



Impact of Visual Aesthetics and Market Mavenism on Brand Personality: Mediating Role of Brand Experience: Evidence from Pakistan's Automobile Sector

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Article Information	Abstract
Article history: Submitted: 2022-02-27 Accepted: 2022-03-23 Published: 2022-03-25	The motivation behind this paper is to evaluate the mediating role of Brand Experience in relationship between Visual Aesthetics, Market Mavenism and Brand Personality in the Automobile sector of Pakistan. This study is based on data from 306 participants who worked in automobile sector in Pakistan. AMOS (22.0) was used to carry out analysis. A pilot study was first employed on responses from 50 participants prior to the field activity to avoid any invalid or irrelevant data. Results of the study enlighten that Visual Aesthetics, Market Mavenism and Brand Experience impact the Brand personality positively, whereas, Brand Experience partially mediates the relationship between Brand personality and Visual Aesthetics. Similarly, Brand Experience also mediates the relationship between Market Mavenism and Brand Personality. Specifically, Visual Aesthetics and Market Mavenism have the ability to enhance the Brand Experience and Brand Personality and vice versa. This study contributes to novel theory based and practice based insights to the factors impacting brand personality. Specifically, identification of Brand Experience as a mediating variable in the process, it adds value to the existing knowledge.
Volume No. 2 Issue No. 1 ISSN: 2790-7899	
Keywords: Aesthetics, Market Mavenism, Brand personality, Brand Experience, AMOS, Automobile Sector	

Introduction

According to Andrew (2014) marketers and academics need to emphasise on the determinants of slow growth rate of the local automobile industry. The free trade policies have been operating here in Pakistan, there has been a huge interest of foreign companies either coming to Pakistan, or exporting into Pakistan or planning to formulate joint ventures with local firms. If we look into the growth trends of Pakistan economy in the last few years (Chinoy, 2014), we see the growth in Pakistan's auto industry at an amazing rate which shall be expected to grow with Pakistan's economy on its track. Additionally, Andrew (2014) cites Automobile Industry Survey conducted by Pakwheels.com (2014) and highlights many issues related to Pakistani Automobile Industry. Firstly, there's a serious Demand-Supply gap that exists in Pakistani Car Industry and shortages have been observed. Pakistani assemblers have not been able to fulfil the demand from local customers. There has only been a 0.6 % sales increase for

local cars, despite high demand. Secondly, lack of focus of local industry has been observed towards customer perceptions of quality of local and foreign cars. Thirdly, in the recent past, the entrance of foreign reassembled cars, specifically Japanese cars has been on the rise. This has been noticed as a result of strong acceptance of foreign reassembled cars by Pakistani customers. There has been a trend of using foreign assembled used cars which are preferred over new locally assembled cars. Fourthly, inconsistent government policies regarding importation of foreign used cars and relaxation of rules by the Government of Pakistan for foreign entrants have also been playing its role. Furthermore, the car financing schemes are quite stringent as well. Lastly, Pakistani consumers considers these factors when purchase a car: drive, comfort, value for money, safety, design, resale value, and cost of ownership along with after sale services.

One way retailers look to expand their sales and maximize their profits is by speaking to the most persuasive clients (Ghauri, Harmon-Kizer, & Talukdar, 2015). A few purchasers tend to be particularly included in the market place. They obtain data about numerous sorts of items, spots to shop, and different aspects of the business sector; and they take part in numerous items related discussions with different shoppers to share their insight (Goldsmith, Clark, & Goldsmith, 2006). Word of mouth is considered as a more authentic source by shoppers instead of traditional advertising sue it its credibility value that may feel maximized due to personal source of information (Keller & Berry, 2003). Thus, the concept of Market Mavens or Market Mavenism plays a significant part in success of a business and when considering automobile sector, customers in Pakistan are seen to be taking insights from different people before making a purchase.

Moreover, in marketing theories, ‘brand experience’ has also been used in various aspects; nevertheless, this area of research has not seen any noteworthy progression, and it questionably explains for the deficiency of any articulated brand experience dimensions (Uecharoenkit, 2013). Brand Personality has also established much research attention over the last decade. Atwal & William (2008) mentioned that brand personality is a major source of differentiation in the marketplace.

There were various research qualifications that called for the attention of academicians and practitioners towards variables discussed and industry under consideration. If we look into the academic research gaps, there are significant gaps that can be seen among the variables under study. Future research should look to examine market maven with other outcome variables (Ghauri, Harmon-Kizer, & Talukdar, 2015) and it is a variable which requires more research (Clark, Goldsmith, & Goldsmith, 2008). It is best to use experimental methods to examine market mavenism and market strategy elements interaction (Goldsmith, Clark, & Goldsmith, 2006). Similarly it should also analyse that whether Market Mavenism leads to status appeals and Brands (Goldsmith, Clark, & Goldsmith, 2006). Brand Personality and other significances of brand experience require further practical testing (Sahin, Zehir, & Kitapçı, 2011). As pointed out by Aaker (1997), it is necessary to look into the determinants and consequences of brand personality through empirical testing as it already has gained much attention but have seldom been tested empirically (Brunel, 2007). Future research should focus its attention on determinants and long-term significane of brand experience (Sahin, Zehir, & Kitapçı, 2011). Extant research has suggested that aesthetic design attributes plays a significant role in the success of a product (Lee, Ha, & Widdows, 2011). Future research can also use more distinct product categories as area of inquiry to cross-validate the findings from this study and for the expansion of the study to other industries (Bloch, Frederic, & Arnold, 2002- 2015). Moreover, the studies related to Visual Aesthetics and Market Mavenism have not studied automobile sector, as per researchers’ findings.

This study has been carried out by taking “Visual Aesthetics” and “Market Mavenism”as an independent variable, “Brand Experience” as a mediator and “Brand

Personality” as a dependent variable with reference to Pakistan’s Automobile sector. So, the goal of current study is to understand the brand personality of cars by focusing on Visual Aesthetics and Market Mavenism through brand experience.

Conceptual Background and Research Hypotheses

Visual Aesthetics

If the logo is considered as an exclusive identifying mark, like nothing else in the world that describes a brand or a group, then the visual identity also called as Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics encompasses that representation and classification with an all-encompassing voice, with a unifying thread. As per Steenberg (2007), a visual identity is the visual and the verbal vibrant speech of a brand or group. It also includes all important design submissions, including business cards, packing and letterhead among many other possible applications. It may also comprise of a tagline or brand line and promotion. Moreover, as per Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold (2003), centrality of visual item feel is characterized as "The general degree of importance that visual style hold for a specific buyer in his/her associations with item" and it comprises of four dimensions, 1) value assigned by customer to product appearance in uplifting personal and social well-being, 2) acumen, customers’ ability to recognize and evaluate a product design, 3) response level towards visual design element of a products, and 4) value of visual aesthetics towards customers’ preferences for a product and satisfaction level towards their purchase.

Market Mavenism

Market mavens refer to the consumers who diverse knowledge on different types of products, shopping places, and other relevant market factors, who are able to discuss and respond to other customers’ requests related to market information (Feick & Price, 1987) also known as generalized opinion leaders (Steenkamp & Katrijn, 2003). Market mavens are both seekers and suppliers of data (Higie, Feick, & Price, 1987) and have large amounts of moral inspiration while shopping (Memery, Megicks, & Williams, 2012). They are naturally very much educated about shopping and purchasing and are eager to speak with different customers, who frequently depend upon their skill/suppositions as a wellspring of market place data (Clark, Goldsmith, & Goldsmith, 2008).

Brand Personality

Symbolic attributes of brand explain consumer behavior (Ha & Perks, 2005). Consumer research defines brand personality as symbolic attribute. It has been defined “a set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker 1997) and has five dimensions: Excitement, Sincerity, Ruggedness and Sophistication. According to Severi & Ling, (2013) personality traits relate to brands that develop representative and self-impressive inferences for the consumers. Several researchers in the literature confirm that consumers see the difference in personalities of different brands (Parker, 2009; Nam, Ekinci, & Whyatt, 2011; Severi & Ling, 2013). A synchronized communication regarding a brand with the consumers delivers brand characteristics, leading to the definition of brand personality (Nam *et al*, 2011). Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer, & Nyffenegger, (2011) mentioned brand personality as the emotional metaphor between consumer and the brand.

Brand Experience

‘Brand experience’ as a concept, has developed as a crucial area of learning within the core fields of marketing e.g. brand management, over the past few years. Brankus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello (2009) defined brand experience as “the subjective response evoked by a stimulus created by the brands.” Ha & Perks, (2005) mentioned brand experience as the internal

response of consumers at each brand confrontation and internal response include sensations, cognitions and feelings. Brand Experience is an under researched construct, requiring empirical testing with various marketing variables. Absence of empirical research related to brand experience, magnitudes and significances has been observed. Brand Experience for Luxury Cosmetics has been observed to be quite important when talked about brand personality (Ueacharoenkit, 2013). Brand experience can be experienced through settings such as those in the coffee shops (Chang and Chieng, 2006), banking (Atwal and Williams, 2008) and online services (Ha and Perks, 2005). However, it has not yet been established through the extant research across diverse frameworks (Ueacharoenkit, 2013). Moreover, according to Brankus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, (2009) brand experience is a degree of product or service exposure and according to them, it has 4 dimensions: Sensory, Affective, Behavioural and Intellectual.

Relationship among Variables

As per Walter, Cleff, & Chu, (2013) better product experience results in higher brand perception and image. Another study found that there's a significant impact of brand experience on brand personality for BMW cars (Walter *et al*, 2013). Moreover, Product Design is a basic antecedent of Brand Personality (Brunel & Kumar, 2007). Thus, as per researcher's finding, the relationship between Visual Aesthetics and Brand Experience is not tested before. Moreover, market mavenism is also found not to be examined with the understudy variables and the reason explored is that studies available have unleashed mavens' search behaviour, its personality traits and customer's trust (Ghauri, Harmon-Kizer, & Talukdar, 2015; Clark, Goldsmith, & Goldsmith, 2008; Somers, Worsley, & McNaughton, 2014; Goldsmith, Clark, & Goldsmith, 2006; Chelminski & Coulter, 2007).

Based on the review of extant literature, the following hypotheses were designed for empirical testing:

H1: Visual Aesthetics significantly impacts Brand Experience

H2: Market Mavenism significantly impacts Brand Experience

H3: Brand Experience significantly impacts Brand Personality

H4: Visual Aesthetics significantly impacts Brand Personality

H5: Market Mavenism significantly impacts Brand Personality

H6: Brand Experience significantly mediates the relationship between Visual Aesthetics and Brand Personality

H7: Brand Experience significantly mediates the relationship between Market Mavenism and Brand Personality

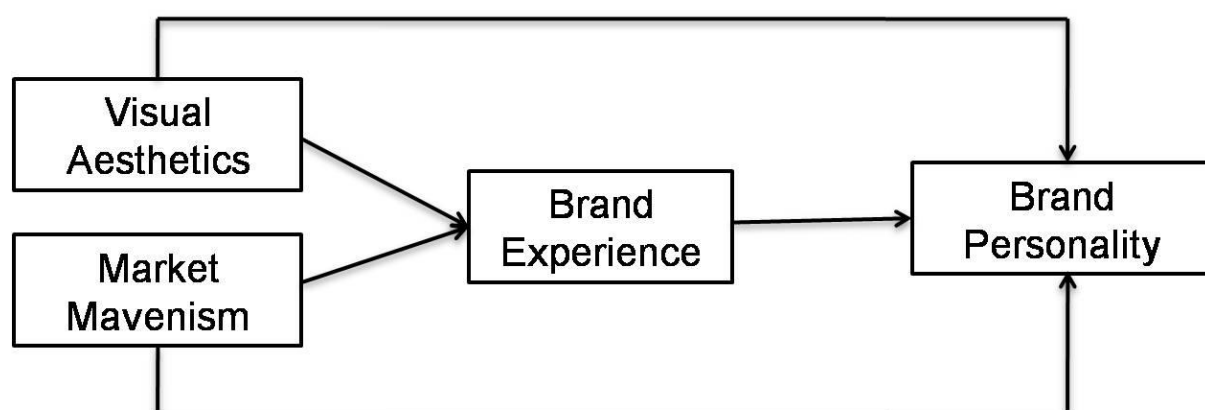


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Research Methodology

Participants

For the current study, we received 330 responses from the participants but out of that, 306 complete and usable responses were used for the data analysis purposes. 6.2% of the respondents belonged to age group of 20 and under, 14.7% from 21 to 30 years of age, 36.9% from 31 to 40 years of age and 31.7% from age group of 50 and above. 32% of the respondents were females and 68% were male respondents. Education wise, 1.3% have done their Intermediate, 33% have done their Bachelor Degree and remaining 65.4% have done their Master's Degree. 4.2% of the individuals are from the Monthly Income category of 20,000 rupees and below, 7.8% are from the Monthly Income category of 20,001-40,000, 5.2% are from the Monthly Income category of 40,000-60,000, 26.5% are from the Monthly Income category of 60,001-80,000 and lastly 56.2% are also from the Monthly Income category of 80,001 and above.

Measures

A scale was compiled for all the variables of study. Statements 1 to 12 measures Visual Aesthetics (Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold, 2003), statements 13 to 25 measured Brand Experience (Brakus et al. 2009), statements 26 to 44 measured Brand Personality (Aaker, 1997) and the statements 44 to 48 measured Market Mavenism (Steenkamp & Katrijn, 2003). The questionnaire used a 7-point likert scale where "1 represented Strongly disagree" and "7 represented Strongly Agree". Before delving into the main field study, we had run a pilot test on the data from 50 participants. This was done in order to prevent against getting invalid or inappropriate data. The results from the pilot run were agreeable and confirmed the reliability of the research instrument.

Sample Procedures

Convenience sampling procedure was employed as the main methodology of data collection and the sample was drawn from the consumers residing within the metropolitan area of Lahore city and data was collected through self-administered questionnaires.

Data Analysis

We utilize AMOS (22.0) in order to ascertain the after effects of our assessment model and subsequent structural regression model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Preliminary Analysis

This study calculates the convergent as well as discriminant validity, that is followed by testing the hypothesized relationships of the variables in structural model. To test validity of the model, this study relied upon the method suggested by Fornell & Larcker (1981). Results revealed a high construct validity and reliability ($\rho > .75$; $AVE > .5$) for the entire latent variable. For discriminant legitimacy, the normal difference removed ($AVE > .5$) of each variable was more noteworthy than the squared connection in the model.

To satisfy the preliminary states of structural equation modeling (SEM), this study presents dependability, and legitimacy through corroborative element investigation (CFA). The computation of united and discriminant legitimacy of the model followed Fornell and Larcker's (1981) strategy. Aftereffects of composite dependability (CR) affirm the unwavering quality of the scale (Joreskog, 1971) as the score of normal change separated (AVE) for each element is more noteworthy than 0.5.

Table 1: Properties of Psychometric

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	BPE	VAC	BEX	MV
BPE	0.94	0.52	0.50	0.38	0.72			

VAC	0.92	0.51	0.47	0.34	0.69	0.71		
BEX	0.91	0.51	0.50	0.35	0.70	0.66	0.71	
MV	0.87	0.62	0.17	0.13	0.41	0.34	0.35	0.79

Note. BEX= Brand Experience; VAC= Visual Aesthetics; BPE= Brand Personality, CR= Composite Reliability; AVE= Average Variance Extracted; MSV= Maximum Shared Variance; ASV= Average Shared Variance

According to Kline (2005) the result display a fair fit in the model ($\chi^2= 1480.81$; $df= 887$; $\chi^2/df = 1.67$; p value = 0.00; GFI = 0.83; AGFI = 0.81; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.05 and PCLOSE = 0.89

The current research takes into consideration CFA to avoid any reliability and validity concerns (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Results reveal no such issues in the model fit of constructs of Brand Experience, Visual Aesthetics and Brand Personality ($\chi^2=3667.770$; $df= 902$; P -value= 0.000; $\chi^2/df= 4.066$; AGFI = 0.499; GFI= 0.544; TLI= 0.658; CFI= 0.674; RMSEA= 0.100 and PCLOSE= 0.000).

Measurement model

The outcome in Table-3 uncovers that every one of the things of the scale are being loaded uniquely on their separate develop and every thing loading is more noteworthy than the end esteem 0.500

Table 2: Loadings of Factors

Construct	No. of Items	Loadings of Factors
BEX	11	0.54, 0.73, 0.83, 0.77, 0.77, 0.80, 0.76, 0.70, 0.51, 0.59, 0.80
MV	4	0.70, 0.83, 0.75, 0.88
VAC	12	0.77, 0.62, 0.74, 0.78, 0.73, 0.77, 0.70, 0.72, 0.74, 0.71, 0.62, 0.69
BPE	17	0.75, 0.74, 0.75, 0.72, 0.67, 0.77, 0.69, 0.73, 0.75, 0.70, 0.75, 0.67, 0.72, 0.66, 0.71, 0.72, 0.75

Note. BEX= Brand Experience, VAC= Visual Aesthetics, BPE= Brand Personality

Hypotheses testing

As hypothesized, the result reveals that Visual Aesthetics have the positive significant impact on Brand Experience ($\beta = 0.511$, p value < 0.001) supports hypothesis (H1). Market Mavenism have positive significant impact on Brand Experience ($\beta = 0.078$, p value < 0.01), supports hypothesis (H2). The impression of brand experience on personality is positively significant with beta of 0.479 and p value less than 0.001 which proves hypothesis 3. Visual Aesthetics also have the significant positive impression of Brand Personality ($\beta = 0.354$, p value < 0.001) that is inline with hypothesis (H4). Market Mavenism have a significant positive impact on Brand Personality ($\beta = 0.088$, $p < 0.01$).

To test the mediated paths proposed in the model; the results demonstrate that all the direct effect are found to be significant. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis of mediated effect of Visual Aesthetics on Brand Personality via Brand Experience (H6) and Market Mavenism on Brand Personality via Brand Experience (H7) are accepted as the basic assumptions of mediated effect is being fulfilled. The results and hypothesis are inline with Baron & Kenny, 1986)

For distinguishing the kind of intervention; examination uncovered that, as all the direct effects are statistically significant, as well as, the corresponding indirect effects (VAC→BEX→BPE) and (MV→BEX→BPE) are also significantly positive ($\beta=0.245$, $p < 0.001$) and ($\beta=0.037$, $p < 0.001$) respectively. The bias-corrected confidence interval (BCCI) limits do not include any negative value. Thus, the result provides support for the partial mediation.

Table 3: Direct Effect of Variables

<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Un standardized</i>	<i>Standardized estimates</i>
<i>VAC → BEX</i>	.51***	(.61)
<i>MV → BEX</i>	.07**	(.14)
<i>BEX → BPE</i>	.48***	(.41)
<i>VAC → BPE</i>	.35***	(.36)
<i>MV → BPE</i>	.09**	(.14)

*Note. Values inside the enclosure are normalized gauges. Values without the enclosure are un-normalized gauges. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$*

Table 4: Indirect Effect

	<i>Unstandardized Estimates</i>	<i>standardized Estimates</i>	<i>BCCI</i>	
			<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<i>VAC → BEX → BPE</i>	.24***	(.25)	.16	.36
<i>MV → BEX → BPE</i>	.03***	(.06)	.02	.11

*Note. BCCI stands for Bias corrected confidence interval, *** $p \leq 0.001$*

Discussion and Conclusion

The result indicates that more the Visual Aesthetics and Market Mavens will be; more will be the Brand Personality (BPE) of such product/brand. Similarly, higher Visual Aesthetics and higher number of Market mavens will also result in a higher number of Brand Experiences (BEX). Moreover the greater the number of BEX the, more will be the Brand Personality of such product/brand and lastly, BEX and MV partially mediates the relationship between VAC and BPE.

This research can help companies/managers to set their strategy accordingly. To develop a good Brand Personality, companies need to put effort on the Brand Experiences and to increase the number of Brand Experiences; they need to put extra effort on Visual Aesthetics. In developing a good Brand Personality, Visual Aesthetics alone can also be very fruitful. Moreover, the result also proves that market mavens do exist in the automobile sector of Pakistan and they play a vital role in encouraging people in Brand Experiencing, which ultimately leads to Brand Personality. Furthermore, it has also been analysed that market mavens also directly influence the Brand Personality which ultimately creates an image of a Brand in the mind of customers even without experiencing it. Thus, marketers also need to focus on market mavens to gain significant results.

Limitations and Future Research

Like other studies, this study also has certain limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted on the data collected from only one city i.e. Lahore and within that city, the metropolitan areas were specifically targeted. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized on the overall population level and remain limited to Lahore only. Secondly, the cross-sectional designed was deployed while collecting the data for the study under-discussion, which means that the same can only be confirmed with the deployment of a longitudinal design. In order to prove the generalizability of this study, there is a significant room available for future researchers in order to conduct this study in various cultural settings and go beyond one city

and deploy longitudinal technique to see the consistency between the collected data. Thirdly, the scope of research in this study can be enhanced by expanding the range variables in the design for future research opportunities.

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