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The Impact of Brand Experience on Attitudinal Loyalty through the Moderating Role of Actual and Ideal Self-concept

Navn: Katerina Alexandra Lørum Stamatiou, Meagan Narie Leber

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## The Impact of Brand Experience on Attitudinal Loyalty through the Moderating Role of Actual and Ideal Self-concept

Supervisor:  
Peter Jarnebrant

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Meagan Marie Leber

Katerina Alexandra Lørum Stamatiou

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines which brand experience dimension(s) are most effective in achieving attitudinal loyalty depending on whether they were presented in either an actual or ideal self-concept context. Drawing on branding, self-concept, and loyalty literature, this research paper aims to empirically address this research question by constructing a conceptual framework and testing it using three independent quantitative studies. This analysis builds upon previous literature's findings by providing insight into the context-specific nature of the relationship between brand experience and attitudinal loyalty. Furthermore, it sheds light on self-concept's facilitating role in this relationship, as it demonstrates the sense of self's ability to influence derived brand meanings.

The initial findings of this research conclude that attitudinal loyalty does not differ by dimension nor self-concept. However, upon further examination, there is supporting evidence of a cross-over interaction between self-concept and brand experience dimensions, emphasizing the importance of brand experience's contextual complexity. The results indicate that brands appealing to the ideal self-concept benefit more from sensorial and behavioral experiences, while brands that appeal to the actual self-concept benefit more from affective and cognitive experiences. This suggests that consumers' self-views shape their internal subjective responses, meaning that self-concept can act as the cornerstone for careful and intentional experiential design. Therefore, brand experience should be analyzed with particular attention to exogenous factors to best capture its epistemological plurality.

# 1. Introduction

## *1.1 Background and Relevance*

Over two decades ago, society transitioned into a new economy in which experiences played an increasingly important role in the consumer decision-making process (Gilmore & Pine, 1998). Factors giving rise to this experience-driven economy are multifaceted, but the main driver originates from the fact that consumers' functional needs are continuously met by the modern marketplace (Gilmore & Pine, 1998). This results in a subsequent increase in consumers' demand for psychological encounters as they progress through the search, purchase, consumption, and postpurchase phases that comprise their customer experience (Gilmore & Pine, 1998). Additionally, the increasingly fragmented and complex nature of the consumer's decision-making process highlights the importance of holistically designing, delivering, and managing the customer experience (Gilmore & Pine, 1998; Verhoef et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2015).

An important contribution of this economic shift was the marketing-oriented conceptualization of the term *experience* in and of itself. Rather than viewing an experience as something extrinsic to the consumer (e.g., a concert), an *experience* refers to an internal consumer response based on exposure to external stimuli (Gilmore & Pine, 1998). In what came to be known as the *experience economy*, evoking these positive internal responses from consumers became critical for establishing differentiation, creating meaningful connections with consumers, and instilling loyalty. As a result, marketers began to emphasize the psychological elements of their marketing strategy to adapt to consumer expectations and reap the benefits that the experience economy has to offer.

*“From brands, consumers expect something more distinct. They want something that engages their senses and touches their hearts. Something that excites or intrigues them. They want marketers to provide them with an experience”*

(Schmitt, 2009).

Even decades after the introduction of the experience economy, the importance of experiential design remains at the forefront of marketing. According to the 2021 edition of the CMO Survey, cultivating a strong customer experience is the number one priority for marketers across all sectors - outranking more traditional marketing



efforts such as communicating product quality and building a trusting relationship (The CMO Survey, 2021). In practice, some of the world's leading brands, such as Apple, Nike, and Starbucks, employ experience-inducing stimuli such as smell, ambient lighting, and sleek packaging elements to reap the benefits that the experience economy has to offer (National Business Research Institute, 2021; Future Stores, 2021). These seemingly subtle nuances have noteworthy implications for the brand's identity, price elasticity, and can even go as far as to create feelings of safety and inclusion.

Given that experience-evoking stimuli often manifest in the form of branding elements such as design, identity, packaging, communications, and environments, experiential design is often considered a component of brand management. Essentially, these brand-related stimuli elicit subjective, internal, and behavioral consumer responses known as *brand experiences*; a phenomenon that has been linked to favorable consumer behavior such as positive brand associations and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010; Khan & Fatma, 2017; van der Westhuizen, 2018). The positive implications of brand experiences have led practitioners to actively invest in cultivating positive, long-lasting experiences for their customers. A 2017 survey by experiential marketing and event specialist company, Freeman, found that 59% of the nearly 1000 Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) surveyed valued brand experience as means to create ongoing relationships (Freeman, 2017). Furthermore, the same study found that more than a third of CMOs said they plan to spend between 21% to 50% of their budgets on brand experiences over the next several years (Freeman, 2017). With budget allocations of this magnitude, it is important to know if brand experience efforts effectively build the highly anticipated loyalty and positive brand associations that they seem to promise.

Brand experience's momentum has resulted in a belief that the more money invested into brand experiences, the greater a company's ROI, namely in terms of loyalty (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2010, p. 532–540). However, this assumption is an oversimplified and arguably inaccurate interpretation of customer-experience dynamics, as not all experiences are equally effective in promoting brand loyalty. Scholars have recognized this oversimplification and have since tried to profile customers based on their experiential preferences (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2010;

Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014; Khan & Fatma, 2017). While these studies have aimed to create a clearer picture as to how brand experiences can be effectively managed, important questions surrounding the context-specific nature of brand experiences remain.

Given that brand stimuli act as sources of symbolic meaning for consumers, they play an important role in identity formation and maintenance. Thus, the symbolic, and resulting self-identifying nature of brand stimuli may serve as an explanation for experiential preference heterogeneity. In other words, a consumer's reaction to a particular stimulus may vary depending on how that stimulus resonates with their self-view. Although brands have long appealed to varying consumer self-views to foster positive brand-consumer relationships, self-concept has yet to be explored in the context of brand experiences (Ross, 1971).

If consumers' self-views shape their internal subjective responses, self-concept can act as the cornerstone for careful and intentional experiential design. Thus, this thesis aims to better understand how consumers experience a brand in relation to their self-concept. More specifically, we hope to explore how certain types of brand experiences are most effective in instilling attitudinal loyalty depending on context, namely, how consumers actually perceive themselves (actual self-concept) versus how they would like to perceive themselves (ideal self-concept). Ultimately, we hope to provide insight into how brands can leverage stimuli-self-concept alignment to favorably influence the relationship between brand experience and loyalty.

## ***1.2 Theoretical and Managerial Contributions***

This thesis has several theoretical contributions. In line with brand experience research, this thesis recognizes the sub-dimensions of brand experience. However, going a step beyond recognition, this thesis investigates the individual impact of each dimension on attitudinal loyalty. This is an important distinction given that most prior research analyzes the impact of an aggregated brand experience (Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014). Another contribution is the application of the self-concept. While prior research has established that not all customers experience brands in the same way, we hope to provide further insight as into why this is the case. To achieve this, we investigate the appeal of sensory, affective, cognitive, and

behavioral brand experience dimensions to the actual and the ideal self-concept, revealing a detailed picture of the interplay between self-concept and brand experience's impact on attitudinal loyalty. We also hope to provide further empirical validation of the Brakus et al. (2009) framework that links brand experience to loyalty.

As a managerial contribution, the following framework will help managers gain better insight into how they can strategically design their brand experiences to align with their overall marketing strategy and satisfy the self-verification or self-enhancement needs of their target market. While brand experience as a construct has been shown to lead to brand loyalty, we suggest that not *all* experiences are equally effective in promoting attitudinal brand loyalty. This suggestion is in line with the idea that although brand experience dimensions are interrelated, brands cannot be everything to everyone. Therefore, marketing managers should design and implement brand experience strategies selectively depending on the goal of a brand. We believe that the difference in experience design depends on if the brand appeals to the consumers' actual or ideal self-concept. In other words, brands with aspirational marketing strategies may need to design their brand experiences differently from brands pursuing "realistic" or "authentic" marketing strategies. By resonating with their target markets' actual or ideal self-view, brands are more likely to achieve self-congruence and provide a sought-after experience that consumers will ultimately want to experience again. Furthermore, by placing a higher focus on relevant experiential dimensions, managers can selectively and strategically design brand experiences.

### ***1.3 Research Question***

We suggest that not all brand experiences are equally effective in the context of actual and ideal self-concept in achieving self-congruence that promotes attitudinal loyalty. Depending on the self-concept that the brand appeals to, marketing managers should design and implement brand experiences selectively. Considering this, we formed the following research question, which will serve as the basis for this thesis.

*Which dimensions of brand experience are most effective in evoking consumers' actual or ideal self that results in attitudinal loyalty?*

## 2. Theoretical Framework & Previous Research

### 2.1 *Brand experience*

The design and management of consumer purchase phases is referred to as the total customer experience (TCE), which is conceptualized as a “multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey” (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The totality of customer experience can be further analyzed in relation to a specific focal agent (i.e., a particular brand) (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This focal agent conceptualization interpreted at a brand level refers to brand experience, which is an independent construct. Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello (2009) define brand experience as the “*subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s identity, packaging, design, environments, and communications*”.

While TCE refers to a firm’s ability to guide a customer throughout the deliberate search, purchase, consumption, and purchase phase, the concept is considered brand- and product-neutral (Zha et al., 2020). This neutrality means that TCE is not confined to a specific firm or product but is instead a higher-order construct encompassing service experience, product experience, retail experience, and brand experience (Zha et al., 2020). Although brand experience is considered a subset of TCE, it is broader from a customer journey standpoint as it comprises touchpoints beyond purchase phases (Verhoef et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2015). This broader conceptualization means that consumers can have an internal response to brand-related stimuli despite their search behavior or need recognition (Skard, et al., 2011). Therefore, brand experiences can occur regardless of the consumer’s intention to purchase or engage in evaluation. Rather, consumer and marketing research has shown that brand experiences occur every time consumers interact with the brand, be it through active or passive interactions (Hoch, 2002).

The implications of active interactions mean that a brand experience may occur when consumers deliberately search, shop, or consume products and services (Arnould et al., 2002; Brakus et al., 2008; Holbrook, 2000). However, the implications of passive interactions mean that a brand experience can also occur when consumers are not interested in or do not have a personal connection with a

brand. For example, when a consumer is involuntarily exposed to a billboard on their commute home, that prompts an internal emotional, sensorial, affective, or behavioral response (Brakus et al., 2009). Therefore, a brand experience can happen directly through intentional exposure or indirectly through involuntary exposure (Hoch & Ha, 1986; Kempf & Smith, 1998). Furthermore, consumers continue to experience these internal responses once they consume branded products or services, highlighting the dynamic and ongoing nature of brand experiences.

Brand experiences vary in intensity and strength, meaning that some experiences are stronger or more intense than others. Also, brand experiences vary in valence; that is, they vary in positivity, while others may even be negative (Brakus et al., 2009). These positive or negative brand experiences can either be short-lived or long-lasting. In line with loss aversion theory, negative brand experiences tend to be more impactful, and therefore longer-lasting, than positive ones, as individuals experience negativity acutely (Tversky & Kahneman 1986; Baumeister et al., 2011). While a negative experience can overpower a positive one, it is important to note that many positive experiences can reverse the psychological effects of a negative one (Baumeister et al., 2011). Thus, a singular, or an accumulation of, positive experiences can go on to create long-lasting relationships with consumers (Baumeister et al., 2011). These long-lasting positive brand experiences are stored in consumer's memory and have been proven to affect consumer loyalty and satisfaction via brand-related stimuli (Reicheld, 1996; Brakus et al., 2009).

Since brand experiences include distinct sensations, cognitions, and behavioral responses caused by specific brand-related stimuli, the concept is conceptually different from other brand constructs (Keller, 1993; Brakus et al., 2009). Various other brand constructs, such as brand attitude, are general evaluations based on affective reactions or beliefs (Murphy & Zajonc, 1993). However, a brand experience is about providing consistent performance, delivering brand promises, and reflecting the perception of an individual's experience with a brand at each brand-consumer touchpoint (Brodie et al., 2009; Ding & Tseng, 2015). Furthermore, brand experiences are different from brand image, brand associations, and brand personality since these constructs are processed inferentially, while brand experience refers to actual sensations, cognitions, and behavioral responses (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1997; Johar et al., 2005). These internal responses define the empirical

dimensions of brand experience as cognitive, affective, sensorial, and behavioral. An additional distinguishing factor of brand experience is that their internal nature inherently defines them from the consumer's point of view, while other concepts, such as experiential marketing, may be defined from a firm's point of view (Ding & Tseng, 2015). To maintain a customer-centric viewpoint, brand experience is defined in this study as consumer's internal perception of their experience with brand-related stimuli.

### *2.1.1 Brand Experience Dimensions*

Dimensions of brand experiences are studied in philosophy, cognitive science, and experiential marketing and management (Brakus et al., 2009). Within the realm of experiential marketing and management, Schmitt (1999) suggested five experiential dimensions: when consumers sense, feel, think, act, and relate. These five experiences are related to Dewey's (1922, 1925) categorization of brand experience from a philosophical perspective, and Dube and Lebel's (2003) pleasure construct. Based on these studies, Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) developed four dimensions of brand experience: sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral. The sensory dimension indicates that brands can make a strong impression on the consumer and can block nonbrand-related stimuli from entering the consumer's mind (Biocca & Delaney, 1995; Spangenberg et al. 1996). Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010) defined the sensory dimension as "*visual, auditory, tactile, gustative, and olfactory simulations provided by a brand.*" The affective dimension means that brands induce feelings or sentiments that build emotional ties with consumers (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). The cognitive dimension refers to a brands' ability to make consumers think or feel curious. Freud (1950) suggested that people seek pleasure and resort to intellectual stimulation to gain pleasure and remove boredom, making intellectual stimulation relevant for brand experiences (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Finally, the behavioral dimension includes bodily experiences, lifestyles, and interactions with the brand, meaning when the consumer experiences a brand, it prompts physical action (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). Behavioral experiences are usually brought on by depictions of inspirational or motivational lifestyles that require the consumer to physically engage with the brand.

The level of impact that brand experiences have vary in valence depending on the degree of arousal and the intensity of stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009). Extant literature has shown that positively influencing these four separate, yet related, dimensions of internal consumer responses are a key source of competitive advantage since accumulated brand experiences foster feelings of brand loyalty and recognition (Woodruff, 1997; Srivastava et al., 1999; Rust et al., 2000). Therefore, brands should aim to appeal to all dimensions to a certain degree in their stimuli design as the dimensions positively influence each other (Hepola et al., 2017).

The idea of appealing to multiple dimensions simultaneously is an innate characteristic of brand experience's conceptualization (Brakus et al., 2009; Hepola et al., 2017). In laying the groundwork for brand experience as a concept, Brakus et al. (2009) state, "*note that there is no one-to-one correspondence, such that a certain stimulus type would trigger a certain experience dimension and only that dimension.*" This is an important characteristic of brand experience as a construct and is a driving factor as to why brand experience is typically evaluated at an aggregate, rather than a dimension-specific, level. However, despite previous research predominately examining brand experience as a second-order factor model, select literature has found that the relative importance of each dimension varies depending on context (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2010). This nuance lays the foundation for an interesting stream of research pertaining to the context-specific nature of stimuli design and the relativity of experiential impact.

## **2.2 Brand Loyalty**

Prior research has predominantly defined brand loyalty from a behavioral perspective (Blattberg & Sen, 1974; Kahn et al., 1986; Ehrenberg et al., 1990). The common thread of this point of view is the pursuit of identifying a behavioral measure to operationalize brand loyalty. A crucial assumption is that repeat purchasing can capture a consumer's loyalty and lead it towards the brand of interest. Select streams of previous research have focused on the purchase sequence (Kahn et al., 1986; McConell, 1968), while others have observed purchasing patterns and made conclusions based on the proportion of purchases devoted to a particular brand (Cunningham, 1956; Blattberg & Sen, 1974). Notably, various researchers have struggled to distinguish between repeat purchase and brand loyalty (Dawes et al., 2015; Oliver, 1999; Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). However, related



research provides insight into how and why consumers are loyal by confirming the multiple dimensions of loyalty. The dimensions explored include situational loyalty, resistance to competing offers, propensity to be loyal, attitudinal loyalty, and complaining behavior. Therefore, more recent research suggests that consumers can be loyal in different ways, thereby demonstrating the superiority of a multidimensional model of consumer loyalty over a unidimensional model (Rundle-Thiele, 2005).

In an effort to comprehensively define brand loyalty, Oliver (1999, p. 34) defined the concept as “*deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.*” This definition sheds light on the two aspects of brand loyalty described previously as behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Assael, 1998; Day, 1969; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Jacoby & Kyner, 1973; Oliver, 1999; Tucker, 1964). Therefore, behavioral or purchase loyalty consists of repeated purchases of a brand, whereas attitudinal loyalty includes a degree of dispositional commitment regarding some unique value associated with the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

### 2.2.1 Attitudinal loyalty

The inclusion of “attitude” along with behavior to define brand loyalty has been a topic of interest among researchers over the years. Day (1969) was likely the first to recognize and articulate this need, followed by Jacoby and Kyner (1973) that defended Jacoby’s (1971) extended definition of brand loyalty. Overtime, the incorporation of attitudes has evolved the definition of attitudinal loyalty. Recently, Pulligadda, Kardes & Cronley (2016) concluded that the concept is made up of three main components; (i) an inclination to speak favorably about the brand (Boulding et al, 1993), (ii) a sense of commitment and psychological attachment to the brand (Lastovicka & Gardner, 1978) and (iii) a willingness to spend more monetary resources to acquire the brand (Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

The notion of psychological commitment provides an essential basis for differentiating attitudinal brand loyalty from other forms of repeat purchasing behavior (Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007). Over the years, researchers have



continued to argue that behavioral measures of loyalty were insufficient in understanding the factors underlying brand loyal purchase behavior (Dick & Basu, 1994; Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996). For example, some consumers engage in repeat purchases out of convenience and would switch brands given the opportunity. Therefore, there seems to be a consensus that brand loyalty encompasses both consumer attitude and repeat purchase behavior. More recent studies have examined the unique role purchase loyalty, and attitudinal loyalty have in relation to other constructs such as brand trust, brand performance, market types, and the service domain (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001; Rundle-Thiele & Bennett 2001).

### **2.3 *Brand Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty***

Brand experiences and the management thereof entail delivering the brand promise and providing consistent action, as well as upholding traditional marketing activities (e.g., communication or advertising) (Frow & Payne, 2007; Dall’Olmo Riley & de Chernatony, 2000; Brodie *et al*, 2009). Considering this, brands that can deliver a superior brand experience can achieve preference over and differentiation from other brands to build brand loyalty and foster evangelism (Brakus *et al.*, 2009). This loyalty arises out of consumers’ desire to continuously encounter positive experiences. Additionally, the comprehensive nature of brand experiences makes it difficult for competitors to recreate them, increasing switching costs and enhancing loyalty (Berry *et al.*, 2002; Gentile *et al.*, 2007).

One central distinction between brand experiences and other concepts is that brand experiences do not presume a motivational state. Rather, brands inherently possess stimuli that evoke a subjective, internal response from consumers regardless of their motivation or willingness to make a purchase. In fact, given the internal and potentially even involuntary nature of brand experiences, consumers continuously have them despite their disinterest or inability to be behaviorally loyal to the brand in question. This means that brands can cumulatively evoke positive internal responses from consumers to influence the necessary evaluation process needed to develop a deep commitment to the brand. This attitudinal, rather than strictly behavioral, nature of brand experience is one key reason why attitudinal loyalty is of particular relevance.

Based on the aforementioned information, we can assume that superior brand experiences may promote strong, positive responses from consumers, leading to satisfaction, willingness to recommend and likelihood to repurchase, all of which comprise attitudinal loyalty. As brand experiences may vary in strength and intensity (Brakus et al., 2009), brands which can provide their consumers with a superior or more personalized experience are likely to achieve higher consumer attitudinal loyalty. Considering previous literature on these concepts, we therefore, hypothesize that:

*H1: A positive brand experience has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty.*

#### **2.4 Moderating Effects**

Many studies have linked brand experience to consumer behavior, and at its conceptualization, brand experience was assumed to be an inherently positive concept (Brakus et al., 2009). However, this assumption has been challenged, with more recent research uncovering that certain types of brand experiences, namely cognitive and affective, were shown to be negative in a service context (Nysveen et al., 2012, 419). Proving that not all dimensions are inherently positive added a layer of complexity to brand experience. Further supporting the idea that brand experiences are context-specific was Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2010) study, which found that different consumers prefer different experiential appeals when evaluating brand attitude and purchase intention. For example, the authors found that some consumers prefer high levels of all brand experience dimensions, while some prefer only high levels of sensorial gratification and behavioral activation, and others prefer low levels of all four dimensions (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2010, 532–540). Therefore, the authors concluded that brands should differentiate their experience strategies to appeal to consumers' experiential preference heterogeneity.

Another notable conclusion by Schmitt and Zarantonello (2010) is that consumers who prefer low levels of brand experience are functional consumers, while those who prefer high levels of brand experience are hedonic consumers. The conclusion implies, that experiential preferences vary by consumer, not necessarily by product category. For example, two different brands within the same product category (e.g., Volvo and Mercedes Benz) may need to provide their consumers with different experiences based on their target market's preferred brand experience dimensions.

Furthermore, Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) agree that brand-related stimuli contain experiential cues that trigger brand experience dimensions. However, they also argue that merely creating positive brand experiences is insufficient and that brands should carefully design experience-triggering stimuli that intentionally resonate with the brand's personality dimensions. To further explore the contextual nature of the link between brand experience and attitudinal loyalty, we include actual and ideal self-concept as moderators. By including a moderating effect, we hope to uncover which dimension(s) of brand experience resonate with either consumer's actual or ideal self-concept and how they can be implemented strategically to increase attitudinal loyalty.

#### *2.4.1 The Self-concept*

Self-concept is defined as the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings referencing to himself as an object (Rogers, 1959; Ross, 1971, Rosenberg, 1979; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). In the beginning stages of marketing-oriented self-concept research, conclusions were explorative and atheoretical. That was until Sirgy (1982) developed a self-image/product-image congruity theory which occurs when product image cues activate self-schema involving the same images. Later called self-congruity theory, Sirgy argues that out of the need for consistency, predictability, and familiarity, consumers will seek out product images that align with their self-concept (Sirgy, 1982).

Rooted in the dyad between self-concept and product image, self-congruency theory is the foundation for self-concept's role in marketing, branding, and consumer behavior literature. The reason is that consumer's psychological need to maintain a logical and consistent self-view drives specific behaviors and dictates consumption patterns (Birdwell, 1964; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987; Malhotra, 1988). Self-congruence's effectiveness in predicting consumption patterns can be explained by a broader set of cognitive-consistency theories, which state that individuals strive for consistency in their behaviors to avoid cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987). Studies on self-congruence conclude that consumers respond more positively to brands that align with their self-concept and may even experience feelings of unpleasantness and tension in the case of inconsistency (Sirgy, 1982; Malar et al., 2011). This alignment is predictive of consumers' attitudes, loyalty, and purchase

intention, all of which strengthen the importance of self-congruence in practice (Aaker, 1999; Hong & Zinkhan, 1995; Sirgy et al., 2008).

Early research interpreted self-concept as unidimensional, but self-concept theory has since evolved into a multidimensional concept. Prior literature has focused predominantly on the actual self-concept, or how individuals actually perceive themselves; and the ideal self-concept, or how individuals would like to perceive themselves (Sirgy 1982; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987). Prior research also explores additional versions of self-concept, such as the social-self and ought-self (Sirgy, 1982; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Brewer, 1991; Aaker 1999). However, the internal private nature of brand experience means that they are less malleable to situational influences (e.g., a social setting). As a result, we solely focus on the actual- and ideal-self dimensions in relation to brand experience.

While self-concept theory generally applies to both the actual and ideal self, the distinction between identity *maintenance* and *enhancement* is further explained by two distinct theories: self-verification theory and self-enhancement theory, respectively (Swann, 1983; Malär et al., 2011). Self-verification theory is driven by self-consistency, or the idea that individuals are motivated to maximize the extent to which their behavior confirms their actual self-view (Swann, 1983). As consumers strive to reinforce their actual self-view, they seek feedback that represents themselves, regardless of whether this feedback is positive or negative (Escalas et al., 2003). Meanwhile, self-enhancement theory is driven by the idea that individuals seek information that enhances their self-esteem (Swann, et al., 1989). Driven by the need for self-esteem enhancement, consumers seek feedback that is favorable to their positive traits and avoid negative feedback (Escalas et al., 2003). The interplay between these two self-views has been the focus of extant literature and applied marketing strategies alike as marketing efforts tend to portray idealized or realistic versions of their target market to positively influence consumer behavior and attitudes.

#### 2.4.2 *Brand Experience and the Self-concept*

Brands are associated with personality traits that carry symbolic meaning, and consumers use them to define and express themselves to others (Aaker, 1999). As a result, brands play an important role in self-concept literature as they are “*important to the self, such that individual customers use the brand to define who*

*they are*” (Lam, et al., 2010, p. 129). The attribution of symbolic meaning is inferential and categorical but ultimately originates from consumers’ response to brand contact (Kressman et al., 2006). This contact with brand stimuli, and the response that follows, is then used in an anthropomorphism process to personify brands. Therefore, brand experience is a critical input in brand personality judgment formation and the self-congruence evaluations that arise from this judgment (Aaker, 1999, 1997; Brakus et al., 2009). In other words, brand experiences provide consumers with the information necessary to make inferences about a brand’s personality and process self-relevant attributes. Thus, a consumer’s propensity to utilize a brand as a vehicle for self-expression is facilitated by their prior brand experience(s). However, it is important to note that previous literature argues that not all types of brand experiences are capable of building specific brand personality types, bringing into question the seemingly straightforward predictive capabilities of brand experience on brand personality (Japurta & Molinillo, 2019).

Moving beyond brand personality and into the specific realm of brand experience, self-concept theory suggests that consumers can achieve consistency in their behaviors by engaging with brands that provide experiences consistent with their self-view. Essentially, these experiences will elicit subjective, internal responses that provide a degree of dissonance, enhancement, or reinforcement of the consumer’s self-concept. This reinforcement of self-concept is what enables self-congruence. For example, if someone sees themselves as intellectual, a brand experience that elicits the sensation of being “curious” or a “problem solver” will activate the consumer’s actual self-schema. This alignment may trigger the consumer to purchase or engage further with the brand to maintain consistency between their behavior and self-image belief (Sirgy, 1982). Thus, the self-concept theory suggests that consumers will continuously seek out brand experiences that maintain or enhance their sense of self and avoid experiences threatening their self-concept. Therefore, the loyalty arising from the positive nature of brand experience is further augmented by the gratification that accompanies congruity, making self-concept a vital determinant of brand loyalty. (Samli & Sirgy, 1981; Kressmann et al., 2006).

As outlined previously, self-concept is further delineated into two distinct concepts. Since self-verification and self-enhancement are driven by self-consistency and

self-esteem, respectively, we expect these motivations will drive consumers to pursue brand experiences that satisfy these motivations. On the one hand, the need for self-consistency leads a consumer to engage with brands that provide experiences congruent with their actual self. On the other hand, the need for increased self-esteem theory leads a consumer to engage with brands that provide experiences congruent with whom they would like to be. By facilitating brand experiences that reflect consumers' actual self-concept, brands give consumers the feeling of consistency and predictability in their identity. Furthermore, by facilitating brand experiences that reflect consumers' ideal self-concept, brands give consumers the feeling of being closer to an enhanced version of themselves. Thus, self-esteem and self-consistency are the two fundamental motives behind consumers' pursuit of self-congruence. As brands are constantly designing experiential efforts that solidify their personality and evoke the actual or ideal self-concept of their target market, the question becomes which dimensions of brand experience are most effective in self-verification and self-enhancement efforts.

Even though brand experience is a well-studied construct in literature, to the best of our knowledge self-concept as a possible moderator in the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty has yet to be studied. Furthermore, previous literature has already confirmed that self-congruity positively impacts brand loyalty and suggest that further research can be key to further explain this relationship (Kressman et al., 2006). More recently, researchers have highlighted that factors beyond the firm's control are bound to exert a palpable influence on brand experience. As a result, there has been a specific call for further research into the dyadic relationship between the brand and self (Zha et al., 2020). In accordance, we suggest that the relationship between brand experience dimensions and brand loyalty is moderated by which self-concept the brand appeals to. The following sections dive deeper into the suggested relationship between self-concept, brand experience dimensions, and attitudinal loyalty.

#### *2.4.3 Affective Experiences*

It has been suggested that self-congruence can enhance affective consumer responses to a brand (Aaker, 1999; Grohmann, 2009). This is particularly because consumers' self-concept must be involved for an emotional brand attachment to occur. Therefore, a sense of alignment between brand and self should play an

especially prominent role in creating emotional brand attachment (Chaplin & John, 2005; Park et al., 2010). Iglesias et al. (2011) provide empirical evidence regarding affective commitment's role in branding, and the authors go as far to state that affective commitment completely mediates the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. They conclude that companies should focus on improving the affective dimension of their communications and the entire brand experience to generate and consolidate affective bonds with consumers if they want to create and strengthen brand loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2011). Hence, the authors suggest that the goal of brand experiences is to create emotional brand attachments that can lead to loyalty.

Additionally, research by Malär et al. (2011) on self-congruence and emotional brand attachment clearly demonstrated that generally, brands with actual-self congruence generate higher levels of emotional brand attachment, than brands evoking ideal-self congruence. Emotional brand attachment occurs when a consumer feels a strong sense of affection, passion, and connection with the brand. Their observations across two studies suggest that consumers are more likely to form a strong emotional connection with a brand that validates who they actually are than with a brand that promises to help them achieve an ideal version of themselves. Thus, there is support for the superiority of "authentic marketing" (i.e., targeting the brand personality toward the consumer's actual self) rather than aspirational marketing (i.e., targeting the brand personality towards consumers' ideal self). This may explain why authentic branding continues to gain importance in management practice (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

Affective brand experiences have been shown to have a significant impact on yet another emotionally oriented construct, brand love (Safeer, et al., 2020). Safeer et al. (2020) find that the relationship between affective brand experiences and brand love is mediated by brand authenticity. While authenticity is a multifaceted concept, it is important to note that Safeer et al. (2020) operationalize authenticity by staying true to its promise and sense of self. Given the affective nature of both emotional brand attachment and brand love and their relationship to authentic branding, it is likely that emotions play a more effective role when used by a brand appealing to consumers' actual self-concept. Thus, affective experiences are likely more



effective in fostering favorable consumer behavior when used in the context of authentic, compared to aspirational marketing. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

*H2<sub>a</sub>: Affective brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to actual self-concept than one that appeals to ideal self-concept.*

#### 2.4.4 Behavioral Experiences

Behavioral experiences are often brought on by depictions of inspirational lifestyles or situations that motivate the consumer to physically engage with the brand. The organismic integration theory (OIT) component of the self-determination theory (SDT) builds upon this defining characteristic of motivation by classifying consumers' extrinsic motives into categories (Gilal et al., 2018). These categories consist of intrinsic, identified, introjected, and external regulation and explain the different reasons consumers engage in certain behaviors (Gilal et al., 2018). In the context of consumer behavior, individuals may buy athletic brands (1) because of their inherent interest in staying healthy and in shape (e.g., intrinsic regulation), (2) because they want to improve their appearance (e.g., identified regulation), (3) perhaps because they want to assuage their worry and guilt about not taking care of their appearance (e.g., introjected regulation), or (4) because they feel jealous when they compare their appearance and physical attractiveness with that of another (e.g., external regulation). The theory assumes that human behavioral intention is guided by attitudes, anticipated emotions, and subjective norms, all of which are evoked by previous experiences and desires.

Although originally motivated extrinsically, some activities might eventually evoke feelings of autonomy and enhance persistence (Ryan & Connell, 1989). The transition from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation unfolds only if the basic psychological needs of individuals are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This evolution eventually brings the individual closer to their ideal self (Ryan & Connell, 1989). For example, suppose a consumer purchases a popular brand of athletic shoes, and every time (s)he wears them to exercise, positive feelings are evoked that motivate him/her to continue exercising. Initially, these individuals might merely be encouraged to exercise due to identified, introjected, or external regulations, reflecting extrinsic motivation. However, over time they begin to internalize this behavior, feeling a sense of pride after engaging in this act and guilt



or shame otherwise, reflecting introjection and gradually reaching the ideal self. At this stage, individuals do not experience ownership over exercising but feel they should engage in this activity. Over time, individuals strive to identify with this behavior intrinsically rather than merely introject it. For instance, they might perceive or identify themselves as an individual who is fit and exercises. Consequently, they feel motivated to engage in this behavior for self-enhancement efforts that help them align with the ideal self-identity. This motivational state is a defining characteristic of the most successful behavioral experiences per Schmitt (1999).

Research has concluded that once a behavior is internalized, it will have stronger long-term mediating effects on consumer behavioral outcomes such as emotional attachment and customer loyalty (Gilal et al., 2018; Hudson et al., 2015; Levy & Hino, 2016). SDT's notion is that controlled extrinsic motivational regulations have only a short-term impact on behavior and are not sustainable in the long run, whereas autonomous intrinsic motivation leads to sustainable consumer engagement such as attitudinal loyalty. Given that individuals strive towards autonomous self-regulating behavior to align with their ideal self, we assume that they are drawn towards brand experiences that support this alignment and hypothesize the following:

*H2<sub>b</sub>: Behavioral brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to ideal self-concept than one that appeals to actual self-concept.*

#### 2.4.5 Cognitive Experiences

Developed by Cacioppo and colleagues, the need for cognition (NC) is defined as a *psychological and personality variable that reflects the extent to which people engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive tasks* (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Preranahuli & Aminbhavi, 2014). Individuals with high NC enjoy situations marked by novelty and complexity, a trait that has proven to be stable throughout an individual's lifetime (Cacioppo et al., 1996). In a marketing context, this means that consumers with high NC are drawn towards complex brand stimuli that diverge from the creative norm, as they elicit curiosity and problem solving (e.g., lexical complexity, asymmetrical or similarities between visual elements, comparative messaging) (Berlyne, 1960; Sanjay et al., 2004; Smith & Yang, 2004; Brakus et al., 2009). Not

only do consumers need high NC levels to enjoy complex and divergent stimuli, but high NC is necessary to engage in the self-reflection needed to form a comprehensive actual self-concept. Alternatively, those low in NC only engage with complex stimuli if prompted to do so. Additionally, low NC individuals are less apt to make self-relevant associations since the process of self-verification efforts requires a conscious and somewhat complex process of self-recognition (Swann, 1990; Peck & Loken, 2004).

NC is positively correlated with self-esteem, meaning that consumers who score highly on NC are likely to have high levels of self-esteem (Mueller, 1985). This has been proven more recently since individuals with high NC have been shown to engage in more profound cognitive elaboration, reflect on their thoughts and arguments, and tend to be more confident about their thoughts and ideas (Wu et al., 2014; Briñol & Petty, 2005). Since consumers with high self-esteem have less discrepancy between their actual and ideal self, they are less motivated by self-enhancement efforts (Malär et al., 2011). Therefore, it could be argued that consumers do not seek cognitive stimulation to meet self-enhancement goals but rather enjoy cognitive stimulation to pursue self-verification goals. Since self-verification motivates consumers to seek brand experiences reflecting their actual self-concept, we hypothesize the following:

*H2<sub>c</sub>: Cognitive brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to actual self-concept than one that appeals to ideal self-concept.*

#### 2.4.6 Sensory Experiences

As mentioned, self-enhancement theory is driven by the need to increase self-esteem, which means that individuals engage in self-enhancing activities to increase their self-esteem. In the context of self-concept, individuals with low self-esteem view their actual self-concept rather negatively and are therefore not as drawn to brands appealing to who they actually are (Malär et al., 2011). Rather, in pursuit of positive reinforcement, low self-esteem individuals are drawn towards brands that embody their ideal self-concept to counter feelings of low self-worth.

Research has shown that individuals with low self-esteem tend to overconsume, often in a compulsory manner, to escape from self-awareness and enhance feelings

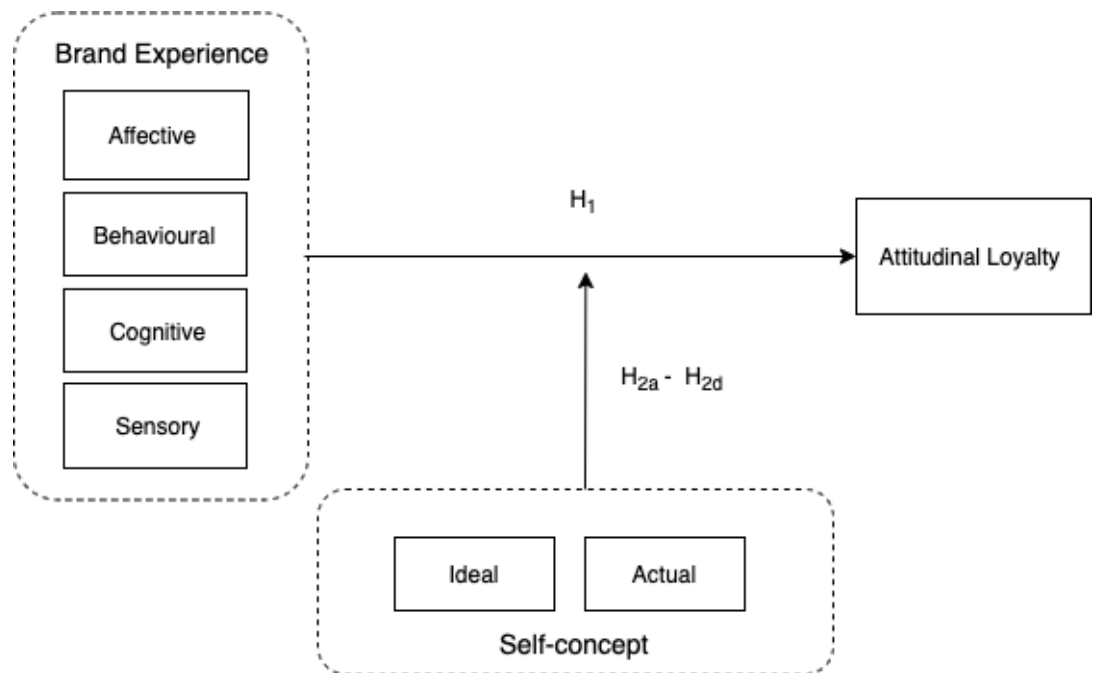
of self-worth (Hanley & Wilhelm 1992; Mandel & Smeesters, 2008). Applying self-esteem in a sensorial context, Batra and Ghoshal (2017) show that individuals with low self-esteem seek high-intensity sensory consumption (HISC) as a reparative tool to restore self-worth through distraction. Given that individuals with low self-esteem are drawn both towards brands that enhance their ideal-self and brands that provide HISC, we hypothesize the following:

*H2<sub>d</sub>: Sensory brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to ideal self-concept than one that appeals to actual self-concept.*

### 3. Conceptual Model

#### 3.1 Proposed Conceptual Model

The proposed conceptual model acts as the basis of the current study and is presented in *Figure 1*.



*Figure 1. Conceptual model*

## 4. Method and Procedures

### 4.1 *General Research Design*

Our research aims, to gain a deeper understanding and generalizable results regarding the hypothesized interactions between variables. Thus, a quantitative survey is appropriate (Malhotra, 2019). Furthermore, given that our proposed effects have not yet been researched, primary data is needed to explore these proposed interactions. Therefore, we chose to carry out our studies in the form of surveys to empirically test our hypotheses. In total, we conducted two pretests along with one main study.

To design and administer our surveys across all studies, we used the online survey tool Qualtrics. The data collection software makes it easy to gather, export, and analyze quantitative and qualitative data anonymously. The online format also provides control and flexibility over survey flows and stimuli design while making it feasible to reach participants around the globe. Additionally, Qualtrics prohibits participants from backtracking during the survey, which can further increase internal validity. However, there are a few drawbacks of conducting our research exclusively in an online setting that are worth mentioning. A notable limitation is the restricting nature of an online context when it comes to stimuli design. Specifically, when it comes to administering sensorial (e.g., taste, smell, touch) and behavioral (e.g., hands-on activities) design elements. There are also general drawbacks, such as sample representativeness and lower response rates, that online surveys pose (Granello & Wheaton, 2004). To analyze our results, we used statistical software, namely IBM SPSS.

### 4.2 *Variable Operationalization*

Table 1 provides an overview of all variables, their respective operationalization, and reliability measures based on collected data. We relied on empirically validated scales and items from previous studies wherever possible. However, adaptations were made when necessary to better suit the purpose of our research and ease participant understanding. While we mostly made adaptations to previous scales, we did construct new scales for our attitudinal loyalty measures. More information regarding the logic and construction of our attitudinal loyalty scale can be found in section 4.4.3 *Measures*.

Throughout nearly all scales in our studies, we employed a five-point Likert scale anchored by strongly disagree-strongly agree. However, when measuring brand familiarity during our first pretest, we opted for a single-item measure. One drawback of using a single-item measure is that there is no statistical method to ascertain its reliability (e.g., Cronbach's alpha). However, using a single-item measure is considered acceptable in certain contexts and when an existing scale homogeneously defines the concept (Postmes et al., 2013). Our single-item brand familiarity measure was adopted from Kent and Allen (1994), which reports a reliability coefficient alpha of 0.85. Taking these points into consideration and given that brand familiarity acts as a manipulation check rather than the focus of our study, we opted for a single-item measure.



Table 1. Variable Operationalization

Variable	Measurement item(s)	Source	Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Dependent Variables</i>				
Prestimulus Attitudinal Loyalty	I say positive things about this brand to other people I would not recommend this brand I am committed to this brand I would not buy another brand if this one is present I would like to buy this brand I am not willing to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands	Authors' contribution building on Lastovicka and Gardner (1978); Boulding et al. (1993); Rust and Zahorik (1993); Zeithaml et al. (1996); Pulligadda et al. (2016)	Six-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.64
Poststimulus Attitudinal Loyalty	This stimulus increases my willingness to say positive things about this brand to other people. This stimulus decreases willingness to recommend this brand This stimulus increases my commitment to this brand This stimulus reduces my willingness to buy another brand if this one is present This stimulus increases my willingness to buy this brand This stimulus decreases my willingness to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands	Authors' contribution building on Lastovicka and Gardner (1978); Boulding et al. (1993); Rust and Zahorik (1993); Zeithaml et al. (1996); Pulligadda et al. (2016)	Six-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.93



<b>Variable</b>	<b>Measurement item(s)</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
Affective Experience	This stimulus induces feelings and sentiment I do not have strong emotions for this stimulus This stimulus is emotional	Authors' contribution building on Brakus et al. (2009)	Six-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.81
Cognitive Experience	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this stimulus This stimulus does not make me think This stimulus encourages my curiosity and problem solving	Authors' contribution building on Brakus et al. (2009)	Six-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.85
Behavioral Experience	This stimulus entices me to act This stimulus results in bodily experiences This stimulus is not action oriented	Authors' contribution building on Brakus et al. (2009)	Six-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.66
Sensorial Experience	This stimulus makes a strong impression on my senses I find this stimulus interesting in a sensory way This stimulus does not appeal to my senses	Authors' contribution building on Brakus et al. (2009)	Six-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.79



Variable	Measurement item(s)	Source	Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Moderators</i>				
Ideal-Self Concept	Brand X is a mirror image of the person I would like to be Brand X is similar to the person I would like to be Brand X is consistent with how I would like to be	Sirgy et al. (1997); Malär et al. (2011); Japutra et al. (2019)	Three-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.96
Actual-Self Concept	Brand X is consistent with how I see myself Brand X is a mirror image of me Brand X is similar to me	Sirgy et al. (1997); Malär et al. (2011); Japutra et al. (2019);	Three-item 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	0.90
<i>Familiarity Check</i>				
Familiarity	I have no familiarity with this brand I have some familiarity with this brand I have moderate familiarity with this brand I have high familiarity with this brand I have maximum familiarity with this brand	Authors' contribution building on Kent and Allen (1994)	Single semantic differential item	N/A



### 4.3 *Pretests*

#### 4.3.1 *Pretest 1*

The goal of the first pretest was to generate a specific list of brands that are considered to appeal to either the actual or ideal self-concept. We achieved this by measuring self-congruence inspired by Malär et al. (2011). In contrast to self-selecting actual and ideal self-representing brands, this pretest helped eliminate our personal biases and establish validity.

#### *Procedure*

To gather responses via Qualtrics, we reached out to our close networks, which is commonly referred to as chain sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Given our nonrandom personal relationships with the participants, we chose not to collect demographic information for the pretests to ensure anonymity. Once participants opened their survey link, they were briefed on anonymity, and asked the first qualifying question regarding consent. They were then presented with a brief introduction that was operationalized using a two-tiered approach adopted from Sirgy et al. (1997). The instructions provided background on the actual and ideal self and prompted participants to elaborate on the brands presented from a self-concept perspective. Finally, participants were instructed to reflect on their own self-concepts before moving onto the questionnaire. Similar to procedures by Malär et al. (2011) and Sirgy et al. (1997), participants were asked to take a moment to think about how they see themselves and how they would like to be seen.

Once participants read the instructions and engaged in their reflections, they were randomly presented with a brand using Qualtrics' randomization function. Brand selection was based on *Forbes: The 2020 World's Most Valuable brands* list (Forbes, 2020). From the list, we retained 16 brands spanning eight product categories based on their availability within the Norwegian market and the business-to-consumer nature of their product. Brands were presented to participants randomly to control for within-subjects' downfalls such as carry-over effect and fatigue. The test logic was that respondents only answered questions pertaining to actual- and ideal-self congruence if they had high or maximum familiarity with the brand. Participants who stated they had moderate, some, or no familiarity with the brand were randomly assigned a new brand as they progressed through the questionnaire. The familiarity manipulation check was reported using an adapted

scale from Kent and Allen, (1994) while actual and ideal-self congruence were assessed using a six-item scale adapted from Malär et al. (2011) (see Table 1). Three of these items pertained to actual self-congruence, while the other three pertained to ideal self-congruence.

### *Analysis and Results*

To prepare the data for further analysis, we began by deleting missing data points and reverse coding questions (1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1). This resulted in a final number of respondents of 41. Although we based our research on predesigned Likert scales, we made slight iterations to these scales to better match our study. Thus, it is appropriate to conduct a reliability analysis to assess the interrelatedness of our adapted Likert scale. Since the first three items in Malär et al.'s (2011) scale measured actual self-congruence, while the latter three measured ideal self-congruence, we conducted two separate reliability tests to assess the scale items reflecting each self-concept. We did this by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Typically, a reliability test resulting in a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.60 is considered satisfactory (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Malhotra, 2019). The Cronbach's alpha values were 0.90 and 0.96 for actual and ideal self-congruence scale items, respectively. This is in line with the reliability from the previous study by Malär et al. (2011), which was 0.82 and 0.95 for actual and ideal self-congruence, respectively. Therefore, we conclude that there is satisfactory interrelatedness among scale items (see Table 1).

Since there is a satisfactory degree of interrelatedness amongst scale items, it is acceptable to merge existing scale items into new variables. Thus, when analyzing, we created two new variables for each of the 16 brands. One of these new variables represented the mean value of the three actual-self congruence items, while the other represented the mean value of the three ideal-self congruence items for each brand. These were labeled Brand\_Actual and Brand\_Ideal, respectively, for each brand.

To determine which brands were considered to evoke either the ideal or actual self-concept, we first compared the mean values of our new variables for each brand. While we could tell which brands seem to have higher mean values for either their actual or ideal self-concept items, many brands had similar mean scores for both. To determine statistically whether the mean scores of actual self-congruence were

significantly different from ideal self-congruence we performed 16 paired sample *t*-tests. A total of eight comparisons resulted in significant differences: Hermès, Zara, Porsche, Hyundai, Emirates, Scandinavian Airlines (SAS), Swix, and Bolia ( $p < 0.10$ ) (see Table 2). It is important to note that some brands had more respondents than others due to our familiarity control. Thus, we selected the following brands due to their significant difference in actual and ideal-self-congruence, product categorization pairing, global recognition, as well as their polarized mean scores and high number of respondents relative to other brands: Hermès and Zara; Porsche and Hyundai; Emirates and Scandinavian Airlines (SAS).

*Table 2. Paired Sample t-test Results*

<b>Pairs</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Pair 1	SAS_Actual	19	3.42	1.962	0.065
	SAS_Ideal		2.88		
Pair 2	Emirates_Actual	11	2.53	3.190	0.010
	Emirates_Ideal		4.10		
Pair 3	Zara_Actual	17	3.70	2.008	0.061
	Zara_Ideal		3.10		
Pair 4	Hermès_Actual	13	2.52	3.456	0.004
	Hermès_Ideal		3.98		
Pair 5	Hyundai_Actual	6	3.48	2.347	0.057
	Hyundai_Ideal		1.90		
Pair 6	Porsche_Actual	14	2.82	4.534	0.001
	Porsche_Ideal		4.31		
Pair 7	Swix_Actual	8	2.96	2.626	0.030
	Swix_Ideal		3.70		
Pair 8	Bolia_Actual	7	3.04	2.567	0.037
	Bolia_Ideal		4.29		

### 4.3.2 *Pretest 2*

As previously discussed, it is unlikely that a particular stimulus type solely triggers a certain experience dimension. For example, it is possible that a particular advertisement simultaneously evokes a sensory experience and emotional experience (Brakus et al., 2009). However, considering that our research question examines experiential effects at a dimension-specific level, it is of interest to better understand which brand-related stimulus is most representative of a given dimension. By doing so, we can mitigate the likelihood that our chosen brand-related stimulus confounds across multiple dimensions. Thus, the statistical objective of our second pretest was to determine which stimulus type was more representative of and effective in evoking a particular brand experience dimension.

#### *Procedure*

When designing the stimuli for the second pretest, it was necessary to clearly distinguish what stimulus design was more representative of each dimension. Some of the stimuli presented in the pretest were real, while others we created for the purpose of the study (see Table 1). We opted to only analyze two stimuli per dimension to mitigate survey length and increase the response rate. Since researching only two stimuli is relatively limiting, each stimulus needed to be designed or selected based on previous literature. A complete overview of stimuli design and justification can be found in Table 3.

Since the first and second pretests were conducted simultaneously, we could not use the selected brands from the first pretest as we did not have the results yet. Furthermore, pretests one and two were distributed to the same set of participants. Therefore, we chose an unrelated brand to design our eight stimuli around to help preserve the objectivity of responses. We opted for the brand Coca-Cola due to its popularity, brand value, and brand recognition, all of which ensured high familiarity and decreased the likelihood of negative previous encounters (Conway, 2021; Forbes, 2020). Since we are not studying the impact of a negative brand experience on attitudinal loyalty, ensuring consumers had a neutral or positive previous experience with the brand was highly important.

Like the first pretest, responses were gathered anonymously via Qualtrics using chain sampling. Once participants opened their survey link, they were briefed on

anonymity and asked the first qualifying question regarding consent. Unlike the first pretest, it was important that not too much context was given to participants around the nature of the study. This lack of context was intentional to avoid priming (Lavrakas, 2008). After the introduction, they were presented with a series of stimuli which they then evaluated against the 12-item brand experience scale adapted from Brakus et al. (2009). All questions in the study were mandatory. This forced response option meant that participants had to answer the current question before moving onto the next page. Not only did this lower the possibility of us collecting incomplete or sporadic data, but forced response makes participants think more deeply about their responses in a forced answer format (Smyth et al., 2006).

It is important to note that in our study, each stimulus was only followed by three dimension-relevant items, rather than the full 12-items presented by Brakus et al. (2009). For example, a sensory stimulus was followed by *Brakus et al.*'s three-item sensory items; a cognitive stimulus was followed by Brakus' three-item cognitive items, and so on. We only asked dimension-relevant questions to decrease survey length and ultimately increase completion rates and response quality as asking the full 12-item scale after every stimulus would result in a 96-question survey (Galesic & Bosnjak, 2009). Another notable adaptation pertains to the wording of the scale. Rather than using the word "brand" or "stimulus," we used terms that refer directly to the stimulus presented (e.g., "this video," "this advertisement," "this activity") to ease the participants' understanding (see Table 1). All respondents were required to answer all questions in the survey.



*Table 3. Stimuli Design and Justification*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Stimulus Description</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Source</b>
Affective	Coca-Cola with Love	Image	Advertising literature has found that commercials showing affectionate couples, mothers with children, and small animals can evoke sense of warmth, endearment, and love – all of which are commonly referred to as social affection. Thus, we chose an image of a young couple seemingly in love to communicate the intimacy, affection, and warmth needed to evoke an affective state.	Batra and Ray, 1986; Aaker, Stayman, & Hagerty, 1986
Affective	Happiness Starts with a Smile	Video	Video format has been shown to be more effective than image format when eliciting positive emotions, which is why we chose a video format for this stimulus. More specifically, facial expressions of others are powerful external signals, prompting facial mimicry and elicit emotionally congruent reactions from us. This emotional contagion mediates the relationship between source expressive displays and consumer attitudes. For example, smiling and laughter have been shown to heighten emotional experiences and positive attitude towards an ad. Thus, the video showing a man laughing on the	Homer and Yoo, 1992; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994; De Gleider, 2006; Teixeira, 2012; Kulczynski, Ilicic, & Baxter, 2016; Uhrig et al., 2016; Fan et al., 2020



Dimension	Stimulus Description	Media	Justification	Source
			<p>subway is likely to influence the emotional response of the viewer in a positive way – a reaction that is augmented by video format.</p>	
Behavioral	Share a Coke Campaign	Drag-and-Drop	<p>The drag-and-drop activity was chosen as a behavioral stimulus due to its inherent ability to prompt physical action which is the essence of a behavioral experience per Zarantonello &amp; Schmitt (2010). By the action of picking from one box, dragging and dropping to another, consumers interact with the brand and engage in physical action. Although this action is originally motivated extrinsically, inspirational feelings are evoked, which may prompt the consumer to internalize this behavior. In this case, the consumer would be inclined to share a Coca-Cola with someone next time they engage with the brand.</p>	<p>Ryan &amp; Connell, 1989; Ryan &amp; Deci, 2000; Zarantonello &amp; Schmitt, 2010</p>
Behavioral	Draw a Coke Activity	Signature Box	<p>The decision to have consumers draw a Coca-Cola bottle was inspired by a recent Heinz ad campaign where consumers were asked to draw Ketchup. Per Schmitt (1999), behavioral experiences are most successful if they are “motivational or inspirational in nature.”</p>	<p>Schmitt, 1999; Diaz, 2021</p>



Dimension	Stimulus Description	Media	Justification	Source
			<p>Drawing a Coke allows for product visualization and creativity via motor-based actions, both of which may evoke motivation and inspiration. The combination of motor-based actions, as well as the creative inspiration brought on by the act of drawing, was the justification for this stimulus selection.</p>	
Sensory*	Coca-Cola Gif	Image	<p>Visual imagery is a key component of sensory marketing. Prior research has explored how visual cues impact persuasion, engagement, and overall brand attitudes. One notable visual cue is motion, both in the context of perceived dynamism and actual movement. In terms of dynamism, perceived movement of an advertisement increases engagement and subsequent attitude towards the brand. Regarding actual movement, animated ads have been shown to increase attention due to enhanced motion. We therefore believe motion plays an important role in sensory marketing and thus evoking a sensorial brand experience.</p>	<p>Krishna, 2012; Cian, Krishna, &amp; Elder, 2014; Krishna, Cian, &amp; Sokolova, 2016; Petit et al., 2019</p>
Sensory*	Bottle opening and pouring	Audio File	<p>Audio is another key component of sensory marketing. Previous research has shown that</p>	<p>Krishna, 2012; Ho et al., 2013</p>





Dimension	Stimulus Description	Media	Justification	Source
Cognitive	Try Not to Read This	Image	<p>sound feedback (vs. no sound) from products during virtual trial has been shown to increase the willingness to pay (WTP). As increased WTP is a key component of attitudinal loyalty, incorporating sound could be one way to evoke a sensory brand experience resulting in loyalty.</p> <hr/> <p>We chose this image as we believe it motivated curiosity, a key component of a cognitive experience per Brakus et al. For this image, curiosity is encouraged through a degree of incongruence between action and instruction. This lexical incongruence has been referred to as a deviant trope. It is important to note that curiosity in this context is not stimulated by an information gap (i.e., asymmetric informative advertising). Rather, curiosity is referred to as a specific state evoked by an external stimuli trigger. This specific stimulus motivates a person to reduce the amount of complexity, novelty, and incongruity presented through thought. Thus, the surprising discrepancy between action and text induces a feeling a curiosity.</p>	<p>Berlyne, 1966; Spielberg and Starr 1994; Sanjay, Joni, &amp; Kenneth, 2004; Brakus et al., 2009; Daume &amp; Hüttl-Maack, 2020.</p>



Dimension	Stimulus Description	Media	Justification	Source
Cognitive	Rank order	Image	<p>This advertisement prompts participants to sort Coke bottles in ascending order based on height. This cognitive activity evoked by a given stimulus categorizes this task-based ad as a cognitive experience. It is important to note that since the sorting is done inside the minds of participants rather than through action (i.e., drag-and-drop), is it considered to be a cognitive, rather than motor, based task. This is an important differentiator between a cognitive and a behavioral experience. Therefore, in order to engage in this ranking task, participants must engage in a degree of cognitive elaboration.</p>	Wood, 1986; Mcquarrie and Mick 1999; Sanjay, Joni, & Kenneth, 2004

\*Due to the online nature of our study, we could not implement haptics, olfaction, nor taste; thus, limiting us to audition and vision

### *Analysis and Results*

Similar to the first pretest, we first prepared the data for further analysis by deleting missing data points. This resulted in a final number of respondents of 41. We then reverse coded the third scale item on each dimension as they were negatively loaded (1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1). Like the first pretest, we assessed the reliability of measures by calculating Cronbach's alpha values. In line with the criterion of 0.60, the Cronbach's alphas proved to be acceptable reliability levels: they were high for affective items (0.81), cognitive items (0.85), satisfactory for sensory items (0.79), and sufficient for behavioral items (0.66) (see Table 1). Reliability from the previous study by Brakus et al. (2009) was also high for affective items (0.93), sensory items (0.93), cognitive items (0.93), and was satisfactory for behavioral items (0.79). We also conducted a factor analysis to analyze the variance explained via Pearson Correlations in further preparation efforts.

To determine which stimulus was most representative of a particular brand experience dimension, we calculated the mean value of the three-item scale following each of the eight stimuli (see Table 4). The stimulus with the higher mean score within a particular dimension was determined to be more representative of that dimension. Based on our results, we concluded that video, audio, drag-and-drop, and an image with curiosity-inducing wording, were most effective in evoking affective, sensorial, behavioral, and cognitive experiences, respectively.

*Table 4. Stimuli Descriptive Statistics*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>SE</b>
Affective	Image	41	3.46	1.962	0.065
	Video		4.00		
Sensorial	Gif	41	3.33	3.190	0.010
	Audio		4.00		
Behavioral	Drag-and-Drop	41	3.20	2.008	0.061
	Drawing		2.88		
Cognitive	Image*	41	3.29	3.456	0.004
	Ranking Task		3.50		

\* Image includes curiosity-inducing wording

In addition to evaluating mean scores, we also wanted to assess whether stimuli within a particular dimension were significantly differentiated from each other. We

did this by conducting four paired sample *t*-test among the two stimuli within a particular dimension across all four dimensions (see Table 4). The results concluded that the difference in stimuli was statistically significant at a 5% significance level for the affective ( $t(40) = 3.72, p < .001$ ), behavioral ( $t(40) = 3.04, p < .004$ ), and sensorial dimensions ( $t(40) = 3.70, p < .001$ ). The stimuli representing the cognitive dimension were not statistically different from one another at a 5% significance level. However, based on our mean analysis, we can determine that the *Try Not to Read This* stimulus was more cognitive than the ranking task.

#### 4.4 Main Study

Now that we have determined which stimuli are most effective in evoking a given brand experience dimension and which brands appeal most to consumers' actual or ideal self-concepts, we can begin our main study. The purpose of this study was to determine if a particular brand-experience-evoking stimulus was effective in increasing attitudinal loyalty depending on the contextual role of self-concept.

##### 4.4.1 Sampling

Since our data have a continuous outcome, somewhat smaller sample sizes are still considered representative depending on the desired effect size (Hyman & Sierra, 2010). Although a correction factor has not been applied, we wanted to estimate a more precise number of respondents needed to determine a sufficient sample size that would result in reliable data and minimize random sampling error. Therefore, we opted to conduct a power calculation based on proportions (Malhotra, 2019). Due to the lack of a standard deviation from previous studies measuring the same variables, and the large size of the population, Cochran's sample size formula was appropriate (Bartlett et al., 2001; Evans et al., 2000; Israel, 2003).

We used the following formula where the sample size is denoted by  $n$ , the value corresponding to a 95% confidence interval is denoted by  $z$ , the margin of error is denoted by  $e$ , and the estimation proportion of the population is denoted by  $p$ . It is common practice that a confidence interval of 95% is appropriate, resulting in an associated critical value of 1.96 (Malhotra, 2019). Additionally, it is common practice to apply a level of precision associated with a margin of error of 5%. Since we are not aware of the estimated sample proportion, we used 50%, which is the most conservative and gives the largest sample size (Bartlett et al., 2001). From this, we find that a random sample of 385 is sufficient for our study.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times p(1 - p)}{e^2} = \frac{1.96^2 \times .5(1 - .5)}{.05^2} = 384.16$$

#### 4.4.2 Data Collection Procedure

##### *Distribution*

As with our pretests, our main study was an online survey distributed through an anonymous link via Qualtrics. To reach the number of respondents estimated by our power calculation, we distributed the anonymous link to our survey via social media platforms and direct contacts who may not be in our social media network. Several friends and family members also posted and shared the link with their network, allowing us to reach an even larger and more heterogeneous audience in a relatively short amount of time. This sampling technique is characterized as the nonprobability sampling technique known as convenience sampling (Malhotra, 2019). As with any sampling technique, convenience sampling has its disadvantages, namely respondent self-selection. However, given that it is the least expensive and time-consuming of all sampling techniques, we proceeded with this option.

##### *Survey Flow*

Once participants opened the anonymous link, they were thanked for their willingness to participate, briefed on anonymity, and asked the first qualifying question regarding consent. Once they consented, they were randomly assigned by Qualtrics to one of two treatment groups representing either the actual or the ideal self-concept. Therefore, this portion of the survey is classified resulting in a between-subjects design. Randomization of group assignments was used to help control for possible extraneous variables (Malhotra, 2019). Depending on their random assignment, participants were either presented with a list of brands that appealed to the actual or ideal self-concept based on the results from our first pretest. Participants were then asked to choose the brand that they were most familiar with in their assigned category. They were then presented with brief instructions about the next part of the survey before moving onto the questionnaire's main portion (see *Appendix 1*).

Once they made their brand selection and read the instructions, they were presented with a six-item loyalty scale (see Table 1). Worded in the present tense, this scale was used to assess participants' current loyalty towards the brand in question

(hereinafter referred to as “prestimulus attitudinal loyalty scale”). Once they had answered the prestimulus attitudinal loyalty scale items, participants were presented with the first brand-experience-evoking stimulus for their chosen brand. After they had watched, listened to, or interacted with the stimulus, participants were presented with a six-item loyalty scale (hereinafter referred to as “poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scale”) (see *Appendix 1*).

The poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scale was presented to all participants after each stimulus exposure (i.e., a total of four times). Therefore, this component of the survey is classified as a within-subjects design. Once participants had been exposed to all four stimuli and completed the resulting loyalty questions, they were asked about their age and gender. We gathered demographics such as age and gender to see how representative and thus generalizable our data is compared to the population. Participants were lastly thanked for their time and consideration in completing our survey. As with previous studies, all questions were forced response.

#### *Study Characteristics*

Given that we asked participants about their loyalty prior to and after treatment exposure, our study is classified as a one-group pretest-posttest design (Malhotra, 2019). We opted for a one-group pretest-posttest design to capture the change that the experience-evoking stimuli might have on loyalty (H1). In this design structure, the treatment effect can be computed by subtracting pretreatment measures from posttreatment measures (further elaborated on in *section 4.4.4*). Furthermore, considering that we incorporated both between- (ideal vs. actual self-concept) and within-subjects (four brand experience dimensions) design components, our study is classified as a 2x4 mixed-factorial design.

#### *4.4.3 Measures*

As mentioned, the purpose of the first pretest was to determine which brands appeal to either the actual or ideal self-concept of consumers. It is, of course, possible that a brand appeals to either the actual or the ideal self-concept depending on the consumer. For example, one consumer may view Porsche as their actual self, despite the fact that, on average, consumers view Porsche as a brand that appeals to their ideal self-concept. To overcome these individual differences between consumers the purpose of the first pretest was to employ self-congruency scale by

Malär et al. (2011) to determine how the average consumer views these brands. By doing so, we did not need to measure self-congruency at an individual level in the main study. Instead, participants were provided with a list of brands proven to appeal to consumers' actual or ideal self-concept based on our first pretest.

Although Brakus et al. (2009) established a brand experience scale that measures the degree to which a consumer has an affective, sensory, behavioral, or cognitive experience with a brand, this scale was used to measure the specific sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral content of the experience itself (e.g., the degree to which a stimulus would trigger a particular dimension). Therefore, the goal of our second pretest was to adapt the scale from Brakus et al. (2009) at a stimulus level and use it to determine what sort of stimulus design was the most experience-evoking for a particular dimension. We used the results from this pretest to operationalize our independent variable, brand experience, and its four dimensions (see Table 1). Further support for the stimuli selection in our second pretest was based on a series of past literature, which can be found in Table 1.

As for our dependent variable, the operationalization of our prestimulus and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scales can be found in Table 1. The driving factor behind our scales' construction was the three attitudinal loyalty characteristics that distinguish the construct from behavioral loyalty outlined by Pulligadda et al. (2016). These defining characteristics are inclination to speak favorably about the brand (Boulding et al., 1993), a sense of commitment and psychological attachment to the brand (Lastovicka & Gardner, 1978), and a willingness to spend more monetary resources to acquire the brand (Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996). We, therefore, constructed a scale based on items that satisfied these conditions. We selected two items for each condition, resulting in a six-item scale. In the end, our scale items were based on seven different established and valid attitudinal loyalty scales (Mechinda et al., 2009; Aurier et al., 2012; Liu-Thompkins & Tam, 2013; Jaiswal & Niraj, 2011; Maity & Gupta, 2016; Hameed, 2013; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). While the poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scale was nearly identical to the prestimulus attitudinal loyalty scale, notable alternations were made. For example, as mentioned, the nouns used referred directly to the stimulus presented (e.g., "this video," "this sound," etc.). Additionally, the verbiage included the terms *increases* and *decreases* to measure the change in loyalty after stimuli exposure. These changes were made to ease respondent understanding.

#### 4.4.4 Analyses Techniques

##### *Hypothesis 1*

Given that measurements between prestimulus attitudinal and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty were taken from the same individuals, attitudinal loyalty prior to treatment exposure acts as a control scenario (Malhotra, 2019). Therefore, we conducted a paired sample *t*-test to evaluate the null hypothesis that there is no difference in attitudinal loyalty prior to and after participants had been exposed to brand-experience-evoking stimuli (*H1*) (Mee & Tin, 1991; Malhotra, 2019). Since we were interested in testing if brand experience positively affected attitudinal loyalty, we conducted a one-tailed, rather than a two-tailed, paired sample *t*-test.

##### *Hypotheses 2<sub>a-d</sub>*

When testing for  $H2_{a-d}$ , it is important to note that we have two independent variables: the type of brand experience (attitudinal, sensory, behavioral, and cognitive) and the self-concept (actual and ideal). These two variables cross over, creating eight experimental conditions. Due to our study's two independent variables, a Factorial Repeated-Measures ANOVA is more appropriate than a One-Way ANOVA (Fisher, 1992; Field, 2013). However, since we collected attitudinal loyalty scores before treatment exposure, we included prestimulus attitudinal loyalty as a covariate to increase the accuracy of our results. Therefore, to test the significance of our hypotheses  $H2_{a-d}$ , we conducted a **Factorial Repeated-Measures Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)** (Vogt, 1999; Field, 2013).

In our analysis, attitudinal loyalty scores resulting from each dimensions-specific stimulus served as the within subjects dependent variable, allowing us to test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in attitudinal loyalty means across the four conditions. The self-concept served as the between-subjects factor. This allowed us to test if there is a difference in attitudinal loyalty means between brands that appeal to the actual or ideal self-concept, as well as how self-concept interacts with (i.e., moderates) our four independent variable conditions. In addition to evaluating the null hypothesis that attitudinal loyalty means are equal across all brand experience dimensions and self-concepts via an ANCOVA, we conducted an independent sample *t*-test. This technique allowed us to see exactly how these means differed from one another. Lastly, we analyzed parameter estimates to



explore the significance and valence of the unstandardized beta coefficients (see *Appendix 16*). A summary of our analysis's techniques can be found in Table 5.

*Table 5. Overview of Analyses Techniques*

Technique	Hypothesis	Purpose
Paired-samples <i>t</i> -test <b>H</b>		To determine if brand experience has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty.
Repeated Measures ANCOVA	<b>H2<sub>a-d</sub></b>	To determine if means were equal across different types of brand experiences and self-concepts. Additionally, it was used to determine if there was a significant interaction effect between brand experience and self-concept.
Independent-samples <i>t</i> -test	<b>H2<sub>a-d</sub></b>	To determine exactly how dimension-specific means differed between the ideal and actual self-concept groups.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Data Preparation

#### 5.1.1 Missing Values and Outliers

To prepare our data for further analysis, we first deleted missing data points resulting from incomplete responses or lack of consent. We opted for casewise deletion or the act of discarding incomplete responses from the dataset entirely. Although incomplete responses may systematically differ from complete responses, our relatively high response rate lessened the likelihood that casewise deletion would result in serious response bias (Malhotra, 2019). Therefore, we believe that this technique was appropriate. After casewise deletion, our final number of respondents was 342. This results in a response rate of around 71%, which is considerably higher than the average internet collection rate of around 46% (Malhotra, 2019). This is likely due to the engaging and relatively short survey design and the somewhat personal nature of our convenience sampling technique. Lastly, we tested for and subsequently deleted outliers in our dataset. This brought our final number of participants to  $N = 330$ .

### 5.1.2 Reverse Coding

While the verbiage and nouns used in the prestimulus and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scales differed, their question sequence and overall scale structure were identical. Therefore, Q2 and Q6 were negatively loaded on both scales, requiring us to reverse code these variables prior to analysis (1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1).

### 5.1.3 Reliability

Although our prestimulus and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scales were inspired by several established and reliable scales, we ultimately constructed these scales organically. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a Cronbach's alpha on our prestimulus and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scales to check their respective internal consistency scale reliability. If the Cronbach's alpha value on either scale was below 0.60, then our newly constructed scales would not be reliable enough to merge variables nor carry out further analysis (Malhotra, 2019). It is also important to note that the Cronbach alpha reliability test tends to underestimate the internal consistency of scales with fewer than ten items (Taber, 2018). Thankfully, our prestimulus attitudinal loyalty scale had a Cronbach's alpha value of  $\alpha = 0.639$ , while our poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scale had a value of  $\alpha = 0.929$ . Although our scales were fundamentally based on the same scale-items (see Table 1), the iterations in verbiage (*increases* and *decreases*) and noun variation may explain the difference in Cronbach's alpha values. Regardless, both values were satisfactory to move forward with new variable computations.

### 5.1.4 Validity

Without establishing internal validity, it becomes difficult to draw valid conclusions about the effects of the independent variable (i.e., internal validity), as well as the generalizability of our findings (i.e., external validity). As sacrificing validity has severe implications for our results, validity was a continuous consideration of our research design and subsequent analyses from as early on as our pretests. As mentioned, our first pretest decreased the likelihood that our chosen brands cross-loaded on actual and ideal self-congruence. In the second pretest, our results were used to shape our main study stimuli selection in such a way that mitigates cross-dimensional confounds. Throughout both pretests, we used well-established scales to increase the content validity of our findings. While both pretests laid the foundation for validity in our main study, there were still several measures that needed to be taken.

The main concern from a validity perspective with a one-group pretest-posttest design is the extraneous variable resulting from main testing effects (MT). In the context of our study, MT would manifest in the form of prestimulus attitudinal loyalty observations affecting poststimulus attitudinal loyalty observations (Malhotra, 2019). However, by running an ANCOVA, we could adjust for MT effects through statistical analysis. In addition to MT effects, our main study employed various other measures to control for factors that could compromise internal and external validity. For example, randomly assigning participants to treatment groups controls selection bias; short time intervals between observations decreases the likelihood that external events occurring in tandem with data collection influence responses; and high response rate mitigates morality (MO), or the idea that systematic differences occur between complete vs. incomplete responses. We further established validity by thoroughly checking the chosen analyses techniques' assumptions and applying correction methods when necessary. Through assumption testing, we increase the robustness of our conclusions (Statistics Solutions, n.d).

#### *5.1.5 New Variables and Data Restructuring*

Since our survey consisted of various stimuli (images, videos, and activities) and subsequent loyalty questions, our initial dataset was rather unstructured as stimuli activities, videos, etc, were exported as variables into SPSS. Additionally, customizing each set of loyalty questions to a particular stimulus (e.g., "this video," "this sound," etc.) added an additional layer of complexity to our initial dataset. Because the videos, images, sound files, and ranking tasks were not relevant to our analysis, we first removed these variables from the dataset. In other words, it was not relevant to us which items consumers built their outfits with, which car they thought was the oldest, etc. We then completed a series of stepwise variable computations that would allow us to study our independent and dependent variables. Please see *Appendix 2* for a complete overview of stepwise computations and resulting computed variables. Lastly, we restructured our data into long-form to better suit our repeated ANCOVA analysis technique. In our long-form dataset, attitudinal loyalty scores from each dimension were combined into four, rather than eight columns. The actual self-concept group scores were "stacked" on top of those from the ideal self-concept treatment groups.

## 5.2 *Respondent Characteristics*

Because the nature of our study does not pertain to individual consumer characteristics, we did not include extensive demographic information in our questionnaire. However, since we used convenience sampling to collect responses, it was likely that our sample might be overly representative of those with similar demographics to our own. Therefore, we collected age and gender demographics in our questionnaire to gain a general overview of respondents and how representative they were of the overall population. Based on our results, 39.7% of our respondents were male, 57.0% were female, and approximately 3.3% either identified as nonbinary or preferred not to disclose their gender (see *Appendix 3*).

Out of 330 respondents, 34.2% ( $N = 113$ ) were aged 25 and 34. The next most represented segment, which accounted for 20.3% ( $N = 67$ ) was the 18 and 24 age group. This was followed by the 19.1% ( $N = 63$ ) aged between 35 and 44. Due to our sampling method, segment representativeness dropped in the segments aged between 45 and 54 ( $N = 36$ ), 55 and 64 ( $N = 34$ ), and those over 65 ( $N = 12$ ). Please see *Appendix 3* for more details regarding respondent characteristics.

In section 4.4.1 *Sampling*, we calculated that a sample size of  $N = 385$  was needed for our sample to be representative of the population. Despite not reaching that, the demographics of our respondents decently reflect the gender and age ratios of the global population (O'Neill, 2021). Furthermore, Malhotra (2019) recommends that survey questionnaires that result in a minimum sample size of 200 respondents are needed to produce generally stable results regardless of population size and that ideally, the sample size number should range from around 300-500 (Malhotra, 2019). The reason is that population size does not directly affect the sample size unless a finite population correction factor has been applied (Malhotra, 2019). Based on this, we consider our data set of 330 respondents a representative sample of the population, and we can confidently generalize the results of our study to the population.

## 5.3 *Descriptive Statistics*

Once our data was prepared for analysis, we familiarized ourselves with the data by exploring our results via descriptive statistics. We began by looking at attitudinal loyalty in both the prestimulus attitudinal loyalty control scenario and the

poststimulus attitudinal loyalty treatment scenario. Based on our results, we see that the aggregate mean values of attitudinal loyalty are slightly lower in the control scenario ( $M = 3.22$ ;  $SD = 0.54$ ) than in the postbrand experience scenario ( $M = 3.44$ ;  $SD = 0.63$ ) (see Table 6). Additionally, mean attitudinal loyalty scores are generally higher for brands that appeal to the ideal self-concept (see Table 6). We also see that all standard deviations are less than the value of one, which suggests there is general agreement among participants regarding mean levels (see Table 6). Additionally, the relatively small standard error values suggest our data are reasonably representative of the population (see Table 6).

Closer examination of individual scale-item descriptive statistics reveals that on both scales, Q3 (“*I am committed to this brand,*” “*This stimulus increases my commitment to this brand*”) and Q4 (“*I would not buy another brand if this one is present,*” “*This stimulus increases my willingness to buy this brand*”) have notably lower means (see *Appendix 4*). This is interesting considering that both questions encapsulate the commitment component of attitudinal loyalty. On the surface, this suggests that a sense of commitment may be less influential on attitudinal loyalty than an inclination to speak favorably about the brand and willingness to spend more monetary resources to acquire the brand. Scale-item descriptive statistics can be found in *Appendix 4*.

*Table 6. Attitudinal Loyalty Descriptive Statistics*

<b>Self-concept</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>SE</b>
Actual	Prestimulus Loyalty	172	3.18	0.53	0.04
	Poststimulus Loyalty		3.42	0.62	0.04
Ideal	Prestimulus Loyalty	158	3.27	0.56	0.04
	Poststimulus Loyalty		3.46	0.63	0.05
Total	Prestimulus Loyalty	330	3.22	0.54	0.03
	Poststimulus Loyalty		3.44	0.63	0.03

Next, we examined attitudinal loyalty scores in the context of experiential dimensions, self-concept, and the combination of the two. Irrespective of ideal and actual self-concept, poststimulus attitudinal loyalty means are relatively similar across dimensions, with mean values ranging between  $M = 3.36$  and  $M = 3.49$  (see Table 7). When looking at different means strictly at a self-concept level, we also see that there is little difference in poststimulus attitudinal loyalty means with  $M = 3.42$  for actual self-concept and  $M = 3.46$  for ideal self-concept (see Table 7). However, when looking at means by both dimension and self-concept, we see more variation, with mean values ranging between  $M = 3.05$  and  $M = 3.82$  (see Table 7). As with the overarching attitudinal loyalty descriptive statistics, we have relatively small standard error and standard deviation values across all variables (see Table 6 & 7).

*Table 7. Poststimulus Attitudinal Loyalty by Dimension Descriptive Statistics*

<b>Self-Concept</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>SE</b>
Actual	Affective		3.80	0.77	0.06
	Sensorial		3.05	1.00	0.08
	Behavioral	172	3.19	0.98	0.07
	Cognitive		3.68	0.83	0.06
	Total		3.42	0.62	0.05
Ideal	Affective		3.16	1.05	0.08
	Sensorial		3.69	0.86	0.07
	Behavioral	158	3.82	0.73	0.06
	Cognitive		3.18	1.03	0.08
	Total		3.46	0.63	0.05
Total	Affective		3.49	0.97	0.05
	Sensorial		3.36	0.99	0.05
	Behavioral	330	3.49	0.93	0.05
	Cognitive		3.44	0.96	0.05

## 5.4 Hypothesis Testing

### 5.4.1 Hypothesis 1

#### *Assumptions*

As a parametric procedure, the paired sample *t*-test makes several assumptions that our data set needs to fulfill prior to conducting the statistical procedure, to assure valid and reliable results. The paired sample *t*-test has four main assumptions; (1) *the dependent variable should be at the continuous level*, (2) *the observations must be independent of one another*, (3) *the dependent variable should be approximately normally distributed*, (4) *there should be no significant outliers* (Field, 2013; van den Berg, 2021).

Due to the chosen research design, the data set fulfills the first and second assumptions. As mentioned in section 5.1.1 *Missing Values and Outliers*, all outliers were removed during the data cleaning process, fulfilling the fourth assumption. Lastly, the large size of our data set and a normal Q-Q plot with points that do not stray away from the diagonal line confirm that our data are normally distributed (see *Appendix 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10*).

#### *Analysis*

A one-tailed paired-sample *t*-test showed that the mean difference in attitudinal loyalty prior to and after a brand experience was positive and statistically significant ( $t(329) = 5.507, p = 0.001$ ) (see Table 8). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. From this, we find statistically significant evidence to support that a positive brand experience has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty (*H1*).

*Table 8. Paired sample t-test comparing prestimulus- and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty*

	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Poststimulus Attitudinal Loyalty – Prestimulus Attitudinal Loyalty	5.507	329	0.001	0.22

### 5.4.2 Hypotheses $H2_a - H2_d$

#### *Assumptions*

Since our data were based on inferential statistics, and with an ANCOVA being a linear model, certain assumptions had to be assessed prior to the analysis to guarantee valid and reliable results (Field, 2013). Nine assumptions need to be fulfilled when carrying out a mixed ANCOVA with repeated measures; (1) *The dependent variable and the covariate should be continuous variables,* (2) *The within-subjects factor should have at least two categorical “related groups” or “matched pairs,”* (3) *The between-subjects factor should consist of at least two categorical “independent groups,”* (4) *There should be no significant outliers in any group of the within- or between-subjects factors,* (5) *The dependent variable should be approximately normally distributed,* (6) *There needs to be homogeneity of variances,* (7) *There must be sphericity,* (8) *Independence of the covariate and treatment effect,* (9) *Homogeneity of regression slopes,* (Field, 2013; van den Berg, 2021).

Due to the research design, our data fulfills the first, second, third, and ninth assumptions. As mentioned in section 5.1.1 *Missing Values and Outliers*, all outliers were removed during the data cleansing, fulfilling the fourth assumption. We used SPSS to check the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and tenth assumptions. Based on our large sample size, and normal Q-Q plots, our data fulfill the requirements for the assumption of normally distributed data (see Appendix 11, 12, 13 & 14). To test for homogeneity, we conducted a Levene’s test. The test showed that only the variances for sensorial ( $F(1, 328) = 2.521, p = 0.113$ ) and cognitive variables ( $F(1, 328) = 2.680, p = 0.103$ ) were equal. However, affective ( $F(1,328) = 16.844, p < 0.001$ ), and behavioral variables ( $F(1, 328) = 12.449, p < 0.001$ ) were significant, deeming them heterogeneous (see Table 9). However, since the sample sizes are roughly equal, the population variances do not necessarily have to be equal (see Table 4) (Field, 2013). Therefore, our data do not violate the assumption of homogeneity (Field, 2013).



Table 9. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Affective	16.844	1	328	<0.001
Sensorial	2.521	1	328	0.113
Behavioral	12.449	1	328	<0.001
Cognitive	2.680	1	328	0.103

Furthermore, we conducted Mauchly's test of sphericity, which indicated that our data violated the seventh assumption ( $\chi^2(5) = 478.610, p < 0.001$ ). However, with the Greenhouse-Geisser estimate ( $\epsilon = 0.515$ ) lower than 0.75, we can move forward with correcting the degrees of freedom with the Greenhouse-Geisser correction to combat the violation of sphericity (Field, 2013). This will allow us to obtain a valid critical F-value to safely analyze our data using mixed ANCOVA with Repeated Measures (Field, 2013).

Lastly, we used SPSS to test for the homogeneity of regression slopes between the dependent and covariate variables. Our findings show that the relationship of the covariate (i.e., prestimulus attitudinal loyalty) and the dependent variable (i.e., poststimulus attitudinal loyalty) is the same in each of our treatment groups ( $F(1, 326) = 1.45, p = 0.23$ ). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis, which supports the fact that our data do not violate the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes.

#### *Main Effects*

We first examined the main effects of brand experience dimensions and self-concept on attitudinal loyalty. A repeated measures ANCOVA indicated no significant difference between the type of brand experience on attitudinal loyalty ( $F(1.55, 505.48) = 0.26, p = 0.74$ ) (see Table 10). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that brand experience dimensions equally impact attitudinal loyalty. Additionally, our repeated measures ANCOVA shows no significant main effect of aggregate self-concept on attitudinal loyalty ( $F(1, 327) = 0.63, p = 0.80$ ) (see Table 11). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that there is no difference in attitudinal loyalty levels depending on if the brand appeals to either the ideal or actual self-concept. Lastly, a repeated measure ANCOVA determined that the

prestimulus attitudinal loyalty covariate was significant in a between-subjects context ( $F(1, 327) = 7.64, p = 0.007$ ) with an effect size of  $\eta_p^2 = 0.023$  (see Table 11). However, prestimulus attitudinal loyalty was insignificant in a within-subjects context.

### *Interaction Effects*

Our results from our repeated measures ANCOVA indicate that the prestimulus attitudinal loyalty covariate was insignificant when interacting with brand experience  $F(1.55, 505.48) = 0.13, p = 0.83$  (see Table 10). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that prestimulus attitudinal loyalty does not affect how experiential dimensions are interpreted. However, we see a statistically significant interaction between the brand experience dimensions and self-concept ( $F(1.55, 505.48) = 66.81, p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 10). Additionally, the large effect size ( $\eta_p^2 = 0.17$ ) indicates a strong interaction effect, suggesting that the mean scores of the poststimulus attitudinal loyalty measures of the four brand experience dimensions have a clear statistical difference depending on the self-concept. In other words, the effect that brand experience dimensions have on attitudinal loyalty differs depending on if a brand is appealing to its target market's actual or the ideal self-concept.

*Table 10. Test of Within-Subjects Effects*

	<b>df</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b><math>\eta_p^2</math></b>
Dimensions	1.55	0.26	0.74	0.007
Dimensions × Prestimulus Attitudinal Loyalty	1.55	0.13	0.83	0.001
Dimensions × Self-Concept	1.55	66.81	<0.001	0.17
Error (Dimensions)	505.48			

Table 11. Test of Between-Subjects Effects

	df	F	Sig.	$\eta_p^2$
Prestimulus Attitudinal Loyalty	1	7.64	0.007	0.023
Self-Concept	1	0.63	0.80	0.00
Error (Dimensions)	327			

Once we determined that this interaction is significant, we began investigating exactly how these means differed. Normally, this can be done via a pairwise comparison in the repeated measures ANCOVA. However, since our between-subjects effect only consisted of two levels (i.e., actual and ideal self-concept), we could not conduct pairwise comparisons in the repeated measures ANCOVA to determine the nature of the relationship between the groups. Therefore, we conducted an independent sample *t*-test to investigate simple effects and help us determine our hypotheses testing for  $H2_{a-d}$ . We did this only for our interaction effect since the main effects of both brand experience dimensions and self-concept were insignificant. Notably, an independent sample *t*-test and a paired-samples *t*-test are both parametric tests based on the normal distribution. This means that an independent sample *t*-test has the same assumptions as listed in 5.4.1 Hypothesis 1. Thus, our data are appropriate for this analysis technique.

Table 12. Independent sample *t*-test comparing attitudinal loyalty between actual and ideal self-concept

	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference
Actual-Ideal Affective	6.30	286.01	< 0.001	0.64
Actual-Ideal Sensorial	-6.20	328	<0.001	-0.64
Actual-Ideal Behavioral	-6.60	313.64	<0.001	-0.63
Actual-Ideal Cognitive	4.83	328	<0.001	0.49

#### Hypothesis $H2_a$

For affective brand experience, equal variances were not assumed (see Table 9). From a one-tailed independent sample *t*-test, we find that on average, participants assigned to brands that appeal to the actual self-concept expressed higher attitudinal

loyalty after being exposed to an affective brand experience ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ) than those who were assigned brands that appeal to the ideal self-concept ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ). This difference of 0.64, BCa 95% CI (0.44, 0.84) was found to be significant ( $t(286.01) = 6.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 12). Therefore, we find statistically significant evidence to support that, on average, affective brand experiences have a more positive effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to actual self-concept than one that appeals to ideal self-concept when controlling for prestimulus attitudinal loyalty. This is also confirmed by the estimated marginal means (see Figure 2). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that affective brand experience has an equal effect on actual and ideal self-concept brands.

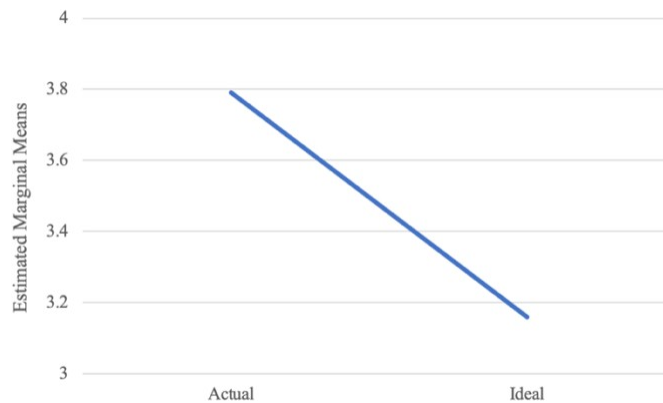


Figure 2. Estimated Marginal Means of Affective Brand Experience

#### *Hypothesis H2<sub>b</sub>*

For behavioral brand experience, equal variances were not assumed (see Table 9). From a one-tailed independent sample  $t$ -test, we find that, on average, participants assigned to brands that appeal to the ideal self-concept expressed higher attitudinal loyalty after being exposed to a behavioral brand experience ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ) than those who were assigned brands that appeal to the actual self-concept ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ). This difference of  $-0.63$ , BCa 95% CI ( $-0.82$ ,  $-0.44$ ) was found to be significant ( $t(313.64) = -6.60$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 12). Therefore, we find statistically significant evidence to support that, on average, behavioral brand experiences have a more positive effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to ideal self-concept than one that appeals to actual self-concept when controlling for prestimulus attitudinal loyalty. This is also confirmed by the estimated marginal means (see Figure 3). Therefore, we reject

the null hypothesis that behavioral brand experience has an equal effect on actual and ideal self-concept brands.

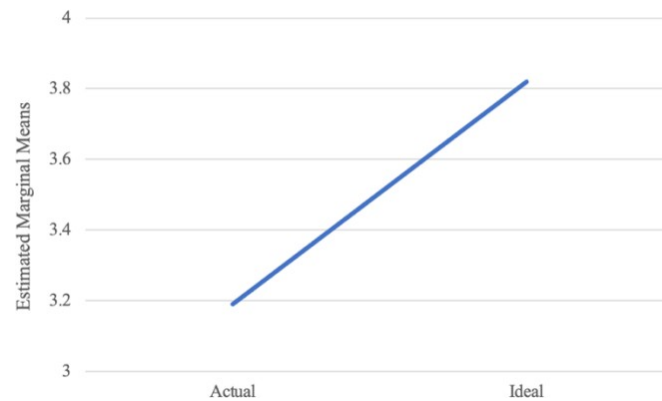


Figure 3. Estimated Marginal Means of Behavioral Brand Experience

#### *Hypothesis H2<sub>c</sub>*

For cognitive brand experience, equal variances were assumed (see Table 9). From a one-tailed independent sample *t*-test, we find that, on average, participants assigned to brands that appeal to the actual self-concept expressed higher attitudinal loyalty after being exposed to a cognitive brand experience ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ) than those who were assigned brands that appeal to the ideal self-concept ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ). This difference of 0.49, BCa 95% CI (0.29, 0.67) was found to be significant ( $t(328) = 4.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 12). Therefore, we find statistically significant evidence to support that, on average, cognitive brand experiences have a more positive effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to actual self-concept than one that appeals to ideal self-concept when controlling for prestimulus attitudinal loyalty. This is also confirmed by the estimated marginal means (see Figure 4). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that cognitive brand experience has an equal effect on actual and ideal self-concept brands.

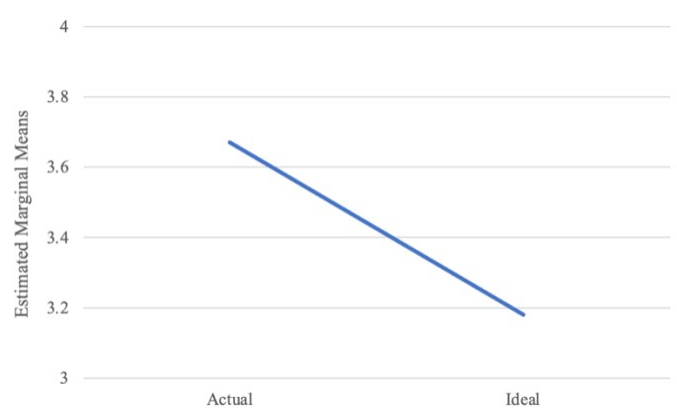


Figure 4. Estimated Marginal Means of Cognitive Brand Experience

*Hypothesis H2<sub>d</sub>*

For sensory brand experience, equal variances were assumed (see Table 9). From a one-tailed independent sample *t*-test, we find that, on average, participants assigned to brands that appeal to the ideal self-concept expressed higher attitudinal loyalty after being exposed to a sensorial brand experience ( $M = 3.69, SE = 0.07$ ) than those who were assigned brands that appeal to the actual self-concept ( $M = 3.05, SE = 0.08$ ). This difference of  $-0.64$ , BCa 95% CI ( $-0.85, -0.44$ ) was found to be significant ( $t(328) = -6.20, p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 12). Therefore, we find statistically significant evidence to support that, on average, sensorial brand experiences have a more positive effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to ideal self-concept than one that appeals to actual self-concept when controlling for prestimulus attitudinal loyalty. This is also confirmed by the estimated marginal means (see Figure 5). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that sensorial brand experience has an equal effect on actual and ideal self-concept brands. A comparison of all marginal means can be found in Appendix 15.

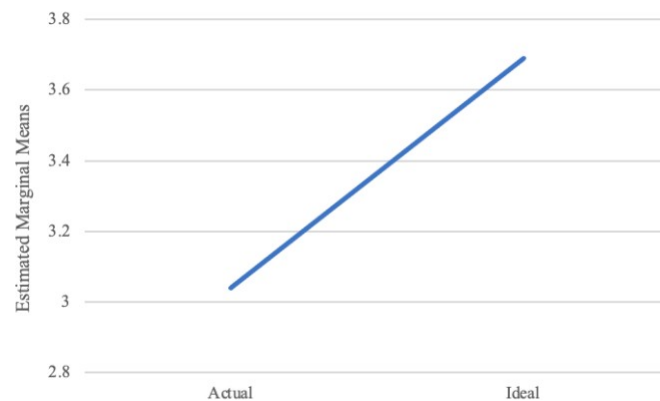


Figure 5. Estimated Marginal Means of Sensory Brand Experience

### 5.4.3 Summary of Hypothesis testing

Based on our analyses, all five of our hypotheses are supported (see Table 13).

Table 13. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

	Hypotheses	Results
H1	A positive brand experience has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty.	Supported
H2 <sub>a</sub>	Affective brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to actual self-concept than one that appeals to ideal self-concept.	Supported
H2 <sub>b</sub>	Behavioral brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to ideal self-concept than one that appeals to actual self-concept.	Supported
H2 <sub>c</sub>	Cognitive brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to actual self-concept than one that appeals to ideal self-concept.	Supported
H2 <sub>d</sub>	Sensory brand experiences have a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty when embedded in a brand that appeals to ideal self-concept than one that appeals to actual self-concept.	Supported

## 5.5 Additional Findings

While analyzing our data to either support or reject our hypotheses, we discovered three relevant additional findings on the current research topic. The first finding we found interesting pertains to participants' gender in relation to attitudinal loyalty. After running a one-way ANOVA on gender, we found that there is a significant effect of gender on our poststimulus attitudinal loyalty variable ( $F(3,326) = 3.08, p = 0.03, \omega = 0.14$ ). A Bonferroni *post hoc* test revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females ( $p = 0.02$ ), with males exhibiting higher loyalty when being exposed to the same brand experience

stimuli. Therefore, we found statistically significant differences in poststimulus attitudinal loyalty levels among different genders after exposure to brand experiences.

Another interesting finding was that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean of prestimulus attitudinal loyalty and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty between the different genders ( $F(17.312) = 1.71, p = 0.04$ ). This is counterintuitive to previous research that suggests female consumers tend to be more loyal than their male counterparts (Melnyk et al., 2009). However, previous research finds that brand gender and the congruence therefore play an important role in driving loyalty. Applying this logic to the current research, if the brands selected for the main study are perceived to hold more masculine gender identities, then perhaps it is easier for men to form loyalties to these brands than women (de Carvalho et al., 2020). Therefore, additional research may investigate whether or the attitudinal loyalty scores of males and females are affected to a different extent when exposed to the same brand experiences but with different brand genders.

As mentioned, our main effects between-subjects results were insignificant, meaning that participants are not more loyal to brands that appeal to one self-concept over another. However, we did find that the mean difference between prestimulus and poststimulus attitudinal loyalty of brands targeting the ideal self-concept (0.19) was not as high as the difference for brands that target the actual self-concept (0.25). This might indicate that brands targeting ideal self-concept are not as malleable for changes in attitudinal loyalty as brands targeting actual self-concept. However, as with the remaining of our additional findings, future research would have to follow up on this to confirm its reliability and validity.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusions

Research on brand experience has flourished since Pine and Gilmore (1998) introduced the role that experiential marketing plays in the marketplace over two decades ago. However, despite extensive literature on brand experience's role in marketing, previous research has yet to address the concept in the context of self-concept. As stated in section 1.3 *Research Question*, this thesis was designed to uncover which brand experience dimension(s) are most effective in achieving attitudinal loyalty depending on whether they were presented in either an ideal or



actual self-concept context. By drawing on branding, self-concept, and loyalty literature, we constructed a conceptual framework and three quantitative studies aimed at empirically answering this question. The results from our empirical analysis contribute to previous literature by providing insight into the context-specific nature of the relationship between brand experience and attitudinal loyalty. More specifically, our research advances the understanding of self-concept's role in facilitating this relationship by highlighting the sense of self's ability to influence derived brand meanings. The following section will provide a qualitative discussion of our findings in further detail, followed by key results and conclusions.

## **6.1 Discussion of Results**

### *6.1.1 Brand Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty*

The foundation of our research lies in the relationship between brand experience and attitudinal loyalty. By comparing consumers' loyalty prior to and after being exposed to a brand experience, we found evidence to support that brand experience positively affects attitudinal loyalty. Finding support for *H1* reinforces existing literature's emphasis on leveraging brand experiences as a means of instilling favorable consumer outcomes, namely loyalty. This could be partly due to the consumer's desire to repeatedly seek out favorable and positive experiences. Due to familiarity and predictability, consumers will likely gravitate towards the same brand rather than the same experience type in the future (i.e., loyalty).

### *6.1.2 Nonsignificant Main Effects*

There was no statistically different impact on poststimulus attitudinal loyalty between experience types. The nonsignificant main effect of brand experience dimensions is in line with most of the previous literature's second-order factor model approach to brand experience (Nysveen et al., 2012). It is important to note that this finding contradicts prior literature, which found statistically significant heterogeneity of experiential preferences (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2010; Nysveen et al., 2012). One plausible explanation is that the heterogeneity found in previous studies may arise from varying preferences in terms of valence, intensity, or other contextual factors rather than from the differences in the dimensions themselves.

The lack of preference heterogeneity that our results reveal may be due to the confounding influence that brand experience dimensions have on each other. For example, even though a single experience can primarily evoke an internal cognitive

response from consumers, it may also simultaneously evoke an affective, sensorial, or behavioral response (Brakus et al., 2009). This indissociable impact that the dimensions have on one another can make it challenging to look at the relative effect of each dimension in isolation. Furthermore, it may also be the case that, on average, there is true equality in experiential impact on attitudinal loyalty, meaning that not one type of brand experience is superior to another. Regardless of the origin behind the nonsignificant result, this finding highlights the importance of simultaneously investing in all brand experience dimensions.

Another noteworthy finding is related to the insignificant main effect of self-concept. Although attitudinal loyalty scores were slightly higher on average for brands appealing to the ideal self-concept, this difference was insignificant. Thus, brand experience as a second-order factor model is equally impactful across aspirational and more “authentic” marketing strategies. This implies that brands can use brand experiences to instill loyalty regardless of which self-concept their marketing strategy aims to appeal to. This further suggests that the gratification that arises from self-congruity is equally satisfying when fulfilling either self-verification or self-enhancement efforts. In conclusion, our results suggest that attitudinal loyalty remains equal across brand experience dimensions and across brands appealing to different self-concepts.

### *6.1.3 A Significant Cross-Over Interaction*

Our results show support for a cross-over interaction, which implies that although attitudinal loyalty does not differ by dimension nor self-concept, there is a meaningful effect when the two are combined. This cross-over interaction is of particular interest, as the purpose of this thesis was to study each dimension in relation to self-concept. Therefore, we conclude that dimensions of brand experience vary in terms of attitudinal loyalty contribution across contexts.

As outlined in the literature review, namely section 2.2.4 *Brand Experience and the Self-concept*, consumers will seek out experiences that fulfill either self-verification or self-enhancement to maintain a coherent view of self. Based on cross-over interaction effects, we can conclude that different types of brand experiences do in fact satisfy different self-concept motivations. When exploring the reasoning behind this finding, it is important to keep in mind that consumers’ self-concepts encode information in terms of self-relevance. This self-relevant coding often

results in selective perceptions that are self-serving in nature and act as a subjective lens through which consumers interpret information. In the context of this research, it is clear that self-concept's encoding functions play an integral role in shaping how consumers form subjective, internal responses to varying experience-evoking stimuli. The self-serving lens is innate to us as individuals, thus making it difficult to separate self-concept's influence on how we experience different brand-related stimuli.

The near inability to separate self-concept from internal, subjective responses may explain why there is statistical significance in the dyadic relationship between brand experience dimensionality and the self. This meaningful interaction is in line with the social constructionist approach to brand experience, which states that the interpretation of brand meaning resulting from an experience is heavily influenced by factors exogenous to the firm (e.g., self-views, cultural nuances, etc.) (Zha et al., 2020). From our results, we see that this influence is of particular relevance when analyzed at a dimension level rather than that of a second-order factor model. In conclusion, our significant cross-over interaction emphasizes the importance of brand experience's contextual complexity, urging researchers to analyze brand experience in light of exogenous firm factors to capture its epistemological plurality. It urges practitioners to consider the relative influence of self-concept when designing experience-evoking stimuli.

#### *6.1.4 Brand Experience in Different Contexts*

This research finds that brands that appeal to the actual self-concept benefit more from affective and cognitive experiences. Therefore, we find statistical support for  $H2_a$  and  $H2_d$ . Regarding affective experiences, our finding is in accordance with previous literature, which highlights the relative importance of emotions in “realistic,” or “authentic” branding efforts, specifically those that aim to aligning with consumers' actual self-concept. Given that the psychological state of feeling an emotion is one of the most subjective and intimate phenomena in an individual's life, it is unsurprising that genuineness of the emotional cue is of the utmost importance. The ongoing challenges that luxury brands, which notoriously appeal to the ideal self-concept, have in creating or enhancing brand authenticity due to the professional, impersonal, and exclusive nature of their marketing efforts further supports this rationale (Heine, et al., 2016; Morhart & Malär, 2020). As consumers may perceive ideal self-concept brands' emotional narrative as inauthentic, it is less

likely that they will establish a loyalty-inducing emotional connection with these brands via emotional appeals.

When interpreting our results, it is important to note that the mean difference in between-subject attitudinal loyalty and effect size, were the lowest for cognitive experiences (see *Appendix 16*). In other words, cognitive experiences were almost equally effective across different contexts (i.e., aspirational or authentic). As mentioned in section 2.4.5 *Cognitive Experiences*, a consumer's propensity to enjoy engaging with cognitive-inducing stimuli depends on their NC level. Given that high NC individuals have higher self-esteem, they enjoy cognitive stimuli for their self-verification capabilities across all contexts. However, those low in NC have lower self-esteem, on average, and may interpret cognitive stimuli differently depending on context. For example, it is possible that when presented in an ideal self-concept context, cognitive stimuli are perceived as intimidating and innately more negative for those with low NC levels. On the contrary, those with low NC may interpret the stimulus as irrelevant or uninteresting, rather than intimidating, when presented in an actual self-concept context. Therefore, the marginal difference in effectiveness may be explained by the interpretation of cognitive stimuli by low NC individuals since those high in NC enjoy cognition regardless of context.

Our results also indicate that brands that appeal to the ideal self-concept benefit more from sensorial and behavioral experiences. Therefore, we find statistical support for  $H2_b$  and  $H2_d$ . Potential explanations for these findings may lie in the inverse relationship between self-enhancement efforts and self-esteem. From a behavioral standpoint, engaging in autonomous self-regulating behavior (e.g., building an outfit, planning to attend an event) helps consumers with low levels of self-esteem by bringing them closer to their idealized lifestyle. From a sensorial standpoint, engaging consumers' senses may temporarily distract them from low self-esteem levels. Therefore, when a brand provides a consumer with the opportunity to pursue self-regulating behavior or engage their senses, they are allowing them to feel closer to an ideal version of themselves. This feeling is more effective in instilling attitudinal loyalty for ideal self-concept brands since consumers typically seek these brands out for self-enhancing purposes. However, if the brand experience is so impactful that it widens the gap between their own reality and an idealistic version of it beyond comfort, the consumer may experience

negative sentiment. Although it seems that our stimuli were not strong enough to bring on these negative sentiments, previous research suggests that “too much of a good thing” in the realm of sensory or behavioral experience may distort brand meaning (Richins, 1991). Thus, there may be an inverted-u shaped relationship between these experience types and favorable consumer behavior.

#### *6.1.5 The Role of Prestimulus Attitudinal Loyalty*

From our results, we see that prestimulus attitudinal loyalty was insignificant within-subjects, yet significant between-subjects. Regarding the between-subjects results, we conclude that prestimulus attitudinal loyalty significantly adjusts poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scores when comparing means between those exposed to either an ideal or actual self-concept brand. This finding suggests that participants’ pre-existing loyalty to either an ideal or actual self-concept brand will influence their loyalty resulting from experience-evoking stimuli.

Regarding the within-subjects results, prestimulus attitudinal loyalty does not adjust poststimulus attitudinal loyalty scores when comparing means between the different dimensions. This implies that participants’ pre-existing attitudinal loyalty does not impact how they experience the individual dimensions themselves. In other words, their degree of prestimulus attitudinal loyalty suggests that they prefer a particular dimension over another.

## **6.2 Key Results and Conclusions**

The key results and conclusions from this thesis have been summarized below:

- Positive brand experience has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty
- Attitudinal loyalty remains equal across brand experience dimensions
- Attitudinal loyalty remains equal across brands appealing to different self-concept
- Brands that are considered to appeal to the actual self-concept benefit more from affective and cognitive experiences
- Brands that are considered to appeal to the ideal self-concept benefit more from sensorial and behavioral experiences

## 7. Recommendations and Future Research

### 7.1 *Managerial implications*

#### 7.1.1 *Strategic recommendations*

The core of this study explores the relationship between brand experience and attitudinal loyalty. The relationship between attitudinal loyalty, rather than overall loyalty, and brand experience is relevant since experiences are not confined to the purchase journey. Rather, consumers may have brand experiences even though they have never purchased or may never intend to purchase the product. However, regardless of purchase intention, these experiences are highly likely to occur and can lead to attitudinal loyalty behaviors such as word of mouth and brand commitment, making it a strategic opportunity to positively influence and improve overall brand health. Additionally, understanding how to influence attitudinal loyalty for aspirational, ideal self-concept brands is of particular interest since many consumers may not be able to afford these products regularly.

Another strategic implication of this study is that managers need to consider the dimensionality of brand experiences rather than assuming that more internal responses evoked from consumers, the better. However, the nuance of dimensionality does not equate to brands hyperfocusing on one or two particular dimensions while neglecting the remaining experience types. In fact, an important takeaway from our strategic recommendation is that brands should not neglect any dimension of brand experience. The reasoning is twofold. On the one hand, the dimensions are highly interrelated, making it nearly impossible to evoke a certain dimension in isolation. On the other hand, consumers are active participants in deriving brand meaning, making it possible for brands to merely influence, rather than control, the brand experiences of consumers. Therefore, brand managers should simultaneously invest in all dimensions while prioritizing those most relevant for either their aspirational or “authentic” marketing strategy. This degree of selectivity will help ensure that brand experiences reflect the organization’s overall marketing strategy to better target their target segment and improve their resource allocation.

#### 7.1.2 *Tactical recommendations*

Our strategic recommendations can be further broken down into shorter-term tactical initiatives. Given that brand experiences manifest in the form of design,

packaging, communications, and environments, tactical initiatives should be implemented directly addressing these areas. The current research suggests that ideal-self brands should invest in integrating sensorial and behavior-evoking elements while actual-self brands should focus on emotional and cognitive elements.

From an environment perspective, an ideal-self brand, such as Hermès, may want to focus more on incorporating materials, scents, lighting, and colors that indulge consumers' senses. Hermès may also consider how it can systematically encourage consumers to use a product in-store prior to their purchase in a bid to inspire action, as engaging in physical activity with a product can help materialize the consumers' idealized life. That is not to say that an actual-self brand, such as Zara, should completely disregard the importance of evoking consumers' senses or inspiring action in their stores, as they have little control over how consumers choose to experience a given stimulus. However, Zara may find that its resources are better invested in designing asymmetrical packaging that sparks curiosity or nostalgic packaging that evokes an emotional response. These tactical environmental and packaging considerations can verify who consumers really are or bring them closer to an ideal version of themselves.

In terms of communication, brands such as Hyundai or SAS, may want to showcase the excitement and joy of passengers rather than the roaring of the engine in their next marketing campaign. However, the inverse would hold true for a brand such as Porsche or Emirates. Instead, these brands could benefit from adopting a tone-of-voice that inspires adventure, as this may cultivate behavioral brand experiences via action-oriented communication. Additionally, they should consider using specific verbiage or incorporating heightened colors and/or sounds into commercials and print ads.

## ***7.2 Theoretical implications***

This paper has several theoretical implications for future brand experience research. First and foremost, it provides further empirical support for externalizing the relationship between brand experience and other brand variables, namely that of loyalty. In addition to providing further validation of this link, our findings go a step further by analyzing loyalty at an attitudinal level. This is a notable contribution as other studies on this topic have analyzed loyalty holistically, even

though brand experience does not require a motivational state. The importance of analyzing attitudinal loyalty specifically can be seen in previous research, which has examined the unique role it plays in relation to other constructs such as brand trust, brand performance, market types, and the service domain (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001; Rundle-Thiele & Bennett 2001). Additionally, our research contributes to self-concept literature, which to date has predominately been analyzed solely in relation to brand personality, attachment, and loyalty. Our findings enrich these research areas by incorporating brand experience.

Another contribution pertains to the importance of dimensionality as we saw that the small nuances between dimensions can substantially impact findings, particularly when they are in the context of exogenous firm factors. While previous research has examined brand experience primarily as a second-order factor model, this thesis suggests that brand experience should be analyzed at a dimension level. By addressing brand experience's multidimensionality, we avoid defining and adopting the concept too narrowly in future research.

By incorporating consumers' sense of self into brand experience research, our findings also contribute to the renewed interest in brand experience literature, coined the *brand experience renaissance* by Andreini et al. (2019). This renewed take on brand experience calls for a reconceptualization from an experiential-centric to brand-centric metatheoretical infrastructure (Zha et al., 2020). This shift originates from the idea that "*companies are no longer solely responsible for the creation of brand meanings and experiences*" (Andreini et al., 2019). By incorporating consumers' self-concepts, our thesis acknowledges that there are external factors that influence how a consumer experiences a brand. Thus, our research contributes to the theoretical narrative that consumers are not merely passive recipients of brand experiences but rather engage in cocreation – a cocreation that is shaped by their self-concepts. This conceptual shift from receiver to cocreator is critical for brand experience literature moving forward as it captures the dynamic and multi-perspective approach of brand experience as a phenomenon.

### **7.3 Limitations**

Although this thesis has revealed some new findings regarding the relationship between brand experience and self-concept, several caveats must be noted. First and foremost, because this thesis was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, a



significant number of limitations resulted from the restrictions for the entire duration of this research. Additionally, the generalizability of our findings may be limited by the specifics of our stimuli, brand selection, online distribution method, and operationalization.

Since we collected our data via online surveys, survey length was a key consideration given the high drop-off rates of online surveys. For example, in the first pretest, we used a limited number of brands to limit survey length. However, including more brands in the first pretest could have helped us identify brands that more clearly represent either actual or ideal self-concept. Even though we included globally recognized brands from major industries, as well as fast-moving consumer goods and durables, we cannot conclude with certainty that our findings apply to all brands, industries, and cultures. In our second pretest, we only tested two stimuli per brand experience dimension to limit survey length. Even though we consider this to be sufficient for our online survey, we believe that a broader laboratory experiment examining several brand-related stimuli of each brand experience dimension would be more accurate in identifying the most effective stimuli.

A laboratory experiment would have also provided more precise results regarding the effect of each of the four brand experience dimensions. For instance, when participants encountered the sensorial brand experience, the stimulus might have been more effective and possibly increased reliability if the stimulus incorporated additional senses such as smell and/or touch. The same holds for behavioral brand experiences since creating an environment that prompts physical behavior is challenging in an online setting.

Another limitation of online surveys is that some participants tend to dismiss the instruction page before completing the survey. The instruction page was especially crucial for the first pretest as it provided participants with accurate instructions and aimed to engage them in the reflections necessary to complete the survey.

Due to resource and time constraints, we used a convenience sample, which has several potential sources of biases, including respondent self-selection. Additionally, even though we collected age and gender that verified that our sample represents the general population, convenience samples are not accurately

representative of any definable population (Malhotra, 2010). Therefore, the findings should be extrapolated with care.

Finally, a notable limitation of our research lies in its overdependence on Brakus et al. (2009). Since its conceptualization over a decade ago, there has been little theoretical introspective advancement of the concept. In other words, there has been significant research on brand experience and its relation to other concepts, but little research furthering the current conceptual understanding of brand experience as a concept. This absence of diversity has made brand experience literature and its operationalization reliant on a single source of conceptual input, a weakness pointed out by both Andreini, Pedeliento, and Zarantonello (2019) and Zha et al. (2020).

#### ***7.4 Directions for Future Research***

Even though the results of this study provide support for our hypothesized relationships, and there is a solid theoretical framework, further research is needed to confirm our findings. The investigation into our hypothesized relationships is new, and future research is needed to confirm and enrich its findings. These findings, as well as the research's limitations, denote several possible extensions.

Due to the limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, future research should continue investigating the impact of brand experience dimensions via laboratory experiments. This would discard several limitations and provide robustness and validity to the current study. We also believe that it would be of great value to current and future research if the second pretest was investigated separately as a research thesis on its own. More specifically, if each stimulus could be evaluated against the full 12-item scale by Brakus et al., 2009. This could capture any potential confounds between dimensions and their respective stimuli. It would also allow for a deeper and broader investigation of the relationship between stimuli characteristics evoked by brand experiences. This clarification would add to the realism and accuracy of the current study, thus strengthening its findings.

As mentioned in section 2.4 *Moderating Effects*, certain types of brand experiences have shown to be negative in a service context. Therefore, the innate positivity that our hypotheses depend on might hold in all contexts. As such, future research should investigate this conceptual framework presented in the context of services and/or business-to-businesses (B2B) research. Applying a similar multifaceted

framework to a service or B2B context would enhance our understanding of brand experience and how its nuances may change in different settings. Additionally, the current research was limited to a few major industries, brands, and the Norwegian and US populations. Moving forward, it would be interesting to see if our findings vary by industry, product category, or culture.

Considering that some brand experiences are sought out by consumers while others are not, it would be interesting to see if there is a difference in impact between voluntary versus involuntary experiences, and how this difference may shape resource allocation. Lastly, our additional findings identified several avenues for future research regarding gender's effect on attitudinal loyalty and the malleability of loyalty in association to brands that appeal to the actual or ideal self-concept.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1. Questionnaire*

We chose to use screenshots of our questionnaire rather than a table to better visualize the survey flow and stimuli exposure. We opted for this due to the media-heavy nature of our study. The following shows an example for those randomly assigned to the ideal self-concept group and who selected the brand Porsche. Identical procedures and similar brand stimuli were presented for all brands across both ideal and actual self-concept groups.



Please pick the brand you are most familiar with.

Porsche

Hermès

Emirates





During the next part of the survey, you will be presented with a series of advertisements and activities for your chosen brand. You will then be asked a series of questions following each advertisement or activity.





**PORSCHE**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.





	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I say positive things about this brand to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would not recommend this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am committed to this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would not buy another brand if this one is present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not willing to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





Please watch the following Porsche advertisement.



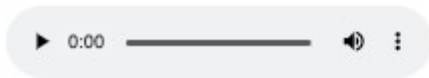


Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This advertisement increases my willingness to say positive things about this brand to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement decreases my willingness to recommend this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement increases my commitment to this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement reduces my willingness to buy another brand if this one is present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement increases my willingness to buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement decreases my willingness to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Now please listen to the following sound for Porsche.





Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This sound increases my willingness to say positive things about this brand to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sound decreases my willingness to recommend this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sound increases my commitment to this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sound reduces my willingness to buy another brand if this one is present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sound increases my willingness to buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sound decreases my willingness to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



In 2018, Porsche launched the campaign "Sportscar Together" to celebrate their 70 year anniversary. The purpose of the campaign was to celebrate sports car fascination, unifying sports car enthusiasts around the world to share experiences and memories.

Whether you owned a sports car or not, the campaign urged people to share their excitement with other sports car enthusiasts and experience sports car fascination – together.



Which three people would you like to share a great Porsche moment with? (Multiple selections possible)

- Items
- Mom
- Dad
- Sister
- Brother
- Wife
- Husband
- Girlfriend
- Boyfriend
- Best friend(s)

Drag the people you would wish to share a Porsche moment with, in this box.





Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This campaign increases my willingness to say positive things about this brand to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This campaign decreases my willingness to recommend this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This campaign increases my commitment to this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This campaign reduces my willingness to buy another brand if this one is present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This campaign increases my willingness to buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This campaign decreases my willingness to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





Please look at the advertisement below and answer the following question.



1

2

3

4





Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This advertisement increases my willingness to say positive things about this brand to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement decreases my willingness to recommend this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement increases my commitment to this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement reduces my willingness to buy another brand if this one is present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement increases my willingness to buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement decreases my willingness to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



### Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

### Age

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 or older





Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We truly value the information you have provided.

Your responses are confidential as we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address.

Once again, if you have any questions about the research study, please contact Katerina Lørum Stamatiou at [katlorstam@gmail.com](mailto:katlorstam@gmail.com) or Meagan Leber at [meagan312749@gmail.com](mailto:meagan312749@gmail.com)

We wish you a pleasant day!

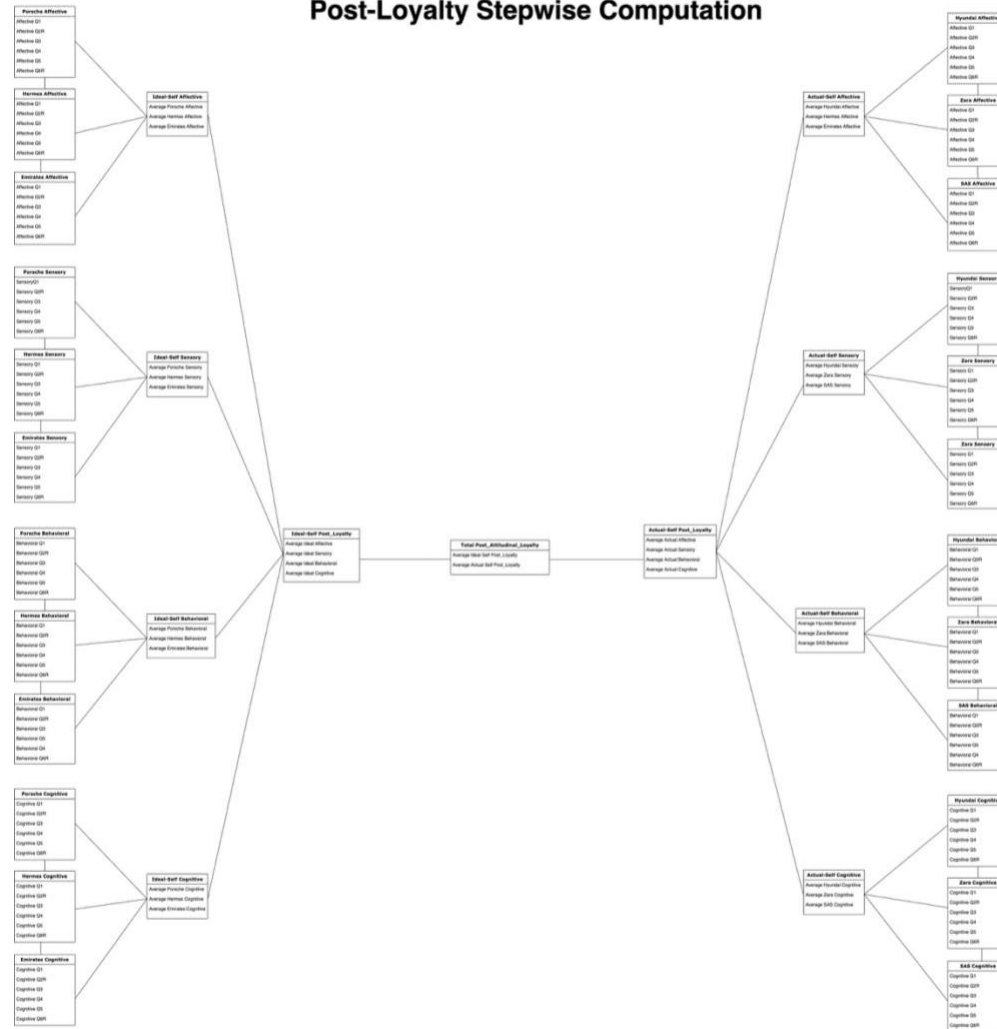




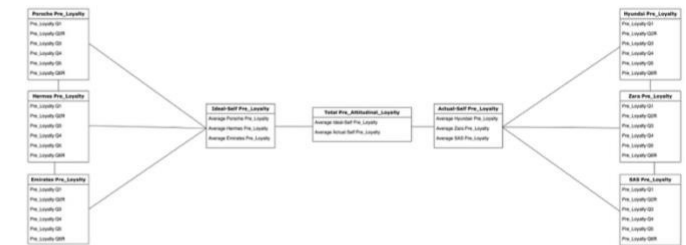
## Appendix 2. Overview over Data cleaning and Analysis

Appendix 2 is also included as an attachment.

### Post-Loyalty Stepwise Computation



### Pre-Loyalty Stepwise Computation





**Appendix 3. Respondent Characteristics Descriptive Statistics**

**Age**

	N	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-24	67	20.3	20.3
25-24	113	34.2	54.4
35-44	63	19.1	73.6
45-54	36	10.9	84.5
55-64	34	10.3	94.8
>65	17	5.2	100.0

**Gender**

	N	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	131	39.7	39.7
Female	188	57.0	96.7
Non-Binary	6	1.80	98.5
Prefer Not to Say	5	1.50	100.0



***Appendix 4. Poststimulus Attitudinal Loyalty Scale Item Descriptive Statistics***

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1	330	3.44	0.78
Q2R		3.67	0.60
Q3		3.26	0.82
Q4		3.31	0.76
Q5		3.39	0.75
Q6R		3.77	0.83

**Poststimulus Attitudinal Loyalty Scale Items**

Q1: This stimulus increases my willingness to say positive things about this brand to other people.

Q2R: This stimulus decreases willingness to recommend this brand

Q3: This stimulus increases my commitment to this brand

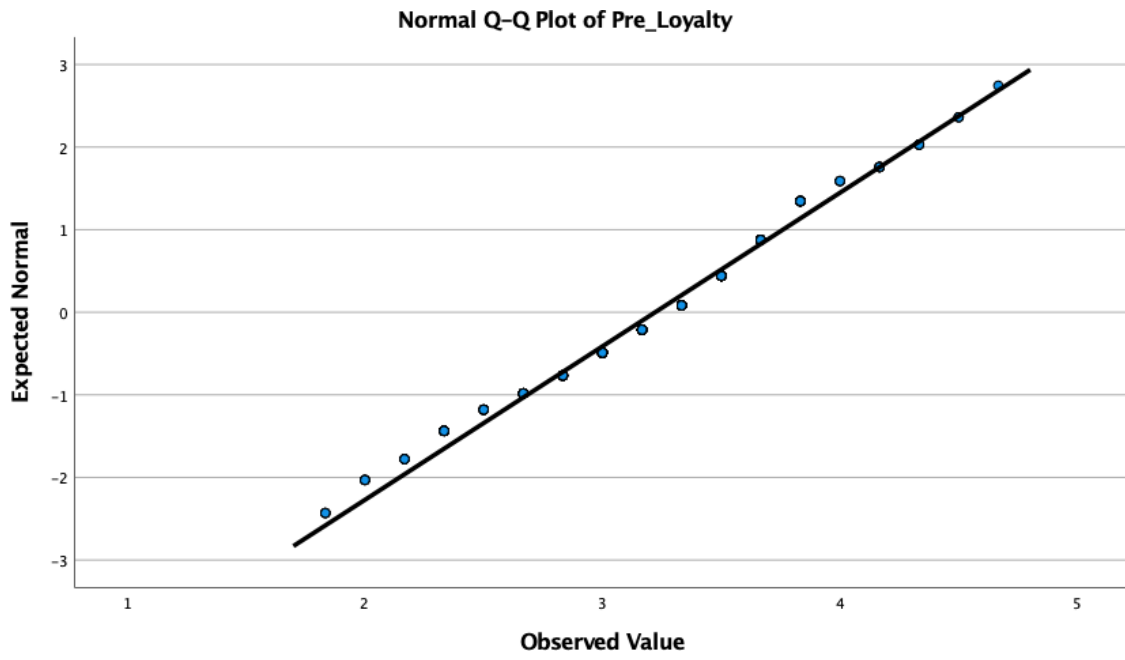
Q4: This stimulus reduces my willingness to buy another brand if this one is present

Q5: This stimulus increases my willingness to buy this brand

Q6: This stimulus decreases my willingness to pay a higher price for this brand over other brands



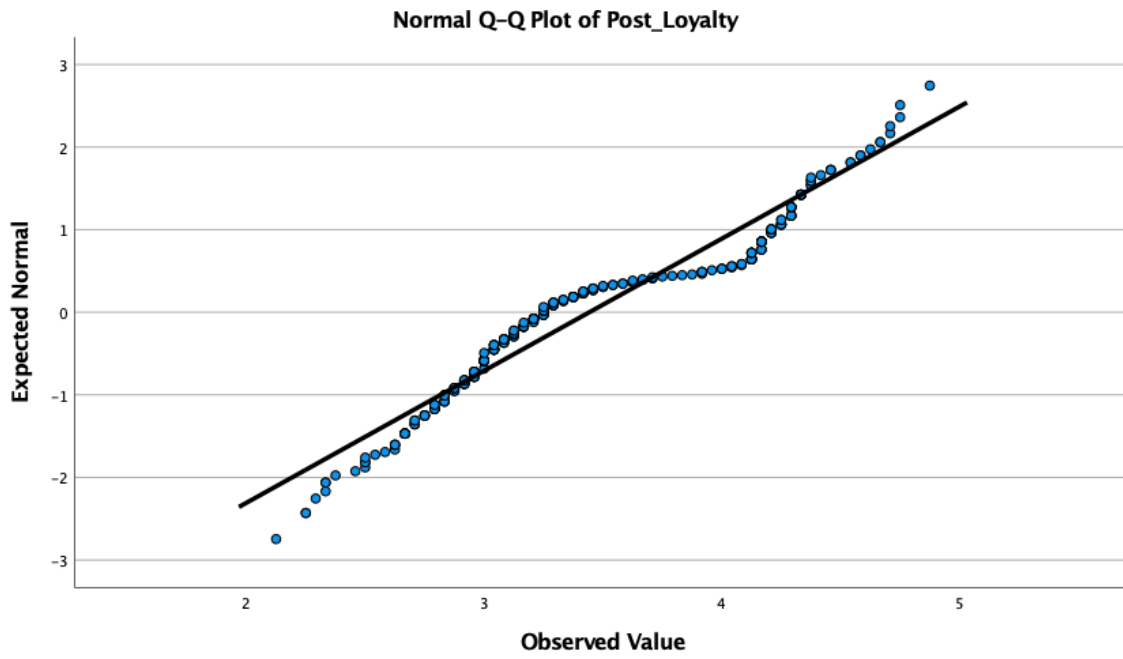
*Appendix 5. Normal Q-Q Plot, Prestimulus Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)*





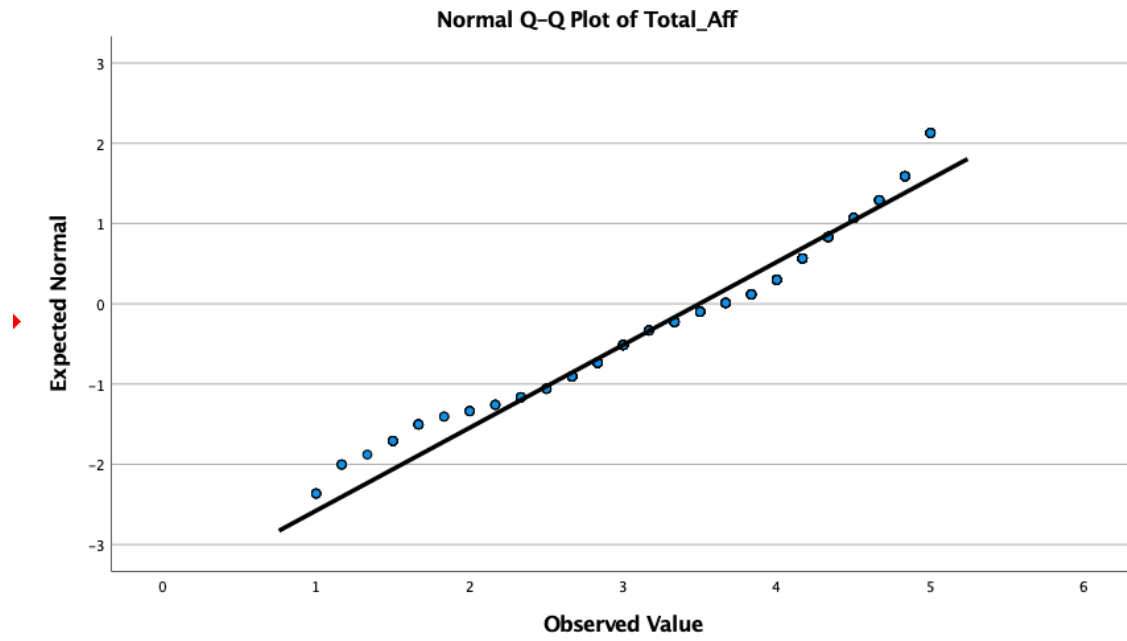


**Appendix 6. Normal Q-Q Plot, Poststimulus Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)**



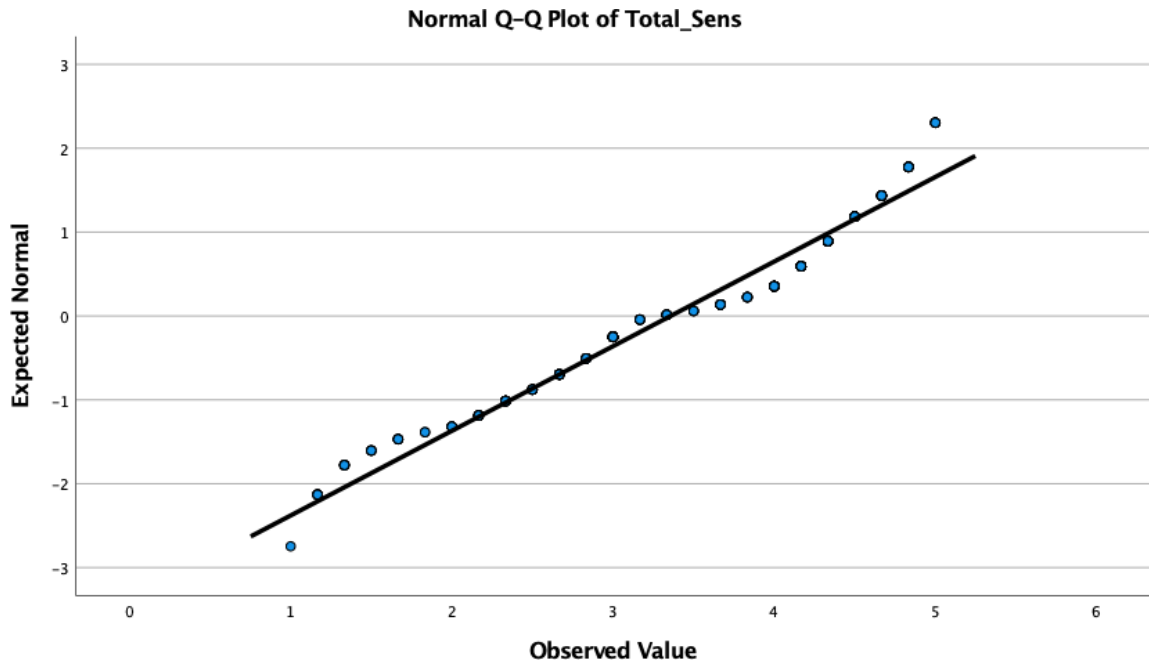


**Appendix 7. Normal Q-Q Plot, Poststimulus Affective Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)**



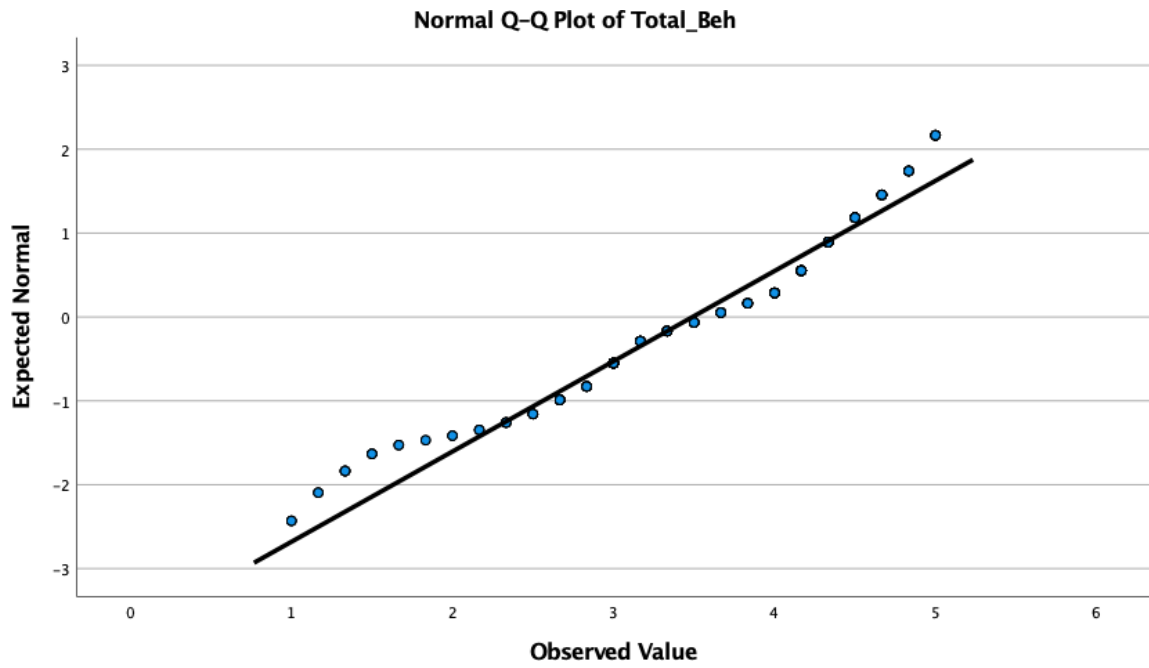


**Appendix 8. Normal Q-Q Plot, Poststimulus Sensorial Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)**



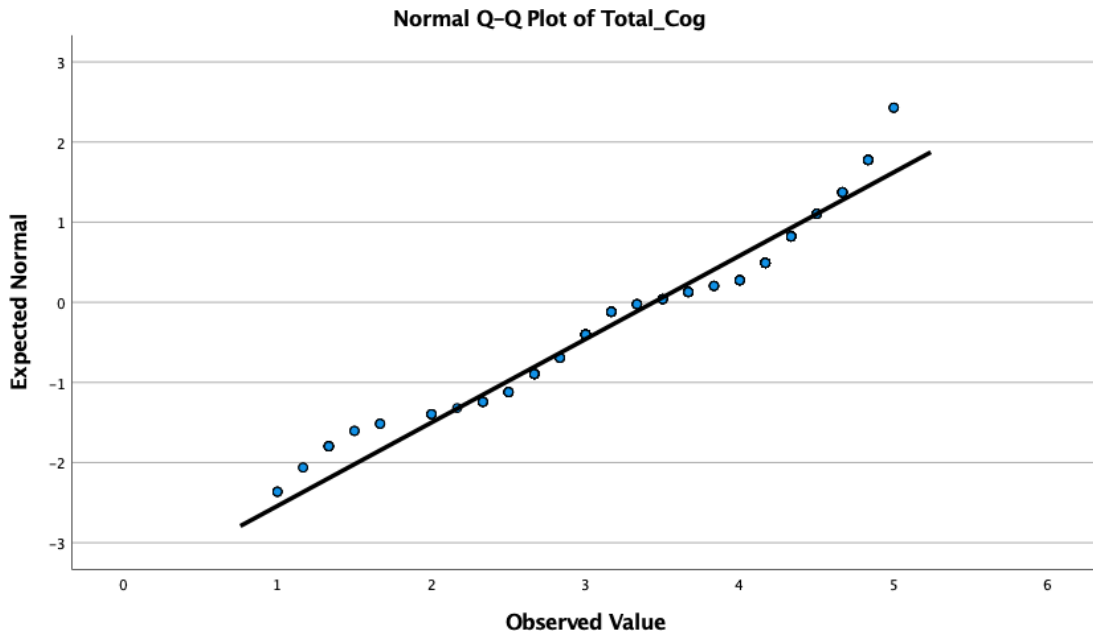


**Appendix 9. Normal Q-Q Plot, Poststimulus Behavioral Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)**



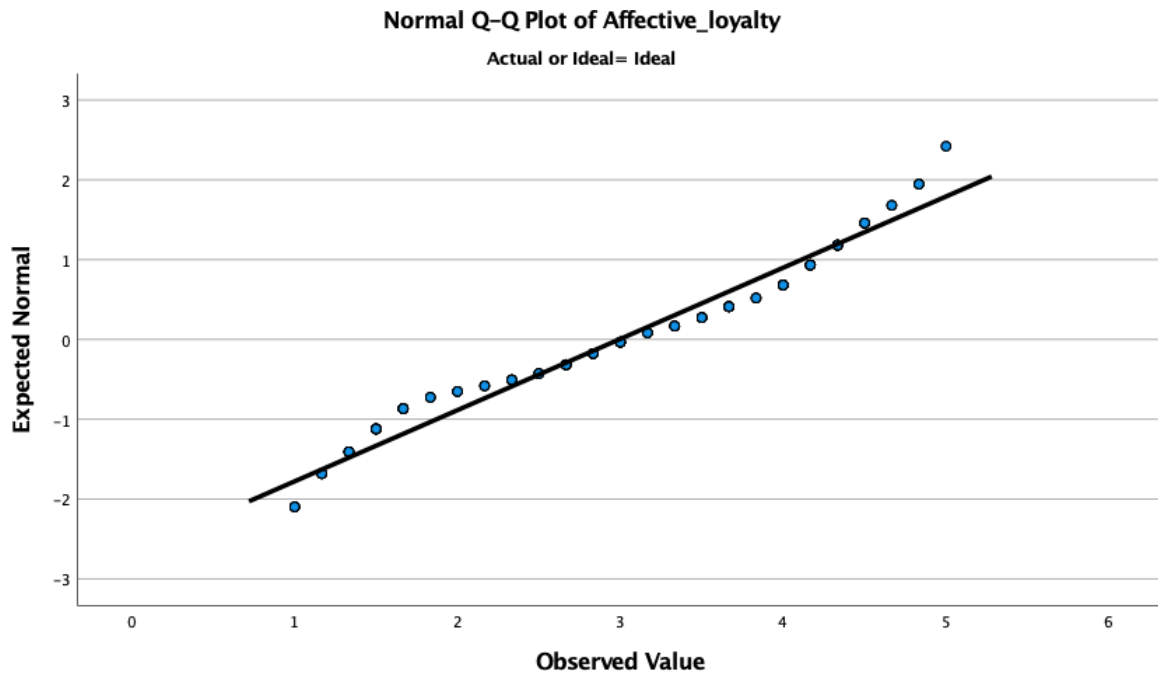


**Appendix 10. Normal Q-Q Plot, Poststimulus Cognitive Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)**



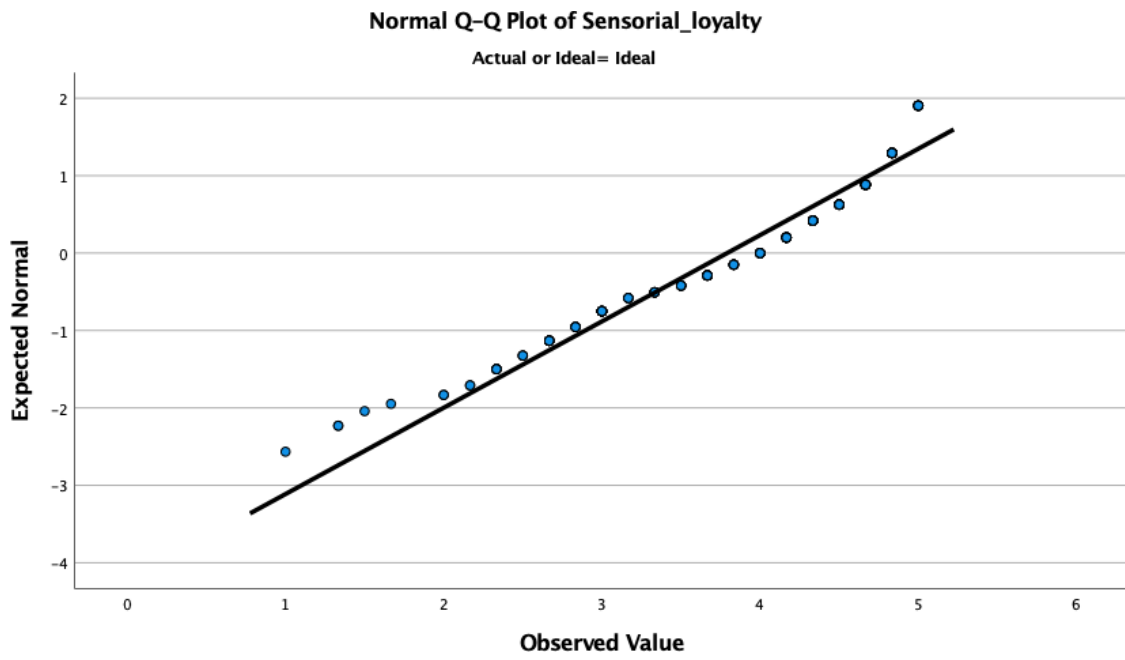


**Appendix 11. Normal Q-Q Plot, Total Affective Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)**



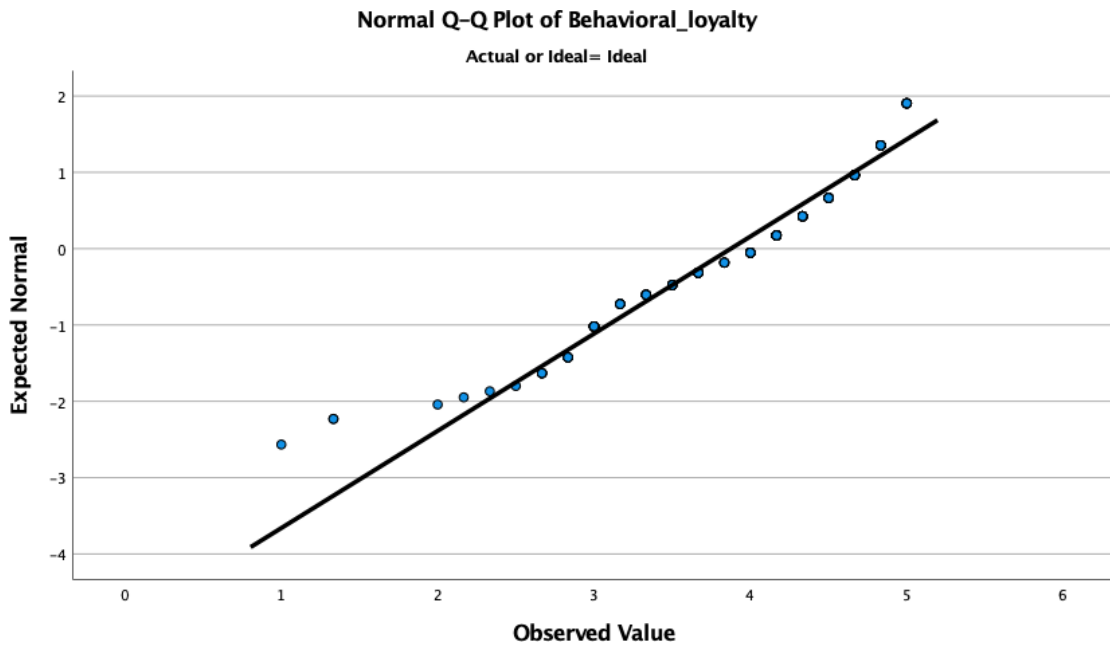


**Appendix 12. Normal Q-Q Plot, Total Sensorial Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)**





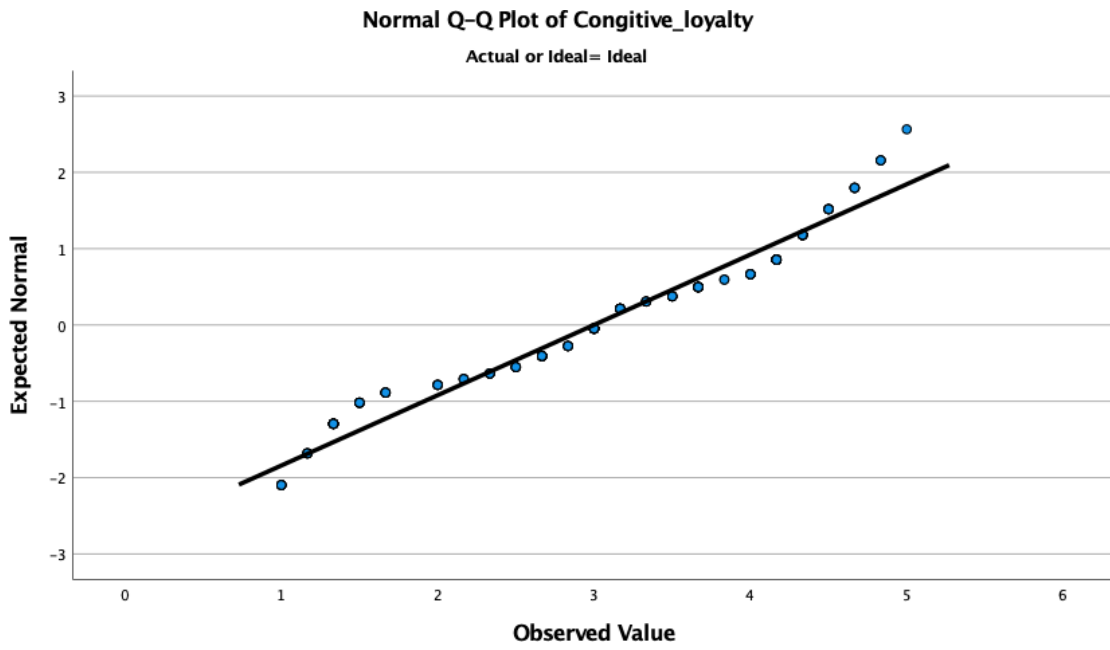
*Appendix 13. Normal Q-Q Plot, Total Behavioral Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)*





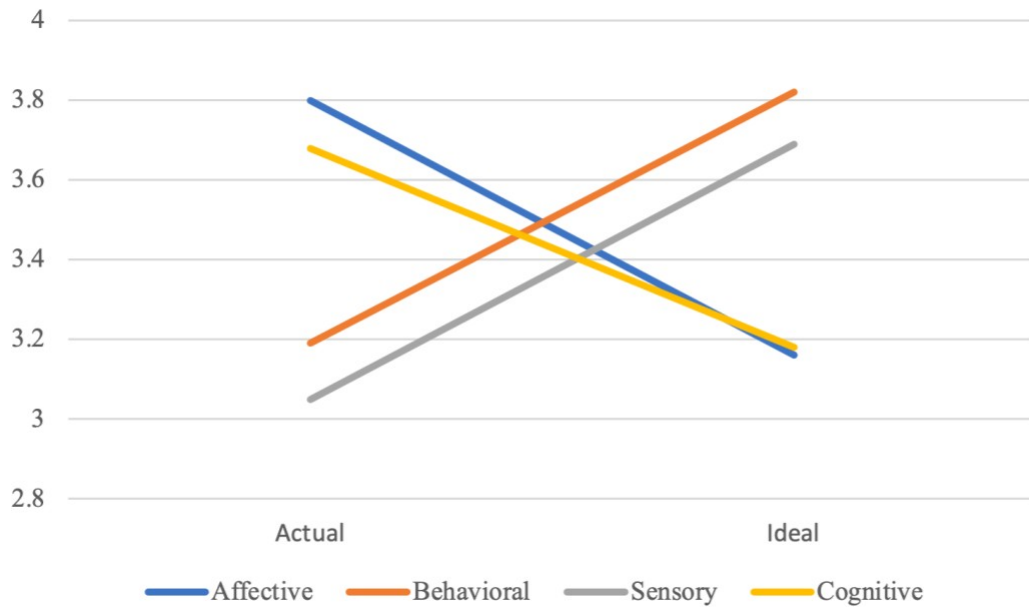


*Appendix 14. Normal Q-Q Plot, Total Cognitive Attitudinal Loyalty (test for normality)*





**Appendix 15. Comparison of all estimated marginal means**





**Appendix 16. Parameter Estimates from Main Study**

	<i>Parameter</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std.Error</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Affective	Intercept	3.159	0.073	43.43	<0.001
Attitudinal	Actual	0.643	0.101	6.38	<0.001
Loyalty	Ideal	0 <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-
Sensorial	Intercept	3.691	0.075	49.41	<0.001
Attitudinal	<i>Actual</i>	-0.642	0.103	-6.2	<0.001
Loyalty	Ideal	0 <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-
Behavioral	Intercept	3.818	0.07	54.801	<0.001
Attitudinal	Actual	-0.629	0.096	-6.514	<0.001
Loyalty	Ideal	0 <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-
Cognitive	Intercept	3.182	0.074	43.037	<0.001
Attitudinal	Actual	0.495	0.102	4.831	<0.001
Loyalty	Ideal	0 <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-