

PRODUCT AESTHETIC AND BRAND LOYALTY AS DRIVERS OF BRAND
PSYCHOLOGICAL BRAND OWNERSHIP: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE
OPINIONS OF A SAMPLE OF CUSTOMERS OF SMARTPHONE BRANDS COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

Companies strive to make their brand saturated in the lives of customers, and perhaps the psychological ownership of the brand represents one of the best ways to make customers own the same brand to build positive behavior, and therefore it becomes necessary for companies to know the way in which the psychological ownership of the brand can be acquired, and to this end the current study aimed to examine the role of the aesthetic product represented by (customer acumen, customer value, customer response) and loyalty to the brand and represented by (behavioral loyalty, attitude loyalty) as driving factors for the psychological ownership of the brand, among a sample of customers of companies brands of smartphones, as distributed (359) questionnaire to a group of customers of companies brands of smartphones, and in order to achieve the goal of the study used a set of methods to ensure in the test of the applied side of the study, Perhaps the most famous of these methods are the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, level of importance, Pearson's correlation coefficient (SPSS.V.27), and the coefficients of influence between internal variables according to the program (AMOS. V.26), the results showed that product aesthetics and brand loyalty contribute to improving the results of psychological ownership of the brand.

Keywords: product aesthetic, brand loyalty, brand psychological property.

INTRODUCTION

In the world of business and marketing, brand psychological ownership is one of the important factors that add value to a brand and contribute to its success and achievement of its business goals. Product aesthetics and brand loyalty are driving factors in achieving brand psychological ownership (Moodley & Machela, 2022:74).

When a product is well designed and attractive, and presented in an aesthetic style that catches the eye, it helps to attract the attention of customers and increase the value of the brand in their eyes (Marmat, 2023:484). When products are presented with high quality and good customer service, it helps to achieve brand loyalty from customers and increase brand psychological ownership.

In addition, brand loyalty can be significantly influenced by the aesthetic of the product (Kim et al., 2021:12030), as attractive, elegant and distinctive design can help strengthen the

emotional relationship between customers and the brand and achieve more psychological ownership of the brand.

Product aesthetics and brand loyalty are strong driving factors to achieve psychological brand ownership, and achieve success for companies in the market (Mishra & Malhotra,2021:10), by improving the organization's reputation in the market and enhancing its competitive position by building a unique competitive advantage, which greatly refines its experience, and this improves its ability to provide high quality products and excellent customer service (Tu&Wu, 2021:505), which requires effective communication with customers in order to identify their perceptions towards the brand and provide them with support and assistance, hence it can be said that the psychological ownership of the brand requires a lot of effort, planning and good implementation, and is one of the most important goals that companies seek in competitive markets, as it helps to achieve success and continuity in the market and increase revenues and profits.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Product Aesthetics: Marketing research and consumer behavior recognize that consumers use design/product to express their different social identities and that aesthetic aspects of design/product influence consumers' product adoption choices. Visual aesthetics is the first thing about products that relate to consumers, and aesthetics about usability and innovation have symbolic functions that affect how products are evaluated (Park & Gunn, 2016:4). See (Wang&Hsu, 2019:6806; Jitender,2018:366) pointed to product aesthetics as a key factor in enhancing consumers' emotional attachment to a particular device because consumer perceptions are important for emotion. Pan (2018:36) argues that product aesthetics represent the process of how products communicate meaning and evoke emotions through the senses. The concept of product aesthetics also embodies the self-expressed consideration of consumers' choice of one group of products to which they feel more responsive compared to another (Jiang & Song,2022:4894).

The aesthetic of the product can be seen as a source of competitive advantage (Wiecek et al.,2019:549), when a company's products have an aesthetic and design that catches the eye, this attracts more customers and helps to achieve competitive advantage when the product is presented in the market, on the other hand, the aesthetic of the product is an important factor in achieving customer satisfaction, as customers tend to buy products that are aesthetic and attractive design, which increases the value of the product and helps to increase sales and achieve profits.

Product aesthetics are the design and aesthetic characteristics that give the product visual appeal and a distinctive user experience (Schrepp & Thomaschewski, 2019:1; & Thüring,2018:14). The aesthetics of the product include many factors such as the external shape of the product, its color, texture, interior design, the quality of the materials used in its manufacture, and the small details that give it elegance and luxury (Violeta et al.,2021:37). Product aesthetics are also an important factor in attracting new customers and retaining existing ones (Hoe&Mansori, 2018:22), as it enhances the value of the product and makes it stand out from other products available in the market (Kadhim et al.,2022). Product aesthetics are also an important factor in sales success and increased profitability for product

manufacturers (Alzoubi et al.,2022:170). The customer acumen refers to a combination of abilities, experience and skills that the customer invests to build a clear perception of the products (Hassouni & Hassan, 2021:27), and customer value expresses a set of advantages that customers expect over the product or service they have purchased (Kusumadewi, 2019:452 ; Ramadonna et al.,2019:16). Customer response refers to a company's ability to respond quickly and effectively to customer needs and desires (Luangsakdapich et al., 2015:55). From the above, it can be said that the aesthetic of the product is a mechanism that enhances the visual identity of the company and enhances the brand, where the design, colors and attractive fonts can be used to create a distinctive identity for the company and enhance customer interaction with it, therefore, looking at the aesthetic of the product as a source of competitive advantage can help companies achieve success in the market and increase their share of sales.

Brand loyalty: Brand loyalty represents an encouraging approach to the brand and dedication to consistently purchasing a similar product or service now and in the future from the same brand (Gnanasekar,2019:43), and argued it (Sulivyo & Ekasari,2021:400) Considering brand loyalty as a very strong commitment to repurchase or subscribe to the product or service that is constantly desired in the future, leading to the purchase of the same brand, brand loyalty also contributes, Dwidienawati et al.,2022:2) stressed that brand loyalty is a commitment that customers carry to constantly repurchase the brand in the future regardless of any circumstances that occur there.

Through brand loyalty, business organizations can consistently implement the commitment and also have an impact on repeated purchases of the same brand (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019:92), improving the firm commitment to future brand reconstruction regardless of Attitude factors (Ebrahim,2020:288).).

Brand loyalty can be measured in terms of behavioral loyalty, which indicates the customer's intention to repurchase and nurture a product or services (Dahhan, 2019:299), repurchase behavior of a brand name or special product (Özgen & Argan, 2017:46), and attitude loyalty) refers to consumers' psychological commitment to the brand (Suhaeni et al., 2019:2), and their belief that the brand is different from others (Madeline&Sihombing,2019:92).From the above, it can be said that brand loyalty refers to the emotional and interactive connection that arises between customers and the brand, which is represented in the preference of customers to buy brand products and services over the products and services of other brands available in the market.

Psychological brand ownership: The application of psychological ownership theory in understanding authentic brands and socially excluded individuals is required because of the difficulty consumers face in identifying authentic brands and the isolated environment that individuals face these days (Kumar & Nayak,2019:168). This theory states that individuals have certain motivations to develop a sense of psychological ownership that includes self-identity, the need for control, and a sense of belonging. Perceived brand ownership meets the need for control by providing individuals with a mechanism to identify genuine and original trademarks. Furthermore, social exclusion motivates individuals to psychologically own brands to regain a sense of belonging (Kumar & Kaushal,2021:2). From the above, it can be said that the psychological ownership of the brand expresses the emotional bond and psychological relationship that arises between customers and the brand, and is represented in a sense of

belonging, recognition of the brand and distinction from other competing brands (Hussein& Jasim,2023; Abbas et al.,2022). Psychological brand ownership depends on the positive factors associated with the brand, such as good reputation, quality of products and services, attractive design, and unique characteristics that distinguish the brand from others. Hence, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Increasing the interest of smartphone brand customers' customers in participating in improving product aesthetics and brand loyalty improves the strength of association towards brand psychological ownership.

H2: The increased interest of customers of smartphone brand companies in participating in improving product aesthetics and brand loyalty affects the driving factors of psychological brand ownership, and Figure (1) illustrates the hypothesis scheme of the study.

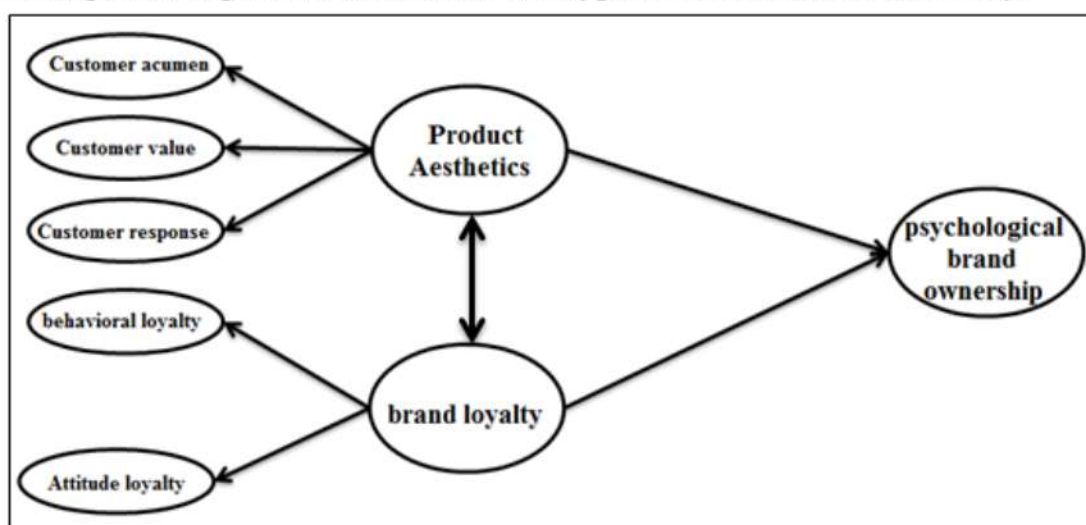


Figure 1 Hypothesis scheme of the study

Study Methodology

1. Study problem

Companies are often looking for different mechanisms to build strong links between customers and their brands in order to achieve positive results, as psychological ownership, which represents a behavioral and attitudinal standard, tends to establish such a relationship between customers and tangible and intangible assets, so the study in various disciplines was interested in verifying this concept and its results by highlighting the importance of psychological property theory in predicting behaviors and attitudes Customers towards the services and products provided, and therefore the evaluation of the psychological ownership of the brand among customers is very complex and requires understanding and analysis of various factors in order to accurately understand the tastes of customers, and determine the experience and dealing of the customer with the brand over time, which means that the study of factors that can affect the psychological ownership of the brand in addition to the aesthetic product and loyalty to the brand works to build a clear perception towards finding appropriate solutions in order to build psychological ownership of the brand, Hence, the problem of the study arises in a general question (What is the role of product aesthetics and brand loyalty as driving factors for the psychological ownership of the brand among customers of smartphone brand companies?), Hence several important questions arise:

- a. How to determine the importance of product aesthetics and brand loyalty in achieving brand psychological ownership in the smartphone market?
- b. What is the mechanism for analyzing the relationship between product aesthetics and brand loyalty and brand psychological ownership to identify the main factors that affect the relationship between them?
- c. What is the mutual influence between product aesthetics and brand loyalty and how much does each affect the psychological ownership of the brand?
- d. How to assess the potential impact of other important factors such as customer acumen, customer value, customer responsiveness, behavioral loyalty, endowment loyalty and compatibility with the personal values of smart mobile phone companies towards brand psychological property?
- e. What are the marketing and design strategy characterization mechanisms that can help achieve product aesthetics and brand loyalty and thus enhance the psychological ownership of the brand in the smartphone market?

2. Objectives of study

The overall objective of the study is to measure the impact of product aesthetics and brand loyalty as driving factors of brand psychological ownership to a deep understanding of the relationship between these factors and the impact they can have on brand success in the smartphone market. Thus, the most effective strategies can be identified to enhance the psychological ownership of the brand and improve performance in the market, and thus the following objectives can be identified to study the impact of product aesthetics and brand loyalty as driving factors for the psychological ownership of the brand in the smartphone market:

- a. Determine the importance of product aesthetics and brand loyalty in achieving brand psychological ownership in the smartphone market.
- B. Analyze the relationship of product aesthetic and brand loyalty to the psychological ownership of the brand to identify the main factors affecting the relationship between them.
- c. Determine the mutual influence between product aesthetics and brand loyalty and the extent to which each affects the psychological ownership of the brand.
- d. Assess the potential impact of other important factors such as customer acumen, customer value, customer response, behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty and compatibility with the personal values of smart mobile phone companies towards brand psychological property.
- e. Characterize marketing and design strategies that can help achieve product aesthetic and brand loyalty and thus enhance the psychological ownership of the brand in the smartphone market.

3. The importance of study

The importance of the study is highlighted in focusing on the importance of product aesthetics and brand loyalty as driving factors for the psychological ownership of the brand because of their great role in the smartphone market, because it greatly affects the success of the brand in this competing and constantly changing market. When a product is beautiful and distinct from other products, it attracts the attention of customers and increases the likelihood that they will buy this product, and this leads to increased sales and improved financial performance of the

brand. When customers feel loyal to the brand, they become more likely to buy from the brand, advise others to buy it as well, and become supporters and partners in success.

In addition, creating strong brand psychological ownership requires providing a comfortable and distinctive customer experience, and this includes product aesthetics, design quality, and good customer interaction. When customers feel belonging and loyalty to the brand, they become more likely to defend the brand and buy its products in the future, and this greatly enhances the brand's success in the smartphone market. Thus, the impact of product aesthetics and brand loyalty as driving factors for brand psychological ownership is vital to the success of brands in the smartphone market, and it is important that smartphone manufacturers optimize these two factors to achieve sustainable success in the market.

4. Study metrics

The study adopted the questionnaire tool as a mechanism to collect the necessary data and survey the opinions of customers using smartphone brands and determine the level of product aesthetics, brand loyalty, psychological ownership of their brand, as the aesthetic of the product was measured based on the scale (Park & Gunn, 2016) by three dimensions (customer acumen, customer value, customer response), second independent variable was represented in brand loyalty in two dimensions (behavioral loyalty, and Attitude loyalty) by relying on the scale (Albert, 2021), and the psychological ownership of the brand as a one-dimensional variable based on the scale (Kumar & Kaushal, 2021), and table (1) shows the axes of the study.

Table 1 Indicators and variables of the study

variants	dimensions	No.	Cod		Cronbach Alpha		Source
Product Aesthetics	Customer acumen	4	PAIV	PRAE	0.799	0.964	Park& Gunn,2016
	Customer value	4	PAIA		0.859		
	Customer response	2	PAIR		0.839		
brand loyalty	behavioral loyalty	4	BLBL	BRLO	0.766	0.954	Albert,2021
	Attitude loyalty	6	BLAL		0.850		
psychological brand ownership	one-dimensional	4	PBO		0.826		Kumar& Kaushal, 2021

It is noted from the results of Table (1) that the measurement tool is characterized by relative stability because the dimensions and variables of the study obtained a stability higher than (0.75), which means that all the parameters of the questionnaire tool are compatible with the answers of customers of smart phone brands companies..

Study Sample

The study sample included a survey of customers using smartphone brands (Samsung, Huawei, and Xiaomi), as (359) electronic questionnaires were distributed to a group of customers of smartphone brands companies, and by adopting the equation (Hair et al., 2010: 101), the appropriate sample according to the number of paragraphs of the measuring tool is:

$$\text{Sample size} = \text{number of paragraphs} * 5 + \text{number of paragraphs} * 5 * (10\%)$$

$$\text{Sample size} = 24 * 5 + 24 * 5 * 10\% = 120 + 12 = 132 \text{ customers minimum}$$

Thus, the minimum sample size is (132) customers, and therefore the number of sample members reached more than the required limit, and this represents a good criterion for the study.

5. Results

5.1 Description of the study sample

The results of Table (2) show the interest of customers of smartphone brands in the aesthetic of the product by an arithmetic mean of (3.48) and a standard deviation of (0.66), which shows the increasing importance of product aesthetics in the world of smartphones, as customers today expect to design smartphones that combine high performance and superior aesthetic. The aesthetic design of smartphones is one of the main factors that customers take into account when choosing a new phone, This came as a result of the customer's response to the smartphone brand with an arithmetic mean of (3.58) and a standard deviation of (0.90), while the customer's acumen came in last place with an arithmetic mean of (3.42) and a standard deviation equal to (0.69), which means that smartphone manufacturers can improve the aesthetics of their products by designing phones in an innovative and attractive way, and using high-quality materials and advanced technology to reach unique and distinct designs. The superior aesthetic of the product can help improve brand reputation and increase sales, leading to profit growth and enhancing a competitive position in the market.

The results also showed a remarkable interest among customers of smartphone brands companies in brand loyalty with an arithmetic mean of (3.47) and a standard deviation of (0.63), and this came through interest in behavioral loyalty by an arithmetic mean of (3.51) and a standard deviation of (0.79), while endowment loyalty came in last place with an arithmetic mean of (3.42) and a standard deviation equal to (0.63). This shows that customer interest in the brand and satisfaction with the product leads to increased brand loyalty. Smartphones are products that require great attention from customers, as customers vary in their preferences between different brands. It is important for smartphone manufacturers to pay attention to the quality of the product and the innovations they offer to meet the needs of customers, as customers will be more likely to consider returning to buy products from the same brand if they are satisfied with their experience with the product and service provided. Brand loyalty is usually about continuing to buy products from the same brand rather than switching to competing brands, and loyalty can also include referring friends and family to buy products from the same brand.

As a result of the above, it is noted that there is a fairly high standard deviation in the interest of customers in the psychological ownership of the brand, which is (0.75) and an arithmetic average of (3.45), which requires improving customer motivation to pay attention to the brand of smartphones by enhancing the standing and behavioral loyalty to it and paying attention to the aesthetic of the product, which greatly improves the driving factors of the psychological ownership of the brand.

Based on the above, it can be said that it is the interest of customers of smartphone brands companies in the aesthetic of the product and other factors affecting customer loyalty to the brand. In addition to performance and high technical specifications, customers are looking for a distinctive and satisfying experience in using smartphones, and here design and aesthetics

play an important role. When the user is satisfied with the smartphone experience, the likelihood of the customer being loyal to the brand that the phone represents, increases. Thus, the brand can Obtain regular customers and increasing the percentage of repeat customers, which contributes to increasing its market share and improving its financial performance.

In order to maintain customer loyalty, brands must continuously improve the user experience, provide premium after-sales services, and offer special benefits and offers to loyal customers. Continuous innovations and improvements in smartphones can help boost customer loyalty and trust in the brand.

Table (2) Statistical description of the study variables

No.	Mean	S.D	No.	Mean	S.D	No.	Mean	S.D
PAIV1	3.30	0.84	BLBL1	3.25	0.73	PBO1	3.66	1.21
PAIV2	3.48	1.05	BLBL2	3.43	1.01	PBO2	3.43	0.98
PAIV3	3.39	1.01	BLBL3	3.61	1.16	PBO3	3.25	0.73
PAIV4	3.32	0.86	BLBL4	3.65	1.28	PBO4	3.42	1.01
Customer acumen	3.42	0.69	behavioral loyalty	3.51	0.79	<u>psychological brand ownership</u>	<u>3.45</u>	<u>0.75</u>
PAIA1	3.30	0.70	BLAL1	3.40	1.01			
PAIA2	3.48	1.10	BLAL2	3.31	0.86			
PAIA3	3.30	0.83	BLAL3	3.30	0.70			
PAIA4	3.48	1.08	BLAL4	3.48	1.10			
Customer value	3.43	0.65	BLAL5	3.30	0.83			
PAIR1	3.65	1.22	BLAL6	3.48	1.07			
PAIR2	3.43	0.97	Attitude loyalty	3.42	0.63			
Customer response	3.58	0.90	<u>brand loyalty</u>	<u>3.47</u>	<u>0.63</u>			
<u>Product Aesthetics</u>	<u>3.48</u>	<u>0.66</u>						

5.2 Hypothesis testing

H1: Increasing the interest of smartphone brand customers' customers in participating in improving product aesthetics and brand loyalty improves the strength of association towards brand psychological ownership

It is noted from Table (3) that there is a significant correlation between the variables of the study product aesthetic and psychological ownership of the brand by (0.780), and loyalty to the brand and psychological ownership of the brand with a value of (0.836) while towards the dimensions of each of the variables included in the analysis has ranged between (0.0441) between the variable of customer acumen and psychological ownership of the brand to (0.917) between the customer's response and the psychological ownership of the brand, which means increasing the interest of customers Smartphone brand companies participating in improving the aesthetic of the product is very important, as it helps to improve the quality of the product and make it outperform competitors, thus increasing brand demand and improving brand loyalty. When customers are involved in product improvement, they feel part of the

development and improvement process, and therefore feel a sense of belonging to the brand and are emotionally connected to it.

On the other hand, brand loyalty improves the bond strength towards brand psychological ownership, which is the emotional and psychological relationship that customers feel towards the brand, which makes them prefer to buy products from that brand regardless of competitors. Thus, increasing the interest of smartphone brand customers' customers in participating in improving product aesthetics and improving user experience, helps to strengthen the bond power towards brand psychological ownership and brand loyalty.

Table 3 Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Customer acumen (1)	1							
Customer value (2)	.755**	1						
Customer response (3)	.568**	.699**	1					
Product Aesthetics (4)	.856**	.911**	.883**	1				
behavioral loyalty (5)	.476**	.596**	.705**	.683**	1			
Attitude loyalty (6)	.870**	.954**	.653**	.915**	.555**	1		
brand loyalty (7)	.736**	.854**	.772**	.889**	.909**	.851**	1	
psychological brand ownership (8)	.441**	.634**	.917**	.780**	.869**	.574**	.836**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
Sig. (2-tailed)= 0.000						N=359		

Impact hypothesis

H2: Increasing the interest of customers of smartphone brand companies in participating in improving product aesthetics and brand loyalty affects the driving factors of brand psychological ownership.

It is noted from the results of Table (3) that all hypotheses of the study are supported and this is due to the fact that the increased interest of brand customers in participating in improving product aesthetics and brand loyalty greatly affects the driving factors of psychological brand ownership. When customers are involved in improving the product and improving the user experience, it strengthens the relationship between customers and the brand, and makes customers feel belonging and loyalty to the brand. Thus, this positively influences the driving factors of a brand's psychological ownership, such as functional suitability, excellence, honesty, comfort, emotional connection, symbolic signs, and trust. Moreover, customers who participate in product improvement and feel part of the development and improvement process become more satisfied with the brand, turning into supporters and partners in success. Thus, this increases the strength of the psychological and emotional attachment of customers with the brand, and leads to enhanced trust between customers and the brand, which ultimately leads to increased brand loyalty and increased sales and profits for the smartphone manufacturer.

However, the second hypothesis (H2) had a significant impact in increasing the interest of customers of smartphone brand companies in participating in improving the aesthetic of the product and loyalty to the brand affects the driving factors of the psychological ownership of the brand and this achieved the level of increase in the impact of the aesthetic of the product on the psychological ownership of the brand by (0.885) and a small error (0.038), in addition to

increasing the impact of brand loyalty on the psychological ownership of the brand by (0.811) and a standard error of (0.075), which was accompanied by a total interpretation factor of (0.705), and this is an interesting result that shows that the relationship between the driving factors of psychological ownership of a brand as a result of increased customer interest in the brand and participation in product improvement and brand loyalty, leads to an improvement in the relationship between customers and the brand, and makes customers feel belonging and loyalty to the brand, and thus become more likely to buy from this brand in the future. And when customers feel belonging and loyalty For the brand, they become more likely to defend the brand and buy its products in the future, and this greatly enhances the success of the brand in the smartphone market.

From the above, it **can be said** that the relationship of influence between increasing customer interest in the brand, participation in improving product aesthetics, brand loyalty and driving factors for brand psychological ownership, is vital to the success of the brand in the smartphone market. When customers feel belonging and loyalty to the brand, they become more likely to buy from the brand, advise others to buy it as well, and become supporters and partners in success. It is important that companies operate Smartphone manufacturers increase customer interest in the brand, encouraging them to participate in product improvement and user experience, by providing high-quality services, technical innovations and attractive design.

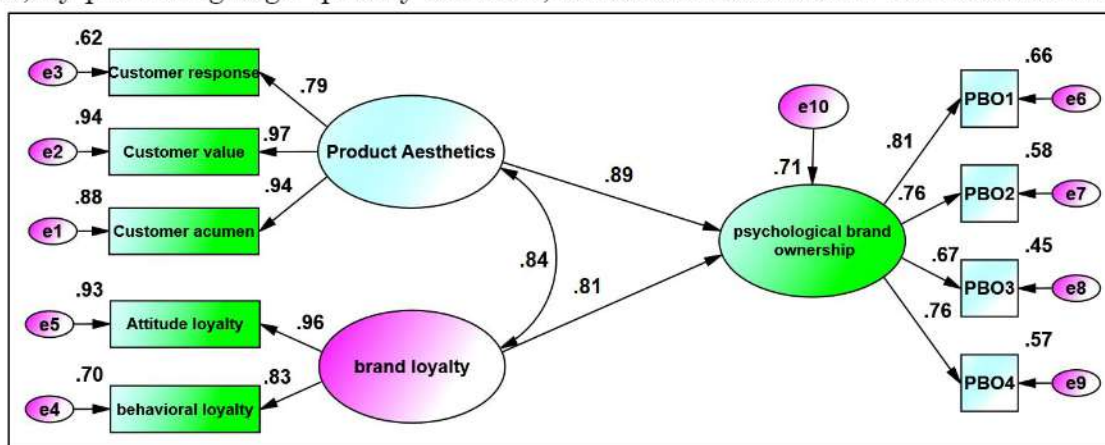


Figure (2) Standard model of the impact of product aesthetics and brand loyalty on the psychological ownership of the brand

Table 3 Standard Results of Product Aesthetic Impact and Brand Loyalty on Brand Psychological Property

Hypotheses	path	Estimate	S.E.	Z-value	R ²	Accepted/ Rejected
H1	Product Aesthetics ---> psychological brand ownership	0.885	0.038	23.518	0.705	Accepted
H2	brand loyalty ---> psychological brand ownership	0.811	0.075	10.813		Accepted

Discussion of findings and recommendations

The results showed that the relationship between product aesthetics and brand loyalty leads to stronger and more effective brand psychological ownership. When a product is well designed, attractive, and presented in an aesthetic and eye-catching style, it contributes to attracting

customers' attention and creating a positive brand impression in their mind. Thus, customers become more loyal to the brand and the emotional relationship between them and the brand is strengthened. When high product quality and excellent customer service are provided, this increases the level of satisfaction of customers and makes them more loyal to the brand. Over time, customers become attached to the brand and begin to think of it as part of their personal identity, and this leads to the realization of psychological ownership of the brand. Thus, it can be said that product aesthetics and brand loyalty are strong driving factors for achieving psychological brand ownership, and achieving success for companies in the market. Therefore, companies must work to improve the quality of products, provide excellent customer service, and design products in an attractive and beautiful way, to achieve the psychological ownership of the brand and strengthen its position in the market.

Hence, the **study recommends** that the company should work hard to provide attractive, beautiful and high-quality products, and provide excellent customer service to increase customer loyalty and achieve psychological brand ownership. In order to achieve this, companies must work to understand the needs and desires of customers and design products and services to meet those needs and desires. Excellent customer experience and after-sales service must also be provided to enhance customer loyalty and achieve the psychological ownership of the brand. Moreover, you must Companies should adopt effective marketing strategies to promote the brand and attract more customers. This can be done through the use of various marketing methods, such as e-marketing, TV advertisements and social media ads, to improve brand appeal and achieve psychological brand ownership. Thus, it can be said that achieving psychological ownership of the brand requires working hard and with good determination, but it is one of the important goals that companies must work to achieve to achieve success and continuity in the market and increase revenues and profits.

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