

## Examining the role of brand value congruence, dimensions of brand experience in the influence of customer-brand identification on tourism brand productivity

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### Abstract:

**Objective:** Examining brand experience, value congruence, and customer engagement for tourism brand productivity. Given the significant effects that brand productivity in the tourism industry can have on a country's prosperity and economic progress, the primary objective of this research is to develop and empirically examine a conceptual model that elucidates the complex relationships among brand experience dimensions, brand value congruence, customer-brand identification, and brand productivity. Furthermore, the study investigates the moderating role of customer-brand engagement within this framework.

**Methods:** The statistical population for this research comprises the tourists visiting the city of Isfahan. Given that the population is unlimited, a sample size of 400 participants was selected based on Cochran's formula, and the sampling method used was convenience sampling. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire. First, the validity and reliability of the measurement scales were assessed. Content validity and convergent validity were established, and the reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability calculations. The results of these assessments were satisfactory. For data analysis, the researchers employed structural equation modeling techniques, utilizing SPSS 25 and SmartPLS 3.0 software.

**Results:** Sensory experience, effective experience, behavioral experience, intellectual experience and brand value congruence have a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification. Customer-brand identification has a positive and significant effect

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on brand productivity. customer-brand engagement can moderate the effect of brand-customer value congruence on customer-brand identification.

**Conclusions:** The results of this research will help the authorities to promote and improve brand productivity in the tourism industry by focusing on customer-brand engagement, brand value congruence and customer-brand identification, and considering different dimensions of customer experiences.

## 1. Introduction

The tourism industry has long been recognized as an important driver of economic growth and development globally. However, recent data from leading organizations such as the OECD, UNWTO, and national data collection agencies have revealed a concerning trend – the tourism sector appears to be lagging behind other industries in terms of productivity. This productivity gap within the tourism industry underscores the need for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and constraints that hinder the sector's ability to optimize its performance. Identifying the root causes of this productivity lag is crucial for developing effective strategies and interventions to enhance the overall competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism industry. Several factors may contribute to the productivity challenges faced by the tourism sector. The inherent heterogeneity and fragmentation of the industry, with a diverse range of service providers and intermediaries, can present coordination and efficiency-related obstacles. Additionally, the labor-intensive nature of many tourism activities, coupled with the seasonality of demand, may introduce complexities in workforce management and resource utilization. By delving into the underlying causes of the tourism industry's productivity gap, researchers and policymakers can devise targeted solutions to address these challenges. This may involve exploring innovative approaches to operational efficiency, leveraging technological advancements, enhancing workforce skills and development, and fostering greater collaboration and integration within the tourism value chain. Addressing the productivity gap in the tourism industry is not only crucial for the sector's own growth and competitiveness but also has broader implications for the economic well-being of communities and regions that rely on tourism as a key driver of employment, investment, and development. A comprehensive and strategic approach to enhancing productivity in the tourism sector can contribute to the overall resilience and prosperity of the industry and the destinations it serves (Brien et al., 2023). The ability to skillfully manage the customer-brand relationship has emerged as a critical factor in driving success in today's competitive markets (Beverland, 2021). However, heightened customer awareness of brands has led businesses to rely more on traditional media for brand advertising. The global economic crisis has further complicated customer engagement with brands, making customer-brand identification a critical factor for effective brand management (Rather et al., 2018). While past research has

provided insights into the customer-brand identification process and related constructs, there remain critical gaps that require further investigation (Elbedweihy et al., 2016). Building strong customer-brand relationships is likely to foster favorable attitudes and behaviors toward the brand. Yet, the underlying motivations for consumers to engage in lasting brand relationships remain unclear (Rather, 2018). Researchers emphasize the need for deeper exploration of the role of customer-brand identification, the relationships between value congruence and customer-brand identification (Rather et al., 2022; Elbedweihy et al., 2016), as well as the connections between value congruence, customer-brand engagement (Islam et al., 2018; Rather et al., 2022), and brand experience (Rather et al., 2022). Addressing these research gaps can provide valuable insights to help tourism businesses navigate the challenges of productivity and strengthen their customer-brand relationships in the highly competitive market.

According to research, brands operating in highly competitive environments can benefit greatly from understanding customer needs and preferences as a key to creating value. One effective approach to achieving this deeper customer understanding is through the process of value co-creation (Saha et al., 2022). As Oklevik et al. (2022) explain, this collaborative effort allows customers and the company to work together to co-create value that is mutually beneficial. In the value co-creation process, customers contribute their personal knowledge, skills, and experiences, which they then integrate with the company's resources (Oklevik et al., 2022). Brands play a crucial role when companies create value-added offerings and provide meaningful experiences to customers (Dressler and Paunovic, 2021). The value and appeal of a brand can be significantly amplified when consumers actively share their brand experiences with others, either directly or indirectly. This phenomenon highlights the strategic importance of fostering positive and memorable brand experiences that consumers are motivated to convey to their social networks and broader audiences. The sharing of brand experiences, whether through word-of-mouth, online reviews, or social media interactions, can have a powerful multiplier effect on the perceived value of a brand. When consumers engage in these forms of brand advocacy, they not only reinforce their own positive associations with the brand but also influence the perceptions and attitudes of others in their sphere of influence. This amplification of brand value occurs through several mechanisms. Firstly, the direct sharing of brand experiences by satisfied and engaged customers can serve as a powerful form of social proof, instilling confidence and trust in the brand among potential new consumers. The personal testimonials and recommendations from existing brand advocates carry a level of authenticity and credibility that traditional marketing efforts may struggle to match. Furthermore, the indirect sharing of brand experiences, such as through the proliferation of user-generated content on digital platforms, can contribute to the expansion of the brand's reach

and visibility. As these brand-related narratives and visual representations circulate within online communities, they can pique the interest of new audiences and create a sense of brand desirability. By actively cultivating positive and shareable brand experiences, organizations can leverage the power of consumer-driven brand advocacy to enhance the overall value and perceived appeal of their brands. This strategic approach can lead to increased brand loyalty, expanded customer acquisition, and greater brand equity— all of which contribute to the long-term success and competitiveness of the organization. In essence, the amplifying effect of brand experience sharing underscores the importance of prioritizing the customer experience as a critical component of brand management. By empowering and incentivizing consumers to become active brand ambassadors, organizations can unlock new avenues for growth and solidify their position in the market (Rosenthal and Brito, 2017). However, there remains limited knowledge and information about the underlying drivers and outcomes of customer-brand identification (Krishna and Kim, 2021). Brand Value Congruence and brand experience is effective on brand identification. Recent research suggests that brand value congruence and brand experience can be effective in shaping customer-brand identification. Value congruence, which refers to the alignment between the customer's personal values and the brand's values, plays a crucial role in facilitating stronger customer-brand identification. When customers perceive a high degree of value congruence with a brand, they are more likely to develop a deeper sense of identification and connection with that brand (Rather et al., 2022). Brand experience provides important insights into increasing the attractiveness of cultural and creative sectors (Chiang and Chen, 2023). Brand experience consists of four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral (Rather et al., 2022). First, studies have shown that brand experience can have a positive effect on the destination brand (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). Brand experience encompasses the sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral dimensions that consumers associate with a brand (Rather et al., 2022). By thoughtfully crafting a compelling brand experience, destination marketers can cultivate stronger emotional connections and more positive perceptions among travelers. Second, research has found that collaborating with a renowned tourism brand through joint advertising initiatives can also benefit the destination brand (Can et al., 2021). This co-branding approach allows destination brands to leverage the equity, reputation, and customer base of the famous partner brand. Potential advantages include increased visibility, enhanced credibility, and valuable co-marketing synergies. Customer engagement is a type of voluntary and motivated customer investment of focal agent resources and operational resources in interactions with the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2019).

Considering the ups and downs of tourism from 2019 to 2023, it can be seen that during 2019 due to Corona and unpleasant conditions, the tourism industry

suffered a lot; But according to Alireza Izadi, Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, in 2023, there was a good boom in Isfahan tourism. From March 24 to the end of the holiday, about 9 million tourists entered Isfahan, which is a 50% increase compared to last year. The tourism industry requires special attention to preserve, develop, and foster its ongoing prosperity. Based on the current research, there appears to be a notable gap in the internal study of brand productivity within the tourism sector. While previous studies have explored various aspects, such as brand experience, brand value congruence, customer-brand identification, and customer-brand engagement, a comprehensive framework integrating these elements to understand their impact on brand productivity has not been adequately addressed. Specifically, no previous internal or external studies have been found that examine the role of brand experience dimensions and brand value congruence in shaping customer-brand identification, and subsequently, their influence on brand productivity. Given the significant importance of the tourism industry to the country's economy, and the documented decline in productivity of the tourism sector compared to other industries, largely due to factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, this research aims to fill this critical gap. By investigating the impact of brand experience dimensions and brand value congruence on customer-brand identification, and subsequently, the effect of customer-brand identification on brand productivity, this study seeks to provide valuable insights that can help tourism businesses navigate the challenges they face and enhance their overall brand productivity. Addressing this research gap is crucial, as it can offer tourism companies much-needed guidance on strengthening their customer-brand relationships and improving their brand's overall performance and productivity within the industry.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Brand productivity**

Brand productivity measures are used to understand brand performance (Hamolin and Aprianingsih, 2023). This comprehensive nature of productivity makes it a widely recognized and reliable indicator for evaluating performance across various industries, including the hospitality sector (Chatzimichael & Liasidou, 2019). The concept of productivity extends beyond merely measuring technical capabilities, skills, and production volumes. It also considers the broader implications of factors such as innovation and scale economies. This holistic approach to productivity provides a more accurate and insightful representation of an entity's overall effectiveness and competitiveness. In the context of branding, productivity can serve as a valuable metric for assessing the success and performance of a brand. By considering the multifaceted nature of productivity, researchers and practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of the

factors that contribute to a brand's overall effectiveness and market positioning (Assaf & Tsionas, 2018). For instance, Hamolin and Aprianingsih (2023) suggest that enhancing marketing communications and strategic brand repositioning can improve a brand's productivity and synergy with its underlying products or services. The result is to create a more attractive and compelling value proposition for consumers. The comprehensive nature of the productivity construct, encompassing technical, innovation, and scale-related aspects, allows for a nuanced evaluation of a brand's performance. This holistic perspective can inform more effective brand management strategies and help organizations identify areas for optimization and growth. In summary, the conceptualization of brand productivity as a multidimensional measure provides a robust framework for assessing brand performance and competitiveness.

## **2.2. brand value congruence**

Aziz et al. (2023: 64) market competence depends on brand identification, and the purpose of brand identification is what consumers need. Product identification is done based on the desirability and appropriateness of the product chosen by the customer, which is biased. There should be a match and alignment between the person and product identification or brand identification. The greater the match between the customer and the brand, the more familiar the brand is (Japutra and Molinello, 2019). Based on psychological comparisons, it has been determined that customers use brands that are more compatible with their values (Hu et al., 2019). customer-brand identification is influenced by brand value congruence (Rather and Camilleri, 2019). According to the content, the first hypothesis of the research is:

H1: Brand value congruence has a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification.

## **2.3. Brand Experience**

The existing literature has examined the conceptual links between brand experience and various critical brand-related constructs, offering a multidimensional perspective on this pivotal marketing concept. By exploring the interconnections between brand experience and constructs such as brand equity, attitudes, values, associations, and cognitive brand personality, researchers have shed light on the nuanced and comprehensive nature of this phenomenon (Japutra & Molinillo, 2019). The congruence between brand values and consumer values, facilitated by positive brand experiences, can foster stronger brand associations and a more distinctive cognitive brand personality. By exploring these interconnections, the existing literature has highlighted the multifaceted nature of brand experience and its ability to provide a holistic understanding of various brand-related constructs. This comprehensive perspective underscores the strategic importance of cultivating meaningful and memorable brand experiences to drive desired brand outcomes, such as enhanced brand equity, positive brand attitudes, and stronger consumer-brand connections. Brand experience

encompasses the entire customer journey, including all touchpoints along the way (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). For consumers, the primary goal of a brand is to provide an attractive and compelling experience (Pina & Dias, 2021). According to Rather et al. (2022), brand experience comprises four key dimensions: behavioral experience, sensory experience, affective experience, and intellectual experience. The creators of a brand should aim to influence customers through authentic and meaningful experiences (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020). This suggests that brand experience can act as a facilitator for consumers' responses and attitudes toward the brand. Several studies have found a positive correlation between brand experience and brand identification (Kumar & Kaushik, 2020; Harjadi et al., 2023; Feiz & Moradi, 2021). In competitive markets, marketers are advised to differentiate their brands by providing distinct and valuable experiences that foster stronger customer-brand identification (Vo-Thanh & Kirova, 2018). This can help brands forge more lasting connections and loyalty, as customers feel a stronger alignment between the brand's identity and their own self-concept. Brands must carefully craft experiences that tap into sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual dimensions to build stronger bonds with their target consumers. Ultimately, fostering customer-brand identification through distinctive brand experiences can be a powerful strategy for marketers in competitive landscapes. Proposed hypotheses:

H2: Brand sensory experience has a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification.

H3: Brand effective experience has a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification.

H4: Brand behavioral experience has a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification.

H5: Brand intellectual experience has a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification.

#### **2.4. Customer-Brand Identification**

Brand identification refers to the process where a brand is perceived and expressed by customers as a desired product with a specific purpose (Swaminathan et al., 2020). According to Razer and Hoolbeck (2019), customer brand identification refers to the customer's psychological state, including feelings and perceptions, and its valuation towards the brand and service provider (seifollahi & Hamidzadeh Arbabi, 2022). This allows consumers to clearly understand what the brand represents. According to Carr and Hayes (2019), brand identification can be a dynamic process, changing over time. This is because as products and services continue to evolve, maintaining a unique and consistent brand identity is crucial to ensure consumers still associate with the brand. Even as a brand evolves, the process of consumer identification with the brand must remain consistent. When a consumer feels a strong connection to a

brand, it suggests that the brand's identity and values are well-aligned with the consumer's own self-perception and personal principles. This sense of identification reflects the consumer's tendency to gravitate towards brands that resonate with their own sense of self and the values they hold dear (Carr and Hayes, 2019). Proposed Hypothesis:

H6: Customer-brand identification has a positive and significant effect on brand productivity.

### **2.5. Customer-Brand Engagemen**

In recent years, the marketing literature has witnessed a surge of interest in the construct of customer engagement, recognizing its pivotal role in understanding and nurturing robust customer-brand relationships. Adopting a comprehensive perspective, Hollebeek et al. (2019) conceptualize customer engagement as the customer's voluntary and motivational investment of various resources, encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dimensions, in their interactions with a brand. This multidimensional conceptualization of customer engagement underscores its inherently interactive and dynamic nature. Customer engagement extends beyond mere transactional interactions, involving the active and purposeful allocation of the customer's cognitive capacities, emotional investments, behavioral commitments, and social resources towards engaging with the brand. By actively engaging with a brand, customers demonstrate a heightened level of immersion, enthusiasm, and a sense of connection that transcends the functional or utilitarian aspects of the brand-customer relationship. This engagement can manifest through various channels, such as dynamic interactions on digital platforms, participation in brand communities, or enthusiastic brand advocacy among the customer's social networks. The multifaceted nature of customer engagement highlights its potential to foster deeper and more meaningful customer-brand relationships. When customers actively invest their cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social resources in engaging with a brand, they develop a stronger sense of affiliation, loyalty, and a heightened propensity to co-create value with the brand. By understanding and effectively leveraging the various dimensions of customer engagement, organizations can unlock opportunities to enhance brand loyalty, solidify customer-brand connections, and ultimately drive superior brand performance and productivity. The strategic management of customer engagement can serve as a powerful lever for organizations to cultivate lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with their target customers. This multidimensional view of customer engagement highlights its interactive and dynamic nature. The conceptualization of customer engagement is grounded in the work of researchers such as Vivek et al. (2014) and Kumar and Pansari (2016), who have established customer engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. Naeem and Ozuem (2021) further emphasize the interactive nature of customer engagement, suggesting that it represents the

customer's active involvement and participation in brand-related interactions. The literature suggests that customer engagement comprises the following key dimensions: Cognitive Engagement: This refers to the customer's level of mental focus, attention, and absorption in brand-related activities and information (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Emotional Engagement: This dimension captures the customer's affective responses, such as enthusiasm, interest, and positive feelings toward the brand (Vivek et al., 2014). Behavioral Engagement: This encompasses the customer's observable actions, such as word-of-mouth, participation in brand communities, and co-creation activities (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Social Engagement: This dimension reflects the customer's engagement in social interactions and exchanges related to the brand, both online and offline (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Proposed Hypothesis:

H7: Customer-brand engagement can moderate the effect of brand value congruence on the customer-brand identification.

## 2.6. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model is proposed to investigate the productivity of the tourism brand in Isfahan city, the purpose of which is to determine the effect of the factors on the productivity of the tourism brand. Drawing inspiration from the work of Rather et al. (2022), Fung So et al. (2017), and Rather et al. (2018), the proposed model seeks to address some key gaps identified in the existing literature. Specifically, previous studies have not directly examined the impact of distinct brand experience dimensions, such as sensory, intellectual, behavioral, and affective experiences, on customer-brand identification. Additionally, the combined effect of brand value congruence on customer-brand identification and brand productivity, considering the moderating role of customer-brand engagement, has not been explored simultaneously. The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

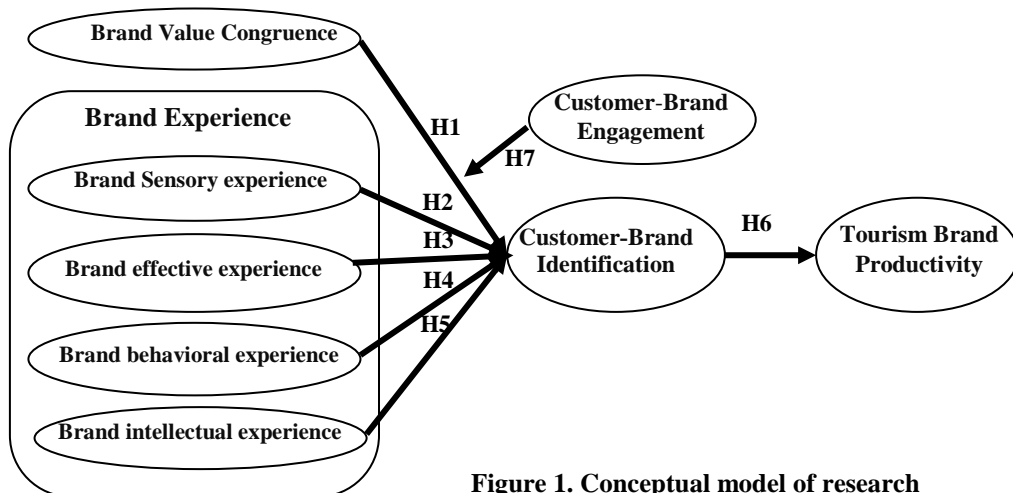


Figure 1. Conceptual model of research

### 3. Research Methodology

The current research study adopts an applied approach, employing a descriptive-survey data collection method to investigate the proposed research questions. The statistical population for this study comprises the tourists visiting the city of Isfahan. The study began by thoroughly examining the relevant theoretical foundations, from which the research scales were extracted to measure the key variables of interest. These included the constructs of brand value congruence, brand experience dimensions, customer-brand identification, and brand productivity. The questionnaire includes the constructs of brand value congruence and the dimensions of the brand experience and customer-brand identification taken from Rather et al. (2022) and the brand productivity of Hamolin and Aprianingsih (2023), the questions have been modified by the authors. and were subsequently modified by the authors to fit the context of the current research. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was evaluated for both form and content validity by a panel of expert reviewers. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated to assess the reliability of the measurement scales, as presented in Table 1. These steps were crucial in establishing the rigor and robustness of the data collection tool. Considering the infinite nature of the target population (tourists in Isfahan), the researchers employed Cochran's formula to determine the appropriate sample size. This calculation, with a confidence interval of  $\alpha=0.5$  and a value of  $p=q=0.5$ , resulted in a sample size of 384 respondents. To further enhance the accuracy of the analysis, the researchers distributed and collected 400 questionnaires using the available method. The collected data was analyzed using advanced statistical techniques, including structural equation modeling, confirmatory factor analysis, and the application of SPSS 25 and Smart PLS 3.0 software. These analytical approaches enabled the researchers to rigorously examine the hypothesized relationships and assess the overall fit of the proposed conceptual framework.

**Table 1. Questionnaire structure and Cronbach's alpha**

Number of questions	Variables	Cronbach's alpha
1-4	Brand Value Congruence	0.735
5-7	Sensory experience	0.832
8-10	Effective experience	0.837
11-13	intellectual experience	0.762
14-16	behavioral experience	0.822
17-19	customer brand identification	0.892
20-22	Customer-Brand Engagement	0.823
23-26	Brand Productivity	0.798

### 3.1. Checking the fit of the model

For model fitting, external model fitting (functionality, validity, and reliability), internal fitting ( $R^2$  criteria or R Squares;  $Q^2$  criterion and significant t numbers), and general model fitting of GOF have been used. The factor loadings of the variables are presented in Table2. The comprehensive assessment of the measurement and structural model fit is a crucial step in ensuring the robustness and validity of the research findings. The results presented in Table3 provide a detailed overview of the model fitting indices, offering valuable insights into the overall quality and appropriateness of the research design.

**Table 2 .Load coefficients**

Load coefficient	Question	Load coefficient	Question	Load coefficient	Question	Load coefficient	Question	Load coefficient	Question	Load coefficient	Question	Load coefficient	Question
0.845	Q25	0.85	Q21	0.916	Q17	0.830	Q13	0.869	Q9	0.843	Q5	0.693	Q1
0.822	Q26	0.860	Q22	0.890	Q18	0.856	Q14	0.859	Q10	0.860	Q6	0.768	Q2
		0.750	Q23	0.916	Q19	0.898	Q15	0.819	Q11	0.891	Q7	0.755	Q3
		0.727	Q24	0.918	Q20	0.827	Q16	0.821	Q12	0.881	Q8	0.758	Q4

The assessment of the measurement model is a critical step in establishing the rigor and validity of a research study. As presented in Table 2, the results of the factor loading analysis offer valuable insights into the appropriateness and adequacy of the measurement criteria employed. Specifically, the results indicate that all factor loading coefficients of the questions included in the survey instrument are greater than the recommended threshold of 0.4. This finding suggests that the variance of the indicators with their corresponding constructs is acceptable, which is a desirable property for establishing construct validity. The factor loading coefficients serve as a key metric in evaluating the extent to which the observed variables (i.e., the survey questions) effectively capture the underlying latent constructs they are intended to measure. Higher factor loadings, as observed in the current study, indicate a strong alignment between the indicators and their respective constructs, demonstrating the convergent validity

of the measurement model. This assessment of the factor loadings provides confidence in the appropriateness and soundness of the measurement criteria employed in the research design. By ensuring that the observed variables adequately represent the latent constructs of interest, the study can proceed with subsequent analyses, safe in the knowledge that the measurement model is robust and the data is suitable for drawing meaningful conclusions.

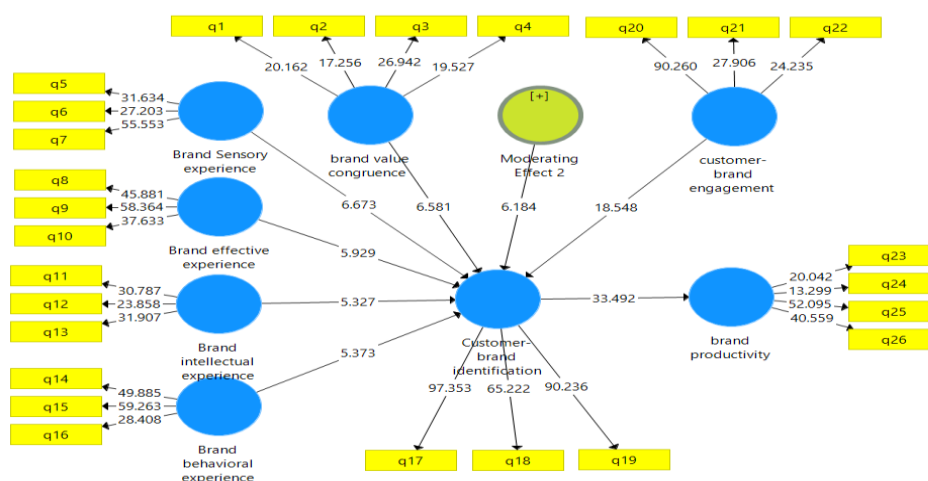
**Table 3. External, internal, and overall model fit**

model fit		Brand Value Congruence	Sensory experience	Effective experience	behavioral experience	intellectual experience	Customer-Brand Engagement	customer brand identification	Brand Productivity
External model fit	Cronbach's alpha coefficients > 0.7	0.735	0.833	0.839	0.824	0.763	0.826	0.893	0.799
	Composite reliability coefficient > 0.7	0.832	0.899	0.903	0.896	0.863	0.896	0.933	0.867
	AVE > 0.5	0.554	0.746	0.756	0.741	0.678	0.743	0.824	0.620
Internal model fit	R <sup>2</sup> (0.19 (weak), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.67 (strong))	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.856	0.601
	Q <sup>2</sup> (0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (strong))	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.666	0.339
Overall model fit	GOF (0.01 (weak), 0.25 (moderate), and 0.36 (strong))	$GOF = \sqrt{\text{Communalit} \times \overline{R^2}} = \sqrt{0.707 \times 0.728} = 0.748$							

According to the values presented in Table 3, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values for all variables are higher than the standard value of 0.7. Additionally, AVE for all variables is greater than the standard value of 0.5. This indicates a good overall model fit. The R-squared (R<sup>2</sup>) criterion represents the effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable. The Q<sup>2</sup> criterion reflects the model's predictive power, indicating the level of predictive power. Regarding the evaluation of the overall model fit, are used as benchmarks. Based on the R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup> values, indicate a strong fit of the internal model. Furthermore, according to the values presented in Table 3, the overall model fit is strong. To analyze the data and test the research hypotheses, this research used structural equation modeling (SEM). Table 4 shows the results of the hypothesis test based on the results of the hypothesis test based on the path coefficient and t-value statistics. Figure 2 shows the output of PLS 3.0 software based on t values.

**Table 4. The results of research hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Statistics $t > 1.96$	Results
brand value congruence → customer-brand identification	0.298	6.581	confirm
Brand sensory experience identification. → customer-brand identification.	0.297	6.673	confirm
Brand effective experience identification. → customer-brand identification.	0.213	5.929	confirm
Brand behavioral experience identification. → customer-brand identification.	0.202	5.373	confirm
Brand intellectual experience identification. → customer-brand identification.	0.182	5.327	confirm
Customer-brand identification → brand productivity	0.775	33.492	confirm
The moderating role of customer-brand engagement in influencing brand value congruence on customer brand identification	0.129	6.184	confirm



**Figure 2. PLS software output related to significant numbers (t-value)**

The current study provides a comprehensive investigation into the antecedents and consequences of customer-brand identification, a critical construct in the branding and consumer behavior literature. The results, as summarized in Table4 and Figure2, offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics governing this phenomenon. Firstly, the findings pertaining to the first hypothesis indicate that brand value congruence has a positive and significant effect on customer-brand

identification. Specifically, the statistical value of 6.581, which exceeds the threshold of 1.96, coupled with a path coefficient of 0.298, suggests that the alignment between a brand's values and those of its customers plays a crucial role in fostering strong identification. Moving on to the brand experience dimensions, the results for the second, third, fourth, and fifth hypotheses reveal that sensory experience (statistical value = 6.673, path coefficient = 0.297), affective experience (statistical value = 5.929, path coefficient = 0.213), behavioral experience (statistical value = 5.373, path coefficient = 0.202), and intellectual experience (statistical value = 5.327, path coefficient = 0.182) all have a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification. Importantly, the sixth hypothesis demonstrates that customer-brand identification has a positive and significant effect on brand productivity, as indicated by the statistical value of 33.492 and the path coefficient of 0.775. This suggests that fostering strong customer-brand identification can contribute to enhanced brand performance and competitiveness. Furthermore, the results of the seventh hypothesis reveal that the effect of brand value congruence on customer-brand identification is moderated by customer-brand engagement. The statistical value of 6.184 suggests that the strength of the customer-brand relationship can amplify the impact of value alignment on identification, underscoring the importance of cultivating authentic and engaged customer-brand connections.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Considering the highly competitive and changing conditions that organizations are facing today, organizations that respond quickly to these changes and developments will be successful (Seifollahi & Ebrahimi Kharajo, 2023). For the tourism industry, in particular, productivity measurement is crucial. It allows countries to evaluate the extent to which the tourism sector is contributing to overall economic development, while also considering the potential social and environmental implications of tourism growth. By closely monitoring productivity metrics, policymakers and industry leaders can make informed decisions to optimize the tourism sector's performance, ensuring sustainable and balanced growth that benefits the country, its people, and the environment as a whole (Brien et al., 2023). The extant literature on branding and consumer behavior has been enriched by investigations into the key drivers, underlying dynamics, and resulting outcomes pertaining to consumer behavior. Analyzing these critical facets - the motivating factors that shape customer attitudes and actions, the complex interplay of variables that influence the decision-making process, as well as the downstream consequences of such consumer behavior - contributes valuable insights to the scholarly discourse in this domain. By systematically examining these customer-centric elements, researchers have been able to expand the theoretical and empirical foundations of the branding and consumer behavior literature (Hollebeek et al., 2020). The importance of gaining

deeper insights into the intricate dynamics governing customer-brand relationships cannot be overstated. Examining the interplay between these variables offers valuable opportunities to expand the theoretical and empirical foundations of the branding and consumer behavior literature. By systematically investigating how customers' perceptions of a brand's credibility, the alignment between the brand's values and their own, as well as their direct experiences with the brand, contribute to the formation of brand identification, researchers can uncover nuanced insights that inform more effective brand management strategies (Rather et al., 2022). If proper engagement with customers is not done and communication is not established, customers will be lost (Seifollahi & Eskandari). Given the importance of understanding the factors shaping customer-brand connections, the current study aims to investigate the impact of brand experience dimensions and brand value congruence on customer-brand identification, and the subsequent influence of customer-brand identification on brand productivity.

The current study examined a comprehensive model of the factors influencing customer-brand identification and their subsequent implications. Consistent with the extant literature, the findings provide valuable empirical support for the key drivers and boundary conditions of this crucial branding construct. Firstly, the results of the first hypothesis demonstrate that brand value congruence has a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Rather et al. (2022), underscoring the importance of alignment between a brand's values and those of its customers in fostering strong identification. Furthermore, the results of the second, third, fourth, and fifth hypotheses indicate that various dimensions of brand experience, all have a positive and significant effect on customer-brand identification. These findings are consistent with the work of Harjadi et al. (2023) and Rather et al. (2022), highlighting the multifaceted role of brand experience in shaping customer-brand connections. Importantly, the seventh hypothesis reveals that customer-brand engagement moderates the effect of brand value congruence on customer-brand identification. This result is in line with the findings reported by Rather et al. (2022) and Khan et al. (2020), suggesting that the strength of the customer-brand relationship can amplify the impact of value alignment on identification. The insights gained can inform more effective brand management strategies and facilitate the development of stronger, more authentic customer-brand relationships. By elucidating the key drivers and contextual factors that shape customer-brand identification, this research provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing brand productivity and competitiveness. The existence of contexts and platforms, including social media, can cause the customer to engage with the brand, if the customer's engagement with the brand is done in the best way, it leads to the intention of tourists to visit again (Seifollāhi Anār, 2023). Managers should create

new operating systems that fit the brand and increase customer engagement with the brand by adopting appropriate strategies (Sefollahi and Dehghani Ghahnavieh, 2022).

In summary, the empirical findings of the current study are largely supported by and aligned with the existing literature on the relationships between brand value congruence, brand experience dimensions, customer-brand engagement, and customer-brand identification. This alignment with prior research reinforces the validity and significance of the observed relationships, providing a stronger foundation for the proposed conceptual model and its implications for both academic and practical domains. The research findings indicate that tourism brand productivity is a crucial factor for growth and development in the industry. To foster brand productivity, it is essential to consider customer-brand identification and the dimensions of brand experience and customer-brand engagement. In today's highly competitive environment, customer-brand identification and brand productivity are vital for the survival and success of tourism organizations. Tourism organizations can maintain a strong presence in customers' minds by aligning their brand's values with the experiences of their customers and by providing collaborative platforms for tourists. The broad findings of the present study provide an important perspective on the factors that can increase brand productivity in the tourism industry. By understanding the intricate relationships between brand value congruence, brand experience dimensions, customer-brand identification, and brand productivity, tourism organizations can develop more effective strategies to strengthen their market position and enhance their brand image in the eyes of customers, the market, and key stakeholders. The study reveals that among the dimensions of brand experience have a positive effect on customer-brand identification. Notably, the sensory experience dimension has the most significant impact, as memorable and favorable brand experiences can make a tourism destination a preferred choice for future trips. Tourism managers should, therefore, focus on enhancing all dimensions of brand experience, with a particular emphasis on sensory experiences, and utilize experiential marketing strategies to succeed in the competitive tourism industry. The research also demonstrates that customer-brand identification has a positive effect on brand productivity. Policymakers and managers in the tourism industry should prioritize the development of customer-brand identification, as it can contribute to brand attachment, loyalty, and the provision of valuable feedback from customers to improve the industry's overall performance. Furthermore, the findings suggest that customer-brand engagement can moderate the effect of brand value congruence on customer-brand identification. Tourism and hospitality organizations should create opportunities

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for customer-brand engagement to strengthen the impact of brand value congruence on customer-brand identification. Effective communication tools and platforms can be used to align customer and brand values, fostering customer-brand identification and, ultimately, brand productivity. The insights gained from this study can inform the development of more strategic and targeted approaches to enhancing brand productivity in the tourism industry. Future research could explore additional methods for increasing brand productivity, examine the proposed model in different city contexts, and investigate the factors that enhance brand attractiveness and its impact on customer-brand identification and productivity. Future researchers should consider conducting extensive research to resolve the limitations of the research as well as to further develop and strengthen the theoretical concepts and practical applications of this topic.

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## بررسی نقش تطابق ارزش برند، ابعاد تجربه برند در تاثیرگذاری شناسایی برند مشتری بر بهره‌وری برند گردشگری

### چکیده

**هدف:** باتوجه به اثراتی که بهره‌وری برند در صنعت گردشگری بر رونق اقتصاد و پیشرفت کشور دارد، هدف این پژوهش بررسی نقش ابعاد تجربه برند، تطابق ارزش برند بر شناسایی برند مشتری و تاثیر شناسایی برند مشتری بر بهره‌وری برند گردشگری با در نظر گرفتن نقش تعدیل‌کنندگی مشارکت مشتری با برند است.

**روش پژوهش:** جامعه آماری این پژوهش گردشگران در شهر اصفهان است با توجه به نامحدود بودن جامعه براساس فرمول کوکران ۴۰۰ نفر انتخاب شدند روش نمونه‌برداری در دسترس می‌باشد. داده‌های پژوهش از طریق پرسشنامه جمع‌آوری شده است. ابتدا روایی (روایی محتوا و روایی همگرا) و پایایی (از طریق آلفای کرونباخ و پایایی ترکیبی) سنجیده شد، که نتایج مورد تایید است. برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها از مدل‌سازی معادلات ساختاری و از نرم‌افزار Spss25 و Smartpls 3.0 استفاده شده است.

**نتیجه‌گیری:** تجربه حسی، تجربه تاثیرگذار، تجربه رفتاری، تجربه فکری و تطابق ارزش برند بر شناسایی برند مشتری تأثیری مثبت و معنادار دارد. شناسایی برند مشتری بر بهره‌وری برند تأثیر مثبت و معنادار دارد. مشارکت مشتری با برند قادر است تاثیر تطابق ارزش برند با مشتری را بر شناسایی برند مشتری تعدیل کند. نتایج این پژوهش به مسئولین در راستای ارتقا و بهبود بهره‌وری برند در صنعت گردشگری از طریق تمرکز بر مشارکت مشتری با برند، تطابق ارزش برند و شناسایی برند مشتری با در نظر داشتن ابعاد مختلف تجربه‌های مشتریان یاری می‌رساند.

**کلمات کلیدی:** بهره‌وری برند گردشگری، تجربه برند، تطابق ارزش برند، شناسایی برند مشتری، مشارکت مشتری با برند.