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Article

Investigating the relationship between brand experience, brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction: Evidence from Vietnam

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MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigating the relationship between brand experience, brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction: Evidence from Vietnam

Van- Dat Tran^{1*} and Ngoc Truc Thao Nguyen²

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between brand experience, brand authenticity, brand equity, and how those factors effect on customer satisfaction. The measurement model and the conceptual model depicting hypothesized relationships were evaluated based on responses from 295 customers using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling, accordingly. By empirical analysis, the study developed a new model presenting positive significant relationships among brand experience, brand authenticity, and brand equity and customer satisfaction. Especially, it is a valuable contribution to branding subject that brand experience positively affects the authenticity of the global brand. Drawing from the study's findings, managerial implications are discussed. Customers' experience about the global brand can increase the authenticity and equity of the brand in the market as well as understandings of what consumers feel about products/services in order to improve their satisfaction. Besides, this study experimented with both concepts and found a positive significant relationship between brand experience and brand authenticity. The more customers use and feel the products/services, the more authentic values that the brand has.

Subjects: Services Marketing; Brand Management; Consumer Behaviour; Marketing Management

Keywords: brand experience; brand authenticity; brand equity; customer satisfaction
JEL: M30; M31; M37

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1. Introduction

Branding is one of the most fundamental aspects in order to achieve brand success in business. The brand represents a guarantee, a trustful relation, and a promise towards the consumers. However, for many recent years, consumers have enjoyed the benefits of convenience and availability of consumption in a material world where most products are mass-produced in a standardized production process. Reimann et al. (2010) stated that when customers have begun to understand that their basic needs are fulfilled, this contentment creates the necessity of fully understanding what affects customers throughout their purchasing process. With the emerging of experience economy, more and more scholars start to put more effort in exploring the knowledge of experiential marketing. Nowadays, consumers seek out authentic brands and experience the “real deal” in all variety of consumption scenarios, as it contributes to perceptions of quality and brand imagery (Brown et al., 2003; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Holt, 2002; Penaloza, 2000; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Recognizing the importance of perceptions of authenticity, brand managers have often responded by imbuing their brands with indications of authenticity (Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Luxton, 2005). Besides, some marketers have begun to use authenticity as a brand-positioning strategy and a product appeal (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Penaloza, 2000). Oh et al. (2019) Finding's brand authenticity was found to influence the self-reinforcing assets. In turn, the self-reinforcing assets promoted closeness toward the brand, thereby increasing the behavioral intentions of consumers to buy a product, visit a store/website in the future and recommend the brand to other people. Akbar and Wymer (2017) The originality dimension reflect a brand's uniqueness and ability to differentiate itself from all other brands. Therefore, according to the report of Geoff Beattie and Louise Fernley, (2014), we have been accessed the time called “The Age of Authenticity,” so it should be essential to understand deeply about the importance of authenticity on customers' behaviors, and considered as the best way for communication between customers and companies.

Many useful researches and studies have been investigated recently in branding literature, including brand personality, brand community, brand trust, brand attachment, brand love, and brand experience (Aaker, 1997; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; J.J. Brakus et al., 2009). However, marketing practitioners have come to realize that understanding how consumers experience brands is critical for developing marketing strategies for goods and services. Although customers' experiences topic has attracted many concerns, there are few investigations about the experience of customers toward a brand as well as the influences of it on brand equity and brand authenticity to be developed. J.J. Brakus et al. (2009) studied the influences of brand authenticity and brand personality on satisfaction. In addition, Chinomona (2013) had research about the influence of brand experience on brand satisfaction, trust, and attachment in consumers in South Africa. Tran et al. (2020) found that brand authenticity positively effect to brand equity and customer satisfaction.

In this sophisticated market, consumers have enough knowledge about the products they want and need. By trying to use new products for the first time or daily-used products, they can have their own experience and truly authenticity about those products. Moreover, consumers prefer using products from companies that have strong brands in the market, and customer behaviors have a positive impact on brand loyalty (Saxena & Mittal, 2014). Notably, brand experience has attracted a lot of attention in marketing practice. Marketing practitioners have come to realize that understanding how consumers experience brands is critical for developing marketing strategies for goods and services. In addition, there is an argument that authenticity is a key component of current daily life (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Moreover, authenticity is at the central position of consumer roles within virtually every subculture and communal consumption context (Belk & Costa, 1998; Holt, 1997; Kozinets, 2002). From the company perspectives, effective brand positioning and communication strategies lead to a higher competitive advantage and even higher achievements in business. The more a brand performs and be associated in a manner that is attached to a noticeable consumer identity, the more meaning the consumer comment to the brand and the more authentic experience consumers have (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Reed, 2004). Moreover, the brand is not just a treasure of company anymore, it has been become the property of consumers. Therefore, it is definitely essential to having a deeper understanding of how

customers authenticate towards brand, how they feel and react towards to brands they like and do not like. Therefore, brand managers can measure dimensions that may affect the authenticity of their brand, and together with brand equity, they evaluate customers' experience as well as customers' behavior towards their brand.

Branding is one of the most concerning businesses in enterprises. There are many common concepts when branding is discussed, such as brand equity, customer loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and so on. However, there are two concepts that marketers and brand managers have been interacted recently brand experience and brand authenticity. In order to discover new criteria in branding strategies, the author would like to develop a model including brand equity, brand experience, and brand authenticity. As a result, the purpose was addressed the influences of the experience about the brand on customer's brand authenticity and brand equity, as well as the effect of brand authenticity on the equity of company's brand in Vietnamese market. Moreover, it also addressed the impacts of brand experience, brand authenticity, and brand equity on the degree of Vietnamese customer satisfaction towards a brand. [Figure 1](#) is showed research framework. Based on the certain background and problems discussed above, main objectives defined as following:

- To investigate the relationship between brand experience and brand authenticity.
- To investigate the relationship between brand experience and brand equity.
- To investigate the relationship between brand authenticity and brand equity.
- To investigate the relationship between brand authenticity and customer satisfaction.
- To investigate the relationship between brand equity and customer satisfaction.
- To investigate the relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction.
- To recommend some strategies to develop the brand throughout customers' authenticity and experience.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

Although limitations in evaluating whether positive or negative experience, J.J. Brakus et al. (2009) has developed a strong empirical scale for further researches about customer experiential brands. More important, this model displays discriminant validity from some of the most widely used branding measures and scales, including brand evaluations, brand involvement, brand attachment, customer delight, and brand personality. He indicated that brand experience can be conceptualized as "subjective, internal customer responses" and "behavior responses" towards brand-related criteria, such as image, logo, communication, and environment (J.J. Brakus et al., 2009). Experience is the key factor in this study, and Brakus's model recently is the most suitable for investigating customer experience on a brand. That is the reason why this scale is applied in the study. Moreover, the brand Authenticity of Tran (2018) is also the other theoretical framework. They discovered and built a 17-item brand authenticity scale captures in a reliable and stable way six dimensions of brand authenticity: virtue, connect, real, aesthetic, control, and original. Despite of availability of other authenticity scale, the researcher decided to adopt Tran's measurement scale to construct the conceptual framework for this study. This model gathered all reviews of authenticity in branding; thus it can represent fully the meaning of "authenticity", and be easier to recognize which elements affect brand authenticity most.

The brand equity model of D. Aaker (1991) is the mother of many later researchers' findings and results. Nowadays, this model has become the typical one when other researchers would like to measure the equity of different kinds of brands. It probably provides the most comprehensive framework for examining brand equity (Anantachart, 1998). This model reflects exactly factors contributed to the "brand equity" concept, which can be applied to measure the brand equity in this study.

2.2. Brand experience

Consumer and marketing research has shown that experiences occur when consumers search for products when they shop for them and receive service, and when they consume them (Arnould et al., 2002; Holbrook, 2000; J. J. Brakus et al., 2008). Another scientist—Schmitt (1999) argued that when customers have experience on a product or service, they will have their own sense, feel, think, act, and relate. Specifically, brand experience can be conceptualized as “a set of responses from consumers in the form of sensations, feelings, responses, cognitive, and behavioral responses that arise as a reaction to a stimulus of the brand, which can be found in brand identity, packaging, and communication and/or the environment in which the brand is marketed” (J.J. Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 1999). Besides that, the customer experience can be considered as an unreal thing. It is invisible to the eye, silent to the ear, odorless to the nose, incorporeal to the skin. People cannot imagine exactly what experience does look like. In conclusion, from the above arguments, the concept of brand experience is interpreted as an intangible value added to the brand, and mainly the attention on consumers’ sense, feeling, thinking, and behavior towards products and services.

2.3. Brand authenticity

Today, authenticity is one of the major characteristics of products or services that most consumers have concerned. However, not many consumers as well as brand marketers can understand clearly what authenticity means in branding. By some researchers defined that authenticity has been connected strongly to branding (Beverland & Luxton, 2005; Brown et al., 2003) and consumption behavior (Belk & Costa, 1998; Holt, 1997; Kozinets, 2002). According to Collins English Dictionary, authenticity talks about when consumers have real experience or genuine product quality, and reflects truly customers’ thoughts on mentioning brands they have ever used. Still others adopt broader definitions of authenticity, which is explained as related generally to ideas of truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, reliability, and genuineness (Beverland, 2006; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Another study about this concept, by using semiotics theory, Gapper (2004) presented two different definitions of object authenticity: when objects have a real and spatiotemporal connection with the world, and when they physically resemble something that is authentic. Mason (2011) had gathered other definition and then confirmed the concept of authenticity, how can it be linked to branding, consumer behavior. He also claimed authenticity has been used for authorized products and adds to the market value of consumer products and cultural goods. In addition, it is stated that authenticity is the essence of who the entity is originally with a permanent association to that entity’s actions, decisions, and philosophy of living up to its own and others’ expectations (Tran, 2018). Thus, what authenticity relates to in terms of branding is this simple concept: Authenticity means genuine and trustworthy belief, real and original feeling towards a product or a service.

2.4. Brand equity

Business world has been understood how important of brand equity in development of the firm. It is simple to state that there have been many and many scientists investigate the definition of brand equity. Kim et al. (2008) defined brand equity is one of the significant concepts in academic research, which is an important strategy in brand management as well as in business practice. Started to be explored in 1980s, the meaning of brand equity has been debated in a number of different ways and for a number of different purposes (K.L Keller, 2002). The equity of the brand is the differences between overall brand preference and multi-attributed preference based on objectively measured attribute levels (Park & Srinivasan, 1994) According to business dictionary, it is a power of a brand derived from the goodwill and name recognition of a firm that has earned for a very long time, which can translate into higher sale volume and higher profit margins against other brand in competitive market.

Some scientists stated that brand equity is a multidimensional concept and a complex phenomenon in branding subject. K.L Keller (2002) separated it into two components: awareness and association, and focuses on brand knowledge. In contrast, D. Aaker (1991) grouped it into five categories: brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality, and other proprietary brand assets, such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationships. Based on those dimensions, he defines it as “a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and symbol that add to (or subtract from) the value

provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers". His definition has become one of the most popular definitions widely accepted in the branding literature. In summary, brand equity can be defined as an intangible asset that accrues to a company as a result of its successful efforts to establish a strong brand depends on value associations made by consumers.

2.5. Customer satisfaction

Basically, customer satisfaction can be defined as a marketing term that estimates how products or services supplied by a company meet or exceed a customer's expectation (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000). Satisfaction has also been interpreted in different ways in the marketing literature. Some researchers have argued that satisfaction as an overall evaluation relied on the total amount of purchase consumption and experience (e.g., Anderson et al., 1994). Moreover, according to Oliver (1997) customer dissatisfaction is defined as "the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with a consumer's prior feelings about the consumer experience". Another scholar, Chi (2007) confirmed that the satisfaction of customers was the result of the purchases and the use of services they spent on. The better satisfaction with the service quality customers congregates, the more pleasure the customer feel, and vice versa (Mevhibe & Erdogan, 2009). In summary, customer satisfaction measures how well the expectations of a customer concerning a product or service provided by your company have been approached.

2.6. Hypothesis

According to Bergner (2014), every time consumers interact with a brand, it is an opportunity to distinguish one brand from other competitors and strengthen its relationship with customers. Normally, great brands have a very clear idea about who they are and what they stand for, and match that in tone and character in all of their touch points. In fact, it comes naturally to them, because of that, the foundation of authenticity exists. Moreover, brands have significant impacts on customer buying behavior. Brand managers often work hard to understand their audiences' motivations and needs at each point in the customer journey, and deliver a "just-in-time" experience at that point. They are careful not to oversell in the awareness and consideration phases when prospects are seeking knowledge. And they continue to stay engaged and responsive long afterward to drive customer loyalty and, ultimately, advocacy. In addition, the more a brand performs and be associated in a manner that is attached to a noticeable consumer identity, the more meaning the consumer ascribes to the brand and the more authentic the experience becomes (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Reed, 2004). Thus, consumers have opportunities to be approached products and experience by their own way, and then they can have original feeling toward those products and stereotype the brand. In conclusion, authentic experiences are created when an organization consistently and intentionally meets or exceeds its brand promise and does so in a manner consistent with customer perceptions. From that, we consider the first hypothesis for this research, which is displayed below:

H1: Brand experience has positive effect on brand authenticity.

According to Mathwick et al. (2001), consumers today are looking for value, choice, and a great customer experience. Some authors have investigated that customer value is typically built on experiential perception and is the result of direct or indirect interaction during the consumption process (Holbrook, 2000; Mathwick et al., 2001). Customer experience is not only about an interaction with service provider but also thinking and feelings towards the brand and the strength of relationship with the brand (J.J. Brakus et al., 2009). Besides that, the equity of brand now is considered an important determinant in branding success. It can present the degree of achievement of an enterprise in building trust and attractiveness on customers. In the competitive market, a brand with high equity means that customers have high brand-name awareness, maintain a favorable brand image, perceive the high quality that brand provides, and are loyal to the brand. Furthermore, the higher levels of brand awareness and the more positive brand image of an enterprise has, the higher the probability of brand choice increase as well as the greater consumers be loyalty, and also damages to competitive marketing actions would be

diminished (K. L. Keller, 1993). With a positive experience, consumers should intend to buy a brand again and recommend it to others and less likely to buy an alternative brand (Mittal & Wagner, 2001; Oliver, 1997). Besides, customer experience is also strongly factored into brand equity. In addition, previous research has found that retail design experts, coordinating their efforts, would have an impact on their success in building up the brand experience and brand experience can increase brand loyalty (Gapper, 2004). Brand experience should affect future-directed consumer loyalty. Therefore, with a strong brand in market, consumers believe that they will have positive experience towards that brand. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed below:

H2: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand equity.

Brand equity is considered as the key value of the brand in the marketplace (Lane 2003). The American Marketing Association has an explanation of “brand equity” in this way: “From a consumer perspective, brand equity is based on consumer attitudes about positive brand attributes and favorable consequences of brand use.” Moreover, the brand remains consistent position in the customer’s mind and the connection between customers and brands is patterned. Therefore, based on those definitions, it is clear that brand equity accrues over time via consumer learning and decision-making processes.

Communications between firm and consumers must be designed to enhance brand equity by improving consumers’ perceptions of the firm’s credibility to deliver what is promised (Erdem & Swait, 2015). Consumers rely only on few piece of information with which they feel confident to help them decide how the brand might perform.’ The amount of information that consumers seek may be determined by various factors, such as time pressure, previous experience, advice from friends and the level of involvement in the brand purchase (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998). Therefore, brand equity has significant impacts on customer buying behavior. Furthermore, higher brand equity generates higher purchase intentions (Chang & Liu, 2009), and buyers keep purchasing the same products or brand, responding to branding (Aaker, 1996; K. L. Keller, 1993). Therefore, while people are consuming the product, they get the brand experience and brand authenticity, and then acknowledge to brand equity, which can build foundation by their repurchasing behavior. As a result, the third hypothesis proposed to test relationship among brand authenticity and brand equity in this study.

H3: Brand authenticity has positive effect on brand equity.

Some researchers have concerned more about an authentic brand in customer’s awareness. A study from Goldman and Kernis (2002) presented general authenticity was positively associated to life satisfaction. Derbaix and Derbaix (2010) showed that the connection between perceived authenticity and perceived value to measure the impact of the latter on the amount of satisfaction felt and more innovatively on the intention to return. Moreover, the satisfaction of a customer depended on the performance of the goods coordinated to the expectation of the customer after purchasing (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Joewono and Kubota (2007) found out that customer satisfaction resulted from the measurement of products and service based on the customer’s previous experiences as well as the overall evaluation on the consuming experience. And another study from Lin and Hsieh (2007), it is indicated that a firm providing a good-quality service could really satisfy the diverse needs on customers, and customer satisfaction was the overall evaluation of the product and the service based on the customer’s past experiences. Thus, when customers try products and services from different brands, they can have opportunities to judge those brands and accumulate into their own experience. The more customers have original experience about products, the higher the level of their satisfaction is. So it is expected that brand authenticity have positive impacts on customer satisfaction.

H4: Brand authenticity has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

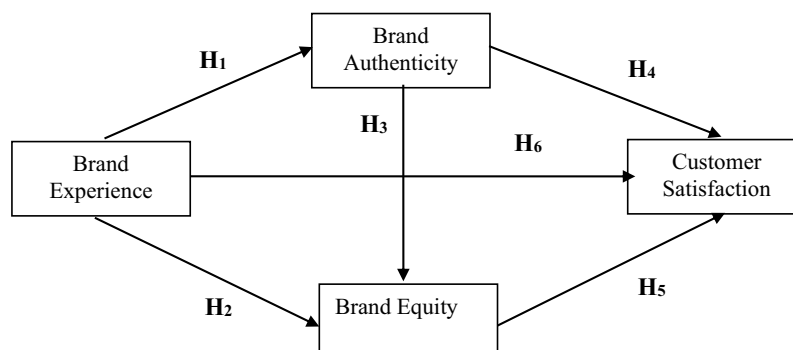
Consumer satisfaction has been regarded a fundamental determinant of long-term business success. Many of the research on consumer satisfaction investigate its impact on consumers' post-consumption evaluations, such as behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Cooil et al., 2007). It is widely accepted that satisfied consumers are less price sensitive, less influenced by competitors' attack and loyal to the firm longer than dissatisfied customers (Dimitriadis, 2006). In brand equity, there are five dimensions constructed as a strong measurement that can make influences on customer satisfaction. For instance, according to Keller and Swaminathan (2003), brand awareness has an important role in decision-making of consumers. When consumers want to buy a product, a brand name they think immediately is the product has higher brand awareness. Obviously, the brand strength depends on the perceptions of customers. Satisfied and loyal customers demonstrate positive perceptions of the brand (Cheha & Hashim, 2007). In addition, the more loyal customers express to the firm, the less pressure, and risky that firm is to competitive challenges. So managers can implement successful values and generate remarkable strategies generating brand equity value in customers mind (Anderson et al., 1994). Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is developed as follow:

H5: Brand equity has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

There have not been had an official scale to measure customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has long been recognized as a process (Oliver, 1997) and is the difference between consumers' perceived and expected performance of a product or service. In other words, when performance of the products/services is higher than expected, customers express happy and satisfied to it, while dissatisfaction occurs when performance is lower than expected. The basis for consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction lies in mankind's ability to learn from past experiences. These long-lasting brand experiences, stored in consumer memory, should affect consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Oliver, 1997; Reichheld et al., 1996). J.J. Brakus et al. (2009) had investigated the statistically significant relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction. Brand experience has positive effects on brand satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Sahin et al., 2011). Overall, to gain customer satisfaction, some argue that organizations need to exceed predictive expectations of customers, rather than just satisfy expectations (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996). Therefore, the more customer have experiences on products or services of one brand, the more they feel satisfied with.

H6: Brand Experience has a positive effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Figure 1. Research framework.



3. Methodology

3.1. Research model

The purpose of the research is to examine about the relationship among brand authenticity on customer experience about brand and the equity of the brand, as well as the influences of brand equity on customer's experience. And then, there is an investigation on how those relationships affect customer satisfaction. From literature review and conceptual hypotheses, the research model tested in this study is displayed as following:

3.2. Questionnaire design

The purpose of questionnaire is to develop empirical evidence and to match with the research's objectives and the research model. This questionnaire is prepared and directly distributed to people who have had experiences on at least one global brand such as Nike, Apple, and McDonald's in order to collect their opinions. The language of the questionnaire is simple, clear, and easy to understand and answer. The statements in the questionnaire are clear and short, avoids making the respondents confused. There are two parts of the questionnaire. The first part consists of questions for measuring brand experience and the relationship with three other factors: brand equity, brand authenticity, and customer satisfaction. The second part includes demographic questions to collect personal information (age, gender, education level, job situation, and monthly income) about respondents.

The questionnaire was designed based on the Likert's measurement scale. According to Likert Rensis (1932), it is a kind of question form that respondents rate the level of their agreement on statements or questions. Likert's scale has many different types of scales; among those, there are two scales which are the most common in quantitative analysis that are questions structured with five-point or seven-point response scale. Likert surveys are quick, efficient, and inexpensive methods for data collection. Therefore, to be easier for collecting and having more accurate data, the questionnaire will be designed in the form of Likert 7-point-scale, which is a scale from 1 (Extremely Disagree) to 7 (Extremely Agree).

Before distributing the questionnaires, it is necessary to conduct a pilot testing. It is a small trial, where a few respondents will take the questionnaire and comment on its structure. Those people will point out any problems in formatting, unclear questions and other issues in the questionnaire. Twenty people are chosen to take this trial. It is also better to get recommendation from advisor and other professors. So through the pilot testing, the questionnaire will be improved in reliability and validity in order to ensure accurate and consistent understanding among all respondents, thereby make the data collection more successful. 9 items J.J. Brakus et al. (2009), 13 items Brand authenticity (Tran, 2018); 6 items Brand Equity (D. Aaker, 1991); 4 items Customer (Oliver, 1997).

3.3. Sample and data collection

3.3.1. Sample

The target sample is the customers, who are living in Vietnam, have experience with one of three famous world brand, such as Nike, Apple, and McDonald's. Definitely, Nike, Apple, and McDonald's were mentioned. Moreover, these brands are probably well known to Vietnamese customers, thus, these are suitable for choose. Furthermore, for this kind of population, it is too large and unknown so convenience sampling method was chosen to apply in this study. It is the way that the data can be collected based on the convenience of the respondent's approach, where investigators can meet their target population easily. One important thing is that due to the limit of time, human resources, and budget, this sampling method is the most feasible.

3.3.2. Data collection

In order to ensure reliable findings of the research and prevent subjective opinions towards the research, the study is divided into two sources of data for investigating—primary data and secondary data. The primary data consists of data collected from questionnaires. Those were all printed out in paper, delivered directly to the respondents and collected right after respondents filled in. Although distributing paper questionnaire face to face is costly and time consuming of interpreting into electronic database later, its advantages are to bring back to researchers almost completed responses within a short period of time and to ensure the clear understanding of respondents about the questionnaire. At first, questionnaires were sent to family, friends, etc., and then they were distributed to customers in supermarkets, coffees, parks, universities, etc., who have experienced one of three researched brands—Nike, Apple, and McDonald's. The questionnaire collection was conducted about 5 months, with nearly 320 questionnaires delivered out. Secondary data is simply defined as data gathered through such existing. It includes published books, articles, web pages, online newspaper, and available database of academic achievements from previous researchers. These data only used for reflecting the current background and for the theoretical literature. Thus, the secondary data was mostly compared to the primary data which was collected in this research to show the results and new findings in this research.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Category	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	124	42%
Female	171	58%
Age		
Less than 20 years old	44	15%
20–29 years old	200	68%
30–39 years old	36	12%
40–49 years old	6	2%
Over 50 years old	9	3%
Education		
College/University	233	79%
Vocational Training	41	14%
Master or higher	6	2%
High school or less	15	5%
Job Categories		
Expert	38	13%
Student	132	45%
Officer	95	32%
Other	30	10%
Monthly Income		
Under 3 million VND	138	47%
3–7 million VND	118	40%
8–15 million VND	30	10%
Over 15 million VND	9	3%
Brand name		
Nike		24%
McDonald's		30%
Apple		46%

4. Research results

4.1. Sample demographic

Demographic data are the characteristics of human population. In this study, demographic questions are used to determine gender, age, job, and monthly income of respondents so that we can find out and compare the differences in experience and opinions between subgroups. There are 320 questionnaires delivered directly to customers in Vietnam. Because some customers did not complete their questionnaires and had consistent answers for all questions, 25 questionnaires were deleted from the analysis process. After the process of screening and editing, the total of 295 valid questionnaires were used to analyze in this research.

In conclusion, the summary of Cronbach's Alpha for each variable is shown in table 4.15. According to it, the minimum value of Cronbach's Alpha is of brand experience (0.854), and the highest one is 0.896 from Brand Equity. Moreover, there are three items deleted from the scale, which are BEX9, BA4, and BA11 because of the low values of corrected item-total correlation. Besides, these values do not exceed 0.95, which proves that there is no significant multicollinearity (Bland & Altman, 1997). Based on the above-mentioned rules of thumb of George and Mallery (2003), these Cronbach's alpha values of brand experience, brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction are good, which makes this research worth for further study. Therefore, this result demonstrates that the measurement scale is well designed and trustworthy.

4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis—EFA

In all three rounds of the factor analysis process, each KMO is 0.915 (>0.5) with each Total Variance Explained is 58.886 (>50%) which prove the appropriateness of factor analysis. Likewise, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant with sig. level being 0.000 ($p < .001$), presenting significant correlation between the variables to proceed with the analysis. In the first round, initial four components are converted into five components. Because of low loading and cross-loading factor, there are 10 items deleted out, which are BA1, BA2, BA7, BE1, BE4, BE9, BE10, BEX3, BEX7, BEX8, and 23 remaining items are kept for the next step. In the second round, the remained items are clustered into four components. Item BA3, BA6, and BE8 are removed because of cross-loading factor and there are 20 remaining items. In the third round, four these components continue to be four major components. There is no items eliminated in this round, and it does not need to test the analysis again. Finally, the result of last analysis round is described in the following table. In addition, there are total 16 variables were eliminated from the measurement scale due to their low loadings and cross-factor loadings. The 20 remained are grouped into four components. In the component 1, 5 items remained with high loading are BE2, BE3, BE5, BE6, and BE7; and this component is till named Brand Equity (BE). The six items together stay in component 2 Brand Authenticity (BA) are BA5, BA8, BA9, BA10, BA11, and BA12. For the third component, there are BEX1, BEX2, BEX4, BEX5, and BEX6. Those items are placed into a group called Brand Experience (BEX). Lastly, Customer Satisfaction still has its four items in the same group, including CS1, CS2, CS3, and CS4.

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis—CFA

Confirmatory Factory Analysis is a better method to assess the validity and reliability of measures (R. Bagozzi & Foxall, 1996). The goodness-of-fit of CFA is used to further assess the convergent validity among the constructs. CFA is applied with following important indexes: Chi-square, Chi-square/df, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker & Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA). The goodness-of-fit for each model was assessed by examining the chi-square statistic, the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), NFI, IFI, and CFI are greater than 0.90 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Hair et al., 1998). GFI and AGFI index exceeds 0.8. Chi-square/df is equal or lower 2 (Chisquare/df ≤ 3 can be accepted in some cases; Carmines & McIver, 1981), and RMSEA is equal or lower 0.08 (RMSEA ≤ 0.05 is excellent; Hair et al., 1998; Steiger, 1990). Those estimates are the precedents for the reliability of all factors for the next analyzing steps in this research.

CFA results showed that these evidences, which are GFI = 0.911, TLI = 0.95, CFI = 0.957 (>0.9), Chi-square/df = 1.883 (<2), RMSEA = 0.055 (<0.08) prove the validity and reliability of measurements.

Table 2. Testing results of reliability and convergent validity of various conceptions

		Factor Loading	AVE	CR
Brand Experience			0.74	0.93
BEX2	This brand induces feelings and sentiments.	0.94		
BEX3	I do have strong emotions for this brand.	0.93		
BEX5	This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	0.83		
BEX6	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand.	0.79		
BEX7	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.	0.81		
Brand Authenticity			0.50	0.86
BA5	Authenticity of this brand means reliable.	0.70		
BA8	The authenticity is considered as prestige of this brand.	0.71		
BA9	This brand is distinctive image, good word-of-mouth and good quality.	0.71		
BA10	This brand is authentic because people should have good faith and confidence in their products.	0.75		
BA12	I hope everything is original enough.	0.67		
BA13	I'd like consuming original products.	0.71		
	Brand Equity		0.55	0.85
BE1	I am familiar with this brand.	0.80		
BE2	Some characteristic of this brand comes to my mind quickly.	0.74		
BE4	I like and trust the company, which makes these products.	0.70		
BE5	This brand would be my first choice.	0.79		

(Continued)

Table2. (Continued)

		Factor Loading	AVE	CR
Brand Experience			0.74	0.93
BE6	I am still willing to buy products from this company even if its price is a little higher than that of its competitors.	0.67		
Customer Satisfaction			0.53	0.82
CS1	I am satisfied with the brand and its performance.	0.74		
CS2	I am interested in experiencing products/services of this brand.	0.73		
CS3	I am happy with what I did with this brand.	0.72		
CS4	I feel good about my decision to get this brand.	0.71		

Moreover, as shown in table 4.18, the convergent validity among the constructs, which standardized regression weights are higher than 0.5 with the significant lower than 0.05 (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Therefore, no item of factors in this model needs to be deleted. In other words, all the items of factors should be kept in this research for the next step of the data analysis process.

4.4. Reliability and validity

In order to check the reliability and validity of this research model, first of all, correlation testing was run. The purpose of this test is to investigate the relationships between quantitative variables, and to measure the strength of the relationship between them. The respondents' profile is showed in table 1The result of correlations testing between brand experience (BEX), brand authenticity (BA), brand equity (BE), and customer satisfaction (CS) is displayed in Table 2.

The above table presents that all the relationships between brand experience and three independent variables—brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction—are positive. All these correlations are significant at the level 0.01 level (2-tailed). The strength of the relationships between variables can be investigated through the coefficient of correlation (r). For instance, brand experience has a moderate correlation with brand authenticity ($r = 0.473$), brand equity ($r = 0.443$), and customer satisfaction ($r = 0.470$), respectively. The relationship between brand authenticity and customer satisfaction are the strongest one ($r = 0.563$). Following that is the relationship between brand equity and customer satisfaction with $r = 0.543$. Finally, brand authenticity and brand equity have a moderate correlation at $r = 0.480$. The next step is to check the reliability and validity of the research model. Reliability was assessed in terms of composite reliability, which measured the degree to which items are free from random error and therefore yield consistent results. The local fit of the model was assessed by following local fit criteria: indicator reliability greater than 0.30; standardized factor loading greater than 0.60 and significant t-value; an average variance explained (AVE) greater than 0.50; and a composite reliability (CR) greater than 0.60 (R. P. Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Table 3. Correlations testing result

		BEX	BA	BE	CS
BEX	Pearson Correlation	1	.473**	.443**	.470**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
BA	Pearson Correlation		1	.480**	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000
BE	Pearson Correlation			1	.543**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000
CS	Pearson Correlation				1
	Sig. (2-tailed)				

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Discriminant validity and correlations among the constructs

	Brand Experience	Brand Authenticity	Brand Equity	Customer Satisfaction
Brand Experience	.74			
Brand Authenticity	.473**	.504		
Brand Equity	.433**	.480**	.550	
Customer Satisfaction	.470**	.563**	.543**	.523

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

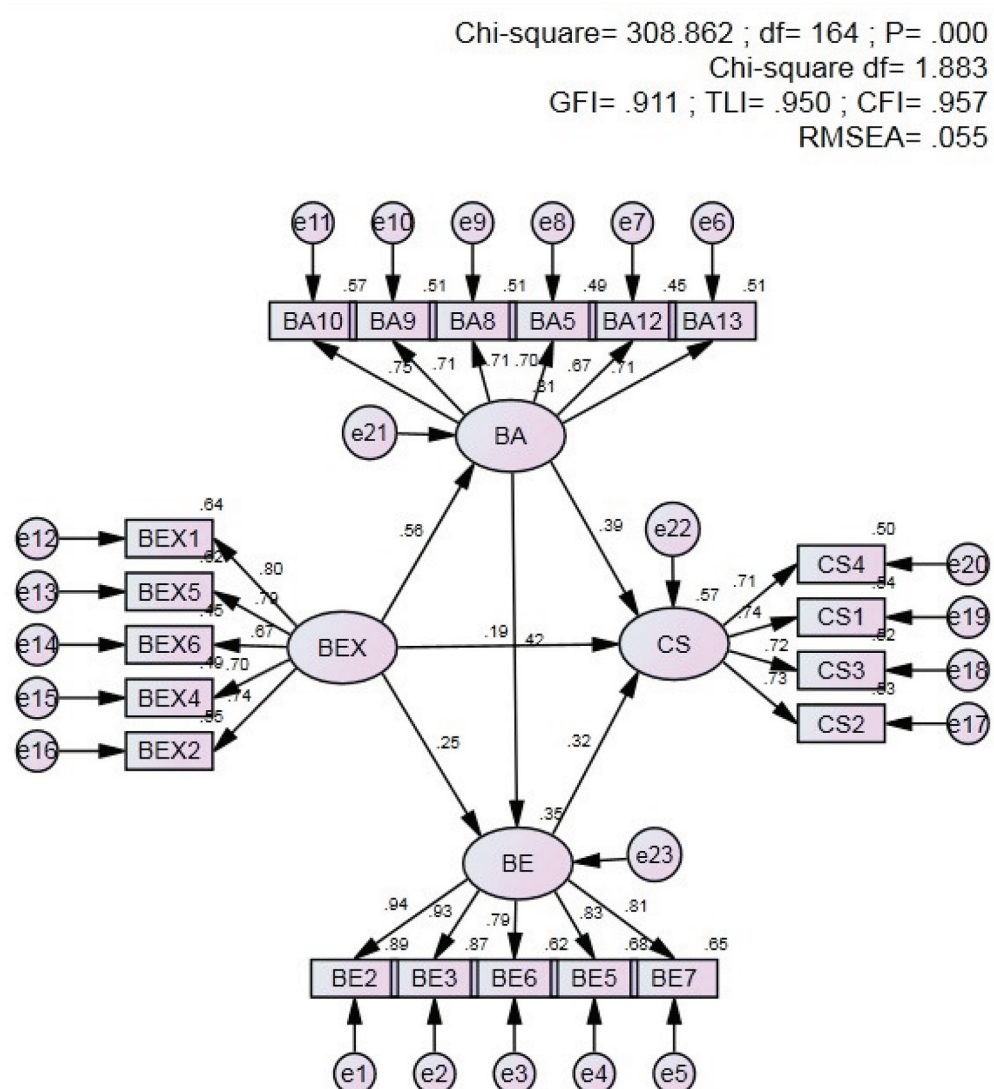
The [Table 3](#) shows the CFA fitting indices. According to Hair et al. (2010), Composite reliabilities (CR) must be larger than 0.7, which should be more reliable. In this study, ranged from 0.81 to 0.93, Convergent validity was assessed in terms of factor loadings and average variance extracted. Definitely, AVE is a strict measure of convergent validity (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). As shown in the table, all items had significant factor loadings higher than 0.50. Average variances extracted ranged from 0.504 to 0.742, suggesting adequate convergent validity. Thus, all factors in the measurement model had adequate reliability. Another important task is to test the Discriminant validity by comparing the average variance extracted (AVE) with the square correlation between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE were greater than the squared inter-construct correlation between any pair of constructs, which supports the discriminant validity of the constructs. Thus, the measurement model demonstrated discriminate validity, see, in [Table 4](#).

To sum up, there are positive and strong relationship between brand experience, brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction. Moreover, this research model has appropriated reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the constructs.

4.5. Structural equation modeling—SEM

Structural Equation Modeling is applied to test the hypotheses about the relationships between brand experience (BEX), brand authenticity (BA), brand equity (BE), and customer satisfaction (CS). In this analysis, Chi-square, Chi-square/df, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker & Lewis Index (TLI),

Figure 2. SEM result.



and Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) are used to test the model. A model well fits the sample data if GFI, TLI, and CFI are equal or above 0.9 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980); Chi-square/df is equal or lower 2 (Chisquare/df ≤ 3 can be accepted in some cases; Carmines & McIver, 1981), and RMSEA is equal or lower 0.08 (RMSEA ≤ 0.05 is excellent; Hair et al., 1998; Steiger, 1990).

According to Figure 2, the research model can be considered as the test of relationship between one independent variable—brand experience and three dependent variables—brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction. Then, the estimated model fits the data reasonably well, including $\chi^2/DF = 1.883$ (< 2), CFI = 0.957, GFI = 0.911, and RMSEA = 0.055 (< 0.08). The model's fit as indicated by these indexes was deemed satisfactory.

The result showed that the relationships between brand experience and brand authenticity, brand equity, brand authenticity. Brand equity are not only positive but also statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The relationship among brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction are also positively and statistically significant. Besides, although the relationship between

brand experience and customer satisfaction have p-value at 0.008, it can indicate that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, it is also accepted.

Next, it is essential to examine the path coefficients of the structural model. According to Table 4.22, the relationship brand authenticity—brand equity has the highest Regression Weight (0.652) which means that brand authenticity has the largest positive impact on brand equity ($\beta = 0.652$ ***, $p < 0.001$), supporting the hypothesis H3. In other words, the more authentic and original products/services from that brand are, the more customers feel satisfied and happy. Besides, brand experience has a high positive impact to brand authenticity ($\beta = 0.500$ ***, $p < 0.001$) which lead the acceptance of the first hypothesis H1. It also affects brand equity at the moderate level ($\beta = 0.343$ ***, $p < 0.001$), which can contribute to the support of hypothesis H2. Additionally, the table also shows that brand experience, brand authenticity, and brand equity positively influence customer satisfaction. For instance, the effect of brand authenticity on customer satisfaction is significant ($\beta = 0.344$ ***, $p < 0.001$). So H4 is approved. The effect of brand equity on customer satisfaction is significant ($\beta = 0.179$ ***, $p < 0.001$), supporting H5. Finally, the effect of brand experience on customer satisfaction is significant ($\beta = 0.147$, $p = 0.008$), supporting H6. In summary, it is concluded that all the initial hypotheses, including H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6 are accepted and are statistically significant. In other words, there is positive impact of brand experience on brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction. Brand authenticity has strong evidences of the positive impacts on brand equity. Furthermore, brand authenticity, brand equity has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction, respectively.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

5.1. Discussion

Brand experience and brand authenticity are two new concepts that marketers and brand managers have not concerned much in Vietnamese market. In this research, it is concluded that brand experience has positive relationships with brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction. Although there are 16 items removed out from 36 items in the initial measurement scale, this scale have adequate reliability and valuable findings that contribute to a new science model in marketing subject.

Adopting the measurement scale of brand authenticity from a study of Tran (2018) can be considered as a challenge of this research. Due to the new of the concept and the new scale constructed, the author had some difficulties in conducting the survey. Moreover, this dimension has many items eliminated from the research scale. For instance, from 13 items, there are 6 items remained in the scale, including brand impression on customers' sense, the effect on customers' feeling and sentiments, customer's curiosity, and customers' reactions to the brand. Although removed many items, the dimension had kept major measurements that can reflect the definition of brand authenticity in business and marketing area. All the remained items had high loading factor and had strong relationships with other investigated dimensions. Besides, academic research from Tran (2018) developed a model of the investigation of the relationship between brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction. That model concluded that there are positive correlation between brand authenticity and brand equity. Likewise, the more reliable and honesty the company express to its customers, the higher degree of satisfaction customers have. In this study, even though the final research model kept few items in brand authenticity, there are strong evidence to assert the significant relationship among brand authenticity, and brand equity as well as brand authenticity and customer satisfaction.

In addition, the study also completely supports to the theory of relationships between brand equity and customer satisfaction. Many authors investigated the high correlation between how customers associate and commit to the company and their satisfaction about the quality of products/services and performance from the company (Aaker (1997), Tong and Hawley (2009),

and Yoo and Donthu (2001). Therefore, the significant relationship of brand equity and customer satisfaction make that theory be more reliable and validity.

Brand experience creates and develops trust-based relationship platform between brand and customer. Brand experiences arise in a variety of settings when consumers search for, shop for, and consume brands. The acceptance of the sixth hypothesis presenting the relationship between brand experience and customer satisfaction contribute to the valid of the model construct by J.J. Brakus et al. (2009). According to his research, brand experience has a direct effect on the satisfaction of customers, and seems to be a stronger predictor of actual buying behavior of consumers. This result may be related to the very nature of experience. Through an empirical study of Starbucks in Taiwan (2014), Walter et al. (2014) confirmed a large positive impact of brand experience on brand image and a somewhat slighter experience on brand awareness. Thus, by statistical estimates, this study supported that brand experience has a strong relationship with brand equity.

Last but not least, the important thing in this research is the investigation of the relationship between brand experience and brand authenticity. Marketing researchers have been beginning to concern these two concepts. The construct of brand experience and the significant estimates of how brand experience predicts consumer behavior (J.J. Brakus et al., 2009). Moreover, authenticity is a core component of successful brands because it forms part of a unique brand identity (Aaker, 1996; K. L. Keller, 1993). Building authenticity and trust is critical for brands (Anderberg & Morris, 2006). This study experimented both concepts and found the positive significant relationship among brand experience, and brand authenticity. The more customers use and feel the products/services, the more authentic values that brand has. In conclusion, all the findings of this research have validity and treasure meanings in science, and have practical implications that is presented in the following part.

5.2. Theoretical contributions and managerial implications

This dissertation applied empirical analysis as the key methodology. According to the results in the previous chapter, the study contributes to the branding literature as well as marketing literature by a new model investigating the relationships among brand experience, brand authenticity, brand equity, and customer satisfaction. Moreover, many researchers stated that consumer satisfaction is the major aim of the marketing concept. If the product performs below the consumers' expectation, then he/she will reevaluate satisfaction with the decision, which at its extreme may result in the consumer returning the product. When the consumer is satisfied with the product's performance, repeated purchase is more likely which can improve the equity of the company in the market. Thus, the contribution of development of a new relationship model between Brand Experience and Customer Satisfaction through the authenticity and equity of the brand is other advance comparing to the previous theory.

First and foremost, that brand must attract all the sense of the customers. If a brand stimulates the senses, makes the person feel good, and engages the mind and body, a stimulation-seeking organism may strive to receive such stimulation again. On the contrary, the private nature of experiences may make them less subject to situational influences than the more social and self-expressive brand personalities (Aaker, 1999). With colors of the logo or an easy-remembered name, the products can catch the eyes of customers. When they see those products somewhere or there is someone mention those products, they can imagine the image of the brand in their minds. Products of authentic brands usually have higher quality, offer greater values, and be more likely to be purchased than less authentic brands. Furthermore, those products can be sold at a significant price premium. This means that managers should work to increase perceptions of authenticity for their offerings if this is appropriate for the product or service categories.

In addition, it is better for a release of new products that the company wants to test the customers' behavior towards those products and services. Based on what customers experience, what they feel, what they think about the product/service in order to make a decision of development of that product/

service. In other words, approaching to customers like that can convey the authentic image from the company to them, make them trust and confident in company's products and services.

The research model in this study can be useful in other further academic research and marketing business. Many researchers stated that consumer satisfaction is the major aim of the marketing concept. If the product performs below the consumers' expectations, then he/she will reevaluate satisfaction with the decision, which at its extreme may result in the consumer returning the product. When the consumer is satisfied with the product's performance, the repeated purchase is more likely which can improve the equity of the company in the market. Thus, the contribution of development of a new relationship model between brand experience and customer satisfaction through the authenticity and equity of the brand can be considered as a theory to make branding strategies for the company. Brand managers should consider authenticity as the prestige of the company. Moreover, consumers hope everything from the company can be original. Then, it should carry out appreciated activities from the plan to ensure the reliability together with distinctive image in order to make the products/services be successful. Besides, building a new brand name is a difficult task for brand managers. The brand has to transfer specific characteristics of products/services as well as the company. Brand managers should pay attention to which value that company and products/services bring to the customers. This means that instead of attempting to play up the authentic origins of a brand directly, internally in the company, marketing efforts should take an indirect route, for example, becoming member of the community. Managers should spend more time with their consumers listening to their needs and interests and how their brand can meet those needs.

5.3. Limitations and future studies

In this research, respondents were asked about their experience on one of three authentic brands—Nike, Apple, and McDonald's. It was a limit because participants could only choose brands that they had used among three brands. They did not have other options so that the target population was limit. Another thing is that the research listed three famous authentic brands in globally. They may not be definitely well known in Vietnam. Therefore, further studies are suggested to investigate more other authentic brands. However, it is better if there is a survey of the most authentic brands in the researched region as well as a survey about customers' experience on brands in order to get various ideas and thoughts to draw a clearly mind-map of customers. That task will make the research to work easier in choosing brand names or brand products/services for questionnaires.

The delimitation of this study is in Vietnam because of the limit of time and budget. It means that all the target customers of three researched brand should be expanded into other regional global markets in light of significant regional gaps in consumer attitudes and behaviors. Thus, it is suggested that future researchers should explore potential participants in the whole of Vietnam in order to have more accurate and more general views of customers' minds about brand experience and their satisfaction with authentic brands.

The next limitation is that respondents for this research are almost students and officers who are in middle-level income group. The author could not interact with ones in high-income class. They can have other opinions about experiencing many kinds of brands and concerning authentic products/services. Those opinions can make a contribution to the more objective observations of customer behaviors about brand experience and brand authenticity.

The other limitation is the research method bias in general. There are certain disadvantages, such as selection bias, a non-representative sample, and a lack of descriptive or casual research recommendations. Other methods for future research will be strongly recommended. For example, systematic sampling could be considered which improves representativeness and is easier to implement than random sample.

Finally, the author did not investigate the number of times that customer used products/services, and the antecedents and long-term consequences of brand experiences. For example, regarding

antecedents, how exactly brand experience dimensions are evoked by brand-related stimuli; how many times respondents used and were interacted with those brand products. Therefore, future researchers should focus on those and expand their model. Besides, brand scientists should explore direct and indirect experience that consumers react to the brands.

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