Factors affecting consumer–brand identification
An empirical study among smartphone users in Egypt

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Abstract:

Developing a better understanding of what drives consumer–brand identification (CBI) to smartphone brands had become of considerable importance for academics and practitioners due the growth and competition in smartphones industry. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring Factors affecting (CBI) among smartphone users in Egypt. Four basic hypotheses were developed. Data were collected by self-report survey study from an area sample that comprised of 540 smart phone users drawn from seven governorates in Egypt. The main findings of multiple regression analysis confirmed that brand attractiveness, brand-lifestyle congruence, and brand social benefits have significant positive effect on consumer-brand identification while the significant positive effect of memorable brand experiences on consumer-brand identification was denied. A discussion of the results, recommendations of the study along with the limitations and future research were presented.

Key Terms: Consumer- brand identification, brand attractiveness, Brand- life congruence, Memorable brand experience, brand social benefits, Smartphone users, and Egypt.

1/ Introduction:

The strategic importance of consumer-brand relationships has been long acknowledged in the brand management literature (So et al., 2017). The nature, form and intensity of these relationships have been studied by several researchers to investigate multiple relevant concepts. Consumer-brand identification (CBI) is one of the most important constructs that measured the consumer-brand bond. It has been proved that CBI generates a number of positive brand responses such as brand loyalty, commitment, and advocacy. As a result, one of the strategic key goals in marketing strategies is to develop consumer-brand identification (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Tuškej et al., 2013).

Although Consumer-brand identification has been lately given some conceptual and empirical attention and past studies have provided important insights, the knowledge of consumer-brand identification is still limited (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Elbedweihy et al., 2016). However, there is much to be understood concerning the antecedents of CBI—what factors cause it (Tuskej et al., 2011; Lam et al., 2013). Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) suggest CBI results from both cognitive and affective based antecedents.

Moreover, it is still controversial how important each of these categories are in predicting consumer-brand identification in the marketing literature. Therefore, the current research focuses on exploring the relative importance of different antecedents of consumer-brand identification. Most of previous studies are supporting the influence of CBI antecedents, while not all these factors are relevant to all consumers. Thus, both marketing academics and practitioners should possess a clear understanding of what produces CBI. In addition, there is little research on examining the CBI antecedents and a need for further examination has been recognized, this study attempts to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the combinations of cognitive-based antecedents that include brand attractiveness and brand-lifestyle congruence as well as affective-based antecedents that include memorable brand experiences and

brand social benefits. Specifically, there are studies that investigated these variables as antecedents of CBI separately or evaluated these concepts in terms of other concepts that can be thought they are correlated with them, whereas these four factors have not been examined collectively before.

On the basis of the above arguments, this study aims to investigate what are the uncover roles of the brand attractiveness, brand-lifestyle congruence, memorable brand experiences and brand social benefits as antecedents of consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.

This article is structured as follows; first is the research problem, second are the research objectives, third is the research importance, fourth is the literature review and hypotheses development. Subsequently, the methodology, results and discussions are presented. Finally, conclusions with some noteworthy implications and suggestions for future research based on limitations are developed.

2/ Research problem:

After reviewing the previous researches' results, three key limitations are apparent from which the research problem stems. First, motivations of consumers to enter into volitional enduring relationships with brands is still unclear even if organizations think that building strong relationships with consumers will likely enhance their favorable attitudes and behaviors toward the brand (Fournier, 1998; Marin and Ruiz, 2007). Second, despite the acknowledgments that consumer-brand identification is one of the important antecedents of consumer behavior (Lam et al., 2013), research knows little about the antecedents of CBI (Stokburger-Saueret al., 2012; Marin and De Maya, 2013). Third, there are two types of products; publicly and privately consumed products. Although previous research proposes that it is more likely that consumers infer identity from publicly consumed products than privately consumed products (Bearden and Etzel, 1982; Shavitt, 1990), people's identity can still be reflected by privately consumed products (Kleine et al., 1993; Berger and Heath, 2007) and that's why most prior empirical research of CBI typically focused on publicly consumed brands or products. Therefore, whether the salience of antecedents of CBI across publicly versus privately consumed products is still unclear.

Accordingly, this study attempts to fill a gap in the literature by combining four distinctive and unique constructs (i.e. brand attractiveness, brand-lifestyle congruence as well as, memorable brand experiences and brand social benefits) to form one model to determine the consumer's psychological path to consumer–brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt and to test their predictive power in explaining consumer–brand identification. Therefore, this study aims to make academic and practical contribution to the existing CBI literature by examining several antecedents collectively in the Middle Eastern Countries context in general– Egypt in particular, which has traditionally received considerable academic attention at the international level.

3/ Pilot study:

On the basis of the previously established problem, the researcher tried to clarify CBI antecedents among Egyptian smartphone users through conducting a pilot study[*]. It had been conducted through several personal interviews with 50 convenience sample units from Cairo and Sharkeya governorates to determine the following points:

- What are the most used smartphone brands in Egypt?
- To what extent Egyptian smartphone users have identification with their brands?
- What are the factors affecting Egyptian smartphone users' identification?

The pilot study has generated the following indicators:

- The most used smartphone brands in Egypt were Samsung, Huawei, Oppo, and iPhone.
- There is a clear difference among smartphone users' opinions about their identification with their smartphone brands where 60% of them don't have identification with their smartphone brands while the rest do have.
- There is a clear difference among smartphone users' opinions about factors affecting their identification with their smartphone brands where brand attractiveness, brand-lifestyle congruence, and brand social benefits have more influence more than memorable brand experiences.

Therefore, and based on the theoretical and practical gap, research problem of this study is to investigate what are the uncover roles of the brand attractiveness, brand-lifestyle congruence, memorable brand experiences and brand social benefits as antecedents of consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt. In line with this basic issue, answers for following questions were sought:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between Brand attractiveness and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between Brand-lifestyle congruence and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between memorable brand experiences and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt?
4. What is the nature of the relationship between brand social benefits and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt?
5. What is the relative importance of each of the antecedents of CBI to better understand how to promote it?

4/ Research objectives:

On the light of the previous questions, the following objectives will be sought:

1. Providing an overview of the nature of CBI conceptualizations and its antecedents.
2. Identifying the nature of the relationship between brand attractiveness and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.

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[*]It has been conducted during January 2017

3. Identifying the nature of the relationship between brand-lifestyle congruence and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.
4. Identifying the nature of the relationship between memorable brand experiences and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.
5. Identifying the nature of the relationship between brand social benefits and consumer- brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.
6. Determining the relative importance of each of the antecedents of CBI to better understand how to promote it

5/ Research importance:

The importance of this study has stem from several sources as following:

5/1/ Academic importance:

The academic importance can be presented through the following points:
1. As there are several calls from previous researches for further investigation to examine antecedents of brand identification (He and Li, 2011; He et al., 2012; Tuškejet al., 2013; Stephenson and Yerger, 2014; Elbedweihy et al., 2016), this study is among the first to introduce antecedents of consumer-brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.
2. The current study, different from previous studies, investigated together antecedents that have been examined separately.
3. This paper developed a framework for CBI containing both cognitive and affective antecedents. In addition, it is demonstrated that each single driver does affect CBI even when controlling for the effects of the others by providing a single model containing the role of multiple drivers of CBI.
4. Brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt has almost never been studied before. Although the concept of identification has had some care in different disciplines such as the sociological, psychological, lately in organization behavior, and human resource management, its importance wasn't properly clarified in the marketing literature. Only recently, some care has been shown to identification of customers with organizations and brands in the marketing discipline and its top journals.

5/2/ Practical importance:

The practical importance can be presented through the following points:
1. It has been proved that several positive outcomes can be achieved through building long-term relationships between organizations and consumers such as consumer-brand identification (Park et al., 2010), that is why companies are increasingly exploring means of building such relationships (Malär et al., 2011), therefore, this study will find a way through which companies can achieve this.
2. The study will help marketers to set suitable promotional strategies for the target audience which managers will use to understand the dynamics, meaning, and role of CBI.

6/ Literature review and hypotheses development:
6/1/ Consumer- brand identification (CBI):

The concept of CBI has its roots from the foundation in Social Identity and Self-categorization Theory developed earlier by Tajfel (1978, 1982). These theories' basic premise is that individuals tend to have a positive social identity and self-verification through affiliating themselves to the group which they believe they belong to. Moreover, Self-verification theory assured that both individual positive and negative self-concepts are verified, confirmed, and maintained as they are motivated to do so (Swann and Ely, 1983).

Identity theorists claimed that self -verification leads to the desire of individuals to develop a binding tie between themselves and some other social entity (Burke and Stets, 1999). Moreover, individuals' choices of products and brands depend on these self-verification needs (Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). As a result, Arnould and Thompson (2005) and Belk (1988) claimed that products represent identity currency. In addition, brands are increasingly used to reflect the social entities and used for identity construction purposes. Therefore, strong ties have been developed between consumers and brands then extensive self-brand schema overlaps (Carlson et al., 2008).

Not all brands can achieve strong consumer-identification. Based on the symbolic nature of brands, consumers-brand identification emerges and consumers construct their social identity based on these brands when they share personality traits and values these brands (Wolter et al., 2016). Thus, brand identification is one kind of social identification where a specific brand is the object with which the consumer identifies him/herself. According to Social Identity Theory, there are three dimensions for identification (cognitive, affective, and evaluative). It is defined as a consumer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and evaluating belongings with a brand (Lam et al., 2010, 2013). Therefore, the brand relationships literature suggested that consumers could infer the quality of a product through brands which present an extrinsic cue with which.

Marketers manage the intrinsic identity of its brands to differentiate it from competitors (Van Rekom et al., 2006; Sung and Choi, 2010). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) claimed that important self-definitional needs could be satisfied through strong relationships between consumers and companies, in other words, identification of consumers with companies or brands.

6/2/ Antecedents of CBI:
6/2/1/ Brand attractiveness:

Brand attractiveness refers to the positive evaluation of the brand's central, distinctive, and enduring associations and characteristics (Ahearne et al., 2005; Currás-Pérez et al., 2009). Companies cannot impose consumer–brand relationships; rather, these relationships are selective and volitional acts by consumers, and based on identification (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003).

The relationship between Brand attractiveness and CBI:

Thus, when the customer perceives that the brand or the company is attractive, identification is more likely to occur (Ahearne et al., 2005), and

therefore, consumer's self-evaluation is enhanced (Marin and De Maya, 2013). That is why consumers will probably identify with the brand and incorporate that identity. Finally, Marin et al. (2009) claimed that identifying with an attractive brand would support consumers' self-enhancement.

Moreover, when consumers perceive the brand as attractive and satisfying some of their essential self-definitional needs, they will be motivated to have a psychological attachment to a brand (Currás-Pérez et al., 2009). Empirical results have confirmed that brand attractiveness is an important antecedent of CBI. Elbedweihy et al. (2016) has indicated that when a brand is attractive, it plays a different positively significant role to affect consumers' identification in both private and public consumption contexts. In addition, focusing on the airline industry, So et al. (2017) has provided a strong support that brand attractiveness significantly predict CBI. To summarize, the following Hypotheses is formulated:

H1: Brand-attractiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer-brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.

6/2/2 Brand-lifestyle congruence:

The particular manner in which consumers live their life represent consumers' lifestyle which composed of their beliefs, aspirations, and attitudes toward life (Brassington and Pettitt, 2003). Brand-lifestyle congruence refers to what extent does the brand supports the consumer's lifestyle (Nam et al., 2011). Keller (2003) defined brand-lifestyle congruence as the brand's capability to help consumers in their social environment to present their values and lifestyle.

The relationship between brand-lifestyle congruence and CBI:

The use or the ownership of the brand is something valuable as the brand usually enhances image, reflects status, and projects lifestyle (Tuominen, 1999). It has been argued that brand-lifestyle congruence is different from brand-self congruence and from brand identification (Nam et al, 2011). Comparison standards can stem from self-concept and social group consumers, while consumers' consumption, opinions, activities, interests and goals are used as comparison standards concerning brand-lifestyle congruence. These factors are not captured by self-concept and social identity and they are related to different social and personal values (Nam et al., 2011).

Consumers can use brands and brand settings to express their lifestyles where consumers in social situations usually purchase specific products and services associated with their lifestyles which is known as lifestyle branding (Nam et al, 2011). Thus, lifestyle branding happens when consumer's personal lifestyle matches the brand image and the consumer will identify him/herself with the brand. Moreover, when the consumption of a brand reflects consumers' desired lifestyles, they tend to identify with that brand and form personal attachments to it (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987)

Crimmins and Horn (1996) assured that sponsors of sport events will not reach the target audience and achieve the desired association if the event image is not consistent with target audience lifestyle and interests. Recently, Alnawas and Altarifi (2016) in a study surveyed (432) from guests that stayed in seven

well-known hotels in Jordan and indicated that customer hotel brand identification (CHBI) could by enhanced through brand-lifestyle congruence. To summarize, the following Hypotheses is formulated:

H2: Brand-lifestyle congruence has a significant positive effect on consumer-brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.

6/2/3/ Memorable brand experiences:

Brand experiences have been conceptualized as "subjective, internal consumer responses and behavioral responses" (Brakus et al, 2009). Sensations, feelings, and cognitions are examples of internal consumer responses while brand-related stimuli (design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments) evoke behavioral responses. Such responses are not homogeneous depending on the memorable experiences that brand provides to their consumers. Some kinds of brands do not remain in memory although they are frequently used, while others, even when used infrequently, can stay in memory indelibly and affectively. The second type of brands allows the consumer to periodically relive positive experience (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012).

The relationship between memorable brand experiences and CBI:

Consumer research literature supported that memorable brand experiences have a very important role on enhancing autobiographical memories and narrative processing (Sujan et al., 1993; Escalas, 2004). This stream of researches argued that greater self-referencing and the construction of brand-related stories or narratives is associated with consumption of certain brands. This self-referencing process therefore leads to more affect-laden and easily retrievable memories (Escalas, 2004). Further, individuals' intertwining of brand-related and self-related thoughts will be enhanced if the brand guarantees memorable experiences (Davis, 1979) which will enhance CBI. This is consistent with the findings of the study of Stokburger-Sauer et al (2012) which confirmed that when consumers are highly involved with the brand's product category, memorable brand experiences have stronger causal relationships with CBI. To summarize, the following Hypotheses is formulated:

H3: Memorable brand experiences has a significant positive effect on consumer-brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.

6/2/4/ Brand social benefits:

Stokburger-Sauer et al (2012) defined brand social benefits (BSB) as the opportunities and gains of social interaction of a brand. It has been suggested that consumers will identify themselves with brand when they perceive that a brand provides social benefits. Consumers form groups based on a shared commitment to a brand when it carries social and cultural meaning (Thompson et al., 2006). Moreover, when consumers form positive attitudes toward a brand, they are more likely going to sustain those positive attitudes (Raghunathan et al., 2006).

The relationship between brand social benefits and CBI:

Several researches in marketing support the idea that consumers can gain social and cultural meaning as forms of social benefits from certain brands (Thompson et al., 2006). Social reference groups, from which user imagery

associations are offered to brands, could be created through social and cultural meaning (i.e., the typical user's demographic and psychographic associations) (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). Social interaction between customer and brands besides interactions among customers could develop brand loyalty (So et al., 2017) and brand communities in which there are structured social relationships among brand fans (Muniz and O'guinn,, 2001). For example, tourists tend to connect with other tourists on several online travel blogs to develop self-enhancement or to increase social status (Wu and Pearce, 2016). Focusing on the airline industry, So et al. (2017) investigated that consumer –brand identification can be significantly predicted through brand social benefits. Based on previous studies results, it is argued that consumers will have high identification with brands connecting them with other important persons, groups, communities, or subcultures. To summarize, the following Hypotheses is formulated:

H 4: Brand social benefits have a significant positive effect on consumer-brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt.

Figure (1) shows the study's model and proposed relationships.
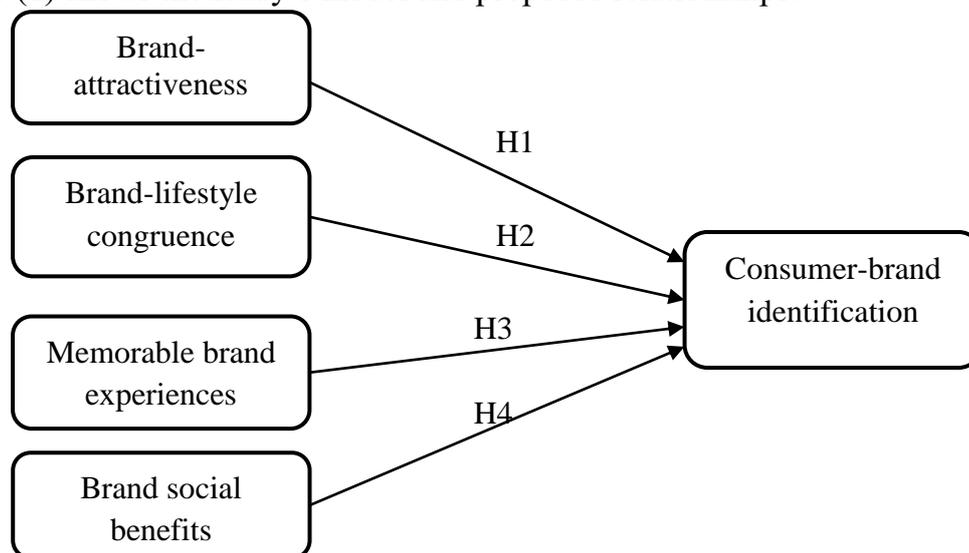
Figure (1): Research model and proposed relationships.

7/ Methodology:

To examine the research hypotheses, the current study adopted a quantitative method. A cross-sectional survey -as a quantitative data collection technique- was employed to test the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable as hypothesized based on the theoretical framework. this data collection method was appropriate for several reasons. First, survey was used extensively in previous researchers to explore the antecedents of brand-consumer identification (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012, Alnawas and Altarifi, 2016; Elbedweihy et al., 2016; So et al., 2017). Second, latent constructs (which cannot be observed or quantified) can be best measured by survey (i.e., CBI, brand attractiveness, memorable brand experiences, brand life style congruence and brand social benefits) (Burton and Mazerolle, 2011). Finally, participants' freedom to fill the questionnaire, determining problems in real settings, easy access to large number of target respondents are all

benefits of survey methods which finally increases the likelihood of generalizing accurate results (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

7/1/ Population and sample:

A study conducted by AppMaker has recorded that Egypt occupied the first rank in Africa as the highest prevalence of mobile phones in 2014 with 68.7 % smart phones use. Smartphones (opposite to feature phones) and tablets were the most frequently used devices when accessing the web compared to laptops and desktops. Handheld devices like smartphones and tablets became versatile while also became accessible for most people (Solangaarachchi et al., 2016). A new report issued by Zenith, a unit of the French ad agency, predicted that 75% of the use of the Internet by 2017 is via mobile, a slight increase from the current year, as the growing number of consumers around the world has access to the World Wide Web via smartphones and tablets.

According to the ministry of communication and information technology in Egypt, 70% of mobile phones used are smartphones (approximately total mobile phones are 93 million phone and smartphones are 65 million smartphones).

7/2/ Sample size:

When the number of population is large exceeding hundreds or thousands, it is impossible to collect data from every element. Even if it was possible, it is illogical because of many constraints such as time, cost, and other human resources. Sample size decision has been greatly simplified by providing a table that ensures a good, generalized, and scientific guideline for sample size decisions (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). As long as the population size (smartphone users in Egypt) is approximately 65million and based on the table, a sample of size 600 respondents is suitable depending on 4% confidence level. To guarantee higher response rate, 650 instruments will be distributed.

7/3/ Sample type:

As this research aims at exploring a specific phenomenon within population units through surveying sample units, it is good to use probability sample. Since the researcher desires to use probability sample, there is no population frame, and there are survey maps, it is ideal to use cluster or area samples (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).

Cluster sampling has been done in several stages (multistage cluster sampling) to collect data with maximum accuracy and minimum cost and cover all population units which are widespread all over the nation.

First, Egypt governorates are divided into seven regions;

1- Cairo region: Cairo, Kaliobia, and Giza.
2- Alexandria region: Alexandria, Matrouh, Behera.
3- Sues Canal region: North Sinai, South Sinai, Port Said, Sharkeya, Ismailia, and Suez.
4- Nile Delta region: Monofia, Gharbeia, Dakahlia, Damietta, and Kafr Elshiekh.
5- North Upper Egypt: Beni Suif, Fayoum, and Menia
6- Middle Upper Egypt: Asiout , New valley.
7- South Upper Egypt: Kena, Sohag, Aswan, Luxor, and Red Sea.

Second: The researcher drew 7 governorates (more than 25% of the governorates) out of the 27 governorates.

Third: the random selection of the governorates has resulted in choosing: Cairo, Behera, Asiout, Sohag, Menia, dakahlia, and Sharkeya. This random selection has shown that:

- All Egypt governorates regions are represented in the sample, where every region is represented by one governorate.
- The selected governorates population represents more than 39% of total Egypt population.

Fourth: Two sections have been randomly chosen from Cairo and the capital beside one town has been randomly chosen from each governorate. As there is no definite population frame, the researcher has taken the following aspects in consideration when collecting data from the chosen areas:

- Sample units are Egyptian smartphone users above 18 years as consumers above this age are expected to be rational and wise enough to judge their brands.
- One customer has been intercepted each 20 minutes.
- Customers have been intercepted during several day and night periods in different week days.

Table (1) shows how sample units were distributed on chosen governorates.

Table (1): Sample units' distribution on selected governorates

Governorate	Population*	% of total population	Sample according to proportional distribution	Valid Instruments	Response Rate (%)
Cairo	9,595,813	22	132	132	100
Behera	6,102,422	14	84	74	88
Sharkeya	6,790,797	16	93	96	100
Dakahlia	6,191,160	14	85	78	92
Asiout	4,481,735	10	61	53	87
Sohag	4,862,308	11	67	52	78
Menia	5,459,795	12	75	55	73
Total	43,484,030	100	600	540	90

* Data obtained from the annual book (2017) of the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.

Respondents' demographic profiles were analyzed on their age, gender, income, highest qualification of education, and their marital status. In addition, smartphone brands are presented. Table (2) shows respondents' demographic profiles.

Table (2): Descriptive statistics of sample demographics (N=540)

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	306	56.7
	Female	234	43.3
Age	From 18-Less Than 27	316	58.5
	From 27-Less Than 37	163	30.2
	From 37-Less Than 47	35	6.5
	From 47-Less Than 57	16	3.0
	57 And More	10	1.9
Income	Less than 2000	113	20.9
	From 2001-less than 4000	174	32.2
	From 4000-less than 6000	148	27.4
	6000-less than 8000	73	13.5
	8000 and more	32	5.9
Education	Less than public secondary	6	1.1
	Lower than university degree	66	12.2
	University degree	390	72.2
	Post graduate	78	14.4
Marital status	Single	337	62.4
	Married	107	19.8
	Married with children	96	17.8
	Widow/divorced	----	----
Smartphone brand	Samsung	171	31.7
	Huawei	140	25.9
	Oppo	57	10.6
	IPhone	42	7.8
	Htc	32	5.9
	Sony	30	5.6
	Lenovo	29	5.4
	Infinix	25	4.6
	Techno	14	2.6

As shown in Table (2), 43.3 of the sample are females and 56.7 are males. Concerning age, %58.5 of respondents were between 18–27 years old, 30.2% were between 27-37 years, 6.5% were between 37-47 years, 3% were between 47-57 years, and finally 1,5% were over age 57. The majority of respondents (72.2%) had University degree while 14.4% of respondents had post graduate degree, 12.2% of them had lower than university degree, and finally, %1.1 had less than public secondary. Monthly income by Egyptian Pound levels varied where 32.2% of the sample are earning between 2001- 4000, whereas % 27.4 of the respondents are earning between 4000- 6000, 20.9% are earning less than 2000, 13.5% are earning between 6000- 8000, and finally %5.9 are earning more than 8000. The majority of respondents (62.4%) were single while 19.8% were married, and17.8% of them were married with children. Respondents were using several smartphone brands where 31.7% of them were using Samsung, 25.9% were using Huawei, 10.6 % were using Oppo, 7.8 % were using iPhone, and so on.

7/4/ Measures:

Five sets of measures were adopted based on the existing literature to develop our survey instrument to measure and to suit the study's context.

a. **Consumer –brand identification:** The current study is different from most previous brand identification studies which treated CBI as a one-dimensional construct (e.g., Kim et al., 2001; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). The current study adopted a multidimensional scale containing six items to conceptualize brand identification which developed by Lam et al. (2010). The scale consists of two items to measure each of the three components; cognitive dimension (e.g., My image overlaps with the brand image to some extent), evaluative dimension (e.g., I believe others respect me for my association with this brand), and finally the affective dimension (e.g., When someone praises this brand, it feels like a personal compliment).

b. **Brand attractiveness:** Brand attractiveness was captured using four items developed by Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) and Currás-Pérez et al (2009). Example items include "I like what my mobile represents".

c. **Brand lifestyle congruence**: Nam et al. (2011) adopted 3 items from Vázquez et al. (2002), Johnson et al. (2006), and Del Rio et al (2001). Example items include "My mobile reflects my personal lifestyle".

d. **Memorable brand experiences**: Memorable brand experiences were measured by three items scale adapted from Stokburger-Sauer et al (2012). Example items include "I have had a lot of memorable experiences with my mobile".

e. **Brand social benefits:** Four items borrowed from Stokburger-Sauer et al (2012) measured brand social benefits. Example items include "Being a customer of my mobile makes me feel like I belong to a special group". All of the measurement items were rated employing a five-point Likert scale representing Participants indicated their agreement with statements (1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree"). Demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, monthly income and marital status) about smart phone consumers were located in the last part of the instrument.

7/5/ Evaluating Validity and reliability of measures:

- Validity:

Prior to data analysis, all measures used in this study were tested. Validity of the measures was approved by a group of researchers and experts after receiving their viewpoints and their suggestions on some questions which all have been taken into consideration. Afterwards, a pilot study was conducted through a convenience sample which comprised of 60 consumers drawn from three governorates (Cairo, Sharkeya and Dakahlia) amended the questionnaire. Some items have been minorly modified based on consumers' feedback.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the research variables' dimensionality.

Table (3): Instrument validity (standardized confirmatory factor-analysis) and reliability (cronbach' alpha)

variable–items	Standardized loadings	t-value	P value	Cronbach' alpha
Brand attractiveness				0.79
1. I like what my mobile represents.	0.624 [a]	---	---	
2. I think that my mobile is an attractive brand	0.432	7.187	0.000	
3. I like what my mobile stands for.	0.488	7.820	0.000	
4. My mobile is a favorable brand	0.572	8.536	0.000	
Brand life style congruence				0.75
5. My mobile reflects my personal lifestyle.	0.831 [a]	---	---	
6. My mobile is totally in line with my lifestyle.	0.670	11.271	0.000	
7. Continuing using my mobile supports my lifestyle.	0.518	9.756	0.000	
Memorable brand experiences				0.76
8. I have had a lot of memorable experiences with my mobile.	0.616 [a]	---	---	
9. Thinking of my mobile brings back good memories.	0.747	12.309	0.000	
10. I have fond memories of my mobile.	0.808	12.317	0.000	
Brand social benefits				0.80
11. My mobile offers me the opportunity to socialize	0.556 [a]	---	---	
12. I feel a sense of kinship with other people who fly with my mobile.	0.476	7.519	0.000	
13. I gain a lot from interactions with other customers/users of my mobile.	0.515	7.897	0.000	
14. Being a customer of my mobile makes me feel like I belong to a special group	0.536	8.079	0.000	
Brand identification				0.73
Cognitive identity				
15.My identity overlaps with my mobile identity to some extent.	0.604 [a]	---	---	
16.My image overlaps with my mobile image to some extent.	0.509	5.802	0.000	
Evaluative identity				
17.I believe others respect me for my association with my mobile.	0.822 [a]	---	---	
18.I consider myself a valuable partner of my mobile.	0.688	8.669	0.000	
Affective identity				
19.When someone praises my mobile, it feels like a personal compliment.	0.470 [a]	---	---	
20.I would experience an emotional loss if I had to stop using my mobile	0.586	4.327	0.000	

Note: [a]Fixed parameters.

P value is significant at less than 0.001

As shown in table (3), a covariance matrix was used as input and models were estimated using the maximum likelihood method. diverse indicators were used to evaluate the goodness of fit (GFI) of the model such as χ2 to df ratio (χ2/df <5.0); comparative fit index (CFI close to 0.9 or 1.0), GFI (close to 0.9 or 1.0) and normed fit index (NFI close to 0.9 or 1.0) and the robustness of mean squared error approximation (RMSEA) with values lower than 0.08, Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI >0.90) (Hair et al., 2010). IBM SPSS 22 and AMOS 22 were utilized to calculate the needed statistical techniques.

First, Factors affecting brand-consumer identification model which include brand attractiveness, brand-lifestyle congruence, memorable brand experiences and brand social benefits yielded good fit to the data, $\chi2/\ df =$ 4.522, NFI = 0.908, TLI = 0.956, CFI = 0.969, RMSEA = 0.072.

Second, consumer-brand identification model, which includes three sub-constructs; cognitive identity, evaluative identity and affective identity, was tested. This model yielded a good fit to the data $\chi2/\ df =$ 4.404, NFI = 0.967, TLI = 0.919, CFI = 0.971, RMSEA = 0.069.

Following Hair et al. (2010), convergent validity has been assessed through calculating the standardized factor loadings (ideally values > 0.4), all constructs items had factor loadings above 0.40 and T values were significant at 0.01. In general, these results suggest that the theoretical model used was valid. The details of the results have been shown in Table (3).

- Reliability:

On the other hand, the analysis of internal consistency of the scale produced a Cronbach's Alpha that transcended 0.7 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013).which showed satisfactory reliability for all measures where the coefficient α computed for these measures ranged from 0.73 to 0.80, it can be said that the scales developed are reliable as shown in Table (3).

7/6/Data collection:

Overall self-administered structured questionnaires were designed, distributed to the 600 of a cluster sample, and collected from respondents. A total of 540 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a usable response rate of 90%. The research was conducted in the period January March–May 2017.

7/7/ Data Analysis and results:

The researcher started data analysis process once the data had been collected to determine whether the hypothetical relationship existed as the author predicted or not. After the satisfying response rate has been achieved, data analysis process started to test the research hypotheses. From the returned instruments, the researcher coded and entered the data into the computer using. SPSS 24 for statistical analysis has been used for data analysis to calculate different statistical techniques which included the following:

(1) Descriptive statistics to describe consumers' views about the study variables.

(2) Pearson correlation analysis to find out whether the correlation among study variables as expected or not.

(3) Multiple regression analysis to test factors affecting consumer–brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt

8/ Descriptive statistics and correlations:

For hypotheses testing, means and standard deviations have calculated for dependent and independent variables, and a correlation matrix has been created. Table (4) shows the previous techniques details.

Table (4): Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of variables

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation	1	2	3	4	5
Brand Attractiveness	2.832	0.4531	1				
Brand Life Style congruence	3.371	0.47196	0.700**	1			
Memorable Brand Experience	2.109	0.5906	0.591**	0.609**	1		
Brand Social Benefits	3.321	0.5630	0.535**	0.498**	0.504**	1	
Consumer-Brand Identification	2.941	0.3935	0.654**	0.625**	0.370**	0.250**	1

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note: Numbers 1-5 in the top row represent the variables as mentioned in the first column.

As shown in Table (4), respondents indicated weak levels of mean score for CBI (M=2.941, SD=0.824), whereas brand attractiveness and brand-life style obtained (M=2.832, SD=0.4531) and (M=3.371, SD=0.47196), respectively. Moreover, the mean score for memorable brand experience was (M=2.109, SD=0.5906). Finally, the mean score of brand social benefits was (M=3.321, SD=0.47196). Next, the researcher calculated the correlations between the variables of the study and found significant and positive relationships among CBI and its expected antecedents with high correlations. In general, the correlations pattern is consistent with prior relevant research and fitted our hypotheses.

9/ Hypotheses Testing:

Multiple regression analysis was done to investigate how much of the CBI variance could be explained by brand attractiveness, brand-life style, memorable brand experience and brand social benefits. Regression preconditions have been all met where Durbin-Watson test was conducted and confirmed no Autocorrelation. Moreover, Multi-collinearity was denied through VIF which recorded high score. Finally, Kolomogrov-Siminrov was calculated to ensure that sample scores follow normal distribution.

A significance level of 1% was set as the basis for accepting or rejecting the study hypotheses and the results are shown in table (5).

As depicted in Table (5), the adjusted R^2 is 0.512 indicating that brand attractiveness, brand-life style congruence, and brand social benefits explain 51% of variance in Consumer-Brand Identification (the dependent variable). Durbin-Watson of 1.499 indicating that there is no auto-correlation problem, variation inflation factors VIF are all lesser than (10).

Table (5): summary of multiple regression analysis results

Variables	Coefficient beta		sig	Collinearity statistics (VIF)
	Unstandardized	standardized		
Constant	1.379	----	0.000	-----
Brand Attractiveness	0.494	0.523	0.000	2.267
Brand Life Style congruence	0.341	0.408	0.000	2.251
Memorable Brand Experience	0.087	0.039	0.206	1.827
Brand Social Benefits	0.240	0.185	0.000	1.539
$R^2 = 0,516$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0,512$ F value =142.497, Sig= 0.000 Durbin-Watson =1.499 Kolmogrove- Smirnov Test =0.126				

P value is significant at less than 0.001

Brand attractiveness has a significant positive effect on CBI (β = 0.494, P < 0.01) and explains 49% of the variation in CBI. Therefore, H1 is supported. Brand-life style has a significant positive effect on CBI (β = 0.341, P <0 .01) as it explains 34% of the variation in CBI. Therefore, H2 is supported. Memorable brand experience has a positive non-significant effect on CBI (β = 0,087, P < 0.01). Therefore, H3 is denied. Brand social benefits has a significant positive effect on CBI (β = 0.240, P < .01) as it explains 24 % of the variation in CBI. Therefore, H4 is supported.

Regression coefficients are significant for three out of the four proposed antecedents (where F=142.497, P < 0.01) which are brand attractiveness, brand-life style congruence and brand social benefits. Moreover, t-test values are significant at P < 0.01for the previous three antecedents but insignificant for memorable brand experience (t=0.206). The three significant antecedents have been ranked according to standardized coefficient beta as follows; brand attractiveness, brand-life style congruence and brand social benefits which recorded 0.523, 0.408, and 0.185, respectively.

10/ Discussion and Conclusion:

The crucial role played by the brand in consumers' identities' construction and maintenance is not new (Levy, 1959; Keller, 1993). Nonetheless, the concept of consumer–brand identification received less than the conceptual and empirical attention it deserved until few years ago. The current study proposed and tested an integrated framework for the antecedents of consumer–brand identification and that is how it enhanced the growing body of knowledge on this topic.

After literature review, the researcher developed a framework that includes four antecedents for CBI. Two of the antecedents are mainly cognitive in nature (Brand attractiveness and Brand-lifestyle congruence), while the other two are more affect-based (Memorable brand experiences and brand social benefits). This frame is proposed to enhance CBI literature by simultaneously testing its direct influencing factors.

The research findings support three hypotheses through revealing four main results. First, brand-attractiveness has a significant positive effect on CBI which is

consistent with previous findings (Elbedweihy et al., 2016; So et al., 2017). Second, brand-lifestyle congruence has a significant positive effect on CBI. This finding corroborates the study by (Nam et al., 2011; Alnawas and Altarifi, 2016). However, memorable brand experiences have a positive non-significant effect on consumer-brand identification. Therefore, the third hypothesis was rejected which is inconsistent with previous research (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). This is due the high percentage of respondents (%58.5) who are from 18-27 years old where the effect of memorable brand experiences on consumer- brand identification is weak.

Finally, brand social benefits have a significant positive effect on consumer-brand identification in line with the previous research (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Wu and Pearce, 2016; So et al., 2017). On this basis, both theoretical and practical implications are derived as following:

11/ Practical implications:

The results of this research suggest several implications. First, both external and internal brand aspects should be taken into consideration to make sure that consumers perceive the brand as attractive. This will induce consumer preference in attempting to generate CBI; therefore, smart phone brand managers should understand consumers' preferences concerning the characteristics of the brand's identity. To do so, managers should communicate and project attractive elements of the identity to customers. To successfully enhance CBI, managers should emphasize the attractiveness of the brand of publicly consumed products on dimensions that target consumers' value. Meanwhile, managers should understand how important other customers are when developing promotional strategies for privately consumed products.

Second, marketers in service sectors must endow their brands in an authentic manner originated from its origin and history. They should reflect status and lifestyle mutual to the brand and the targeted audience. Also, changing the layout and style and developing new products and services could create engaging-based symbolic consumption through to reflect the different lifestyles of their consumers.

Third, the results suggest that in order to build CBI, marketing managers of smart phone brands should also create rewarding and empowering staff, developing product offerings, designing service delivery systems, and creating policies and procedures.

Fourth, brand lifestyle congruence significantly affects CBI. Therefore, managers should work on creating the highest possible congruence between brands and targeted consumer lifestyle. Moreover, they should realize that brand-lifestyle congruence can significantly enhance brand identification, therefore, consumers should be pushed to perceive the brand as a salient category by either (1) delivering the values of brands that appeal to consumers and which are consistent with their values, and (2) concentrating on beneficial comparisons with other brands about important values or beliefs of potential and actual customers, and (3) making the brand more attractive and appealing to target consumers to satisfy their self-verification needs.

Fifth, in order to enhance CBI, managers must serve consumers' interpersonal goals through ensuring that their brands have high social value which is achieved by enhancing interactions between consumers and brands (could be enhanced through event marketing and product co-creation) in addition to interactions among consumers around a brand (could be enhanced through both physical and virtual brand communication). The previous implications are important to develop enduring and committed consumers' relationships.

12/ Limitations and future research Paths:

There are several limitations inherent in this study, but even though, important findings on the antecedents of consumer –brand identification among smartphone users in Egypt are reported. First, the current study implemented a cross-sectional design which implies predictive relationships not cause-effect relationships. Therefore, testing the time ordering effect of the relationships by conducting a longitudinal research design could enhance more understanding. Moreover, Future researches could conduct an experiment to examine the antecedents of CBI.

Second, as the study was limited to smartphone users in Egypt, consumers from different countries and from different cultural backgrounds could be examined to determine whether different antecedents in other populations and cultural settings would influence CBI.

Third, this study focused largely on products (smartphones as a sample product) rather services, future research could examine other products or services, such as luxury brands, service brands, and online service providers, or diverse of them, to further generalize the results.

Fourth, the variables of the current study were positioned in the model after reviewing previous literature; however, it is needed to generalize the current study's findings about the relations that were established.

Fifth, some factors have not been considered in this study for simplification, even though, other possible independent variables which significantly influence the CIB (such as, brand identity) are needed to be investigated.

Sixth, although previous researches have provided evidence concerning CBI outcomes, some relational outcome variables could also be incorporated into the present model, such as brand relationship quality which is reflected by customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Hollebeek, 2011; Hultman et al., 2015). Finally, purchase behavior or brand use frequency as actual behavioral outcomes could be also added.

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