunk, 2012; Schmitt, 2013).

In an era of growing ethical consumerism, where brand conduct has come under public scrutiny, consumers' ethical perceptions of brands play an important role in their purchase decisions and long-term commitments (Brunk, 2012; Singh, Iglesias, & Batista-Foguet, 2012; Story & Hess, 2010; Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016). Perceived ethicality of brands is an important factor in consumers' decision-making process as it influences their brand evaluation and brand choice (Paliawadana, Oghazi, & Liu, 2016). Put differently, Brunk and Blümelhuber (2011) argue that even a single instance of brand misconduct may negatively influence consumers' brand perceptions and consumer-brand relationships. Several researchers have theoretically argued that providing stimulating, extra-ordinary brand experiences and building an ethical brand image in the minds of customers, together may result in long-term commitment (e.g., Francisco-Maffezzoli, Semperebon, & Prado, 2014; Morhart, Malär, Guevremont, Girardin, & Grohmann, 2015; Swimberghe, Astakhova, & Wooldridge, 2014). While marketers have successfully used brand-related stimuli as primary sources of positive brand experiences, consumers reward companies that meet and exceed their need for brand ethicality over and above their specific needs for stimulation, efficacy, and symbolic meaning (Schmitt, 2013). This begs the question: how do perceptions of brand ethicality interplay with brand experiences in influencing brand commitment given that brand experiences do not presume a motivational or

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evaluative state? That is, do moral imperatives signalled by brands help accentuate the influence of positive brand experiences on brand commitment? Given its growing importance, it is somewhat surprising that no study has examined the moderating role perceived brand ethicality plays in converting brand experience into brand commitment. The present study aims to fill this gap.

At the same time, while brand experience has gained both conceptual and empirical validation as a significant construct that plays a central role in building brands (e.g., Francisco-Maffezzoli et al., 2014; Nysveen, Pedersen, & Skard, 2013), its specific relationship with brand commitment still remains mixed and equivocal at best. Intuitively, a positive brand experience should result in brand commitment. But, there are contrary arguments in the literature regarding their relationship. For example, Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) argued for a direct relationship while Francisco-Maffezzoli et al. (2014) suggested an indirect relationship through mediators capturing cognitive aspects (e.g. relationship quality and credibility) and hedonic aspects (e.g. affect and emotions). In this paper, we propose “brand passion” as an important piece in this missing link that provides a strong relational link to brands which individuals value and is considered central to an individual's identity, thereby encompassing the cognitive, affective, and evaluative aspects of customer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998).

However, because brand passion comprises of fascination for brands, the role of perceived brand ethicality is particularly interesting as it adds a dimension of moral reasoning to brand passion, posing a potential to dampen its influence on brand commitment. On the other hand, passion and purpose are not mutually exclusive and perceived brand ethicality can provide an internal motivation for customers to reward the brand through brand commitment till the time purpose controls passion (Vallerand et al., 2003). This begs the question: does perceived brand ethicality compete with or complement the influence of brand passion on customer's commitment toward brand. Further, is this influence of perceived brand ethicality sustainable or does it get masked in the presence of brand passion given its strong emotional connection with the brand? The present study aims to provide solution to these questions.

Therefore, the present work focuses on empirically investigating the moderating influence of customers' perceived brand ethicality in brand experience→brand commitment relationship, incorporating brand passion as a mediator. We test both facets of brand passion i.e., harmonious and obsessive separately, as well as aggregate brand passion. In order to assess this complex relationship, we investigate whether perceived brand ethicality significantly moderates direct and indirect links in this relationship. Our study makes two important contributions. First, our study strongly supports the case of “mediated-moderation” influence of perceived brand ethicality in the link connecting brand experience and brand commitment. In other words, brand passion significantly overpowers both the direct role of brand experience (i.e., full mediation) and the moderating role of perceived brand ethicality (i.e., mediated-moderation) in explaining brand commitment. Second, in studying the “mediated-moderation” links, we also find the dampening effect of perceived brand ethicality at play suggesting that sensory-related brand experiences desist moral reasoning and tend to succumb to temporal pleasures. The same pattern is observed when brand passion is modeled separately as harmonious and obsessive passion. However, perceived brand ethicality significantly attenuates the impact of harmonious passion on brand commitment suggesting its moral restraining influence.

These findings provide several implications relevant for brand scholars and practitioners in understanding the subtle role of perceived brand ethicality vis-à-vis brand experience, brand passion, and brand commitment. While customers' perceived brand ethicality is important in influencing brand passion and brand commitment, their nuanced interplay offers some caveats especially for brand managers. Because brand experience loses its potency in influencing brand commitment in the presence of brand passion, managers should focus on building and

maintaining “passion-oriented” branding strategies for long-term customer-brand relationship. That said, managers need to exercise caution when targeting customers possessing specific brand passion, i.e., harmonious vs. obsessive passion, in a way that balances customer well-being and brand commitment.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Brand experience and commitment: mediating influence of brand passion

Brand experience encompasses “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). Consumers tend to form certain brand perceptions when they experience a brand in terms of various brand stimuli like name, logos, color, packaging, and advertisements. Brand experience not presumes a motivational state nor constitutes an evaluative state and thus varies from other motivational and emotional constructs like brand involvement and attachment (Park et al., 2010; Zaichkowsky, 1985). However, it is also distinct from attitudinal concepts such as brand evaluation (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It primarily comprise four facets where the *affective facet* captures emotions; *intellectual facet* corresponds to brand's capability to stimulate thinking, both analytical and imaginative thinking; *sensory facet* relates to aesthetic and sensory qualities that appeal to the senses; and *behavioral facet* corresponds to actions and bodily experiences with a brand (Nysveen et al., 2013; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010).

In the branding literature, brand passion is “a strong emotional connection to a brand that people value, find important, desire to own and/or use, incorporate into their identity, and invest resources in over a period of time” (Swimberghe et al., 2014, p. 2659). It encompasses cognitive, hedonic and behavioral aspects of consumer-brand connections that are motivationally fueled by a deep sense of desire and infatuation. Based on identity theory, brands are imperative to an individual's self in such a manner that consumers use brands to express their identity in a social context. The mechanisms that outline the private/social self can be self-directed or controlled, resulting in two forms of brand passion i.e., harmonious brand passion that “results from the autonomous internalization of the brand into one's self-identity” and obsessive passion that “results from a controlled internalization of the brand into one's identity” (for details see Swimberghe et al., 2014, p. 2659).

Schmitt (2013) argues that positive sensory and affective brand experiences, i.e., sensory pleasure tend to entice customers toward the brand by appealing to the stimulation dimension of the self; positive behavioral brand experiences tend to enable customers by appealing to the efficacy dimension of the self; and intellectual brand experiences tend to enrich customers by appealing to their symbolic meaning dimension of the self, allowing them to project a desirable self-identity and social-identity, i.e., self-expression. Several studies on customer-brand relationships provide similar motivations for customers' passion for a few particular brands (e.g., Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Therefore, brand experiences evoked by brand-related stimuli can influence differential dimensions of the self-identity thereby satisfying multiple customer needs.

When brand experiences positively stimulate multiple dimensions of the self, it expands to incorporate the brand as an integral part of its identity (Aron & Aron, 1996). Park et al. (2013) explain consumer-brand relationship on the basis of attachment-aversion theory which postulates that distance of brand with an individual's self and its prominence tend to govern consumers' tendency to attach or avert from the brand. That is, the closer the perceived brand and self-distance, and the more prominent the brand related thoughts are, the more consumers feel connected to the brand. This can create an intense and often

irresistible longing for the brand leading to emotional attachment, i.e., brand passion (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2013). This attachment as a passion has a set of schemas that connects a brand to the customer's identity needs and which tend to develop over a period of time (Schmalz & Orth, 2012). Harmonious brand passion reflects autonomous internalization of the brand that projects a desirable self-identity, whereas obsessive brand passion reflects controlled internalization of the brand that projects a desirable social identity.

Brand passion invokes strong emotions which provides meaning to the relationship, motivates customers to invest their resources and form a close tie with the brand, and stick to it for a long time (Swimberghe et al., 2014). In many situations, harmonious brand passion provides an internal motivation that enables customers to preserve their relationship with the brand in synchronization with other facets of their lifestyle (Albert et al., 2013; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). In others, however, customers may anticipate distress of being without a particular brand as in the case of obsessive brand passion (Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014), and hence they tend to remain committed to that brand. Thus, brand passion results in brand commitment.

At the same time extant literature also provides some evidence of direct linkage between brand experience and brand commitment (Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014). Brand experiences lead to pleasurable outcomes and as such customers like to reprise these positive experiences. Customers who have affirmative brand experiences are expected to buy again, i.e., brand loyalty, endorse it, i.e., attitudinal loyalty, and seldom switch to alternative brands (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Probably, they tend to assign a higher value proposition to the brand making them more loyal and committed to that particular brand (Brakus et al., 2009). A positive experience can also result in affective or cognitive attachment with the brand with behavioral manifestations of repeat purchase and habitual behavior (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010).

By taking the mediational hypothesis route, we posit that when customers experience a brand, several brand-related stimuli and cues satisfying specific self-relevant needs motivate them to incorporate the brand to their selves, that triggers brand passion, i.e., harmonious and obsessive brand passion characterized by emotional bond, attachment, and commitment to the brand. In other words, brand experience may be considered as an important driver for developing brand passion which in turn leads to the behavioral outcome of brand commitment (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Accordingly, we hypothesize an indirect linkage of brand experience and commitment through brand passion. Thus we posit:

H1. Both (i) harmonious brand passion and (ii) obsessive brand passion act as mediators between brand experience and brand commitment.

2.2. Moderating influence of perceived brand ethicality

Consumers' perceived brand ethicality can be conceptualized as "perception of the brand as being honest, responsible, and accountable toward various stakeholders" (Singh, Iglesias, & Batista-Foguet (2012, p.543). Brand ethicality perception is based on the underpinnings of the ethical theory governed by moral philosophy (Barnett, Cafaro, & Newholm, 2005). The theory proposes two prominent basis for ethicality i.e. deontology (rule based) and teleology (consequence based). Deontology is based on non-consequentialist ethics where a person assesses actions as right or wrong in reference to higher moral standards or the law. By comparison, teleology, or utilitarianism, is based on consequentialist ethics considering the possible outcome and how much good or bad will result from that action. [For details refer to Brunk, 2012, p. 552–553]. Not surprising, companies have begun to leverage "brand ethicality" as a strategic initiative in terms of defining, differentiating, and sustaining their brands in the competitive marketplace (Brunk, 2012).

Consumers' ethical judgments are functions of both consequentialist

(teleological) and non-consequentialist (deontological) ethical principles, simultaneously evaluating brand ethicality from both streams of ethical theories (Shanahan & Hyman, 2003). That is, from the deontological perspective companies need to abide by the law – financial laws, labour laws, environmental laws, etc. It also means consumers' rule-based approach to moral evaluations including fairness, honesty, integrity, transparency, among other moral norms. Ethical brands are also seen as reflecting human values of compassion, trust, and care toward stakeholders as a result of anthropomorphic thinking (Grohmann & Bodur, 2015). From the teleological perspective, focusing on the positive consequences of company's actions constitute consumers' consequentialist approach, e.g., social responsibility, proactive social engagement, and philanthropy (Brunk, 2012).

Schmitt (2013) theoretically argues that brand experience (a multi-sensory experience) acts as a psychological determinant of the self in terms of enticing, enabling, or enriching the self. Multi-faceted stimulations resulted from brand experience tend to entice the self through sensory and affective experiences offering sensorial pleasure to the self; enable the self through behavioral responses providing functional pleasure that relate to a sense of one's efficacy; and enrich the self through intellectual and relational experiences by synchronizing consumer values with brand values that help to promote one's self- and social identity (Park et al., 2013). For example, Tiffany & Co. (An American luxury jewelry and specialty retailer), endeavors to bond with its customers by employing multi-sensory experiences. The blue color of the jewelry box appeals to senses, i.e., enticing the self, the finely crafted jewelry provides functional pleasure demonstrating that customers can complete their outfit with Tiffany jewelry, i.e., enabling the self, and the brand inspires and symbolizes luxury, sophistication, elegance and creativity, i.e., enriching the self.

In the present research, we argue that 'perceived brand ethicality' act as an important intangible symbolic resource that helps, inter alia, satisfy consumers' need for self-identity and self-expression (Johnson, Matear, & Thomson, 2011; Park et al., 2013). In consumer-brand relationships, acquiring and integrating positive brand resource, i.e., brand ethicality, to one's expanded self (Aron & Aron, 1986) are accompanied by pleasures as they help to satisfy several self-relevant needs. When a brand's ethical character and conduct represents internally one's coherent private self through autonomous internalization of the brand (Vallerand et al., 2003), i.e., validating one's self-identity, it enriches the self and accentuates harmonious brand passion. Likewise, when a brand's ethical character and conduct externally communicates an individual's present or desired social self through controlled internalization of the brand (Vallerand et al., 2003), i.e., validating self-expression, it also enriches the self and accentuates obsessive brand passion. Further, when perceived brand ethicality is highly accessible in memory in terms of salience, i.e., ease and frequency of brand thought deliberations, self-relevant brands share a greater self-brand overlap resulting in greater brand passion in general.

In addition, recent research links cognitive and emotional facets of organizational identification to motivations of self-uncertainty and self-enhancement (e.g., Wolter & Cronin, 2016). Customers are drawn toward companies who share similar cognitive-based identities that deeply matter to them and are relatively stable – i.e., central and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This aspiration to see one's self-identity as being consistent over a period is powerful and often triggered by a perceived threat to the integrity of the self that results in the individual seeking confirmation and stability about the self (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). With growing ethical consumerism (Brunk, 2012) customers are increasingly concerned about brand ethicality. Customers internalize ethical brands into their self-identities in an autonomous manner (Vallerand et al., 2003), thereby reducing subjective uncertainty and validating their need for self-identity. At the same time, customers also display self-expression motivated by a need for self-enhancement (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Reid & Hogg, 2005). Brand passionate customers, because of

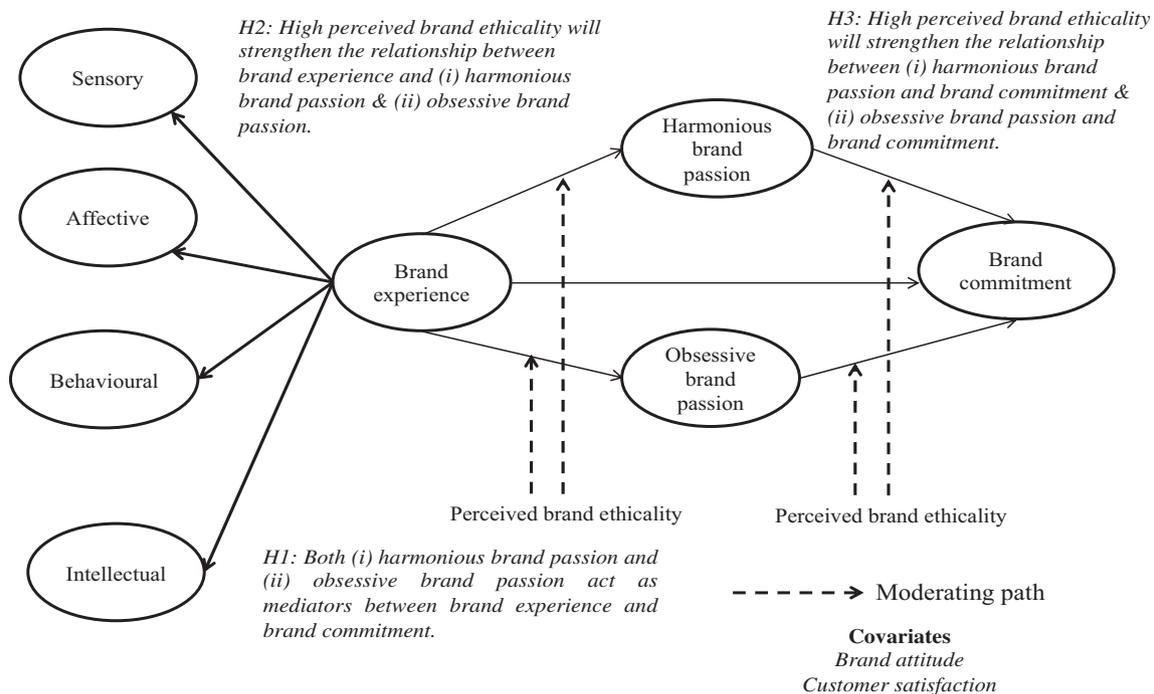


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

contingencies and social pressures, also internalize ethical brands into their self-identities in a controlled manner (Vallerand et al., 2003), thereby validating their need for self-enhancement.

Several studies have emphasized that customers tend to feel more valued and recognized when brand experiences give them signals that the brands they are purchasing and consuming engages in ethical initiatives (e.g. Albert et al., 2013; He & Li, 2011; Iglesias, Markovic, Singh, & Sierra, 2017). Brand ethicality validates one's self-identity internally, validates one's social identity externally, thereby reducing customer's subjective uncertainty and enhancing their self-expression. In sum, perceived brand ethicality as an intangible symbolic resource will augment brand experience in the expanded self by enriching-the-self, and thereby fostering brand passion. Thus we posit that:

H2. High perceived brand ethicality will strengthen the relationship between brand experience and (i) harmonious brand passion, & (ii) obsessive brand passion.

Brand passionate consumers, who are excited and obsessed, find it difficult to resist their temptation for the brand resulting from monitored internalization of brands into their identities (Vallerand et al., 2003). Passionate customers are compelled by cravings that are overpowering and may dictate consumers' views especially in a social context where validating self-expression is important (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003). In such case, i.e., obsessive passion, contingencies control their attachment to the brand, specifically the pressure to protect and enhance their self-esteem and social acceptance. However, passionate customers are also motivated internally where validating one's self-identity is important resulting from autonomous internalization of the brand (Vallerand et al., 2003). In such case, i.e., harmonious passion, customers admire the brand and find it essential without any external pressure, and decide to invest and engage with the brand in a way that maintains congruence with other aspects of their lifestyles. In both facets, brand passion can lead to positive behavioral consequences like brand commitment. We argue that brand ethicality as an intangible symbolic resource adds a sense of moral conviction and reasoning to brand passion that is rife with infatuation and obsession. Philosophers like Descartes (1596–1650) and Spinoza (1632–1677) have long argued that passions are integrally malicious and can direct to affirmative

behavioral predispositions, till the time reason controls the behavior. Perceived brand ethicality further provides an internal motivation for consumers to reward the brand by demonstrating long-term relationship and brand commitment.

In addition, perceived brand ethicality also acts as a buffer in protecting consumer-brand relationships (Albert & Horowitz, 2009). A strong emotion-laden bond with a brand makes customers to selectively process information available to them about that particular brand in order to protect their self- and identity (Britton & Fuendeling, 2005). This biased processing not only tends to shield the existing connection with the brand, but also protects the self- and social concept support derived from that relationship. Several researchers have argued that even a single instance of brand misconduct potentially can negatively influence customer-brand relationships (Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Schmalz & Orth, 2012). In other words, when an individual come across any negative information about the brand for which they are passionate about, they are likely to experience conflicting emotions such as emotional ambivalence. In a few cases, this may result in extreme outcomes like boycott, retaliation and negative word-of-mouth (e.g. Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Shaw, Newholm, & Dickinson, 2006). In sum perceived brand ethicality not only provides moral reasoning to passion but also buffers customer-brand relationships. Thus we posit:

H3. High perceived brand ethicality will strengthen the relationship between (i) harmonious brand passion and brand commitment, & (ii) obsessive brand passion and brand commitment.

The conceptual framework is depicted in Fig. 1.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling and data collection

The respondents were selected based on convenience sampling in metropolitan urban centers in India and were given a self-administered questionnaire in English language. The respondents were requested to select their preferred apparel brand from the list of brands and then provided the questionnaire to fill-up their responses. We have considered apparel brands for this study mainly because of three reasons;

(i) apparel brands are hugely popular, people feel attached to it and tend to display more passion because of its symbolism, (ii) fashion brand managers are recently putting more effort and trying to create/retain emotional attachment to their brands, (iii) perception of brand ethicality plays an important role in apparel purchase (Rageh Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Put differently, among various product categories, apparel has a close connection in shaping and expressing an individual's identity and in several cases, apparel brands become an indispensable symbol of an individual's self-esteem and social status which provides a sense of distinctiveness. Therefore, customers tend to develop a deep emotional attachment with a particular apparel brand (Rageh Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Moreover, a recent study indicates that consumers nowadays exhibit their concern for ethical fashion, i.e. they tend to purchase apparel brands that are engaged in socially and environmentally responsible business (Shen, Wang, Lo, & Shum, 2012). Therefore, we selected apparel brands considering their relevance to the constructs chosen for this study.

To identify these brands, a pilot study was conducted with thirty respondents above the age of 18 years. To reduce gender bias, equal number of male ($n = 15$) and female ($n = 15$) respondents were selected and were asked to choose one apparel brand from top fourteen fashion brands based on familiarity. The familiarity was assessed through a pilot survey with a sample size of 30 on a 7 point scale (1-not at all familiar, 7-very familiar). After receiving 30 responses, the mean was calculated. The brands with higher mean ratings including Levi's (5.81), Wrangler (4.97), Blackberrys (4.72), Zara (4.56) and Allen Solly (4.13) were retained for the study. Apparel brands were identified based on brand popularity and respondent familiarity.

Next, respondents were chosen to fill self-administered survey depending on researcher's convenience. The data were collected by using intercept survey method popularly used in retailing research. The screening conditions for the participants to be involved in data collection were (a) their age, had to be eighteen years and above; and (b) must have used at least one of the five apparel brands selected for the survey. In total 305 responses were collected. Before analysis, the data were cleaned by eliminating incomplete responses and outliers. In the end, 273 remained for the analysis. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents are: gender – 64% female and 36% male; age in years – 18%: 18–25, 36%: 26–30, 30%: 31–35, 15%: 36–40, and 1%: 41–50; education – 12% higher secondary, 50% graduate, 33% post-graduate, and 5% PhD or equivalent; monthly income – 12% upto \$310, 16% \$311–\$620, 30% \$621–\$1240, 28% \$1241–\$1550, 7% \$1551–\$1860, and 7% \$1861–\$3100.

3.2. Measures

The constructs in our study were measured using pre-developed instruments from the marketing literature. These scales were contextualized and Appendix A provides list of the items. The respondents marked their responses on a Likert-type question format (where 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). In order to measure brand experience, we utilised scale suggested by Brakus et al. (2009). Their study proposed that brand experience may be considered as the second order construct having affective, behavioral, sensorial, and intellectual dimensions. Hence, in the present study we also used brand experience as a second order reflective measure. For consumers' perceived brand ethicality, the scale was adopted from the study by Brunk (2012). Brand passion and brand commitment was measured by scales proposed by Vallerand et al. (2003) and Shukla et al. (2016) respectively. Before using scales for the analysis, we tested face/content validity for all the measures in the present study context. The content and face validity was examined by a panel comprising of 12 participants: 4 marketing

professors, 6 shoppers and 2 retail managers.

3.3. Covariates

We controlled for brand attitude and brand satisfaction. Brand attitude may be defined as favorable or unfavourable evaluations of a brand by its customers (Park et al., 2010). Brand satisfaction can be conceptualised as “judgment that a product/service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under-or over-fulfillment” (Oliver, 2014, p. 8). Brand attitude and customer satisfaction, potentially prominent confounding factors, influence customer-brand relationship (Kim, Kim, Kim, Kim, & Kang, 2008), purchase intention (Lee, Petrick, & Crompton, 2007), and commitment (Park et al., 2010). We measured brand attitude by using three items (Cronbach alpha = 0.81) from the study of Park et al. (2010). For measuring customer satisfaction four items (Cronbach alpha = 0.85) were taken from the study of Williams and Soutar (2009). These covariates were included as predictors and direct paths were included between the covariates, brand passion, and brand commitment.

4. Analysis and results

4.1. Reliability and validity of constructs & CMV tests

Before analyzing the conceptual model, the reliability and validity of the scales was checked and the results are summarised in Appendix B.1. The cronbach alpha coefficient values met the minimum cut-off value of 0.70 for all the constructs. Similarly as recommended by Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Mena (2012), CR (composite reliability) and AVE (average variance extracted) values met the minimum cut-off of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively (see Appendix B.1). The average variance extracted from two standardized constructs was more than the squared correlation among two constructs indicating discriminant validity among constructs (see Appendix B.2) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Common method variance (CMV) was also examined (Malhotra, Kim, & Patil, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Firstly, in confirmatory factor analysis, connecting each indicator to single construct (i.e. factor that captures the potential common method variance) instead of separate ones led to a significant decrease in the model's fit. In a similar manner, addition of common latent factor and marker variable factor not resulted to non-significance of factor loadings/correlations in measurement model. Finally, we attuned for the correlation matrix connecting composite scales by partialing out influence of the factor having second smallest positive correlation with others (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). All significant partial correlations among the remaining composite scales continued to be statistically significant after the adjustments. Hence, CMV is not an issue in this study.

We tested the model by using Structural Equation Modeling (AMOS version 19). First, we conducted the measurement model test using confirmatory factor analysis. Model fit indices were: (χ^2 /degrees of freedom = 1.511 ($p = 0.00$); NFI (0.901); GFI (0.902); CFI (0.948); SRMR (0.032); RMSEA (0.046), indicating acceptable measurement model fit (Byrne, 2013). Second, to test the appropriate factor structure of brand experience, we tested model fit considering brand experience as first order correlated model and fit indices were: (χ^2 /degrees of freedom = 3.309 ($p = 0.00$); NFI (0.933); GFI (0.900); CFI (0.960); SRMR (0.034); RMSEA (0.067). Next, we tested the model fit considering brand experience construct as second order reflective construct with the four dimensions as first-order reflective constructs. The fit indices were χ^2 /degrees of freedom = 2.309 ($p = 0.00$); NFI (0.938);

GFI (0.932); CFI (0.964); SRMR (0.038); RMSEA (0.063). Results indicate that brand experience fits better as a second order reflective measure and, therefore, we have modeled it accordingly in the present study.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

To test our hypotheses, we tested the full structural model (see Fig. 1). The model fit indices were: ($\chi^2/\text{degrees of freedom} = 1.780$ ($p = 0.00$); NFI (0.904); GFI (0.901); CFI (0.928); SRMR (0.044); and RMSEA (0.054), indicating acceptable structural model fit (Byrne, 2013). The second-order factor loadings were all significant: brand experience \rightarrow sensory dimension (0.927, $p < 0.05$); brand experience \rightarrow affective dimension (0.987, $p < 0.05$); brand experience \rightarrow behavioral dimension (0.961, $p < 0.05$); brand experience \rightarrow intellectual dimension (0.986, $p < 0.05$). The hypotheses were tested with structural model based on p -value. Structural coefficients were: brand experience \rightarrow harmonious brand passion ($\beta = 0.905$, $t = 11.715$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H1(i); brand experience \rightarrow obsessive brand passion ($\beta = 0.860$, $t = 10.007$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H1(ii); brand experience \rightarrow brand commitment ($\beta = -0.677$, $t = -1.806$, $p > 0.05$); harmonious brand passion \rightarrow brand commitment ($\beta = 1.160$, $t = 4.550$, $p < 0.05$); obsessive brand passion \rightarrow brand commitment ($\beta = 1.152$, $t = 4.446$, $p < 0.05$). Among covariates, only brand attitude showed a positive significant impact on harmonious brand passion ($\beta = 0.106$, $t = 2.147$, $p < 0.05$) and obsessive brand passion ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 2.517$, $p < 0.05$). The results are summarised in Table 1.

4.3. Mediated-moderation test – harmonious & obsessive brand passion

We tested for mediated-moderation model for (a) harmonious brand passion, and (b) obsessive brand passion as depicted in Fig. 1 (see Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). Harmonious and obsessive brand passion were measured by using the first set of 7 consecutive items and second set of 7 consecutive items, respectively, from the 14-item scale (Vallerand et al., 2003, see Appendix A). As before, Table 2 represents the bootstrapping results of mediation for both harmonious and obsessive passion separately. The bootstrapping technique was performed with 2000 samples at 95% confidence intervals to check the indirect, direct, and total estimates of path coefficients. Bootstrapping is a non-parametric method based on resampling with replacement for testing an indirect effect or mediation effect. Results validate full mediation for both sub-constructs^{1,2}, supporting H1(i)/(ii).

Moderation analysis shows (see Table 3a) that the “mediated-moderation” model for brand passion (harmonious) holds such that condition (a) is met as $\beta_{13} = -0.078$ is significant at $p < 0.05$; (b) β_{23} and β_{34} are both significant, -0.132 and 0.417 respectively and β_{21} and β_{35} are both significant, 0.682 and -0.139 respectively; and (c) β_{33} reduces in magnitude from -0.078 to 0.128 and turns nonsignificant, indicating “full” mediated-moderation. In the indirect path, both the first-stage moderation is significant ($\beta_{23} = -0.132$) and the second-

¹ As an alternative analysis, Hayes and Preacher (2014) model 4 results reconfirmed the indirect effect of brand experience (mediated through harmonious brand passion) on brand commitment (IE = 0.73, CI_{95%} = 0.61 to 0.85) and the indirect effect of brand experience (mediated through obsessive brand passion) on brand commitment (IE = 0.65, CI_{95%} = 0.55 to 0.76).

² To reconfirm the results of mediated moderation, the analysis was conducted with Hayes and Preacher (2014) PROCESS model 14 considering brand experience as an independent variable, harmonious brand passion as mediator, perceived brand ethicality as moderator and brand commitment as dependent variable. The results of model 14 showed that for both high (effect = 0.52, CI_{95%} = 0.40 to 0.66) and low (effect = 0.58, CI_{95%} = 0.48 to 0.70) perceived brand ethicality, the conditional indirect impact of brand experience on brand commitment was significant. Similarly, the mediated moderation model 14 (for obsessive brand passion as the mediator) results also showed that for both high (effect = 0.53, CI_{95%} = 0.40 to 0.68) and low (effect = 0.54, CI_{95%} = 0.43 to 0.65) perceived brand ethicality, the conditional indirect effects of obsessive brand passion on brand commitment were significant.

Table 1
Model fit and structural coefficients.

Brand experience dimensions	2nd-order factor loadings	t-Value	p-Value
BE \rightarrow SD	0.927	12.497	0.000 ^a
BE \rightarrow AD	0.987	^a	0.000 ^a
BE \rightarrow BD	0.961	10.702	0.000 ^a
BE \rightarrow ID	0.986	12.887	0.000 ^a
Structural links	β -value	t-Value	p-Value
BE \rightarrow HBP	0.905	11.715	0.000 ^a
BE \rightarrow OBP	0.860	10.007	0.000 ^a
BE \rightarrow BC	-0.677	-1.806	0.122
HBP \rightarrow BC	1.160	4.550	0.000 ^a
OBP \rightarrow BC	1.152	4.446	0.000 ^a
Covariates			
BA \rightarrow HBP	0.106	2.147	0.000 ^a
BA \rightarrow OBP	0.139	2.517	0.000 ^a
BA \rightarrow BC	-0.061	-0.810	0.418
CS \rightarrow HBP	0.012	0.347	0.729
CS \rightarrow OBP	-0.019	-0.491	0.623
CS \rightarrow BC	-0.024	-0.579	0.562

SD-sensory dimension; ad-affective dimension; BD-behavioral dimension; ID-intellectual dimension; HBP-harmonious brand passion; OBP-obsessive brand passion; BC-brand commitment; BA-brand attitude; CS-customer satisfaction.

Measurement model: $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.511$ ($p = 0.000$); NFI = 0.901; GFI = 0.902; CFI = 0.948; SRMR = 0.032; and RMSEA = 0.046.

Structural model: $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.780$ ($p = 0.000$); NFI = 0.904; GFI = 0.901; CFI = 0.928; SRMR = 0.044; and RMSEA = 0.054.

^a p values < 0.05 (significant).

^a In order to achieve identifiability in the second order factor structure, the path was constrained by imposing regression weight equal to 1.

stage moderation is significant ($\beta_{35} = -0.139$).

This is clearly a case of mediated-moderation and accordingly H2(i) and H3(i) are fully supported for harmonious brand passion.³ Using Johnson-Neyman floodlight analysis technique as recommended by Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch Jr, and McClelland (2013), the interaction graphs were also plotted for the first stage moderation (independent variable: brand experience; dependent variable: harmonious brand passion; moderator: perceived brand ethicality) and second stage moderation (independent variable: harmonious brand passion; dependent variable: brand commitment; moderator: perceived brand ethicality). The graphs are depicted in Fig. 2.

Similarly, our analysis shows (see Table 3b) that the “mediated-moderation” model for brand passion (obsessive) also holds such that condition (a) is met as $\beta_{13} = -0.078$ is significant at $p < 0.05$; (b) only β_{23} and β_{34} are both significant, -0.141 and 0.468 respectively; and (c) β_{33} reduces in magnitude from -0.078 to 0.020 and turns nonsignificant, indicating “full” mediated-moderation. In the indirect path, only the first-stage moderation is significant ($\beta_{23} = -0.141$) whereas the second-stage moderation is not significant ($\beta_{35} = -0.030$).

However, given that condition (c) is satisfied, suggests the case for mediated-moderation. Thus, H2(ii) is supported, but H3(ii) is not supported for obsessive brand passion. The analysis indicated that the second stage moderation (independent variable as obsessive brand passion and dependent variable as brand commitment) was not

³ As an alternative analysis to check the moderating influence of perceived brand ethicality in case of brand experience and harmonious brand passion, Hayes and Preacher (2014) PROCESS model 1 was used for the analysis. The results of model 1 also showed that for both high (effect = 0.57, CI_{95%} = 0.44 to 0.70) and low (effect = 0.79, CI_{95%} = 0.68 to 0.91) perceived brand ethicality the conditional impacts of brand experience on harmonious brand passion were significant, supporting H2(i). The moderating role of perceived brand ethicality is also examined in the connection between harmonious brand passion and brand commitment through Hayes and Preacher (2014) PROCESS model 1. The results of model 1 showed that for both high (effect = 0.51, CI_{95%} = 0.41 to 0.61) and low (effect = 0.57, CI_{95%} = 0.49 to 0.65) perceived brand ethicality the conditional effects of harmonious brand passion on brand commitment were significant, supporting H3(i).

Table 2
Mediation Bootstrapping Results for Harmonious and Obsessive Brand Passion.*

(Indirect effect = ab)				Remaining direct effect after controlling for the mediator (<i>brand passion</i>)	Effect of the independent variable (<i>brand experience</i>) on the mediator (<i>brand passion</i>)	Effect of the mediator (<i>brand passion</i>) on the dependent variable (<i>brand commitment</i>)	Conclusion
Mean indirect effect	Standard error	LL: 95% CI	UL: 95% CI	(c)	(a)	(b)	
0.989*	0.268	0.710	1.504	-0.124 (ns)	0.934*	1.059*	Full mediation
0.828*	0.127	0.625	1.096	0.038 (ns)	0.889*	0.932*	Full mediation

* value significant at 5% ($p < 0.05$); ns: not significant at 5% ($p > 0.05$).

Table 3a
OLS Regression Results for Mediated-Moderation Model: Harmonious Brand Passion.

Predictors	Eq. (1) (Brand commitment)					Eq. (2) (Harmonious brand passion)					Eq. (3) (Brand commitment)				
	b	t	R ²	adjR ²	VIF	b	t	R ²	adjR ²	VIF	b	t	R ²	adjR ²	VIF
Brand experience	(β_{11}) 0.332***	5.444	0.87	0.76	2.98	(β_{21}) 0.682***	10.479	0.86	0.75	2.98	(β_{31}) 0.056 ^{ns}	0.853	0.90	0.82	4.48
Perceived brand ethicality	(β_{12}) 0.605***	11.038			2.92	(β_{22}) 0.290***	4.982			2.92	(β_{32}) 0.454***	8.910			3.33
Brand experience \times perceived brand ethicality	(β_{13}) -0.078*	-2.412			1.21	(β_{23}) -0.132***	-3.824			1.21	(β_{33}) 0.128 ^{ns}	1.884			7.01
Brand passion (harmonious)											(β_{34}) 0.417***	7.786			4.20
Brand passion (harmonious) \times perceived brand ethicality											(β_{35}) -0.139*	-2.401			7.80

Notes: † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed test); adj R² denotes adjusted R²; VIF denotes variance inflation factor.

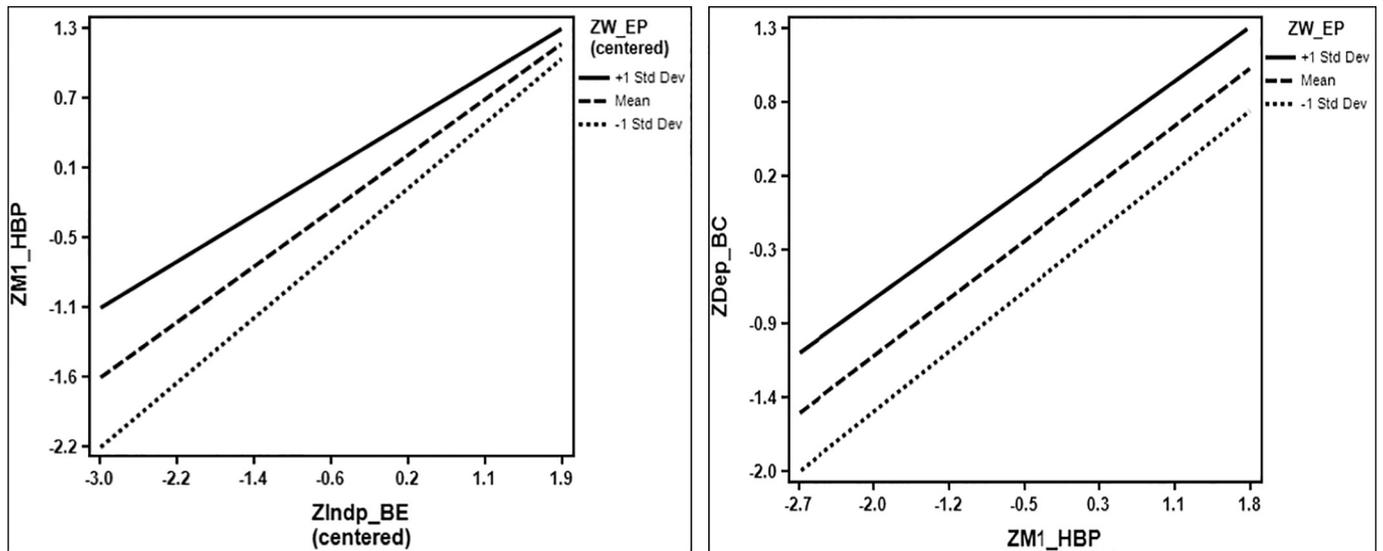


Fig. 2. Interaction effect graphs (harmonious brand passion).

significant.⁴ Therefore, the interaction graph for the first stage moderation only (independent variable as brand experience and dependent

⁴ Similarly, the moderating influence of perceived brand ethicality was also assessed in case of brand experience and obsessive brand passion through Hayes and Preacher (2014) PROCESS model 1. The results of model 1 showed that for both high (effect = 0.35, CI_{95%} = 0.20 to 0.50) and low (effect = 0.63, CI_{95%} = 0.50 to 0.75) perceived brand ethicality the conditional impacts of brand experience on obsessive brand passion were significant, supporting H2(ii). The moderating role of perceived brand ethicality was also checked in case of obsessive brand passion and brand commitment through Hayes and Preacher (2014) PROCESS model 1. Results of model 1 show that for both high (effect = 0.12, CI_{95%} = -0.01 to 0.03) and low (effect = 0.21, CI_{95%} = -0.03 to 0.04) perceived brand ethicality the conditional effects of obsessive brand passion on brand commitment were insignificant and H3(ii) was not supported.

variable as obsessive brand passion) was plotted and depicted in Fig. 3.

Based on Johnson-Neyman floodlight analysis (Spiller et al., 2013), as predicted, this analysis indicates that the presence of perceived brand ethicality results in significantly favorable harmonious brand passion below 4.33 ($t = 13.50$, $p = 0.00$) and above 6.00 ($t = 8.44$, $p = 0.00$). Similarly, in case of obsessive brand passion, it was found that the presence of perceived brand ethicality results in significantly favorable obsessive brand passion below 4.33 ($t = 9.57$, $p = 0.00$) and above 6.00 ($t = 4.74$, $p = 0.00$).

Table 3b
OLS regression results for mediated-moderation model: obsessive brand passion.

Predictors	Eq. (1) (Brand commitment)					Eq. (2) (Obsessive brand passion)					Eq. (3) (Brand commitment)				
	b	t	R ²	adjR ²	VIF	b	t	R ²	adjR ²	VIF	b	t	R ²	adjR ²	VIF
Brand experience	(β_{11}) 0.332***	5.444	0.87	0.76	2.98	(β_{21}) 0.510***	7.313	0.84	0.71	2.98	(β_{31}) 0.094 ^{ns}	1.644	0.91	0.83	3.65
Perceived brand ethicality	(β_{12}) 0.605***	11.038			2.92	(β_{22}) 0.420***	6.730			2.92	(β_{32}) 0.403***	8.008			3.49
Brand experience \times perceived brand ethicality	(β_{13}) -0.078*	-2.412			1.21	(β_{23}) -0.141***	-3.812			1.21	(β_{33}) 0.020 ^{ns}	0.370			4.80
Brand passion (obsessive)											(β_{34}) 0.468***	9.839			3.62
Brand passion (obsessive) \times perceived brand ethicality											(β_{35}) -0.030 ^{ns}	-0.677			5.16

Notes: † $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed test); adj R² denotes adjusted R²; VIF denotes variance inflation factor.

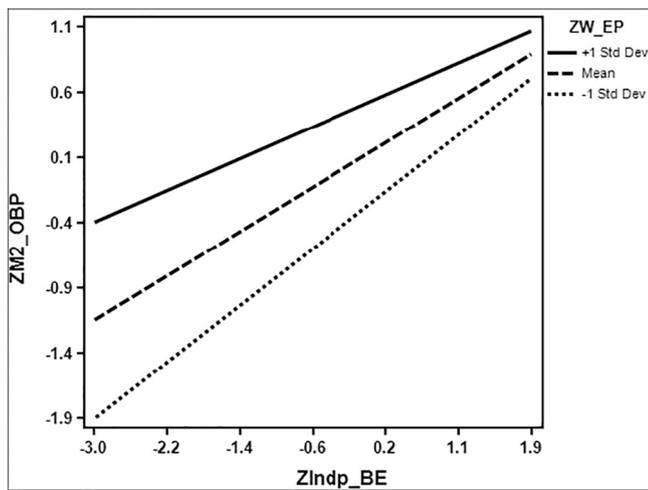


Fig. 3. Interaction effect graph (obsessive brand passion).

5. Discussion & implications

5.1. Theoretical implications

First, it is noteworthy that perceived brand ethicality significantly interacts with brand experience in explaining brand passion and brand commitment. The pattern is true when brand passion is modeled separately as harmonious and obsessive brand passion. However, the negative valence in the moderation effect in both cases is interesting and somewhat curious. Because brand experience does not necessarily presume relevance or personal connection with a brand, nor does it necessarily occur after consumption or is linked with apriori expectations (Brakus et al., 2009), positioning of moral imperatives in brands, teleological-based or deontological-based, may be seen as an impediment that dampens the momentary experience itself. Consistent with the Aristotelian and Platonic traditions, Dube and Le Bel (2003) argue that pleasures arising from sensory experiences, i.e., pleasures of the body are fallible and false and only through the operation of moral reasoning and consciousness simple pleasures can be raised to true pleasures of the mind. It is plausible that in the fashion apparel retail context as in the current study, sensory and affective brand experiences, i.e., visual, aural, olfactory, tactile, design, and brand characteristics may desist consequentialist and non-consequentialist ethical and moral reasoning, and succumb to “enticing-the-self” motivation so as to maximize temporal pleasure-based utility. Our finding suggests that multiple brand experiences when experienced simultaneously may not have synergistic effects as they compete with, rather than complement, each other. Perhaps also, because brand experiences are

conceptualized in the form of subjective sensations, emotions, and cognitions with behavioral reactions induced by brand-related stimuli, the absence of evaluative judgments may grant latitude to dismiss, discount, or perhaps delay brand-related moral imperatives till such time as brand passion develops. Even here, brand passion that is of obsessive type tends to resist the tempering effect of perceived brand ethicality and persist toward brand commitment more than harmonious brand passion does. Future investigations are warranted to shed more light on the negative valence.

Second, our findings demonstrate that brand passion “fully mediates” brand experience and brand commitment linkage. Put differently, brand experience loses its significant direct impact on brand commitment in presence of brand passion. This is true when brand passion is modeled separately as harmonious and obsessive brand passion. The theoretical implication of this finding is the validation that brand experience not presumes motivation and an “experience” may happen even when customers do not have a personal connection with or show interest in brands (Brakus et al., 2009). These experiences are not evaluative assessments about the brand in general; however they comprise specific sensations, emotions, cognitions, and actions elicited by particular brand related stimuli through interactions with the brand. As a result, while critical for building brand passion, brand experience is not sufficiently powerful in itself to influence brand commitment. Unlike motivational and affective notions such as brand attitude and brand involvement that carry an evaluative judgment or personal relevance, brand experiences are idiosyncratic responses evoked by brand-related experiential attributes, and as such are dependent on external stimuli to activate episodic traces embedded in brand memories. Incidentally, it is noteworthy to point out that this aspect of episodic activation is borne in our empirical modeling of brand experience as a second order reflective measure in which activation of the top-level node in the pleasure hierarchy, i.e., unitary view of pleasure, or general representation of pleasure results in a flow of activation to all sub-category nodes, i.e., differentiated view of pleasure (Dube & Le Bel, 2003). However, while this halo effect may serve as a heuristic, i.e., effortless use of cognitive and perceptual fluency, brand experience contingent on external brand-related stimulation for activation is ephemeral in its impact on brand commitment, in the presence of brand passion. In short, brand experience is an important predictor of brand passion; however, it is the motivational strength of brand passion exhibited by an irresistible desire and infatuation that endures over time leading to brand commitment.

Third, our findings indicate that in the case of harmonious passion, both first-stage and second-stage moderation is significant; however, only the first-stage moderation is significant for obsessive passion (see Tables 3a and 3b). That is, for harmonious passion, perceived brand ethicality significantly attenuates the impact of brand passion on brand

commitment, thus tempering this relationship. However, for obsessive passion, because second-stage moderation is nonsignificant, perceived brand ethicality fails to attenuate the impact of brand passion on commitment. The theoretical interpretation of this finding is that consumers' passion toward a brand in a harmonious way tends to show moral restraint toward brand commitment by considering the brand's ethical position, be it teleological-based or deontological-based. Harmonious passion is a result of self-directed internalization of brands into an individual's self that is easily acquired without any contingencies and pressures attached (Vallerand et al., 2003). Consumers are not compelled to engage in brand passion but rather do so freely and as a result a brand takes a vital but not too overpowering space in their identity. This facilitates consumers in validating their self-identity and in enriching the self in consumer-brand relationships. In contrast, when brand passion goes out of control due to intrapersonal and/or interpersonal pressures as in obsessive brand passion, it takes disproportionate space in one's identity and thus consumers tend to show less moral restraint and more rigid persistence in their desire for self-expression and self-enhancement. This leads to stronger brand commitment. However, while enlightening, more research is required to be conducted to understand the nuances regarding the antecedents or consequences of the two forms of brand passion (e.g., brand-related attributes, consumer characteristics, consumer-brand relational constructs) and how these interact with brand ethicality.

5.2. Managerial implications

The findings of this work have several relevant suggestions for practitioners. In today's sophisticated environment, one of the key concerns for brand managers is how they can translate their brand experience into brand commitment. The present work sheds light on this concern and provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon. Today, while there is a widespread movement of brands defining and differentiating themselves as being "ethical", our study demonstrates the nuanced interplay between perceived brand ethicality, brand experience, and brand passion in influencing brand commitment. Brand ethicality is important in influencing brand passion and brand commitment (i.e., main effects in our study were significant) as customers tend to trust and identify with ethical brands. However, the present study offers some *caveats*.

First, the presence of the mediator (i.e., brand passion) overpowers and suppresses the moderating influence of perceived brand ethicality in explaining brand commitment. This does not imply that the brand's ethical perception is not important. Rather, it is brand passion that is responsible for and underlies the moderation effect of brand ethicality. Our findings indicate that brand passion bridges the gap between brand experience and commitment. This implies that experience from brands in all of its manifestations, while significant in building brand passion, loses its potency in influencing brand commitment in the very presence of brand passion. Thus, managers should focus on building and maintaining brand passion. While brand experiences are useful in influencing brand passion, they cannot sustain brand commitment.

Several "passion-oriented" branding strategies can be implemented. For instance, managers can enhance brand passion by establishing an emotional bond and value congruence with customers and endowing the brand with a sense of genuineness and authenticity through its corporate culture. Managers can also entice customers to become members of their online/offline brand communities by harnessing the potential of social platforms to develop and maintain long-term relationships with their customers. Further, because brand passion involves irresistible cravings, managers can leverage the feelings of anticipated separation anxiety and distress among customers, especially those with obsessive brand passion. This, however, is debatable from an ethical and public policy perspective. All in all, these "passion-oriented" branding strategies imply that building and maintaining brand passion would require a careful shift in resource allocation away from brand experiences and toward resources that would sustain brand passion over the long-term.

Second, managers need to differentiate their customers on the basis of the 'type of passion' they hold toward their brand, i.e., harmonious passion versus obsessive passion. Customers that are obsessed with certain brands, i.e., displaying obsessive passion, are unaffected by perceptions of the brand's ethicality, even though, in general, they are motivated to join the bandwagon of consuming ethical brands. While the short term consequence may be positive, at best, or neutral, at worst, this type of passion may result in negative effects in the long-term. These customers will no longer recognize the brand as gratifying but may still endure it because they feel they are addicted to the brand. Therefore, while brand ethicality is important in building brand passion and brand commitment, it presents an "ethical dilemma" when customers are "wired" to the brand leading to negative well-being in the long-term (Philippe, Vallerand, & Lavigne, 2009). On the other hand, for customers that display harmonious brand passion, managers need to take a strategic and targeted approach to resource allocation in projecting their brand ethicality in that, ironically, it may be less effective in fostering brand commitment in the short-term. Perhaps, there may be a "silver lining" in that a healthier consumer well-being as a result of free choice and a sense of volition may eventually engender long-term brand commitment.

6. Limitations and future research

The present research has a few limitations. The research was carried out using apparel shoppers in India and respondents were selected from urban metropolitan cities in India after considering their familiarity, preference and access to the brand products. Given that we employed convenience sampling in one industry, i.e., fashion apparel brand; future research should employ appropriate probability-based sampling methods studying different industries, product/service categories, and nationalities to test the generalizability of our findings. Perhaps, brand ethicality will have differential moderating effect depending on product types where brand passion and commitment are not deemed *a priori*. Experimental studies can also manipulate different levels of brand ethicality crossed along types of brands, e.g., value-based brands, premium brands, prestige brands, and fun (hedonic) brands where passion and commitment are at different levels. In a similar vein, future researchers should examine the impacts of other potential covariates in the model like brand love or brand trust.

While the use of self-reports in measuring brand experience is widely used, one limitation is the cognitive interpretation and recall of sensory and affective dimensions of brand experience. On a related note, future studies can assess the differential effects of brand experience dimensions and how they relate to harmonious and obsessive brand passion. For instance, to what extent are differentiated pleasures arising out of multiple brand experience dimensions substitutable to each other in motivating behaviors? Exploring the influence of various other antecedents like brand authenticity, involvement, motivation, emotions, co-shopper presence, and brand image may also provide a prospective avenue for research.

Another limitation in our study is that we did not model individual differences in cognitive moral development. For instance, Kohlberg's (1984) cognitive moral development theory argues that an individual's cognitive ability to reason through moral dilemma is developmental in that an "egoist" operating at pre-conventional stage is self/significant-other focused in maximizing pleasure. Over time, it progressively advances to conventional and post-conventional stages of moral development wherein the focus shifts away from indulging in self pleasures and toward enriching the self-pleasures through societal conformity, social contract, and universal ethical principles. This framework may help further to explain the negative valence in our study and appears promising for future research. Limitations notwithstanding, we believe our study has resulted in some unexpected, yet interesting findings, which should whet the appetite of scholars and become the basis for ongoing research in this important line of enquiry.

Appendix A

A.1. Measures: note: *r* denotes “reverse coded”

A.1.1. Brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009)

- This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense and other senses.
- I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.
- This brand does not appeal to my senses.^r
- This brand induces feelings and sentiments.
- I do not have strong emotions for this brand.^r
- This brand is an emotional brand.
- I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand.
- This brand results in bodily experiences.
- This brand is not action oriented.^r
- I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.
- This brand does not make me think.^r
- This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.

A.1.2. Brand passion (Vallerand et al., 2003)

- This activity allows me to live a variety of experiences.
- The new things that I discover with this activity allow me to appreciate it even more.
- This activity allows me to live memorable experiences.
- This activity reflects the qualities I like about myself.
- This activity is in harmony with the other activities in my life.
- For me it is a passion that I still manage to control.
- I am completely taken with this activity.
- I cannot live without it.
- The urge is so strong, I can't help myself from doing this activity.
- I have difficulty imagining my life without this activity.
- I am emotionally dependent on this activity.
- I have a tough time controlling my need to do this activity.
- I have almost an obsessive feeling for this activity.
- My mood depends on me being able to do this activity.

A.1.3. Brand commitment (Shukla et al., 2016) *X* denotes the brand selected by the respondent

- I do not feel “emotionally attached” to *X*.^r
- *X* has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
- I do feel a strong sense of belonging with *X*.
- It would be very hard for me to leave *X* right now, even if I wanted to.
- Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave *X* now.
- Right now, staying with *X* is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
- If I had the opportunity to shop with a better provider elsewhere, I would not feel it was right to leave.
- Even if it would be to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave *X*.
- I would not leave *X* right now because I have a sense of obligation to them.
- *X* deserves my loyalty.
- I would feel guilty if I left *X* now.

A.1.4. Perceived brand ethicality (Brunk, 2012)

- This brand respects moral laws.
- This brand always adheres to the law.
- This brand is socially responsible.
- This brand avoids damaging behaviour at all cost.
- This brand is a good brand.
- This brand will make a decision only after careful consideration of the potential positive or negative consequences for all those involved.

A.1.5. Brand attitude (Park et al., 2010)

- | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| • I don't like this brand | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | I strongly like this brand |
| • Unfavourable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Favourable |
| • This brand is not good | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | This brand is good |

A.1.6. Customer satisfaction (Williams & Soutar, 2009)

- This brand provided me what I exactly needed.
- I am satisfied with my decision.
- It was a wise choice.
- It was a good experience with this brand.

Appendix B

B.1. Reliability and validity of constructs

Construct	Composite reliability (Cut off value 0.70)	Average variance extracted (Cut off value 0.50)	Cronbach alpha (Cut off value 0.70)
Brand experience			
Sensory dimension	0.74	0.75	0.80
Affective dimension	0.89	0.95	0.76
Behavioral dimension	0.90	0.96	0.77
Intellectual dimension	0.77	0.84	0.76
Brand commitment	0.71	0.76	0.93
Harmonious brand passion	0.75	0.82	0.88
Obsessive brand passion	0.76	0.95	0.89
Brand attitude	0.75	0.74	0.81
Customer satisfaction	0.84	0.76	0.85

B.2. Discriminant validity

	SD	AD	BD	ID	HBP	OBP	BC	BA	CS
SD	1 (0.75 ^a)								
AD	0.61 ^b	1 (0.95)							
BD	0.53	0.52	1 (0.96)						
ID	0.52	0.58	0.62	1 (0.84)					
HBP	0.52	0.59	0.58	0.63	1 (0.82)				
OBP	0.51	0.56	0.51	0.54	0.77	1 (0.95)			
BC	0.53	0.61	0.49	0.51	0.74	0.80	1 (0.76)		
BA	0.25	0.21	0.28	0.19	0.30	0.29	0.30	1 (0.74)	
CS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1 (0.76)

*SD-sensory dimension; AD-affective dimension; BD-behavioral dimension; ID-intellectual dimension; HBP-harmonious brand passion; OBP-obsessive brand passion; BC-brand commitment; BA-brand attitude; CS-customer satisfaction.

^a Average variance extracted (AVE).

^b Squared correlation.

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