



# CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND ONLINE BRAND EXPERIENCE: THE ROLE OF BRAND FAMILIARITY AND BRAND TRUST

MAZEDAN INTERNATIONAL  
BUSINESS REVIEW

e-ISSN: 2583-0929

Article id: MIBR0101005

Vol-1, Issue-1

Received: 30 Dec 2019

Revised: 19 Jan 2020

Accepted: 24 Mar 2020

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**Citation:** Ullah, N., Aijaz, A., Ullah, A., & Nawaz, A. (2020). Consumer Perception and Online Brand Experience: The role of Brand Familiarity and Brand Trust. *Mazedan International Business Review*, 1(1), 16-21.

## Abstract

In marketing research and academics, it has been analysed that consumer demand the product that provide them a satisfaction and unique experience. Therefore, the main aim of this research was to analyse consumer perception and online brand experience in UK retail sector, while considering the role of brand familiarity and brand trust. In research method, primary quantitative research method has been deployed, and information were gathered from 300 consumers in UK retail sector, based on 5-point Likert scale. For data analysis, statistical analysis (i.e., demographic, descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation analysis, and regression analysis) were used through SPSS software.

Findings from demographic analysis revealed that from different age, gender, and background have been participated in the current research. Moreover, after reliability testing of datasets, findings from correlation analysis shows a positive association of consumer perception with online brand experience. Similarly, findings from regression analysis have also validated the positive influence of online brand experience on consumer perception. Further, findings from moderation analysis have also revealed that both brand trust and brand familiarity positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.

Future research should be focused on both qualitative and quantitative research for in-depth analysis. In addition to this, other dimensions (i.e., consumer satisfaction, consumer engagement, etc.) are also need to consider while analysing the consumer perception and online brand experience.

**Keywords:** Marketing mix, Customer satisfaction, Retailing, Benchmarking, marketing research, Brand Trust.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article aims to analyse the role that brand trust and familiarity play in the consumer perception and experience of brands in the retail sector of UK. The concept of the consumer-brand relationship, which is a mechanism by which a brand can interact with both the seller and buyer. The main factors that influence this relationship are brand experience and brand loyalty. The traditional approach to brand marketing is mainly focused on providing functional links with consumers, but they now prefer a more compelling experience. A brand is created in the retail industry in the UK through a process that can involve multiple strategies. It can be done in different ways such as creating a symbol, a name, or a combination. Since brands are considered to be very important, the business should use all its marketing tools to raise awareness of them. Having a good image can help consumers become more loyal to a brand. This can lead to a higher likelihood of consuming the product or service (Sahin et al., 2011). The objective of the article was to develop a conceptual framework for building a brand relationship from an experiential perspective. The article will attempt to discuss various aspects of this framework, such as the role of trust, satisfaction, and brand loyalty in

the retail sector. A company's brand trust is very important to its customers. This is because it can differentiate them from other businesses in the same sector. An online retail brand community is a vital part of any organization's strategy to improve its competitive position and attract more customers (Khan et al., 2019). It can also help boost the company's sales and improve its customer relationships. As more retail businesses start using social media to attract and interact with their consumers, they will need to develop effective strategies and manage their online communities. Through the use of data, businesses can now collect and analyse various information about their customers, such as their past purchasing habits and needs. This allows them to improve their marketing and customer service (Suesawadwanit et al., 2021). In the UK, for instance, they can use this to connect with their potential customers on a more intimate level. The role that familiarity and trust play in the brand's online presence can be seen in the way consumers perceive and experience a brand in the retail sector of UK. Retail brands from various product categories interact with their consumers

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through social media. In addition, a growing number of consumer types are now able to interact with these types of brands. However, the exact role that trust plays in the brand's interactions with consumers is still unclear. Until now, there has been a lack of a direct communication link between brands and consumers in online communities (Amoah et al., 2022). Hence this article will examine the role of online brand experience in retail sector consumers' perception and how they tend to trust and become familiar with the brand.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

According to Dessart et al. (2016); Carvalho et al. (2018) customer perception is defined as opinions, emotional, belief, and attachments with particular brand. Although, customer perception has embodied in various marketing research, especially in online brand experience due to its substantial role in offering a competitive advantage in business environment (Niculescu et al., 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2019). Meanwhile, Niculescu et al. (2019); Hollebeek et al. (2019) in their study asserted that online branding has gained a significant importance in business organisation due to its positive influence on consumer experience. The authors further evaluated those businesses used multiple platforms and sites (i.e., Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Websites) to promote their brand and persuading consumer buying behaviour. Similarly, Jiang, Luk and Cardinali (2018) in their study have also advocated a positive association in consumer perception with online branding. Additionally, businesses are also using different tools and techniques (i.e., Google Alert, Hootsuite, and Search Engine Optimisation SEO) to promote their brand and target their customers (Matta, Gupta and Agarwal, 2020). However, in prior studies various dimensions have been identified that are likely to influence on consumer perception towards different products and markets in online brand experience (Menidjel, Benhabib and Bilgihan, 2017; Yang and Chiang, 2017; Pintado et al., 2017; Xiao et al., 2019; Taskin and Çakmak, 2020; Ebrahim, 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020).

The brand familiarity is one of the most essential dimensions which refers to the information about brand that consumer has had, regardless the type of product or market. Although, some studies have determined a higher level of consumer perception in online brand with greater level of familiarity (Xiao et al., 2019; Ebrahim, 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020). Likely, Xiao et al. (2019) in their study indicated that customers that are more likely to explore or linger are determined to more influence with online branding. Interestingly, Ebrahim (2020) in their study have also explored a positive association among brand familiarity and consumer perception in e-commerce. The author further evaluated that higher time spent on research and gathering information tends to deeper brand impression. On contrary, it has also been found that most of the dot.com brands have not yet accomplished the familiarity level that are needed to influence on consumer perception (Reinikainen et al., 2020).

Brand trust has also been determined to be a major indicator which refers to interaction and feeling of

security with brands (Taskin and Çakmak, 2020). According to Yang and Chiang (2017) a higher-level trust, enhance willingness of consumers for purchasing brand, and maintaining a long-term relationship with consumers in the future. Similarly, Pintado et al. (2017) in their study indicated that brand trust provides a higher level of security to customers in interaction with online brand. Additionally, Menidjel, Benhabib and Bilgihan (2017) in their study indicated that maintenance and development of brand trust is found to be crucial element in consumer perception, especially in online business environment. Because most of the consumers experience security and privacy issues in marketing websites, e-commerce or particularly unknown ones. Therefore, to meet these challenges it is essential for business to add dimensions of brand trust and security in online business environment (Menidjel, Benhabib and Bilgihan, 2017). Moreover, Ebrahim (2020) in their study urged that most of the dot.com companies are focusing towards maintaining a long-term relationship with their customers through enhancing consumer satisfaction, security, and brand trust. Further, Reinikainen et al., (2020) in their study illustrated that building a brand trust significantly help in shaping the perceptions of customers towards branding. The author further evaluated that absence of trust, make suspicious to the consumers to purchase a particular product or services. However, based on the aforementioned studies, in the current research, following hypotheses have been formulated:

- H1a: Greater online brand experience leads to a higher level of consumer perception.
- H0a: Greater online brand experience does not lead to a higher level of consumer perception.
- H1b: Brand familiarity positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.
- H0b: Brand familiarity does not positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.
- H1c: Brand trust positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.
- H0c: Brand trust does not positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.

Based on the above formulated hypotheses, the relationships among variables have been summarised in figure-1, represented as conceptual framework model.

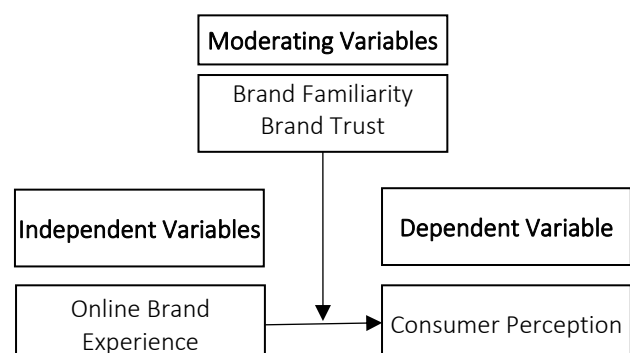


Figure 1 conceptual framework model

**3. RESEARCH METHOD**

In the current research the main emphasis of the researcher was to investigate the consumer perception and online branding experience while considering the role of brand trust and familiarity. Therefore, researcher has particularly relied on quantitative research approach, as it assists the researcher in analysing the impact of different dimensions on consumer perception. In addition, quantitative approach also allows the investigator in minimising errors, and validating research outcomes through mitigating systemic error and psychological biases (Tobi and Kampen, 2018). Moreover, it also helps the researcher in assessment of hypothesis through using statistical techniques. Therefore, quantitative research approach has been used as one of the most suitable approaches.

Referring to of data collection, researcher used a primary approach, and information were gathered using closed-ended survey questionnaires. Since the researcher aim was to analyse the role of online brand experience on consumer perception, particularly in retail sector. Hence, primary data collection method has enabled the researcher to gather most up-dated information relevant to research phenomenon (Mazhar et al., 2021). For data sampling and size, convenience sampling was used due to accessibility and convenience of the researcher, and for sample size 300 customers were selected from the UK retail sector. Responses were gathered, based on the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 5 “Strongly Agree”. For data analysis, descriptive statistics was used to summarise the responses of participants using SPSS software. Further, correlation, regression analysis, and moderation analysis were used to decipher the association between variables and hypothesis testing.

Lastly, ethical values have also given a significant importance while conducting this research, as it ensures the confidentiality of participants’ personal information (Hasan et al., 2021). Moreover, secondary information derived in this specified research has also been appropriately cited which ensure the validity of research outcome.

**4. RESULTS**

Table 1 Demographic Analysis

Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	177	59.0	59.0	59.0
Female	123	41.0	41.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	
Age				
18-25	93	31.0	31.0	31.0
26-35	99	33.0	33.0	64.0
36-45	67	22.3	22.3	86.3
45-50	31	10.3	10.3	96.7
50 Above	10	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	
Online Engagement				
Instagram	84	28.0	28.0	28.0
Facebook	86	28.7	28.7	56.7
Twitter	56	18.7	18.7	75.3
WhatsApp	21	7.0	7.0	82.3
Others	53	17.7	17.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The above table represent demographic information of the respondents participated in the current research. Referring to the gender, it is noteworthy that majority (i.e., 59%) are male participants. On contrary, 123 out of 300 are female participants which accounted approximately 41 of the total sample. Additionally, age of the respondents has also been inquired, and majority (i.e., 33%) participants fall in the age of 26-35. Moreover, 31% have been reported age in between 18 to 25, 22.3% reported in between 26 to 45, 10.3% reported in between 45 to 50, and only 3.3% participants have been reported their age above 50. Thus, it implies that majority of the participants are in young age. Furthermore, participants have also been inquired regarding their online engagement in social media websites. Hence, 28% reported Instagram, 28.7% reported Facebook, 18.7% reported twitter, 7% reported WhatsApp, and 17.7% have been reported other option.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Online Brand Experience	300	1.000	5.000	3.374	0.807
Brand Familiarity	300	1.000	5.000	3.477	0.891
Brand Trust	300	1.000	5.000	3.631	0.804
Consumer Perception	300	1.000	5.000	3.783	0.768

From the above table of descriptive statistics, it can be seen that total number of respondents are 300 denoted by ‘N’. Further while referring to the mean value, it is also noteworthy that average number of participants in online brand experience are inclined toward neutral, as mean value is found to be closer to 3 (i.e., 3.4), based on 5-point Likert-scale. Similarly, the mean value of brand familiarity is also found closer to 3 which indicate neutral response. Further, mean value of brand trust and consumer perception are found closer to 4 which indicated that average number of respondents are inclined toward agree.

Table 3 - Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.880	12

Before conducting an inferential analysis, reliability analysis has also been used to analyse the validity of dataset and research outcome. Notably, it can be seen that reliability analysis yielded a favourable result, as Cronbach’s value is found to be 0.880 > 0.70. Thus, it implies that each item involved is reliable and valid for further analysis.

Table 4 - Correlation Analysis

Correlations				
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
[1] Online Brand Experience	1	.502**	.450**	.240**
[2] Brand Familiarity	.502**	1	.631**	.419**
[3] Brand Trust	.450**	.631**	1	.408**
[4] Consumer Perception	.240**	.419**	.408**	1
	300	300	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table shows association among variables involved in this specified research. It can be observed that consumer perception has a positive and weak association with online brand experience, as confident value is found to be 0.240. On contrary. Brand familiarity and brand trust has also a positive and moderate association with consumer perception, as coefficient value are found to be 0.419 and 0.408, respectively. However, all variables have a significant association, as sig value is found to be less than 0.05.

Table 5 - Regression Analysis

	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	3.01*** (0.000)	3.58*** (0.000)
Online Brand Experience	0.22*** (0.000)	-0.42*** (0.000)
Brand Familiarity * Online Brand Experience		0.07*** (0.000)
Brand Trust * Online Brand Experience		0.05*** (0.004)
R Square	0.058	0.199
Adjusted R-square	0.054	0.191
Sig	0	0
Significant at 1% ***, 5% **, 10% ***		

In model Regression analysis has also been used to analyse the influence of independent variable on dependent variable. Notably, online brand experience has a positive and significant influence on consumer perception, as coefficient value is found to be 0.22, and sig value is  $0.000 < 0.01$ . Thus, it is suggested that increase in online brand experience tends to positively influence on consumer perception.

Further, in model 2 moderation analysis has also been used to analyse the role of familiarity brand and familiarity trust. It can be seen that online brand experience has a negative and significant influence on consumer perception, as coefficient value is -0.42, and sig value is  $0.000 < 0.01$ . On contrary, brand familiarity and brand trust both have a moderated the positive influence of online business experience on consumer perception, as coefficient value is found to be 0.05 and 0.07, respectively.

**5. DISCUSSION AND HYPOTHESES ASSESSMENT**

By reviewing a literature and previous market researches, it has been analysed that online branding and consumer perception has gained a significant importance, but few studies have been carried out in retail sector (Niculescu et

al., 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2019). Therefore, the main emphasis of the researcher was to analyse the consumer perception in online branding, specifically in retail sector. Hence, findings revealed that online brand experience has a positive and significant influence on consumer perception. Similarly, findings from correlation analysis have also revealed a positive association between consumer perception and online brand experience. Therefore, “H0a” has been rejected, and alternative hypothesis “H1a” has been accepted.

Further, in order to analyse the consumer perception two main dimension were identified: brand trust and brand familiarity. Regarding, brand familiarity in prior studies it has been identified that brand familiarity has a positive influence on consumer perception, as it helps in providing a greater information regardless type of product or brand (Xiao et al., 2019; Ebrahim, 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020). Similarly, findings from correlation analysis have also revealed a positive association among brand familiarity and consumer perception in online branding. Furthermore, findings in the moderation analysis have also been forecasted a positive moderating influence between consumer perception and online brand experience. Therefore, based on the aforementioned studies and findings in the current research null hypothesis “H0b” has been rejected, and alternative hypothesis “H1b” has been accepted.

Brand trust has also been considered as another major dimension that power the business organisations to shape the consumer purchasing. Although, in prior studies it has been revealed that brand trust helps in maintaining a long-term relation and changing consumer perception toward brand (Taskin and Çakmak, 2020; Pintado et al., 2017; Menidjel, Benhabib and Bilgihan, 2017). Further, it has also been analysed that it is essential for e-businesses to build trust due to challenges of privacy, security in online business environment (Ebrahim 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020). Similarly, findings from correlation analysis have also revealed a positive association between brand trust and consumer perception in online branding. Furthermore, findings in the moderation analysis have also been forecasted a positive moderating influence between consumer perception and online brand. Therefore, based on the aforementioned studies and findings in the current research null hypothesis “H0c” has also been rejected, and alternative hypothesis “H1c” has been accepted. However, following table summarise the key findings of the research.

Table 6 – Hypotheses Assessment

Hypothesis	Statement	Coefficient	Sig	Accepted	Rejected
H1a:	<i>Greater online brand experience leads to a higher level of consumer perception.</i>			Accepted	
H0a:	<i>Greater online brand experience does not lead to a higher level of consumer perception.</i>	0.22	0.000		Rejected
H1b:	<i>Brand familiarity positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.</i>			Accepted	
H0b:	<i>Brand familiarity does not positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.</i>	0.07	0.00		Rejected
H1c	<i>Brand trust positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.</i>			Accepted	
H0c	<i>Brand trust does not positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience.</i>	0.05	0.04		Rejected

**6. CONCLUSION**

The main intent of the current was to analyse the consumer perception in online brand experience while considering the role of brand familiarity and brand trust, specifically in retail sector of UK. For the purpose of this primary quantitative research method was used, and information were gathered using survey questionnaire. For data analysis descriptive statistics, demographic analysis, reliability testing, and inferential analysis were used through using statistical software SPSS. Hence, findings revealed that there is a significant and positive association between consumer perception and online brand experience. Additionally, findings also revealed that both brand trust and brand familiarity positively moderate the relationship between consumer perception and online brand experience. Thus, based on the analysis, it can be concluded that brand familiarity and brand trust are most essential determinant for consumer perception, especially in online business.

However, the current research has played an essential role in analysing the role of brand familiarity and trust in consumer perception of online branding experience. But, findings in the current research are also limited to quantitative research and small sample size due to time

and cost constraints, and it provide a direction for future research. Another major limitation is that it only explores two factors that shape the consumer perception. Thus, future research should be focus on further dimensions (i.e., consumer satisfaction, consumer engagement, etc.) that can influence on consumer perception in online branding experience.

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

**Gender**

- Male
- Female

**Age**

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-49
- 50 and Above

**Social media platform engaged**

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- WhatsApp
- Others

S.NO	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	<b>Online Brand Experience</b>					
1	Online branding has significantly help in increasing consumer awareness.					
2	It also helps in increasing engagement and communication.					
3	It helps in shaping consumer behaviour.					
	<b>Brand Familiarity</b>					
4	Consumer brand familiarity leads to changes in the consumer perception towards online business experience.					
5	Advertising through e-branding is more used in community rather than traditional advertising (such as TV, newspapers, and radio).					
6	Feature content in e-commerce has power to influence on purchasing behaviour of consumer towards a					
	<b>Brand Trust</b>					
7	Brand trust helps in enhancing the reliability of product or services offered.					
8	Higher level of quality and trust leads to long-term relationship and attachment with brand.					
9	Constant engagement with consumers also helps in building consumer trust.					
	<b>Consumer Perception</b>					
10	Higher level of brand trust leads to greater influence on consumer perception toward brands.					
11	Brand familiarity in social media and other sites can influence on purchasing behaviour of consumers towards brand.					
12	Social networking sites can help in enhancing engagement level, brand familiarity, and level of trust.					

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