Experience with Brands and Perceived Quality in Most Remembered Medicines

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KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

This work aimed to analyze a customer experience with the brand and if it has a positive effect on the perceived quality of the medicines. The non-probabilistic sample included the participation of 209 individuals, who answered the questionnaire available on the electronic platform regarding Google Forms through social networks. To meet the central objective of this study, i.e., to test the hypothesis of the relationship between the experience of the drug brands and the perceived quality, equation modeling was used, even using the PLS-Sem statistical tool. The results achieved demonstrated the existence of a relationship between the experience of the brands with the perceived quality with a positive and predictive average effect, in addition, the results also showed that moderated by gender, the female coefficient increased whereas the male was not significant.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho envolve analisar a experiência do cliente com a marca e se essa tem um efeito positivo na qualidade percebida dos medicamentos, quando moderados pelo gênero. A amostra não probabilística contou com a participação de 209 indivíduos, que responderam ao questionário disponibilizado, em plataforma eletrônica *Google forms*, por intermédio das redes sociais. Para atender o objetivo central deste estudo, ou seja, testar a hipótese da relação entre experiência das marcas de medicamentos e a qualidade percebida, se recorreu à modelagem de equações por meio da ferramenta estatística PLS-Sem. Os resultados alcançados demonstraram a existência da relação entre a experiência das marcas com a qualidade percebida com efeito médio positivo e preditivo, ademais, os resultados mostrarão que moderados pelo gênero, se aumenta o coeficiente do feminino enquanto o masculino não foi significativo.

1 Introduction

The basic rule of all purchase is related to the reason for an exchange which is satisfied by a product of reasonable or expected value. Thus, the delivery with a superior perceived quality is considered one of the biggest challenges in marketing strategies of organizations (Slater & Narver, 2000; Snoj, Pisnik Korda, & Mumel, 2004).

In this sense, the brand is an important component for consumer decision-making, as it differentiates a product or service from other competitors, protecting the buyer of similar products (Aaker, 1992; Hakala, Svensson, & Vincze, 2012; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Therefore, this difference is what makes the consumer to choose products of a brand, as well as the marketing actions for brand recognition define its value (Datta, Ailawadi, & Van Heerde, 2017; Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000).

In addition, brand equity also includes perceived quality, which is defined by the consumer's judgment about the superiority or excellence of a product (Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality is the comparison between consumer expectations and the actual performance of a brand (Snoj at al., 2004).

Thus, the recognition of the quality of a brand, provided by the surpassing of consumer expectations, may strengthen consumer expectations regarding the brand (Aaker, 1992; Zeithaml, 1988).

The variables that influence this consumer's expectation with the brand may differ between consumers with high perceived quality and consumers with low perceived quality (Calvo-Porral & Lévy-Mangin, 2017).

Although there is a lack of research on the relationship between brand experience and the quality of brand perception (Pina & Dias, 2020), studies have pointed out the significance of the relationship with a questionnaire applied to Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) of Swedish companies (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010), with Iranian health insurance customers (Eslami, 2020), even as with triple play telecommunications users in Portugal (Moreira, Silva, & Moutinho, 2017) and with 333 Nespresso customers, who answered an internet questionnaire (Pina & Dias, 2020). Not being found in the searches across the bases EBSCO,

Scielo and Google Scholar, it could be found that articles were associated with the genre moderating the relationship between experience with the brand and perceived quality and, similarly, with medicines as the object of research. Furthermore, what differentiates this research is the simplicity of the theoretical model, making room for its improvement.

Thus, brand recognition and the consumer's experience concerning the products or services of that brand matter are listed in the following question: does the customer's experience with the brand have a positive effect on the perceived quality of medicines, when moderated by gender? To answer the question, the objective aimed to analyze the customer's experience with the brand and whether this had a positive effect on the perceived quality of drugs moderated by gender.

This work intended to fill the gap that demonstrates this relationship, making use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)), to prove or not the hypothesis that the customer's experience with the brand had a positive effect on the perceived quality of medicines.

2 Theoretical model

This section discussed the constructs that make up the proposed theoretical model, as well as the hypotheses provided for in the research.

2.1 Consumer behavior

More and more, market administration scholars seek to understand the phenomena that lead the consumer how to decide to buy, based on social, demographic, economic, psychological and customs factors, among others (Levrini & Maciel, 2016). In this sense, "buying behavior involves mental and emotional activities during the purchase or use of products that satisfy the consumer's needs or desires" (Mattei, Machado, & Oliveira, 2008, p. 27).

Consumer behavior is also influenced by cultural factors, when the individual is strongly influenced by the family and institutions regarding the values of their country or region; social, when it is influenced by the family cycle, friends, colleagues, i.e., by affinity groups; personal, such as: age, financial conditions, personality, among

others and; psychological factors, such as motivation, perception, learning and memory (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

In summary, consumer purchases are extremely influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics (Souza et al., 2016), being internal and external factors that determine consumer behavior in pursuit of satisfying a need (Castro, Pitombeira, Ferreira Neto, Caetano, & Silva, 2020).

2.2 Brand

For centuries, the brand served simply to identify the producer and his/her products, differentiating one manufacturer from another (Scharf, Soriano-Sierra, & Prim, 2007). Currently, the brand represents a good or service, serving to differentiate itself from other developed products or services, adding dimensions that satisfy the same consumer needs (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

A trademark is a name and/or distinctive symbol (such as a logo, trademark or packaging design) designed to identify the products or services of a seller or a group of sellers and differentiate those products or services from competitors. Thus, a brand signals the source of the product to the customer and protects the customer and the producer from competitors, who would try to provide products that look identical (Aaker, 1992).

The brand is related to a synthesis of the good and the bad, transforming itself into a symbolic and effective link between the products that this is offered to the consumers, and that it is intended for. By absorbing ephemeral images and sensations, the brand becomes a concept, when even slightly it is appreciated and recognized, occupying a part of the consumer's memory (Mello & Gouvêa, 2014). Due to these characteristics, it is up to the Marketing area to manage the brand, in addition to being the most valuable asset in a company, seeing that it generates intense customer loyalty with the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

A strong brand identity is communicated through consistent communication over the years (Hayes, 2015). The consistency of the message leads the consumer to easily assimilate and identify the brand's position and symbols in various communications, such as in the launch of other products, services, events and others (Aaker, 2003; Keller, 2011).

Brands bring a unique meaning to consumers, and this meaning resulting from a personal experience with the brand can create an emotional connection and a relationship between consumer and brand (Elyria, Ravi, & Enrique, 2014).

Brands represent extremely valuable pieces of legal ownership, capable of influencing consumer behavior, being bought and sold, and providing the security of sustained future revenue for their owners. The value added, directly or indirectly, by these various benefits is often called brand equity (Keller, & Brexendorf, 2019).

In this sense, brand equity can be defined as the difference in consumer choice between a focal brand product and a non-branded product, considering the same level of product features. This definition deals with the comparison of two products, which are identical in every respect except the brand name (Yoo et al., 2000). In the same sense, brand equity is the preference and differential response to the marketing effort that a product obtains as a result of its brand identification. Brand equity can be measured using consumer perceptions or sales (Datta et al., 2017).

Thus, brand equity includes five assets as following: a) brand loyalty; b) brand recognition; c) perceived brand quality; d) brand associations; e) other proprietary brand assets, eg patents, trademarks, channel relationships (Aaker, 1992).

However, according to Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995), there are five important considerations to define brand value. First, brand equity refers to consumer perceptions, not to any objective indicators. Second, brand equity refers to an overall value associated with a brand. Third, the overall value associated with the brand is derived from the brand name and not just from the physical aspects of the brand. Fourth, brand equity is not absolute but relative to competition. Finally, brand equity positively influences financial performance.

Thus, a high brand equity implies that customers are familiar and have many positive, strong and unique associations in memory related to the brand, perceive that the brand is of high quality and are loyal to the brand (Yoo et al., 2000; Hakala et al., 2012).

Therefore, brand equity is a central construct in marketing theory and practice. Companies invest

considerable efforts over many years to build their brand equity. These companies reap the benefits of this investment in the product market and financial market outcomes and leverage their brand value to introduce brand extensions (Datta et al., 2017).

For the authors Cravens & Guilding (2001) there are several ways to evaluate a brand and there are several reasons why organizations evaluate brands, which can be the following: for financial reporting, acquisitions or mergers; corporate strategies for evaluating the management of brands, from the brand portfolio; and the brand can be measured by the perceived quality, which can be understood as delivering a product or service that exceeds the customer's expectations.

In this sense, quality is not something static, it is linked to the perception, by the consumer, and their expectations regarding that product or service (Aaker, 1992; Zeithaml, 1988).

2.3 Perceived quality

In this sense, quality can be broadly defined as superiority or excellence. By extension, perceived quality can be defined as the consumer's judgment about the general excellence or superiority of a product or service in relation to the intended objective (Aaker, 1992; Zeithaml, 1988). Perceived quality generates value, providing a reason to buy, as well as differentiating the brand, attracting the interest of channel members, being the basis for line extensions and supporting a higher price, thereby generating predictable sales and profits (Aaker, 1992) .

Furthermore, the quality of a product is assessed as high or low, depending on its excellence or relative superiority between products or services, which are seen as substitutes by the consumer (Zeithaml, 1988). Therefore, it is based on subjective assessments of product quality, by consumers or users and not by managers or specialists (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Thus, the perceived high quality would lead a consumer to choose a certain brand over other competing brands. Therefore, as brand quality is perceived by consumers, brand value will increase (Yoo et al., 2000).

Perceived quality measures the subjective judgment of consumers about the overall excellence or superiority of a brand and addresses overall quality rather than individual elements of quality (Yoo et al., 2000). Thus, the perceived quality of the product is a critical issue for producers and marketers, as the perceived quality can offer an opportunity for differentiation (Konuk, 2018).

Therefore, brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand associations can strengthen brand loyalty, even as increasing customer satisfaction and providing reasons to buy products (Aaker, 1992).

Previous works sought to demonstrate the relationship between brand experience and perceived quality, for instance, Pina and Dias (2020) tested the relationships between brand experience with loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations moderated by gender, however, the moderation was not significant. In Klabi's work (2020) the hypothesis that brand experience moderates or amplifies the effect of self-image congruence on perceived quality was tested. The hypothesis of service quality moderating the relationship between brand experience and brand love was verified in the study by Prentice, Wang and Loureiro (2019).

2.4 Brand experience

Marketing traditionally focuses on studying the physical aspects of products and services, such as functionality, price, availability or quality (Iglesias, Singh, & Batista-Foguet, 2011). However, research shows that consumers do not just buy products or services, they buy relationship (Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002) and value (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Furthermore, marketing scholars have found that customer experience is the key issue to be managed (Berry et al., 2002).

In this sense, to reduce risk in decision-making, consumers rely on brand value, which consists of being able to assign responsibility to a specific manufacturer or distributor, simplifying decision-making and reducing risks. A brand signals a certain level of quality so that satisfied customers may choose products again (Hakala et al, 2012).

Thus, customer experiences are an internal and subjective response to any direct contact, which usually occurs during purchase, use and service and is usually initiated by the customer, or indirect contact, which especially involves meetings unplanned with representations of a company's products, services or brands and takes the form of recommendations or word-of-mouth criticism, advertising, reporting, analysis, and so on (Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

Before trying out a service or good, customers should rate it primarily based on their perception of the brand name. However, once customers have the opportunity to try the product, they receive additional information that is even more integrated into their perception of quality (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010). In this sense, the customer experience is defined as the cognitive recognition or perception, which follows from the stimulated motivation of a customer, who observes or participates in an event, being a method that generates a bond between the customer and the product and provides a memorable experience for the customer, adding value to the product (Chen & Lin, 2015).

All aspects of brand experiences are triggered when people seek, buy, consume, evaluate, and even remember products and services (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). Brand experiences arise directly from physical clues, such as a store's physical environment, salespeople, and company practices. These experiences are also indirectly associated with websites or advertisements (Hui & Bateson, 1990).

Furthermore, the quality of the consumer's relationship with the brand refers to the degree to which the consumer perceives that their relationship with the brand meets their expectations (Oliveira, Caetano, & Coelho, 2017).

The brand experience is related to, however distinct from, associative, evaluative and affective constructs of the brand, such as brand personality, brand involvement, attitudes and brand attachment, being a more holistic evaluator of a brand from the consumer's perspective (Brakus et al., 2009).

Before trying out a service or good, customers should primarily evaluate it based on their perception of the brand. However, as soon as customers have the opportunity to try the product, they receive additional information that further

integrates their perception of quality (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010).

Experiences happen whenever a customer interacts with a brand-related stimulus. Service quality is linked to customer interaction, such as personal support or empathy. It is predictable that the provision of positive experiences, through interaction with the personal brand or a positive service judgment, will lead to an increase in the perceived quality of a service that exceeds customer expectations (Moreira, Silva, & Moutinho, 2017).

In this context, in the survey conducted with 647 respondents, Biedenbach and Marell (2010) tested the hypotheses that the customer experience had a positive effect on perceived quality, another confirmed hypothesis was the positive relationship between the experience with the brand and its recognition, consumer reminder. In this sense, the following hypothesis was hypothesis:

H1 - The customer's experience with the brand had a positive effect on perceived quality.

Women and men assessed shape quality differently using extrinsic, intrinsic, appearance and performance cues (Gitimu, Workman, & Robinson, 2013). Gender differences in the perception of quality affected customer satisfaction more strongly for women than for men (Wang & Kim, 2019). Therefore, in this case there was the following hypothesis:

H2 - Gender moderated the relationship between brand experience and perceived quality.

Figure 1 represents the structural model of the study, graphically, demonstrating that the perceived quality is influenced by the customer's experience with that brand.
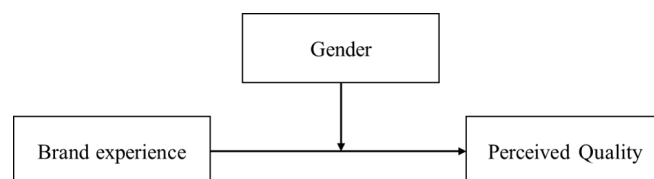

Figure 1 – Structural research model

3 Method and Research Procedures

It was a quantitative, correlational research, with a study of two or more variables, descriptive, causal, which sought to understand the existing relationship, and explanatory that aimed to answer questions related to the perceptions of the participants, type field research, with the data collection developed through questionnaires in a sample of university students (Cooper, & Schindler, 2016).

To meet the aim of this study, the non-probabilistic and convenience sample had the participation of 209 individuals, who were asked to participate voluntarily through social networks, as long as they were over eighteen years old, and the sample was derived from the snow ball sampling technique, a model in which people transfer the research to others, and those to others, thus forming a snowball (Cooper, & Schindler, 2016).

Initially, a secondary survey was carried out using academic search sites to locate articles and/or books that support the framework of this work. The Euromonitor International database was also used to identify the drug brands, which led the national ranking, the which are: Allegra; Benegrip; Cimegripe; Coristina; Decongex Plus; Expec; Halls; Naldecon; Valda; and Vick.

Then, the questionnaire was available on Google forms in the month of April/2020, and this form needed to be answered.

The questionnaire was formed by demographic variables, with experience with the brand with answers between 'yes' or 'no', the perceived quality with answers in the form of a Likert-type scale, ranging from: totally disagree and totally agree; and which was the most remembered brand, according to determined in Table 1.

Table 1
Research instrument.

Construct Brand	Item	Question	References
Top of mind	P1	What brand name drug that first came to mind?	The authors (2020)
Brand experience	P2 P3	Have you ever bought a branded product?	Yoo e Donthu, (2001)
	P4	Have you already bought another branded product? Do you currently use/own any branded products?	
Perceived quality	P5.1 P5.2 P5.3 P5.4 P5.5 P5.6	The product brand was of high quality The likely product quality was extremely high. The likely functionality of the product was too high The likely reliability of the product was very high. The product brand was of good quality The branded product appeared to be of low quality (I)	Yoo *et at.*,(2000)
Social	P6 P7 P8 P9	Gender What was your age group? What was your education? What was the family income?	The authors (2020)

Data were tabulated in an Excel ® spreadsheet and exported to IBM® SPSS® Statistics, version 20, for descriptive statistics calculations, and to Smart PLSSEM, version 3.2.9, used for structural equation modeling (Ringle , Wende, & Becker, 2015). Furthermore, the PLS-SEM operated as a multiple regression analysis, which made it particularly valuable for exploratory research purposes, and its use is indicated when recording: a) abnormal data; b) small samples and; c) formative constructs (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins and Kuppelwieser, 2014).

In order to meet the assumptions of the confirmatory factor analysis, variable P5.6 was excluded, as it had a low factor loading.

4 Analysis of Results

In this section, the data were analyzed and the results discussed and, in some cases, confronted with the literature that supports this article.

Therefore, as shown in Table 2, 54.5% of respondents were female, the predominant age group was from 30 to 37 years old, and 37.3% were

postgraduates. The identified income was higher than five (5) minimum wages for 43.5% of respondents, and of those who received this income, 85% had at least a college degree.

Table 2
Demographic data

Variables	Description	Frequency
Gender	Male	45.5%
	Female	54.5%
Age Group	Up to 21 years old	13.4%
	From 22 to 29 years old	30.1%
	From 30 to 37 years old	32.1%
	From 38 years onwards	24.4%
Education	Fundamental	2.9%
	Medium	34.9%
	Higher	24.9%
	Graduate	37.3%
Income	Up to 1 minimum wage (SM)	8.6%
	Above 1 to 3 SM	25.8%
	Above 3 to 5 SM	22.1%
	Above 5 to 10 SM	20.5%
	Above 10 SM	16.7%
	No income	6.3%

Table 3 shows the drug brands most remembered by the survey participants when they answered: which drug brand that first came to your mind?

The three most common measures of brand awareness are known as premium awareness, assisted and unassisted (Laurent, Kapferer & Roussel, 1995). All measures suggested the brand, with differences concentrated in the nature and responsiveness of the consumer (Romaniuk, Wight, & Faulkner, 2017). In this case, the research took place with the help of the list containing the ten brands most remembered by Brazilians in the segment of medicines for coughs and allergies.

Table 3
Most remembered medicine brand

Brand	Quantity	Percentage
Benegrip	59	28.2
Vick	47	22.5
Allegra	38	18.2
Cimegripe	15	7.2
Coristina	15	7.2
Decongex Plus	14	6.7
Naldecon	9	4.3
Valda	5	2.4
Expec	4	1.6
Halls	3	1.4

As shown in Table 3, Benegrip was the drug brand most remembered by respondents. Benegrip is an analgesic and antipyretic, symptomatic medication for the treatment of flu and cold, being marketed in three types of products: Benegrip (6 tablet blister), Benegrip Multi (vial with 240 ml) and Benegrip (20 tablet box), produced by Hypera Pharma.

Table 4 presents the respondents' overall shopping experience. It is noticed that the choice of brand was based on the respondent's experience.

Table 4
Shopping experience - general

Variable	Yes	No
P2 - Have you ever bought a branded product?	89.5%	10.5%
P3 - Have you already bought another branded product?	63.2%	36.8%
P4 - Do you currently use/own any branded products?	65.6%	34.4%

A new analysis was performed, this time using the Benegrip variable in intersection with the others in the purchasing experience.

Table 5
Shopping experience - Benegrip

Variable	Yes	No
P2- Have you ever purchased a branded product?	91.5%	8.5%
P3 - Have you already bought another branded product?	61.0%	39.0%
P4 - Do you currently use/own any branded product?	54.3%	45.7%

Table 5 shows the same information, using the variable Benegrip, which represented the most remembered drug, and the results were similar. With the use of the product, it was easier to remember the brand. Table 6 presents the results of the items related to the perceived quality construct. With a mode of 4, which represents agree and the level of agreement (NC) of 80%, i.e., these respondents somehow agreed with the proposed assertions.

Table 6
Perceived quality construct

Item	1	2	3	4	5	Me	NC
P5.1	6	6	28	100	69	4.0	80%
P5.2	3	12	33	103	58	3.9	77%

P5.3	3	10	20	113	63	4.0	84%
P5.4	3	8	23	114	61	4.0	83%
P5.5	3	7	18	117	64	4.1	86%
P5.6	11	25	21	65	87	3.9	72%

Observing the results, the perceived quality resulted in expressive values, as well as the shopping experience, in this sense, when the consumer had the opportunity to try the product, he/she received additional information, which was even more integrated with his/her perception of quality (Biedenbach & Marell, 2010). To verify the existence of a relationship between the two variables, the PLS-SEM was used, using structural equations.

4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis

Figure 2 demonstrates the model with a second-order latent variable (repeating indicators). For a better fit of the model, the variable P5.6 was excluded from the perceived quality construct for presenting a factor loading below 0.50 (Hair at al, 2009).

For the formation of the VL "Experience with the brand", the categorical variables (dummy) P2, P3 and P4 were used, which form the reflexive construct. In this sense, the variables P2, P3 and P4 became manifest variables of the experience with the construct brand.

Table 7 demonstrates the reliability and validity of the first order constructs (VL). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.5 and composite reliability could meet the minimum required of 0.70. The values of the diagonals were higher than the other values of the constructs, in this case the discriminant validity of the model was confirmed (Hair et al., 2009).

Table 7
Reliability and validity of the construct

VL de 1ª Ordem	P2	P3	P4	Qual_perc
P2 - Experience	1.00			
P3 – Experience	0.78	1.00		
P4 – Experience	0.70	0.34	1.00	
Perceived quality	0.35	0.27	0.12	0.89
Composite reliability	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.955
Average variance extracted (AVE)	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.809

Note: values on the diagonal are related to the square root of the AVEs; all correlations are significant at 5%.

Regarding Table 8, which demonstrates the reliability and validity of the latent variable of the structural model, considering that the composite reliability > 0.07 and AVEs > 0.50, in addition, the values in diagonals could surpass the other values of the construct, indeed it was confirmed the discriminant validity of the structural model (Hair et al., 2009).

Table 8
Reliability and validity of the construct

VL of the structural model	1	2
Brand experience	0.718	
Perceived quality	0.351	0.885
Composite reliability	0.760	0.955
Average variance extracted (AVE)	0.515	0.809

Note: values on the diagonal are related to the square root of the AVEs; all correlations are significant at 5%; the brand experience is a second order VL

Table 9 presents the results of the predictive validity indicators (Q^2), which must be different from zero, and the R^2, which indicates the quality of the adjusted model. For the area of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Cohen (1988) suggested that the model R2=2% could be classified as a small effect, R2=13% as a medium effect and R2=26% as a large one. As shown in Table 9, the perceived quality construct had a medium effect and the other effects are large.

Table 9
Predictive values

Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2
P2 - Experience	0.445	0.436	0.405
P3 – Experience	0.608	0.611	0.581
P4 – Experience	0.491	0.492	0.460
Perceived quality	0.124	0.126	0.095

Finally, Table 10 shows the general fit of the model, in this case, the hypothesis was confirmed ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$). The result was similar to the work of Eslami (2020), which showed significance in the relationship between experience with the brand and perceived quality ($\beta = 0.665$, p

< 0.001) and with the research by Moreira et al. (2017), through which they validated the hypothesis of the influence of experience with the brand and perceived quality (β = 0.445, p < 0.001). The result could also converge with what was presented by Pina and Dias (2020), who validated the positive relationship of the dimensions of the experience with the brand with the perceived quality. Likewise, the research conducted by Biedenbach and Marell (2010) resulted in the small direct effect of customer experience on perceived quality (β= 0.16, p < 0.10).

Table 10

Structural coefficients - general model

Hypothe sis	Coefficient	p-value	f²	Supported
H1	0.351	0.000	0.141	YES

Brand experiences lead to the creation of emotional bonds between the brand and the consumer, which increases brand trust and, consequently, the brand's perceived quality (Pina & Dias, 2020).

4.3 Moderating role of gender

Biological sex was considered a more appropriate and practical segmentation variable (Palan, 2001). Therefore, this study considered the moderating role of gender as biological sex (male versus female) in the relationship that brand experience influences perceived quality.

This study employed multigroup causal analysis, in structural equations, to examine the moderating effect of gender. The present study divided the entire sample into two distinct groups (female 95; male 114) and adopted the process used by Khan and Rahman (2017). It was found that the experience with the brand and its relationship with perceived quality was significant for women and not significant for men.

Table 11
Structural coefficients - Gender

Hypothesis	Female		Male	
	Coeffi- cient	p-value	Coeffi- cient	p-value
H1	0.406	0.000	0.206	0.072

As shown, the experience with the brand was directly and positively related to the perceived quality, proving the initial hypothesis of the work.

The relationship indicated that the quality of the consumer's relationship with the brand could be referred to the degree to which the consumer could perceive that their relationship with the brand met their expectations (Oliveira et al., 2017).

Women were more interested in quality and use more information to assess quality than men (Gitimu et al., 2013). Perhaps, men were not as picky about quality or rely on the brand name as an indication of the level of quality they have experienced in the past (Lee & Workman, 2021).

The results could converge with the evolution of marketing research evidenced by Berry et al. (2002) and other scholars such as Haeckel, Carbone and Berry (2003), Morrison and Crane (2007), who could bring the customer experience as a key issue for brand development. In addition to showing that the brand experience, this set of sensations, feelings and behavioral responses were evoked by different stimuli that occur when the customer directly enters or indirectly interacts with a certain brand.

Furthermore, the profile of respondents, the use of medication as a reference for the client and the use of gender as a moderator fills the gaps found in the literature.

One of the limitations of the study was associated with the non-probabilistic collection model, which allowed for a concentration of high income and education among respondents. Furthermore, the model that presents the marks in the questionnaire could influence the participants' responses.

5 Conclusion

The article explored the brand as a reference when making a purchase decision, as well as the importance of the customer experience, which is related to the perceived quality of this brand.

Regarding the perceived quality construct, the questions had an average of 80.9% of respondents confirming that the brands indicated present good quality.

The positive relationship between experience with the brand and its perceived quality was confirmed, with a coefficient of 0.351, p-value < 0.05, and with a predictive value (f² = 0.14) close to the average, with females having a coefficient

higher than the male, which did not result in significant, leading to believe that women are more linked to the perception of the quality of brands than men. In this sense, the research question was answered considering that the greater the customer experience with the brand, the greater the recognition of its quality.

6 Contributions

It is expected to contribute to the academy with a model that associates experience with the quality of the brand, suggesting that this model may be replicated in other regions, with other products or services with the purpose of confirming and improving the model.

Regarding moderation by gender, it was found that women were more identified than men, demonstrating the need for marketing work aimed at the male audience, aiming to bring the product they use closer to the brand they most remember.

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