



**Investigating the Mediating Role of Customer Attachment in the Effect of service quality on brand experience and Customer's Patronage Intention (case study: Mashhad language institutes)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In service organizations and institutions, such as educational institutions, it is very sensitive to establish proper relationships with customers in the field of providing services. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the mediating role of customer attachment in the effect of service quality on brand experience and customer's patronage intention. This research statistical population includes language learners of educational institutions in Mashhad. The number of statistical samples was determined using Cochran's formula of 384 people and the sampling method is available. The research method is descriptive and survey type and four questionnaires were used in this research. These four questionnaires include the customer's patronage intention questionnaire by Kjolola et al. (1999) with 3 questions, the brand experience questionnaire by Brakus et al. (2009) with 6 questions, the customer attachment questionnaire by Holbeck et al. (2014) with 10 questions and finally the service quality questionnaire by Ekinci (2001) and Ekinci et al. (2008) with 8 questions. The face validity of the questionnaire was investigated using the opinions of several professors of the management group in the Sanabad Golbahar Institute of Higher Education and the construct validity was also investigated through factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate and measure the reliability of the questionnaire. Structural equation modeling methods and "SPSS" and "AMOS" software were used to analyze data and test hypotheses. The results of the data analysis showed that service quality affects customer attachment, and customer attachment affects the brand experience, and customer's patronage intention. In addition, customer attachment mediates the relationship between service quality, brand experience, and the customer's patronage intention.*

**Keywords:** Brand experience, Customer attachment, Customer's patronage intention, Service quality

**INTRODUCTION**

Today's global markets, companies, and service institutions are facing problems and issues related to creating customer experiences to improve brand awareness, customer loyalty, and ultimately profit. Customer experience is an internal and subjective response from customers when communicating directly or indirectly with the company (Hasanqolipour Yasuri et al., 2017). Generally, direct communication is created when purchasing and using services that are often commenced by the customer. Indirect communication usually includes unplanned

interactions with a company's services or products or brand representatives and is manifested in the forms of verbal suggestions, criticism, reports, or reviews (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Therefore, understanding what companies should evaluate and measure nowadays to gain competitive advantage has become the biggest challenge facing them. In such a situation, a part of the creative aspects of being good at a company is to understand the customer experience, find new ways to model it and exploit it to create more value than competitors. In other words, companies and service institutions can not manage and improve customer experience and its components in their industry until they have a correct and fundamental understanding of them (Hashmati et al., 2019).

In addition to this topic, competition in today's world to improve the quality of services in the direction of branding is a strategic issue and problem for organizations that are active in the service sector. (Melki et al., 2016). In other words, the increase in competition has led to the fact that service applicants are not required to comply with the type and quality of services provided by a service institution. In addition, they have the right to choose the institute that offers the highest quality to their customers from among countless service institutions with the best quality (Heshmati et al., 2018 b).

Hosseini Kolko (2016), in his thesis, examined the impact of social media on service quality, emotional attachment, quality of brand communication, word-of-mouth advertising, and customers' willingness to buy. The research results showed that the effect of social media on emotional attachment, service quality, and the quality of brand communication is positive and significant. The effect of service quality on emotional attachment and word-of-mouth advertising is positive and significant. The effect of emotional attachment is also positive and significant on the quality of brand communication, word-of-mouth advertising, and willingness to buy. The effect of the quality of brand communication on word-of-mouth advertising and willingness to buy is positive and significant. The effect of word-of-mouth advertising on the willingness to buy is positive and significant.

Farhat et al. (2020) conducted an article that examined the link between customer attachment to brand equity and the role of brand experience, brand personality, and brand influence. The research results showed that brand experience, brand personality, and brand feeling are important predictors of the brand attachment behavior of customers. Therefore, the design of marketing programs with an emphasis on the pleasant experience of the brand, which leads to the brand effect, ultimately leads to brand attachment behavior. Islam et al. (2019) conducted a case study of incidents and consequences related to customer attachment in the service sector. The results of this research showed that service quality positively affects customer attachment, and in this way, it has a positive effect on brand experience and re-patronage intention.

The quality of service and customer experience from this quality are all the ideas created by customers as the result of the company, service, brand, and product. Whenever the customer makes direct or indirect contact with them, it leads to the formation of a completely personal experience that originates from the client's participation on different levels (emotional, intellectual, spiritual, sensory, and physical) (Laming & Mason, 2014). Therefore, the brand experience includes the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive reactions created through the generators related to the brand such as communication, identity, design, packaging, and the environment in which the brand is offered. A large number of marketing experts and researchers



believe that it is essential that consumers understand and recognize the brand experience to expand the marketing strategies of services and products because brand experience is used to predict consumer behavior (Brakus et al., 2009).

Nowadays, language institutes are facing many problems, including increased competition and inefficiency in attracting students due to providing similar services. This issue has led language learners to face many choices in choosing institutes. In addition, such educational institutions do not show much desire to understand the language learners' needs and use their experiences and opinions and gain their support, which has led to a significant decrease in the number of language learners in recent years. Therefore, this research mainly examines whether service quality affects brand experience and customer's patronage intention through the mediating role of customer attachment and the moderating role of gender.

### **Customer attachment**

Attachment is an emerging research topic that describes an interaction between a customer and a company so that a customer's participation in the company's offerings means that he is attached (Berry, 2015; quoted by Dalvand et al., 2019). There are different definitions of attachment, which mostly include the relationship between the customer and the focal object, i.e. the brand (Dwivedi, 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Hollebeek, 2011). Therefore, attachment is the result of a process that is associated with the goals of members to interact, cooperate and participate in society (Dalund et al., 2019). Community identification is a strong predictor of community attachment (Yeh & Choi, 2011).

Pansari and Kumar (2017) noticed customer participation from the aspect of companies and considered such participation as the output of marketing activities and actions. As a result, customers can, directly and indirectly, create value for companies through their behavior. Such value can happen through customer purchases (direct) or through referral of potential customers, influence on actual and potential customers in social networks and also providing feedback (indirect) (Kumar and Reinartz, 2016). As a result, Kumar et al. (2010) proposed a framework for the value of customer engagement that can be used to identify and evaluate valuable customers for the company.

### **Service quality**

Service quality is the result of the comparison made by customers between their expectations of services and their perception of how services are provided, and customers feel dissatisfied with service quality when their expectations are not met (Amuda and Banu, 2007).

In reactive mode, quality is not considered a main source of competitive advantage or differentiation. In passive quality monitoring and planning, it is more emphasized on reducing customer dissatisfaction compared to customer satisfaction. This approach emphasizes the effect of planning and quality control activities on health factors and components. Health factors are among the factors that customers take for granted. Therefore, these factors are not enough to achieve customer satisfaction, because meeting these needs will not lead to customer satisfaction, but their absence will cause customer dissatisfaction.

Active or strategic attitude mentions quality as a differentiating factor. Quality is at the top of the organization's strategies to achieve a competitive advantage. Here, quality is often one of the primary driving forces in any business, and the company's mental image is formed around the quality provided to the customer. This attitude emphasizes continuous and nonstop customer



satisfaction and considers service quality as a resource to create superiority and differentiation in the company's service delivery compared to competitors' services (Tabatabaei Khanzaei and Akhwan, 2010).

Providing superior customer service significantly reduces sales and marketing costs for three reasons. First, the cost of attracting a new customer is up to five times the cost of retaining an existing customer because fewer sales activities are taken to retain existing customers. Second, satisfied customers can be the best source of advertisements and recommendations to friends and acquaintances because the effect of advertisements made by customers is much greater than advertisements that companies pay for. Potential customers trust acquaintances and friends more, and this trust leads to a decrease in uncertainty when buying a product from a supplier. The third reason is the opposite of the previous reason. Customer dissatisfaction can lead to the destruction of a business. Previous studies have shown that customers' dissatisfaction with the products and services provided transfers their unpleasant experiences to other people (Farji Ghazani, 2011).

### **Brand experience**

Brand experience is the internal (sensational, emotional, and cognitive) and behavioral responses of the customer that are triggered by the stimuli associated with the brand and includes part of the design and characteristics of the brand. Brand experiences vary in strength and intensity. Some experiences are stronger or more intense than other experiences and others are weaker. Just as product experience varies in capacity, some experiences may be more positively or negatively charged in other aspects. Some brand experiences occur spontaneously and without high reflection and are short-lived, while others are intentional and have a longer lifespan. These long-term experiences are stored in customers' minds over time and thus affect customer satisfaction and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009). In this research, the meaning of experience is the perceived experience of customers toward the brand

### **Customer's patronage intention**

The patronage intention is a background for patronage behavior. It is a measurement scale that shows whether the buyers will refer to the brand to complete the purchase process or leave the brand in the future (Cowell et al., 2010).

Before doing anything, you should know what factors make customers happy. What is the requirement for a full patronage experience? What do you think about customer satisfaction? The answers to these questions can create a philosophy and team structure that creates a great experience for the customer. The values of companies should be considered to create a better understanding of patronage if a model is needed (Hosseini, 2016).

According to the surveys conducted by Zendesk, online dialogue creates satisfaction in customers more than any other method (about 19%). Meanwhile, the use of telephone support is more valuable among the older generation who are less dependent on technology. It is necessary to talk to the customers in the language in which they are located to support their abilities (Hosseini, 2015).

Companies should create an operational team to support the team. This activity includes all necessary measures from training to quality assurance and project management. Using operational workforces allows new ideas to be tested faster and more effectively by a distributed team or internal personnel (Hosseini, 2016).



It is necessary to help in the creation and formation of structures in teams to make changes in businesses. For example, if the current structure of the teams fails to achieve customer satisfaction, it is necessary to rebuild the team by focusing on issues such as payments, negotiations, and suspensions. Therefore, the approaches should be continuously reviewed to ensure that the demands are met (Hosseini, 2016).

#### **Service quality and customer attachment**

According to social exchange theory, individuals perform comparative reward-cost analyses to assess their anticipated value derived from an exchange (Priporas et al., 2017). As a result, when they receive perceived value from the company, it is predicted that they will act with respect to providing value to the organization (for an example demonstrating customer citizenship behaviors such as helping other customers). As a result, they maintain a balance between the relationship and the customer's attachment

#### **Customer attachment and brand experience**

Brand experience is defined as "passions, emotions, cognitions, and behavioral responses of the customer resulting from brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments." Brand experience is different from motivational concepts, such as participation, thus brand experience is also distinct from the motivational nature of customer attachment (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). Despite these differences, customer attachment and brand experience both fit within a relational model that focuses on optimizing customer/brand interactions from both the customer and the company's perspective (Boulding et al., 2005). The intra-interactive focus of customer attachment reaches its peak in a specific brand experience (Islam et al., 2018). In addition, the effect of customer attachment on brand experience is discussed in the background of online branding (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Therefore, despite the conceptual claims of the effect of customer attachment on brand experience, this relationship is still empirically investigated.

#### **Customer attachment and patronage intention**

Appealing to customers to repeat behavior is a powerful marketing approach to reducing costs and building long-term relationships (Jung et al., 2014). So far, the relationships between customer attachment and other important consumer behavioral outcomes (trust and loyalty) have been addressed in conceptual research. Little information remains on the effect of customer attachment on re-patronage intention in empirical research (Ahn and Back, 2018). Adopting various social networks allow individuals to interact with other participants. Research shows that customer-based brand reviews (expressing customer interaction) tend to influence other customers' re-patronage intentions by minimizing perceived purchase risks (Zhu and Zhang, 2010). Other studies show that customer purchase and patronage intention are influenced by other customers' ideas and social interactions. In addition, entertaining customer attachment activities offered by a hotel brand act as an influential factor in customers' revisit intention. The proposed relationship between customer attachment and patronage intention is further strengthened by social exchange theory, which shows that the resources (tangible and intangible) created by customers by engaging in a focal goal (tourism destination) will lead them to revisit that goal more often. (Harrigan et al., 2018).

Service quality is generally an independent variable in this research, which is considered an influencing factor on brand attachment. Hosseini Kolko (2017) stated that service quality can



affect the emotional attachment of customers. In addition, in this research, customer attachment is considered a mediating variable and it affects patronage intention and brand experience. Khodami et al. (2018) in their research concluded that brand attachment is a prerequisite for brand experience. In addition, brand attachment can affect customers' patronage intention. Therefore, patronage intention and brand experience are considered dependent variables in this research. Finally, the role of gender has been considered as a moderating variable. Islam et al. (2019) investigated gender as a moderating variable. They concluded that the gender role of women is more than that of men so the moderating role of gender moderates the relationship between service quality, brand experience, and customer attachment. Therefore, according to the stated contents, the conceptual model in this research is as Figure(1).

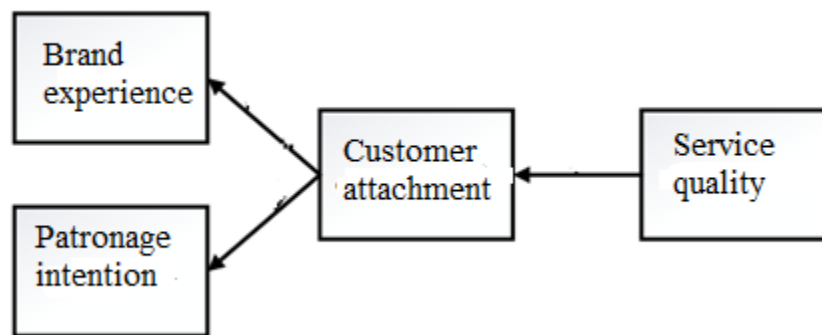


Figure 1: The conceptual model of the research based on the research of Islam et al (2019)

### Research Methodology

In terms of purpose, the current research is applied and descriptive survey in terms of method. This research statistical population includes language learners of institutions in Mashhad. Due to the unknown number of community members in this research, Cochran's formula has been used for the unknown community. The error coefficient in this formula is considered to be 0.05. Using this formula, the sample size was determined to be 384 people. Four questionnaires were used in this research. These four questionnaires include the customer patronage intention questionnaire by Kivela et al. (1999) with 3 questions, the brand experience questionnaire by Brakus et al. (2009) with 6 questions, the customer attachment questionnaire by Hollebeek et al. (2014) with 10 questions and finally the service quality questionnaire from Ekinci (2001) and Ekinci et al. (2008) with 8 questions. It should be noted that the distribution method of the questionnaire is non-random due to the lack of access to the list of language learners.

In this research, two levels of content and construct validity have been considered to validate the questionnaire and in that direction, face validity and factor validity (confirmatory factor analysis) have been investigated. In the present study, the reliability test was performed by SPSS software (Table 2).

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the main research variables

| Variable name | Cronbach's alpha |
|---------------|------------------|
|---------------|------------------|

|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| Service quality     | 0.926 |
| Job attachment      | 0.948 |
| Brand experience    | 0.916 |
| Patronage intention | 0.866 |

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all research variables is higher than 0.8. Therefore, it is concluded that this research questionnaire has good reliability.

Finally, the results were analyzed using Amos software after collecting the data. The structural equation model was used to analyze the data related to the direct effects between the variables. Hierarchical regression was used based on the procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny to investigate the mediation.

### Findings

The results showed that 58.9% of the respondents were female and 41.1% were male. In addition, regarding the age of the respondents, 41.8 percent of the respondents are under 20 years old, 26.3 percent are between 20 and 25 years old, 20.7 percent are between 25 and 30 years old and 2.2 11% were over 30 years old. Finally, regarding the level of education, 40.6% have a diploma or lower degree, 35.2% have a postgraduate degree, 18.4% have a bachelor's degree, and 5.8% have a postgraduate degree or higher.

Before evaluating the presented structural model, it is necessary to check the significance of the regression weight (factor loading) of the different variables of the questionnaire in predicting the relevant items to ensure the fitness of the measurement models and the acceptability of their indicators in measuring the variables. This important issue was done using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) technique and AMOS software. In the adjusted factor analysis model, the factor load of the dimensions and variables in predicting the relevant items had a significant difference from zero at the confidence level of 0.95. Therefore, none of the items in the questionnaire were removed. Reliability is checked using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It can be said that the tool has adequate reliability because this value is above 0.7 for all its variables and dimensions.

The correlation between research variables was also investigated. The Pearson correlation coefficient between all research variables is presented in Table (2).

Table 2: Average, standard deviation, and correlation of variables

| Variables           | mean  | standard deviation | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4 |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| Service quality     | 2.721 | 0.803              | 1       | -       | -       | - |
| Job attachment      | 2.600 | 0.796              | **0.631 | 1       | -       | - |
| Brand experience    | 2.548 | 0.834              | **0.404 | 0.545** | 1       | - |
| patronage intention | 2.596 | 0.889              | **0.522 | 0.556** | **0.364 | 1 |

The coefficients in Table (2) show that the largest correlation coefficient among the research variables (service quality, job attachment, brand experience, and patronage intention) is related to the relationship between service quality variables and job attachment at the rate of 0.631. The



smallest coefficient is related to the relationship between the variables of brand experience and patronage intention with a value of 0.364, which is significant. The following structural equation model was obtained after ensuring the validity and reliability of the research tool by analyzing the questionnaire data (Figure 2).

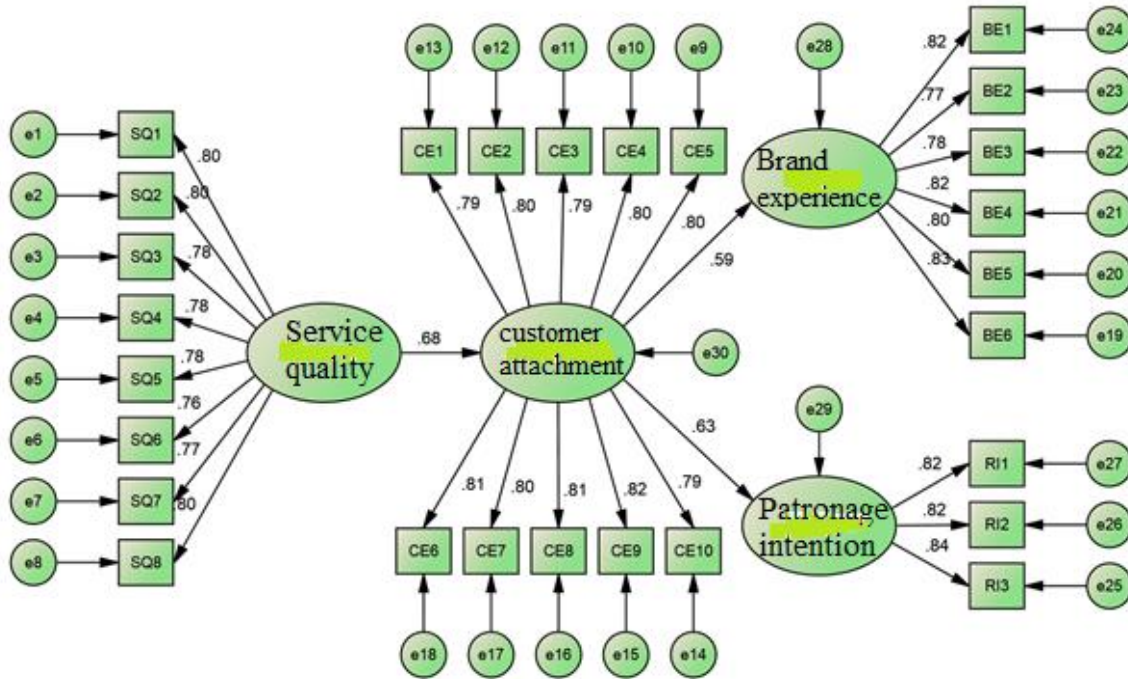


Figure 2: The fitted model of the research

Table (3) shows the fit indices of the model along with the desired values.

Table 3: Fit indices of the theoretical research model

| Index name                                 | Desired value                | Measurement model |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Degrees of Freedom (df)                    | -                            | 963               |
| Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )                    | $2 df \leq \chi^2 \leq 3 df$ | 1283.484          |
| Optimized chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ )       | Less than 3                  | 1.333             |
| Goodness Fit (GFI)                         | More than 0.8                | 0.898             |
| Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)            | Below 0.09                   | 0.044             |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI)                | 0.9                          | 0.975             |
| Root Mean Square Error of Estimate (RMSEA) | Below 0.08                   | 0.021             |
| Parsimony goodness of Fit Index (PGFI)     | Between 0.6 and 1            | 0.763             |

|                                       |                   |                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Index name                            | Desired value     | Measurement model |
| Parsimony Normalized Fit Index (PNFI) | Between 0.6 and 1 | 0.831             |

The above content and its quantitative indicators concluded that the theoretical model related to the research is acceptable.

As observed in Table (4), the regression coefficient is estimated as 0.68 in examining the effects of service quality on customer attachment. The partial index value is equal to 0.000 and is less than the significance level of 0.05 and also the significant number is equal to 12.360 and is more than 1.96. Therefore, It can be concluded that this path coefficient is significant at the error level of 0.05, which means that service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer attachment.

Table 4: Regression coefficient and significance of service quality on customer attachment

| Direct path                           | Path coefficient | p-value | Significant number | Result      |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------|
| Service quality → Customer attachment | 0.68             | 0.000   | 12.360             | Significant |

As observed in Table (5), the regression coefficient is estimated as 0.59 in examining the effects of customer attachment on brand experience. The partial index value is equal to 0.000 and is less than the significance level of 0.05 and also the significant number is equal to 10.839 and is more than 1.96. Therefore, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is significant at the error level of 0.05, which means that customer attachment has a positive and significant effect on brand experience.

Table 5: Regression coefficient and significance of customer attachment on brand experience

| Direct path                            | Path coefficient | p-value | Significant number | Result      |
|--|------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------|
| Customer attachment → brand experience | 0.59             | 0.000   | 10.839             | Significant |

As observed in Table (6), the regression coefficient is estimated as 0.63 in examining the effects of customer attachment on the customer's patronage intention. The partial index value is equal to 0.000 and is less than the significance level of 0.05 and also the significant number is equal to 11.236 and is more than 1.96. Therefore, it can be concluded that this path coefficient is significant at the error level of 0.05, which means that customer attachment has a positive and significant effect on customers' patronage intention.

Table 6: Regression coefficient and significance of customer attachment on customer's patronage intention

| Hypothesis | Direct path | Path coefficient | p-value | Significant number | Result |
|------------|-------------|------------------|---------|--------------------|--------|
|------------|-------------|------------------|---------|--------------------|--------|



|   |  |      |       |        |             |
|---|--|------|-------|--------|-------------|
| 3 | customer attachment →<br>customers patronage intention | 0.63 | 0.000 | 11.236 | significant |
|---|--|------|-------|--------|-------------|

As observed in Table (7), the effect of service quality on brand experience, service quality on customer attachment, and customer attachment on brand experience (three basic conditions) have become significant. In the fourth step (entering the mediator variable), the results show that in the presence of the customer attachment variable, the standard beta for the relationship between service quality and brand experience has decreased from 0.404 to 0.100 and has become insignificant. Therefore, the role of the customer attachment variable is a complete mediator.

Table 7: Mediation analysis results of customer attachment in the relationship between service quality and brand experience

| step | Independent variable | Dependent variable  | $\beta$      | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | Sig          |
|------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| 1    | Service quality      | Brand experience    | <u>0.404</u> | 0.404 | 0.163          | 0.000        |
| 2    | Service quality      | Customer attachment | 0.631        | 0.631 | 0.398          | 0.000        |
| 3    | Customer attachment  | Brand experience    | 0.545        | 0.545 | 0.297          | 0.000        |
| 4    | Service quality      | Brand experience    | <u>0.100</u> | 0.551 | 0.303          | <u>0.068</u> |
|      | Customer attachment  |                     | 0.482        |       |                | 0.000        |

As observed in Table (8), to calculate the indirect effect of service quality on brand experience, the value of the path coefficient for the relationship between the two variables of service quality and customer attachment equals 0.631 and for the relationship between the two variables of customer attachment and brand experience is equals to 545 0.0. Therefore, as calculated below, the indirect effect of customer attachment equals 0.344.

$$b_{indirect} = a \times b = 0.631 \times 0.545 = 0.344$$

According to the results, the effect of service quality on customer patronage intention, service quality on customer attachment, and customer attachment on customer patronage intention (three primary conditions) have become significant. In the fourth step (entering the mediator variable), the results show that in the presence of the customer attachment variable, the standard beta for the relationship between service quality and customer patronage intention has decreased from 0.522 to 0.284 and has become significant. Therefore, the role of the customer attachment variable is a partial mediator.

Table 8: The results of mediation analysis of customer attachment in the relationship between service quality and patronage intention

| step | Independent variable | Dependent variable  | $\beta$      | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | Sig          |
|------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| 1    | Service quality      | patronage intention | <u>0.522</u> | 0.522 | 0.272          | 0.000        |
| 2    | Service quality      | Customer attachment | 0.631        | 0.631 | 0.398          | 0.000        |
| 3    | Customer attachment  | patronage intention | 0.556        | 0.556 | 0.309          | 0.000        |
| 4    | Service quality      | patronage intention | <u>0.284</u> | 0.598 | 0.358          | <u>0.000</u> |
|      | Customer attachment  |                     | 0.376        |       |                | 0.000        |

As observed in Table 14-4, to calculate the indirect effect of service quality on customer patronage intention, the value of the path coefficient for the relationship between the two variables of service quality and customer attachment is equal to 0.631, and for the relationship between the two variables of customer attachment and customer patronage intention equal 0.556. Therefore, as calculated below, the indirect effect of customer attachment equals 0.351.

$$b_{indirect} = a \times b = 0.631 \times 0.556 = 0.351$$

Table (18-4): Summary of hypothesis results

| Row | Direct path  | Result    |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 1   | Quality of service → Customer attachment                   | Confirmed |
| 2   | Customer attachment → brand experience                     | Confirmed |
| 3   | Customer attachment → Customer patronage intention         | Confirmed |
| Row | A row of the indirect path (customer attachment mediation) | Confirmed |
| 4   | Quality of service → Brand experience                      | Confirmed |
| 5   | Quality of service → Customer's patronage intention        | Confirmed |

## Conclusion

This research aims to examine the mediating role of customer attachment in the effect of service quality on brand experience and patronage intention. It is concluded that service quality positively and significantly affects customer attachment. The results are in line with the results in the research of Islam et al. (2019) and Pern Thies et al. (2019). Their research showed that service quality leads to customer attachment. To confirm this hypothesis, it is stated that language learners are satisfied with the services received by educational institutions when the training in these institutions is in accordance with their wishes and needs. Only in this case, the language learners are confident about the quality of the services provided by these institutions. If the quality of this training continues, they will be more eager to use the services. In other words, continuity in the quality of services will motivate students more and they will have more attachment to using educational services. In addition, the quality of service leads to the fact that when language learners see the smallest defects in the way of providing services, they also notice



it and take the necessary measures to fix it. Attachment is the result of a process that is associated with members' goals for cooperative interaction and participation in society. This participation is only possible when the language learners are confident about the willingness of the educational institutions to eliminate the deficiencies. Only in this case, a language learner will move from a state of disinterest to a state of attachment.

According to the results, customer attachment positively and significantly affects the brand experience. The results of this hypothesis are in line with the research results of Khodami et al. (2018) and Islam et al. (2020). It can be said that attached people have deeper views and insights about the issues and problems in an educational institution. They try to find appropriate solutions while investigating these problems. As a result, such people have better experiences than others regarding a particular brand. when an attached person has a positive experience with a brand, he will make more efforts to fix the shortcomings in this organization. As mentioned, brand experience means the consumer's internal response (sensational, emotional, and cognitive) and his behavioral response to brand stimuli. Therefore, language learners with more emotions and attachments to the brand have a better internal response to these stimuli. They will have a better understanding of the services provided by the institutions and as a result, they will receive a better experience than others from the relevant brand.

Customer attachment also positively and significantly affect customer patronage intention. The results are in line with the research results of Khodami et al.'s (2018), Hosseini Kolko (2017), and Islam et al. (2019). To confirm this hypothesis, it can be stated that customer attachment affects the customers' re-patronage intention by minimizing purchase risks, and this issue is in accordance with the research of Zhou and Zhang (2010). In other words, language learners have a better ability to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the institution when they are better integrated with the services of the company, and the customers have a better-supporting role if the institution needs to revise its services .

It was concluded that customer attachment has a mediating role in this relationship. The results are in line with the research result of Islam et al. (2019). Language learners have a better experience of the received services when it is based on a better-received quality. In addition, service quality can lead to a better experience as a significant factor when learners have more attachment to the brand. In other words, language learners do not ignore any effort to achieve higher quality when they have a better understanding of the services they receive. Therefore, they play an active role to create a better experience to improve the quality of services. The results of this research also indicate that attachment is one of the important and effective factors in brand experience, which has a fully mediating role in the relationship between service quality and brand experience. This means that although service quality affects the brand experience, that experience is effective that is created through the channel of customer attachment.

It was found that customer attachment has a mediating role in this relationship. The results of this hypothesis are in line with the research results of Islam et al. (2019). The quality of service is an influencing factor in the language learner's attachment. In addition, brand attachment can also affect the patronage intention of language learners. In other words, the students feel satisfied and pleased with the services provided after checking the services provided by the company and comparing them with the expectations and services provided by other companies. As a result of this inner feeling and attachment, they play a supporting role to attract customers to buy again.



In other words, customers are looking for a long-term bilateral relationship with the company. In this regard, they do bilateral activities such as word-of-mouth advertising and continuous relations with the company.

Based on the effect of service quality on customer attachment among language institutes students in Mashhad, managers of language institutes in Mashhad are suggested to provide the possibility of improving the quality of services in relation to providing suitable facilities and equipment and targeted planning to achieve appropriate educational goals by relying on the opinions of language learners. In addition, to increase the quality of services, they are also suggested to hire talented employees and conduct in-service training to increase the productivity of employees and the quality of training courses.

Based on the effect of customer attachment on brand experience and patronage intention among language institutes students in Mashhad, the managers of language institutes are suggested to use and apply marketing methods, especially advertising, to attract customers to improve their position in their minds. In addition, using the opinions and suggestions of language learners can effectively improve the customer's experience of the services received, which educational institutions should pay special attention to.

Based on the mediating role of customer attachment in the relationship between service quality and brand experience and patronage intention among language institute students in Mashhad, managers of language institutes are suggested to receive feedback from language learners on a monthly and semester basis considering the importance of students' attitude. Trying to identify the educational needs of language learners can effectively improve their experience and improve the quality of services. In addition, attachment is an important factor in improving the brand experience and customer patronage intention. Therefore, they should use smart methods to hear the customer's voice and be fully aware of the up-to-date expectations and demands of these customers and create a positive feeling in them and keep them loyal to themselves by considering their customers demands.

**Acknowledgment: None**

**Conflict of Interest: None**

**Funding: None**

**Ethical statements: None**

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