

GENDER DIFFERENCES ON CUSTOMER INSPIRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

ABSTRACT

The present research examined gender differences on customer inspiration by brands of electronic devices. Using PLS-SEM, a model of customer inspiration that included its antecedents and consequences was validated. The results show preliminary evidence that men and women are affected differently by the variables included in the model: customer inspiration was associated with brand engagement in women, while it was associated with brand satisfaction, brand affect and brand engagement, in men. These findings are discussed and future directions for research are proposed.

Keywords: Customer inspiration, gender differences, electronic device brands

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumers are exposed to a large variety of brands that may have a psychological impact on them (Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008; Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013). Successful brands, for instance, may trigger goal-oriented behaviors due to their aspirational nature (Fitzsimons et al., 2008; Gollwitzer & Moskowitz, 1996). The electronics market is part of this phenomenon. For example, Apple with its slogan ‘think different’ delivers an inspirational message to its customers to build an identity that awakes customers’ desire and curiosity.

Inspiration is a temporary motivational state that facilitates the transition between the reception of a marketing-induced idea and the pursuit of a consumption-related goal (Böttger, Rudolph, Evanschitzky, & Pfrang, 2017). Böttger et al. (2017) claimed that customer inspiration has two components. The first component refers to the state of activation (inspired-by), that is, the reception of a new idea induced by marketing offers (evocation), and the change in the customer’s awareness towards new possibilities (transcendence), stimulating the imagination (motivation). In contrast, the second component covers the state of intention (inspired-by), and is related to the intrinsic pursuit of a consumption goal.

From a literature review, Böttger et al. (2017) developed and validated a scale for customer inspiration based on the relationship between the two above-mentioned stages. Their model also suggests that customer inspiration is evoked by external sources of inspiration (e.g., advertisements) in interaction with the individual characteristics of the consumer. In the context of electronic devices, Libaque-Saenz, Hernani-Merino, & Noel (2019) validated Böttger et al. (2017)'s customer inspiration scale and evaluated a model of antecedents and consequences of customer inspiration. However, the effect of individual characteristics in this topic (inspiration induced by electronic devices) remains unexplored. Gender may be an important criterion to assess individual characteristics because men are likely to be more task-oriented than women (Minton & Schneider, 1985), while women are likely to have a stronger process orientation than men (Venkatesh, Morris, & Ackerman, 2000). Prior technology-based studies, for example, have focused on gender differences to understand the use of software (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2000), smartphones (Kang, Hur, & Son, 2014; Liu & Liang, 2014), among other technologies.

Our research aims to fill this gap by using the model validated by Libaque-Saenz et al. (2019) to explore gender differences on customer inspiration generated by electronic devices.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Inspiration

Inspiration is rooted in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that goal-oriented behaviors may be classified into externally determined (extrinsic) or self-determined (intrinsic). The former refers to the desire to achieve an outcome external to the activity, and this type of motivation may vary in degree according to how internalized the motive is (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). In contrast, in the latter, the goal of the behavior is the inherent satisfaction that the activity itself provides.

Thrash and Elliot (2003) define inspiration as a specific type of intrinsic motivation that is driven by an external stimulus and leads to the actualization of new ideas. The authors focused on the construct's content, identifying two different states of inspiration: (1) a momentary motivational state that describes the transition from a state of activation (inspired-by), and (2) an intention state (inspired-to). The concept of 'inspired-by' refers to the reception of an evocative object, meaning that individuals apprehend an idea that would normally be outside their comprehension (transcendence), being influenced by a source beyond themselves

(evocation). In contrast, the concept of ‘inspired-to’ refers to the motivation to pursue and implement the apprehended goals (Thrash & Elliot, 2004).

Böttger et al. (2017) adapted the inspiration construct to the domain of marketing. The authors defined customer inspiration as “a client's temporary motivational state that facilitates the transition from the reception of an idea induced by marketing to the intrinsic pursuit of a consumer objective” (Böttger et al., 2017, p. 217). This conceptualization assesses customers as receivers of inspiration (exposed to ideas proposed by marketing efforts) that aims to lead them to pursue goals such as purchases, donations or increase commitment to the brand.

Finally, Libaque-Saenz et al. (2019) validated Böttger et al. (2017)’s customer inspiration scale and evaluated a model that included antecedents and consequences of customer inspiration in the context of electronic devices. The authors found that customer inspiration has two states (inspired-by and inspired-to) which are necessary to generate an inspiration event, as they play different roles when evaluating the use of electronic device brands as triggers of inspiration. The model included brand experience (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009) as an antecedent of inspiration, and brand satisfaction (Westbrook, 1980), brand engagement (Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009), and brand affect (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), as consequences of inspiration. Figure 1 shows the validated model, which will serve as the basis for this study.

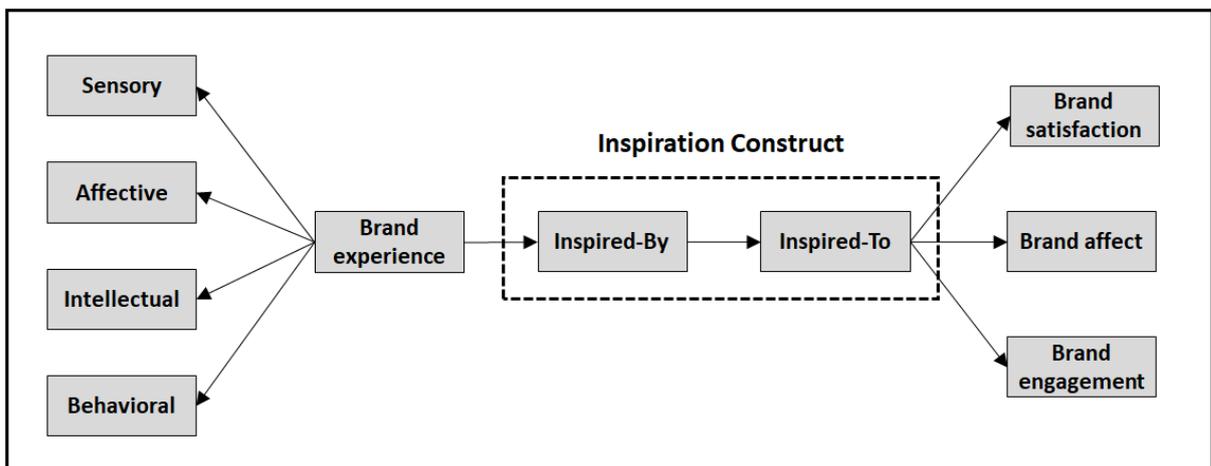


Figure 1. Libaque-Saenz et al. (2019)’s validated model

2.2. Gender and technology

Research on gender differences in the context of technology use has focused on different types of technology such as software and smartphones.

In the case of software, for example, research has focused on outcomes such as behavioral intention (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2000), and attitude toward using these programs (Padilla-Meléndez, del Aguila-Obra, & Garrido-Moreno, 2013). Differences between men and women on these outcomes have been explained by predictors such as perceived usefulness (Padilla-Meléndez et al., 2013; Venkatesh & Morris, 2000), perceived playfulness (Padilla-Meléndez et al., 2013), perceived ease of use (Venkatesh et al., 2000); subjective norm (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2000), and perceived behavioral control (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000).

Results show that perceived usefulness and attitude were more salient in the case of men (Padilla-Meléndez et al., 2013; Venkatesh et al., 2000). In contrast, in the case of women, subjective norms (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2000), perceived ease of use (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000), and perceived behavioral control (Venkatesh et al., 2000) were more salient.

As for smartphone use, previous research has focused on outcomes such as choice of operative system (Shaw, Ellis, Kendrick, Ziegler, & Wiseman, 2016), brand word-of-mouth (Kang et al., 2014), frequency of use and types of applications (Andone et al., 2016), repurchase intention (Hew, Badaruddin, & Moorthy, 2017), brand loyalty (Yeh, Wang, & Yieh, 2016), and brand appearance (Liu & Liang, 2014).

Some of the results of this prior research are as follows: a) women were 2.25 times more likely to own an iOS device (iPhone) than men were (Shaw et al., 2016), b) women spent more time on their phones than men did (Andone et al., 2016), c) women preferred to use social apps while men preferred gaming applications (Andone et al., 2016), d) perceived ease of use exerted a greater influence on women than it did on men (Kang et al., 2014), e) men were sensitive to the influence of brand attachment in developing their satisfaction and continuance intention, while women relied on perceived usefulness (Hew et al., 2017).

In both cases (software and smartphones), gender differences could be explained by the fact that men are more focused than women on their decision-making process, while women are more balanced than men (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2000).

Finally, regardless of these important findings, other studies failed to find statistical gender differences in other outcomes. For example, Liu and Liang (2014) studied gender differences in brand appearance of four smartphone brands. Their results did not show significant differences across fifteen phone specifications.

Based on the above discussion, gender may play an important role in the case of technology. Therefore, we aim to explore gender differences in customer inspiration generated by electronic devices.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Measurement instrument

All variables were measured as reflective constructs, including the second-order variable (i.e., brand experience). Table 1 shows the details of the measurement instrument.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

We used a survey to gather responses from current USA users. Amazon Mechanical Turk, which is a web-based platform, was used for data collection. We followed Huang, Curran, Keeney, Poposki, and DeShon (2012)'s recommendations to detect careless responses as follows: (1) inclusion of one attention check item that has only one correct response embedded in the question, and (2) a warning statement that acknowledges participants that statistical tests will be used to detect effortless responses.

For data analysis, we used partial least squares (PLS) technique, with SmartPLS as the analysis tool (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015).

3.3. Sample

Our sample was composed of 84 respondents. Table 2 shows the demographics in detail.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Analysis of reliability and validity

4.1.1. First-order variables

The Appendix section shows that all item loadings were greater than the recommended value of 0.7 (Barclay & Higgins, 1995). In addition, Table 3 shows that Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were greater than the criterion of 0.7 suggested by Nunnally (1978). We also found that all AVE values (Table 3) were greater than the recommended value of 0.5 (Hu, Lin, Whinston, & Zhang, 2004). Hence, our measurement instrument was reliable.

Table 1. Measurement instrument

Sensory - Brakus et al. (2009)
This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way. This brand does not appeal to my senses (r).
Affective - Brakus et al. (2009)
This brand induces feelings and sentiments. I do not have strong emotions for this brand (r). This brand is an emotional brand.
Behavioral - Brakus et al. (2009)
I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand. This brand results in bodily experiences. This brand is not action oriented (r).
Intellectual - Brakus et al. (2009)
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand. This brand does not make me think (r). This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.
Inspired-by - Böttger et al. (2017)
My imagination was stimulated. I was intrigued by a new idea. I unexpectedly and spontaneously got new ideas. My horizon was broadened. I discovered something new.
Inspired-to - Böttger et al. (2017)
I was inspired to buy something. I felt a desire to buy something. My interest to buy something was increased. I was motivated to buy something. I felt an urge to buy something.
Brand affect - Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)
I feel good when I use this brand. This brand makes me happy. This brand gives me pleasure.
Brand satisfaction - Westbrook (1980)
This is one of the best brands I could have bought. My choice to buy this brand was a wise one. I have truly enjoyed this brand. Owning this brand has been a good experience.
Brand engagement - Sprott et al. (2009)
I consider my favorite brand to be a part of myself. I often feel a personal connection between my favorite brand and me. Part of me is defined by my favorite brand. I feel as if I have a close personal connection with my favorite brand. There are links between my favorite brand and how I view myself. My favorite brand is an important indication of who I am.

(r) Reverse coded

Table 2. Demographics

Demographic category	N = 84	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	56	66.67%
Female	28	33.33%
<i>Age</i>		
Less than 20	1	1.19%
21-25	14	16.67%
26-30	19	22.62%
31-35	19	22.62%
36-40	12	14.29%
41-45	7	8.33%
46-50	2	2.38%
Older than 50	10	11.90%
<i>Brand</i>		
Samsung	41	48.81%
Apple	32	38.10%
Others	11	13.10%

To establish discriminant validity, we compared the correlations among the variables with the square root of the AVEs. Adequate discriminant validity occurs when the square root of the AVEs is greater than the correlations among the constructs (Chin, 1998). An examination of Table 3 shows that this criterion is met.

4.1.2. Second-order variables

In the case of brand experience, which was operationalized as a reflective second-order variable, we used a repeated indicators approach. The loadings of this construct on its first-order variables were found to be significant and equal to 0.847 for sensory, 0.933 for affective, 0.855 for intellectual, and 0.852 for behavioral. Hence, CR and AVE values were 0.927 and 0.761 respectively. Both values are greater than the recommended values discussed in the above section and thus brand experience is adequate.

4.3. Structural model

To assess the structural model, we analyzed the path coefficients between variables, and the R^2 of the dependent variables. All path coefficients were significant (Figure 2).

Table 3. Reliability and validity

Variable	ALPHA	CR	AVE	AFF	BA	BEH	BEN	BS	CIB	CIT	INT	SEN
AFF	0.879	0.926	0.806	0.898								
BA	0.928	0.954	0.874	0.731	0.935							
BEH	0.809	0.888	0.729	0.753	0.615	0.854						
BEN	0.983	0.986	0.920	0.791	0.614	0.712	0.959					
BS	0.930	0.946	0.780	0.585	0.757	0.444	0.422	0.883				
CIB	0.937	0.952	0.798	0.752	0.740	0.633	0.673	0.541	0.893			
CIT	0.971	0.977	0.896	0.524	0.446	0.512	0.533	0.393	0.570	0.947		
INT	0.858	0.913	0.779	0.711	0.681	0.685	0.639	0.490	0.723	0.536	0.883	
SEN	0.903	0.939	0.838	0.774	0.715	0.566	0.560	0.614	0.627	0.501	0.596	0.915

AFF = affective, BA = brand affect, BEH = behavioral, BEN = brand engagement, BS = brand satisfaction, CIB = inspired-by, CIT = inspired-to, INT = intellectual, SEN = sensory. In bold the square root of AVE.

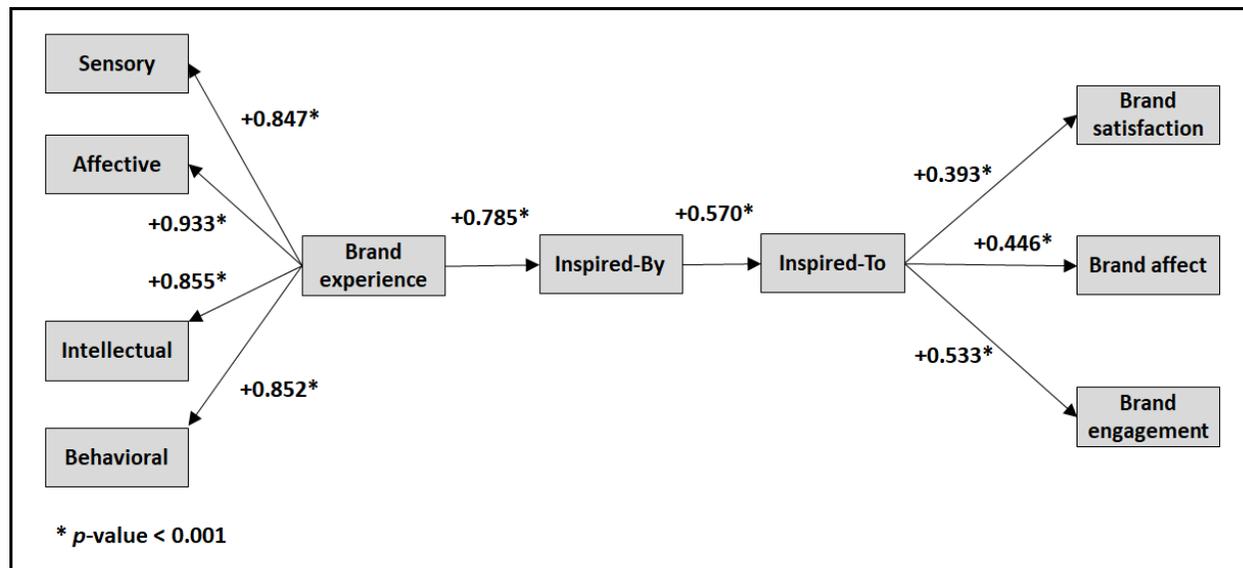


Figure 2. Structural model assessment

4.3. Exploratory analysis of gender differences

According to prior research, differences in the use of technology between males and females may exist. Hence, we aim to provide insights for future research through an exploratory analysis of gender differences in the nomological network of the inspiration construct within the electronic devices context. Table 4 shows these results.

Table 4. Potential gender differences

Path	Female	Male
Brand experience → Affective	0.944**	0.937**
Brand experience → Behavioral	0.738**	0.895**
Brand experience → Inspired-by	0.653**	0.840**
Brand experience → Intellectual	0.727**	0.903**
Brand experience → Sensory	0.814**	0.864**
Inspired-by → Inspired-to	0.743**	0.515**
Inspired-to → Brand affect	0.365 ^{ns}	0.473**
Inspired-to → Brand engagement	0.482*	0.552**
Inspired-to → Brand satisfaction	0.246 ^{ns}	0.436*

* p -value < 0.01

** p -value < 0.001

ns Non-significant

Results show that while all hypotheses were supported in the case of the male sample. In the case of females, the relationship between inspired-to and two variables – brand affect and brand satisfaction – were found to be non-significant.

5. DISCUSSION

Libaque-Saenz et al. (2019)'s model showed adequate reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. It also supported the nomological validity of the model through assessing the structural model with the antecedents and consequences of inspiration. Results also supported the importance of the two states (inspired-by and inspired-to) of consumer inspiration. However, the main objective of our research was to explore gender differences on this validated model.

In the case of women, inspired-to was only significantly related to brand engagement. No relationship was found between inspired-to and two of its consequences, brand affect and brand satisfaction, which points to the fact that the inspiration provided by the studied brands may not be leading women to feel satisfaction and positive affect in relation to them. A possible

explanation is as follows. These brands are well-known as leaders in the smartphone industry (Chau & Reith, 2019; Goasduff & van der Meulen, 2018), and as the literature on smartphone use has shown, women tend to use these devices as a means of communication and socialization (Andone et al., 2016). Thus, women could have perceived these brands as providers of technology that acts as a mere tool for communicating and socializing. In this regard, these brands may lead to brand engagement, as women may identify deeply with them (Sprott et al., 2009) because they may be part of an essential aspect of their life (communicating and socializing). However, they might only perceive them as a means-to-an-end, meaning that the brands may not be perceived as the actual causes of satisfaction and affect, but as providers of a utilitarian means (Hew et al., 2017) to achieve satisfaction and affect indirectly via communication and socialization. As such, future research should focus on studying possible mediators between the inspired-to state, and brand affect and brand satisfaction.

In the case of men, inspired-to was significantly related to its three consequences: brand affect, brand engagement and brand satisfaction. A possible explanation could be that when technologies have hedonic features, men tend to be more entertainment-driven (Zhou, Jin, & Fang, 2014) and are not influenced by the perceived usefulness of technology (Hew et al., 2017). If men associated the studied brands as providers of hedonic products, such as smartphones (Hew et al., 2017), these brands may not only inspire men to feel a deeper connection with them (brand engagement), but may also inspire them to feel satisfaction and positive affect (brand satisfaction and brand affect), as the brands may provide hedonic value (e.g. entertainment via gaming) to them (Andone et al., 2016).

Finally, for both males and females, brand experience was significantly related to its first-order variables (sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral) and to inspired-by. In addition, there was a significant relationship between inspired-to and inspired-by. These results are aligned with Libaque-Saenz et al. (2019)'s findings that brand experience predicts both its first-order variables and the inspired-by state, demonstrating that the use of brand experience may be a source of new brand-related ideas for consumers (evocation) and may stimulate consumers to engage in brand-related activities (transcendence).

This study provides preliminary evidence that men and women are affected differently by the inspiration that a brand elicits. Future research should focus on using a larger sample size to explore the validity of these relationships.

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Appendix – Loadings and cross loadings

Items	AFF	BA	BEH	BEN	BS	CIB	CIT	INT	SEN
AFF1	0.931	0.663	0.749	0.771	0.531	0.727	0.539	0.700	0.712
AFF2	0.908	0.659	0.684	0.728	0.481	0.680	0.490	0.677	0.718
AFF3	0.852	0.650	0.583	0.624	0.448	0.611	0.370	0.526	0.653
BA1	0.685	0.929	0.552	0.550	0.760	0.675	0.411	0.618	0.680
BA2	0.713	0.966	0.586	0.612	0.681	0.726	0.451	0.674	0.701
BA3	0.651	0.909	0.591	0.556	0.528	0.671	0.383	0.616	0.620
BEH1	0.708	0.568	0.924	0.646	0.448	0.558	0.495	0.618	0.551
BEH2	0.696	0.473	0.907	0.650	0.303	0.602	0.462	0.637	0.524
BEH3	0.501	0.555	0.713	0.519	0.300	0.452	0.339	0.488	0.352
BEN1	0.798	0.590	0.683	0.968	0.355	0.662	0.500	0.611	0.565
BEN2	0.755	0.615	0.647	0.954	0.385	0.660	0.573	0.622	0.555
BEN3	0.755	0.567	0.662	0.963	0.348	0.640	0.511	0.599	0.525
BEN4	0.800	0.643	0.694	0.963	0.446	0.689	0.513	0.636	0.563
BEN5	0.731	0.554	0.719	0.954	0.326	0.629	0.482	0.620	0.533
BEN6	0.712	0.557	0.699	0.952	0.345	0.587	0.477	0.585	0.474
BS1	0.561	0.673	0.441	0.414	0.945	0.519	0.382	0.464	0.557
BS2	0.517	0.636	0.383	0.371	0.936	0.463	0.279	0.397	0.480
BS3	0.504	0.698	0.376	0.346	0.931	0.470	0.404	0.463	0.597
BS4	0.184	0.358	0.140	0.101	0.668	0.178	0.112	0.147	0.244
CIB1	0.656	0.694	0.491	0.536	0.452	0.867	0.475	0.610	0.624
CIB2	0.673	0.693	0.637	0.630	0.474	0.926	0.614	0.660	0.571
CIB3	0.620	0.563	0.525	0.584	0.302	0.866	0.410	0.641	0.483
CIB4	0.719	0.649	0.610	0.644	0.435	0.918	0.548	0.649	0.531
CIB5	0.686	0.696	0.553	0.607	0.559	0.887	0.478	0.672	0.588
CIT1	0.493	0.472	0.487	0.525	0.335	0.598	0.928	0.519	0.442
CIT2	0.434	0.428	0.463	0.459	0.336	0.562	0.950	0.502	0.404
CIT3	0.532	0.424	0.504	0.526	0.366	0.534	0.967	0.499	0.533
CIT4	0.545	0.422	0.531	0.549	0.378	0.536	0.971	0.522	0.516
CIT5	0.471	0.354	0.433	0.455	0.345	0.454	0.916	0.492	0.473
INT1	0.664	0.647	0.660	0.591	0.456	0.673	0.486	0.945	0.516
INT2	0.446	0.459	0.431	0.418	0.341	0.571	0.423	0.794	0.427
INT3	0.735	0.670	0.687	0.652	0.409	0.665	0.504	0.903	0.616
SEN1	0.763	0.696	0.597	0.554	0.552	0.624	0.540	0.601	0.957
SEN2	0.787	0.707	0.572	0.577	0.536	0.647	0.467	0.632	0.954
SEN3	0.542	0.541	0.349	0.378	0.487	0.417	0.346	0.363	0.829

AFF = affective, BA = brand affect, BEH = behavioral, BEN = brand engagement, BS = brand satisfaction, CIB = inspired-by, CIT = inspired-to, INT = intellectual, SEN = sensory