The Effect of Brand Authenticity toward Emotional Brand Attachment: The Moderating Role of Brand Image

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Abstract

In the airline industry, brand authenticity and Emotional brand attachment (EMA) are important constructs. This study aims to investigate a conceptual model displaying the brand authenticity effect on EMA using a multi-dimensional scale. The study proposed the moderating role of Brand Image in the proposed model by using Income and Education as Control variables. A structural equation modeling approach (SEM) by using WarpPLS 7 program was adapted to analyze the data collected from 320 Egypt Air customers working in the Arab Gulf region through a web survey by using Snowballing techniques. The findings indicate statistical support for all brand authenticity dimensions (Brand Heritage -Quality commitment- Uniqueness- Symbolism) on EMA. Brand Image enhances the influence of uniqueness on EMA. Brand image doesn't enhance influence of three dimensions of brand authenticity (Brand Heritage - Quality commitment- Symbolism) on EMA. Overall, this study provides a theoretical and empirical contribution to the marketing literature, particularly in the customer attitude context.

Keywords: Brand Authenticity, Brand Image, Emotional Brand Attachment.

Introduction

Recently, the authenticity idea has grabbed scholars' attention in the marketing discipline, due to the growing demand for brand authenticity in the purchased products and services. Brand authenticity is viewed as a response for a growing number of critical crises in previous years, as the financial crisis and real challenges to society, climate change, persistent managerial corruption and globalization, which is gradually distancing nation from citizens' identities (Bruhn et al., 2012; Fine, 2003; Fritz et al., 2017).

The concept of attachment introduced in the 1980s indicates the essential human need for relationships like bonds among infants and parents (Huang et al., 2017). The concept of EMA is developed by various studies extensively in the 1990s, this concept went beyond the personal relations by pointing out that can evolve into an attachment with objects, celebrities, places, gifts, experiences, and brands (Arnould & Price, 1993; Huang et al., 2017; Thomson et al., 2005; Vlachos et al., 2010). EMA is self-defining, customers with strong brand attachment tend to tolerate, defend, and uphold the brand despite events and accidents that may affect the brand and lead to service failure (Huang et al., 2017; Levy & Hino, 2016; Park et al., 2010)

Brand Image is important and vital for the company to instill what the company owns and offers in the mind of the customer (Muniz & Guinn, 2001). Brand Image indicates the memory of a brand platform, which includes the consumer interpretation of the advantages, attributes, situations, and characteristics of users, marketers, and manufacturers (Hawkins et al., 2005).

Egypt Air is considered one of the leading companies in the world, upon its inception in May 1932. "Egypt Air" began operating its commercial operations with "Spartan Cruisers", operating between Cairo and Alexandria in 1933. During the Second World War, the Egyptian government placed its hand on the company and changed its name from Egypt Airlines to Egypt Air.

Egypt Air became the seventh airline in the world to join the International Air Transport Association and become a distinct brand. Despite this, Egypt Air recently witnessed some successive events that affected the Egyptian flight sector and Egypt air image. This research aims to investigate whether the brand authenticity will affect the emotional brand attachment and whether the brand image has an effect in supporting this relationship in an attempt to help Egypt Air Company as an authentic Egyptian national company to regain its prestigious position in the minds of current and potential customers.

Literature Review and proposed hypotheses:

- ### *Literature Review*

Brand Authenticity.

Authentic is often described as original, responsible, real, not false, fictitious, and unfavorable to something that has been reproduced or copied (Molleda, 2010; Rosado-Pinto et al., 2020). Authenticity is known as a theme -related behavioral characteristic, in the disciplines of philosophy, authenticity is carefully connected with moral behavior and described as an ethical principle of regeneration and truthfulness for building independent and original essence (Fritz et al., 2017).

Carroll and Wheaton (2009) argue that brand authenticity is not an "actual" object or nothing for objectivity. however, it is a phenomenon that is socially constructed and related to expectations. Brand authenticity is related to the Lack of cognitive awareness. cognitive awareness produces a direct experience, pure, sincere, true, original, unconstrained special strategic instrumental and self-presentation" (Carroll, 2015). In the psychology field, brand authenticity is firmed in conscious experiences that have inclusions for behavior relationships and understanding of one's self-knowledge. The self-determination theory is supported that Authenticity considered the perceived quality identity as focused on Self-consistency. this theory states that individuals enjoy authenticity when it reflects their actions True or the essence of self in enjoying autonomy and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Beverland and Farrelly, (2010) state that authenticity is needed as a consequence of the growing marketplace homogenization, consumer's differentiation, and serves as a guide of quality. Ewing et al. (2012) state that although more studies are focused on brand authenticity antecedents and consequences there are as yet a research gap. So, various researches argue prospective impacting brand authenticity factors and consequences whereby the plurality of previous researches are descriptive, explicatory, and restricted to the implementing of selected variables and concentrate primarily on certain product or category.

Fritz et al. (2017) determined that the demand for authentic brands would be consistently strong. With growing pressure to satisfy this demand, researchers are starting to identify how to impact the perceived brand authenticity. The desire for authenticity is most effective in times of change and confusion when customers need something to trust and demonstrates consistency (Turner & Manning, 1988). Fritz et al. (2017) are identified different brand authenticity antecedents that are closely linked to the brand's history and identified brand authenticity as a subjective construction, involving brand involvement as a moderator variable. Results of the study illustrate that particular variables (e.g. brand identity, brand marketing, brand nostalgia, brand social commitment, actual self-congruence, brand clarity, and employee passion) may affect brand authenticity, which positively affects brand relationship quality, and the effects on the customer's behavioral intentions positively.

Emotional Brand Attachment (EMA)

Schmalz and Orth (2012) noted that a brand attachment can be defined as " To what degree customer Feel by contacting a particular brand or The extent to which the brand elements are self-referenced and self-determined (Arnould & Price, 1993; Zhang, 2010). Park et al. (2010) refer that EMA acts as the vigor of the connection that binds customers to a particular brand.

Several studies and researches in the field of the brand association have linked the consistency of customers with Brand and use it for self-expression which leads to building EMA. This explains why many researchers associate consumers' self-congruence with EMA (Huang et al., 2017; Park et al., 2010; Salimi & Khanlari, 2018). Depending on theories of consistency, individuals seek to achieve consistency in beliefs and behaviors, thus tendency to maintain their or actual self-concept. One method used to express this consistency is to buy a brand whose personality and qualities correspond to the self-concept. The greater the congruence between the customer actual self and the brand, the more positive EMA (Huang et al., 2017).

The study of Japutra et al., (2019) examines the effect of ideal and actual self-congruence on EMA, the study results indicate that actual self-congruence is considered as a strong EMA indicator, where self-congruence directly affects brand attachment. Berry (2000) Argues that Emotion is one of the factors that motivate and encourages consumers to select and relate to a particular good or service, these emotional relationships are gradually established between the company and its customers that influence the different consumer decisions about products. This has led most marketers to try to build an emotional relationship between the brand of their products and their customers which is supported by researches and academic literature by researching how to develop the emotional relationships of brands(Berry, 2000; Levy & Hino, 2016; Thomson et al., 2005).

▪ *Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development*

Brand heritage and brand authenticity overlap empirically and conceptually. Academics examined the conceptualization of, authenticity integrating brand heritage as a dimension of brand authenticity (together with quality commitment and sincerity). Authenticity is assessed as a consumer's understanding of brand uniqueness (Guèvremont, 2018; Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2016; Napoli et al., 2014). In this study, four dimensions of brand authenticity were used, which were adopted in a study of (Shirdastian et al., 2019), Where four dimensions were used for the brand's authenticity (Brand Heritage -Quality commitment- Uniqueness- Symbolism). Previous studies that contributed to the hypothesis's development can be reviewed as follows:

Brand Heritage and EMA

Brand Heritage focuses specifically on confidence in organizations and a focus on their history (Rindell et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2016; Urde et al., 2007). The brand heritage recall is provided as linking the company history to its present role. Previous studies of brand heritage focused on brand heritage in various fields, for example, Food industries (Hakala et al., 2011; Pecot et al., 2018), banking and furniture(Urde et al., 2007), automotive industry(Hakala et al., 2011; Rindell et al., 2015; Urde et al., 2007). Brand heritage has a positive impact on purchasing intentions, particularly for companies with a low sales promotion focus. brand heritage encourages positive emotions and trust, facilitates commitment, and brand attachment (Rose et al., 2016). Studies indicate a gap in

Empirical researching of brand heritage outcomes, previous studies focused on examining the consumer's perceptions about brand heritage importance and consequences. Previous studies focused on illustrating the effects of brand heritage on consumer purchasing intentions to assess the moderating role of sales promotion focus. While the current study focused on relates brand heritage as a dimension of brand authenticity with an empirical set of cognitive and affective consequences, thus, the study hypothesizes:

H1: Brand heritage positively influences EMA.

Quality commitment and EMA.

the consumer receives the direct and indirect consumption values derive from using the authentic brand(Napoli et al., 2016). if the brands are deeply rooted in the mind of a customer, the chances of forming an emotional bond are higher (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). When brands provide recognizable benefits, a sense of connection with the brand that establishes in the customer mind, creates a brand emotional relationship (Charlton & Cornwell, 2019; Pourazad & Pare, 2014) (Fournier, 1998). Thus, the study hypothesizes:

H2: Quality commitment positively influences EMA.

Uniqueness and EMA.

Uniqueness is defined By obtaining, using, and disposing of consumer goods to enhance and establish personal and social identity(Rosado-Pinto et al., 2020; Tian & McKenzie, 2001). Uniqueness defines the predisposition of a person to accept new ideas, question conventions, and embrace unusual and unique objects and experiences. To beloved brands, authenticity is seen as a distinct dimension(Napoli et al., 2014). unique characteristics participants customers to be attached to the brand (Bilgihan et al., 2018; Manthiou et al., 2018). Thus, the study hypothesizes:

H3: Uniqueness positively influences EMA.

Symbolism and EMA.

Symbolism defines mostly as select the suitable of how much a brand symbolizes a certain cultural group's delicate values and moral norms (Jian et al., 2019; Kubat & Swaminathan, 2015). Symbolism resources have been widely recognized as providing the capacity for brand development(Jian et al., 2019), specifically, Symbolism resources can facilitate brand image building(Yu Liu et al., 2020; Ozsomer, 2012). Therefore, as consumers achieve the fulfillment of establishing a relationship or Community affiliations by cultural symbolic brand, this process not only promotes positive feelings and emotions for customers but also leads to consumer self-realization and self improvement. Based on that logic, the present study suggests the following

H4: Symbolism positively influences EMA.

The moderating role of Brand Image

The brand image is defined as Consumer general and comprehensive impression of a particular brand. Brand image is a consumer's rational or emotional perception of a certain brand (Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019; Pourazad & Pare, 2014). The company that enjoys the image of a good brand achieves a strong competitive advantage as consumers chose the products of that company after comparing it with the products of other companies (CHA & LYU, 2019)

The importance of The Brand Image also comes from its ability to distinguish and position the company in a privileged position in the market. A variety of brand images can reflect a customer's view of a particular product and also the manufacturer of that product(Propheto et al., 2020). A strong mental image of the brand means a long history, richness, and a higher degree of the brand on the common use and consumption and the ability to face competition all this enables the brand to form a distinct structure and identity. Stern et al. (2001) defined the image of marketing as comprising the image of the brand, store, and the company, Ditcher (1985) explained that a brand image is a complete impression in the mind of the consumer and consumers form a brand image based on their relations to the brand. Kotler (2000)decided that brand image act as a set of values and beliefs about a particular brand (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). It was clarified that users of certain products will be influenced by their views on the brand by buying and using the products provided if it was negative or positive. If the brand image is attached and related to the minds of customers as a brand that owns good products or services, this will be reflected in the brand image and strongly distinguished by customers. This interpretation is consistent with Hubanic and Hubanic (2009) where they indicated that brand image is considered as customer perceptions and comprehension to the brand's features that are specified established on certain associations (Hubanic & Hubanic, 2009).

Barreda et al, (2020) study results suggest that social media incentives and benefits impact the user's brand commitment. Interactivity and promotions on social media tend to create a better brand image. Brand commitment and brand image in turn positively impact emotional attachment. The (Klabi, 2020) study findings showed that self-image congruence has a beneficial impact on EMA. The study applied to 21 KSA brands indicated that the impact of actual and ideal self-image congruence on EMA is greater for high-standard brands.

Brand image is one of the most powerful determinants of strong brand attachment (Bigné et al., 2001). Researchers recommend that stronger cognitive brand attachment is generated by a more positive brand image(Veasna et al., 2013). Academics adopted these arguments by anticipating the same effect to also take place at the affective level. Where people expect a positive feeling, they will promote a strong brand image that will make them more inclined to build Strong emotional brand relationships through the brand image (Gross & Brown, 2006; Yeyi Liu et al., 2020). Based on that logic, the present study suggests that:

H5: Brand image enhances the associations between Brand heritage and EMA.

H6: Brand image enhances the associations between Quality commitment and EMA

H7: Brand image enhances the associations between Uniqueness and EMA

H8: Brand image enhances the associations between Symbolism and EMA.

- *Literature gaps:*

The author describes two research gaps based upon the literature First, the essence of the Brand Authenticity still largely unexplored and the extent to which the brand's originality was affected by the recurrent crises facing it. Second, the process of keeping and protecting the brand authenticity remains underexplored, Though some work provides an understanding of the brand authenticity antecedents(Charlton & Cornwell, 2019; Fritz et al., 2017).

At best of our knowledge, there isn't a holistic quantitative study that has yet analyzed the relationship between brand authenticity dimensions and EMA and testing the mediating role of brand image in the airline service especially, Egypt Air company as a national company established in 1932 and recently suffered from some crises. Thus, the present paper aims to identify the relationship between brand authenticity and EMA among Egypt Air customers to identify whether Egypt air authenticity can address and treat with the bad psychological impact that can be left in the consumer minds after repeated accidents and crises in the field of Airline. The gained knowledge will supply marketing managers with helpful information for redesigning Egypt Air strategic decisions and evolving tactical communication messages which enhance Egypt Air authenticity and growing customer-related outcomes.

- *Conceptual framework*

The brand image that has a long and rich history encourages the brand's ability to counter the threats of competitors and makes the brand more predisposed to form a brand association (Davidson et al., 2007). When customers show an attachment to the company or brand, they describe their positive feelings towards that brand/company (Shah et al.,

2020), The researcher assumes that brands that enjoy a high degree of Authenticity are linked emotionally to the customer, and this association increases whenever the image of the brand is good, so We developed a conceptual framework based on specific hypotheses, shown in Figure (1)

The study used income and education level as control variables in the study to exclude their effects on the study results, given that Egypt Air ticket prices are considered somewhat lower than other airlines operating in the Gulf region and Egyptians worked in the Gulf region with low education level may resort to Egypt Air For ease of dealing with those offices for language restrictions.
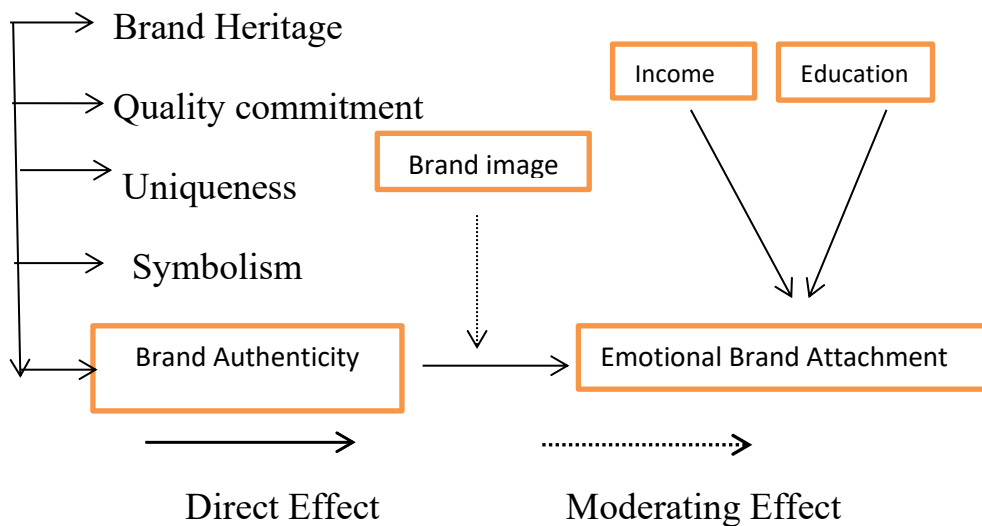
Brand Heritage

Quality commitment

Uniqueness

Symbolism

Brand image

Income   Education

Brand Authenticity → Emotional Brand Attachment

Direct Effect   Moderating Effect

Figure 1. The study conceptual framework.

Methodology:

Measurement

The constructs of proposed model measured by adopting multiple scales pulled from the previous literature. The study adopted (Shirdastian et al., 2019) scales of brand authenticity dimensions, consists of four dimensions (Brand Heritage -Quality commitment- Uniqueness-Symbolism). The study adopted (Fritz et al., 2017; Napoli et al., 2014) measures for brand heritage, that applied in most studies. Brand heritage consists of 9 phrases. also adapted (Napoli et al., 2014) scale for measuring Quality commitment dimension, which consists of 6 phrases .The study adopted (Schallehn et al., 2019) scale, for measuring uniqueness dimension, which consists of 4 phrases .also adopted (Charlton & Cornwell, 2019) scale ,for measuring Symbolism dimension, which consists of 5 phrases.. The study depended on (Rahman et al., 2019) scale ,for measuring brand image variable, which consists of 5 phrases The study adopted (Levy & Hino, 2016; Thomson et al., 2005; Yusof et al., 2020) scale ,for measuring EMA variable, which consists of 6 phrases.

Research tool and data collection method:

The questionnaire was relied upon as a tool for collecting data, and to achieve the research objectives, some adjustments were made to the questionnaire items to suit the purpose of conducting the study, where some measures were adopted through reviewing previous studies that are relevant to the research topic. To operationalize all the study constructs, the study adopted a 5-point scale where strongly disagree (Represents the value 1), strongly agree (Represents the value 5). Given that income and education may influence customer EMA(Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019), these variables are used as control variables in the study.

Population and research sample:

The study Population includes Egypt Air customers working in the Arab Gulf region. The study adopted a web survey for different Considerations to achieve the study goal, perception of customers attitude and belief to Egypt air company, the difficulty of determining the size of the Population or setting a specific frame and the spread of its vocabulary .the web Survey is the most suitable technique to handle with these goals and reinforce the research outcomes (Kim & Chao, 2019). Snowballing techniques were used, respondents asked for recommending other people who were concerned about Egypt air services to collaborate and survey share when they finish the survey. With determining the restriction of working in the Arab Gulf region thus the survey became available to a large number of participants.

The survey was designed Depending on Google drive and was made available to the Egyptian community in some Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia - Kuwait - United Arab Emirates), which was chosen due to the increasing number of the Egyptian community working in. the web survey was available for a period of three months from May 20, 2019, to August 20, 2019. At first, the criterion of filtering decided the selection of respondents by asking them whether the employers (companies-individuals) or the respondent would choose an airline. Because the unrestraint of choosing the airline company should be available to measure study variables. The participants who reacted positively to the question then had the opportunity to fill out and submit the form. The questionnaire also included descriptions of the study's purpose and the time it could take to complete the survey. The numbers of incoming lists reached 342 and 22 incomplete lists were excluded, so the number of the approved sample items was 320.

As Hair et al. (2010) indicated, the 300–500 sample size is considered suitable for SEM based on variance and covariance. The current study included two approaches to identify the sample size acceptable, especially regarding Gamma Exponential and Inverse Square Root. Simulating the above tests for Monte Carlo studies estimates similar to those generated using the Monte Carlo method are calculated (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). The reverse square root approach underestimates the crucial sample size required for SEM, while the gamma exponential technique appears to provide more accurate. Figure 2 illustrates the presumed estimates were generated based on certain default path coefficient values 0.197 (the minimum absolute accepted), 0.05 (the p-value significant level), and 0.80 (the suitable required power). Therefore, this study used the same default path coefficient values but perceived a greater power level (0.96). To verify the recommended sample size is strict. Implementing exponential inverse square root and gamma methods yields the sample sizes 279 and 298, respectively. So even, this study's sample size exceeds the required threshold and thus meets the sampling specifications. The present study included detecting the sample size that is appropriate Inverse Square Root (Kock & Hadaya, 2018; Nikhashemi et al., 2019).
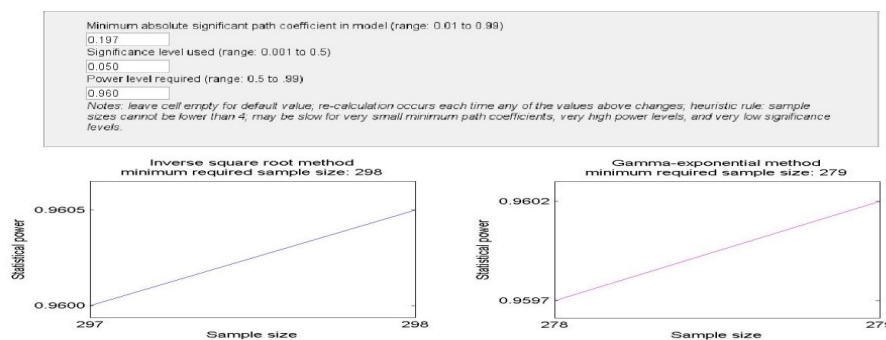

Figure 2. The sample size using the Monte Carlo method

Table 1 illustrates the demographic breakdown of the survey respondents and Research sample properties. The number of respondents in the study sample was 320 respondents 60.6% (194 respondents) of the total sample were male and 39.4% percent (126 respondents) of the total sample were female. The common income category within the study sample was (15001-20000) representing 45.9% (147 respondents) of the total sample. The common number of flight times for the same airline within the study sample was 7–8 times representing 35% (112 respondents). And the common education level feature in the study sample was postgraduate representing 70.3% (225respondents) of the total sample.

Table1: Research sample properties

variable	item	Frequency	%	variable	item	Frequency	%
gender	male	194	60.6%	income	5001-10000	20	6.3%
	female	126	39.4%		10001-15000	109	34.1%
times	1–2 times	63	19.7%		15001-20000	147	45.9%
	3–4 times	57	17.8%		>20000	44	13.8%
	5–6 times	59	18.4%	Education	A-level	2	0.6%
	7–8 times	112	35%		high school	21	6.6%
	> 9 times	29	9.1%		undergraduate	72	22.5%
					postgraduate	225	70.3%
	Total	320	100%		Total	320	100%

▪ *Data Analysis and Results*

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a widely recognized analytic tool for the theory testing and extension in marketing and consumer behavior disciplines (Sarstedt et al., 2014). SEM has been recommended versus simple regression methods as it helps academics to test a collection of dependency associations at the same time (do Valle & Assaker, 2016; Hair et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2019). In addition to being able to deal with formative and reflective models, SEM is also useful for analyzing the path coefficient in complex models(do Valle & Assaker, 2016; Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019; Voorhees et al., 2016).

This research was adopted on WarpPLS software, which provides researchers with some advantages (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). WarpPLS helps to define non-linear relationships between variables and offers comprehensive indices of model fit that are consistent with both factor and composite-based SEM (Kock, 2015; Kock & Hadaya, 2018). SEM easily evaluates a large number of variables and prevents multicollinearity and normal distribution problems (Ali et al., 2018; Richter et al., 2015; Sarstedt et al., 2014). The proposed model evaluation has been done by two main steps, Firstly, the measurement model was tested to determine the reliability and validity of the research indicators. Secondly, the structural model was developed to evaluate the fit model and the best test hypothesis (Hair et al., 2014; Sarstedt et al., 2014). Various analyzes related to this study were performed as follows:

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model):

After the initial design of the survey list, and to assure the validity and reliability of the indicators that perform the latent variables. the validity and reliability tests were performed by using the Outer model. The measuring instruments used with reflective indicators variables in the evaluation of the outer model are composite reliability (CR), Confirmatory factor analysis, discriminant validity, and AVE.

To perform Confirmatory factor analysis the cross-loadings and combined loadings together were used through the standardized estimates to determine each indicator validity. The loading factor of reflective indicators (Brand heritage, Quality commitment, Uniqueness, Symbolism, and brand image) can be reviewed in Table 2. To develop the model fit, items were dropped with factor loadings lower than 0.7 and removed indicator which its weights are not significant. As an additional indicator accurate measure convergent validity.

Convergent validity indicates that indicators belong or load to the same specific construct. all measurement model indicator loadings should be (≥ 7) (Nikhashemi et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2014). Furthermore, items with loadings in 0.40–0.70 range may be considered acceptable if the variables R^2 and AVE do not improve by removing them (Khan et al., 2019; Kock & Hadaya, 2018; Nikhashemi et al., 2019). So, the items (BH8 and BH9) from the Brand heritage variable the item (QC6) from the Quality commitment variable and the item (EMA4) from the EMA variable were dropped.

Table 2. The measurement model Assessment.

Construct	Indicator	LF	LFD	CR	α	VIFs	AVE
Brand heritage (Fritz et al., 2017; Napoli et al., 2014)	BH1: Egypt Air is characterized by its history	0.882	0.89***	0.933	0.915	4.517	0.665
	BH2: Egypt Air's assurances are closely connected to its history	0.834	0.85***				
	BH3: See Egypt Air as related to the Egyptian tradition	0.845	0.86***				
	BH4: I think Egypt Air has strong links to a particular historical time, culture or area	0.823	0.84***				
	BH5: Egypt Air connects strongly with the past	0.787	0.76***				
	BH6: Egypt Air reminds me of beautiful memories.	0.759	0.74***				
	BH7: Egypt Air evokes A sense of tradition.	0.726	0.73***				
	BH8: Egypt Air strengthens long-established traditions	0.404					
	BH9: I remember regular behavior that I had with Egypt Air in the past	0.429					
Quality commitment (Napoli et al., 2014)	QC1: Only the finest services are used in Egypt Air	0.754	0.76***	0.891	0.846	4.844	0.620
	QC2: Quality is important for Egypt Air	0.808	0.80***				
	QC3: The services of Egypt Air are made to the most exacting criteria, where all strive to improve quality.	0.824	0.81***				
	QC4: Services offered by Egypt Air follow the	0.719	0.75***				

	most rigorous quality requirements.						
	QC5: Egypt Air provides continuous additional skills and offers in services.	0.781	0.80***				
	QC6: Egypt Air services provides Skilled hospitality services and cares attentions to detail	0.551					
Uniqueness (Schallehn et al., 2019)	UN1: How Egypt Air delivers on its brand promise is somewhat different from competitor companies.	0.972	0.97***	0.982	0.975	1.633	0.931
	UN2: The way Egypt Air performs its promise is unique.	0.962	0.96***				
	UN3: Egypt Air distinctly performs its promise.	0.958	0.95***				
	UN4: Egypt Air is a service that brings value to the customers.	0.967	0.96***				
Symbolism (Charlton & Cornwell, 2019)	SY1: Egypt Air is a service that represents essential customer-care values.	0.903	0.90***	0.930	0.907	2.185	0.731
	SY2: Egypt Air is a service which connects people to their authentic personality	0.772	0.77***				
	SY3: Egypt Air is a service that connects people to important things.	0.813	0.81***				
	SY4: Egypt Air is a service which is concerned with preserving the identity of the customer.	0.916	0.91***				
	SY5: Egypt Air is a service that fulfills my favorite services.	0.862	0.86***				

Brand image (Rahman et al., 2019)	BI1: I quickly recall the airline company when I hear the word "Airline Service"	0.901	0.90***	0.931	0.907	3.593	0.731
	BI2: I believe that Egypt Air's customers are distinguished	0.900	0.90***				
	BI3: I feel safe if I use Egypt Air services	0.765	0.76***				
	BI4: I regularly select Egypt Air's services due to their good reputation and credibility	0.803	0.80***				
	BI5: I use Egypt airline services because it is a national company	0.895	0.89***				
EMA (Levy & Hino, 2016; Thomson et al., 2005; Yusof et al., 2020)	EMA1: I have a unique relationship with Egypt Air	0.933	0.95***	0.941	0.920	2.363	0.762
	EMA2: I identify with what Egypt Air stands for	0.874	0.87***				
	EMA3: I feel a sense of belonging regarding Egypt Air	0.864	0.86***				
	EMA4: I am very proud to be an Egypt Air customer	0.688					
	EMA5: I am highly regarded by Egypt Air	0.785	0.76***				
	EMA6: Egypt Air fits my personality	0.863	0.89***				

Notes: LF (Loading factor); LFD (Loading factor after dropped items); α (Cronbach's Alpha); VIFs (Variance Inflation Factor); *** (P-value <0.001).

For each latent variable, the maximum collinearity VIF values are below 5 (the criterion), showing the discriminant validity of latent variables (Kock, 2015). CR was used to reflect the Internal Consistency between variables and as shown in table (2) CR of all variables in the model are meet the CR criteria because its values are more than 0.7 (Kock, 2015; Voorhees et al., 2016). AVE was used to check how far the study indicator ability to explain the variables. Fornell and Larcker (1981) decided that the AVE value recommended should be more than 0.50. By reviewing the results all variables values were more than 0.50. Thus, all variables encourage specified requirements (Voorhees et al., 2016). For every variable, the AVE square root should be more than the association among constructs in the study (Klarner et al., 2013; Sarstedt et al., 2014). The results are referred to in table (3) indicate that all reflective indicators variables have met discriminant validity criteria.

Common method bias (CMB) and Data normality:

Responses were collected from the same respondents of all study variables (dependent and independent), so a probability of common method bias (CMB) may appear. However according to Bagozzi et al. (1991), when intercorrelations between exogenous and endogenous variables reach the 0.90 thresholds, CMB occurs. As seen in the correlation matrix there is no correlation above the suggested threshold (refer Table 2). So, in this study, CMB is not a major concern. Also, as indicated in the literature (Ali et al., 2018; Kock & Hadaya, 2018). The variance inflation factors (VIF) should be (< 5), or preferably (< 3.3), to guarantee the CMB problems don't occur. The maximum collinearity VIF is < 5 in the current study, thus CMB will not be a problem (view Table3).

Table 3: Discriminant validity analysis

	Brand heritage	Quality commitment	Uniqueness	Symbolism	brand image	EMA
Brand heritage	(0.875)					
Quality commitment	0.740	(0.875)				
Uniqueness	0.526	0.497	(0.865)			
Symbolism	0.524	0.473	0.423	(0.855)		
brand image	0.710	0.812	0.383	0.434	(0.879)	
EMA	0.495	0.529	0.288	0.613	0.623	(0.838)

Note: The Diagonals values shows the AVEs square roots.

- ▪ *Structural model evaluation (Inner Model)*

There are two key parameters for determining the structural model, including the path coefficient significance and the R^2 value. In the structural model, the relationship between endogenous and exogenous variables is hypothesized, the path coefficients are determined for each hypothesized relationship, and their significance can be checked based on the P-values(< 0.05)(Hair et al., 2014). The relationship nature among latent variables is arranged through the variance which can be explained and measured according to P-value significance. The R^2 value for all endogenous latent variables was used to determine and define the structural model predictive power. The causal relationship strength between variables refers to theoretical justification. The basic principle guides the structural model development is the parsimony principle, which means simple models with concise theoretical models(Kock & Hadaya, 2018; Sukaris et al., 2020). In the proposed model brand image variable was used as a moderating variable between brand authenticity and EBA . The model predictive relevance and the model strength as a whole were determined using the Stone-Geisser test. The goodness of fit was reviewed in table 4.

Table 4. Model fit Indices:

No	Model fit and Quality Indices	Criteria	Analysis of Results	Remarks
1	Average path coefficient (APC)	P<0.001	0.201 ***	Ideal
2	Average R-squared (ARS)	P<0.001	0.625***	Ideal
3	Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	P<0.001	0.613***	Good
4	Average block VIF (AVIF)	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3	4.055	Good
Causality assessment indices:				
5	Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3	4.901	low
6	Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	small >= 0.1, medium >= 0.25, large >= 0.36	0.737	Ideal
7	Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	acceptable if >= 0.7, ideally = 1	0.800	Good
8	R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	acceptable if >= 0.9, ideally = 1	0.854	Good
9	Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	acceptable if >= 0.7	1.000	Ideal
10	Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	acceptable if >= 0.7	0.500	low

By reviewing the results of the analysis, we find that all indicators were acceptable the model fit is good, which the ARS value was (0.201), APC, and AARS value was (0.625 and 0.613) and P-value is less than 0.001. The value of (AFVIF) and (AVIF) less than 5 which means there is no problem related to multicollinearity between latent variables and between the study indicators, Tenenhaus GOF value was (0.737) that mean the strength of the model was excellent. There is no problem related to causality in the model because the value of SSR and SPR was more than (0.7) and the value of RSCR was more than (0.9).

- ▪ *Assessment of structural equation modeling (SEM)*

SEM which displays the effect of brand authenticity dimensions on EMA with and without brand image which represents as a moderating variable were shown in Figure 3
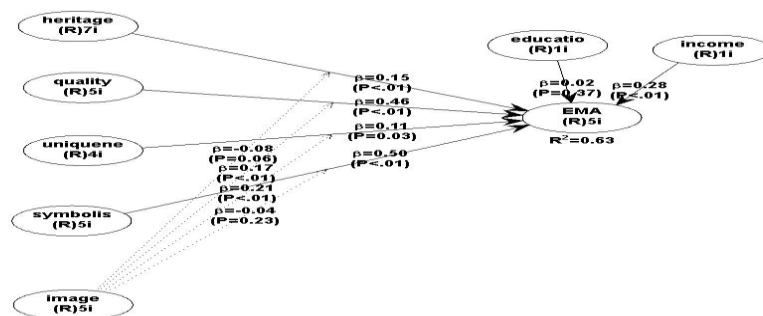

Fig. 3. Structural model outcomes.

As shown in Fig (3), 63% of the variance of EMA is explained by brand authenticity dimensions (brand heritage - quality commitment – Uniqueness- Symbolism) and control variables (income – education). The structural model outcome, as indicated in Table 5 and Fig. 3, shows that Brand heritage, Quality commitment, Uniqueness, and Symbolism have a direct and positive significant relationship with EMA using a one-tailed test, $P < 0.01$ level ($\beta = 0.15***$; $\beta=0.46 ***$; $\beta=0.50 ***$), Hence, H1, H2, H4 are supported. Uniqueness has a significant relationship with EMA using the one-tailed test, $P < 0.05$ level ($\beta=0.11**$), Hence, H3 is Supported. Besides, the effects of income as a control variable on resultant variable EMA were significant ($\beta=0.28.0***$) but the effects of the other control variable (education) on resultant variable EMA were insignificant ($\beta=0.02$, $p < 0.37$).

Table 5. Results of hypothesis testing (Structural model outcome).

Hypothesized path	B and p-value	Decision
H1: Brand heritage positively influences Emotional Brand Attachment (heritage -> EMA)	$\beta = 0.15***$	Supported
H2: Quality commitment positively influences Emotional Brand Attachment (quality -> EMA)	$\beta=0.46 ***$	Supported
H3: Uniqueness positively influences Emotional Brand Attachment (uniquene -> EMA)	$\beta=0.11 **$	Supported
H4: Symbolism positively influences Emotional Brand Attachment (Symbolis -> EMA)	$\beta=0.50 ***$	Supported
Control variables		
Income	$\beta=0.28 ***$	Significant
Education	$\beta=0.02$ [NS]	insignificant

Notice: *** < 0.001, ** < 0.05 and NS > 0.05

As shown in Table 6, and Fig. 3 Surprisingly, the brand image doesn't enhance the associations between Brand heritage and EMA (heritage ->EMA - β=0.08, p < 0.06) because the β coefficient decrease (in the direct relation between brand heritage and EMA was 0.15 but when using the brand image as a moderator variable in the relation, β coefficient decrease to 0.08). This means that the direct relation between Brand heritage and EMA better than the relationship with brand image moderating role, so using brand image didn't support the proposed relations and H5 was rejected.

Also, the brand image didn't enhance the associations between Quality commitment and EMA (Quality ->EMA - β=0.17***). Although the moderating role of brand image is significant that means brand image affect the relationship between Quality commitment and EMA, this effect will reduce the proposed relation because the β coefficient decrease (in the direct relation between Quality commitment and EMA was 0.46 but when using the brand image as a moderator variable in the relation, β coefficient decrease to 0.17). This means that the direct relation between Quality commitment and EMA better than the relationship with the brand image moderating role, so using brand image didn't support the proposed relations and H6 was rejected.

Brand image enhances the associations between Uniqueness and EMA (Uniqueness->EMA - β=0.21***). This indicates the brand image's significant moderating role in the relationship between certain variables, and the β coefficient increased from 0.11 to 0.21 thus H7 was supported.

The brand image's moderating roles in the relationship between Symbolism and EMA (Symbolism ->EMA, β=0.04, p < 0.23) is found to be insignificant, so H8 was rejected.

Table 6: WarpPLS- moderation role

Hypothesis	β and P values	Decision	The reason
H5: brand image enhances the associations between Brand heritage and EMA (heritage – image >EMA)	β=0.08 ,p < 0.06	Rejected	β coefficient decrease P value insignificant
H6: brand image enhances the associations between Quality commitment and EMA (Quality - image >EMA)	β=0.17, p < 0.01	Rejected	β coefficient decrease
H7: brand image enhances the associations between Uniqueness and EMA (Uniqueness-image >EMA)	β=0.21, p < 0.01	Accepted	β coefficient increase P-value significant
H8: brand image enhances the associations between Symbolism and EMA (Symbolism -image >EMA)	β=0.04, p < 0.23	Rejected	β coefficient decrease P-value insignificant

- *Discussion*

The study has investigated the impact of brand authenticity on EMA and investigating the brand image moderating role in these constructs, in the airline industry context by using a multidimensional and comprehensive measurement scale that was recently implemented for brand authenticity operationalization. The results indicate that all of the brand authenticity dimensions (Brand heritage- Quality commitment- Uniqueness - Symbolism) have a positive influence on EMA in the airline industry context. These results are harmonious with a study of (Assiouras et al., 2015), The study indicates that brand authenticity determines EMA, and affects consumers purchasing intentions, willingness to pay more, and brand support. These findings also complement previous studies (Rose et al., 2016) which decided that Brand heritage encourages positive

emotions, builds trust, and reinforces commitment and EMA. Successful brand heritage positions products based on their history and relate them to current circumstances (Balmer & Chen, 2015; Urde et al., 2007). This finding is in harmony with the study of (Merchant & Rose, 2013), which decided that Brand heritage leads to deeper brand attachment. Heritage brands are seen as being reliable, encourage trust, and improve the brand's view in Continue generating value successfully. Brand heritage probably influences consumer choice by setting forward a reliable offer (Santos et al., 2016; Schroeder, 2017).

The study results are compatible with Arya et al., (2019), The brand's authenticity articulates the desire of consumers to explore meaning and intent in their lives and is a means of carrying out their expression of distinguished EMA. The brand can represent the ideal self of a consumer, achieving consumer hopes and aspirations (Thomson et al., 2005). These findings show that consumers are emotionally attached to brands that received and evaluated it as a high level of quality commitment.

The brand uniqueness refers to the degree that a customer recognizes the brand as being various among other brands(Southworth & Ha-Brookshire, 2016). The study results regarding the uniqueness impacts on EMA are consistent with the results of Park et al., (2006) and Malär et al., (2011) represents that the brand achieves the ideal of a customer's hopes and expectations. Customers tend to be loyal to the brands that affirm their present selves and commit to a potential, ideal self. The more customer relates to a brand, the greater the degree of emotional connection between the customer and the brand (Assiouras et al., 2015).

EMA is relatively high if the brand is considered as unique and sincere (Arya et al., 2019; Jian et al., 2019). Although studies concentrated on using positive emotions and trust as mediating variables in the study of brand heritage's positive impact on brand attachment (Rose et al., 2016),

The moderating role of brand image is another significant contribution to this study. While the concept of "brand image" has recently received increasing attention from scholars, its moderating role in enhancing the relationship between brand authenticity and customer responses represented in EMA has not been well investigated. The result of the study regarding the moderating role of the brand image in the relationship between three dimensions of brand authenticity and EMA was a surprise such findings contradicted our expectations and the arguments pointed out in the literature. Our findings indicate that brand image doesn't enhance the relation between brand heritage, quality commitment, symbolism, and EMA. This is due to the nature of the Egypt Air Company and for the time in which the study applied. Whereas, Egypt Air Company's image has been affected a lot in recent times due to the unprecedented losses it witnessed in its history due to the successive events that hit the airline sector. It is a temporary stage that the long-standing company in the airline field is going through, and perhaps the current study will help Egypt Air Company to restore the strong brand image.

However, the results also indicate that brand image plays a significant moderating role in enhancing the relationship between uniqueness and EMA, Brand image development can lead to successful brand attachment. Consequently, an existing brand with a strong image would most likely result in an increased emotional attachment to the brand.

Brand attachment refers to the psychological perception. A positive brand image may offer positive feelings towards the Brand, which could turn out to be a more emotional Brand attachment (Belaid & Behi, 2011).

Practical implications

The current study has a variety of recommendations for airline services practice. The results suggest that brand image enhances emotional outcomes for consumers, such as EMA. This indicates that better EMA in an airline company will allow the company to harvest these results from its customers. Therefore, the need for the company to enhance EMA through uniqueness. additional well-being perception procedure deals such as post-flight or transit butler services at airports and mini relaxing sessions to enhance flights Self-enhancing all along the journey. Suggests that airlines should acknowledge achievement uniqueness as vital motivational value for passengers and special attention to ensuring that the products and services satisfy the desires of travelers. It will start from the point of booking the flight or Check-in where passengers can choose their important features which they find essential, then it has to last till the end by ensuring that travelers are comfortable, safely and   meal services diversity are now increasingly common in many airlines' companies

▪ *Limitations and future research directions*

The study results are subject to certain limitations that may be overcome by future researchers. This study is confined to some of Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia-Kuwait-United Arab Emirates), This study also limited an electronic survey to Egyptians who join the Egyptian community groups in the Arab Gulf, while many Egyptians are working in

the countries of the Arabian Gulf and not affiliated with those groups. This study is confined to brand authenticity and EMA within the Egyptian community. For a better generalization, therefore, the proposed model should be replicated in other countries, communities, and other airline companies.

This study has suggestions regarding the directions for future research. Firstly, this research used brand authenticity dimensions representing heritage, quality commitment, uniqueness, and Symbolism. Therefore, it would be interesting in the future to consider another brand authenticity dimension. Secondly, this research included various grades of airline customers and recommend future research focus on the different classifications for the first class or economy class or tourism class. Finally, this study used the brand image in studying the effects of brand authenticity on EMA. Future researchers can therefore apply this model to other contexts and evaluate whether the same outcomes are generated for the moderating role of brand image in those contexts.

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