



Perceived Ethical Value of Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience: The Moderating Role Of Employee Resilience and The Mediating Role Of Brand Relationship Quality in Iraq Smartphone Users

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Abstract: The current study explores customer relationships among Iraq Smartphone Users by measuring the level of relationship between perceived ethical value of the brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience and the quality of their relationship with it, in addition to studying the moderating effect of Employee Resilience. Data was collected from (453) Iraq Smartphone Users, and to address the study's problem, the descriptive analytical method was adopted. A questionnaire was used as a tool to collect the necessary data for determining the level of these variables. For analyzing the results, two packages (SPSS & AMOS) were used to build the structural equation model (SEM) and extract the required results. The study's results indicated a significant positive relationship between perceived ethical value of the brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience through the mediating role of the quality of their relationship with it. The results also showed a meaningful relationship between Employee Resilience and perceived ethical value of the brand through the moderating role of Brand Relationship Quality, indicating that Brand Relationship Quality contributes to improving the customer interaction process by encouraging them to participate in product design and creating a vision that aligns with the needs and desires of customers. Thus, this study places significant emphasis on the behaviors of Iraq Smartphone Users, especially regarding phones (Apple, Samsung, Xiaomi, and Huawei), as well as examining how Brand Relationship Quality can mediate these variables. This contributes to improving customer value by building a positive relationship with customers and ensuring the maintenance of providing them with a distinguished experience.

Keywords: Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand, Customers' Experience, Employee Resilience, Brand Relationship Quality, Iraq Smartphone Users.

Introduction

The global smart phone market witnessed significant growth in 2025, driven by the increasing demand for premium and AI-powered devices (Mendis, 2025), as Apple and Samsung dominated the shipment rankings with their distinctive brands. Meanwhile, Chinese brands like Xiaomi and Huawei experienced a major leap in product aesthetics, designs, and creative capabilities, contributing to the introduction of new market entry points (Partanen, 2025). Since smart phones can enhance customer repurchase intent, there

is always a focus on convenience in daily use (Sudirjo et al., 2023), as this significant growth stems from individuals relying on mobile phones to perform their daily tasks, particularly in communication, entertainment, productivity, and business activities. This is directly related to the average person using their phones for three hours a day, according to statistics (Sarmad et al., 2024:43; Laricchia, 2025). While using the smartphone brand, consumers often experience a range of past experiences with their used phones, and customers develop ethical value with the brand through the ease of use of the product and Online Customers' Shopping Experience (Faber et al., 2022). The aesthetic design of the phone, its applications, functions, services, programs, and the level of customer support in the company, along with other elements, may influence perceived ethical value of the brand, as well as the Customers' Experience in the field of smartphones. Thus, it is likely that users will develop emotional responses that reflect the quality of their relationship with the world through adopting new products that carry the smartphone brand (Htet, 2024). In Iraq, the brands Apple, Samsung, Xiaomi, and Huawei dominate public interest, and the reason for consumer preference for these brands in Iraq is that all their applications are relatively available. Therefore, these phones, especially the iPhone, are often considered a standard for social status (Revaldi et al., 2022). Argues that (Coleman, 2018) customers prefer to purchase a brand that offers a positive experience and is easy to understand, which contributes to satisfying their needs and desires, thereby affecting the ethical value of the brand. This value focuses directly on Employee Resilience in providing service, which in turn relates to the extent of customer interaction with the brand, thereby improving the nature of the relationship between the brand's ethical value and Employee Resilience through the quality of the relationship with the smart phone brand.

Ethical values of a brand are often highly multifaceted and can refer to both the process and the outcome or value. When considering the ethics of the process, the focus is on the procedures and internal actions implemented by the company. The ethical dimension refers to a set of standards through which the organization interacts with its customers. In this case, the focus is on the transparency of information interaction, the fairness of pricing, the confidentiality of personal data, and so on. The ethics of outcomes are related to the characteristics of the output of the artificial intelligence system, non-discrimination, fairness, and objectivity. It is important to consider the ethics of values from all the perspectives mentioned above, as they address the ethical issues related to the brand and the design, development, implementation, and use of appropriate technologies in practical practice (Dolganova, 2021).

On the other hand, Employee Resilience, as a service provider, is typically classified as internal and external according to (Ansoff, 1965), since external resilience does not mean putting all the eggs in one basket, while internal resilience aims to provide a cushion for responding to disasters (Sharma & Sushil, 2010). Then came (Eppink, 1978) and linked resilience to the important concept of unexpected changes, defining resilience as the stability that makes the organization less vulnerable to unexpected environmental changes or more capable of responding to them successfully. His major contribution came in the form of a classification that categorizes resilience into three levels: operational,

competitive, and strategic, which are distributed based on the intensity and level of change required (Singh & Shalender, 2012). The organization's ability to enter and exit markets, to define its position and reposition it within current and new markets, is defined as marketing resilience (Kołodziej, 2023). Resilience is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the ability to endure or recover quickly from difficult conditions. As a multidisciplinary concept, resilience has attracted significant attention in many fields, including physics, engineering, environment, geography, psychology, and management. Introduced flexibility in the field (Meyer, 1982) of organizational management initially to describe the dynamic adaptation of organizations and employees in the face of adversity. It helps employees' resilience to overcome negative events and recover from them, such as psychological shocks, conflicts, frustration, and failure in internal and external environments (Zhu et al., 2019). It also positively predicts employees' well-being, mental health, job performance, and organizational commitment, as well as negatively predicts the turnover intention of employees (Nguyen et al., 2016). At the organizational level, Employee Resilience becomes a critical strategic tool to withstand the damages of crises, maintain survival and development, enhance organizational performance, and achieve competitive advantages during tough times (Saad Elshaer, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). And (Balogh, 2023) pointed out that employees' resilience reflects organizations' desire to respond and continuously adapt to the changing tastes of customers. Chaudhuri et al. (2024) stated that the concept of marketing flexibility is used for making marketing decisions based on the organization's ability to identify new and alternative options and to make marketing decisions that express its desire to achieve a set of marketing objectives. The fundamental condition for marketing flexibility requires the presence of specifically trained labor force in market sensing techniques (Yawis et al., 2024), as well as the efficiency of the communication and information technology infrastructure, in addition to the supportive organizational culture for customer orientation (Tariq, 2025).

While the quality of the relationship represents a comprehensive evaluation of the relationship's strength as it directly focuses on the extent to which the relationship fits to meet the needs of the customers associated with it, thus this concept is based on Relationship Marketing theories of Commitment and Trust, Social Exchange Theory, Organizational Behavior Theory, and Interdependence (Kumar, 2013). It is clear that developing a strong Relationship Quality (BRQ) scale for the customer is extremely important, as it reflects the strong emotional and motivational bonds between customers and brands, similarly to their connection with people (Kim et al., 2014), therefore, efforts should be focused on improving the relationships between customers and brands, due to the latter's crucial role in building emotional bonds with customers, which often leads to increased brand value, repurchase intention, financial gains, and customer retention (Huber et al., 2010). Marketing studies have shown particular interest in the concepts of Customer Service Quality (BRQ) to determine precise measures for them, despite the lack of consensus on the application of relationship quality standards (BRQ) (Lo, 2020), six dimensions are generally used to describe Brand Relationship Quality: Interdependence, Intimacy, Self-Connection, Self-Connection, Partner Quality/Trust, and

Commitment. These dimensions are frequently used as factors for relationship quality in smart phone studies (Francisco-Maffezzolli et al., 2014).

Since work in smart phone companies is characterized by highly dangerous and intensive physical, mental, and emotional effort (Chen et al., 2019), employees may face internal adverse conditions, such as customer conflicts, poor treatment from colleagues, lack of safety management, in addition to external risks, including terrorist attacks, natural disasters, epidemics, and crimes. Therefore, enhancing employees' resilience to cope with various types of adversity has become a highly important cornerstone for managing smart phone companies (Xie et al., 2023).

For mobile phone companies to operate effectively, they must achieve a positive online shopping experience for customers (Ayada et al., 2023), and this experience inherently relates to the nature of the relationship Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand (Kervyn et al., 2022). According to some studies, achieving a positive relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Customers' Experience for online shopping urgently requires high flexibility among service-providing employees (Hayat et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2023). This flexibility must be characterized by a direct quality of relationship with the brand (Love et al., 2022; Ghazali et al., 2024), as some researchers and marketing academics believe that concepts like Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand (Rastgar et al., 2022), Online Customers' Shopping Experience (Gulfraz et al., 2022), Employee Flexibility (Xie et al., 2023), and Brand Relationship Quality (Francisco-Maffezzolli et al., 2014) all fall within the framework of brand-customer relationship management. As customer relationship management is a widely used marketing philosophy in organizational competition to retain customers, it represents a comprehensive and powerful philosophy for building and maintaining relationships with customers to ensure long-term profitability and achieve sustainable revenue growth through developing distinctive customer value and satisfaction (Ndidi, 2020: 55). This means that customer relationship management is a philosophy used by service providers to develop positive and profitable relationships for both parties. Therefore, this allows the organization to collect the necessary data about customers to ensure the continued engagement of customers with the services provided by the organization (Kumar et al., 2022).

And the quality of the relationship with the brand works on strengthening the way organizations deal with customers through understanding, anticipating, and managing customer requirements (Ranjbarfard, 2016: 939), as well as customer relationship management contributes to enhancing the extent to which organizations can invest in modern technologies to improve their relationships and interactions with customers and gain their satisfaction and loyalty (Albort-Morant, 2018), which requires organizations to make continuous efforts to maintain the nature and type of the relationship with customers (Yeng et al., 2018) and communicate with them (Bijadeh & Rostami, 2019; Nasse, 2019), so customer relationship management is considered a philosophy and strategy through which the process of acquiring and retaining customers can be described through creating customer value (Dahal, 2019; Ogbu Edeh et al., 2019). According to the brand relationship management theory, the strength of the relationship between the

customer and the brand contributes to increasing Online Customers' Shopping Experience, and therefore this research examines the impact of Employee Resilience of service providers, Brand Relationship Quality, and the perceived ethical value on Online Customers' Shopping Experience.

According to (Mustafa et al., 2022), the relationship between Customers' Experience for online shopping and relationship quality is stronger at high levels of value co-creation participation, as customer engagement in the value co-creation process and providing them with a fun online shopping experience can be an excellent way to improve customer relationship quality and brand love. (Čater & Čater, 2010; Chomvilailuk & Butcher, 2014; Al-Wugayan, 2019) concluded that relationship quality has a positive relationship with Customers' Experience. Researchers claim that the presence of mediating factors that contribute to developing the relationship with Customers' Experience for online shopping (Santala, 2021) is necessary. As the current academic literature lacks focus on measuring Customers' Experience for online shopping, which leads to companies incurring significant losses due to negative reactions (Mustafa et al., 2022), in addition to measuring the moderated role of Brand Relationship Quality (Tajvidi et al., 2021; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023).

There is a research and knowledge gap between traditional and contemporary studies, which necessitates bridging the research gap between these variables (Mohajerzad et al., 2021). Therefore, most researchers believe that Customers' Experience for online shopping and Employee Resilience of service providers are directly related. However, the quality of the relationship with the brand increases the strength of this relationship by increasing consumers' emotional engagement, which leads to improving perceived ethical value of the brand. Thus, this contributes to building a business relationship that brings high benefits and value to companies (Rycroft-Smith, 2022; Chaika, 2024). Therefore, this research can study the relationship between perceived ethical value of the brand and Customers' Experience for online shopping through the mediating role of Employee Resilience of service providers and the moderating role of the quality of the relationship with the brand. Given that Iraq Smartphone Users are among the directly targeted population groups, the current research represents an important necessity for them, as it focuses exclusively on them and highlights the importance of Customers' Experience for online shopping.

The current research aims to examine the studies that addressed the nature of the relationship between the variables under study, represented by perceived ethical value of the brand, Customers' Experience, Employee Resilience, and Brand Relationship Quality, and the extent to which these studies contribute to addressing the current research issues. The primary objective of this study is to determine the extent to which perceived ethical value of the brand and employee resilience are important drivers in building Customers' Experience for online shopping, as perceived ethical value of the brand can be considered a fundamental focus in achieving (Brand Ethical Behavior, Brand Ethical Personality, Brand Ethical Operations, and Brand Ethical Responsibility) (Rastgar et al., 2022). Furthermore, based on what previous studies have reached, multidimensional concepts

tend to be more effective in measuring the level of availability of the variables among the target sample. The second objective of the study concerns examining Employee Resilience of service providers as a mediating variable and Brand Relationship Quality as a moderating variable. The current research explains how perceived ethical value of the brand and brand relationship quality can affect Customers' Experience for online shopping through the mediating role of Employee Resilience. From here, it is possible to highlight the potential consequences of Customers' Experience for online shopping by identifying the gap between perceived ethical value of the brand and Employee Resilience. This gap can be bridged by studying the role of Brand Relationship Quality as a moderating role.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Given the significant importance that brand relationships hold in the Iraqi smartphone market, the current study explores the conceptual interaction between perceived brand ethical value, Customers' Experience, Employee Resilience, and the quality of the relationship with them among Iraqi smartphone users. Additionally, this study summarizes relevant literature on the study topics to provide a comprehensive perspective based on theoretical and conceptual foundations that support the relationship between perceived brand ethical value, Customers' Experience, Employee Resilience, and the quality of the relationship with them among Iraqi smartphone users.

Perceived Ethical Value Of The Brand Impact On Brand Relationship Quality.

The perceived brand ethics represent consumer engagement in Brand Relationship Quality, as most companies today continuously seek ways to strengthen the relationship with customers to improve their motivation to participate in product design for achieving multiple benefits, primarily focusing on brand usage intention (Kumar & Kaushal, 2023), customer-brand relationship (Habibi et al., 2014), and willingness to pay a higher price (Kumar & Kaushik, 2022:27). Company managers and marketers recognize the importance of ethical practices in enhancing business sustainability, which means the quality of the relationship between consumers and the brand represents a comprehensive concept reflecting the strength, depth, continuity, and impact of the relationship between consumers and the brand (Yamoah et al., 2016). The quality of the consumer-brand relationship can be identified to include brand impact (Thomson et al., 2005), brand recognition (Fournier, 1998), close relationships, brand trust, interdependence, self-connection (Papista & Dimitriadis, 2012), and brand commitment (Lee & Jin, 2019).

The quality of the relationship with the brand works on building customer handling in organizations through understanding, anticipating, and managing customer requirements (Ranjbarfard, 2016), as well as the quality of the relationship with the brand contributes to enhancing the extent to which organizations can invest in modern technologies to improve their relationships and interactions with customers and gain their satisfaction and loyalty (Albort-Morant, 2018). This requires organizations to make continuous efforts to maintain the nature and type of Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand

(Yeng et al., 2018) and communicate with them (Bijadeh&Rostami, 2019), as the quality of the relationship with the brand is considered a philosophy and strategy through which the process of acquiring and retaining customers can be described through creating customer value (Dahal, 2019).

This results in a range of high costs for customers, as the customer seeking to build a relationship with the service provider resorts to rewarding the service provider for their efforts, which leads to tangible benefits, thereby motivating the customer to respond positively to the relationship. On the other hand, there are many factors that increase the customer's motivation to build a relationship, including (customer focus, frequent interaction, product involvement, and environmental uncertainty), as these factors contribute to enhancing the customer's relational motivation and perceived value (Ryu & Lee, 2017). Based on the foregoing, it can be said that the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand plays an important role in enhancing the Brand Relationship Quality, and thus it can be hypothesized:

H1: There is a positive relationship between perceived ethical value of the brand and brand relationship quality.

Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand impact on Online Customers' Shopping Experience

The contradictory nature of customer experience management raises a wide range of ethical considerations regarding how to treat all stakeholders fairly and responsibly, which requires adopting ethical customer experience management by recognizing and addressing the potential conflicts faced by stakeholders when balancing competing demands and interests (Velasco et al., 2024), as ethics refers to the principles, values, and ethical standards that guide human behavior when providing information, goods, and services (Tan & Salo, 2023; Arli, 2017). In this study, Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand is understood as social and environmental practices, such as selling reliable products at a fair price, arising from eco-friendly production, without exploiting workers or providing misleading offers (Hayat et al., 2022; Chen & Moosmayer, 2020). These practices have increasingly attracted consumer attention and can create positive perceptions about the ethics of retail trade (Rathore et al., 2023). As the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand can affect Online Customers' Shopping Experience, leading to positive responses to transactions and increasing their propensity to purchase (Zaman et al., 2025), in sales relationships, the ethics of retail trade was generally related to customer experience and satisfaction (Mainardes et al., 2022).

From another perspective, the impact of the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand on Online Customers' Shopping Experience can be explained through consumers' evaluation of the perceived ethical value of the brand by adopting (Brand Ethical Behavior, Brand Ethical Personality, Brand Ethical Operations, and Brand Ethical Responsibility) (Rastgar et al., 2022), and this theory provides a cognitive and utilitarian approach to the trade-offs in determining and maintaining ethical consumption habits. Conflict with customer desires leads to a conflict between gains and losses in the decision-making process,

producing value judgments. This is because consumption habits are not long-term, but they change the search for responses to new purposes, new identity goals, or with the emergence of different perspectives on personal interests (Suh & Yoo, 2024), which requires companies to adopt the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand in a way that allows online consumers to judge the ethics of retail stores. When they have ethical awareness of social and environmental issues, avoid unethical retail stores, and choose consumption experiences that address their ethical concerns, this leads to achieving gains and profits that positively benefit companies and achieve marketing success (Chowdhury, 2024). Based on what has been mentioned, it can be said that the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand plays an important role in enhancing Online Customers' Shopping Experience, H2 can be assumed as follows:

H2: There is a positive relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand on Online Customers' Shopping Experience.

Brand Relationship Quality impact on Online Customers' Shopping Experience

The concept of Customers' Experience includes the internal and subjective reactions of consumers, such as emotions, feelings, and thoughts, as well as their behavioral responses triggered by brand-related stimuli. The stimuli encompass a range of components, including brand design, identity, communications, and packaging (Sarmad et al., 2024). Brakus et al. (2009) and Andreini et al. (2019) argue that Customers' Experience represents the phenomenon where the brand evokes sensory responses in the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile domains, known as the sensory brand experience, and the emotions and feelings it evokes are referred to as the emotional brand experience.

As the Customers' Experience of the brand is the primary determinant in evaluating product quality, good Customers' Experience indicates a good product. It is viewed as a key objective for companies, making Customers' Experience a strategically important component for organizations in general and service organizations in particular (Maklan, 2012). The brand's Customers' Experience has become an important way to compete, as experiences are highly valued by customers and are nearly impossible for competitors to replicate. If a company succeeds in creating a positive experience, it gains a competitive advantage; however, if it fails, it can have significant consequences (Garg et al., 2014). Shaheen et al. (2022) argue that the brand experience represents a sensory, interactive, and emotional interaction between the customer and the brand.

Companies compete better when they combine job-related and emotional benefits in their offers, as it is difficult for competitors to cut the emotional ties between companies and customers. To compete successfully, a large number of companies apply principles and tools of Customers' Experience management systematically to enhance customer loyalty. Unlike many product improvements, the comprehensive nature of these experimental designs makes it very difficult for competitors to replicate them. As a result, many companies try to integrate Customers' Experience into their marketing practices (Kandampully et al., 2018). On the other hand, performance-related determinants focus on

the job function, meaning that Brand Relationship Quality represents a crucial foundation for achieving service diversity, which leads to offering distinctive and high-quality products. Perceived high quality and product differentiation will enhance the perceived customer experience. Therefore, the company's brand often acts as a substitute for service quality and can be considered a performance-related determinant (Holland & Ramanathan, 2016). Based on what has been presented, it can be said that Brand Relationship Quality plays an important role in enhancing Online Customers' Shopping Experience. Thus, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H3: There is a positive relationship between Brand Relationship Quality on Online Customers' Shopping Experience.

The Role of Brand Relationship Quality As a Mediator

Brand Relationship Quality refers to satisfaction with the relationship, while Trust and Commitment relate to the relationship (Cardoso et al., 2022). Additionally, relationship quality expresses the intangible values of the products and services offered by the organization, as relationship quality represents efforts to strengthen the relationship with the customer, which contributes to increasing and improving customer engagement with the organization (Dam & Dam, 2021). Mohammad Shafiee & Tabaeian (2022) argue that relationship quality plays a significant role in improving social investments by enhancing the quality and capacity of the investments made by the organization, which in turn benefits the customer. This contributes to creating a sustainable relationship between the organization and the customer, thereby fostering positive feelings toward this relationship, as well as developing customer loyalty (Agu et al., 2024).

And practices Brand Relationship Quality improving the relationship and emotional response of the customer towards the nature and type of the relationship with the organization (Shankar & Yadav, 2021), which encourages the customer to interact with the organization, achieve differentiation, and maximize the relationship with it, which in turn motivates the organization to develop its capabilities and the services it offers to the customer (Quaye et al., 2022), as meeting the customer's needs and satisfying and emotionally supporting them represents a crucial foundation that the organization must fulfill and address in a way that creates positive harmony with these tastes and requirements (Hussain et al., 2025).

As Brand Relationship Quality plays a significant role in maintaining Commitment to customer service and achieving intentions and benefits (Sharif & Sidi Lemine, 2024), customer satisfaction and fulfilling the requirements that the customer needs, which are based on mutual Trust with the organization (Singh et al., 2023), it in turn works to improve customer Trust in the service provider by encouraging the customer to invest within the organization (Chang et al., 2021). Thus, Brand Relationship Quality represents a fundamental pillar for improving the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, and H4 can be hypothesized as follows:

H4: *Brand Relationship Quality as a mediating factor between perceived ethical value of the brand and online customers' shopping experience.*

The Role of Employee Resilience As a Moderator

Configuring the links between the consumer and the brand requires recognizing the fundamental importance of the flexibility of the service provided, thereby reducing the perceived risks of purchasing a particular brand as the employee's flexibility in dealing with customers increases and the negative reactions to that brand are minimized (Xie et al., 2023). The employee's flexibility enables quick responses to the challenges posed by competitive market conditions and demanding customers (Bardoel et al., 2014). It also allows organizations to gain a competitive advantage by improving their ability to change and reposition themselves quickly within competitive global markets (Nosike et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2025). Furthermore, organizations that are flexible in the market introduce and develop new markets, which enhances and strengthens the value of the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, working as a primary growth strategy (Omowole et al., 2024).

As employee resilience enables organizations to achieve a high global market share (Chaudhuri et al., 2024), the current study focuses on examining the effects of service provider employee resilience on Brand Relationship Quality and Online Customers' Shopping Experience (Ahn et al., 2025), as positive interactions between companies' brands and smart phone users lead to increased Employee Resilience over time. When a customer's emotions are attached to the aesthetics and quality of the product offered, they are willing to pay a higher value for using this product (Oloba et al., 2024). Asthana et al. (2024) state that Employee Resilience enhances Online Customers' Shopping Experience and customer interactions with the brand, thereby making Employee Resilience a crucial necessity for the perceived ethical value of the brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience (Sachdev & Sauber, 2023). These fluctuations return to Employee Resilience, which directly and indirectly affects the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience (Swazan & Youn, 2023), and there should be a positive correlation between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, as smartphone companies with the most resilient employees showed a stronger correlation. Therefore, we suggest H5 as follows:

H5: *Employee Resilience will moderate (strengthen) the relationship between perceived ethical value of the brand and online customers' shopping experience.*

Traditional studies suggest that customers tend to behave rationally when purchasing products and services and using them (Solomon et al., 1985), while contemporary studies have focused on the fact that consumption situations are often characterized by negative or undesirable behavior by the customer, which violates behavioral norms and harms the organization in some way or may damage the consumption experience of other customers during the service encounter (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998), which directed researchers to the negative effects that can occur from

the tools and methods used to deliver services, which directly and indirectly affect Online Customers' Shopping Experience (Lu et al., 2023; Asthana et al., 2024).

And to address negative reactions, smartphone companies must handle customers flexibly (Nayal al., 2022), which means the relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Brand Relationship Quality can be improved through Employee Resilience (Low, 2024). Due to the nature of the services provided, interactions between service providers and customers depend on the ethical value essence offered by service employees, which in turn will work to build a positive reputation and position among customers as a result of the excellence in the flexibility of service providers (Le al., 2022; Shahmehr al., 2024; Lee & Gong, 2024). Flexibility with service providers plays a crucial role in dealing with customers through creativity in service delivery, which earns customer trust and preferences for the products offered. For this reason, customers prefer high-quality and branded products through the service they provide and the aesthetics they carry. Therefore, we propose H6 as follows:

H6: Employee Resilience will improve (strengthen) the relationship between perceived ethical value of the brand and brand relationship quality.

If the quality of the brand relationship represents a mediating role in the relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, then the degree of employee service flexibility may affect, from the indirect relationship strength between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Brand Relationship Quality, in other words, when the employee service flexibility is strong, it will enhance the strength of the indirect link between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience. Based on this, the hypothesis H7 can be formulated:

H7: Employee resilience is moderated the indirect relationship between perceived ethical value of the brand and online customers' shopping experience via brand relationship quality. .

The virtual research framework of this study focuses on the complex relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand, Online Customers' Shopping Experience, Brand Relationship Quality, and Employee Resilience of service providers at smartphone companies in Iraq. Based on the literature and conceptual foundations provided, the current study assumes that the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand represents a primary driver for enhancing the Online Customers' Shopping Experience through Brand Relationship Quality as a mediating factor. Additionally, it aims to uncover the moderated effect of Employee Resilience on the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Brand Relationship Quality. Building on the interpretation of the relationships between the study variables, the study seeks to offer a clear perspective on the mechanisms and approaches that can act as a significant driver in influencing customer behavior towards investing in the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand to satisfy their needs and desires in the Iraqi smartphone market.

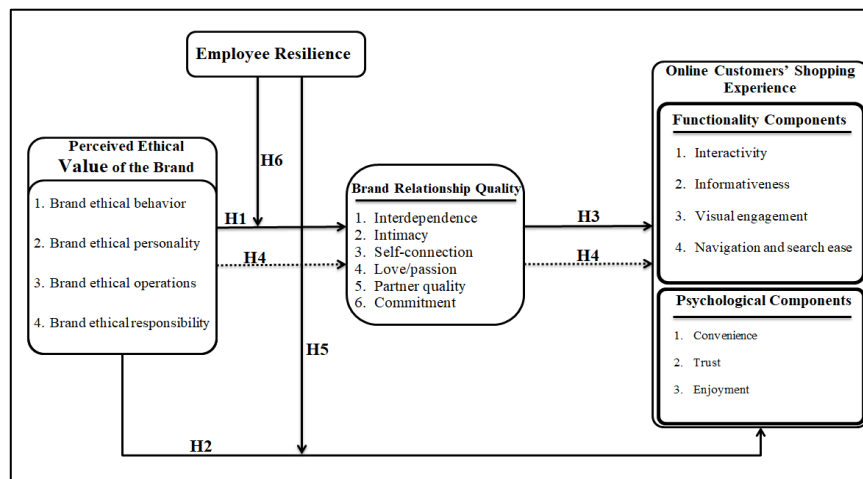


Figure 1. The hypothetical conceptual framework of the study

Methodology

Data Collection and Sample

Represents the research community in Iraqi smartphone companies, represented by four leading companies (Apple, Samsung, Xiaomi, Huawei). The research sample consisted of smartphone users of these companies. The current study adopted a questionnaire as a tool to collect the necessary data by identifying the random sampling method as the most appropriate analytical and descriptive approach. Through the questionnaire, the maximum possible amount of data can be collected to determine the efficiency of the research variables among the sample, in addition to saving time and resources for researchers and facilitating access to smartphone users, which contributed to achieving the research objectives within specified timeframes. The Iraq Smartphone Users survey focused on several brands, as smartphones were chosen as the sample for the study because they are the most suitable and closest to the research variables and measuring Customers' Experience for online shopping due to the daily use of these smartphones by customers. Other reasons included the importance and maturity of the telecommunications sector, as well as the flexibility and freedom smartphone users have in expressing their opinions, in addition to demonstrating an active role in determining the extent of alignment with operational, technological, financial, and service developments. Accordingly, through the Iraq Smartphone Users survey, (453) smartphone users were collected Two packages were adopted for data analysis using SPSS and AMOS software to build the structural equation model (SEM).

Measures

Measurement is one of the fundamental concepts in scientific research management and can be defined as a process of assigning numbers to variables based on certain rules that enable accurate representation of the variable. To evaluate the research variables, a five-point Likert scale was adopted, except for demographic characteristics. A scale was designed for each variable of the research. A four-dimensional scale (Brand Ethical Behavior, Brand Ethical Personality, Brand Ethical Operations, Brand Ethical

Responsibility) by Rastgar et al. (2022) was used to evaluate the variable Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand, while the variable Online Customers' Shopping Experience was measured using a scale by Gulfranz et al. (2022) through two dimensions: (Functionality Components "Interactivity, Information, Visual Engagement, Navigation and Search Ease", and Psychological Components "Convenience, Trust, Enjoyment"). A scale developed by Xie et al. (2023) was used to evaluate the variable Employee Flexibility as a one-dimensional variable, while the variable Brand Relationship Quality was measured through six dimensions (Interdependence, Intimacy, Self-Connection, Self-Connection, Partner Quality, Commitment) using a scale by Francisco-Maffezzolli et al. (2014).

Results and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of a sample of Iraq Smartphone Users from (453) users, where participants were distributed by social gender category, with (269) males equivalent to (59%), and (184) females equivalent to (41%). The age category ranked first with the (31-40 years) category, with a number of users reaching (134), equivalent to (30%) of the total (453). The (20-30 years) category ranked second with (116) users, representing (26%). The (41-50 years) category ranked third with (92) users, equivalent to a percentage of (20%). The (51-60 years) category ranked fourth, equivalent to (69) users, which is a percentage of (15%). The (61 years and older) category ranked last with a number of users reaching (42), equivalent to (9%). Regarding the educational backgrounds of the sample, the majority are university graduates, totaling (227) users, which accounts for (50%) of the total users. The second rank was represented by users holding a high diploma equivalent to a master's degree, totaling (135) users, which is (30%). The third rank was held by master's degree holders, with (70) users, accounting for (15%). The last rank was among PhD holders, with (21) users, equivalent to (5%) of the total users. As for the income level, the highest percentage was among users with an income of (751 thousand – 1 million), totaling (189) users, which accounts for (42%) and ranks first. Users with an income of (250 – 500 thousand) came in second place, totaling (106) users, accounting for (23%). The third rank was represented by users with an income of (501 – 750 thousand), totaling (93) users, accounting for (21%). The last rank was among those with an income (over 1 million), totaling (65) users, which accounts for (14%). However, for the category of smart phones, the most preferred brand was Samsung, as it was chosen by (164) users, equivalent to (36%), while the choice fell on Apple with (111) users, amounting to (25%), whereas Huawei secured the third place with (91), equivalent to (20%), and the last place was occupied by the brand Xiaomi with (87) users, equivalent to (19%).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

NO.	Target group	Frequency	%	
1	Age	20-30 years	116	26%
		31-40 years	134	30%
		41-50 years	92	20%
		51-60 years	69	15%
		60 years and over	42	9%
2	Gender (Sex)	Male	269	59%

		Female	184	41%
3	Smartphone preferences	Apple	111	25%
		Samsung	164	36%
		Xiaomi	87	19%
		Huawei	91	20%
4	Income level	From 250,000 to 500,000	106	23%
		From 501,000 to 750,000	93	21%
		From 751,000 to 1 million	189	42%
		Over 1 million	65	14%
5	Educational backgrounds of participants	Bachelor's Degree	227	50%
		Higher Diploma equivalent to a Master's Degree	135	30%
		Master's Degree	70	15%
		PhD	21	5%

Table (2) shows the correlation matrix between the research variables, indicating a significant relationship at a p-value less than 0.01. This reveals that the correlation between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand (PECB) and Online Customers' Shopping Experience (OCSE) reached 0.761**, and the results showed that the correlation between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand (PECB) and Functionality Components (FC) and Psychological Components (PC) reached values of 0.742** and 0.696, respectively. The correlation between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand (PECB) and Employee Resilience (ER) was 0.538, while the correlation between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand (PECB) and Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) was 0.823**, and all these correlations fall within acceptable values and standards.

As Table 2 shows, there is a positive correlation between Employee Resilience (ER) and Online Customers' Shopping Experience (OCSE) at a value of 0.512**, and the correlation between Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) and Online Customers' Shopping Experience (OCSE) reached 0.820**. However, the correlation between Employee Resilience (ER) and Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) has a value of 0.659**, and all these correlations fall within acceptable values and standards. Appendix (1) explains the relationships between the study's internal dimensions.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. PECB	1					
2. FC	0.742**	1				
3. PC	0.696**	0.774**	1			
4. OCSE	0.761**	0.913**	0.925**	1		
5. ER	0.538**	0.486**	0.528**	0.512**	1	
6. BRQ	0.823**	0.820**	0.781**	0.820**	0.659**	1

** p < 0.01 (2-tailed)

Measurement Model

Table 3 indicates that the descriptive statistics for the research variables are represented by acceptable calculated means, which are above the assumed midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale, with the means ranging between (3.15-4.92). Additionally, the standard deviations of the research variables show a low dispersion from their calculated

mean, ranging between (0.45-0.99). Based on this, it can be concluded that the paragraphs and dimensions of the research variables explain the dimension that it set.

As shown in Table 3, the properties of the structural equation modeling (SEM) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are represented by a set of measured variables that actually represent theoretical variables designed for measurement. Construct validity refers to the extent to which a test successfully measures a specific hypothetical construct, meaning that construct validity aims to measure the extent to which a paragraph belongs to the scale designed for measurement and whether it is suitable for measuring the respondent's characteristics. Using the structural equation modeling (SEM) model, which was constructed through the statistical package AMOS.V.28, it was found that the indicators of good model fit for the research variables are ($X^2/df=1.247$, $GFI=0.914$, $AGFI=0.908$, $CFI=0.951$, $TLT=0.927$, $RMSEA=0.063$), which indicates good indicators and aligns with the standards of model fit (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2 shows that the standardized loadings of the structural equation modeling for the research variables indicate acceptable and relatively high standard weights and a hypothetical association strength, with standardized loadings ranging from 0.860 to 0.949, indicating that these items are strongly associated with the dimension they belong to and explain it well. The table also illustrates the Cronbach's alpha measurement, which assesses the internal consistency of the dimensions and variables, and the results show that Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.915 to 0.954, indicating stability and internal consistency regarding the variables included in the analysis. These results also support the composite reliability (CR), which represents another measure of internal consistency and reflects the internal structure of the relationship between these indicators, which should be higher than (0.70) (Nunnally, 1970), as it is observed that all CR values are high and range between 0.938 to 0.962, meaning the construct measure has good and acceptable reliability. The last column shows the extracted variance rate, which measures the accuracy of the convergence between the variable scale dimensions, representing the amount of variance extracted that is explained by the dimension items (sum of squared standardized weights for the dimension / sum of squared standardized weights for the dimension + sum of squared errors) divided by the number of dimensions. Therefore, the table shows high values for the extracted variance rate, which may have ranged between 0.948 to 0.956 This means that the construct validity model of research variables is characterized by a strong convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3. Description of variables, reliability, stability, composite validity, and convergence validity

Variables		Item Code	Mean		Standard Deviation		Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha		CR	AVE		
Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand (PECB)	Brand Ethical Behavior (BEB)	BEB1	3.38	3.56	0.63	0.63	0.921	0.934	0.951	0.951			
		BEB2	3.69								0.78	0.878	
		BEB3	3.61								0.72	0.888	
	Brand Ethical Personality (BEP)	BEP1	3.43	3.64	0.56	0.48	0.869	0.929	0.923		0.946		
		BEP2	3.78									0.76	0.863
		BEP3	3.71									0.69	0.871
	Brand Ethical Operations (BEO)	BEO1	3.58	3.55	0.63	0.63	0.913	0.919	0.919		0.950		
		BEO2	3.49									0.99	0.864
		BEO3	3.72									0.72	0.928

Online Customers' Shopping Experience (OCSE)	Brand Ethical Responsibility (BER)	BEO4	3.40	3.52	3.38	0.72	0.56	0.950	BEO4	0.904	0.955	0.956		
		BER1	3.70						0.97	0.919				
		BER2	3.49						0.86	0.946				
		BER3	3.38						0.84	0.901				
	Functionality Components (FC)	Interactivity (INA)	INA1	3.31		3.38		0.70	0.56	0.945	INA1		0.926	0.952
			INA2	3.33							0.91		0.876	
			INA3	3.21							0.96		0.922	
			INA4	3.80							0.95		0.930	
			INA5	3.25							0.83		0.883	
	Information (INF)	INF1	3.16	3.34		0.67		0.56	0.934	INF1	0.880		0.954	
		INF2	3.30							0.96	0.890			
		INF3	3.52							0.86	0.902			
		INF4	3.38							0.82	0.894			
Visual Engagement (VE)	VEN1	3.36	3.33	0.76	0.56	0.916	VEN1	0.937	0.962					
	VEN2	3.15					0.92	0.934						
	VEN3	3.47					0.87	0.942						
Navigation and Search Ease (NSE)	NSE1	3.58	3.47	0.63	0.57	0.945	NSE1	0.861	0.956					
	NSE2	3.47					0.80	0.874						
	NSE3	3.44					0.94	0.912						
	NSE4	3.40					0.87	0.867						
Psychological Components (PC)	Convenience (CON)	CON1	3.16	3.29	0.74	0.63	0.915	CON1	0.864	0.953				
		CON2	3.32					0.99	0.933					
		CON3	3.24					0.91	0.865					
		CON4	3.43					0.83	0.869					
Trust (TRU)	TRU1	3.31	3.47	0.65	0.63	0.927	TRU1	0.887	0.952					
	TRU2	3.60					0.97	0.875						
	TRU3	3.37					0.87	0.927						
	TRU4	3.60					0.89	0.868						
Enjoyment (ENJ)	ENJ1	3.30	3.37	0.76	0.63	0.921	ENJ1	0.860	0.960					
	ENJ2	3.51					0.92	0.919						
	ENJ3	3.29					0.91	0.869						
Employee Resilience (ER)	ER1	3.82	3.60	0.45	0.954	0.951	ER1	0.936	0.951					
	ER2	3.63					0.92	0.905						
	ER3	3.42					0.89	0.877						
	ER4	3.64					0.82	0.884						
	ER5	3.70					0.82	0.870						
	ER6	3.78					0.90	0.875						
	ER7	3.96					0.72	0.949						
	ER8	3.43					0.65	0.879						
	ER9	3.52					0.85	0.891						
	ER10	3.41					0.84	0.920						
	ER11	3.60					0.70	0.913						
	ER12	3.34					0.64	0.946						
Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ)	Interdependence (IND)	IND1	4.92	4.17	3.73	0.80	0.53	0.915	IND1	0.872	0.947			
		IND2	3.43						0.74	0.863				
	Intimacy (INT)	INT1	3.98	3.88		0.73		0.53	0.916	INT1	0.933	0.948		
		INT2	3.62							0.97	0.889			
		INT3	4.03							0.99	0.934			
	Self-Connection (SC)	SC1	3.43	3.69		0.77		0.53	0.937	SC1	0.866	0.938		
		SC2	4.10							0.87	0.879			
		SC3	3.53							0.96	0.885			
Love/Passion (LP)	LP1	3.72	3.59	0.69	0.53	0.928	LP1	0.938	0.956					
	LP2	3.91					0.91	0.913						

		LP3	3.34			0.95			0.866			
		LP4	3.40			0.85			0.863			
Partner Quality (PQ)		PQ1	3.93	3.63		0.94	0.65		0.875	0.917		0.951
		PQ2	3.42			0.91			0.890			
		PQ3	3.53			0.87			0.874			
Commitment (COM)		COM1	3.42	3.42		0.88	0.74		0.882	0.933		0.948
		COM2	3.41			0.84			0.860			

Table 4 represents the discriminant validity analysis of the ratio of differential attributes to single attributes, derived based on the results of the hypothetical relationship between the research variable dimensions and the extracted AVE (Average Variance Extracted), and to ensure the uniqueness of the research structures, discriminant validity represents an important cornerstone for determining this accurately.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity of Constructs Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	Common Variance	AVE	Researcher's decision
BEB <---> BEP	0.824**	0.951	The existence of true differentiation
BEB <---> BEO	0.789**		
BEB <---> BER	0.645**		
BEP <---> BEO	0.632**		
BEP <---> BER	0.795**		
BEO <---> BER	0.632**		
INA <---> INF	0.651**	0.956	
INA <---> VE	0.599**		
INA <---> NSE	0.556**		
INF <---> VE	0.461**		
INF <---> NSE	0.582**		
VE <---> NSE	0.443**		
CON <---> TRU	0.644**	0.955	
CON <---> ENJ	0.572**		
TRU <---> ENH	0.562**		
IND <---> INT	0.566**	0.948	
IND <---> SC	0.537**		
IND <---> LP	0.580**		
IND <---> PQ	0.647**		
IND <---> COM	0.847**		
INT <---> SC	0.625**		
INT <---> LP	0.762**		
INT <---> PQ	0.611**		
INT <---> COM	0.702**		
SC <---> LP	0.650**		
SC <---> PQ	0.655**		
SC <---> COM	0.797**		
LP <---> PQ	0.710**		
LP <---> COM	0.758**		
PQ <---> COM	0.864**		

N = 453; all HTMT correlations are within - 1 < HTMT < 1

The results in Table 4 show no linear relationship between the dimensions of the research variables, with the findings stabilizing to indicate discriminant validity between the dimensions. The relationship between the Brand Relationship Quality dimension achieved the highest hypothetical internal correlation, represented between the

Commitment (COM) dimension and the Partner Quality/Trust (PQ) dimension, with a value of (0.864). The lowest relationship was represented in the Online Customers' Shopping Experience variable, between the Navigation and Search Ease (NSE) dimension and the Visual Engagement (VE) dimension, with a value of (0.443), which means the extracted variance is greater than the shared variance, indicating discriminant validity between the dimensions and that each dimension of the research variables represents itself, and so on for the rest of the dimensions. The results indicate that the structures are distinct and measure different fundamental concepts, as planned in the research study.

Hypothesis Testing (Structural Model)

Understanding the relationship between the variables in the analysis represents an important issue that needs to be tested. When focusing on the use of the structural equation model, it is necessary to measure the nature of the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and the customer's online shopping experience. Previous studies have indicated that the description of the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience of service providers are unidimensional variables rather than multidimensional variables (Zabid & Alsagoff, 1993; Valentine & Barnett, 2023; Shahriari et al., 2012; Araque-Padilla et al., 2015; Mpinganjira & Maduku, 2019; Font et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2025), which itself represents a test for the current study, as it is constrained by the study's ability to examine structural components. By using Employee Resilience of service providers and their relationship with the brand, these complexities can be overcome through appropriate solutions to the issues that stand in the way of identifying the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and the customer's online shopping experience. From here, this paragraph focuses on testing hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 5. Structural Path Coefficients

Path	β	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
H1: Perceived ethical value of the brand → brand relationship quality	0.028	2.723	0.00	0.892	1.144
H2: Perceived ethical value of the brand → online customers' shopping experience	0.069	2.342	0.00	0.715	0.491
H3: brand relationship quality → online customers' shopping experience	0.070	4.359	0.00	0.598	1.121
H4: Perceived ethical value of the brand → brand relationship quality → online customers' shopping experience	0.071	4.771	0.00	0.507	0.959

(N = 453), **p<0.05

Results in Table 4 indicate that the structural coefficient in hypothesis H1, which examines the relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Brand Relationship Quality, shows a significant relationship ($\beta=0.028$, $T=2.723$, $p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, hypothesis H2, which examines the relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Customers' Experience for online shopping, shows a significant relationship ($\beta=0.069$, $T=2.342$, $p < 0.05$). Hypothesis H3 examined the relationship between Brand Relationship Quality and Customers' Experience for online shopping, which was significant ($\beta=0.070$, $T=4.359$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, the joint effect of the perceived ethical value of the brand and its quality on Customers' Experience for online

shopping plays an important role in improving this experience by guiding customers to invest in the services offered by smartphone companies to overcome obstacles for the customer in the service experience, which demonstrates acceptable value ($\beta=0.071$, $T=4.771$, $p < 0.05$), and on this basis, hypothesis H4 is supported.

On the other hand, performing a moderate mediation analysis using Model 8, as presented by Hayes (2017), and employing the PROCESS algorithm, requires building the regression to evaluate the hypotheses H5, H6, H7. To test their validity, it is necessary to build and determine the value of beta, the standard error, and the critical T value to determine the acceptance of these hypotheses, and Table 5 illustrates these hypotheses.

The results showed that Employee Resilience service providers improve the relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and its quality in reality ($\beta=0.096$, $T=7.292$, $p < 0.05$), which supports the validity of hypothesis H5. More precisely, there is an effect that strengthens this relationship and is statistically significant for Employee Resilience service providers on Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and its quality at different levels, as it reached ($\beta=0.736$, $T=26.286$, $p < 0.05$ and in reality the standard error coefficient is (0.028), which proves the validity of hypothesis H6.

Based on the previous hypotheses (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), the seventh hypothesis (H7) can be established, which focuses on the moderating role of Employee Resilience in the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, with the moderating role of Employee Resilience as the mediator of its quality among Iraq Smartphone Users. This represents an acceptable and statistically significant indicator ($\beta=0.866$, $SE=0.018$, $p < 0.05$) with a confidence interval of (0.95), meaning the results of this hypothesis indicate that Brand Relationship Quality plays a mediating role in the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, as Employee Resilience service providers play a moderating role in improving the relationship between these variables. As observed in Table 6, the indirect effect of Employee Resilience contributes to improving the relationship at three levels: low ($\beta=0.096$, $SE=0.008$, $p < 0.05$), medium ($\beta=0.736$, $SE=0.028$, $p < 0.05$), and high ($\beta=0.866$, $SE=0.018$, $p < 0.05$), with a confidence level of (0.095), indicating that the mediating effect of Brand Relationship Quality grows as Employee Resilience among service providers increases.

Table 6. Analysis of Moderate Mediation

Path	β	S.E.	t-value	p-value
Mediator - brand relationship quality				
Perceived ethical value of the brand	0.474	0.065	7.292	<0.05
employee resilience	0.396	0.053	7.472	<0.05
H5: Perceived ethical value of the brand X employee resilience	0.096	0.008	12.000	<0.05
DV - online customers' shopping experience				
Perceived ethical value of the brand	0.204	0.043	4.744	<0.05
employee resilience	0.674	0.040	16.850	<0.05
brand relationship quality	0.900	0.016	56.250	<0.05
H6: Perceived ethical value of the brand X brand relationship quality	0.736	0.028	26.286	<0.05
	Index	Boot SE	Boot	Boot
			LLCI	ULCI

Path	β	S.E.	t-value	p-value
Mediator - brand relationship quality				
H7: Index of moderated mediation	0.866	0.018	0.061	0.093

Figure 2 illustrates the final results of the research hypotheses, as it is clear that the flexibility of service providers contributes to softening and modifying the relationship between the variables included in the analysis.

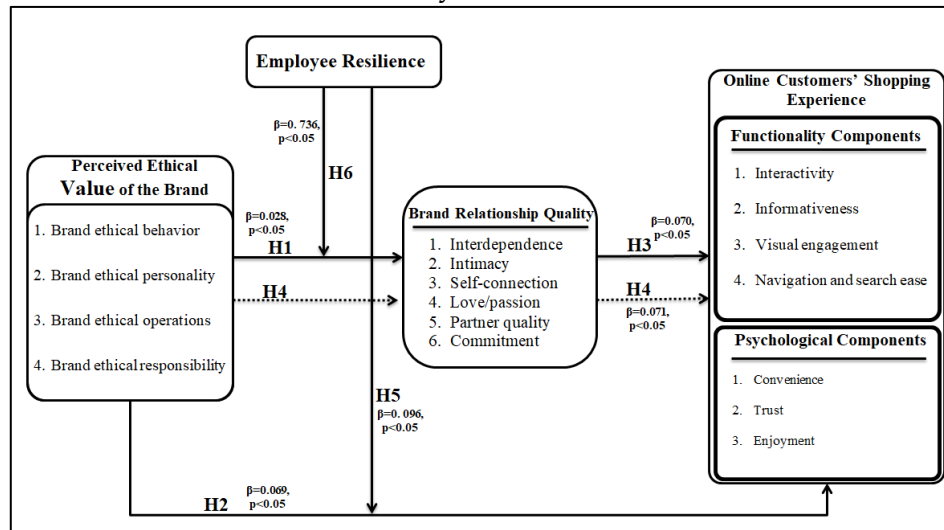


Figure 2. SEM results

Conclusion

The current research encourages smart phone companies in Iraq to acquire different internet channels and expand locally. However, all this competition aims to retain customers for longer periods. On the other hand, social and economic aspects, such as traditional values and social standards of the individual, support achieving a specific social desire instead of focusing on a particular category. Inspiration stems from external environmental motivations or internal motivations of the individual who needs encouragement for a specific purchasing behavior. One of the important and significant theoretical results of this study is a better understanding of purchase intention and the buying behavior of mobile service packages that affect these service's consumers more (Khar & Irfan, 2021). Additionally, the purpose of the current research is to explore the relationships between customers Iraq Smartphone Users by measuring the relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience of service providers and the quality of the relationship with the brand, in addition to identifying the impact of Brand Relationship Quality and Employee Resilience of service providers on Online Customers' Shopping Experience, as well as revealing how the interest in the brand's value and quality and Employee Resilience affect Online Customers' Shopping Experience, As customers interact with their smart devices at different times and repeatedly with their own brands daily, this means that this affects their job and psychological status directly and indirectly, which leads to positive interactions with the brand, ultimately resulting in improving Online Customers' Shopping Experience. The research also shows that the perceived ethical value of the brand has a positive impact on

its quality, indicating that smart phone users are highly concerned with the value of the brand of these phones, which leads to building Interdependence and Intimacy and Self-Connection with great love and passion. This, in turn, contributes to raising the level of Trust and Commitment towards the brand (Morea et al., 2023; Shakeel & Nedumaran, 2024; Upadhyaya et al., 2025). Additionally, the brand's positive past experiences have improved Customers' Experience for online shopping, meaning that Brand Relationship Quality increases the value of Customers' Experience by increasing Interdependence and Intimacy and Self-Connection and love and passion and Partner Quality and Commitment (Ahmadian et al., 2023). Moreover, Brand Relationship Quality is directly linked to loyal customers by building a relationship that aligns with their needs, desires, and participation in product design (Ghali-Zinoubi, 2023; Mofokeng, 2023). As Employee Resilience service providers enhance the relationship with the brand through a strong relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and its quality, which leads to customers having greater preference when they trust the brand through improving Brand Ethical Behavior and building its personality, identity, and responsibility (Alkhadra et al., 2023; Menshikova et al., 2025), This, in turn, affects Functionality Components by enhancing and improving (Interactivity, Information, Visual Engagement, and Navigation and Search Ease), and Psychological Components by building (Convenience, Trust, and Enjoyment) for customers, achieving a positive experience and enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Xie et al., 2023). Furthermore, Employee Resilience of service providers acts as a mediator between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and its quality, thereby improving the Online Customers' Shopping Experience (Mainardes et al., 2023; Shen & Huang, 2024). Additionally, the results indicated a significant positive relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and the Online Customers' Shopping Experience through the mediating role of Brand Relationship Quality. The results also showed a meaningful relationship between Employee Resilience and the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand through the moderating role of Brand Relationship Quality, indicating that Brand Relationship Quality contributes to improving the customer interaction process by encouraging their participation in product design and creating a vision that aligns with customers' needs and preferences. Thus, this study places significant emphasis on the behaviors of Iraq Smartphone Users, particularly concerning phones (Apple, Samsung, Xiaomi, and Huawei), as well as examining how Brand Relationship Quality can mediate these variables. This contributes to improving customer value by building a positive relationship with customers and ensuring the maintenance of providing them with a distinguished experience.

Theoretical Implications:

Search results support the relationship between customer relationship management and branding, emphasizing that improving Customers' Experience and building positive long-term relationships contribute to customer loyalty and satisfaction, which in turn depends on understanding customer needs and the services they prefer. This reflects the company's brand value and identity, influencing customer behavior and strengthening

their connection to the brand. In the current research, improving Online Customers' Shopping Experience is the primary priority by focusing on building the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience among Iraq Smartphone Users. This, in turn, supports the customer-brand relationship theory, which posits that positive experiences with the company's brand enhance the customer's perceived value of participating in the brand experience and designing products, thereby increasing the flexibility of service providers. Additionally, the quality of the brand affects its Perceived Ethical Value and flexibility in the current research.

The theory of the relationship between the customer and the brand emphasizes that building brand quality contributes to establishing a positive and related relationship between the customer and the company's brand. The research results show that increasing brand quality enhances the nature of the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience of service providers, highlighting the importance of brand quality in building sustainable emotional bonds with the company. This, in turn, contributes to improving the company's ability to invest in the relationship with customers by understanding customer dynamics towards their preferences for specific services and products, thereby strengthening the brand's value in the long term, especially concerning the Online Customers' Shopping Experience. These results also enhance the value of smartphone users in Iraq by gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of the relationship for customer behaviors and providing clear insights into brand preferences.

Test the current research the quality of the brand as a variable in the relationship between Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience, and according to the research results, the relationship between achieving Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience and Customers' Experience has a significant impact according to its quality, which means that the brand quality works on understanding customer behaviors and expectations, which helps improve the services and products offered to Iraq Smartphone Users, and more accurately, there is a good correlation between the perceived ethical value of the brand, Employee Resilience, and its quality, which strengthens the relationship towards Customers' Experience, especially when customers show a high degree of interest in the brand quality, which helps the company identify target segments and improve its marketing campaigns according to the customers' needs and desires.

From the other side, the research looks at past experiences regarding the importance of investing in the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, which shows that the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience have the ability to achieve high levels, especially when this relationship is built on the quality of the brand. The results also indicated a positive correlation between Employee Resilience, Brand Relationship Quality, and Online Customers' Shopping Experience, which contributes to improving the company's ability to respond quickly to customer demands and inquiries, thereby enhancing its ability to build loyalty and Trust in the brand. Additionally, quick responses lead to building a positive image, reputation, and credibility for the brand.

As search results indicate, customers have a strong tendency to build positive relationships with the brand through connecting with their experiences and feelings toward it, suggesting that the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand significantly influences Employee Resilience and the quality of the relationship with it among Iraq Smartphone Users. Previous positive experiences of customers with the brand enhance the strength of the connection and relationship between the customer and the brand, indicating an emotional bond that strengthens the Online Customers' Shopping Experience. Additionally, Brand Relationship Quality enhances the strength of the relationship between the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and Employee Resilience, meaning that Brand Relationship Quality directly impacts Functionality Components through reinforcement and improvement (Interactivity, Information, Visual Engagement, and Navigation and Search Ease), and Psychological Components through building (Convenience, Trust, and Enjoyment) for Iraqi Smartphone Users.

Managerial Implications:

The results of the research represent a crucial foundation in the field of management, particularly in marketing management, as the current research reveals an important issue concerning the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand and its impact on Customers' Experience while shopping online among smartphone users. This necessitates that smartphone manufacturers focus on improving their ability to gain customer satisfaction and loyalty, which requires focusing on developing Employee Resilience capabilities within their organizations, in addition to improving Brand Relationship Quality. To achieve this, several considerations must be addressed, which include: First: From a design perspective, companies must be concerned with the aesthetics of the product. Second, from a services perspective: Companies must provide services that alleviate difficulties for customers in using the product, and to achieve this, attention must be paid to the quality of the interface, the quality of the information, and the quality of the product system. Third, participation: Smartphone companies must engage customers in designing the product by investing the relationship with customers in participating in product standards, features, and modernity, which makes the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand more influential in Employee Resilience and Customers' Experience. Fourth, the results indicate that the best impact on smartphone users' loyalty and satisfaction lies in their emotions and attachment to the brand quality, which requires companies to improve the customer experience in online shopping. Fifth, companies should focus on customer interaction with the brand, providing Information and Visual Engagement, and offering services that contribute to Navigation and Search Ease, thereby providing Convenience and Trust and Enjoyment for the customer. This depends on the extent to which smartphone companies can improve their capabilities in Interdependence, Intimacy, Self-Connection, Passion, Partner Quality, and Commitment. Finally, companies should motivate their employees to double their effort in understanding the contexts related to customer preferences to ensure the provision of a high-experience service in online shopping.

Limitations and Future Research

The research aims to provide important information regarding the Perceived Ethical Value of the Brand, Employee Resilience, Brand Relationship Quality, and Customers' Experience among Iraq Smartphone Users; however, to achieve this importance, some key issues must be considered. First: the use of cross-sectional design limits the ability to build causal relationships between research variables, which in turn leads to a focus on using longitudinal studies to explore the relationship between these variables. Additionally, focusing on one variable without the other may lead to bias toward that variable. Furthermore, focusing on Iraq Smartphone Users means generalizing to cultural or other market attitudes, which may not be possible as it requires conducting comparative research in other regions and populations, since longitudinal studies require stability in the work environment, and Iraq is not characterized by market stability due to the instability of its work environment in most cases.

On the other hand, there are other factors that need to be focused on when testing the moderating effect of demographic variables such as age, gender, smartphone preferences, income level, and educational backgrounds of participants. These factors will provide more detail on the issues that drive the customer to prefer one brand over another and to understand their behaviors in the job market. Additionally, the use of social identity theory, the theory of capture, and self-concept theory contributes to understanding the relationship with the brand and providing new insights that have not been considered in the study of the smartphone sector in Iraq.

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