

The effect of cognitive dissonance on customer experience quality: A survey study at Zain Telecommunications Company in Baghdad

Rounaq Kadhem Hussin Hussein Falah Wared tabaerk raad
Al-Qadisiyah of University

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Corresponding Author: tabaerk raad

Abstract: This research aims to determine the impact of cognitive dissonance on customer experience quality. Cognitive dissonance is a crucial aspect for companies striving for high quality. A state of cognitive dissonance can contribute to a decline in customer experience quality because it affects the customer's evaluation of all stages of the experience, from initial impression to post-use. A sample of 120 managers and marketers was used for the research. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool. The collected data was statistically analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and path analysis, while the formulated hypotheses were tested using Spearman's rank correlation. The research results showed that cognitive dissonance has a positive impact on customer experience quality. The research concluded with several recommendations, the most important of which is that Zain Telecommunications Company in Baghdad should support its current cognitive dissonance approach across its three dimensions to keep pace with rapid and significant developments. Companies need to adopt a cognitive dissonance theory to achieve excellence.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, customer experience quality.

Introduction: In today's highly competitive business environment, cognitive dissonance is a crucial aspect of managing relationships with external stakeholders. In marketing, we collaborate with other companies to achieve shared goals, primarily marketing products or services that can subsequently contribute to the company's profits. Customer experience is a key modern concept in marketing and customer relationship management, as companies strive to understand the expectations, behaviors, and preferences associated with the customer experience across all touchpoints. A company's success today is no longer solely dependent on the quality of the product or service offered, but rather on the overall harmony of the customer experience and the resulting feelings, decisions, and impressions of the brand. Despite efforts to improve the customer experience, many companies face the challenge of a gap between pre-purchase expectations and the actual service received. This gap can lead to cognitive dissonance, a psychological concept referring to feelings of anxiety or tension resulting from a discrepancy between an individual's beliefs, information, or expectations. Perceptual dissonance is a key factor influencing the quality of customer experience. It can prompt customers to reconsider their expectations, seek further information, or change their attitude toward the brand, which in turn affects their satisfaction, loyalty, repurchase intentions, and even positive or negative recommendations about the organization. Therefore, understanding the relationship between perceptual dissonance and customer experience quality is essential for developing effective marketing strategies that help organizations mitigate sources of dissonance, enhance customer satisfaction, and improve their overall experience.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the impact of perceptual dissonance on customer experience quality, determine the strength of this impact, and identify factors that may amplify or diminish its effects. This will contribute to enriching scientific knowledge and providing practical solutions that organizations can utilize to improve their services and enhance their competitiveness.

Section One

Research Methodology

First: Research Problem

Despite the increased focus of companies in recent years on designing high-quality customer experiences and developing services that meet consumer expectations, many customers still face a gap between their pre-purchase expectations and the actual experience they receive afterward. This gap can lead to cognitive dissonance, where customers perceive a discrepancy between what they expected and what was actually delivered. This dissonance manifests as negative feelings, cognitive anxiety, or a re-evaluation of the product or service.

This cognitive dissonance can contribute to a decline in the quality of the customer experience, as it affects the customer's evaluation of every stage, from the initial impression to post-use. It can also lead to decreased satisfaction levels, reduced repurchase intentions, loss of brand trust, or even a proliferation of negative reviews.

Despite the importance of this issue, many companies continue to focus on improving the operational quality of service, neglecting the cognitive and psychological aspects that directly influence the customer experience. Therefore, there is a need to study how perceptual dissonance influences the quality of customer experience, and to determine whether this influence is direct or mediated by variables such as trust, perceived value, or satisfaction.

The research problem lies in the knowledge gap regarding the extent to which perceptual dissonance, experienced by customers due to discrepancies between their expectations and reality, affects the quality of their experience with a service or product. It also lies in whether this dissonance is a key factor in shaping their evaluation of the experience, their satisfaction, and their subsequent consumer behavior. Thus, the research problem is clarified by the main question: (What is the impact of perceptual dissonance on the quality of customer experience?)

Second: The importance of the research

The importance of this research lies in the following:

1 .The private sector is a vital and important sector globally, especially in Iraq at present. Conducting this research will help Zain Telecom Iraq find precise solutions to the problems it faces and bridge the gap for the company's development.

2 .This research supports research efforts in the field of marketing by addressing important research questions. It contributes to developing a theoretical framework for measuring customer experience quality from a psychological perspective. It also offers practical solutions for improving customer experience and reducing cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, it is beneficial for companies in improving after-sales services and customer retention.

3 .The current research's importance stems from the significance of its contemporary topics (renewed content). This research is relatively new to the Iraqi literature and aims to study the impact of cognitive dissonance on customer experience quality.

4. The research findings and recommendations can be particularly useful for Zain Telecom's leadership, the research sample, in building a framework based on cognitive dissonance, which has a significant impact on customer experience quality.

Third: Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to measure the impact of cognitive dissonance on customer experience quality at Zain Telecom in Iraq, in addition to several other objectives, including:

1 .Establishing a conceptual framework for the main research variables (cognitive dissonance and customer experience quality) and their sub-dimensions by reviewing established intellectual and literary perspectives. This involves examining the theoretical frameworks presented by authors and researchers to develop precise understandings of the main and sub-variables. Furthermore, the research aims to identify the fundamental pillars that define the intellectual debate surrounding the overlapping and contradictory concepts of cognitive dissonance and customer experience quality.

2 .Determining the level of cognitive dissonance among customers (the emotional dimension, the "wisdom of buying" dimension within the context of cognitive dissonance, and the "concern about the transaction" dimension within the context of marketing) at Zain Telecom, the research sample.

3. Measuring the quality of customer experience at different stages of the purchase process (brand experience, service provider experience, and post-purchase experience) from the perspective of the research sample.

4. Study and analyze the nature of the relationship between cognitive dissonance and customer satisfaction.

Fourth: The hypothetical research plan:

To effectively analyze and interpret the research findings, a dynamic model was developed to translate the research concept into a practical framework. This model represents the core research concept and was developed based on assumptions derived from intellectual discussions and theoretical proposals related to cognitive dissonance and customer experience quality. The model was designed to address the research problem and questions in accordance with the research methodology. Figure (1) illustrates the correlation and influence relationships between the main and sub-variables.

1 .Independent Variable: This variable influences the dependent variable, which in this research is cognitive dissonance, comprised of three dimensions: (the emotional dimension, the "wisdom of buying" dimension within the context of cognitive dissonance, and the "concern about the transaction" dimension within the context of marketing), according to study.()

2. Dependent Variable: This variable is influenced by the independent variable, which is customer experience quality, comprised of three dimensions: (brand experience, service provider experience, and post-purchase experience), according to study ().

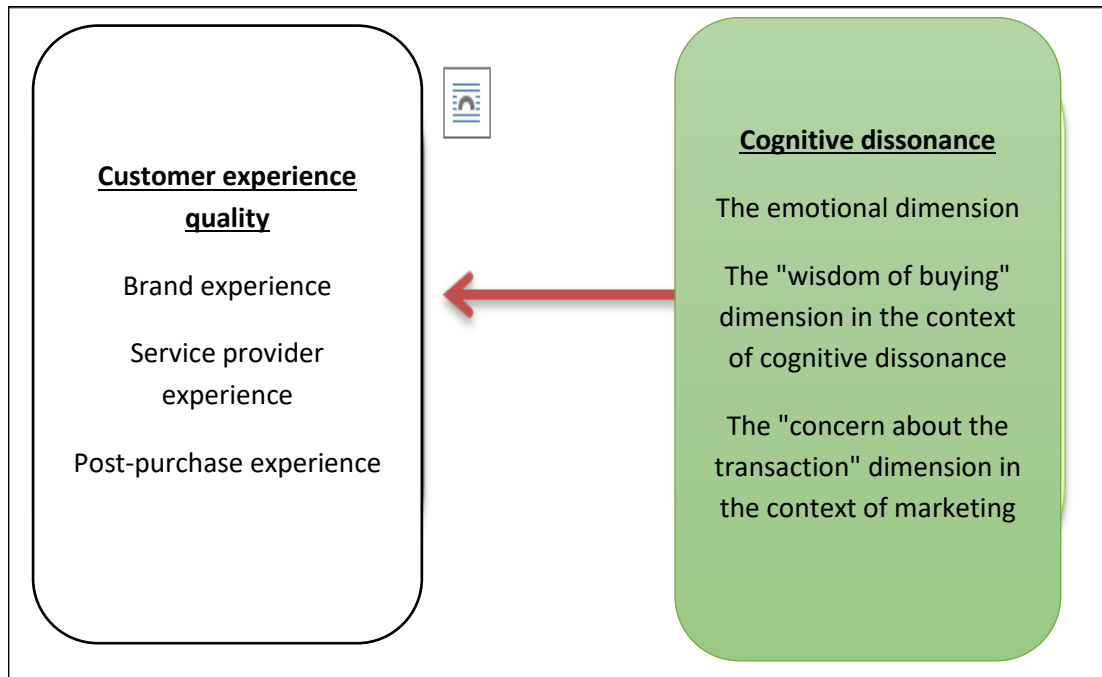


Figure (1) Hypothetical Research Plan
Fifth: Research hypotheses

In pursuit of the current research objectives and in anticipation of answering the main question, the main and sub-hypotheses were formulated within the research methodology using statistical expression to link the variables. In light of the general hypothetical framework of the research, it became easier to formulate appropriate statistical hypotheses, and to determine the nature of the relationships between the explanatory variable and the dependent variable, with a negative bias due to the absence of any study or research that proves the existence of a relationship between the variables under investigation, as follows:

The first main hypothesis: Correlation hypothesis: (The cognitive dissonance variable is significantly and positively correlated with the customer experience quality variable at the overall level of the research variables).

The second main hypothesis: Effect hypothesis: (Cognitive dissonance significantly affects the dependent variable, customer experience quality, at the overall level of the research variables).

Sixth: Research Methodology

The researchers adopted the descriptive analytical approach in preparing this research, as it is the most suitable for understanding the facts and aspects of the research. It is based on identifying the characteristics of the phenomenon, the nature of the relationships between its variables, and describing its nature, causes, and trends. It is not limited to description only, but is concerned with the conditions and relationships existing between the elements of the phenomenon and interpreting them (Attia, 2010: 138). It must be said here that scientific research in administrative disciplines - and before them in the humanities and psychology - has begun to adopt the descriptive approach, as it is suitable for studying social and administrative phenomena. It presents data about these phenomena, indicating their causes, results, analyses, and relationships, and identifies the factors affecting them, and benefits from this by coming up with appropriate conclusions and recommendations regarding them (Al-Ani, 2002: 7). The research methodology

was determined based on its variables and the objectives sought from them, as well as the nature of the data and information that will be studied and obtained.

Seventh: Scope of research

- a) Spatial Boundaries: The spatial boundaries of this research were limited to Zain Telecommunications Company in Baghdad Governorate.
- b) Temporal Boundaries: The temporal boundaries of this research extended from September 4, 2025, to November 30, 2025.
- c) Scientific Boundaries: The scientific boundaries of this research included the variables included in the study and their sub-dimensions. The two variables and their positions were: the independent variable (cognitive dissonance) and the dependent variable (customer experience quality).
- d) Human Boundaries: The human boundaries of this research consisted of the executive managers at Zain Telecommunications Company in Baghdad Governorate.

Eighth: Data Collection and Analysis Methods

A- Data Collection

The researchers relied on a group of important sources to collect the data and information that helped them write the theoretical aspect of the research, as well as the practical aspect of the study, to reach the results and conclusions. They relied on various Arab and foreign sources, represented in books, letters and theses, scientific research, and reputable journals, as well as relying on sources available on the World Wide Web (Internet).

B- Statistical Methods for Data Analysis

To complete the practical aspect of the study, ready-made statistical software such as SPSS version 23 and SmartPLS version 4 were used. The following statistical methods were employed in the analysis process:

- 1 .Testing the Fit of the Study Instrument: This included the use of confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha.
- 2 .Statistical Description: This involved the use of standard regression, the arithmetic mean, response level, response intensity, and ordinal significance.
- 3. Hypothesis Testing: This involved the use of simple correlation matrices and structural modeling equations to examine direct and interaction effects.

Ninth: The research community and the research sample

Table (1): Results of distributing the study questionnaire

Percentage of validity for fraud	Recovery rate	Number of questionnaires valid for analysis	Number of returned questionnaires	Number of distributed questionnaires	Sample size
.941	.975	113	117	120	120

Source: The work of the researchers.

Tenth: Research variables and their measurement

Modern models and knowledge field theories were used to measure the current research variables. The independent variable (cognitive dissonance) was measured by three dimensions (which affect the dependent variable, which in the current research is cognitive dissonance, consisting of three dimensions: the emotional dimension, the "wisdom of buying" dimension in the context of cognitive dissonance, and the "concern about the transaction" dimension in the context of marketing). The quality of the customer experience was measured by three dimensions: the brand experience, the service provider experience, and the post-purchase experience.

Table No. (2) Research Variables and Dimensions

Source	Number of paragraphs	Distance	variable
	4	Emotional dimension	cognitive dissonance
	4	The "wisdom of buying" dimension in the context of cognitive dissonance	
	4	The dimension of (concern about the deal) in the context of marketing	
	4	Brand Experience	

	4	Service provider experience	Customer quality	experience
	4	Post-purchase experience		

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on literature

Section Two

Theoretical Aspect

First: Perceptual Dissonance

1- The Concept of Perceptual Dissonance

Although many researchers in the literature have followed Festinger's concept (Festinger, 1957), more recently, researchers have referred to it separately as cognitive inconsistency or cognitive dissonance and dissonance or dissonance discomfort (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007: 7). In this research, to cover the full timeline of related studies, cognitive dissonance will be considered to encompass both categories in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the concept. In psychology, cognitive dissonance is described as the mental tension or discomfort experienced by an individual who simultaneously holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values, or who acts in a way that conflicts with one or more beliefs, ideas, or values, or who is confronted with new information that conflicts with their existing beliefs, ideas, or values (Borah, Gogoi, and Dutta, 2020: 63.)

*The author is trying to reconcile their existing beliefs, ideas, or values. Cognitive dissonance is defined as a state of psychological agitation that prevents the desired consistency between attitudes and behaviors. Individuals are motivated to address and reduce the contradictions between their attitudes and behaviors, and to lessen the intensity of this dissonance, as there is a tendency for attitudes and behaviors to be consistent with each other (Khawla & Fayrouz, 2021: 17). Cognitive dissonance is also defined as a psychological state of tension or discomfort that arises when individuals hold two contradictory pieces of knowledge or beliefs, or when they engage in behavior that contradicts their convictions. This dissonance leads to an internal motivation to reduce it by changing beliefs, modifying behavior, or seeking new information that aligns with original convictions (Festinger, 1957; Cooper, 2007; Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019). From analyzing these definitions, we conclude that cognitive dissonance is a multidimensional concept, encompassing descriptive, motivational, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. This reflects the evolution of the theory from its foundation by Festinger (1957) to recent research that sheds light on the mechanisms of psychological interaction with dissonance and how to reduce it.

2 - Cognitive Dissonance Theory

In the 1950s, social psychologist Leon Festinger introduced Cognitive Dissonance Theory as a theoretical framework for understanding the psychological conflict that arises when individuals encounter a discrepancy between their beliefs and behaviors, or between conflicting cognitive elements (Festinger, 1957). Festinger proposed that this discrepancy creates a state of uncomfortable psychological tension, known as cognitive dissonance, which naturally drives individuals to try to reduce or eliminate it entirely (Colthirst-Reid, 2022: 2). This process is usually accomplished by modifying one of the conflicting cognitive components, whether it be a belief or a behavior, or by adding new justifications that help restore internal psychological equilibrium (Jones and Mills, 2019: 3-4). The concept of cognitive dissonance specifically refers to the state of inconsistency that occurs when an individual's perception (such as their beliefs or values) conflicts with their actual behavior, or when two perceptions conflict (Meierink, 2019: 3). In this context, perception—according to the Psychological Dictionary—is defined as encompassing all mental processes, including sensation, perception, and knowledge, making it a comprehensive concept that includes beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors alike.

In this regard, a recent study by Melo, Sinval, and Isler (2025: 502) demonstrated that individuals possess an innate tendency to maintain internal consistency among their cognitive components, leading them to make conscious and unconscious efforts to minimize any emerging dissonance. Strategies for reducing dissonance vary and include changing inconsistent behavior, modifying beliefs, or seeking new information that supports the current position. For example, when a person smokes despite knowing the health risks, they may resort to one of the following solutions: quitting smoking (behavior change), minimizing the health risks (belief modification), or adopting the idea that smoking helps relieve stress (adding a new rationale) (Montecinos, 2020: 9-10).

From a neuropsychological perspective, Al-Adamat and Atoum (2022: 217) have pointed out that the human mind functions as a dynamic information processing machine that constantly strives for internal harmony. This harmony is a prerequisite for psychological comfort and self-stability, which explains why cognitive dissonance is a source of

psychological distress that affects not only temporary mood but can also impact self-esteem and decision-making effectiveness.

In a fitting analogy, Festinger himself compared the experience of cognitive dissonance to physical hunger, where the individual—as Montecinos (2020: 9-10) indicates—seeks to "satisfy" this psychological hunger through rationalization or change mechanisms. This analogy highlights the instinctive nature of this psychological drive, as the pursuit of cognitive consistency closely resembles basic physiological needs in its strength and urgency.

Therefore, Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance is a cornerstone of social psychology, offering a profound explanation of the psychological mechanisms governing individual behavior when faced with internal contradictions. As Colthirst-Reid (2022: 2) affirms, this theory retains its scientific and applied significance today due to its ability to explain a wide range of human behaviors. Studies such as those by Melo, Sinval, and Isler (2025: 502) have demonstrated that the need for cognitive consistency is a fundamental drive influencing decision-making and attitude formation in individuals. It is worth noting that the applications of this theory extend across various fields. Habib et al. (2025: 1906) pointed to its effectiveness in explaining consumer behavior and purchasing trends, while Al-Adamat and Atoum (2022: 217) drew attention to its role in understanding the mechanisms of psychological and social adaptation. In light of recent studies such as those conducted by Gonzalez et al. (2024: 2) and Pietrzyk (2025: 3), it becomes clear that cognitive dissonance theory continues to prove its validity and explanatory power in the face of contemporary challenges. Advances in neuroscience and cognitive psychology have broadened the horizons of this theory's application, confirming Festinger's (1957) original view of the dynamic nature of cognitive processes. Therefore, the theory remains a valuable tool for both academic researchers and practitioners in various disciplines, providing profound insights into humanity's ongoing quest for inner harmony and psychological consistency.

3 - Dimensions of cognitive dissonance

The concept of cognitive dissonance has garnered significant attention in psychological and sociological literature, where it has been addressed in various contexts, including individual behavior, decision-making, and self-justification. Despite the abundance of studies exploring this concept, the majority of this literature has not adequately focused on its applications in marketing, particularly concerning consumer behavior after purchase decisions. Much research has concentrated on the general psychological dimensions of cognitive dissonance without delving into its specifics within the market environment, its impact on satisfaction, loyalty, and subsequent product and service evaluations.

However, in recent years, several studies have emerged that have sought to explore the dimensions of cognitive dissonance within a marketing context (Sweeney et al., 2000; Telcia et al., 2011; Ravimohan et al., 2018; Ward and Mohammed, 2020), examining the impact of this dissonance on future purchase intentions, brand interaction, and the strategies companies employ to mitigate consumer dissonance. This study contributes to this field by analyzing the dimensions of cognitive dissonance more deeply within the marketing environment, and highlighting how consumers perceive and deal with this dissonance, thereby enhancing our understanding of their purchasing behavior and future trends.

A - Emotional Dimension

In the context of marketing, the emotional dimension is crucial for understanding post-purchase consumer behavior, particularly regarding the experience of satisfaction or regret over a purchase decision. This dimension refers to the feelings and emotions that accompany a consumer after making a purchase decision, which may include anxiety, tension, regret, or even sadness, especially when they realize the product did not live up to expectations or when they feel they could have made a better decision.

According to Sweeney et al. (2000: 374), the emotional dissonance a consumer may experience after a purchase is not solely a result of rational thought, but also an uncomfortable psychological state of an emotional nature. They explained that this emotional dimension is what makes the post-purchase experience so impactful and can influence future purchasing decisions and even the level of consumer loyalty to the brand. For example, a consumer may feel upset, angry, or sad if they later realize that the product they purchased does not align with their expectations or personal values.

In short, the emotional dimension is a fundamental component in understanding the post-purchase consumer experience. It is this factor that determines whether a purchasing decision will later be viewed as a success or a source of regret. Therefore, understanding this dimension and dealing with it intelligently through marketing is key to building long-term relationships with customers and reducing the likelihood of emotional dissonance that could lead to losing them.

b) The "wisdom of buying" dimension in the context of cognitive dissonance

The concept of "wisdom of purchase" is a key dimension of the cognitive dissonance experienced by consumers after making a purchase decision, particularly in high-value purchases or those involving complex choices. This dimension reflects the doubts and regrets consumers may feel about the wisdom of their decision, whether regarding the necessity of the purchase in the first place or their choice of a specific product from among available alternatives (Sweeney et al., 2000: 372). According to Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, individuals seek to reduce the psychological distress resulting from the inconsistency between their beliefs and their decisions, often manifesting in the context of purchasing through attempts to justify the decision or seek information to confirm it (Gan & Ting, 2021: 2).

"Purchase wisdom" represents the cognitive aspect of dissonance, focusing on the consumer's evaluation of the rationality of their decision and its suitability to their needs (Sweeney et al., 2000: 374). For example, after purchasing an expensive computer, a consumer might ask, "Did I really need this product?" or "Was there a better option at a lower price?" These questions reflect doubts about the wisdom of the decision, which can lead to dissatisfaction or even repurchase in some cases (Ravimohan et al., 2018: 22).

In conclusion, the concept of "purchase wisdom" is a crucial component in understanding post-purchase consumer behavior, revealing the psychological conflict individuals experience when evaluating their decisions. By adopting strategies that promote transparency and trust, companies can mitigate this dissonance and improve customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

C - The dimension of (concern about the deal) in the context of marketing

In the field of consumer behavior, transaction anxiety (COD) is a crucial dimension of cognitive dissonance. It reflects a consumer's post-purchase concern about whether they were overly influenced by salespeople or misled into making a purchase that contradicts their initial beliefs or expectations (Sweeney et al., 2000: 380). This concept embodies the psychological distress consumers experience when they suspect their purchasing decision may have been influenced by persuasive sales techniques, misleading information, or external pressures, rather than their own rational judgment (Ravimohan et al., 2018: 20). Transaction anxiety is particularly important in high-involvement purchases, where the stakes are higher and the consequences of a poor decision are more pronounced (Ward & Mohammed, 2020: 13). The theoretical basis of cognitive dissonance (COD) theory stems from Festinger's (1957) theory, which posits that individuals strive for consistency between their beliefs and actions. When a discrepancy arises—such as a feeling of being manipulated by a seller—consumers experience dissonance, prompting them to seek ways to alleviate this discomfort (Telci et al., 2011: 379). For example, a buyer might question the fairness of a transaction after realizing that the seller exaggerated the product's advantages or overlooked significant flaws (Sweeney et al., 2000: 381). This dissonance can manifest as regret, frustration, or distrust toward the brand or retailer, potentially leading to negative news circulation or a change of brand (Ward & Mohammed, 2020: 14). Empirical studies have applied the concept of cash on delivery through statements such as, "I wondered if I had been cheated after the purchase," or "I wondered if the seller was honest about the transaction" (Sweeney et al., 2000: 381). These measures highlight the role of external influences in shaping post-purchase evaluations. For example, Ravimohan et al. (2018: 22) found that cash on delivery is negatively associated with customer loyalty in fast-food restaurants, as customers who feel misled are less likely to return. Similarly, Ward and Mohammed (2020: 26) demonstrated this.

Second: Quality of customer experience

1 - - The concept of customer experience quality

The concept of Customer Experience Quality (CEQ) has undergone significant development over the past four decades, tracing its origins from service quality research to multidimensional models that dynamically address the customer journey. The starting point was the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman and colleagues (1988), which established a framework for assessing functional quality dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This model emphasized that service quality is measured by the gap between customer expectations and their perception of performance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988: 12). While this model established a functional approach, it remained limited because it focused more on instantaneous service elements than on the overall customer experience over time.

The most significant theoretical shift occurred with Pine and Gilmore (1998), who introduced the concept of "experience economics," arguing that economic competitiveness is no longer based solely on goods or services, but rather on the ability to create impactful, sensory, and emotional experiences that customers remember (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, pp. 10–11). This represented a radical shift towards considering experience a strategic element in value creation, not merely a byproduct.

Later, Gentile et al. (2007) expanded the theoretical understanding of experience by proposing a multidimensional model encompassing cognitive, emotional, sensory, physical, and spiritual aspects. They emphasized that experience is an internal construct of the consumer, formed through a series of interactions with the environment and the product, thus transcending its reduction to indicators of instant satisfaction (Gentile, Spiller, and Noci, 2007: 397). In a parallel context, Verhoef et al. (2009) addressed the customer experience as a dynamic timeline (Customer Journey) that extends through the stages of research, purchase, consumption, and after-sales, and is influenced by the surrounding regulatory, social, and digital environment (Verhoef et al., 2009: 33).

Customer experience quality is defined as the personal and unique experience that creates an emotional connection between the customer and the brand through personalization and innovation (Accenture, 2021). Customer experience quality is also defined as a process that encompasses service efficiency and the quality of human interaction, where the customer evaluates each stage of the service (Grönroos, 2022: 210). Customer experience quality is described as the overall impression that combines service quality, ease of use, and value provided, with a focus on digital integration (Tandon et al., 2023: 75).

2 - The importance of studying customer experience quality

Customer experience quality (CREQ) is a strategic pillar of success for modern organizations. The customer's experience with a brand has become more important than the quality of the product or service itself. This importance stems from the profound shift in consumer behavior in recent decades, where customers have become more discerning, expectant, and influential on an organization's reputation. Today, customers interact not only with products but with the entire experience, from research and purchase to after-sales service. This necessitates that organizations adopt a holistic approach to improving CREQ (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016: 71).

Focusing on CREQ contributes primarily to enhancing customer satisfaction, a central goal for any organization striving for sustainability. When a customer has a positive experience characterized by smoothness, clarity, and positive emotion, they are more likely to evaluate the organization favorably, resulting in higher levels of satisfaction (Oliver, 1997: 15). Customer satisfaction, in turn, leads to the formation of positive behavioral intentions such as repeat purchases, loyalty, and even recommending the brand to others—behaviors that are of significant economic and strategic value to the organization (Zeithaml et al., 1996: 34).

Second, the quality of customer experience is a crucial factor in building long-term loyalty. Studies have shown that customers who have positive and consistent experiences with an organization are more likely to remain committed to it even if competing or cheaper alternatives emerge (Klaus & Maklan, 2013: 239). This loyalty is built on an emotional foundation that goes beyond mere job satisfaction. The customer feels that the organization "understands" them and treats them with care, making the relationship deeper and more enduring. This loyalty, in turn, reduces the costs of acquiring new customers, which is critical in competitive markets.

Third, focusing on the quality of customer experience contributes to achieving a competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate. While competitors can imitate products and prices relatively easily, creating a distinctive customer experience with integrated personal, emotional, and digital dimensions is difficult to transfer or replicate (Pine & Gilmore, 1999: 98). This gives organizations that succeed in designing a unique experience a sustainable competitive advantage, especially in industries where products or services are similar in quality and cost.

Finally, the quality of the customer experience is now a measure of good corporate governance, indicating the extent to which an organization can balance profitability, meet customer expectations, and enhance value for society. Focusing on the customer as a central element in the growth equation reflects organizational maturity and a clear strategic vision, making the organization more resilient to crises and changes.

3 - - Dimensions of customer experience quality

The dimensions of customer service quality have garnered significant attention from researchers in management and marketing due to their vital role in enhancing customer satisfaction and ensuring organizational sustainability in a dynamic and competitive environment. Academic literature has explored this concept from multiple perspectives, with most studies agreeing that service quality is embodied in a set of key dimensions that determine how customers perceive the service level. Among these are tangible dimensions, which relate to the physical aspects of the service, such as facilities, equipment, and the appearance of staff, as these directly influence the customer's first impression. Several researchers have also highlighted the importance of reliability, which refers to an organization's ability to consistently and reliably deliver the promised service.

The responsiveness dimension has emerged as a fundamental element in service evaluation, focusing on the speed with which employees respond to customer requests and their willingness to assist, thus fostering a sense of customer care. Safety has also been addressed by researchers as an essential dimension reflecting customer trust in the organization, whether through employee competence or established security policies. Equally important is the empathy dimension, which involves demonstrating understanding of customers' specific needs and providing service with a human touch that respects individual differences.

A. Brand Experience

As a result of contemporary transformations in the services and marketing market, it has become essential to focus on the quality of customer experience as a fundamental factor in brand success. Quality is no longer limited to simply meeting expectations; it now encompasses providing a comprehensive and distinctive experience that leads to positive customer feelings such as loyalty and active engagement. Among the important aspects of this experience, brand experience stands out as a key dimension that shapes customer experience quality. Brakus et al. (2009) addressed this concept, defining it as a set of sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral responses that customers experience as a result of their interaction with various brand elements, such as design, identity, packaging, communication style, and the environment in which the brand is present (Brakus et al., 2009:53).

Brand experience gains its importance from being the point of convergence between the values and image that an organization offers and what the customer feels and values. Numerous studies have demonstrated that this experience directly influences satisfaction, loyalty, and referral behavior. For example, a study (Al-Abdallah, 2023: 148) in the healthcare sector revealed that the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of brand experience have a strong impact on customer loyalty. Other studies, such as (Brakus et al., 2009: 53), have also shown that increased strength of these dimensions is associated with higher levels of customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty (Schlesinger & Cervera, 2008: 112; Nysveen et al., 2013: 76).

To gain a deeper understanding of this experience and transform it into a measurable tool, researchers have turned to big data analytics, as in the study (Kim et al., 2021: 215), which redefined the concept of brand experience based on actual consumer behaviors and confirmed that integrating sensory, emotional, and behavioral influences into digital environments produces more sustainable and engaging experiences. This is consistent with the concept of "experience economy" introduced by Pine & Gilmore (1998: 102), which emphasizes that the value of a product or service increasingly depends on the experience the customer has during their interaction with the brand.

B. Service provider experience

Service provider experience (SPE) is a pivotal element in the success of service organizations. Recent research indicates that SPE extends beyond mere service delivery, representing a complex system of interactions between employees, systems, and customers. According to Bitner et al. (2017: 12/4/2017), SPE encompasses "all organizational and individual aspects that affect an employee's ability to deliver exceptional service." This concept is gaining increasing importance in today's competitive environment, where the focus is no longer solely on service quality but also on the overall service delivery experience.

Theoretically, SPE can be analyzed through the lens of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Bakker & Demerouti (2017: 89). This model illustrates how organizational resources (such as training and technical support) can alleviate job demands (such as workload and complexity), thereby improving employee performance. A study by Guchait et al. (2021: 215) in the hospitality sector showed that providing psychological support to employees increases their ability to deliver an exceptional customer experience by 37%.

On a practical level, research indicates that there are three key components to an effective service provider experience:

- 1 .Technical competence: This suggests that "possessing specialized technical skills remains the cornerstone of service delivery" (Parasuraman et al., 2020: 45). A case study in the banking sector showed that investing in employee training on new digital systems improved service efficiency by 28% (Huang & Rust, 2021: 112).

- 2 .Interpersonal skills: Groth et al. (2019: 76) demonstrate that "the ability to manage emotional interactions with customers accounts for up to 40% of the variance in customer satisfaction ratings." In the healthcare sector, results showed that physicians who received emotional intelligence training received 22% higher patient ratings (Diefendorff et al., 2020: 134).

3. A supportive organizational environment: According to Schneider et al. (2020: 93), "A positive organizational climate promotes spontaneous employee service behaviors." Research in the airline industry revealed that organizations that

implemented employee recognition programs experienced an 18% decrease in employee turnover (Yagil & Luria, 2020: 207).

c. Post-purchase experience

The post-purchase experience is a crucial stage in the customer journey, determining their satisfaction with the product or service and directly influencing their future decisions regarding repurchase or brand recommendation. This experience encompasses all interactions between the customer and the organization after the purchase is complete, from receiving the product and using it to customer service and technical support if needed. Studies show that a positive post-purchase experience fosters brand loyalty, while a negative experience can lead to customer loss and damage the organization's reputation (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016: 71).

Third Section

Practical Aspect

First: Analyzing the Normal Distribution of Research Data

Before analyzing the data and extracting the desired results, the most important question must be answered: Can the extracted results be generalized to the population? To answer this question, the study data must be subjected to tests of normality based on a set of important assumptions. These tests include the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, which rely on a p-value greater than 0.05. Table () illustrates the normality of the collected data.

Table (3) Normal distribution of items of the research variables

Variable	Kol-Smi	P-value	Sha-Wil	P-value	Variable	Kol-Smi	P-value	Sha-Wil	P-value
CDEM1	.332	0.05>P	.762	0.05>P	CEQBE1	.332	0.05>P	.762	0.05>P
CDEM2	.280	0.05>P	.854	0.05>P	CEQBE2	.377	0.05>P	.715	0.05>P
CDEM3	.311	0.05>P	.838	0.05>P	CEQBE3	.409	0.05>P	.671	0.05>P
CDEM4	.238	0.05>P	.874	0.05>P	CEQBE4	.256	0.05>P	.791	0.05>P
CDEM	.213	0.05>P	.919	0.05>P	CEQBE	.212	0.05>P	.922	0.05>P
CDWB1	.330	0.05>P	.815	0.05>P	CEQSPE1	.369	0.05>P	.714	0.05>P
CDWB2	.320	0.05>P	.801	0.05>P	CEQSPE2	.345	0.05>P	.743	0.05>P
CDWB3	.272	0.05>P	.777	0.05>P	CEQSPE3	.281	0.05>P	.791	0.05>P
CDWB4	.251	0.05>P	.841	0.05>P	CEQSPE4	.208	0.05>P	.825	0.05>P
CDWB	.155	0.05>P	.941	0.05>P	CEQSPE	.194	0.05>P	.926	0.05>P
CDCA1	.455	0.05>P	.582	0.05>P	CEQPPE1	.330	0.05>P	.815	0.05>P
CDCA2	.390	0.05>P	.679	0.05>P	CEQPPE2	.320	0.05>P	.801	0.05>P
CDCA3	.275	0.05>P	.798	0.05>P	CEQPPE3	.272	0.05>P	.777	0.05>P
CDCA4	.328	0.05>P	.806	0.05>P	CEQPPE4	.251	0.05>P	.841	0.05>P
CDCA	.308	0.05>P	.839	0.05>P	CEQPPE	.155	0.05>P	.941	0.05>P
CD	.092	0.05>P	.977	0.05>P	CEQ	.135	0.05>P	.951	0.05>P

Source: Results of SPSS VR 24

The results in Table (3) indicate that the results clearly shown in the table came in accordance with the imposed rule that pertains to the normality test, which stipulates that the significance value (P-value) of the items of the research variables must be higher than (0.05), which means that the results that will be obtained can be generalized to the research population.

Second: Construct validity of the reliability of the measurement instrument

In order to reveal the construct validity of the research variables and dimensions, they must be subjected to a set of statistical methods capable of extracting the required results. One of the most famous of these methods or coefficients, in particular, is Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which aims to measure the reliability and consistency of the measurement

tool. Cronbach's alpha coefficient stipulates that the results must be higher than (75%) in order to be acceptable (Bartholomew, 1996:24). Table (4) shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the study variables and dimensions.

Table (4) Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the study variables and dimensions

Cronbach's study as a whole	Cronbach for every dimension	Number of paragraphs	Distance	Cronbach's for the variable as a whole	variable
.976	.985	4	Emotional dimension	.976	Perceptual dissonance
	.976	4	The "wisdom of buying" dimension in the context of cognitive dissonance		
	.969	4	The dimension of (concern about the deal) in the context of marketing		
	.975	4	Brand Experience	.977	Customer experience quality
	.983	4	Service provider experience		
	.973	4	Post-purchase experience		

Third: Confirmation Factor Analysis

A- Confirmation Factor Analysis of a Perceptual Dissonance Variable

Table (5) shows the confirmatory factor analysis of the cognitive dissonance variable according to the Modification Indices, which includes three basic dimensions consisting of (12) items. Table (5) shows that all items of the cognitive dynamics variable are greater than (0.50), which corresponds to the goodness of fit. This gives a good indicator for conducting all statistical analyses. Table (5), which includes the goodness of fit indicators for the model, shows the relationships between the three dimensions. All indicators were good, and all model estimates are statistically significant at (0.05). All standard regression weight values for the cognitive dissonance dimensions are equal to or greater than 0.50, which is a good indicator.

Table (5) shows the good fit indicators for cognitive dissonance variables.		
General rule	Index	
-1-Conformity quality indicators) Goodness-of-Fit(
191.46	X2 Kai Square	A -
46	Degree of freedom) DF(b-
4.162	-DF The ratio between X2 and degrees of freedom	C-
0.921	Good conformity index) GFI(d-
0.062	Root Mean Square (RMS) Approximate Error (RMSEA)	f-
0.902	Comparative Conformity Index) CFI(g-
0.918	Lewis Tokr Index) TLI(h-
Acceptable weights ≥ 0.5	2 -Standardized regression weights (standardized saturations)	

b) Confirmatory factor analysis of the customer experience quality variable

Table (6) shows the confirmatory factor analysis of the customer experience quality variable according to the Modification Indices, which consists of three basic dimensions that include (12) items. Table (6) shows that all items of the customer experience quality variable are greater than (0.50) and are consistent with the Goodness of Fit, which gives a good indicator for conducting all statistical analyses. Table (6), which represents the Goodness of Fit indicators for the model, shows the relationships between the three dimensions. All indicators were good, and all the model estimates were statistically significant at (0.05). It is evident that all the standard regression weight values for the dimensions of customer experience quality are equal to or greater than 0.50, which is a good indicator.

Table (6) shows the good conformity indicators for customer experience quality variables.		
General rule	Index	
1 -Conformity quality indicators) Goodness-of-Fit(
126.394	X2 Kai Square	1-
50	Degree of freedom) DF(2-
2.527	The ratio between X2 and degrees of freedom DF	3-
0.901	Good conformity index) GFI(4-
0.079	Root Mean Square (RMS) Approximate Error) (RMSEA	5-

0.923	Comparative Conformity Index) CFI(6-
0.918	Lewis Tokr Index) TLI(7-
Acceptable weights ≥ 0.5	2 -Standardized regression weights (standardized saturations)	

Fourth: Descriptive analysis of research variables

This section describes and analyzes the research variables by examining the impact of perceptual dissonance on customer experience quality. This analysis is based on 113 responses from the research sample. The following measures were used: the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation. Additionally, the relative importance of the dimensions within each variable is determined using the coefficient of variation. The research employed a five-point Likert scale for the questionnaire responses. Each variable has four levels, ranging from 1 to 5, as shown in Table 7. Table 7 illustrates this, indicating two levels: two levels above the hypothetical mean of 3 (good if between 3 and 4, and very good if above 4); and two levels below the hypothetical mean of 3 (weak if between 2 and 3, and very weak if below 3).

Table (8) shows the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and relative importance of the research variables.					
Relative importance	Coefficient of variation	standard deviation	arithmetic mean	Symbol and dimensions of search variables	Search variables
3	24.207	0.919	3.794	Emotional dimension	Perceptual dissonance (X)
1	20.325	0.805	3.958	The "wisdom of buying" dimension in the context of cognitive dissonance	
2	25.550	0.972	3.804	The dimension of (concern about the deal) in the context of marketing	
2	14.531	0.613	4.220	Brand Experience	Customer experience quality (Y)
1	14.558	0.615	4.225	Service provider experience	
3	15.174	0.633	4.171	Post-purchase experience	

1 - Perceptual dissonance (x)

The cognitive dissonance variable was measured across three dimensions: the emotional dimension, the "buying wisdom" dimension within the context of cognitive dissonance, and the "concern about the transaction" dimension within the context of marketing. Table (8) indicates the arithmetic means, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and relative importance. The highest overall arithmetic mean was in the "buying wisdom" dimension within the context of cognitive dissonance, reaching (3.958), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of (3) and at a good level, with a standard deviation of (0.805) and a coefficient of variation of (20.325). This dimension was at the first level in terms of relative importance. The lowest overall arithmetic mean was in the emotional dimension, with a mean of (3.794), a standard deviation of (0.919), and a coefficient of variation of (24.207). This dimension was at the third level in terms of importance.

2 - Customer experience quality (y)

The customer experience quality variable was measured through three dimensions: brand experience, service provider experience, and post-purchase experience. Table (8) shows the arithmetic means, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and relative importance. The highest overall arithmetic mean was in the service provider experience dimension, reaching (4.225), which is higher than the hypothetical mean of (3) and is considered very good. The standard deviation was (0.615) and the coefficient of variation was (14.558), placing this dimension at the first level of relative importance. The lowest overall arithmetic mean was in the post-purchase experience dimension, reaching (4.171), with a standard deviation of (0.633) and a coefficient of variation of (15.174), placing this dimension at the third level of importance.

Fifth: Testing the study hypotheses

This section tests the main research hypotheses, which include correlation and influence relationships, as well as the sub-hypotheses that stemmed from them. The research uses statistical methods and tools to verify the research hypotheses and determine their validity. The simple correlation coefficient and simple linear regression are used for the research data as follows:

1 - Testing the correlation hypothesis

The correlation hypotheses between the main research variables will be tested as follows:

The first main hypothesis: The cognitive dissonance variable is significantly and directly related to the customer experience quality variable at the overall level of the research variables.

This was tested using the statistical software (SPSS v.26) as follows:

Table (9) Correlation Relations Test

Morale level	Customer experience quality	dimension/variable
0.000	.968**	Emotional dimension
0.000	.948**	The "wisdom of buying" dimension in the context of cognitive dissonance
0.000	.974**	The dimension of (concern about the deal) in the context of marketing
0.000	.984**	Perceptual dissonance

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the SPSS V.26 statistical program.

The clear results in Table (9) indicate that the independent variable (cognitive dissonance) has a positive and significant correlation with the dependent variable (customer experience quality) at the overall level of the research variables, as the value of the correlation coefficient between them reached (0.984) with a significant significance of (0.000). Based on these results, the main correlation hypotheses between the research variables are accepted. Moreover, based on the results of Table (9), all the sub-correction hypotheses are accepted, as they came below the significance level of (0.05).

2- Testing the effect hypothesis

Effect Hypothesis: (Perceptual dissonance significantly affects the dependent variable, customer experience quality, at the overall level of the research variables). To test this hypothesis, a structural model was built to illustrate the path of influence between the two variables (perceptual dissonance and customer experience quality). The results were extracted using the SmartPLS V.4 statistical software.

The table below indicates that the more the company in the research sample prioritizes perceptual dissonance, the higher the customer experience quality. In other words, a one-unit increase in perceptual dissonance leads to a very high increase in customer experience quality, with a standard weight of 0.765. This is statistically significant, based on the achieved significance level of 0.000, which is less than the tabulated significance value assumed by the researchers (5%), and a standard error of 0.098. The critical value is 7.453, which is greater than the value... The statistical significance level (1.96) supports the above, thus accepting the alternative hypothesis and rejecting the null hypothesis. This indicates that the increased attention the research sample company pays to cognitive dissonance leads to a higher quality of customer experience. In other words, the research sample company works to study and understand the cognitive dissonance that customers experience due to their innate tendencies, aiming to maintain internal consistency among their cognitive components. The company studies customer cognitive dissonance and encourages them to make conscious and unconscious efforts to reduce any emerging dissonance. Strategies for reducing dissonance vary, including changing inconsistent behavior, modifying beliefs, or seeking new information that supports the current situation. This provides a deep explanation of the psychological mechanisms that govern individual behavior when faced with internal contradictions. Cognitive dissonance has the ability to explain a wide range of human behaviors. The need for cognitive consistency is a fundamental motivator that influences decision-making processes and attitude formation in individuals. It also contributes to its effectiveness in explaining consumer behavior and purchasing trends. Cognitive dissonance also contributes to understanding deep psychological processes, and on the other hand, it provides practical tools that can be used in the fields of education, media, and marketing. Furthermore, understanding the mechanisms of customer cognitive dissonance can contribute to developing more effective strategies for modifying undesirable behaviors and reinforcing positive behavioral patterns.

Table (10) Results of the main effect hypothesis

Result of the hypothesis	Sig..	R2 value	Critical value	standard error	direct impact	Hypothesis path
Acceptable	0.000	76.5%	7.453	0.098	0.765	Perceptual dissonance -> Customer experience quality

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the Smart PLS v. 4 statistical software.

Section Four

Conclusions and Recommendations

First: Conclusions

This section will present a number of conclusions reached by the researchers through the practical framework of the study, based on the results obtained through data analysis using the established statistical methods. These conclusions can be summarized as follows:

a) The level of interest in studying cognitive dissonance (the emotional dimension, the "wisdom of buying" dimension within the context of cognitive dissonance, and the "concern about the transaction" dimension within the context of marketing) was high, approaching the average level. Most respondents' answers to the various items were neutral, indicating a moderate level of interest from the company under study in the components of cognitive dissonance. All these components are highly available but require further enhancement.

b) There is a high level of interest, approaching the average level, in the quality of customer experience across its dimensions (brand experience, service provider experience, and post-purchase experience) within the company under study. The overall average of the sample's responses was highly consistent, reflecting the company's management's high level of interest in customer experience quality activities and strategies. However, this interest requires further development.

c- Accepting the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a statistically significant effect of perceptual dissonance on the quality of customer experience, as the results showed that the direct effect between (perceptual dissonance on the quality of customer experience) is a large positive direct effect.

Secondly: Recommendations

After reaching a set of conclusions, recommendations related to the research variables will be formulated:

- 1 .Zain Telecom in Baghdad should support the current cognitive dissonance approach through its three dimensions, in line with the significant and rapid developments. This requires companies to adopt a cognitive dissonance theory capable of achieving excellence.
- 2 .Zain Telecom in Baghdad must establish a detailed and comprehensive customer database, as the customer is the source of success and growth. The customer is also the ideal marketer for the company, and can be relied upon to promote products.
- 3 .Zain Telecom in Baghdad must prioritize the quality of the customer experience, as it contributes to enhancing customer satisfaction, a central goal for any company striving for sustainability. When a customer has a positive experience characterized by smoothness, clarity, and positive emotion, they are more likely to evaluate the organization positively, which is reflected in high levels of satisfaction.
4. Zain Telecom in Baghdad must focus on the dimensions of customer experience quality to outperform competitors and capitalize on current opportunities to increase the company's growth.

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