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ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF SAUDI AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Abstract

The main aim of this study is to examine the antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement in the Saudi airline industry. In total, 403 usable responses were collected using an electronic survey. The study respondents include airline travelers who are living in Saudi Arabia. The survey data were examined using structural equation modeling (SEM) to verify the theoretical model. The major study findings suggest that a positive correlation is found between online brand experience, brand love, and customer engagement. Moreover, customer engagement is positively associated with repatronage intention. In addition, the moderating results show that service quality has a moderating influence on the relationship between customer engagement and repatronage intention. As a consequence, the findings indicate the existence of service quality and its role in determining customer behavior intentions. This study also offers a great understanding of the interaction between the important factors. Thus, they may be utilized as a guideline for managing air traveling and improving airline sales in the country.

Keywords

customer engagement, brand experience, brand love, repatronage intention, service quality

JEL Classification

M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

The topic of customer engagement has attracted interest over the past several decades, especially in the marketing literature, wherein researchers and practitioners have intensively explored this concept (van Doorn et al., 2010; Prentice et al., 2019). A key focus has been the reactions to customer engagement of the airline industry as observed in consumer behavior, as many customers have a strong and highly interactive presence on both Facebook and Twitter (Dijkmans et al., 2015). Since travelers are increasingly required to use the social media of airlines, the use of social media platforms by airlines is expected to increase in the coming years (Seo & Park, 2018). Sharing and posting comments on brand social media pages are behavioral expressions of consumer engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010) and are essential to the overall social media engagement plan of the brand (Kabadayi & Price, 2014).

The approaches of social media studies in the airline context have varied but include, for example, customer polls (Bigne et al., 2018; Dijkmans et al., 2015; Seo & Park, 2018), airline manager interviews (Parveen et al., 2015), and content analysis and web content or text mining (Bygstad & Presthus, 2013; Leung et al., 2013; Grančay, 2014). In the industry, various airline firms expose consumers to multiple products as stimuli in marketing communications before those consumers complete purchase actions. Therefore, an airline must offer a unique brand experience to survive in such a competitive climate.

Studies on the airline industry sector have illustrated that airlines use social media for several reasons, including customer support, brand building and consumer engagement, and the provision of specific offers and promotions (Gal-Tzur et al., 2014; Grančay, 2014; Parveen et al., 2015).

This study explores the customer-brand relationship, as determined by the online brand experience and brand love, and the service offerings of a company influencing consumer engagement with the brand and its related company in the airline industry. Supporting brand connections with airlines and specific service characteristics is increasingly crucial given the importance of the emotional loyalty of passengers to airline firms and the demand for service attributes. Given this, this paper explores how the relationship of customers with an airline and their understanding of the level of service that it provides impact their enjoyment of the airline brand as well as their communication behavior. To this end, it investigates the role of service quality in determining customer engagement and the functional consequences for repatronage intention, which to date have remained nebulous, in line with these trends. The findings can contribute insights regarding customer engagement in terms of the antecedents and consequences of how consumer- and firm-based factors influence customer engagement with brands online. The study aims to clarify the links between the factors and assess the moderating role of service quality. On the foundation of this reasoning, the following questions are addressed:

- 1) How online brand experience and brand love influence customer engagement in the airline industry context?
- 2) Does service quality have a moderating role in enhancing customer engagement and repatronage intention in the airline services sector?

The following section conducts an applicable literature review and generates hypotheses. Subsequently, the methodology for evaluating these hypotheses is outlined, and the results are presented. Then, the paper presents a discussion of the findings and finally, the study will be summarized in the conclusion section.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Through the online brand experience and customer engagement on the Internet, travelers (customers) can peruse options to meet their needs in terms of bookings, collecting information, buying their tickets online, and following their airline brand on social media to receive daily updates. Modern customers want to experience their favorite brands and are not simply seeking tangible rewards (Ong et al., 2018). An online brand experience ensures that the customer experience is not restricted to a physical marketplace and instead extends to an online setting (Brakus et al., 2009). Yu et al. (2020) highlighted that an active brand experience through social networking can improve customer equity, as it enables them to consume more comprehensive information and use

online services in their decision-making. Online brands develop based on technological advances in communication and information.

Touni et al. (2020) encouraged future investigations to inspect customer engagement in online brand networks. It is useful when customers are attracted by a brand and experience charming emotions, as this outcome cultivates buyer feelings and positive memories that sustain such effects (Sophonsiri & Polyorat, 2009). Laming and Mason (2014) explored the significance of the customer experience in the airline industry and the degree to which aircraft brands convey the customer experience. It was estimated that by integrating the concept of the customer experience into their administration, structure, and focal points, aircraft brands can expand the customer experience of carrier travelers and empower themselves to start constructing individual, solid brand spaces. In addition, Loo (2020) discovered that the type of

posts (stimulus) on the Facebook influences the perceptions and feelings of clients on the platform by prompting positive or negative reactions.

The online brand experience describes a person's inner emotional response to the online brand interaction (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). In general, the customer experiences of retailers vary across customer gathering points. Brand love, which represents the emotional bond within every consumer experience, is dependent on a customer appreciation for and degree of positive association with a retailer and its brand (Fullerton, 2003; Khan et al., 2016). According to Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), brand love reflects the extent of an enthusiastic emotional connection to a certain trademark for a satisfied customer. Evidence supports that brand love improves the correlation between the retail brand experience and willingness to pay a higher price as well as the correlation between the latter and word-of-mouth interactions (Nikhashemi et al., 2019). Nikhashemi et al. (2019) revealed that brand love has a significant relationship with the retail brand experience. However, when brand love was used as a moderator for improving the relationship between the retail brand experience and purchase intention or between word-of-mouth and purchase intention, the result was insignificant. While some customers develop enthusiasm about a brand immediately, others require more purchasing experience to determine their true feelings toward that brand (Langner et al., 2016).

Brand love emerges from continuous association with a brand with a strong feeling of alignment towards the item personality among purchasers (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Huber et al., 2015). Prentice et al. (2019) illustrated that, for airlines, brand awareness has a significant centralized effect on brand love. Their outcome indicates that travelers' experience with carriers influences not only their passionate connection with and perspectives of the selected carriers but also their brand commitment to those carriers and their loyalty practices. Mandler et al. (2019) reported a significant relationship between brand relations and the experience of the online brand. In addition, Machado et al. (2019) concluded that a Facebook user's brand experience has an impact on brand love. Customers of a brand prefer to provide input and serve as brand advisors. Their reviews allow

a brand to track successful and ineffective factors from a consumer viewpoint (Eisingerich et al., 2014; Hollebeek et al., 2019).

Brand love is characterized by an enthusiastic client promise to the validation of a specific brand name or trademark (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Huber et al. (2015) argued that brand love is the result of a longtime association with a brand that encourages a compelling segment of buyers to incorporate the brand image into their own identity. In the marketing sector, customer engagement is frequently defined as an enthusiastic, intellectual, and social customer loyalty to the brand (Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek et al., 2012). Prentice et al. (2019) described brand love as encompassing travelers' enthusiasm toward and perception of brand integration as well as a passionate relationship with their preferred airline. It is important to cultivate a profound association with the brand among customers to reinforce their emotional connection and trust in that brand (Li et al., 2020). Furthermore, Prentice et al. (2019) used brand love as a mediator between brand experience and customer engagement. The partial involvement of brand love reflected a significant impact on travelers' understanding of their emotional connection to an airline and, in turn, their resulting commitment practices. More specifically, the affirmation of a noteworthy directed intervention impact strengthened the intervening function of brand love. Thus, clients' passionate connection (brand love) assumed a role in deciding their commitment to the brand association.

In addition, Machado et al. (2019) analyzed the relationship between manufacturer impact and consumer-brand engagement employing a mediation feature on consumer-brand engagement and trademark love on Facebook. There was an assumption that the passion of Facebook users for the most widely favored brand would have a strong and important effect on purchaser-based brand value. The results demonstrated a full mediation effect of gender on customer brand value via brand love and the customer brand experience.

Wallace et al. (2014) referred to the suggestion of Chauhan and Pillai (2013) that a "like" of the brand on the social network is an indication of customer engagement. Wallace et al. (2014) observed custom-

ers who were drawn in by self-expressive brands through the Facebook “like” and found a particularly high level of brand love, and the consequence was a positive connection between “liked” self-expressive brands and brand love.

In marketing, customer engagement is often defined as enthusiastic, psychological, and social engagement of brand customers (Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek et al., 2012). Recent studies on customer engagement have explored a range of contexts, such as banking (Islam et al., 2018), luxury hotels (Islam et al., 2019), the role of social media in tourism (Li et al., 2020), and mobile applications (Ho et al., 2020). Customer engagement is believed to allow contributions by affecting customer experience between the key advertisements and marketing partnership requirements of customer repeat patronage, sustaining customer engagement (Verhoef et al., 2010). The present study follows previous attempts to provide a more detailed and persuasive perspective of consumer engagement (Groeger et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2019). Islam et al. (2019) investigated gender in customer engagement as a moderator and reported that customer engagement in the hospitality industry is a major determinant of brand experience and desire in terms of revisit intention by providing high-quality service.

The link between customer engagement and the reason for repatronage is additionally strengthened by the concept of social exchange (Harrigan et al., 2018). Zhu and Zhang (2010) proposed that customer-based brand reviews (i.e. portrayals of customer commitment) generally influence the repatronage expectation of various customers by neutralizing their purchasing fear. Further, Islam et al. (2018) suggested that customer and repatriation preferences are influenced by consumer thinking as well as social media. The elements of customer engagement, consumer equity, and repurchase have been combined under the composite impact of portable applications (Ho et al., 2020). This represents a significant advancement in adaptable applications research; mobile applications have a decisive role, and industries can succeed by consistently centering on repeat purchases (Arora et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, by recognizing the elements that affect customer engagement with airline social applications to enhance repatronage intention, air-

lines can provide optimal services. This consideration is crucial for understanding consumer interest in the airline brand experience in social media research. Since the airline industry is extremely competitive, companies can only achieve continued success if they focus on re-purchase intention in their social media use.

Farooq et al. (2018), and Trischler and Lohmann (2018) evidenced customer patterns that reflect an appreciation for the value and an interest in advanced service quality, especially in the airline industry. It is widely acknowledged that service quality is an indicator of customer fulfillment and social standards, which are advantageous for businesses (Prentice, 2013). Andotra et al. (2008) discovered that service quality can be viewed as a “competitive marketing technique” in the airline industry that combines a focus on customers, innovation in facilities, growth, and a propensity to increase “service excellence.” Islam et al. (2018) considered the quality of service as a moderator, and the focus is not widely put on the impact of customer engagement on service quality; thus, additional investigations are needed.

Customers generally agree that comfortable and clean seats are a key offering of every airline (Chen & Chang, 2005; Liou & Tzeng, 2007). It was experimentally argued that providing support to resolve passenger complaints is critical for the airline industry. Parasuraman et al. (1985) advised that analyses of results and perceptions should examine the quality of service. Cronin et al. (2000) suggested that the success of customer service in each assistance consultation decides the quality of the company management. This methodology has been extensively referred to and discussed. In response to Prentice et al. (2019), this study argues that the quality of service mediates the impacts of brand experience and brand love on consumer engagement instead of explicitly influencing the outcome variable. Service quality increases consumer participation in the brand through each encounter, which eventually leads to an enthusiastic connection (for example, brand love for an airline on social media) to the brand and, subsequently, the communication practices underlying purchasing, mentions, and electronic word-of-mouth. Individuals conduct

a comparative cost advantage-reward analysis to determine their expected exchange-derived value based on the principle of social exchange (Priporas et al., 2017).

The aim of this study is to examine the correlation between online brand experience, brand love, customer engagement, and repatronage intention in the Saudi airline sector.

Based on the literature review the hypotheses can be developed as follows:

- H1: *Online brand experience has a positive impact on customer engagement.*
- H2: *Online brand experience has a positive impact on brand love.*
- H3: *Brand love has a positive impact on customer engagement.*
- H4: *Customer engagement has a positive impact on repatronage intention.*
- H5: *Service quality moderates the relationship between customer engagement and repatronage intention.*

Based on the presented data, this paper tests the hypotheses to evaluate how the service quality (in terms of how customers experience the flight and perceive the airline administration) is described. The study conveys future customer engagement commitments and reflects on the online brand experience by presenting substantial information about how shopper- and firm-based variables influence consumers to reference the online platform of a brand. However, Figure 1 shows the elaborated framework.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study highlights the importance of online brand experience and brand love as antecedents of customer engagement and subsequent repatronage intention, with service quality as a moderator. To verify the proposed model, a quantitative approach was adopted. The research instrument for the study was designed regarding items from validated scales for measuring online brand experience, brand love, customer engagement, repatronage intention, and service quality. The study focuses on social media use in the airline industry. The selection criteria required that respondents must be a follower of a fan page for a Saudi airline brand on social media. Surveys were randomly conducted through an online review from June to September 2020 among customers who had traveled with Saudi airlines. Of the 449 received surveys, 403 reactions were deemed substantial, which reflects an 89.76% reaction rate. The 46 (10.24%) omitted responses were found to be of no utilization to the investigation because the respondents answered the restricted question regarding language by selecting the Arabic language, which directed them to the end of the survey. Since the survey was designed in English, only answers selecting the English language were accepted.

To suit the context of the study, the existing scales were slightly modified. The questionnaire consisted of a distinct, randomly assigned sequence of the data collection items with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). This seven-point scale supported a more accurate result from the questionnaire. To reach the maximum scope of travelers, a restricted question asked the airline customers to select an airline website or social media mobile

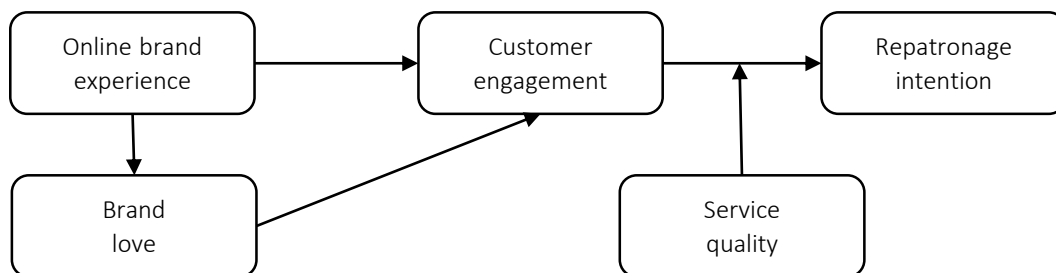


Figure 1. Elaborated framework

application (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram) through which they purchased tickets within the previous six months, and they then completed the entire questionnaire for that airline site or mobile application only. Online brand experience items were adapted following findings of Yasin et al. (2020). Brand love was measured by adapted items from Prentice et al. (2019) and Bagozzi et al. (2017). Customer engagement was measured by adapting the scale developed by Hollebeek et al. (2014). Service quality was measured by adapted items from Prentice and Correia Loureiro (2017). Repatronage intention was measured by adapted items from Islam et al. (). Brand love was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “very much” to “not at all.” Other constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “very strongly disagree” to “very strongly agree”. In addition, the Cronbach’s alpha values were analyzed (Appendix A).

The primary data for this study were collected from June to September 2020. Email and social media channels were used to contact potential study participants and distribute the pre-tested questionnaire. Initially, the four most heavily used social media platforms in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were selected according to their reported penetration levels by the Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2020). Facebook and Twitter recorded the highest numbers of social media users in the kingdom, whereas YouTube reported a high view rate. A purposeful sampling method was employed to recruit participants for the study. The purpose of the study was clearly defined on the first page of the survey instrument, and it was ensured that the Saudis and non-Saudis participated and engaged in an airline social media. Data were obtained from both Saudi and non-Saudi passengers who had traveled with Saudi airline brands. Before administering the questionnaire, a pilot assessment was performed with 10 travelers to ensure that the language of the questionnaire was consistent and well understood. As Table 1 indicates, the participants reported a variety of backgrounds and educational levels. The majority of the participants (40.20%) were between 31 and 40 years of age, which suggests that middle-aged individuals were more independent in their travel.

Of 403 participants, 55.58% were male, and 44.42% were female. In addition, approximately 31.02% had at least a bachelor’s degree. Finally, 29% of participants were following their airline Twitter account.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

Variable	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male (GND = 1)	224	55.58%
Female (GND = 2)	179	44.42%
Age		
Between 18 and 20 (AGE = 1)	25	6.20%
Between 21 and 30 (AGE = 2)	73	18.11%
Between 31 and 40 (AGE = 3)	162	40.20%
Between 41 and 50 (AGE = 4)	102	25.31%
Between 51 and 60 (AGE = 5)	29	7.20%
More than 60 (AGE = 6)	12	2.98%
Education		
Below high school (EDU = 1)	10	2.48%
High school (EDU = 2)	46	11.41%
College degree (EDU = 3)	84	20.84%
Bachelor’s degree (EDU = 4)	125	31.02%
Master’s degree (EDU = 5)	74	18.36%
Doctoral degree (EDU = 6)	55	13.65%
Professional degree (EDU = 7)	9	2.23%
Level of experience		
Beginner (LE = 1)	74	18.36%
Intermediate (LE = 2)	224	55.58%
Advanced (LE = 3)	105	26.05%
Saudi airlines		
Saudia (SLA =1)	139	34.49%
Flyadeal (SLA = 2)	95	23.57%
Flynas (SLA = 3)	103	25.56%
SaudiGulf (SLA = 4)	66	16.38%
Which of the following social platform of the airline do you follow?		
Instagram (SPA = 1)	79	19.60%
Twitter (SPA = 2)	120	29.78%
Facebook (SPA =3)	103	25.56%
YouTube (SPA = 4)	52	12.90%
Not following (SPA = 5)	49	12.16%

Note: Demographic information of participants (N = 403).

3. RESULTS

This analysis used AMOS 0.22 to test the hypotheses since it focuses on explaining heterogeneity. In addition, the AMOS 22.0 SEM package was employed to run confirmatory factors analysis (CFA) to verify the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2010). The AMOS SEM approach was chosen to determine the links between the online brand experi-

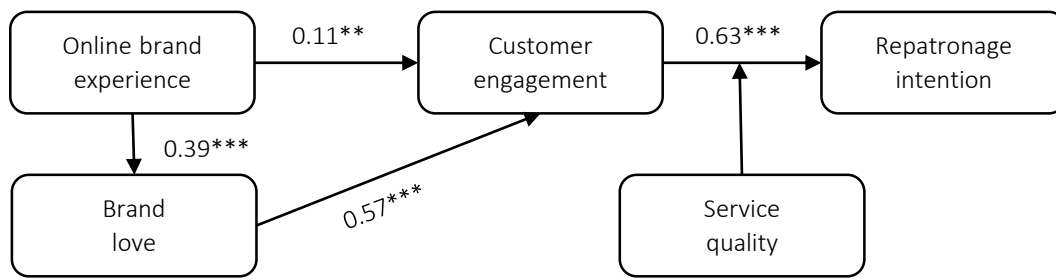


Figure 2. AMOS results

ence, brand love, customer engagement, repatronage intention, and the moderating role of service quality in the Saudi airline industry, which were the main focal points of this analysis. This method has been widely utilized to evaluate relatively complex cause-effect relationship models with an optimization technique; thus, it was considered an acceptable approach to the data analysis (Evermann & Tate, 2016; Hair et al., 2017; Thusi & Maduku, 2020). By capturing the overall heterogeneity of the manifest variables rather than the relations between those variables, this technique focuses on explaining the variance of the dependent variable. Thus, a maximized definition could be obtained by generating latent variable scores that simultaneously decrease residuals (Sarstedt et al., 2014). AMOS-SEM does not assume normality and requires a comparison of two models, namely the structural model and the measurement model. The first measure is the relationship between the constructs and their indicators, while the second defines the ties between the analytical constructs (Jarvis et al., 2003). However, Figure 2 indicates the AMOS results.

It is imperative to evaluate measurement models in terms of reliability and validity to determine whether they represent the topics of interest for the study (Hair et al., 2011). Reliability is the degree to which the test yields consistent outcomes under the same conditions, while validity refers to the extent to which a series of tests collectively captures what is to be measured (Hair et al., 2016). The reliability of each indicator was assessed by its load factor in this study; Appendix A presents confirmatory factor analysis. The structural reliability coefficient and Cronbach’s alpha were then tested to determine the reliability of the building the construct. The average variance extracted (AVE) was also evaluated to assess the

converging validity of the constructs (Table 2). The Heterotrait-Monotrait HTMT methodology was applied for the assessment of the discriminatory validity; the results are displayed in Table 3 (Henseler et al., 2014). A cut-off value of HTMT < 0.9 was suggested to validate the discriminator. Discriminatory validity was established, as the majority of values are below the critical value of 0.9. In addition, most AVE scores met the cut-off value of 0.5, which demonstrates strong convergent validity of all constructs (Henseler et al., 2009). Finally, no multicollinearity problems were noted, as the construction variance inflation factors (VIFs) range from 1.047 to 2.06 (Appendix A).

Table 2. Composite reliability, Cronbach’s alpha, and AVE coefficients

Construct/Indicators	CR	Cronbach’s alpha	AVE
Repatronage intention (RI)	0.95	0.93	0.732
Customer engagement (CE)	0.94	0.92	0.784
Online brand experience (OBE)	0.95	0.93	0.668
Brand love (BL)	0.94	0.90	0.537
Service quality (SQ)	0.93	0.90	0.632

Table 3. Discriminant validity

	RI	CE	OBE	BL	SQ
RI	0.856				
CE	0.638	0.885			
OBE	0.493	0.409	0.817		
BL	0.594	0.517	0.574	0.733	
SQ	0.597	0.605	0.395	0.612	0.795

Note: * means that the diagonal is the square root of the AVE of the latent variables and indicates the highest in any column or row.

Figure 2 depicts the path coefficients (β) and the p values of the relationships that were hypothesized in this study. These values determine the significance, direction, and strength of the relationships

that are involved in the structural model, and they explain the variance in the dependent variable.

The results of the CFA with the maximum-likelihood estimation technique indicate a satisfactory fit of this conceptual framework to the data ($\chi^2 = 1639.670$, $df = 963$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.702$, $RMSEA = 0.083$, $GFI = 0.886$, $CFI = 0.958$, $IFI = 0.981$, $TLI = 0.990$), which conveys that the model fit in the study is suitable (Prentice et al., 2019).

To test the moderating role of service quality, a two-group model was utilized, as it could determine whether service quality moderates the effect of customer engagement on repatronage intention. The results demonstrate that service quality has a moderating role in the link between customer engagement and repatronage intention (Table 4). Specifically, the association between customer engagement and repatronage intention is stronger for the high service quality group. Therefore, the results confirm that service quality exists and is part of the process of shaping consumer behavior intentions.

All hypothesized relationships in this study were supported. Brand love ($\beta = 0.75^{***}$) and the online brand experience ($\beta = 0.11^{**}$) were significant and positive predictors of customer engagement that had a strong influence. Similarly, the online brand experience positively and significantly impacted brand love ($\beta = 0.39^{***}$). Finally, the strongest relationship was evident between customer engagement and repatronage intention, with the former having a positive and significant influence on the latter ($\beta = 0.63^{***}$).

Regarding the explained variances, the R^2 values indicate that 58%, 43%, and 67.5% of the customer engagement, repatronage intention, and sustained usage, respectively, were caused by the proposed predictors (R^2 for the model is 43%). Additionally, to measure the conceptual model's predictive validity, a blindfold procedure was performed (Sarstedt et al., 2014). This procedure produced cross-validated redundancy (Stone-Geisser's Q2) values that were greater than zero for the endogenous construct (Q2 perceived value = 0.381; Q2 advocacy intention = 0.468; Q2 sustained usage = 0.409), which supports the model's predictive relevance. The study tested the predictive validity of

the structural model following the Stone-Geisser Q2. According to Roldán and Sánchez-Franco (2012), to examine the predictive validity of the research model, the cross-validated construct redundancy Q2 is necessary. A Q2 of greater than zero implies that the model has predictive validity. In the main AMOS model, the Q2 was 0.32 for brand love, 0.54 for customer engagement, and 0.39 for repatronage intention. These results are positive and therefore satisfy this condition.

To evaluate H5, a two-group model was utilized to determine whether service quality moderates the effect of customer engagement on repatronage intention. The formula of Chin et al. (2003) was applied to assess the variances in path coefficients between subgroups. The association between customer engagement and repatronage intention was stronger for the high service quality group. The results confirm that service quality exists and is part of the process of shaping consumer behavior intention, as they suggest a moderating impact of service quality on the relationship between customer engagement and repatronage intention.

Table 4. Moderating effect of service quality

Paths	β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Moderating effect				
CE=>RI				
Yes				
Low service quality	0.207	0.232	5.493	0.063
High service quality	0.492	0.163	5.89	0.000

Note: S.E. = standard error; C.R. = critical ratio.

To explain the significant results of the structural model path coefficients, Table 5 below shows the hypotheses' testing results.

Table 5. Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Structural Path	Coefficient	P-value	Decision
H1	OBE → CE**	0.11	0.0364	Supported
H2	OBE → BL***	0.39	0.0000	Supported
H3	BL → CE***	0.57	0.0000	Supported
H4	CE → RI***	0.63	0.0000	Supported
H5	CE → SQ → RI***	0.35	0.0000	Supported

Note: a. OBE: Online Brand Experience; CE: Customer Engagement; BL: Brand Love; RI: Repatronage Intention; SQ: Service Quality. b. *** $p > 0.01$, ** $p > 0.05$.

4. DISCUSSION

This paper examines the relationships among brand love, online brand experience, customer engagement, and repatronage intention, and the moderating role of service quality in the airline industry, which poses a range of interesting implications. Initially, the results empirically confirmed that enhanced brand love is vital to improve the online brand experience through future contributions of customers to the brand (Islam et al., 2019; Prentice et al., 2019). For the airline industry, the results of the present study indicate that customer engagement, as a critical predictor of repatronage intention, is fostered by the provision of superior service quality. Thus, the findings imply that marketers should concentrate on delivering a superior online brand experience – rather than relying on practical service attributes – to generate brand love (Islam et al., 2019). In particular, enjoyable online interactions on social networking sites reinforce customer loyalty to a brand and encourage more beneficial brand experiences by creating and sustaining positive feelings, memories, and emotional states among consumers (Yu et al., 2020).

The study results indicate an important moderating function of service efficiency in the proposed associations in the model. Accordingly, they reflect that customers differ in their ways of thinking. It is, therefore, necessary for scholars and companies to recognize gaps in service quality when analyzing and opting for active participation in social networks. This study concerns the level of service quality as assessed by travelers, which performs a

moderating role in determining customer engagement and repatronage intention. This suggestion is predicated on the assumption of Prentice et al. (2020) that customer-based variables are more reflective of the customer's desire to interact with a brand on an online platform. To encourage consumers to respond favorably and connect with the brand on a social networking platform, a company should offer premium support. Many similar airlines and flights can operate safe transport to their target location. According to Prentice et al. (2019), there was no significant moderation of the effects of the in-flight service on customer engagement. This result suggests that the relationship of flight attendants with travelers forms their experience with the airline and their emotional attachment.

Airlines should focus on engaging customers to improve their experiences. However, the confirmatory result suggests that the service provided by the flight attendant has a direct effect on the involvement of the passenger. To engage customers, the focus should be on enhancing the customer experience. However, the confirmatory finding indicates that the service rendered by flight attendants has a clear impact on customer participation. Many flight service components often reveal major consequences of moderation across various airlines. This result, along with Prentice and Wong (2015), indicates that customer support is important in engaging consumers and improving consumer satisfaction. Following customer engagement, it is relevant to concentrate on service quality to boost the consumer brand experience and revisit intention (Vivek et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

The adaptability of the airline industry to the rapidly changing market climate, and perhaps even the powerful approach and methods of digital marketing, such as the use of the platforms and online communication networks, have resulted in sustainable and resilient developments. This study examines customer engagement antecedent and consequences among brand love, online brand experience, and repatronage intention, and the moderating role of service quality in the airline industry, which poses a range of interesting implications. The results empirically confirmed that brand love is a vital tool to improve the online brand experience through future contributions of customers to the brand. For the airline industry, the results of the present study indicate that customer engagement, as a critical predictor of repatronage intention, is fostered by the provision of superior service quality. Thus, the findings imply that marketers should concentrate on delivering a superior online brand experience – rather than relying on practical service attributes – to generate brand love. In particular, enjoyable online interactions on social networking sites reinforce customer loyalty to a brand and encourage more beneficial

brand experiences by creating and sustaining positive feelings, memories, and emotional states among consumers. Moreover, the study contributes to the findings of customer engagement indicating a potential line of future studies based on the notion that service quality is critical in improving customer satisfaction. While this paper focused on the relationship between online brand experience, brand love, customer engagement, service quality, and repatronage intention, further studies could employ different arrangements. The implications of the study support policymakers, investors, customers, and academics. Another implication that suggested by Shaikh et al. (2020) in mobile banking study which could be relevant to our study, when the airline industry apply voice or virtual assistant technology on App as features it would improve customers online experience and engagement.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Hawazen Alamoudi.
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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Measurement statistics of construct scales

Construct/Indicators	Standard loading	CR	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	Mean	SD	t-statistic	Skewness	Kurtosis
Repatronage intent (RI): Islam et al. (2019); Kivela et al. (1999)										
To what degree would you rate your intent of return to travel with this airline? RI1	0.96					3.44	0.84	29.37	-1.67	2.39
To what degree would you rate your intentions to travel with this airline? RI2	0.94					4.78	0.86	22.38	-2.35	3.52
To what degree would you rate your definite intentions of return to travel with this airline? RI3	0.92	0.95	1.047	0.93	0.732	4.31	0.78	22.20	-0.53	3.93
Customer engagement (CE): Hollebeek et al. (2019)										
Using airline website gets me to think about the brand. CE1	0.97					3.34	0.84	27.33	-3.35	1.54
I think about airline website a lot when I am using it. CE2	0.95	0.94	1.263	0.92	0.784	4.42	0.80	25.42	-4.73	2.42
Using airline website stimulates my interest to learn more about this airline. CE3	0.93					3.29	0.83	23.28	-3.48	4.38
I feel very positive when I use airline website. CE4	0.89					3.20	0.78	21.29	-4.39	2.10
Using airline website makes me happy. CE5	0.88					3.64	0.79	27.89	-2.38	4.30
I feel good when I use airline website CE6	0.97					3.47	0.83	21.25	-5.28	1.29
I am proud to use airline website. CE7	0.94					4.30	0.82	18.30	-6.34	3.25
Online brand experience (OBE)										
The layout of the airline website is appealing. OBE1	0.95					4.38	0.82	25.40	-2.45	2.49
The airline website is easy to navigate. OBE2	0.94					4.12	0.86	23.06	-0.98	1.82
Results are always returned promptly when browsing this airline website. OBE3	0.93					3.29	0.78	32.10	-0.23	2.90
The results of this airline website are always up-to-date. OBE4	0.90	0.95	1.32	0.93	0.668	3.89	0.79	18.29	-0.34	2.07
Accurate search results are always returned when browsing this airline website. OBE5	0.95					3.52	0.85	14.30	-2.19	2.18
This airline brand is emotional. OBE6	0.90					3.20	0.80	24.29	-0.28	1.29
Brand love (BL): Prentice et al. (2019); Bagozzi et al. (2017)										
Flying with this airline says something "true" and "deep" about whom you are as a person. BL1	0.89					4.41	0.80	25.40	-1.50	1.39
Is this airline able to make you look like you want to look? BL2	0.85					4.90	0.83	22.43	-0.88	2.14
Is this airline able to do something that makes your life more meaningful? BL3	0.94					3.90	0.87	25.19	-0.47	2.10
Do you find yourself thinking about this airline? BL4	0.93					3.29	0.79	19.28	-0.57	1.29
Are you willing to spend a lot of money improving and fine-tuning a product from this airline after you buy it? BL5	0.90	0.94	2.023	0.90	0.537	4.03	0.83	31.29	-0.89	3.07

Table A1 (cont.). Measurement statistics of construct scales

Construct/Indicators	Standard loading	CR	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	AVE	Mean	SD	t-statistic	Skewness	Kurtosis
Do you feel yourself desiring to flight with this airline? BL6	0.87					3.89	0.81	21.57	-0.67	2.18
Do you feel that there is a natural fit between you and this airline? BL7	0.88					4.07	0.83	23.24	-0.98	2.85
You feel emotionally connected to this airline. BL8	0.92					3.29	0.84	22.84	-0.37	1.29
Service quality (SQ): Prentice and Correia Loureiro (2017)										
The temperature during the flight was comfortable. SQ1	0.90					3.34	0.79	21.29	-1.45	2.05
It was not very cold/hot during the flight. SQ2	0.98					4.14	0.84	24.89	-1.06	2.14
It was not too dry during the flight. SQ3	0.89	0.93	1.484	0.90	0.632	3.29	0.84	23.29	-0.37	1.28
The seat and tray for eating and reading were comfortable. SQ4	0.90					3.89	0.77	31.56	-0.56	2.19
The seating layout in this plane was comfortably arranged. SQ5	0.94					3.28	0.82	22.10	-1.38	2.78
Overall, the layout in this plane made it easy for me to move around. SQ6	0.92					3.17	0.81	21.20	-2.16	2.37
The staff was knowledgeable and helpful during the flight. SQ7	0.95					3.26	0.79	25.28	-1.28	1.20
The staff was courteous and professional during the flight. SQ8	0.94					3.00	0.84	26.36	-0.46	1.63
There was enough staff during the flight. SQ9	0.90					3.17	0.83	21.84	-0.78	1.61
The staff demonstrated interest and enthusiasm during the flight. SQ10	0.93					3.26	0.81	32.18	-0.53	2.04
The odor was not strange/unfamiliar during the flight. SQ11	0.90					3.11	0.85	25.38	-0.89	2.56
The odor during the flight was acceptable. SQ12	0.91					3.29	0.82	27.28	-0.63	3.20
The odor was fine during the flight. SQ13	0.90					3.76	0.81	21.29	-0.54	1.27