

## Utilizing Sensory Marketing and Brand Experience: The Case of Luxury Watchmaking

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### Abstract

This research examines the impact of sensory marketing cues and brand experience on emotional attachment, customer commitment, and brand loyalty in the luxury wristwatch industry. The study, conducted with 323 Indonesian consumers who purchased luxury wristwatches, reveals significant associations among sensory marketing cues, brand experience, emotional attachment, customer commitment, and brand loyalty. However, the effect of store image was found to be insignificant in moderating the connections between sensory marketing cues, brand experience, and emotional attachment. These findings highlight the importance of sensory marketing cues and brand experience in fostering emotional attachment and customer commitment, ultimately leading to brand loyalty. The results provide valuable insights for luxury wristwatch manufacturers and distributors in Indonesia to enhance customer loyalty through effective marketing strategies and optimized retail experiences. However, caution must be exercised in generalizing these implications to other countries or industries. Additionally, this study contributes to the literature on brand loyalty, particularly in the luxury wristwatch industry, by addressing the challenges posed by emerging substitutes such as advanced smartwatches and offering guidance on maintaining brand loyalty amidst increasing competition.

### Keywords

Wristwatch, Luxury Watchmaking, Marketing Management, Brand Loyalty, Sensory Marketing, Brand Experience

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### Introduction

According to Deloitte AG's 2020 report, Apple emerged as the leading global smartwatch brand in 2017, with the Apple Watch Series outselling the entire conventional watch industry, with 30.7 million units sold. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), as proposed by

Chuah et al. (2016) and Davis et al. (1989), suggests that wearable technology adoption can be explained by two dimensions: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. These dimensions support the utilization of smartwatch technology, which offers various features

such as accurate timekeeping, smartphone connectivity, display of notifications, communication capabilities, health and fitness tracking, and GPS functionality (2016).

The historical example of the Quartz Crisis in 1969 provides insights into addressing the current challenges posed by advanced smartwatch technology (Donzé, 2020; Philippe et al., 2022; Raffaelli, 2019). The mechanical watch industry successfully navigated the crisis by adapting its marketing strategies and shifting towards the luxury market segment (Philippe et al., 2022). Consumers have started to use goods to show or signal their status and social standings to external audiences (Dubois & Ordabayeva, 2015), and as a result, brands, particularly luxury brands have emphasized status attributes in marketing their products (Humphreys & Carpenter, 2018). Through repositioning their products as luxury items, emphasizing craftsmanship and artistic value, the industry revived the production of mechanical watches that had been nearly abandoned (Donzé, 2020; Raffaelli, 2019). This approach involved redefining the technological and market aspects, highlighting the unique qualities of mechanical watchmaking and mobilizing passionate consumers (Raffaelli, 2019).

Luxury watch brands utilize sensory marketing techniques in their retail stores to create a captivating brand experience for customers (Shahid et al., 2022). This approach allows brands to engage consumers' senses and establish an emotional connection through brand communication both inside and outside the store (Philippe et al., 2022; Shimul et al., 2019). In luxury retail, a positive brand experience is crucial as it fosters an emotional bond between customers and the brand (Dion & Borraz, 2017; Shahid et al., 2021), as customers' buying decisions in the market depend on the products' emotional and experiential attraction (Dhaliwal et al., 2020). By delivering exceptional brand experiences, brands can

build strong relationships with customers, leading to increased profitability, customer loyalty, and future purchases (Mingione et al., 2020; Tang & Tsang, 2020). Brand experience directly (Khan et al., 2020) or indirectly (Shahid et al., 2022) influences customers' emotional attachment to the brand, ultimately impacting brand loyalty.

Zhang et al. (2022) emphasize the role of retail stores in facilitating in-depth product inspection by consumers. This behavior involves the examination, inspection, and interaction with products before or after making a purchase. Physical engagement, especially in physical stores, enables consumers to go beyond visual inspection and engage multiple senses, including touch and product usage. Research has demonstrated that physical touch is associated with product valuation (Peck & Shu, 2009) and can contribute to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Aside from product inspection depth, this research focuses on sensory marketing, brand experience, store image, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty in the luxury wristwatch industry (Shahid et al., 2022). It aims to investigate the factors that influence brand loyalty towards luxury watch brands, particularly considering the presence of technologically advanced substitutes like smartwatches. Additionally, the study explores the direct impact of brand experience on brand loyalty, as well as its indirect effects through calculative and affective commitment (Khan et al., 2020).

## Literature Review

### *Sensory marketing cues*

Sensory marketing is a component of experiential marketing that utilizes marketing techniques to influence customers' emotions and senses (Wiedmann et al., 2018). It is a powerful tool that impacts all human senses, controlling emotions, preferences, and customers' actions (Krishna, 2012). Sensory marketing is considered crucial in

strengthening the bond between customers and products or brands (Shahid et al., 2022), and can influence customer behavior (Brakus et al., 2009). Customers use sensory cues to form assumptions about a retail store (Grewal et al., 1998; Lude & Prögl, 2018), and the goal of utilizing sensory marketing cues is to foster deeper connections between brands and customers, thereby influencing their behavior towards a brand (Pelletier & Collier, 2018).

Marketers commonly use sensory marketing cues to create an enjoyable and engaging shopping experience for customers in their retail stores (Shahid et al., 2022). This is because retail stores are often the first physical point of contact in a physical space between consumers and brands (Lunardo & Mouangue, 2019). According to Kim et al. (2016), a multisensory experience can provide a soothing and enjoyable experience for customers, and this experience serves as an integral feature of luxury brands and their strategies, since those brands promise a sensory product experience (Jhamb et al., 2020; Joshi & Garg, 2021).

#### *Brand experience*

According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experience refers to the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and sensory response that a customer has to stimuli associated with a brand. This experience is formed when customers connect with a brand during the purchasing process (Kumar & Kaushik, 2020), and it is influenced by their emotions and reflections regarding the brand (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) from their study define brand experience from a customer's perspective as "a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey". The physical sensations that customers experience also play an important role in shaping their perception of a brand and their brand

experience (Smilansky, 2009). In the luxury retail industry, a positive brand experience is crucial for emotionally attracting customers to luxury brands (Dion & Borraz, 2017; Shahid et al., 2022). Brand experience is essential for influencing customers' feelings and experiences during a transaction process (Tang & Tsang, 2020).

Wiedman et al. (2018) suggest that experiential marketing aims to influence customers' emotions and senses, with the goal of shaping their feelings, perceptions, judgements, and behaviors (Krishna, 2012; Xixiang et al., 2016) towards a brand. All these factors contribute to the overall brand experience of the customer, as suggested by Hultén (2011).

#### *Emotional attachment*

Emotional attachment refers to the bond between a customer and a brand (Husain et al., 2022; Japutra et al., 2018), reflecting the customer's emotions and sentiments towards the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). This attachment is particularly evident in the case of luxury brands (Jacob et al., 2020; Park et al., 2010). Thomson et al. (2005) associates emotional attachment with a profound interest, enjoyable experience, and strong connection that a customer has with a brand. Basing on emotional attachment theory, Boateng et al. (2020) and Jacob et al. (2020) are convinced that customers are able to develop emotional attachment towards luxury brands.

#### *Customer commitment*

According to Dwyer et al. (1987), commitment implies an enduring relationship between two parties, which can be either implicitly or explicitly expressed. Customer commitment refers to the customer's willingness to uphold the relationship with a brand by making future purchases or return purchases to the brand (Khan et al., 2020). As such, commitment reflects the customer's readiness to make sacrifices in pursuit of a long-term

relationship with the brand (E. Anderson & Weitz, 1992).

Customer commitment is a multidimensional concept, and can be categorized into two dimensions: affective, calculative, and normative commitment. (Fullerton, 2005; Khan et al., 2020; Pandit & Vilches-Montero, 2016). For the purpose of this study, normative commitment is not examined due to its focus on issues that customers think on what they “should” do (Pandit & Vilches-Montero, 2016).

#### *Affective commitment*

Affective commitment is characterized by emotional attachment and a sense of identification between customers and brands (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This type of commitment provides a critical basis for maintaining relationships between customers and brands (Fullerton, 2005). It is related to the efforts made by brands to create a deep emotional connection with customers (Khan et al., 2020).

#### *Calculative commitment*

Calculative commitment refers to a customer's intention to continue the relationship with a brand due to high switching costs or lack of alternatives (Shukla et al., 2016). This dimension of commitment is characterized by a more rational perspective, where the customer considers the costs and benefits of maintaining the relationship. The loss felt by the customer when the relationship ends is a key factor in calculative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Gilliland & Bello, 2002; Johnson, 2007).

#### *Brand loyalty*

Brand loyalty is the strong commitment to repurchase a product from a brand, or to be a loyal customer of a brand consistently in the future, despite situational and marketing setbacks that might influence a customer to shift away from a brand (Khan et al., 2020; Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty is an indicator for long-term commitment of a customer towards a brand (Reichheld et

al., 2000). Brand loyalty is the result of a customer's tendency and emotional or rational bond towards a brand (He et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020). Therefore, Shahid et al. (2022) posits that brand loyalty is the result of emotional attachment (Cardinale et al., 2016), and Khan et al. (2020) posits that brand loyalty is the result of calculative commitment (Khan et al., 2020; Shukla et al., 2016) and affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Fullerton, 2005; Khan et al., 2020).

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### *Sensory marketing cues and emotional attachment*

Sensory marketing cues have a significant impact on customers' emotions, which in turn shapes their emotional connection with a brand (Chen & Lin, 2018; Lindstrom, 2005; Shahid et al., 2022). A positive sensory experience can strengthen the relationship between customers and brands, leading to emotional attachment and increased customer satisfaction (Haase et al., 2020). As a result, customers tend to exhibit behaviors such as increased store visits, higher willingness to explore products, and greater loyalty to the brand (Shahid et al., 2022). Marketers have recognized the importance of incorporating sensory cues into their communication to establish emotional connections with customers (Shimul et al., 2019). By creating a unique sensory environment, managers can stimulate customers' senses and enhance the distinctiveness of their brands (Hultén, 2011). Ultimately, the amalgamation of sensory experiences in customers' minds contributes to their emotional attachment towards brands (Cardinale et al., 2016). Therefore, between sensory marketing cues and emotional attachment, the following hypothesis is formed:

H1: Sensory marketing cues have a positive impact on emotional attachment.

### *Sensory marketing cues and brand experience*

Sensory marketing cues create a strong relationship between customers and brands, as interactions between them shape unique sensory experiences that mix in customers' minds, ultimately shaping the overall brand experience (Hultén, 2011). The more senses that are influenced by sensory cues, the greater the customers' brand experience is likely to be (Soars, 2009). The sensations created by sensory cues mix together in customers' minds, resulting in a comprehensive brand experience (Lindstrom, 2005). Hepola et al. (2017) emphasize the relevance of sensory interactions in reinforcing emotional connection between customers and brands. Thus, between sensory marketing cues and brand experience, the following hypothesis is formed:

H2: Sensory marketing cues have a positive impact on brand experience.

### *Brand experience and emotional attachment*

According to Shahid et al. (Shahid et al., 2022), the connection between brand experience and emotional attachment is significant. A positive brand experience that is created in a customer's mind through sensory cues (Lindstrom, 2005) can lead to emotional attachment towards the brand (Cardinale et al., 2016). Additionally, a brand that provides a positive brand experience can establish an emotional connection with its customers, leading to the development of a strong brand-customer relationship (Mingione et al., 2020). Therefore, between brand experience and emotional attachment, the following hypothesis is formed:

H3: Brand experience has a positive impact on emotional attachment.

### *Brand experience and affective commitment*

Allen and Meyer (1990) define affective commitment as the emotional bond and identification that a customer has with a brand. A positive experience that appeals to a customer's emotions can increase the

customer's affective commitment towards the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020). Thus, between brand experience and affective commitment, the following hypothesis is formed:

H4: Brand experience has a positive impact on affective commitment.

### *Brand experience and calculative commitment*

Shukla et al. (2016) propose that calculative commitment refers to a customer's intention to continue a relationship with a brand due to high switching costs and limited alternatives. If a brand provides a positive experience that appeals to a customer's rational side, it can strengthen their calculative commitment. Thus, between brand experience and calculative commitment, the following hypothesis is formed:

H5: Brand experience has a positive impact on calculative commitment.

### *Emotional attachment and brand loyalty*

Shahid et al. (2022) propose that emotional attachment, which is developed through sensory marketing cues and brand experience, has a positive influence on brand loyalty. Fedorikhin et al. (2008) also suggest that emotional attachment is a determinant of customer loyalty towards a brand. Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) note that customers who have emotional bonds with a brand are generally more loyal to it. Additionally, Shahid and Paul (2021) suggest that deep affection, satisfactory experiences, and personal associations contribute to brand loyalty. This idea is supported by Park et al. (2010) and Thomson et al. (2005), who argue that customer satisfaction leads to brand loyalty. Furthermore, He et al. (2012) suggest that a customer's emotional attachment to a brand is a crucial factor in brand loyalty. As a result, a positive emotional attachment created through sensory marketing cues and brand experience (Cardinale et al., 2016; Haase et al., 2020; Wiedmann et al., 2018) can lead to brand loyalty (Francisco-Maffezzoli et al., 2014). Therefore between emotional

attachment and brand loyalty, the following hypothesis is formed:

H6: Emotional attachment has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

#### *Affective commitment and brand loyalty*

As previously discussed, the concept of customer commitment (Moorman et al., 1992) refers to a customer's intention to maintain a relationship with a brand to make future purchases or repurchases from the brand (Khan et al., 2020). Customer commitment is a multidimensional construct, and affective commitment is one of its dimensions. Khan et al. (2020) suggest that customer commitment has a positive influence on brand loyalty. Therefore, between affective commitment and brand loyalty, the following hypothesis is formed:

H7: Affective commitment has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

#### *Calculative commitment and brand loyalty*

Moorman et al. (1992) define customer commitment as the intention of a customer to maintain a relationship with a brand for future purchases or repurchases. It is a multidimensional concept, of which calculative commitment is one dimension. According to Khan et al. (2020), customer commitment has a positive effect on brand loyalty. Thus, between calculative commitment and brand loyalty, the following hypothesis is formed:

H8: Calculative commitment has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

#### *Store image as moderating variable*

Shahid et al. (2022) highlight the significance of store image concerning its associations with sensory marketing cues, brand experience, and emotional attachment. Store image is deemed as a consistent and reliable signal (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2014) and a credible indicator of brand quality (Olshavsky, 1985). In the interaction between a brand or store and a customer, store image plays a pivotal role. Positive impressions of a brand is formed by customers have a favorable impact on the brand's store

image (Shahid et al., 2022). A store's image can instill trust, familiarity, recognition, and connection to customers, facilitating their purchase or repurchase from the brand (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006). Burlison and Oe (2018) also point that store image is critical in affecting the customers' behaviour. Therefore, as the mediating variable linking sensory marketing cues, brand experience, and emotional attachment, store image is hypothesized to have the following role:

H9a: The relationship between sensory marketing cues and emotional attachment is influenced by store image as a mediator, where a high store image strengthens the relationship and a low store image weakens it.

H9b: The relationship between sensory marketing cues and brand experience is influenced by store image as a mediator, where a high store image strengthens the relationship and a low store image weakens it.

H9c: The relationship between brand experience and emotional attachment is influenced by store image as a mediator, where a high store image strengthens the relationship and a low store image weakens it.

## **Data and Methodology**

### *Sample and data collection*

The sample for this study consisted of 323 individuals from Indonesia who had purchased luxury watches from specialty boutique stores, similar to previous studies conducted by Shahid et al. (2022) and Khan et al. (2020). This approach allows for a focused examination of the effects of independent variables on brand loyalty for specific brands, as specialty stores typically concentrate on a single brand.

Shahid et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the luxury industry, encompassing renowned brands like Armani, Burberry, Chanel, Dior, Gucci, Jimmy Choo, Louis Vuitton, and Salvatore Ferragamo. In contrast, Khan et al. (2020) conducted a broader study across

various industries without specifying a particular sector. Their research included self-service brands such as coffee shops, fast food restaurants, supermarkets, as well as brands providing interactive services like travel agencies and car dealerships. This paper focuses on investigating the luxury wristwatch industry in Indonesia, falling within the specific category examined by Shahid et al. (2022) within the luxury industry.

A total of 338 online questionnaires were distributed for data collection, with a small number of respondents excluded from the analysis for not meeting the screening criteria. These excluded respondents either referred to non-luxury brand watches or indicated that their watches were purchased from multi-brand stores instead of specialty boutiques.

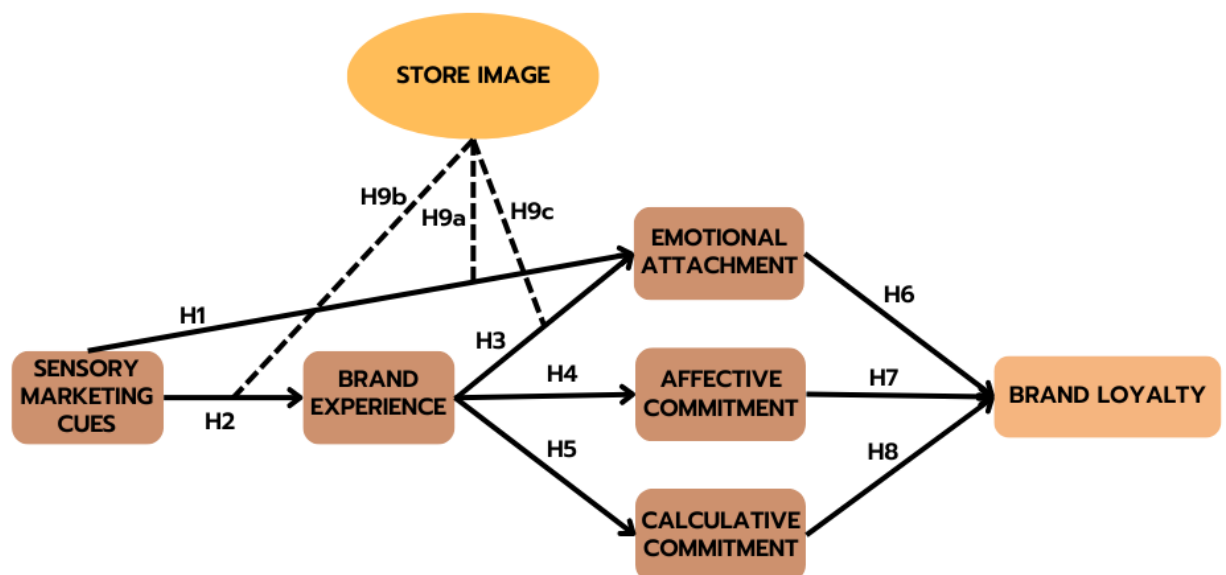
Hair et al. (2017) recommend a sample size that is at least five times the number of indicators to ensure representativeness to the population. With 57 indicators in this

study, a minimum sample size of 285 individuals was required.

#### *Measures and statistical methods*

This research utilizes quantitative methodologies to measure constructs, incorporating both predetermined variables and validated measurements from previous studies. The model depicted in Figure 1 consists of six construct variables, with two of them being second-order variables comprising four dimensions. Additionally, a moderating variable is included as part of the research instrument.

The Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM) approach, a quantitative methodology, is employed to test the proposed hypotheses. PLS–SEM is commonly used when the research objective is theory development and construct prediction (Hair et al., 2017). In this study, PLS–SEM is chosen due to its suitability for handling complex structural models with multiple constructs and indicators (Hair et al., 2017).



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model**

The research aims to determine the primary driver of brand loyalty in the luxury wristwatch industry in Indonesia. This involves predicting specific target constructs and identifying their key drivers. Given the specific context of the study, the sample size is relatively small and non-normal. The limited availability of respondents is a consequence of focusing on a specific industry. Additionally, the use of virtual snowball sampling generates non-normal data.

## Results

### *Measure validity and reliability*

We utilized confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) to assess the validity and reliability of the model and data. To ensure the validity and reliability of each variable, we conducted a pre-test with 30 participants. Our research includes two variables that comprise four dimensions each: sensory marketing cues and brand experience. The four dimensions for sensory marketing cues are visual, acoustic, haptic, and olfactory (Wiedmann et al., 2018). Gustatory, however, is not included as a dimension since it is not relevant to luxury watch boutiques. Additionally, the four dimensions used for

brand experience are sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual (Brakus et al., 2009).

To evaluate the validity of the pre-test conducted, we employed various statistical tests: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Barlett's Test of Sphericity, and Component Matrix. Our analysis revealed that the KMO values for each variable were above the threshold of 0.50, the Barlett's Test of Sphericity was above the threshold of 0.05, and the Component Matrix was above 0.60 for all variables. We also tested each dimension of the sensory marketing cues and brand experience variables, and the results were satisfactory. Based on these statistical values, we conclude that all variables in the pre-test are valid.

To assess the reliability of the pre-test, we utilized Cronbach's Alpha. Our findings indicated that all variables exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating adequate reliability. Additionally, we tested each dimension of the sensory marketing cues and brand experience variables, and the results were also satisfactory. Based on these statistical values, we conclude that all variables in the pre-test are reliable.

**Table 1. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency Measurement**

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Sensory Marketing Cues	0,919	0,931	0,553
Brand Experience	0,954	0,960	0,630
Emotional Attachment	0,815	0,878	0,642
Affective Commitment	0,816	0,879	0,646
Calculative Commitment	0,807	0,874	0,634
Brand Loyalty	0,906	0,931	0,729
Store Image	0,898	0,922	0,663

In assessing the validity and reliability of the measurements, we conducted an outer loading test and employed Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values (Hair et al., 2017). While most indicators

demonstrated satisfactory reliability, a few indicators did not meet the validity criteria due to their loading factors falling below the threshold of 0.7. These indicators were deemed invalid despite the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value exceeding



0.5. Notably, all indicators related to the olfactory dimension of the sensory marketing cues variable were found to be invalid, leading to its removal from the construct.

To ensure a robust analysis, a bootstrap sample of over 5,000 cases was utilized. The weights and loadings of the indicators were deemed acceptable, with P-Values below 5%. Additionally, the variance inflation factor (VIF) remained below 5, indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues. The large sample size enabled the assessment of the significance of path coefficients through bootstrapping, with P-Values below 5% considered significant at a 95% confidence level.

#### *Structural model results*

The findings of this study indicate that the minimum R-Square observed is 0.533, which surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.25. Therefore, the sample size of 323 respondents is considered sufficient based on the recommended criteria (Hair et al., 2017).

The first phase of the structural model analysis examines the relationships between sensory marketing cues and brand

experience, as well as their impact on emotional attachment. Hypothesis 1 is supported, showing a positive and significant impact on emotional attachment. Hypothesis 2 is also supported, indicating a positive influence of sensory marketing cues on brand experience. However, hypothesis 3, proposing a positive impact of brand experience on emotional attachment, is not supported. Hypotheses 4 and 5 receive support, demonstrating a positive influence of brand experience on affective and calculative commitment, respectively.

The second phase investigates the impact of emotional attachment, affective commitment, and calculative commitment on brand loyalty. Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8 are all supported, indicating positive relationships between emotional attachment, affective commitment, and calculative commitment with brand loyalty.

Emotional attachment emerges as a strong predictor, followed by brand experience, affective commitment, calculative commitment, and brand loyalty, with varying degrees of predictive power.

**Table 2. Path Coefficient Direct Effect**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P-Value
Sensory Marketing Cues → Emotional Attachment	0,920	0,921	0,044	20,735	0,000
Sensory Marketing Cues → Brand Experience	0,391	0,385	0,064	6,151	0,000
Brand Experience → Emotional Attachment	-0,025	-0,035	0,093	0,273	0,785
Brand Experience → Affective Commitment	0,731	0,732	0,031	23,733	0,000
Brand Experience → Calculative Commitment	0,770	0,771	0,029	26,730	0,000
Emotional Attachment → Brand Loyalty	0,366	0,363	0,055	6,713	0,000
Affective Commitment → Brand Loyalty	0,210	0,209	0,061	3,440	0,001
Calculative Commitment → Brand Loyalty	0,330	0,334	0,062	5,346	0,000
Sensory Marketing Cues x Store Image → Emotional Attachment	-0,009	-0,015	0,040	0,236	0,813
Sensory Marketing Cues x Store Image → Brand Experience	-0,012	-0,012	0,012	1,010	0,313
Brand Experience x Store Image → Emotional Attachment	0,017	0,022	0,042	0,413	0,679

The final stage explores the moderating effect of store image on the relationships between sensory marketing cues, brand experience, and emotional attachment. However, the data does not support the moderating hypotheses (9a, 9b, 9c). Second, our study also investigated the influence of customers' emotional attachment, affective and calculative commitment on brand loyalty in the luxury

watch industry. Our findings revealed that emotional attachment and affective commitment have a significant positive impact on brand loyalty (Fullerton, 2005; Khan et al., 2020; Shahid et al., 2022), and while previous research failed to point out the significance of calculative commitment towards brand loyalty, we found that calculative commitment is a significant factor contributing to brand loyalty.

This finding is consistent with the notion that customers who exhibit high attitudinal loyalty tend to have positive feelings towards the brand, making them more likely to repurchase the brand and recommend it to others (Gustafsson et al., 2005), and in addition, also exhibit high rational loyalty in the sense that it is difficult for customers to move from one brand to another due to material factors. In line with previous research (Khan et al., 2020), our study underscores the importance of fostering strong, positive brand-related sentiment to enhance brand loyalty, and contradicting the previous research, designing rational brand-related sentiment is also important to enhance brand loyalty.

Based on the tested hypotheses, the relationships between the variables are visualized in Figure 2, revealing both significant and non-significant relationships, such as the relationship between brand experience and emotional attachment and the moderating effect of store image.

### Discussion and Implications

In this research, we investigated how sensory marketing cues and brand experience impact emotional attachment, customer commitment, both affective and calculative, and ultimately, brand loyalty for luxury wristwatch customers. Our analysis revealed that sensory marketing cues have a positive influence on brand experience and emotional attachment. Moreover, brand experience significantly impacts emotional attachment and affective commitment, as well as calculative commitment. In turn, emotional attachment and both affective and calculative commitment have a significant positive impact on brand loyalty. These findings have important implications for both marketing theory and practice, which will be discussed in further detail.

### *Theoretical implications*

Our study has significant theoretical implications in the luxury watch industry. Firstly, it contributes to prior literature (Khan et al., 2020; Shahid et al., 2022) by establishing that sensory marketing cues have a favorable impact on brand experience and emotional attachment. Additionally, our findings reveal the linkage between brand experience, emotional attachment, affective commitment, and calculative commitment. Our results add to previous research and emphasize the importance of developing emotional connections with customers (Thomson et al., 2005), as well as rational connections.

Third, contradicting previous literature (Shahid et al., 2022), our findings do not support the moderating role of store image in shaping the relationship between sensory marketing cues, brand experience, and emotional attachment. Previous literature found that brands with a high and positive store image, sensory marketing cues and brand experience significantly contribute to the development of a strong emotional attachment. However, this relationship is less pronounced in brands with a low store image. This study contradicts the existing knowledge base on sensory cues, brands, and experience (Shahid et al., 2022), an area that has been emphasized by experts in the field (Brakus et al., 2009; Krishna, 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2018). Our findings carry significant theoretical implications, particularly within the luxury watch industry.

Fourth, this study extends the existing literature by establishing the connections between sensory marketing cues, brand experience, store image, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty (Shahid et al., 2022) within the context of a luxury watch retail channel. Our research findings align with previous literature (Khan et al., 2020) in demonstrating that brand experience has a significant positive

influence on affective commitment, but not regarding its impact on calculative commitment, as we found that brand experience has a significant positive influence on calculative commitment. Subsequently, our results indicate that affective commitment as well as calculative commitment has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

Fifth, in line with previous literature (Shahid et al., 2022), our study found that despite the proliferation of online platforms, luxury customers still expressed a preference for visiting physical stores instead of shopping online, despite the convenience and practicality offered by online channels. This underscores the continued importance of physical stores in the luxury retail industry (Zhang et al., 2022). These findings suggest that luxury retailers, including luxury watch retailers, should prioritize providing enhanced symbolic and functional benefits to their customers, as this can contribute to the development of a strong emotional attachment and, ultimately, foster brand loyalty (Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Shahid et al., 2022). As customers become increasingly reliant on these luxury brands, personalized customer service and individual attention play a crucial role in establishing emotional attachment and affective commitment. Furthermore, our study revealed a positive and significant influence of brand experience on brand loyalty, emphasizing the significance of brand experience as a critical factor in cultivating brand loyalty within the luxury watchmaking industry.

Finally, the moderating role of store image (Grewal et al., 1998) in luxury watchmaking does not highlight the significant influence of store atmosphere on customer behavior. The store image, encompassing factors such as aesthetic appeal and brand's prestigious image, in the context of luxury watchmaking does not have the potential to shape customers'

emotions and increase their likelihood of making a purchase as mentioned by Shahid et al. (2022). Customers do not have expectations of an enticing store ambiance that aligns with the brand's prestige, appealing to both the emotional and cognitive aspects of their decision-making process, contradicting Shahid et al. (2022). One potential reason is that watch brands are already embedded in customers' minds and store image is insignificant to further enhance the already embedded image.

#### *Managerial implications*

This study carries significant managerial implications as well. Firstly, for retailers aiming to cultivate customers' emotional attachment and affective commitment and brand loyalty, our findings emphasize the importance of brand experience as a key driver, particularly in fostering affective commitment, calculative commitment, and emotional attachment. Thus, implementing experiential marketing strategies (Pine B. & James H., 1998) as well as rational strategies become crucial. This can be achieved by engaging multiple customer senses and creating stimulating cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and sensorial experiences (Khan et al., 2020), as well as rational and calculative marketing.

Second, our findings suggest that luxury watch retailers in general should not prioritize enhancing customers' emotional brand experience over cognitive brand experience, as both have significant impacts on subsequent affective and calculative brand commitment. This aligns with previous literature (Khan et al., 2020; Shahid et al., 2022) and highlights the importance of allocating resources towards the development of personalized and authentic strategies that foster affective commitment (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). However, this research also emphasizes the importance of cognitive and rational strategies that foster calculative commitment.

Third, customers who have a penchant for indulging in the realm of luxury, such as luxury watches, are primarily seeking an environment that can evoke their senses in a unique manner (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2020). Consequently, the significance of engaging customer senses, and delivering a retail experience that is immersive and memorable is emphasized (Shahid et al., 2022). Moreover, retailers can enhance their differentiation by incorporating curated music playlists, and captivating window displays, thereby providing functional benefits to their customers (Shahid et al., 2022). Our findings support the notion that sensory marketing exposure holds particular significance in luxury retail settings, particularly in the context of luxury watch stores. Given the unique characteristics of this industry, offering superior, memorable, and distinctive brand experiences plays a crucial role in fostering brand trust, satisfying customers, nurturing brand loyalty, and establishing brand credibility.

Fourth, customers' emotional attachment (Shahid et al., 2022) and affective commitment (Khan et al., 2020) to a brand signify their deep connection and loyalty towards it. Emotionally attached customers exhibit a strong sense of loyalty, while affectively committed customers also demonstrate their loyalty to the brand. Therefore, it is crucial for luxury marketers to recognize that luxury customers associate products with their own identities. Additionally, luxury products often evoke memories of significant moments or notable achievements that customers hold dear (Shahid et al., 2022), particularly luxury watches. Understanding the factors that contribute to the formation of emotional attachment and affective commitment, which ultimately drive brand loyalty, becomes imperative for luxury marketers. This knowledge enables them to gauge the strength of the customer-brand relationship and empowers them to develop

effective strategies and tactics to better serve their customers.

Fifth, luxury stores serve as more than just distribution platforms, and their aesthetic appeal stands out as one of their most distinguishing characteristics (Shahid et al., 2022). They are regarded as creative representations that exhibit exquisitely crafted products and effectively incorporate sensory cues into their brand identity, thereby enhancing customers' sensorially immersive experiences (Joy et al., 2014). Moreover, luxury stores, including those dedicated to luxury watches, embody the image of a luxury brand, heightening customers' emotions, and feelings. This is important in relation to providing customers with sensory marketing. The store image itself, however, in luxury watchmaking has little potential to strengthen the bond between customers and the brand. In the context of the luxury watchmaking industry, customers have expectations of visually captivating store designs in terms of sensory marketing that enhance the brand's prestige. Therefore, it is imperative for marketers to create an environment that is not only visually appealing but also pleasant, encouraging customers to spend a longer duration in the stores. Marketers should recognize that the sentiments conveyed by sensory marketing should extend beyond the aesthetic appeal of the products and resonate with customers on an emotional and psychological level.

#### *Limitations and future research*

Like any other research endeavor, this study is not without its limitations, which consequently opens various avenues for future research. First, it is important to note that the relationships examined in this study are specific to the luxury watchmaking industry. Shahid et al. (2022) investigated the connections between sensory marketing cues, brand experience, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty within the broader context of luxury stores, while Khan et al. (2020) explored the

relationships between brand experience, affective commitment, calculative commitment, and brand loyalty across multiple industries. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future researchers can apply this conceptual model to other industries, encompassing both luxury and non-luxury sectors. By doing so, a comprehensive understanding of these relationships across diverse business contexts can be attained.

Second, the conceptual model was developed based on an analysis of existing literature on sensory marketing and brand experience. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential existence of other constructs that were not included in this model. Future research could explore the inclusion of additional constructs and potential drivers and investigate their relationships within the context of luxury (or non-luxury) stores. This would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing customer behavior and brand loyalty in retail settings.

Third, this study lacks the analysis regarding the influence of demographic factors on customer perceptions and decision-making processes. Demographic factors, such as age, gender, income, and education, can have a significant impact on how individuals perceive and interact with luxury brands, including luxury watches. Future research could incorporate the analysis of respondents' demographics to gain valuable insights into the role of these factors in shaping customer perception and behaviors. This would provide useful implications for luxury watch marketers and marketers across industries, enabling them to develop more targeted and effective branding strategies tailored to specific demographic segments.

Fourth, this study focuses exclusively on single-brand store experiences within the luxury watchmaking industry, neglecting the examination of multi-brand store

experiences. Given the emergence of multi-brand luxury watch boutiques in the industry, there is a need for future researchers to investigate the experiences and dynamics within these multi-brand store contexts. Additionally, exploring both multi-brand and single-brand store experiences across other industries would provide a comprehensive understanding of how different store formats contribute to customers' unique and distinct shopping experiences. Such research could offer valuable insights into the factors influencing customer perceptions, emotions, and brand loyalty in diverse retail settings.

Fifth, this study has a focused sample scope, consisting only of Indonesian citizens with their specific cultural backgrounds and behaviors. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to other nationalities or cultural contexts. To address this limitation, future researchers could replicate the study design in different countries, considering diverse cultural contexts and consumer behaviors. This would provide a broader perspective on the relationships between sensory marketing cues, brand experience, emotional attachment, affective and calculative commitment, and brand loyalty, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within the luxury watchmaking industry or other industries, both luxury and non-luxury, in various cultural settings.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the significance of sensory marketing cues and brand experience in fostering emotional connections between luxury watch brands and customers, leading to brand loyalty. The study emphasizes the importance of emotional attachment and affective commitment in driving repeat purchases and loyalty, while calculative

commitment was found to be less influential. Additionally, the study underscores the role of store image in shaping emotional attachments. These insights provide valuable guidance for luxury watch marketers seeking to enhance brand loyalty and establish emotional connections with their customers.

### Notes on Contributors

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