6. DISCUSSION

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6.1. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a discussion on the findings from this study and discusses them with reference to past studies in the literature. The main themes of the study are Brand Experiences and Brand Equity. The chapter is organised in to five sections- the overview of the chapter; finalisation of the conceptual model of the study; testing of the finalised overall structural model of the study; testing of the moderating effect of hedonic motives and finally the summary of the chapter.

The conceptual model of the study was based on the effect of all the Brand Experience constructs (Sensory Experiences, Affective Experiences, Intellectual Experiences, Behavioural Experiences and Social Experiences) outlined in the theoretical literature and on the Brand Equity constructs (Brand Salience, Brand Meaning, Brand Response and Brand Resonance) propounded by Keller (2001) in the CBBE Model. The chapter reviews the hypotheses and illustrate theoretical foundations for support or rejection of the hypotheses.

The first level of analysis was conducted on the Brand Experience and Brand Equity measures, tested through hypotheses, H1 & H2. The findings revealed five first order factor structures for Brand Experience and three first order factor structures for Brand Equity. The five factors emerging from the EFA conducted using SPSS 17 on the Brand Experience measure, were labelled ‘Sensory experiences’; ‘Affective experiences’; ‘Intellectual experiences’; ‘Behavioural experiences’ and ‘Social experiences’. The result of the Exploratory Factor Analysis conducted on the Brand Equity measure indicated that the factor structure was based on three uncorrelated first order factors, wherein items measuring Brand Salience and Brand Resonance emerged as 2 distinct factors, however items measuring Brand Meaning and Brand Response appeared as part of the third factor. Hence the resultant three factors of Brand
Equity were labelled as ‘Brand Salience’; ‘Brand Meaning & Response’ and ‘Brand Resonance’.

As a result of the EFA performed on the Brand Equity measure and the emergence of a common factor for the brand meaning and brand response construct led to emergence of a new factor labelled as Brand Meaning and Response (BMR) and hence modification of the initially proposed hypotheses. The revised hypothesis of the study and revised overall structural model of the study are outlined in Appendix M and Figure: 5-3 respectively. The subsequent analysis involved CFA of the Brand Equity and Brand Experience factors and the results indicated acceptable levels of model fit.

In the succeeding analysis of the structural model, the study examined the constructs of Brand Experience and their effect on Brand Equity constructs emerging from the previous analysis. The revised overall structural model of the relations between the constructs was tested in the context of luxury brands. The effect of Sensory Experiences was tested on the Brand Equity constructs of Brand Resonance, Brand Salience and Brand Meaning & Response through hypotheses, H3a, H3b and H3c. The effect of Affective Experiences was tested on Brand Resonance, Brand Salience and Brand Meaning & Response through hypotheses, H4a, H4b and H4c. The effect of Intellectual Experiences was tested on Brand Resonance, Brand Salience and Brand Meaning & Response through hypotheses, H5a, H5b and H5c. The effect of Behavioural Experiences was tested on Brand Resonance, Brand Salience and Brand Meaning & Response through hypotheses, H6a, H6b and H6c. And finally the effect of Social Experiences was tested on Brand Resonance, Brand Salience and Brand Meaning & Response through hypotheses, H7a, H7b and H7c.

The step wise and sequential approach of Brand Equity constructs from Brand Salience to Brand Meaning & Response and from Brand Meaning & Response to Brand Resonance were tested through hypotheses, H8r and H10r.
The scale comprised of 37 indicators/items representing the constructs of Sensory Experiences, Affective Experiences, Intellectual Experiences, Behavioural Experiences, Social Experiences, Brand Salience, Brand Meaning & Response, Brand Resonance and Hedonistic Motives.

The third level of analysis involved testing the moderation effect of hedonistic motives of luxury consumers through invariance testing on the measurements of Brand Experience and Brand Equity and the structural model of the relationships between the two latent constructs. This was tested through hypotheses H11-H13.

**6.2. FINALISATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

The conceptual model for this research is based on the theoretical foundations and empirical studies by researchers across different cultural contexts and at different points in time. The past research on some of the constructs of this study have been conducted in the developed market contexts, this study tested them based on a sample from an emerging market context in the socio-cultural milieu of India. The measurement models of Brand Experience and Brand Equity were assessed and the refined measurement model results were used in the testing of the structural model. In the overall structural model 37 out of 65 items originally proposed were retained.

**6.2.1. BRAND EXPERIENCES**

The Brand Experience measurement of this study shows it as a 5 dimensional construct and encapsulates all the constructs proposed by Brakus et al. (2009). The present study empirically tested the 5 dimensions and found them to be conceptually relevant.
However when Brakus et al. (2009) empirically tested the Brand Experience scale, they reported a 4 dimensional structure. Their study resulted in a four factor solution with 12 indicators/items. The social dimension in Brakus et al.’s (2009) measurement loaded on to the affective dimension since the socially worded items included strong emotional aspects. In the process of further item reduction from the scale based on semantic similarity the social items were omitted from the scale, resulting in 12 items, including 3 for each of the 4 experience dimensions. The products categories in Brakus et al.’s study may have been ones with low social influence. However in the present study, luxury brands are known to have high social influence, hence the inclusion of the social dimension was imperative.

The Brand Experience construct is conceptually similar across both the studies, however it is diverse construct wise.

The Brand Experience Scale of the present study has 17 items, explaining 5 dimensions, Sensory Experiences (4 items), Affective Experiences (3 items), Intellectual Experiences (3 items), Behavioural Experiences (3 items) and Social Experiences (4 items).

To make the brand experience construct more relevant to the current study the Social Experiences dimension was included in the construct, since luxury brands are often associated with social aspects such as social identity and a display of social status. The social dimension scale items were adopted from Nysveen et al. (2012) and only 1 item was added subsequently.

The Brand Experience Scale developed in this study is the only theoretically derived and empirically tested 5 dimension scale of Brand Experience. The scale developed for this study has internal consistency and has high construct validity.
The brand experience scales developed in earlier studies have not been used to measure the experience but to classify people on the basis of their brand experiences (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010).

Since the experience concept has emerged from the service sector, one of the initial studies by Grace and O’Cass (2004) offered a 16 item scale on the dimensions of service experience, such as core service, employee service and servicescape. In the online environment Ha and Perks (2005) examined the experience elements using a 5 item scale, Stuart-Menteth et al. (2006) and Bidenbach and Marell (2009) developed customer experience scales with 7 dimensions such as care, meaningfulness, relevance, customization, excellence expectation, participation and engagement. Schouten et al. (2007) conceptualized a 13 item scale on transcendental customer experience. Lywood (2009) provided an instrument on empathy rating to measure customer experiences.

In line with the findings of this study, most ‘Experience’ based studies based on their context or setting have measurement items ranging from 5-16, all of them are explained through 5-7 dimensions. Therefore the scale is in line with other salient studies in the ‘Experience’ area.

6.2.1.1. SENSORY EXPERIENCES

The Sensory Experience dimension in this study is measured through 4 items and explains 16% of the total variance for Brand Experience. The factor loadings of all the items are high. The results reflect that the sensory dimension is measured through a comprehensive measure and is context relevant in the case of luxury brands (Kapferer, 1997).

Brakus et al.’s (2009) scale for Sensory Experience had 3 items and subsequent researches (Choi, Ok and & Hyun, 2011 on Coffee House Brands; Barnes and Mattsson, 2011 in the tourism context in Denmark; Nysveen et al.’s,
2012 study on service industry; Evans’s, 2011 study on fashion brand experiences; Reisegg’s, 2012 study on effect of engaging marketing campaigns on brand experiences and Walter, Cleff, Chu’s, 2013 study on BMW brand) adopted and tested the 3 item Sensory scale by Brakus et al. (2009).

The sensory dimension has been conceptualized as sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell and aesthetic experiences that arouse pleasure, excitement, satisfaction and by various researchers (Schmitt, 1999; Dube and LeBel, 2003; Gentile et al., 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Craig Roberts et al., 2009 & Korichi et al., 2009). Hultén et al. (2009) offered a view that a multi-sensory brand-experience takes place when more than one of the five senses contributes to the perception of sensory experiences. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982); Havlena and Holbrook (1986) argued that sensorial stimuli (visual and acoustic stimuli, as well as smell, touch and taste) significantly contribute to the emotional brand experience.

### 6.2.1.2. AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES

The Affective Experiences dimension in this study was measured through 3 items, explaining 14% of the total variance. These items had high factor loadings, reflecting the strength of the dimension and its indicators.

The original scale by Brakus et al. (2009) had three items to measure the Affective Experience construct which was also adopted by several subsequent studies (Barnes and Mattsson, 2011; Nysveen et al., 2012 and Walter, Cleff, Chu, 2013). Evans (2011) added 2 new items to the original scale to measure Affective Experiences.

Affect or Affective Experiences have been conceptually viewed by Schmitt (1999) as the ‘Feel’ experience; Pine & Gilmore (1999) as the ‘Entertaining’ experience; Verhoef et al. (2009) in the retail context and Rose et
al. (2010) as the affective experiences in the context of online purchases. Dube and Le Bel (2003) distinguished four pleasure dimensions, emotional, intellectual, physical and social pleasures similar to Schmitt’s experience modules. Gentile et al. (2007) explored the emotional aspect of experiences, as moods, feelings and emotional experiences that create an affective relation with the company, its brands and products. Most of these studies emphasize the significance of the emotional aspects of experience which run as a common thread, occupying a central position in consumer behavior literature (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Chaudhari & Holbrook, 2001; Richins, 1997).

6.2.1.3. INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCES

The Intellectual Experiences dimension in this study is measured through 3 items, which explains 11% of the total variance. The factor loadings of these items are reasonably high. The Intellectual dimension of experiences explains the rationalization a consumer does with respect to luxury brands on the basis of the emotional and symbolic value they derive from the purchase or consumption.

The original scale by Brakus et al. (2009) had three items to measure the Intellectual Experiences construct, which was adopted by other studies (Choi, Ok an Hyun, 2011; Nysveen et al., 2012; Reisegg, 2012 and Walter, Cleff, Chu, 2013). Evans, 2011 retained 2 of the intellectual experiences items from the original scale and added 2 new items in the fashion brand context. In line with Evans (2011) study, the current study also included 2 new items specific to the luxury brand context.

In the past, Cognitive or Intellectual experiences have received limited attention from researchers, in the form of the ‘think’ dimension by Schmitt (1999); ‘Intellectual experiences’ by Dube and Le Bel (2003); Cognitive Experiences by Gentile et al. (2007); Verhoef et al. (2009) and Rose et al. (2010) and Educational experiences by Pine and Gilmore (1999). All the above studies
were conceptual with an exception of Brakus et al.’s (2009) and Gentile et al.’s (2007) which empirically tested the constructs.

6.2.1.4. SOCIAL EXPERIENCES

The Social Experiences dimension measure of this study included 4 items, which explained 18% of the total variance and had high factor loadings, explaining the significance of social experiences for luxury brands.

The Social Experiences measure in Brakus et al.’s (2009) study was unclear, hence the measure in Nysveen et al.’s (2012) work were looked at and adopted. An additional item was added to the measure based on its relevance in the luxury context. The social experience dimension, itself was added due to its relevance in the luxury context. In some studies it may or may not be included as a dimension of brand experience, particularly because social experiences may not be relevant across all product categories. In line with this understanding, the Social experiences construct did not emerge as an independent factor in Brakus et al.’s (2009) landmark study.

However for this study the Social Experiences dimension is an important one as socially oriented consumers are motivated to possess luxury brands in order to display their status and success to their targeted social groups (Tsai, 2005).

The items for Social Experiences were developed by Nysveen et al. (2012) in the service industry context and Evans (2011) also identified different Social Experiences items in their study on fashion brand experiences.

Social or Relate experiences were also researched by Schmitt (1999) as the relate experiences take in to account the individual’s desire to be part of a social context. Dube and Le Bel (2003) suggested social pleasures as one of the pleasure dimensions similar to Verhoef et al.’s (2009) study that focused on
the social environment such as reference groups, reviews and service personnel. Luxury brands are known to have a significant social context of their own and luxury users relate to their reference groups strongly.

6.2.1.5. BEHAVIORAL EXPERIENCES

The Behavioral Experiences dimension was measured through 3 items in this study, explaining 12% of the total variance and having reasonably high factor loadings. Since the behavioral items of Brakus et al.’s (2009) scale were not well defined for the context of this study, alternate behavioral items were included in the study. The three items measuring behavioral experiences were found to be most relevant, as advocating, recommending and repurchase are important to provide stimulus required for brands to create resonance value with their consumers (Atwal & Jain, 2012).

Brakus et al. (2009) measured Behavioral Experiences through 3 measurement items. Choi, Ok and Hyun (2011); Barnes and Mattsson (2011); Nysveen et al. (2012) and Reisegg (2012) retained all the 3 items of the Behavioral Experiences construct from the original Brakus et al.’s (2009) scale.

Schmitt (1999) argues that behavioral experiences are aimed at eliciting physical behaviors, lifestyles and interactions amongst consumers. Verhoef et al. (2009) also explained the physical dimension of experiences in their study in the Retail. Pine and Gilmore (1999) added escapist experiences as a part of the overall experience concept. Gentile et al. (2007) added new dimensions, such as pragmatic and lifestyle components, but they did not empirically test it. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) also provided distinguished experience dimension such as functional, informational, novelty and utopian experiences. The conceptualizations of behavioral experiences in present study are different and focus on aspects of advocacy, recommendation and repurchase.
6.2.2. HEDONISM AND BRAND EXPERIENCE

Extant literature supports the notion that luxury consumers are driven primarily by hedonic pleasures and emotional reward (Dubois, Laurent & Czellar, 2004; Kivetz and Simonson, 2002; Strhilevitz & Myers, 1998; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

Measurement model invariance testing for brand experience was done with hedonism as the moderating variable, with high and low hedonistic consumers. The results indicated adequate configural invariance, which indicates that high and low hedonistic respondents conceptualize the brand experience construct in the same way.

Further metric invariance testing was done to ensure that different groups respond to the items in the same way, in order to compare the ratings obtained from different groups in a meaningful way (Hair et al., 2006; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). Partial metric invariance was observed in the brand experience scale of 17 items with only 7 items loading significantly higher in the respondent group showing higher hedonism as compared to the other group. The dominant items showing higher loading for hedonism belonged to the affective and sensory dimensions which indicates that high hedonic consumers draw from the strong sensorial and emotional experiences they have with the luxury brands they own.

6.2.3. BRAND EQUITY

The Brand Equity measure for this study is a 3 dimensional construct (Brand Salience, Brand Meaning & Response and Brand Resonance) which encapsulates all the CBBE model constructs proposed by Keller (2001). The present study empirically tested the 3 dimensions and found them relevant for the luxury brands framework.
Keller (2001) conceptualised Customer Based Brand Equity as a 4 dimensional model comprising of the building blocks- Brand Salience, Brand Meaning (Brand Performance and Brand Imagery), Brand Response (Brand Judgements and Brand Feelings) and Brand Resonance. The Brand Performance and Brand Judgment dimensions form the rational part of any consumer’s decision making process and Brand Imagery and Brand Feelings form a part of the emotional aspects of the decision making.

The proposed conceptual model of this study adopted Keller’s (2001) conceptualisation of Brand Equity with the above 4 dimensions, however this conceptualisation did not hold true on empirical testing in the luxury brand context. The results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis indicated the emergence of a single factor combining Brand Meaning and Brand Response dimensions.

This is a unique finding of this study, which may be specific to luxury products. Consumers buying luxury products typically indulge in purchase for emotional reasons but also rationalise and justify their purchase decision on the basis of the personal and social value they derive from these brands. Hence the purchase of luxury brands involves a mix of both rational and emotional aspects.

Moreover, sub dimensions such as Brand Performance, Brand Imagery, Brand Judgements and Brand Feelings are interlinked, as performance can enhance imagery and imagery can give an impression of great performance. Similarly, positive judgements and feelings may evolve from good performance and positive imagery. Also positive judgements and feelings may also lead to good performance and positive imagery. Hence it can be presumed that luxury consumers view these sub dimensions as interlinked, justifying the emergence of Brand Meaning and Brand Response as a common factor.

It is also observed that there is lack of empirical testing of Keller’s model in literature and this is amongst the first studies testing the Keller’s Model
empirically. Therefore the four factor structure expected as per Keller’s Model is only a conceptual model.

Keller’s (2003) measure of the CBBE model was adopted in the study in the absence of a comprehensive scale in literature that covers all the CBBE constructs. For some dimensions such as Brand Salience and Brand Performance, items were adopted from the Yoo and Donthu (2001) measurement scale, which is one of the most used Brand Equity measures in recent times. Apart from the above some new items were also incorporated keeping in mind the context of the current study.

The Brand Equity scale of the present study had 15 items, explaining 3 dimensions, Brand Salience (4 items), Brand Meaning & Response (BRM) (7 items) and Brand Resonance (4 items). The BRM dimension sufficiently covers all the sub dimensions of Brand Performance (1 item), Brand Imagery (3 items), Brand Judgement (2 items) and Brand Feelings (1 items). As is evident, the brand imagery items and brand judgment items are dominant in the BMR dimension.

The brand equity construct of this study is a unique 3 dimensional model, which may be specific to the luxury brands. The measure for this construct was found to have high internal consistency and construct validity.

Past studies have thrown up that predominant consumer-based measures of brand equity are based on Aaker’s (1991; 1996) and Keller’s (1993) conceptualisations of brand equity. Since Keller’s conceptualisation of customer based brand equity was found to be more comprehensive and in-depth and most suited to the context of the study, this study adopted Keller’s (2001) CBBE Model as the framework for brand equity.

The other researches, adopting different approaches included, Park & Srinivasan (1994), who conceptualised customer-based brand equity as attribute

Consumer based brand equity itself has been operationalized by various researchers based on their direct or indirect approach to its measurement. The direct approach to brand equity measurement attempted to measure the phenomenon by focusing on consumers’ preferences (Srinivasan, 1979; Park and Srinivasan, 1994) or utilities (Kamakura and Russell, 1993; Swait et al., 1993). The indirect approach measured brand equity through its demonstrable dimensions (Yoo et al., 2001; Pappu et al., 2005).

De Chernatony et al. (2004) and Christodoulides et al. (2006) have developed category or industry specific measures of consumer-based brand equity, while Davis et al. (2009) developed a measure of brand equity in the logistics services context.
Given the diverse measures of brand equity that exist, the measure used in this study was most appropriate for the luxury category.

6.2.3.1. BRAND SALIENCE

Brand Salience dimension was measured through 4 items, of which 3 were adopted from Yoo & Donthu’s (2001) Scale. These items had high factor loadings and they explained 18% of the total variance.

Brand salience typically is the launching point for brand equity (Keller, 1993). For individuals to hold favorable thoughts regarding a brand, they must first be aware of the brand. Numerous researchers have hypothesized that brand awareness influences brand associations (Aaker, 1996; Gladden et al., 2001; Keller, 1993; Ross, 2006 and Ross et al., 2008). Consumers who have a high level of familiarity with a brand have more depth and breadth of thoughts about the brand and are more likely to have a positive disposition toward the brand (Campbell & Keller, 2003).

The Brand salience measure was empirically tested in this study and was found to have high internal consistency and construct validity.

6.2.3.2. BRAND MEANING & RESPONSE

The Brand Meaning and Response construct is measured through 7 items/indicators in this study, explaining almost 30% of the total variance identifying it as a strong dimension. The factor loadings of all the 7 items were high ranging from 0.60-0.83.

The brand performance sub dimension relates to the satisfaction of customers’ functional needs (Keller, 2003). Various researches in the past have indicated the importance of the quality (Aaker, 1991) and utility value (Swait et al., 1993), as indicators of its functional performance. More recently, Vázquez et
al. (2002) also focused on the symbolic utilities of brands along with the symbolic utilities. They defined the utilities as ex-post (i.e. functional utilities obtained by consumers following a brand’s purchase) and ex-ante (i.e. symbolic utilities obtained prior to purchase). Hence, it may be appropriate to state that, apart from the inherent functional value of the brand, the intangible value created by brands can be an important contributor to the meaning of the brand and its overall brand equity.

The brand image sub dimension in this study was viewed from the perspective of an outcome measure of various image building activities that link strong, favorable, and unique associations to the brand in the consumers’ memory. This sub dimension has been related to the satisfaction of customers’ psychological needs (Keller, 2003); conceptualized as creating an image for the brand as a part of the product strategy (Kotler, 2000); building a brand image was a goal of the traditional branding model (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000); as a means to disclose the hidden qualities of the product (Kapferer, 1997) and to identify a product and to distinguish it from the competition (Kohli and Thakor; 1997).

Brand judgments measure in this study was based on the overall opinion of the customers and the trust they had in the brands. Brand judgments in the past researches have focused on cognitive evaluations (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Cronin, Brady, and Hult, 2000; Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 1994; Dabholkar, Shephard, & Thorpe, 2000; Gotlieb, Grewal, & Brown, 1994 and Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994); brand attitudes (Suh & Yi, 2006; Faircloth et al., 2001).

The level of sophistication in luxury brands is very high. In this study feelings were measured through the higher affective perception based on the high levels of sophistication that luxury brands offer.
Keller (2003) conceptualized Brand feelings as the consumers’ emotional responses and reactions to the brand. Researches in the past have largely looked at how consumer’s emotional/affective responses influence their purchasing decisions (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Chaudhari & Holbrook, 2001; Mano & Oliver, 1993; Matzler, Bidmon, & Grabner-Krauter, 2006; Mooradian & Oliver, 1997; Richins, 1997; Thompson, Rindfliesch, & Arsel, 2006). Chaudhari and Holbrook (2001) observed that brand affect is a significant predictor of consumer loyalty.

6.2.3.3. BRAND RESONANCE

Brand Resonance dimension was measured through 4 items, which explained almost 21% of the variance explained. All the 4 factor loadings showed high values.

The Brand Resonance measure adequately covered the various resonance sub dimensions, such as behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty (the psychological bond and intensity of attachment between the brand and the consumer) and sense of community (communities of consumers who share a high level of commitment with the brand), thus emerging as a strong measure.

Keller (2003) conceptualized brand resonance as the relationship and level of identification of the customer with a brand, referring to it as the ultimate relationship that consumers hold with a brand as well as the extent to which the consumer feels “in sync” with a particular brand.

6.2.4. HEDONISM AND BRAND EQUITY

Measurement model invariance testing for brand equity measure was done with hedonism as the moderating variable, with high and low hedonistic consumers. The results indicated adequate configural invariance, which indicates...
that high and low hedonistic respondents conceptualize the brand equity construct in the same way.

Further metric invariance testing was done to ensure that different groups respond to the items in the same way. Partial metric invariance was observed in the brand equity scale of 15 items with only 3 items loading significantly higher in the respondent group showing higher hedonism as compared to the other group. The dominant items showing higher loading for hedonism belonged to the resonance, performance and feeling dimensions which indicates that in the luxury brand category high hedonic consumers resonate with, have strong feelings for and high perceptions of performance. All the other indicators were same across the high and low hedonistic respondents. Hedonism affects the higher order equity construct such as brand resonance more than salience or BMR since people buy luxury brands more for their enjoyment and draw a lot from them.

On the whole the results of the measurement model assessment indicated a clear factor structure and robust measurement scales for the brand experience and brand equity constructs which are statistically validated.
6.3. STRUCTURAL MODEL TESTING

The structural model was tested on the complete sample data of the study using AMOS 18.0. The overall model had a reasonably satisfactory fit for the data in this study. Table 6-1 summarises the results of the specific hypotheses tested in the study, which are discussed in this section.

Table 6-1: Summary of Findings based on Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HYPOTHESIS</th>
<th>HYPOTHESESIZED RELATION</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>SENSORY → BRAND EQUITY</td>
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<tr>
<td>H3a</td>
<td>SENSORY → RESONANCE</td>
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<td>H3b</td>
<td>SENSORY → SALIENCE</td>
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<td>SENSORY → BMR</td>
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<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>AFFECTIVE → BRAND EQUITY</td>
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<td>H4a</td>
<td>AFFECTIVE → RESONANCE</td>
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<td>AFFECTIVE → SALIENCE</td>
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<td>H4c</td>
<td>AFFECTIVE → BMR</td>
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<td>H5</td>
<td>INTELLECTUAL → BRAND EQUITY</td>
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<tr>
<td>H5a</td>
<td>INTELLECTUAL → RESONANCE</td>
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<td>H5b</td>
<td>INTELLECTUAL → SALIENCE</td>
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<td>H5c</td>
<td>INTELLECTUAL → BMR</td>
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<td>H6</td>
<td>BEHAVORIAL → BRAND EQUITY</td>
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<td>BEHAVORIAL → RESONANCE</td>
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<td>H6c</td>
<td>BEHAVORIAL → BMR</td>
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<td>H7</td>
<td>SOCIAL → BRAND EQUITY</td>
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<td>H7a</td>
<td>SOCIAL → RESONANCE</td>
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<td>H8r</td>
<td>SALIENCE → BMR</td>
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<td>H10r</td>
<td>BMR → RESONANCE</td>
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The key objective of the study was to investigate the effects of brand experience constructs on brand equity constructs through a comprehensive model.
integrating all dimensions of brand experience and brand equity. The proposed model was empirically investigated in the context of apparel and accessories luxury brands with 17 hypotheses. This model linked brand experience constructs such as sensory experiences, affective experiences, intellectual experiences, behavioural experiences and social experiences to brand equity, explained by three constructs, brand salience, brand meaning & response and brand resonance. Structural equation modelling (SEM) technique was used to test these relations and evaluate the model fit between these eight constructs simultaneously. The overall structural model proposed in this study showed acceptable fit indices. The only non significant relations existed between affective experiences and brand salience; intellectual experiences and brand resonance; behavioural experiences and brand salience and brand meaning and response. Further in this section the results of each hypotheses pertaining to the model are discussed in detail.

6.3.1. SENSORY EXPERIENCES ON BRAND EQUITY

**H3a** *Sensory experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand resonance.*

**H3b** *Sensory experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand salience.*

**H3c** *Sensory experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand meaning and response.*

The results showed all the three hypotheses (H3a, H3b and H3c) were supported indicating the positive effect of sensory experiences on brand salience, brand response and brand resonance.

The results of the hypothesis (H3b) support the premise that sensory experiences have a positive effect on brand salience. This finding is in line with past studies and is well supported in literature. Schmitt (1999) and Schmitt and
Simonson (1997) took a position that the overall purpose of sensory experiences is to provide aesthetic pleasure, excitement, beauty, and satisfaction through sensory simulation and these experiences contribute to the brand’s identity, which in effect is a part of building brand salience.

The sensory experiences are delivered through the primary brand elements of color, shape, typeface, loudness, pitch, material, texture, which also have an objective to create a distinct and consistent view of the brand for the consumer. These sensory signals can be seen as creating mental nodes or anchors in the minds of the consumers, which then may create responses on the part of the consumers at a later stage. This finding is also supported in Hoch’s (2002) study, wherein experiences are explained to be creating multiple traces in memory, which lead to higher levels of brand recall and recognition.

Past literature also supports the belief that luxury brands have an experiential dimension. Keller (2009) characterized luxury brands as high quality products and services with pleasurable purchase and consumption experiences. Dubois and Paternault (1995), conclude on the basis of empirical research that Luxury products can be positioned in terms of an awareness-purchase-dream relationship which when dissected highlights the importance of the dimension of sensory pleasure. Moreover luxury brands have high sensorial value due to the premium and sophisticated imagery associated with their branding elements, products and retail environments.

Hence the findings of H3b are consistent with past literature and draws from it to explain that the sensory experiences are delivered through the elements of the brand, their distinctive and consistent style and themes across their products and environments which and act as mental anchors in the minds of the consumers thereby deliver brand salience. This finding emphasizes the need for luxury companies to leverage their experiential approach to build higher salience.
levels in the target consumers and also enhance the distinctiveness of these experiences in comparison with other brands.

The results of the hypothesis (H3c) support the argument that sensory experiences have a positive effect on brand meaning and response. The main purpose of sensory experiences is to generate positive sensations in consumers, particularly in luxury brands. These sensory experiences are instrumental in creating a certain ‘share of mind’ and meaning with the consumers. Hence, when a brand occupies the consumers mind space, the possibility of its consideration in subsequent interactions is enhanced.

This finding is supported in branding literature as Okonkwo (2009) states that luxury brands are sensory in nature, which translates to the fact that the human senses of visuals, smell, touch and feel are considered imperative in selling luxury brands, as it makes the consumers experience the persona of a brand. Also Schmitt and Simonson (1997) argue that the brand’s visual identity is often the most important component for invoking attitudes, associations and customer responses. Since visual identities are a part of sensory experiences and they contribute to attracting and invoking responses in consumers, the finding of this study is consistent with past research.

While there is substantial evidence in past studies to support the positive effect of sensory experiences on brand salience and brand response, there is no specific research which connects sensory experiences to brand resonance. However the interpretation of the empirical results of this hypothesis (H3a) reveal that sensory brand experiences created by luxury brands can positively affect their brand resonance.

Brand resonance suggests a profound consumer brand relationship that is based on loyalty, attachment, and an enduring sense of communal kinship or affiliation (Keller, 2001). The sensory nature of luxury brands can evoke pleasurable outcomes from consumers during and after the purchase, which may
trigger the consumer to engage in repeated interactions with these brands and build loyalty. If these experiences are delivered consistently by brands, over a period of time, consumers would tend to resonate with these brands.

The findings imply that sensory experiences in luxury brands impact all the brand equity constructs comprehensively.

6.3.2. AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES ON BRAND EQUITY

**H4a** Affective experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand resonance.

**H4b** Affective experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand salience.

**H4c** Affective experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand meaning and response.

The results showed that two (H4a & H4c) of the three hypotheses were supported indicating the positive effect of affective experiences on brand meaning & response and brand resonance. However the effect of affective experience on brand salience (H4b) was not supported.

Schmitt (1999) opines that affective experiences involve creation of feelings during the consumption experience. These feelings may range from mild positive or negative mood states to intense emotions.

The findings of this study (H4b) suggest that brand salience as a construct incorporates the level of awareness and brand knowledge and refers to depth and the width of awareness about the brand. Therefore one expects that the brand experience dimension that may have a higher impact on Brand Salience would be sensory, intellectual and relational dimensions, hence the affective experience dimension does not influence brand salience. The role of affective experiences, as
mentioned earlier in the study, is to generate favourable moods and emotions amongst consumers as a result of interaction and use. Brand experiences are reflected in how consumers feel about the brand and signal a higher level of consumer connect. Brand Salience as explained by Aaker (1991), brand awareness may not be a sufficient condition for consumers to purchase instead it acts as a launch point for building the meaning of the brand in the mind of the consumer. Hence the finding that affective experiences do not lead to brand salience is justified.

Hypothesis (H4c) of the study proposes the positive effect of affective experiences on brand meaning and response, which finds support in this study. This can be explained in the luxury brand context as these brands are known to be bought for hedonic or emotional reasons. Feelings and emotions are aspects of consumption that influence brand perceptions and purchase behavior (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Since emotional gratification is one of the predominant reasons for luxury brand purchase, luxury marketers create experiences that generate positive feelings and emotions amongst consumers. These positive feelings and emotions act as triggers for brand interaction from time to time. Hence the emotional benefit luxury consumers get from the affective brand experiences, positively impact brand meaning and response. This finding is also supported by Edell & Burke’s (1987) work, which argues that feelings generated by brands represent attitude and purchase intention towards the brand.

The findings of hypothesis (H4a), that proposes a positive effect of affective experiences on brand resonance, are significant and find support in past literature. Schmitt (1999) explains affective experiences resulting from contact and interaction during consumption are very powerful (Schmitt, 1999). These personal encounters over a period of time create a relationship between the brand and the consumer and may lead to loyalty. Chaudhari and Holbrook (2001) also
suggest that ‘affect’ significantly impacts attitudinal and purchase loyalty in both services and product categories. Emotional connectivity with customers decommoditizes a business, elevating a brand beyond price and features to a higher level of meaning and commitment for customers. Connecting emotionally with customers requires an organization to create a cohesive, authentic and sensory-stimulating total customer experience that resonates, pleases, communicates effectively and differentiates the organization from the competition (Berry & Carbone, 2007). Hence hypothesis (H8) supported in this study also find support in past research.

Therefore it can be posited that affective experiences significantly impact the higher order brand equity constructs of brand meaning & response and brand resonance. The emotional bonds built by such experiences between Companies and their consumers are difficult for competitors to sever or duplicate.

### 6.3.3. INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCES ON BRAND EQUITY

**H5a** *Intellectual experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand resonance.*

**H5b** *Intellectual experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand salience.*

**H5c** *Intellectual experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand meaning and response.*

The results showed that two (H5b, H5c) of the three hypotheses (H5a, H5b & H5c) were supported indicating the positive effect of intellectual experiences on brand salience and brand meaning & response. There was no effect of intellectual experiences on brand resonance.
The experiences triggered by primary brand elements and creative advertisements may lead to rational processing in the minds of consumers. In luxury brands the primary brand elements such as logos, symbols, colors etc and advertisements convey a sense of elitism, sophistication and elegance associated with a certain lifestyle. These symbols of luxury brands create strong associations in the minds of consumers and intrigue them. Hence the results of hypothesis (H5b) are justified, explaining the effect of intellectual experiences on salience of the brand through relevant associations.

Keller’s (1993) study viewed experience as the basis for more elaborative information processing and inference making that result in brand-related associations. Luxury consumers may engage in mental evaluations of the brands to rationalize their brand beliefs prior to purchase consideration. This primarily can be seen as a trait of the value seeking luxury consumer who may want to evaluate and rationalize the purchase on the basis of the emotional or social equity it generates. Though luxury brands are known for their symbolic value more than the utility value, hence they are not considered very rational purchases based on cost and the utility derived. On the contrary, it can be viewed that consumers would be rationalising and justifying the extremely high prices of luxury brands on the symbolic or emotional value it extends to them. Hence it can be implied that intellectual experiences and their assessment by luxury consumers may lead to brand meaning and response. Hence the result of hypothesis (H5c) is justified.

The result of the hypothesis (H5a), that examines the effect of intellectual experiences on brand resonance, is not significant. This can be explained from the fact that more than 50% of the respondents of this study are corporate employees. Most corporate employees in India are the first generation of people who have joined the corporate world and are known to come from frugal backgrounds (Chaddha & Husband, 2006). Chaddha and Husband (2006)
describe it as the paradoxical group that has the money but not the mindset to spend on luxury brands. Hence, even though these consumers would have been exposed to the world of luxury brands and they may own some of these brands, they do not see value in overt attachment and repeated purchases of these brands.

Another observation in this regard is that traditionally, luxury brands are characterized by a premium image, higher perceived price, outstanding quality, uniqueness/scarcity, unnecessity, ancestral heritage, personal history, aesthetics, and experientiality. These brands are often bought for their symbolic value, more than the functional or rational reasons, hence they may not appeal to the rational side of consumers, and hence the hypothesis on the effect of intellectual experiences on brand resonance is not supported.

6.3.4. BEHAVIOURAL EXPERIENCES ON BRAND EQUITY

**H6a** *Behavioral experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand resonance.*

**H6b** *Behavioral experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand salience.*

**H6c** *Behavioral experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand meaning and response.*

The results showed that one (H6a) of the three hypotheses (H6a, H6b and H6c) were supported indicating the positive effect of behavioural experiences on brand resonance. The effect of behavioural experiences on brand salience and brand meaning and response was not significant.

The hypothesis (H6b) explaining the effect of behavioral experiences on brand salience was not supported in the study. These findings suggest that brand salience as a construct incorporates the level of awareness and brand knowledge
and refers to depth and the width of awareness about the brand. Therefore one expects that the brand experience dimension that may have a higher impact on Brand Salience would be sensory, intellectual and relational dimensions, and affective and behavioural experience dimensions would not influence brand salience.

The behavioral experiences are known as the bodily experiences of consumers characterized by purchasing, consuming, advocating and recommending the brand to others. Consumers engaging in purchase, consumption, advocacy and recommendation of luxury brands are expected to have high brand salience (breadth and depth of brand knowledge) and salience is not an outcome of these behaviors, hence the finding that behavioral experiences do not affect brand salience is justified.

In Hypothesis (H6c) of the study, the effect of behavioral experiences on brand meaning and response was tested and the results were not found to be significant. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that positive behavioral experiences would typically influence the highest order brand equity dimension of brand resonance. The dimension of brand meaning and response is influenced by all other brand experience dimensions including sensory, affective, intellectual and social. This in effect explains that in the brand experience construct, the sensory, affective, intellectual and social dimensions contribute to a higher brand meaning and response but do not ensure that the consumer resonates with the brand. Hence for luxury brands the role of behavioral experiences in building brand resonance is critical, which finds support in this study.

Hypothesis (H6a) was proposed to test the effect of behavioral experiences on brand resonance. The results of hypothesis testing indicate a positive effect of behavioral experience on brand resonance. Brakus et al. (2009) discovered that brand experience seems to be a stronger predictor of actual buying behavior, which can be related to behavioral loyalty and active engagement with the brand.
Similarly the role of brand experiences in making the brand lifestyle a reality (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2008) relates well to the concepts of attitudinal attachment and sense of community dimensions of brand resonance. Hence it would be appropriate to state that positive behavioral experiences may generate lasting loyalty among consumers, which can be equated with brand resonance conceptualized by Keller (2001).

This can also be explained as the positive effect of experiences that build a strong bond between consumers and luxury brands that is reflected in their repurchase behavior, advocacy and recommendations to others and relating to other users of these brands.

Therefore behavioral experiences are also observed to affect the higher order equity constructs of brand meaning and response and brand resonance.

6.3.5. SOCIAL EXPERIENCES ON BRAND EQUITY

H7a Social experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand resonance.

H7b Social experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand salience.

H7c Social experiences created by luxury brands have a significant positive effect on brand meaning & response.

The results showed all the three hypotheses (H7a, H7b & H7c) were supported indicating the positive effect of social experiences on brand equity.

The results of Hypothesis (H7b) indicated that social brand experiences have a positive effect on brand salience. Schmitt (1999) characterises essence of social experiences, based on how people relate to self, other individuals as well
as to entire groups and cultures via brands. Luxury brand consumers often buy these products for their hedonic or conspicuous nature. The conspicuous aspect of luxury brands arises from the need for a social identity and social recognition amongst consumers and hence important for consumers engaging in luxury consumption for external reasons. The social recognition is usually sought in the peer / reference group which also display higher brand salience and knowledge of similar products. Consumers belonging to a particular reference group engage in constantly updating themselves on aspects relating to these groups. Hence social experiences are likely to impact the brand salience of luxury brands.

The results of Hypothesis (H7c) indicated that social brand experiences have a positive effect on brand meaning and response. Social experiences relating to luxury brands result from brand or reference group interaction and how consumers form meaning about the brand and respond to brands depends on the reactions of the social reference groups. Hence this finding that social experiences have a positive effect on brand meaning and response is justified.

The results of Hypothesis (H7a) indicated that social brand experiences have a positive effect on brand resonance.

From literature, it is deduced that luxury brands have a strong symbolic dimension and a social context. Certain luxury consumers purchase and consume these brands to be socially visible and to signal their wealth and success. Such consumers perceive the social experiences as dominant in the luxury consumption process and pamper themselves with repeated purchase and consumption of these brands to have a distinct social identity and stay relevant to their social groups. Hence they may display loyalty to one brand across categories for example; they may own a Louis Vuitton bag, a wallet, card pouch, shoes, belts, sunglasses etc or focus only on a particular category of products such as hand bags or watches. Hence it can be opined that social experiences significantly affect brand resonance in luxury brands.
The results of this study are further substantiated by Atwal and Jain (2012) and Bidenbach and Marell’s (2010) recent studies. Atwal and Jain (2012), suggest that to increase their chances of success in India, luxury brands need to think of the brand experience as the customer journey—the interaction between customer and brand throughout the relationship, from awareness and consideration to purchase and loyalty. The results of Bidenbach and Marell’s (2010) study in the B2B context also indicate that customer experience has a positive effect on dimensions of brand equity such as brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty.

Hence similar to sensory experiences, social experiences in luxury brands also have a larger impact by comprehensively affecting all the brand equity constructs indicating their importance in the brand building process in luxury brands, which is also widely supported in other studies in the past, while the other experience constructs have a scattered effect on brand equity.

Analysis indicates that brand experience dimensions are good predictors of higher order brand equity constructs such as brand meaning & response and brand resonance, explaining 48% and 55% of variance in these constructs respectively. Brand experiences are seen as explaining just 10% of the variance for brand salience, lower order equity construct, which is much less in proportion relative to the other two constructs.

6.3.6. STEP WISE BRAND EQUITY HYPOTHESES

The second key objective was to test the step wise approach to brand building in Keller’s (2001) customer based brand equity model in the luxury brands context. The relations between Brand Salience → Brand Meaning & Response and Brand Meaning & Response→ Brand Resonance were empirically
tested in this study and the findings supported the step wise approach to brand building proposed by Keller (2001).

The hypotheses developed to test this premise in the luxury brand context are detailed below:

**H8r** *Brand salience of luxury brands has a significant positive effect on its brand meaning & response.*

**H10r** *Brand meaning & response of luxury brands has a significant positive effect on its brand resonance.*

The findings of the first hypothesis in the brand building ladder (H8r) suggested a positive effect of brand salience on brand meaning & response. Similarly the hypothesis (H10r) on the effect of brand meaning & response on brand resonance is also supported. These findings empirically confirm to Keller’s (2001) Customer based brand equity approach on brand building being a step wise and sequential process from brand salience to brand resonance for luxury brands.

A review of extant literature provides support for this finding. Brand salience, commonly termed as brand awareness, creates a brand node in the consumers’ memory and has a positive effect on the formation of strong and unique associations (Keller, 1993). Brand salience is also crucial to brand knowledge (Hoyer and Brown, 1990), which measures how familiar and intimate consumers are with the brand (Keller, 2009). Keller (2006) argues that the consumer mindset includes the 5 A’s: awareness, associations, attitudes, attachment, and activity. These dimensions are hierarchical in nature, which can be explained as awareness leading to brand associations; brand associations drive attitudes which can lead to attachment and ultimately activity. Hence brand salience contributes in building meaning and responses towards the brand, and
positive brand response and interactions over a period of time can contribute in the establishment of resonating consumer-brand relationships.

Therefore, in view of the findings and their interpretations discussed above, it can be stated that brand experiences can play a crucial role in building customer based brand equity of luxury brands which is a step wise and sequential process of building brand salience, brand meaning & response and brand resonance.

6.4. MODERATING ROLE OF HEDONISTIC MOTIVATIONS

Past researches have discussed the perceptual and behavioral differences towards brands and services between high and low hedonistic consumers.

To evaluate the effect of hedonic motivations on luxury brand consumers, this study proposed to examine the effect of high and low hedonistic consumers of luxury brands on the brand experience and brand equity constructs (H11, H12), which are discussed in detail above. Further, the study proposed to look at the effect of High and Low hedonistic motives on the structural model of the research and the moderation role of hedonistic motives on the structural relationships in the theoretical model of the study (H13).

The concept of brand experience has become of great interest to researchers and marketers. The concept of brand experience includes various dimensions: a sensory dimension, which refers to the visual, auditory, tactile, gustative, and olfactory stimulations provided by a brand; an affective dimension, which includes feelings generated by the brand and its emotional bond with the consumer; an intellectual dimension, which refers to the ability of the brand to engage consumers’ convergent and divergent thinking; a social dimension which includes how people relate to self, other individuals as well as to entire groups and cultures via brands and a behavioral dimension, which includes bodily experiences, lifestyles, and interactions with the brand.
According to Schmitt (1999), depending on how many of these dimensions are evoked and the intensity of the stimulation, the resulting brand experience can be more or less intense.

According to Kaul (2007), the experiential view associated with hedonism takes a far more holistic approach to the consumption process, right from involvement to post-purchase usage. Past researches also suggested that hedonism motives are associated with luxury brands (Christodoulides et al., 2009; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004).

The study results indicate that consumers with high hedonic motives perceive brand experiences differently than consumers with low hedonic motives. The results find support in Zarantonello and Schmitt’s (2010) study which used the brand experience scale to profile consumers and predict consumer behavior. They found five types of consumers: hedonistic, action-oriented, holistic, inner-directed, and utilitarian consumers. Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010) found that hedonistic consumers scored high on all experiential dimensions, but with the highest scores on the sensory and affective dimensions. These consumers attach importance to the sensory stimulations that brands exercise on their visual sense or other senses, as well as to the emotions that brands are able to generate in them. Hence, hedonism can also be connected to the sensory and affective constructs of brand experiences, where sensory experiences gratify the consumers’ inner self and affective experiences appeal to the consumers’ inner feelings and emotions.

Hence this study establishes the link between hedonism in luxury brand experiences, also supported by past research, the essence of which is to provide relevant and pleasurable connects between brands and consumers. The results of the study also suggest that people with higher hedonistic motives derive higher experience as compared to people with lower hedonic motives.
To explain consumers’ behavior in relation to luxury brands, Wiedmann, Henings and Siebels (2009), pointed out that there are other aspects of motives for luxury consumption, apart from interpersonal aspects like snobbery and conspicuousness (Leibenstein, 1950; Mason, 1992), personal aspects such as hedonist and perfectionist motives (Dubois and Laurent, 1994), and situational conditions (e.g. economic, societal, and political factors) that have to be taken into consideration (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004).

Some products and services carry an emotional value and provide intrinsic pleasure in addition to their functional utility (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Sheth et al., 1991; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). The role of hedonistic motives in luxury brand literature has been established in past studies. These studies have shown that luxury products are likely to provide such subjective intangible benefits (Dubois and Laurent, 1994), and emotional responses associated with luxury consumption, such as sensory pleasure, gratification, aesthetic beauty, or excitement (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Hence, hedonism describes the perceived subjective utility from the purchase and consumption of a luxury brand to arouse feelings and affective states (Sheth et al., 1991; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991).

Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010) observed that the relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention was significant only in the case of hedonic and holistic consumer profiles. They not only observed a positive effect on the purchase intentions, but also willingness of consumers to pay a higher price. These aspects of brand attitude, purchase intention and willingness to pay higher price are also measures of the consumers brand loyalty and resonance, as covered in past studies.

In luxury literature researchers (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004) have also observed that hedonistic consumers are more interested in their own thoughts and feelings and are willing to pay higher prices for luxury brands. Additionally,
Kim (2010) observed that consumers purchasing luxury brands show more positive feelings and emotions for these brands than those who have never purchased luxury brands.

The results of this study indicate high and low hedonic consumers differ only in the levels of brand resonance and not in the lower order brand equity dimensions. This explains that luxury consumers with high hedonistic motivations resonate with these brands.

The relation between brand experiences and brand equity may vary across consumers with different motives. The findings of this study suggest that consumers with high hedonic motives will perceive the brand experiences more strongly as compared to consumers with low hedonic motives. This strong perception of brand experiences will not only lead to higher brand salience, but also higher order equity constructs such as brand meaning, brand response and resonance. Moreover, compared to low hedonic consumers, high hedonic consumers affect the perception of brand equity more strongly. Thus, we expect the relationship between brand experiences and brand equity to be stronger for consumers with a high hedonic profile and to be weaker for consumers with a low hedonic profile, thus finding support for hypotheses H13.

6.5. SUMMARY

This chapter of the study presented discussions around the findings of the study based on the assessments of the constructs of the study, proposed causal hypotheses and the overall model of the study and the effect of the moderator on the measurement and overall model.