Design of Productive Services Marketing Mix to Improve Brand Personality in Tehran's Chain Stores

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ABSTRACT

Investigations indicate that the reason behind the unsuccessful companies, roots in their lack of capability in taking the advantage of marketing tactics. Thus devising a productive marketing strategy in many organizations such as service organizations is of high importance. In this case, designing a productive marketing mix and making a strong brand which has a parallel personality with the recognition of the customers are the means which can have a leading strategic role for an active business in the field of services since brand personality has a close relationship with the customers' decision making. Therefore in the above research, by investigating the effect of services marketing mix including price, product, promotion, place, physical evidence, process and people on brand personality dimensions including sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, we will introduce productive services marketing mix which has positive impact on brand personality. The statistic society of the above research is the whole customers of ten main branches of ETKA chain stores in Tehran and the research data were gathered through questionnaire. Sample volume including 385 persons was determined by simple random method and by using the structural equation modeling method, the research hypotheses were examined and the final model was confirmed. Research findings showed that all the investigated relations were meaningful. Also the goodness of fit indexes of the conceptual method was an indicator of high reliability of the research in showing the relationships among the variables.

KEYWORDS: Brand Personality, Services Marketing Mix, Chain Stores, Structural Equations Modeling.1.

INTRODUCTION

Brand concept is considered as a new and impressive view in marketing and a revision in the marketing classic literature. Great organizations have proved that in order to gain competitive advantage and success in the domestic and international markets, it is very important to pay enough attention to this concept. Also in many cases, it has been observed that a great and successful organization main capability is due to its brand but according to Kapferer's model (1999), the main values of a brand are not the performance capabilities but it is the emotional capabilities of the brand such as brand personality. In fact, brand personality helps the company to drive its marketing activities parallel to what the brand represents and also it will help the customers to understand and feel the brand value (even with a little information). According to the committed investigations, when there are more similarities in the appearance and performance of the products, it is the brand personality which plays a bold role in the customers' final decision making. Therefore, the importance of considering the brand personality as a strategy to gain competitive advantage in the domestic and international markets, accurate recognition of this concept and its nature, understanding the way marketing activities affect their constructs especially in the field of services, and gaining an impressive and standard means for its measurement are all of high importance. Thus, in this research, first of all we decided to explain the brand personality concept for the audience. In the next part, we committed to measure the status of the marketing tools and investigate the causal and correlational relationship of these two concepts with each other. The important note here is that in this research, the perspective toward the marketing tools is not merely the tool itself but its capability and solidarity in creating the mentioned concepts. Thus, the main goal in this research is the study and investigation of the effect of services marketing mix in the view of Rafiq and Ahmed (1995), including price, product, promotion, place, physical evidence, process and people on brand personality dimensions in the view of Jennifer Aaker (1997) including sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness so that the way each of the elements of the services marketing mix affect the brand personality dimensions will be explored and that group of marketing mix of services that have positive impact on brand personality dimensions would be extracted. And finally productive services marketing mix which can be impressive on brand personality development will be introduced.

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2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. BRAND PERSONALITY

In case of consumer, there is a special vision toward to the construct of "Brand Personality" which is a combination of human features that are given to a brand. In fact, it can be said that the meaning of brand personality is: "A set of specific meanings that explains the natural and internal features of a brand. These meanings get personified through the consumers and the behaviors of the brand or the brand features are formed (Aaker et al, 1995)". The researchers' focus has been on the fact that how brand personality would help the customers to know his real self (Belk, 1988) and ideal self (Malhotra, 1988). The experts consider this matter as the key to distinguish a brand among a group of products (Halliday, 1996), director of consumer's preferences (Biel, 1993), and a common point of the brand and its marketing in different cultures (Plummer, 1985). Though brand personality and human personality have similar concept (Epstein, 1977), they are different in formation. Recognition of brand personality would be conducted through our understanding of one's behavior, apparent characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, and demographic specifications (Plummer, 1985). On the other side, recognition of a brand personality would be formed or manipulated through direct and indirect relationships of the customer with that brand (Plummer, 1985). Brand personality created by direct relationships is the peoples' personalities who use the brand and these personalities would be given to the brand (McCracken, 1989). Moreover, In indirect type, brand personality would be formed through products features like product category, brand name, symbol, advertisement type and distribution channels. Researchers believe that in addition to the personality features, demographic features such as sex, age, class and category also affect the brand personality. Demographic features like personality features are directly inducted by the consumers. For example in USA, Coca Cola is considered as an original and classic brand though Pepsi is thought to be young, cool and energetic. Also many consider Apple as a younger brand and IBM as an older one. Brands have tangible and intangible aspects. Brand personality is categorized under intangible aspect which is also called emotional aspect. Brand personality is one the brand's elements which is really useful for it, especially for those types of brands that have less physical or apparent differences. Brand personality helps them know each other better and take the advantage of that. Concerning this concept, since consumers consider the brands as human beings and give them the human features, brand personality dimensions can be determined by generalizing the human personalities to the brands (Gopal, 2006). Human personality elements that are determined by one's behavior, appearance, attitude, beliefs and demographic features, have a 5 dimensional model which is known as BIG 5 model. These five main dimensions of human personality includes extroversion (introversion), agreeableness, consciousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. A lot of researches conducted on this matter and all have confirmed the functionality and generalization of it among all humans and people (McCrae & John, 1992). According to the researchers of the personality, there is difference between main personality characteristics like BIG 5 and more flexible personality such the "self" concept. It is said that the main personality characteristics affect the human behaviors but environmental impressions, life events and environmental factors have little or zero effect on the main personality characteristics. But on the other side, the elements of the "self" concept are greatly affected by the conditions, life events and environmental factors (Marsh et al, 2006). According to BIG 5 model, Aaker (1997), originated a new five model, called Brand Personality Scale. She was the first to take a step to measure the brand personality model in the world of marketing. According to Aaker's brand personality theory (1997), brand personality dimensions are: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness which is shown in figure 1. The model has also been used in this research.
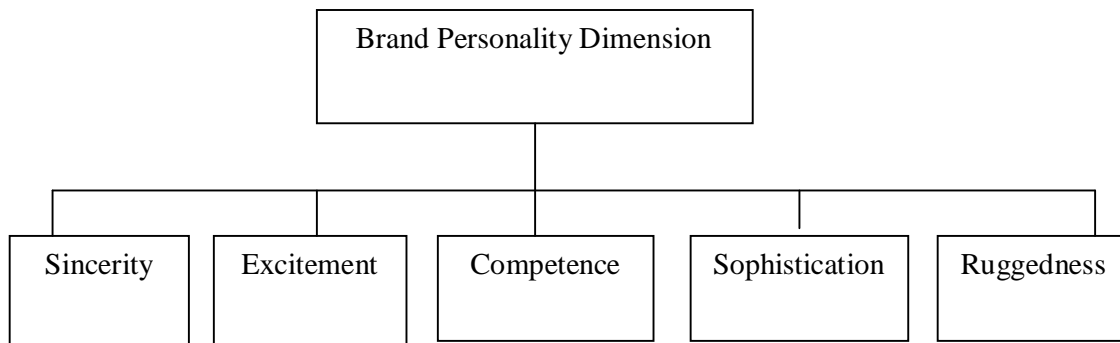

Figure 1: Brand personality dimensions by Aaker (1997)

Many researches have been conducted in case of Jennifer Aaker's brand personality dimensions, some of which is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Researches conducted using Aaker's model

Selected Reference	Scale Used	Number of Dimensions Found	Settings	Culture
Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Roper (2001)	Aaker (1997)	5 dimensions	Commercial brands	Japan and Spain
Venable ,Pose,Bush and Gilbert (2005)	Aaker (1997)	4 dimensions	Nonprofit organization	Russia
Supphellen and Gronhaug (2003)	Aaker (1997)	5 dimensions	Commercial brands	United Kingdom
Rojas-Mendez, Erenchun-Podlech, and Silva-Olave (2004)	Aaker (1997)	4 dimensions	Automobile brands	Chile
Shintaro Okazaki (2006)	Aaker (1997)	5 dimensions	Commercial brands	USA, UK, France, Germany and Spain
Kurt Matzler and Sonja Bidmon and Sonja Grubner (2006)	Aaker (1997)	2 dimensions	Commercial brands	Austria

2.2. SERVICES MARKETING MIX

Now that marketing has become an increasing matter of focus of the organizations, private and governmental institutions and nations, and has transferred from an initial point of sell and distribution into a complicated philosophy to have a dynamic relationship of the organizations with their markets, most of the small and big companies have gradually noticed the difference between selling and marketing and have committed to arrange their marketing activities. Marketing mix is a trading tool in marketing. Marketing mix includes all the activities that a company takes to affect the demands for its products (Dargi, 2005). Marketing mix is usually known as the famous "4P" which are: product, price, promotion and place. Of course this will change into "7P" in the services marketing mix. Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) considering the areas of services have introduced 7P model as the right model for the services organizations that have three extra Ps in addition to the previously mentioned 4P which are: people, physical evidence and process which will be introduced briefly as followings:

Product: Product is something that meets a need or demand of the customer. Product can be a physical thing, service, place, organization or even an idea or thought (Moheb Ali, 2002). Any product is under the function of the life cycle that contains some stages of growth, maturity and finally fall (death). Nowadays marketers conduct vast researches on the life cycle and also pay a great attention to the challenges to the each stage of the life cycle.

Price: Price is the cost that a customer pays for the product. In a more widespread vision, price equals to the whole values that a consumer loses in order to enjoy the advantages of having one product or service (Azizi, 2002).

Promotion: Promotion is a set of communication method that a marketer uses to offer information on the product to different people. It also refers to all the activities that relates to offering a message about a product non- personally through a specific media against a determined cost (Cundiff & Hilger, 1988).

Place: It means some where a product is offered so that the access for the customers would be easy. Place in marketing is the synonym of distribution. Distribution channels are formed due to the market's needs. Distribution channels are organized networks of organizations and brokers that assist each other in order to arrange the activities for the relationship of the manufacturers and customers as marketing duties (Fakhimi Azar, 2009).

People: Many services depend on the personal interaction between customers and companies' employees. The essence of these interactions would affect greatly the customer's recognition about the services quality. Successful services companies conduct special efforts for recruitment, training and provocation of the employees (Lovelock & Wright, 2010)**.** Thus it is essential for a service company to devise a policy for its employees' interaction with the customers. In this case, the role of having an exact and standard definition of recruitment, training, provocation, rewarding the employees is very important due to vital role of interaction with the people (Vahedi,2012).

Process: Process will determine the way and consequence of the services activities systems (Lovelock & Wright, 2010). Providing services and the time that a customer spends to receive the services have a great impression on increasing and decreasing the customers' satisfaction(Vahedi,2012).

Physical Evidence: Building surface, outlook, interior furniture, equipment, and all other observable signs are all considered to be physical evidence(Lovelock& Wright, 2010), and provide tangible evidence of the quality of the services of the company and will have great impression on customers' perception thus must be carefully arranged by the companies. Facilities and equipment that would increase the quality of the services would also make the customers more satisfied (Vahedi,2012).

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual model of the present study was designed using the constructs of brand equity in the view of Aaker(1997) and services marketing mix in the view of Rafiq and Ahmed (1995). This model is presented in Fig. 2.
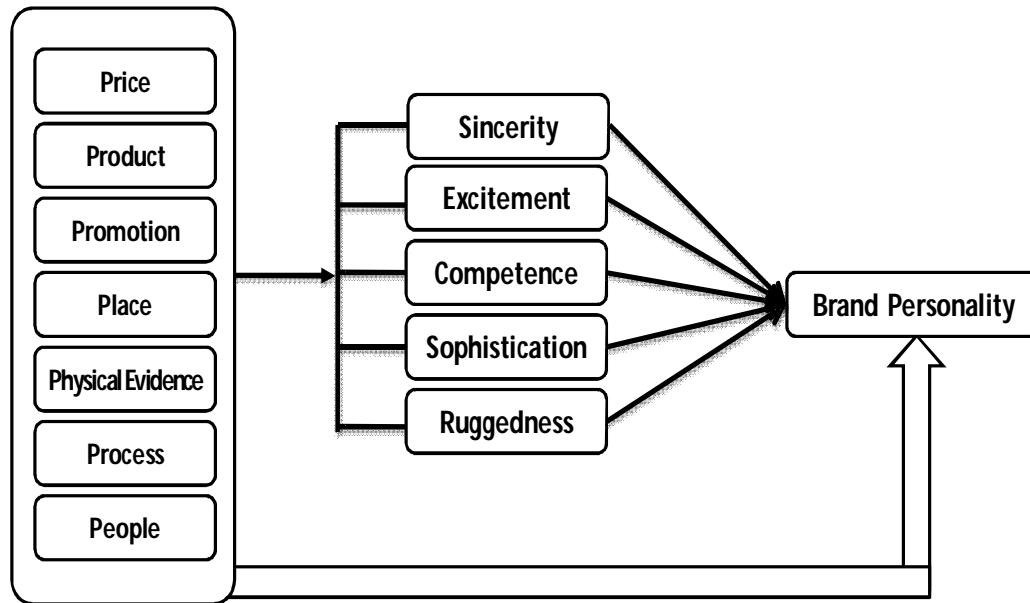

Figure 2: Research conceptual framework

According to the given model, the research hypotheses are as follows:

1. Services marketing mix affects sincerity.
2. Services marketing mix affects competence.
3. Services marketing mix affects ruggedness.
4. Services marketing mix affects sophistication.
5. Services marketing mix affects excitement.
6. Sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness affect brand personality.
7. Services marketing mix affects brand personality.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research in case of goal is considered to be applied research, because it undergoes the application of science in practice and in case of method, it is descriptive correlational. It is descriptive since it gives an image of the current situation and it is correlational as it will investigate the relationships between the variables. In this research the statistic society is the whole customers of ETKA chain stores in Tehran who take the advantage of ETKA chain stores services. Due to the vast area of the statistic society, lack of accessibility to the whole customers and being time and cost consuming, simple random sampling method of a part of the society that represents the whole society has been used. In order to calculate the sample volume, considering unknown society volume, Cochran formula has been used as follows:

Where,
$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times pq}{\varepsilon^2}$$

n= sample volume
p= distribution percentage of those having the feature in the society.
q= distribution percentage of those not having the feature in the society.
(It shall be noted that since p and q were unknown, it was considered that p=q=0.05 and thus n would be maximized.)
ε = it is he error amount that in this research like all other social sciences researches, it was considered to be 0.05.

z= level of significance which 1.96 is in this study

 (1.96) (1.96) (0.5) (0.5)/ (0.05)(0.05) ≈385

Finally the sample volume determined to be 385, but due to the possibility that some questionnaires might not be returned, 400 questionnaires were distributed.

4.1. VALIDITY

Questionnaire validity is that if the questions measure an important aspect of the research goal or not. In this research, simulate validity has been used to measure the questionnaire validity. For this matter, according to review of the literature, research backgrounds and by using the patterns of the standard and valid questionnaires, a questionnaire including 85 questions was designed. It was given to some experts in this field of area and according to their ideas; final amendments were done and distributed among the customers.

4.2. RELIABILITY

Reliability of a questionnaire means that if the questionnaire by the researcher or someone else be conducted in another time and place, the results would be similar. In order to investigate the reliability of the research, we have used the method of Cronbach's alpha. First of all, a sample of 40 questionnaires were distributed and then by using the software of SPSS, coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the elements. The minimum of acceptance for the above scale is considered as 0.7. The results indicate a strong reliability of the questionnaire that is well shown in the table 2.

Table 2: The results of calculating Cronbach's alpha

Questions distribution		Source	Alpha
1 - 9	Competence	Aaker (1997)	0.88
10 - 18	Sincerity	Aaker (1997)	0.89
19 - 24	Sophistication	Aaker (1997)	0.93
25 - 34	Excitement	Aaker (1997)	0/93
35 - 38	Ruggedness	Aaker (1997)	0/80
39 - 45	Product	Moghimi (2010)	0/80
46 - 48	Price	Moghimi (2010)	0/83
49 - 55	Promotion	Moghimi (2010)	0/86
56 - 58	Place	Moghimi (2010)	0/81
59 - 65	People	Moghimi (2010)	0/94
66 - 76	Physical Evidence	Moghimi (2010)	0/91
77 - 81	Process	Moghimi (2010)	0/81
82 - 85	Brand Personality	Aaker (1997)	0/80
Total Questions		0/83	

5. RESULTS

5.1. CHEKING THE STATUS OF NORMALITY

In this section of the research in order to determine the normalization of the data distribution, the test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov has been used. For this issue, the meaningfulness coefficient must be beyond 0.05. The results of the test are declared in table 3.

H_0: Variable is normal.

H_1: Variable is not normal.

Table 3: The results of investigation the normal status of the research variables

Variable	Numbers	Mean	Standard Deviation	K_S	Sig	Distribution
Competence	385	2.83	0/76	1.66	0.810	Normal
Sincerity	385	2.94	0/74	1.27	0.391	Normal
Sophistication	385	2.24	0/89	1.14	0.872	Normal
Excitement	385	2.36	0/81	1.67	0.058	Normal
Ruggedness	385	2.91	0/76	1.03	0.440	Normal
Product	385	2.44	0/72	1.12	0.1000	Normal
Price	385	3.03	1/10	1.57	0.095	Normal
Promotion	385	2.12	0/76	1.47	0.199	Normal
Place	385	3.39	1/06	1.16	0.600	Normal
People	385	2.69	0/97	1.76	0.183	Normal
Physical Evidence	385	2.72	0/83	1.79	0.121	Normal
Process	385	2.94	0/79	1.50	0.066	Normal
Brand Personality	385	2.83	0/78	1.42	0.079	Normal

According to the results, the meaningfulness coefficients of all the variables are above 0.05 which is the indication of all the variables distribution. Therefore in order to confirm or refuse the hypotheses, tests with the supposition of being normal are used.

5.2. STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL

As there are some independent variables in this research, in order to investigate the effect of the independent variables on dependent variables, structural model has been used. The hypothesis under investigation in a structural model is a causal structure in a complex of non-observable construct. These constructs are measured through a set of observer variables (Sarmad et al, 1999). Figures 3 and 4 indicate the standardized estimation and meaningful numbers of the structural model for the final research model. In this research, the acceptable effectiveness coefficients in the standard type are above 0.3 and the acceptable meaningful numbers are more than 1.96 or less than -1.96.
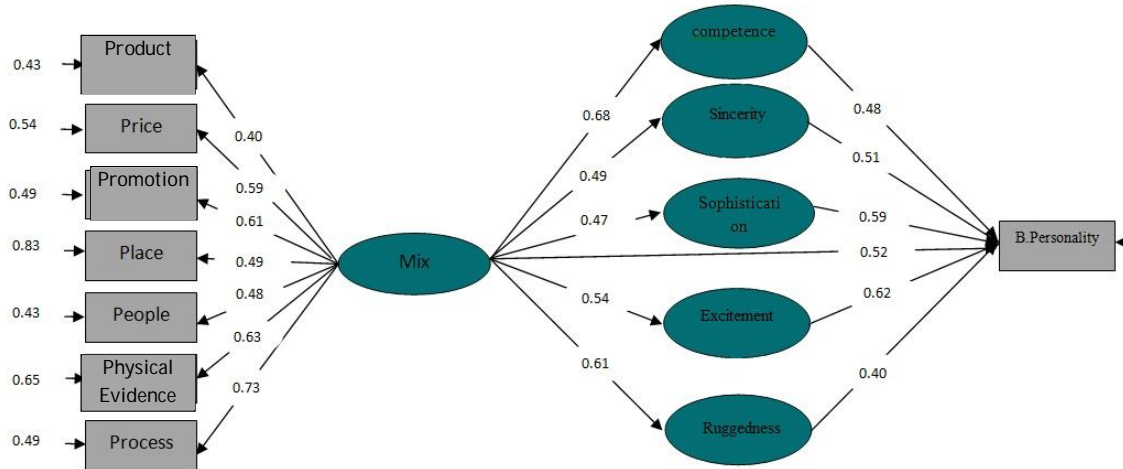

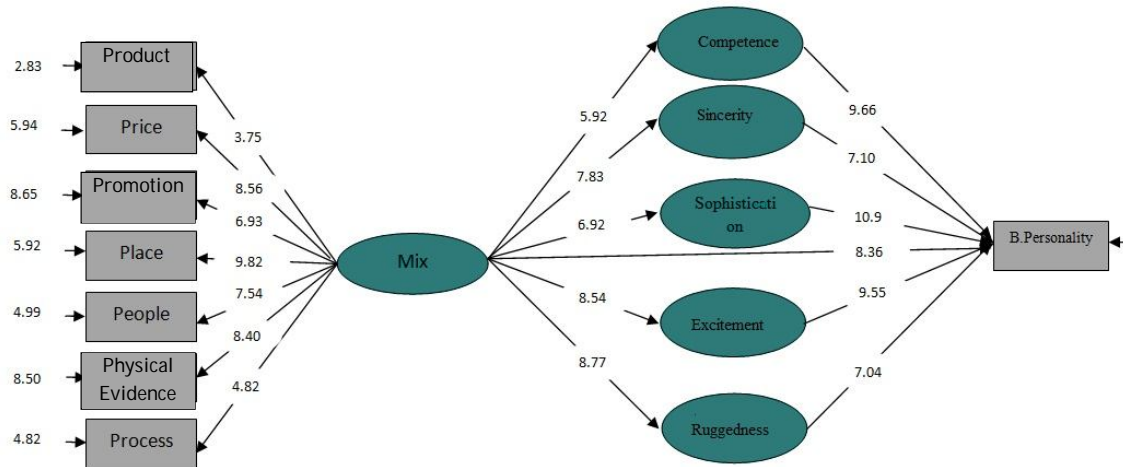Figure 3: Research final model in standard estimation type

Figure 4: Research final model in meaningful type

5.3. MODEL GOODNESS OF FIT

LISREL software provides some indexes for the measurement of the goodness of fit of the designed model. These indexes for the conceptual model of the research are as follows:

X^2 **Index:** This index actually shows the difference between the data and model and is a criterion for the badness of the model. Thus the lower it is, there will be lower difference between variance – covariance matrix of the sample and it can be the indicator of badness of the model. It shall also be noted that the rate of this index is under the effect of the quantity of the samples. In fact, if the volume is over 200, this index greatly tends to increase; therefore the analysis of goodness of fit of the model would be reliable for the samples in quantity of

100 to 200. It is also better to interpret this index considering the degree of freedom (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). In this research the rate of this index equals to 129.93.

Degree of Freedom (df): This index shows the degree of freedom of the model and shall not be less than zero (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). In this research df equals to 59.

P-Value Index: This index is another criterion for the goodness of the model. But there is no unanimous agreement on the reliability of this index. Some of the statistics scientists believe that it shall be less than 0.05, while others believe it shall be more than this (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). P-Value for this research is 0.0001.

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA): This index is made based on the model errors and like X^2 Index; it is a criterion for badness of the research. Some scientists believe it shall be less than 0.05 and some others consider less than 0.08 as qualified (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). In this research, RMSEA equals to 0.039.

Estimation of RMSEA at 90% level of significance: LISREL software estimates a confidence distance for the mean square of the model errors. This estimated domain for this research under the confidence level of 90% is between 0.066 and 0.093.

Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI): This index is a criterion for the goodness of the research. Being over 0.9 is the indicator of goodness of the model extracted from the data (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). The rate of this index in this research is 0.901.

Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index: This index is the adjusted type for GFI considering degree of freedom (df). It is another criterion for the goodness of the model. Being over 0.9 is the indicator of goodness of the model extracted from the data (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). The rate of this index in this research is 0.920.

Normed Fit Index (NFI): This index is another criterion for measuring the goodness of the model made of the data. If this index is over 0.9, it indicates the extracted model to be suitable (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). The rate of this index in this research is 0.941.

5.4 .TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

Test of Hypothesis 1: Services marketing mix affects sincerity. People consider those brands as sincere that are wholesome, down to earth, realistic, honest and cheerful. By investigating this hypothesis and the analysis of the results, it is very obvious hat marketing mix of services have positive and meaningful effect on sincerity (r=0.49, t=7.83)

Test of Hypothesis 2: Services marketing mix affects competence. Being reliable, intelligent, hardworking and successful are the characteristics of the competent brands. The results indicated marketing mix of services have positive and meaningful effect on competence (r=0.68, t=5.92).

Test of Hypothesis 3: Services marketing mix affects ruggedness. Rugged brands are considered to be tough and masculine and these brands are known by the people who do risky and dangerous things. The results indicated that marketing mix of services have positive and meaningful on ruggedness (r=0.61, t=8.77)

Test of Hypothesis 4: Services marketing mix affects sophistication. Sophisticated brands are charming, good-looking, glamorous and high class. By investigating the results, it is so obvious that marketing mix of services have positive and meaningful on sophistication (r=0.47, t=6.92).

Test of Hypothesis 5: Services marketing mix affects excitement. Exciting brands are daring, spirited, cool, young and imaginative. Results showed that marketing mix of services have positive and meaningful effect on excitement(r=0.54, t=8.54).

Test of Hypothesis 6: sincerity (r=0.51, t=7.10), excitement (r=0.62, t=9.55), competence (r=0.48, t=9.66), sophistication (r=0.59, t=10.9) and ruggedness (r=0.40, t=7.04) have all positive and meaningful effect on brand personality.

Test of Hypothesis 7: Services marketing mix affects brand personality. The results indicated that marketing mix of services have positive and meaningful effect on brand personality(r=0.52,t=8.36).

Also the indexes of the goodness-of-fit of the model including P-Value=0.0001, AGFI=0.920, GFI=0.901, NFI=0.941, X^2=129.93, df= 59 and RMSEA= 0.039 indicates a suitable goodness-of-fit of the model for realizing the various effective factors on brand personality.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Experts in the fields of economy and market do not consider brands only as a means to identify the products, but they are also looking for factors so that the consumers identify himself through his favorite brand. In fact, they make a mirror out of the brand through which consumers can see themselves. In this case, if the brand personality is similar to the person personality, he would feel closer to that brand, therefore those of marketing mix that can enhance and direct this feeling according to the goal of the marketer, would have key role in his success. In this research, we investigated the relationship between marketing mix of services and brand personality dimensions. The results showed that recognizing the sincerity of the store has a direct relationship with the services of the store. While the customers of the store find the quality of the products as

high and the prices of the products as reasonable, it would have direct effect on their recognition of that store to be wholesome and nice. Also the behaviors of the store employees can be another important factor in transferring the sincerity. Other factors such as: convenient furniture in the store, simple and friendly advertisements with no exaggeration and easy process of receiving the services all can be effective in transferring the feeling of sincerity. In peoples' view as competent brand is reliable, hardworking, and successful. Recognition of the competence has a direct relationship with the store brand. If the store can show the progress of the store to the people through advertising the success of the store whether in case of products they offer or the modern equipment and facilities in the store, it will be successful to show itself as competent comparing to the others. Marketing mix of the chain stores also affect the excitement of the brans. Exciting brands are daring, spirited, cool, young and imaginative. The products provided by the store and their quality would affect the customers' recognition of brand features like being cool, young and imaginative. Other factors such as joyful coloring of the store, playing music and taking the advantage of young employees with casual outfits, as the front stage of interaction with the buyers would also have great role in transferring this feeling. Sophistication means how charming, glamorous, good-looking and high class the brands are for the customers. If the products brands offered by the store are high class and glamorous brands, the store appearance is beautiful and modern, the employees' outfit s are nice and the store is located in the more expensive area of the city, they can all affect the customers' evaluation on how sophisticated the brands are. Marketing mix of the services is effective in transferring the ruggedness feeling and if buyers encounter the factors that convey the feeling of power (like powerful brands) in the store, this feeling would be enhanced in them automatically. As a whole, brand personality is an important factor in brand identity that can lead to the relationship of a consumer with a specific brand and will also direct his preferences. Accordingly it is required for the stores that due to their target market and store policy and the class of the consumers determined by the officials, they design the accurate marketing mix so that by impressing the customers, the store brand personality and customers' personality get parallel and also enhance the competitive advantage and store's success factors.

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