

Investigation of Relationship between Purchase Involvement and Loyalty to Brand

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Received: February 4, 2015

Accepted: May 16, 2015

ABSTRACT

Loyalty to brand is a kind of consumer's behavior in which a consumer prefers to make his or her future purchases from the same brand he or she uses now or tends to continue use of the present brand he or she uses. Loyalty to brand takes place when a customer believes a brand reflects some aspects of his perception of himself. If a brand establishes symbolic relationship with customers, individuals will be attracted to that brand and will trust in that brand and may buy it and believe in its supremacy. The present research aims to investigate relationship between dimensions of product purchase involvement and customers' loyalty in mobile phone users. It is a descriptive research in terms of research design and its sampling method was random sampling. Regular random sampling was used for distributing questionnaires among respondents. 276 questionnaires were collected. Data were analyzed by means of correlation and regression analyses. In the end, the results of testing the hypotheses show that all dimensions of product purchase involvement had positive and significant relationships with loyalty to brand.

KEYWORDS: loyalty to brand, purchase involvement tendency to purchase, pleasure with purchase, symbolic value, risk possibility, risk importance.

INTRODUCTION

The present era is full of unpredictable transformations and companies are confronted with the harshest competitive conditions due to factors like unclear borders of markets, fragmentation of markets, short products lifecycles, and rapid changes in customers' purchase desires and awareness of customers (Vazifehdoost, Vaezi and Tavanazadeh, 2014). In any organization, either a production or a service one, the main factor for organizational survival is customers. If an organization fails to attract their loyalty, it will not guarantee its long-term survival (Vazifehdoost, Rahnama and Mousaviyan, 2014). Serving customers is the oldest and also the newest issue for any institute. Most scholars believe that the best way for an institute or company to survive and be successful is to provide high-quality services. Contrary to products which have specified scales like durability and number of faulty items for measurement of quality, service performance is intangible and inhomogeneous so that every customer's experience of services is different from another customer. Furthermore, production and consumption of service quality cannot be separated from each other because services are produced by organization and consumed by customers (Tavanazadeh and Aligholi, 2014). For decades, a company's value was measured based on its equipment, properties, tangible assets and factories. However, it is now believed that the real value of a company is somewhere in potential consumers' minds (Heidarzadeh et al, 2011). Loyalty to brand is an important concept in strategic marketing. Companies design marketing strategies for increasing loyalty to brand to maintain their market share and reach higher profits. Loyalty to brand also can lead to other marketing advantages like word-of-mouth marketing and increase competitive power and it has some benefits for companies like acquisition of higher market share, new customers, supporting from brand development, reduction in marketing costs and brand improvement (Atilgan et al, 2005). As access to new media increases, companies need special performance and strategies for maintaining their customers. Today, customers compare all products, services and brands features via internet, advertisement in media and so on and select the best choices and sometimes make some companies appear. Kapferer and Laurent (1985) investigated product purchase involvement as a multidimensional concept and identified 5 factors: enjoying with purchase, tendency purchasing, risk possibility, signal value, risk importance. they showed that different aspects of involvement can have different impacts on consumer's behavior (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985). Considering the above discussion, the main question of the research is: "how is the relationship between purchase involvement and loyalty to brand?"

Theoretical background

Park (1994) conducted a research titled: "relationship between attitude loyalty and involvement in adults' health programs" and investigated relationships among involvement and loyalty in recreational agencies. The

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results showed that purchase involvement influences loyalty to brand. In fact, Park referred to relationship between product purchase involvement and loyalty to brand (Park, 1994). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2002) conducted a research titled: "impacts of product category on commitment to brand and brand implications: the role of trust in brand and emotion towards brand". They found that individuals with high product purchase involvement had higher perceived risks and were more loyal to brand. Quaster & Lim (2003) conducted a research titled: "whether product purchase involvement has relationship with loyalty to brand?". They found that involvement is a determining factor for loyalty to brand. Iwasaki & Havtitz (2004) conducted a research titled: "investigation of relationship between recreational involvement, psychological commitment and loyalty to recreation and entertainment agency". They found that a customer with high involvement has a high psychological commitment with a recreational activity and will be followed by loyalty to recreational agency. Bin Ismail *et al.* (2006) conducted a research titled: "influence of purchase involvement on loyalty to brand in Malaysia". They found that there is a direct relationship between purchase involvement and loyalty to brand and findings also showed that all dimensions of purchase involvement like tendency to purchase, signal, risk possibility, pleasure with purchase, and risk importance have significant relationship with loyalty to brand. Bennett *et al.* (2007) conducted an initiative study and investigated involvement (complexity), satisfaction and loyalty to brand in a commercial services environment (many studies before that had investigated involvement (complexity) and loyalty to brand in a consumption condition). They studied relationship between attitude loyalty and behavioral loyalty in a commercial condition and identified two important factors which influenced loyalty (involvement and purchase satisfaction). They believed that involvement (complexity) can influence loyalty via mediating variables. they showed factors influencing loyalty in their model.

Brand definition

Stephen King says: a product is something which is produced in a factory but a brand is what a customer purchases. A product may be copied by a competitor but a brand is unique. A product becomes outdated after a while but a successful brand may be durable. American Marketing Association defines brand as:

A brand is a commercial name, phrase, sign or a combination of these elements which is used for recognizing product or service of a seller or a group of sellers and differentiation between products and services. For short, a brand leads to recognition of a seller or manufacturer. A brand is a permanent commitment of a seller for presenting a collection of features, advantages and services (Kotler and Aaker, 2007). Brand and branding theory has changed and evolved slowly with the passage of time. In the past, products were nominated and nomination involved a signal in the form of a symbol which specified the originality of the product. a brand is an abstract of identity, originality, feature and differences between a product or company and other companies. It is a defensive means against prices. A strong brand has a better image of quality in comparison with other brands. Individuals tend to pay more money for a strong brand. The ultimate strength of a brand is based on its performance and not its sales promotion (Kotler, 2000).

Meanings of brand

A brand is a permanent commitment of a seller to provide a collection of features, advantages and special services to purchasers. The best brands guarantee quality but a brand can symbolize more complex things. A brand can have up to six different meanings (Kotler, 2006).

Features: The first thing a brand brings to mind is special features. Therefore, when we hear the name of Mercedes, the following features come to our minds: high price, good manufacture quality, supreme engineering, durability, credit, high second-hand price, speed and ... the company may use only one or two of these features in its advertisements. Mercedes has long said: "engineering not used in any automobile worldwide." This advertising sentence creates images about other features of the automobile.

Advantages: a brand is something more than a collection of features. Customers do not purchase features but they buy advantages. features should be converted into operational or emotional advantages. "durability" feature is converted into the operational advantage "I will not be obliged to buy a new automobile every year". Valuable feature is converted into emotional advantage: "automobile helps me feel I am important and acceptable". "good manufacture" feature can be converted into the operational and emotional advantage: "I will not be hurt in case of accident. Benefits: a brand has also some benefits for users. Mercedes symbolizes good performance, safety, credit and things like that. A brand marketer should investigate special groups of automobile purchasers who look for these benefits.

Culture: a brand may indicate a particular culture. Mercedes automobile is representative of German culture, i.e. discipline, efficiency and supreme quality.

Personality: a brand can bring a particular personality into one's mind. If a brand is a person, animal or object, what would it bring to our minds? Mercedes may convey the concept of a stupid boss (person), a strong lion (animal) or a deserted palace (thing). Sometimes, it may take the personality of a person or spokesman.

User: a brand conveys the type of user. We will be astounded if we see a 20-year-old secretary riding a Mercedes. Conversely, we expect to see a 55-year-old manager riding a Mercedes. Users of a product are those who respect value, culture and personality of the brand.

Loyalty to brand

In customers' strategy, customer's loyalty is of strategic importance for any organization. Increase in customers' loyalty is a popular subject of study among managers and scholars (Haghighi et al, 2012). Loyalty to brand is an important subject and has significant relationship with high market share and profitability. Aaker (1992) stated that loyalty to brand increases brand value and this in part results in profitability. Loyalty to brand has an important share in competitive advantage. Marketing costs make it difficult to find new customers and loyal customers are less possible to use other brands. High loyalty to a brand is an asset which results in development, high market share, high capital return and high brand value. Aaker (1992) believes that loyalty to brand is developed when a consumer believes that the brand is consistent with his self-concept or the brand provides benefits he wants (Quester and Lim, 2003). When we investigate historical roots of involvement we find that conceptualization of consumer mental involvement is highly indebted to social psychology. The origin of studies conducted on involvement is Social Judgment Theory which was proposed by Sherif et al (1965), Sherif and Cantril (1947) and Sherif and Holland (1961). This theory deals with attitude, its organizing and processes for changing behavior and judgment. Involvement is a psychological structure and Cantril and Sherif were pioneers of study in this regard. They believe that involvement is a state which occurs when conscious and semi-conscious stimulants influence an individual. They believed that individuals can have different types of involvement. For instance, involvement related to their activities, involvement related to objects, ideas, social issues and so on. Therefore, a product is an issue towards which individuals can involve.

Involvement dimensions

Tendency to purchase

Richens and Blach (1983) believed that as innate importance or personal meaning of a product increase for an individual, the individual will be more interested in that product and will have more involvement. This interest can be resulted from the fact that the particular product is consistent with his or her important values of life from his or her opinion (Bin Ismail et al, 2006). Moreover, a person will not feel involvement towards a product which is not perceived as important. However, there is no doubt that a product may be unimportant for a person but it may be related to many issues like attention to environment, hygienic issues, political position and so on. Marketers can use this potential link for attracting consumers' interest in a product which may seem unimportant in the first place. Therefore, product importance is regarded as an aspect of product purchase involvement (Hughes et al, 1998).

Purchase pleasure

According to mental involvement profile of consumer (CIP) developed by Kapferer and Larent (1985), purchase pleasure is one of the five dimensions which can account for buying a product. They defined this factor as a value based on purchase pleasure, emotional attraction and ability to provide pleasure and influence on individuals (Quester and Lim, 2003). Individuals can make decisions based on their feelings and purchase a product without even smallest awareness and knowledge about the product (Abdolvand et al, 2011). "Hedonic evaluation" has more an emotional nature than a cognitive one. Non-instrumental hedonic values are emotional and experience-based and are usually related to intangible features of seller/product. Adventurous nature of hedonic value is resulted from entertaining and emotional feature of purchase and not reaching a special target. It is clear that hedonic values are important for understanding consumers' evaluations because these values are present in consumption.

Sign Value

Some researchers talk about "personal involvement" as if there is a kind of impersonal involvement. For instance, Baudrillard, a French Semiologist (1968-1970) states that "involvement is present only when symbol is present". When consumers are confronted with several products, they look for a difference which corresponds to their "Ego". When a product selection is perceived as self-symbol, we have involvement (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985). They also believe that signal value is the very symbolic value which is allocated by a consumer to a product. In other words, this concept indicates that how much a consumer uses a product to describe his or her self-concept and personal values (Quester and lim, 2003, 25). Christiansen et al (1999) considers signal value as one of the important dimensions of product purchase. They believe that this concept is a factor which can be used in explaining relationship between consumer and product (Bin Ismail et al, 2006).

Risk probability

Kapferer and Lurent (1985) defined risk probability as a level of uncertainty a consumer is confronted when buying a product. In other words, risk probability means how much a consumer thinks his or her purchase had been weak or wrong and "risk importance" is the importance and weight consumer gives to negative results

of a weak selection. In other words, risk importance indicates how much negative results of a wrong selection are important for a consumer. In this stage, the risk which was probable in the previous stage comes true and now the consumer evaluates its negative results (Quester and Lim, 2003).

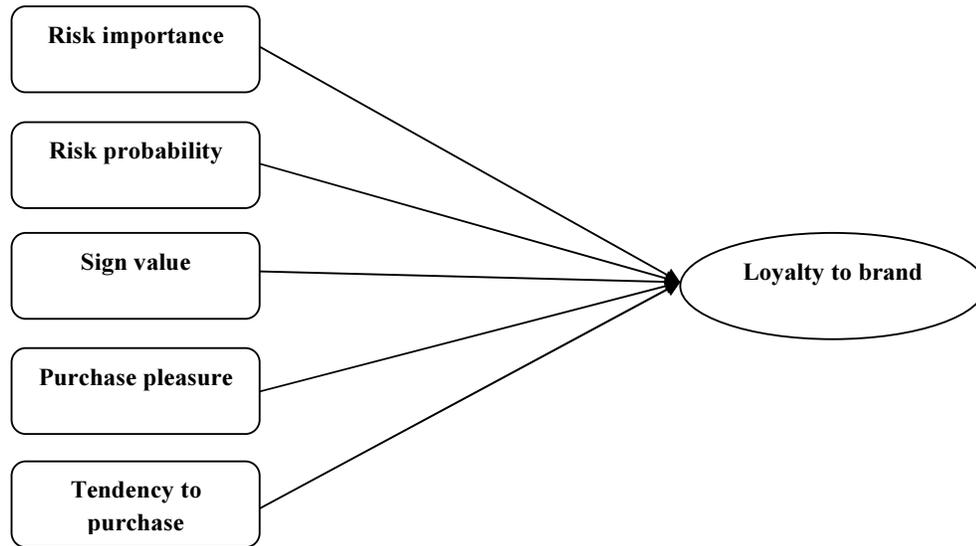


Figure 1: research conceptual model

Research hypotheses

H1: there is a significant relationship between risk importance (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.

H2: there is a significant relationship between risk probability (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.

H3: there is a significant relationship between sign value (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.

H4: there is a significant relationship between purchase pleasure (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.

H5: there is a significant relationship between tendency to purchase (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

The present research tries to investigate factors which influence loyalty to mobile phone brands in Iranians arcade in Tehran. It is an applied research in terms of goal and it is a descriptive study in terms of data collection. Furthermore, it is a correlation study in terms of data analysis which is conducted by means of regression analysis. The statistical population of the research included all individuals who use mobile phones with different brands in Tehran City. Because population size was unlimited and there were some multi-valued variables, we used the following equation for determining sample size:

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times P(1 - P)}{\epsilon^2} \qquad n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.06)^2} = 267$$

Z is standard normal probability value, alpha is error level, P is success ratio and epsilon is precision. In this research, certainty level is 95% and precision is 6%. Questionnaire was used for acquisition of data. 5-point Likert scale was used for measurement of questions from "completely agree" to "completely disagree". After preparation of questionnaire, 30 questionnaires were distributed as pretest in order to investigate reliability of the questionnaire. For investigation of reliability, we used Cronbach's alpha. The results showed that Cronbach's alpha was above 0.7 for all variables and total questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all variables and total questionnaire and the questions have been summarized in table 1). On the other hand, content validity of the questionnaire was also verified by experts. Therefore, the questionnaire has enough validity and reliability for distribution among population members.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Calculated Cronbach's alpha	questions	Research variables
0.727	1-4	Risk importance
0.714	5-7	Risk probability
0.767	8-10	Sign value
0.729	11-14	Brand pleasure
0.712	15-19	Tendency to purchase
0.847	20-25	Brand loyalty
0.80	1-25	Total questionnaire

Considering the sample size and the probability of receiving some incomplete questionnaires, 300 questionnaires were distributed for data collection. We surveyed customers of Iranian Arcade stores which is one of the main mobile phone centers in Tehran.

Table 2: demographic variables of the research

variable	dimension	frequency	Frequency percentage
gender	male	177	0.662
	female	90	0.338
age	21-30	118	0.442
	31-40	85	0.318
	41-50	46	0.172
	51 and above	18	0.068
education	High school	52	0.194
	Associate's degree	49	0.184
	Bachelor degree	105	0.394
	Master and above	61	0.228

Data analysis

Investigation of normality of variables

In order to investigate normality of variables, we used Kolmogrov-Smearnov test. The results of the test have been proposed in table 2.

Table 3: investigation of normality

Sig.	df	statistic	variables
0.000	266	0.126	Risk importance
0.000	266	0.121	Risk probability
0.000	266	0.109	Sign value
0.000	266	0.111	Brand purchase pleasure
0.000	266	0.093	Tendency to purchase
0.000	266	0.124	Brand loyalty

As it can be seen, all variables have non-normal distribution because significance levels of these elements were below 0.05. Consequently, we should use non-parametric tests for testing the hypotheses.

Investigation of dimensions of product purchase involvement

Considering the results of Kolmogrov-Smearnov test, we used binomial test for investigation of dimensions of product purchase involvement. The results of binomial test have been shown in table 4.

Table 4: binomial test for customer's satisfaction

	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (1-tailed)
Satisfaction	Group 1	<= 3	64	.2	.5
	Group 2	> 3	202	.8	
	Total		267	1.0	

a. Alternative hypothesis states that the proportion of cases in the first group < .4.

Considering the results of binomial test, sig value is smaller than alpha=0.05. Therefore, it can be said with 95% of certainty that dimensions of product purchase involvement are in appropriate situation in terms of loyalty variable (above mean value which is 3).

Research hypotheses test

Correlation test was used for testing the hypotheses. Considering the fact that distribution of variables was not normal, we used Spearman correlation test. The results of Spearman correlation test have been summarized in table 5.

Table 5: research hypotheses test

sig	correlation	hypothesis
0.000	0.543	there is a significant relationship between risk importance (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.
0.000	0.521	there is a significant relationship between risk probability (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.
0.000	0.464	there is a significant relationship between sign value (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.
0.000	0.516	there is a significant relationship between purchase pleasure (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.
0.000	0.413	there is a significant relationship between tendency to purchase (as a dimension of purchase involvement) and brand loyalty.

An investigation of research hypotheses shows that all hypotheses are supported. Further, risk importance dimension (factor loading equal to 0.543 and significance number equal to 0.000) has the strongest relationship with loyalty to brand. Tendency to purchase has the weakest relationship with loyalty to brand.

Conclusion

The results of the present research showed that within the past two decades, many researchers have dealt with the fact that how individuals describe their personality by selecting from different brands. Brand personality is considered as the main factor in a customer's purchase decision. In many markets, a brand creates a special identity for a product and links them to special groups of society. Therefore, a customer is ready to pay higher amounts for that and organizations will be able to guarantee their profitability if they are able to identify loyal customers. Of course, it must be mentioned that although loyal customers are usually satisfied, but their satisfaction is not restricted to loyalty behaviors. Today, recognition and prediction of customers' needs is necessary for firms reaching competitive advantage and market segmentation. Since a customer is a key factor in improvement of organizational agility and orientation of all goals, strategies and resources is based on customer attraction and maintenance, attraction of customer's loyalty is considered as a strategic challenge for organizations which want to develop or maintain their competitive positions. Therefore, "loyalty to brand" is an important concept in marketing which plays an important role in creating long-term benefits for the organization. The results of the present research showed that product purchase involvement has a significant role in loyalty to brand and different aspects of involvement can have different impacts on consumer behavior. Therefore, product purchase involvement should be investigated along with all its dimensions so that it can describe relationship between consumer and product. Symbolic value of a product is becoming more and more important. Today, differentiation of products based on their technical functions or their quality is difficult. Symbolic meaning of a product is another way of differentiation. Marketing managers should conduct more studies on symbolic values of products and try to differentiate their products from competitors' products. Brand managers must recognize emotional needs of consumers and increase their brand's power and use opportunities for innovation. Use of attractive advertisements for motivation of feelings and emotions can make consumers aware and attract them in addition to improving current consumers' loyalty. Marketing managers should conduct more studies on factors which affect risk perception and negative implications (especially understanding of social and intangible risk). Advertisements can improve a product image and people may think it reduces a risk. Advertisements with social risk reduction probability can be effective in reducing social worries of consumers. Marketing managers who try to increase profitability via loyalty to brand must pay attention to involvement and its dimensions.

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