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Research Article

Analysis of the Influence of Brand Experience on Brand Attachment and Loyalty of Perfume Consumers Using Gender as a Moderator Variable

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Abstract: Toward HMNS fragrances by incorporating brand passion, brand affection, and self-brand connection as mediating variables, and gender as a moderating variable. The research is motivated by the increasing competition within Indonesia's local fragrance industry and the growing importance of brand experience in shaping emotional attachment and customer loyalty. A quantitative approach was employed using an online survey distributed to HMNS fragrance consumers who had prior brand usage experience. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results indicate that brand experience significantly affects all three dimensions of Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) : brand passion, self-brand connection, dan brand affection. Furthermore, these mediators significantly influence customer loyalty. Gender was also found to moderate the relationship between brand experience and certain EBA dimensions, suggesting differences in emotional processing between male and female consumers. The findings contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on the role of brand experience and emotional brand attachment within the local fragrance context, and practically by offering insights for HMNS to design more emotionally driven and personalized brand experience strategies.

Keywords: Brand Affection; Brand Passion; Customer Loyalty; Emotional Brand Attachment; Self-Brand Connection

1. Introduction

The perfume industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, as perfume is now used not only as a personal necessity but also as a symbol of lifestyle and identity. In Indonesia, the potential for growth in this industry has continued to show a positive trend since 2020. According to Statista data published by Hanandian Nurhayati-Wolff, the cosmetics and personal care market in Indonesia is showing a stable and positive growth trend. In 2024, this market recorded annual revenue growth of more than 5.4%, surpassing pre-pandemic levels, and is expected to maintain a stable average annual growth rate of 4% between 2025 and 2030 (Statista Research Department, 2025).

The Indonesian perfume market revenue chart published by Statista also shows consistent year-over-year growth, reaching a projected US$440.86 million by 2024. This trend confirms that perfume is increasingly seen as an essential part of the modern Indonesian lifestyle. Unlike personal hygiene products like deodorant or antiperspirant, perfume plays a role in personal identity and aesthetic value (Statista Research Department, 2025).

As perfume's function shifts from a basic necessity to an element of personal grooming and self-expression, consumer preferences have also changed. Perfume is now used not only as a complement to personal hygiene but has become part of an individual's nonverbal communication, reflecting lifestyle, social status, and personality. Research by Figueiredo & Eiriz (2020) shows that perfume consumption is closely linked to symbolic value, social status, and

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the expression of personal identity. Consumers often choose products based on brand associations and perceptions of the brand's image.

In an increasingly competitive market climate, creating a strong and meaningful brand experience is becoming increasingly important. This experience involves not only rational interaction but also emotional and symbolic aspects of consumers. This approach contributes to strengthening the emotional bond between consumers and brands and fostering lasting consumer loyalty (Figueiredo & Eiriz, 2020).

Brakus et al. (2009) define brand experience as a consumer response encompassing sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions arising from various stimuli associated with a brand. This definition is reinforced by Khan et al. (2020) and Islam et al. (2019), who state that brand experience is a subjective and internal response to stimuli that represent brand identity. In the perfume industry, which relies heavily on emotional and symbolic dimensions, creating a positive brand experience is a key element in building consumer loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009).

In Indonesia's increasingly competitive local perfume industry, Google Trends data from May 2024 to May 2025 shows that HMNS tops the list of online consumer search volumes compared to other local brands. The consistency of this search trend reflects the emotional appeal and effectiveness of the brand's ongoing communication strategy (Google Trends data, 2025).

HMNS, founded by PT. Hadir Mengharumkan Nusantara (Human Fragrance of the Archipelago) has been known as a local perfume brand that implements a human-centric marketing approach by emphasizing consumer emotional value. This strategy enables the creation of strong, long-term relationships, especially among Generation Z and millennials, who tend to be attracted to brands with emotional closeness and human values (Fadhilah, 2023; Zaki et al., 2024).

Although market growth shows a positive trend, increased sales do not automatically guarantee consumer loyalty. Research shows that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is non-linear and is often mediated by psychological factors such as emotional attachment (Dick & Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1999). In beauty product categories like perfume, brand switching is common due to promotions, price, and perceived quality. Therefore, it is important to examine how brand experience shapes emotional attachment and consumer loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011).

One of HMNS's key branding strengths is its use of storytelling as a brand communication strategy. This approach enables brands to build personal and meaningful emotional connections with consumers and create psychologically relevant brand experiences (SBM ITB, 2023; Baker & Boyle, 2009).

HMNS is also relevant to Brakus et al.'s (2009) brand experience framework, which encompasses sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral dimensions. This makes HMNS a valuable context.

2. Literature Review

Brand Experience

Brand experience is a subjective consumer response that arises as a result of brand-related stimuli, either through interactions such as product use, or indirectly through brand communications, packaging, and social media contexts. Schmitt (1999) formulated this concept as part of an experiential marketing approach that emphasizes the importance of creating a holistic consumer experience. Brand experience encompasses the sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects experienced by consumers during interactions with brand elements. According to Schmitt (1999), brand experience consists of four main dimensions: Sensory Experience, Affective Experience, Behavioral Experience, and Intellectual Experience.

Brand experience occurs not only when consumers directly use a product but can also develop before and after the actual interaction. This is confirmed by Islam et al. (2019) and Hollebeek & Andreassen (2018), who state that brand experience encompasses the entire consumer journey with a brand, including digital engagement and social interactions. In the context of perfume products, the sensory experience dimension plays a central role because scent is the primary stimulus that significantly influences first impressions of a brand. A study by Hepola et al. (2017) showed that sensory experiences can trigger cognitive, affective, and activation responses to a brand.

Studies by Tsai & Men (2013), Khan & Rahman (2017), and Kumar & Kaushik (2020) demonstrated that a positive brand experience significantly impacts the formation of

consumer identification and emotional attachment to a brand. Research by Paramita et al. (2021) proposed that brand experience is positioned as an antecedent to consumer social engagement on a brand's website, which encourages positive word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. Conceptually, brand experience reflects consumers' subjective reactions to various stimuli related to brand identity. Khan et al. (2019) and Islam et al. (2019) explain that brand experience can be manifested through sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses resulting from contact with brand elements.

Brand Attachment

Brand attachment is a strong emotional bond between a consumer and a brand. Park et al. (2006) stated that brand attachment can be built through emotional and symbolic experiences that reflect the brand's importance in the consumer's personal life. This view is supported by Orth et al. (2010), who emphasized that attachment is emotional and object-specific. Schultz Kleine et al. (2004) stated that attachment is complex, multidimensional, and requires a history of the individual's relationship with the brand. Attachment reflects not only liking but also a deep connection to the symbolic value and personal meaning of the brand (Schmalz & Orth, 2012). Measuring brand attachment is divided into two main approaches: the emotional approach by Thomson et al. (2005) and the cognitive approach by Park et al. (2010). In this study, brand attachment is examined through an emotional approach that emphasizes the dimensions of affection, passion, and self-connection (Shi et al., 2011).

Emotional Brand Attachment

Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) is a specific form of brand attachment that emphasizes the deep emotional bond between consumers and brands, rooted in attachment theory (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). In a marketing context, EBA is understood as the closeness between consumers and brands that develops over time (Park et al., 2006; Kleine & Baker, 2004). EBA is a psychological bond formed through affective and cognitive experiences. Research by Korhonen et al. (2018) shows that EBA reflects mutually reinforcing social attachments, behaviors, and cognitive beliefs. Kim et al. (2017) position EBA as the core of consumers' relationships with brands.

EBA consists of three main components: brand passion, self-brand connection, and brand affection (Thomson et al., 2005; Park et al., 2010; Tsai & Men, 2013). The EBA approach is considered relevant to explain the relationship between brand experience and consumer loyalty in the context of perfume which is highly influenced by emotional perception and self-identity (Moussa & Touzani, 2017; Liu et al., 2020).

Brand Passion

Brand passion is a strong, positive, and persistent emotional attachment to a brand (Goswami & Balasubramanian, 2022). Consumers with brand passion feel a deep personal connection to the brand (Revaldi et al., n.d.). The brand passion model refers to the dualistic model of passion by Vallerand et al. (2003), which differentiates passion into harmonious passion and obsessive passion. Brand passion also has symbolic and identity dimensions, where consumers use the brand to strengthen their self-image (Pourazad et al., 2019). In the context of perfume, the brand serves as a symbol of self-expression. Brand passion is at the core of the consumer-brand relationship and plays a role in strengthening loyalty and advocacy (Liow & Taylor, 2019; Davari et al., 2018). Therefore, brand passion is positioned as an indicator that bridges brand experience with emotional brand attachment (Albert et al., 2013; Revaldi et al., 2022).

Self-Brand Connection

Self-Brand Connection (SBC) refers to the extent to which consumers integrate a brand into their self-identity (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Brands serve as a means of self-expression and social identity (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). SBC is formed through repeated experiences with a brand and the symbolic relevance between the brand and personal identity (Escalas, 2004; Ferraro et al., 2013). Self-brand connection significantly impacts loyalty, repurchase intentions, and brand advocacy (Park et al., 2010; Batra et al., 2012). In the context of perfume, SBC strengthens long-term emotional attachment (Lin & Sung, 2014). In the digital age, social media engagement strengthens SBC (Moisescu et al., 2022). SBC also encourages brand advocacy (Dorai et al., 2021).

Brand Affection

Brand affection is an affective dimension that reflects consumers' feelings of warmth, affection, and happiness toward a brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Affection is formed from repeated and stable positive experiences (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Brand affection encourages social interaction and emotional connection between consumers and the brand (Hesse & Mikkelson, 2021). Brand affection plays a significant role in shaping loyalty and

repeat purchases (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Ooi et al., 2022). However, strong affection can also trigger brand betrayal when emotional expectations are not met (Japutra, 2021). In this study, brand affection is positioned as a crucial component in the formation of emotional brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005; Cheung et al., 2021; Ooi et al., 2022).

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty reflects repeat purchase behavior and a positive attitude toward a brand (Popp & Woratschek, 2017, cited in Mahothan et al., 2022). Loyalty encompasses a psychological dimension in the form of a stable preference for a brand (Dick & Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1999). Loyalty is a commitment to repurchase despite competitive pressure (Budur, 2021, cited in Mahothan et al., 2022). Loyalty is a strategic asset that protects a brand from competition (Oliver, 1997). Loyal consumers tend to be less price sensitive and more open to innovation (Hiranrithikorna et al., cited in Mahothan, 2022). Loyalty built through emotional experiences is stronger than financial incentives alone (Dowling & Uncles, 1997, cited in Mostafa, 2020).

Gender as a Moderating Variable

Moderating variables influence the strength or direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Aguinis et al., 2017). In marketing research, gender is often used as a moderator to understand differences in consumer behavior (Walsh et al., 2008). Tifferet and Herstein (2012) showed that women are more socially and emotionally oriented, while men are more rational and functional. Gender moderates the relationship between brand experience, brand attachment, and brand loyalty (Vacas de Carvalho et al., 2020; Khan & Rahman, 2017). Therefore, brand experience strategies need to consider gender differences to optimally build loyalty.

3. Research Method

Research Type

This research is a quantitative study with an explanatory approach, as it aims to examine the causal relationships between variables (brand experience, brand passion, self-brand connection and brand affection, loyalty, and gender).

Population and Sample

The population in this study consists of Generation Z consumers (born 1997–2012) who are users of HMNS perfume in Indonesia. Generation Z was selected for this study based on their characteristics of being adaptable to technology and active users of social media. They are predominantly e-commerce users, possessing significant purchasing power, accounting for up to 73% of the total active users of online shopping platforms. They average 68% of transactions at least twice per month, with an average value of around Rp 750,000. They are highly dependent on social commerce and the influence of trends, including lifestyle trends. Because the exact population of HMNS perfume users cannot be determined, the sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was relevant because the researcher needed respondents who met certain criteria, as follows:

a. Aged 18-27 (Generation Z category)
b. Have purchased and used HMNS perfume at least once
c. Residing in Indonesia

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire distributed through the Google Forms platform. Distribution was carried out online through social media and perfume user communities, particularly those related to the HMNS brand. The questionnaire consisted of five main sections: respondent screening, measuring brand experience, brand attachment, consumer loyalty, and demographic data.

4. Results and Discussion

Instrument Test Results (Pilot Test)

Instrument Validity Test

Table 1. Brand Experience Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Conclusion
Brand Experience	BE1	0.752	Valid
	BE2	0.750	Valid
	BE3	0.764	Valid
	BE4	0.809	Valid
	BE5	0.780	Valid
	BE6	0.774	Valid
	BE7	0.749	Valid
	BE8	0.792	Valid
	BE9	0.831	Valid
	BE10	0.791	Valid
	BE11	0.731	Valid
	BE12	0.795	Valid

Based on the results presented in the table, all brand experience indicators exhibited loading factor values ranging from 0.731 to 0.831, indicating that they all exceeded the previously recommended threshold. These results indicate that all indicators BE1–BE12 have excellent validity. These results also indicate that the user experience aspects representing the indicators, including sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral, have been measured consistently and comprehensively represent the brand experience construct. The table also revealed no weak indicators or indicators that needed to be eliminated, allowing all indicators to be used in the next phase of the research.

Table 2. Brand Passion Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Conclusion
Brand Passion	BP1	0.894	Valid
	BP2	0.894	Valid
	BP3	0.724	Valid

The table above shows that all brand passion instrument indicators have loading factor values ranging from 0.724 to 0.894. This is considered very good, as no indicator falls above the 0.70 threshold. These findings indicate that the brand passion instrument has high validity, and the three indicators within it are able to consistently capture user emotional elements. Therefore, all indicators can proceed to the next stage of the PLS.

Table 3. Self-Brand Connection Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Conclusion
Self-Brand Connection	SBC1	0.899	Valid
	SBC2	0.745	Valid
	SBC3	0.905	Valid

Indicators SBC1–SBC3 obtained loading factor values ranging from 0.745 to 0.905, all of which are valid and have a high correlation with their respective constructs. This indicates that the self-brand connection instrument is highly representative in measuring the symbolic relationship between users and brands. No indicators needed to be eliminated.

Table 4. Brand Affection Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Conclusion
Brand Affection	BA1	0.853	Valid
	BA2	0.869	Valid
	BA3	0.909	Valid

The three brand affection indicators have very high loading factor values, ranging from 0.853 to 0.909. This value indicates that all indicators strongly reflect the construct of brand affection. The high correlation between indicators and constructs indicates excellent measurement quality, so all brand affection indicators can be used without any revision.

Table 5. Brand Loyalty Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Conclusion
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.907	Valid
	BL2	0.851	Valid
	BL3	0.903	Valid
	BL4	0.909	Valid
	BL5	0.886	Valid

The loading factor values for all indicators range from 0.851 to 0.909, indicating they are all highly valid. No indicator approaches the 0.700 threshold, indicating that this construct is very strong and stable. Therefore, all indicators in the brand loyalty variable have been shown to consistently measure respondent loyalty.

Table 6. Fornell-Larcker

Variables	BE	BL	BP	SBC	BA	BL
Brand Experience	0.777				0.567	
Brand Passion	0.466	0.735	0.841		0.739	0.735
Self-Brand Connection	0.521	0.808	0.797	0.853	0.776	0.808
Brand Affection					0.877	
Brand Loyalty	0.565	0.891			0.791	0.891

Based on the Fornell-Larcker results table above, all diagonal values (root AVE) are higher than the correlation values between constructs in the same row and column. The Brand Affection construct has a root value of 0.877, which is greater than its correlation with Brand Experience, which has a root value of 0.565. Similarly, Brand Loyalty has an AVE value of 0.891, higher than its correlation with Brand Experience, which has a root value of 0.565, Brand Passion, which has a root value of 0.735, and Self-Brand Connection, which has a root value of 0.808. These results indicate that each construct in the research instrument has good discriminant validity, enabling the indicators used to represent their respective constructs more strongly than other constructs. Therefore, the instrument meets the discriminant validity requirements based on the Fornell-Larcker criteria and is suitable for use in the next stage of analysis.

Table 7. HTML

Variables	BE	BP	SBC	BA	BL
Brand Experience				0.617	
Brand Passion	0.528			0.884	0.844
Self-Brand Connection	0.582	0.986		0.948	0.925
Brand Affection					
Brand Loyalty	0.594			0.885	

The overall results of the HTMT table indicate that the constructs in the instrument are empirically differentiated and show no issues of construct overlap. Therefore, the instrument is deemed to have met discriminant validity based on the HTMT test. However, it is noted in the PLS-SEM literature that HTMT values approaching or slightly exceeding the conventional limit (0.90) do not necessarily indicate a failure of discriminant validity, particularly in the context of pilot testing and instrument development. Some empirical studies report very high HTMT values (approaching 1.00) but still conclude that discriminant validity is met if no conceptual overlap is found between the constructs and all other measurement model evaluation criteria are met. Therefore, the HTMT value of 0.986 for the relationship between self-brand connection and brand passion in the pilot test phase, considering that the constructs remain conceptually distinct and show no indication of measurement redundancy, is still acceptable, and no further treatment was conducted.

Instrument Reliability Test

Table 8. Instrument Reliability Test

Variables	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Conclusion
Brand Experience	0.945	0.948	0.940	0.604	Reliable
Brand Passion	0.818	0.878	0.790	0.708	Reliable
Self-Brand Connection	0.826	0.888	0.809	0.728	Reliable
Brand Affection	0.850	0.909	0.850	0.770	Reliable
Brand Loyalty	0.937	0.951	0.935	0.795	Reliable

Based on the reliability table, all variables in the study had Cronbach's Alpha values in the range of 0.790 to 0.940, indicating high internal consistency. Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.878 to 0.951, indicating that each variable had excellent composite reliability. The AVE values for all variables ranged from 0.604 to 0.795, meaning they explained more than 50% of the variance in their indicators. These findings indicate that all constructs involved in this study have excellent measurement quality, both in terms of internal consistency and the indicators' ability to explain the variables. Overall, the pilot test results demonstrated that the research instrument was valid and reliable, allowing it to be used without revision in subsequent PLS-SEM analysis stages.

PLS-SEM Model Evaluation Results

Outer Model Evaluation (Measurement Model)

Table 9. Outer Loading

Variables	Outer loadings
BE1 ← Brand Experience	0.81
BE2 ← Brand Experience	0.81
BE3 ← Brand Experience	0.78
BE4 ← Brand Experience	0.82
BE5 ← Brand Experience	0.80
BE6 ← Brand Experience	0.82
BE7 ← Brand Experience	0.81
BE8 ← Brand Experience	0.80
BE9 ← Brand Experience	0.81
BE10 ← Brand Experience	0.82
BE11 ← Brand Experience	0.77
BE12 ← Brand Experience	0.83
BP1 ← Brand Passion	0.89
BP2 ← Brand Passion	0.86
BP3 ← Brand Passion	0.87
SBC1 ← Self-Brand Connection	0.89
SBC2 ← Self-Brand Connection	0.85
SBC3 ← Self-Brand Connection	0.90
BA1 ← Brand Affection	0.88
BA2 ← Brand Affection	0.90
BA3 ← Brand Affection	0.89
BL1 ← Brand Loyalty	0.87
BL2 ← Brand Loyalty	0.89
BL3 ← Brand Loyalty	0.90
BL4 ← Brand Loyalty	0.93
BL5 ← Brand Loyalty	0.93
GENDER ← GENDER	1.00
GENDER x Brand Experience → GENDER x Brand Experience	1.00

Based on the outer loading table, all indicators within the constructs of brand experience, brand passion, self-brand connection, brand affection, and brand loyalty have loading values between 0.77 and 0.93, which are generally above the 0.70 threshold. This indicates that each indicator contributes strongly to explaining its respective construct. Furthermore, the presence of indicators with loading values above 0.80 indicates that the constructs have excellent internal value. The GENDER and GENDER × Brand Experience indicators have loadings of 1.00, which is appropriate because they are dummy variables and interaction terms with no other indicator variables. Overall, the results in this table indicate that all indicators meet convergent validity requirements and are suitable for use in the model.

Table 10. AVE (Average Variance Extracted)

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	(AVE)
Brand Experience	0.951	0.951	0.957	0.648
Brand Passion	0.842	0.844	0.905	0.76
Self-Brand Connection	0.855	0.858	0.912	0.775
Brand Affection	0.871	0.875	0.921	0.795
Brand Loyalty	0.944	0.948	0.957	0.818

Based on the AVE calculations, all constructs have AVE values above 0.50, ranging from 0.648 to 0.818. This value indicates that each construct is considered to be very capable of explaining the indicator variance. The Brand Loyalty construct has the highest AVE of 0.818, indicating the very strong quality of the indicators in forming the construct. The

Cronbach's Alpha and Coefficient Reliability values for the variables as a whole range from 0.842 to 0.957, indicating very good reliability. These results indicate that all constructs in this study meet the criteria for convergent validity and reliability, thus being considered suitable for use in evaluating the inner model.

Table 11. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker)

Variable	BE	BP	SBC	BA	BL	GEN-DER
Brand Experience	0.805			0.469		
Brand Passion	0.531	0.872		0.68	0.604	
Self-Brand Connection	0.487	0.671	0.881	0.654	0.563	0.37
Brand Affection				0.891		
Brand Loyalty	0.509			0.637	0.904	
GENDER	-0.071	0.356		0.339	0.208	1

Based on the results shown in the Fornell-Larcker Criterion table, all diagonal values, or the roots of the AVE, are higher than the correlations between the other constructs. This indicates that each construct has distinct characteristics and no overlap between them. High diagonal values for the constructs brand experience, brand passion, self-brand connection, brand affection, and brand loyalty indicate that all four have excellent discriminatory power. Therefore, the discriminant validity obtained based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion table has been met in this model.

Table 12. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Variables	BE	BP	SBC	BA	BL	GENDER	GENDERXBE
Brand Experience				0.512			
Brand Passion	0.589			0.793	0.674		
Self-Brand Connec-tion	0.539	0.789		0.756	0.622	0.403	
Brand Affection							
Brand Loyalty	0.536			0.698			
GENDER	0.074	0.388			0.211		
GENDER x Brand Experience	0.736	0.575	0.532		0.549	0.048	

The presented HTMT results show that all HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.90. This indicates that discriminant validity has been met well in all constructs in the model, as there are no pairs of constructs with excessively high correlations. The moderate HTMT values indicate that each construct has clear contrast and can stand alone conceptually within the model. Overall, the results of the outer model test indicate that all indicators used have adequate validity and reliability. With these criteria met, the analysis continues with the inner model test, which functions to examine the structural relationships between variables according to the conceptual model.

Inner Model Evaluation (Structural Model)

Table 13. Collinearity (VIF)

Variables	VIF
BE1	2.50
BE2	2.45
BE3	2.30
BE4	2.62
BE5	2.39
BE6	2.65
BE7	2.62
BE8	2.44
BE9	2.48
BE10	2.65
BE11	2.17
BE12	2.69
BP1	2.25
BP2	1.96
BP3	1.90
SBC1	2.30
SBC2	1.87
SBC3	2.39
BA1	2.26
BA2	2.30

BA3	2.37
BL1	2.84
BL2	3.76
BL3	3.67
BL4	4.89
BL5	4.79
GENDER	1.00
GENDER x Brand Experience	1.00

The VIF table shows that all indicators have values below the standardized value of 5, indicating no serious multicollinearity in the model. The highest VIF values are found in the Brand Loyalty construct, designated BL4 and BL5, but remain within the acceptable range. This indicates that the exogenous construct indicators do not have a redundant impact on the endogenous variables and can still be used for further analysis without the risk of violating the collinearity assumption.

Table 14. R-Square (R^2)

Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
Brand Passion	0.48	0.48
Self-Brand Connection	0.44	0.44
Brand Affection	0.43	0.42
Brand Loyalty	0.47	0.47

This indicates that the research model falls into the moderate category, meaning the combination of variables in the model has sufficient predictive ability to explain the variance of these constructs. The adjusted R^2 value, which is only slightly different from the R^2, indicates that the model is stable and does not experience overfitting.

Table 15. Effect Size (f-square)

Variables	f-square
Brand Experience → Brand Passion	0.11
Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.08
Brand Experience → Brand Affection	0.04
Brand Passion → Brand Loyalty	0.05
Self-Brand Connection → Brand Loyalty	0.02
Brand Affection → Brand Loyalty	0.12
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Affection	0.12
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Passion	0.09
GENDER x Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.07

Overall, the f-square analysis results indicate that Brand Experience has a small to medium effect on Brand Passion, Self-Brand Connection, and Brand Affection, while the influence of these three variables on Brand Loyalty is small to medium. The gender variable also shows a medium contribution to Brand Passion, Self-Brand Connection, and Brand Affection, indicating a significant role for gender in strengthening the relationship between brand experience and consumer emotional responses. Thus, variations in f-square values reflect differences in the strength of contributions between variables and confirm that the structural model used demonstrates a meaningful and statistically sound relationship.

Bootstrapping Results (Path Coefficient Significance Test)

Table 16. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-values
Brand Experience → Brand Passion	0.341	0.331	0.107	3.184	0.001
Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.307	0.297	0.114	2.701	0.007
Brand Experience → Brand Affection	0.229	0.218	0.131	1.74	0.082
Brand Passion → Brand Loyalty	0.252	0.252	0.063	4.026	0
Self-Brand Connection → Brand Loyalty	0.155	0.156	0.055	2.817	0.005
Brand Affection → Brand Loyalty	0.365	0.362	0.06	6.123	0
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Passion	0.422	0.432	0.128	3.291	0.001
GENDER x Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.406	0.413	0.138	2.941	0.003

GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Affection	0.518	0.528	0.149	3.479	0.001

Bootstrapping results indicate that most direct relationships in the model are significant at the 5% level, indicated by a t-statistic > 1.96 and a p-value < 0.05, except for the relationship between brand experience and brand affection, which was insignificant. The relationships between brand experience and brand passion, brand passion and brand loyalty, brand affection and brand loyalty, and all gender variables show strong direct effects. In terms of path coefficients, brand experience has a moderate effect on brand passion (β = 0.341), while brand affection has the strongest effect on brand loyalty (β = 0.365), confirming that consumer loyalty is more predominantly shaped by emotional attachment than purely functional experience.

Table 17. Total Indirect Effects

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Brand Experience → Brand Loyalty	0.217	0.211	0.093	2.329	0.02
GENDER → Brand Loyalty	0.596	0.593	0.054	11.076	0
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Loyalty	0.358	0.364	0.099	3.618	0

The results in the table show that all three total indirect effects have a p-value <0.05, indicating that all indirect relationships derived from brand experience, gender, and gender with brand experience on the brand loyalty construct are significant. This indicates that in this model, the mediating mechanism plays a significant role in explaining the influence of exogenous variables on brand loyalty. Furthermore, the highest t-statistic value is found in the GENDER-to-brand loyalty path (t = 11.076), indicating that this variable has a very strong indirect contribution. Thus, all mediation paths at the total level can be declared statistically significant.

Table 18. Specific Indirect Effects

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Brand Experience → Brand Affection → Brand Loyalty	0.083	0.08	0.052	1.616	0.106
Brand Experience → Brand Passion → Brand Loyalty	0.086	0.084	0.036	2.377	0.018
Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection → Brand Loyalty	0.048	0.047	0.026	1.819	0.069
GENDER → Brand Affection → Brand Loyalty	0.272	0.269	0.052	5.179	0
GENDER → Brand Passion → Brand Loyalty	0.199	0.198	0.052	3.826	0
GENDER → Self-Brand Connection → Brand Loyalty	0.126	0.126	0.045	2.815	0.005
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Affection → Brand Loyalty	0.189	0.191	0.063	3.02	0.003

The results of the specific indirect effect analysis indicate that several mediation pathways are significant (p < 0.05), particularly the pathway from brand experience through brand passion to brand loyalty, the influence of GENDER through brand affection to brand loyalty, and most of the moderation pathways based on the GENDER × Brand Experience interaction. While the pathways from brand experience through brand affection and self-brand connection to brand loyalty were found to be insignificant. Overall, these findings indicate that most of the mediation mechanisms in the model contribute statistically, with brand passion proving to be an effective emotional mediator (β = 0.086) in transforming brand experience

into loyalty. While brand affection is not formed directly from brand experience, it develops through a gradual emotional process mediated by other variables.

Table 19. Total Effect

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Brand Experience → Brand Passion	0.341	0.331	0.107	3.184	0.001
Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.307	0.297	0.114	2.701	0.007
Brand Experience → Brand Affection	0.229	0.218	0.131	1.74	0.082
Brand Experience → Brand Loyalty	0.217	0.211	0.093	2.329	0.02
Brand Passion → Brand Loyalty	0.252	0.252	0.063	4.026	0
Self-Brand Connection → Brand Loyalty	0.155	0.156	0.055	2.817	0.005
Brand Affection → Brand Loyalty	0.365	0.362	0.06	6.123	0
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Affection	0.518	0.528	0.149	3.479	0.001
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Loyalty	0.358	0.364	0.099	3.618	0
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Passion	0.422	0.432	0.128	3.291	0.001
GENDER x Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.406	0.413	0.138	2.941	0.003

The overall total effect in the model shown in the table shows a p-value <0.05, except for the relationship between brand experience and brand affection, which is consistent with the previous direct effect results, which were also insignificant. This result indicates that most of the relationships between constructs in the model have a statistically significant total effect. The high t-statistic values for the GENDER variable and the interaction between GENDER and brand experience indicate that these variables provide a strong total construct that explains the variance in the endogenous construct. Overall, these findings indicate that the tested structural model has reasonable explanatory power, and the influences between variables have been statistically verified.

Table 20. Gender Moderation Results

Variables	Original sample (O)	T statistics	P-Value
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Passion	0.422	3.291	0.001
GENDER x Brand Experience → Self-Brand Connection	0.406	2.941	0.003
GENDER x Brand Experience → Brand Affection	0.518	3.479	0.001

The results of the moderation test indicate that gender variables play a role in strengthening the influence of brand experience on brand passion, self-brand connection, and brand affection, with a stronger influence on female consumers than male consumers. This finding indicates that female consumers respond to the HMNS brand experience emotionally with higher intensity, where the sensory, affective, and narrative aspects of the brand experience are more effective in building emotional attachment. This pattern is emphasized through a moderation graph in the form of a two-way standardized interaction plot that shows differences in the relationship between brand experience and emotional variables in each gender, with moderation-based regression modeling and a ±1 standard deviation approach, thus clarifying that increased brand experience results in a greater emotional response in female consumers.

Gender Moderation Results

Gender and Brand Experience on Brand Passion (O = 0.422; T = 3.291; P = 0.001)

The analysis results show that gender significantly strengthens the influence of brand experience on brand passion, with a moderation coefficient of 0.422, indicating that brand experience has a stronger impact on shaping passion in female consumers. This finding is consistent with research by Tifferet & Herstein (2012), which states that women tend to have more intense emotional responses to sensory stimulation and aesthetic elements of brands.

In the context of HMNS, scent narratives, creative process stories, and activity-based perfume usage recommendations enable female consumers to evaluate brand experiences more emotionally, resulting in faster brand attachment and passion formation than male consumers.

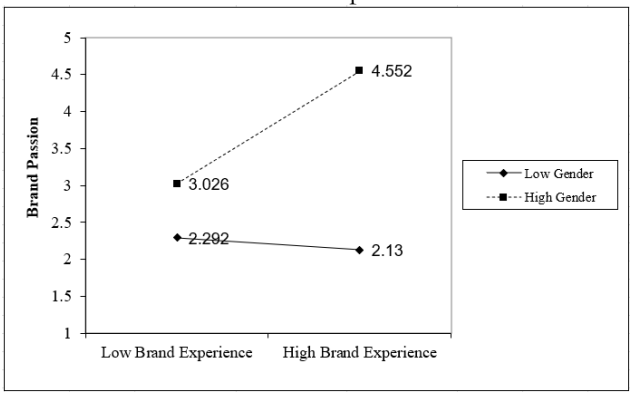

Figure 1. Two-Way Standardized Interaction Plot Graph (Brand Passion)

The results of the moderation graph confirm differences in response patterns between male (low gender) and female (high gender) consumers. At low levels of brand experience, female consumers' brand passion scores (3.026) were higher than those of males (2.292), indicating that even with minimal brand experience, women already have a stronger emotional attachment. This difference becomes more pronounced at high levels of brand experience, where male consumers' brand passion scores actually decrease to 2.13, while female consumers' brand passion scores significantly increase to 4.552. These findings indicate that increasingly rich sensory, narrative, and emotional brand experiences substantially strengthen female consumers' emotional attachment to the HMNS brand, while also confirming the moderating effect of gender, where brand experience not only directly influences brand passion but also interacts with gender, resulting in different levels of influence between men and women.

Gender and Brand Experience on Self-Brand Connection (O = 0.406; T = 2.941; P = 0.003)

The analysis results show that gender strengthens the relationship between brand experience and self-brand connection with a coefficient of 0.406, indicating that female consumers are more likely to internalize brand experience as part of their self-identity. This finding aligns with the literature stating that women tend to interpret fragrance products as a representation of their personal identity (Khan & Rahman, 2017), thus making positive experiences from using perfume more easily integrated into their self-image. In the context of HMNS, the product's genderless positioning creates a flexible space for consumers to express their preferences, personality, mood, and lifestyle. However, aesthetic elements such as modern and minimalist packaging design and narrative brand communication make it easier for female consumers to perceive the brand's alignment with their desired identity, resulting in a stronger self-brand connection.

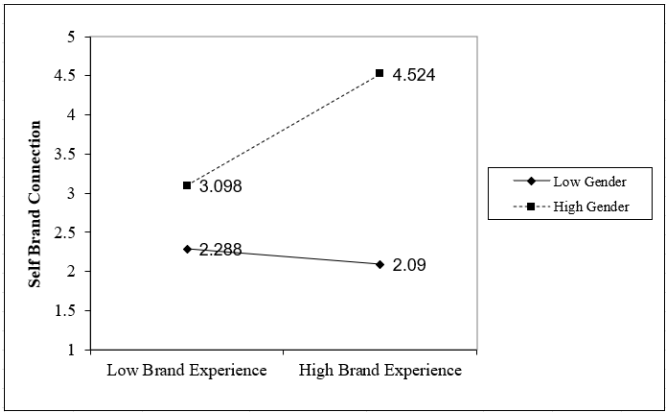

Figure 2. Two-Way Standardized Interaction Plot (Self-Brand Connection)

This finding is supported by the moderation graph, which shows differences in the relationship between brand experience and self-brand connection among male (low gender) and female (high gender) consumers. At low levels of brand experience, female consumers' self-brand connection (3.098) was higher than that of males (2.288), indicating that women are

more likely to associate perfume as part of their personal identity, despite limited brand experience. This difference becomes even more pronounced at high levels of brand experience, where male consumers' self-brand connection decreases to 2.09, while female consumers' increases significantly to 4.524. This striking divergence confirms a strong moderating effect, indicating that brand experience not only directly influences self-brand connection but also interacts with gender, resulting in different responses between male and female consumers.

Gender and Brand Experience on Brand Affection (O = 0.518; T = 3.479; P = 0.001)

The analysis results show that the strongest moderating effect is found in the path from brand experience to brand affection, with a coefficient of 0.518, indicating that gender significantly strengthens the formation of emotional affective responses to brands. Brand affection reflects warm feelings such as liking, comfort, and emotional closeness, which in the perfume industry are strongly influenced by scent preferences, sensory experiences, and product design. In the context of HMNS, female consumers tend to respond more emotionally to brand experience elements. Therefore, diverse scent characteristics, modern packaging designs, and product narratives emphasizing self-expression enable the formation of affective feelings more quickly and strongly in female consumers compared to male consumers, even though the brand is positioned as genderless.

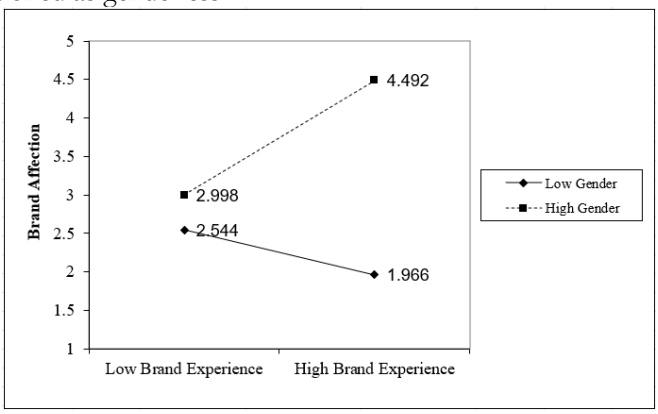

Figure 3. Two-Way Standardized Interaction Plot (Self-Brand Connection)

This finding is validated by the moderation graph, which shows differences in response patterns between male (low gender) and female (high gender) consumers in the relationship between brand experience and brand affection. At low levels of brand experience, female consumers' brand affection (2.998) is already higher than male consumers' (2.544), indicating that women tend to have stronger affective responses even when brand experience is still limited. This difference becomes more pronounced as brand experience increases, where male consumers' brand affection decreases to 1.966, while female consumers' brand affection increases significantly to 4.492. This sharp divergence pattern confirms the strong moderating effect of gender, indicating that brand experience not only directly influences brand affection but also interacts with gender, resulting in a significantly greater emotional impact on female consumers compared to male consumers.

The results of the moderation generated by the three pathways show a consistent pattern, namely that gender acts as a reinforcing moderator, with women being the group with a more intense response to the HMNS perfume experience. This finding is highly relevant in the context of the perfume industry, which is strongly influenced by sensory preferences and emotional responses. Therefore, HMNS can consider communication strategies, campaign storytelling, and designs that remain genderless but address the stronger sensory preferences of female consumers.

Discussion

The Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Passion (H1)

Hypothesis H1 was supported with a coefficient of 0.341 and a p-value of 0.001. These results indicate that brand experience has a positive and significant influence on brand passion. This finding is consistent with Brakus et al. (2009) and Park et al. (2010), which assert that sensory, affective, and intellectual experiences can shape initial emotional attachment to a brand. In the context of HMNS, the brand experience is constructed through scent narratives, the handcrafted perfume concept, and usage recommendations based on activities and

moods. The diversity of scent characteristics allows consumers to experience experiences relevant to their personal needs, thus fostering passion for the brand.

The Influence of Brand Experience on Self-Brand Connection (H2)

Hypothesis H2 is also supported by a coefficient of 0.307 and a p-value of 0.007. These results align with those of Escalas & Bettman (2003) and Park et al. (2010), who stated that consistent and meaningful brand experiences enable brands to integrate into consumers' self-concepts. In HMNS, the genderless approach and diverse scents provide consumers with the opportunity to express their identity through perfume choices. This experience strengthens the perception that the brand represents consumers, thus forming a stronger self-brand connection.

The Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Affection (H3)

Hypothesis H3 was not supported with a coefficient of 0.229 and a p-value of 0.082. This finding is not entirely consistent with Mostafa & Kasamani (2021) and Khan & Rahman (2017), who stated that positive experiences can directly shape brand affection. This insignificance can be explained by the characteristics of HMNS perfume products, which have diverse scents, including strong and experimental characters. Brand affection tends to require a long-term emotional process, symbolic attachment, and repeated experiences before developing stably (Park et al., 2010). Therefore, initial experiences are more likely to drive passion and self-brand connection than affection.

The Effect of Brand Passion on Brand Loyalty (H4)

Hypothesis H4 was supported with a coefficient of 0.252 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding is consistent with the Emotional Brand Attachment model (Park et al., 2010) and Figueiredo & Eiriz (2020), which suggests that passion plays a significant role in driving repurchase intentions and long-term brand preference.

In the context of HMNS, passion is formed through the scent experience and product narrative, which encourages consumers to try other variants and make HMNS their primary perfume choice.

The Effect of Self-Brand Connection on Brand Loyalty (H5)

Hypothesis H5 is supported with a coefficient of 0.155 and a p-value of 0.005. This finding aligns with Park et al. (2010) and D'Lima (2018), which state that brand association with self-identity significantly contributes to loyalty.

HMNS positions perfume as a form of self-expression, so when consumers feel a particular scent reflects their identity, brand loyalty naturally forms.

The Influence of Brand Affection on Brand Loyalty (H6)

Hypothesis H6 is supported with the highest coefficient of 0.365 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding is highly consistent with Thomson et al. (2005) and Park et al. (2010), which assert that emotional closeness is a strong predictor of loyalty.

In HMNS, affection develops through scent congruence, creative narratives, and personal experiences that shape memories and emotional comfort with the brand.

Gender Moderation in the Relationship Between Brand Experience and Emotional Responses (H7a–H7c)

The results show that gender significantly moderates the influence of brand experience on brand passion (H7a), self-brand connection (H7b), and brand affection (H7c). This finding is consistent with Tifferet & Herstein (2012) and Khan & Rahman (2017), which state that women tend to have more intense emotional responses to brand stimuli. In the context of HMNS, female consumers demonstrate greater openness to variations in scent, product aesthetics, and brand narratives, resulting in positive experiences that more quickly foster passion, self-connection, and affection. Conversely, male consumers tend to be more selective, resulting in more limited emotional reinforcement.

5. Conclusions

(1) This study aims to analyze the influence of brand experience on brand passion, self-brand connection, and brand affection, as well as their impact on brand loyalty among HMNS perfume consumers, considering the moderating role of gender. (2) Brand experience significantly influences brand passion and self-brand connection, but not brand affection. This indicates that HMNS brand experience is more effective in building psychological engagement and self-identity connection than deep emotional affection. (3) All dimensions of emotional brand attachment (brand passion, self-brand connection, and brand affection) are

proven to have a significant influence on brand loyalty. Brand affection is the strongest predictor of brand loyalty. (4) Gender significantly moderates the relationship between brand experience and all dimensions of emotional brand attachment. Female consumers show a stronger emotional response to brand experience than male consumers. (5) Brand passion is the only mediator that significantly mediates the indirect effect of brand experience on brand loyalty, while self-brand connection and brand affection do not act as mediators. (6).The research model has moderate predictive ability and is considered suitable for use in the context of the modern local perfume industry, with HMNS proven to have experiential branding strength that is able to build emotional attachment among young consumers.

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