

INVESTIGATING EFFECT RATE OF BRAND LOVE ON MOUTH MARKETING AND CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION CONSIDERING MODERATING ROLE OF PRODUCT CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Considering that attracting a new customer is much more expensive than establishing abroad and deep relationship with existing customers, the issue of customer loyalty to the brand and factors affecting it is of particular importance and one of the causes increase of commitment and loyalty, is making brand love in customer. The present study tries to investigate effect of brand love on mouth marketing and consumers' purchase intention considering moderating role of product class among home appliance products brands and because there is a wide variety of home appliances researcher investigates 4 class product from the market of home appliances, including: (1) Audio and Video devices (2) China shelves 3-cooking appliances and (4) heating and cooling equipment in the home appliance market in Esfahan. This study is an applied study in terms of purpose and is a descriptive survey study in terms of method. This study includes one main hypothesis (investigate effect of brand love on mouth marketing and purchase intention) and six subsidiary hypotheses (effect of brand love on loyalty, effect of loyalty on mouth marketing, effect of loyalty on purchase intention, moderating effect of product class on the relationship between customer and his favorite brand).

Keywords: *Brand Love, Loyalty to Brand, Purchase Intention, Mouth Marketing, Product Class*

INTRODUCTION

Each brand has a core of loyal and valuable customers they are the main engine which make value creation and financial income of brand. So, development and establishment of loyalty is considered as one of the key goals of all organizations. Customer loyalty reduces competitive attacks and threats, because loyal customers have very little incentives to try other brands. Also loyal customers are less sensitive to prices and costs in comparison new customers. Meanwhile, when the company enter new product into market it will extend its product line or increase diversity of its products. Possibility that loyal and committed customers in face of a problem ignore it will increase.

Marketing research is a traditional custom in commercial studies between producer and supplier. Only in the past decade assessment of business relationship between customer and his favorite brand has become an important issue. Customer's business relationship is an interdisciplinary and dynamic subject that has unresolved issues. Terms such as commercial loyalty, trust, anxiety, interest, fascination, honesty and even commercial love have been used to distinguish different feelings of customers. Commercial love is one of the recently studied subjects in relation to customer. Brand love is considered as key aspects of commercial communication with customer.

A variety of other studies have provided evidence of a sense of love brands. So that on the basis of his views people make strong emotional relationship with their brands (Forniz, 1998) that this issue remained in their minds even for years like the love of a particular person and so they become loyal to mentioned brands. The effect of customer satisfaction and loyalty is key to business success and the concept of loyal customer is increase of profitability in low cost, in today's world of development, building and maintaining customer loyalty requires hard work. Five percent increase in customer retention will double achievable benefits, no organization should assume that customer management for loyalty means managing customers for profitability, loyal customer is an excellent marketer and sale source

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(Maghsoodi, 2004). Perhaps the most important variable in research on marketing is customer retention and repurchase intention. In recent years a number of studies have investigated the relationship between affective commitment and customer retention and show positive and strong affective commitment effect on retaining customer without exception because customers are willing to support something that can identify them and are dependent on it (Bensal *et al.*, 2004). In an environment where trust to organization and advertising has declined, mouth communication is away to achieve competitive advantage. To influence opinions of other members entail significant benefits for organizations and services suppliers, marketing through mouth communication is more reliable than other marketing techniques, because only fourteen percent of people trust the things they see, read or hear in commercials. More interesting is that, ninety percent of the people trust to family, friends or colleagues who approve a product or service, because they know that there is no interest in this approval for them (Jalilvand & Ebrahimi, 2011).

In a crowded market that we observe activity of several brands of home appliances on the one hand we face reduction of purchase of these goods due to economic recession and decline of people purchasing power and on the other hand we see company's effort to distinguish their brands in the minds of consumers than their competitors.

So professional marketer must know that how to change affective variables on brand loyalty to influence repurchase intention (Brown *et al.*, 2003). Considering potential of home appliance factories in economic and social development of country and important effect of existence of these companies in increasing employment in the country, the researcher has tried to investigate factors cause better performance even ensure maintenance of the status quo of the industry in a competitive environment and economic and social crisis. So in this research it is tried by investigating effect rate of brand love on mouth marketing and purchase intention through customers' loyalty to present strategies to increase companies' performance.

Literature Review

Brand Love

Brand love is a very new and vital concept that in recent decades has attracted attention of many experts to itself in marketing. Brand love shows passionate emotional relationship between consumer and brand (Karl & Ahooya, 2006). Brand love is a bilateral interfaces, dynamic and purposeful relationship between consumers and a brand which is characterized by emotional and cognitive characteristics (Pong *et al.*, 2007).

In marketing literature idea of love has been used with two distinct views. In the first view, consumer's love towards product is discussed. Some of these studies have considered consumers' emotional connection towards products (Tomoson *et al.*, 2005). In the second view, many studies have investigated consumers love to brand. In this view researchers believe that consumers view brands as partners of their interfaces (Pong *et al.*, 2007).

The concept of love in Robin's view (1970) is a view from a lover to his beloved that includes desires, feelings and specific behaviors for the beloved. Sternberg (1986) with regard to relationship-focused approach in explaining this concept considers love as a multi dimensional concept that in describing its aspects he refers to a triangle named love triangle which includes desire of possessing something, intimacy and commitment to it. However, based on the views of this thinker, love does not always mean romantic love and it can be shown towards family members, friends and even a brand. So that, according to Foriner's view (1998) people establish strong emotional ties with brands and this remains in their mind like love to a person and they became loyal to mentioned brand.

Brand love is effective on different aspects of customer behavior. One of the behavioral aspects is customer loyalty.

Bowen and Chen (2010) believe that in describing the concept of brand loyalty this concept can be explored from three approaches: in the first approach entitled behavioral approach brand loyalty is measured on the basis of repurchase and recommendation to others. In the second view entitled perceptual approach brand loyalty is measured based on three detailed dimensions including emotional, accrual and

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active components. In the third approach which is a hybrid approach two previous approach are used in measuring customer loyalty.

Customer Loyalty

In the academic literature there is a significant amount of content to define and identify dimensions of customer loyalty. However, researchers have not yet achieved a unit definition (Fullerton, 2005). There are different definitions of loyalty in one definition loyalty is desirable attitude to a brand or service and its repurchasing (Vong & Sahl, 2005).

In another definition loyalty is defined as a strong commitment to repurchase a better product or service in future so that in spite of effects and potential efforts of competitors that product will be bought (Vong *et al.*, 2011). Loyalty occurs when customers feel that organization can meet their respective needs so that organization competitors are out of consumers' considerations and they only think to exclusively from organization (Andersen & Lindstad, 1988). Researchers proposed four kinds of loyalty including:

1. Absolute loyalty: this emphasizes desirable agreement between one attitude and repurchase.
2. Hidden loyalty: this depends on high relative attitude with low repurchase.
3. False loyalty: refers to low relative attitude with high repurchase.
4. Lack of loyalty: it depends on low relative attitude which is combined with low repurchase (Rovli, 2004).

Mouth Marketing

Today, mouth marketing is growing very fast. One of the common tools of marketing and advertising that its effectiveness is observable in service marketing is mouth marketing. In fact, the only form of marketing that is based on customers' actual thinking to your company's brand is mouth marketing. This marketing is more honest and more honorable than other types of marketing, in fact, trying to satisfy people through meeting their needs to share their experience with family, friends and society is the philosophy of this kind of marketing. Companies must try to satisfy people to share their satisfaction with others. Mouth words are more honest than your most honest sellers. Mouth words are more accessible to people and are more rapid than advertising devices because they can quickly spread such as flammable materials.

It can be claimed that mouth marketing is one of the strongest and best modern marketing; there are many studies on mouth marketing which show this subject.

Some of the reasons for the superiority of mouth marketing in comparison to other types of marketing are the most powerful, most influential and most compelling force in the market, it is an experimental mechanism of arrival. Although it is reliable and independent it is part of production. It is itself productive and grows exponentially. Its speed and extension of its range is unlimited. It stems from one or several small resources and finally ends in natural resource and has capacity to save time and labor and to encourage customer maintenance and development has less expense (Silverman, 2011).

Behavioral Intentions (Purchase Intention)

Behavioral intentions are customers' perceptions of performance in terms of service providing and whether customers are willing to buy more of a specific organization or reduce purchase (Koler, 1993). Intention is considered as determiner of action in specific route. They have defined behavior intention as mental possibility of forming a specific behavior. Behavioral intention is defined as mental situation which reflects persons' decision to take an action.

So, having better understanding of consumers' behavioral intentions can help marketer to establish better relationship with target group. Usually purchase intention scale is used to identify products purchase possibility in a specific period. Voluntary scales can be more effective than behavioral scales in gaining customer's decision because it is possible that customers buy based on some forces (Hoo, 2010).

Considering mentioned subjects, it is possible that consumers form specific method to search for information, tell their experience about the product to another person, purchasing product or service or attitudes after consuming product. Because behavioral intentions are predictors of actual behavior, it is important to measure behavioral intentions for market researchers.

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Empirical Literature of Study

There are many researches in the field of brand love however, today greater focus is on effect of brand validity, commercial name and brand love on customers' loyalty. But effect of love on these variables is just on one product class. In the present research, researchers try to measure mouth marketing in four product class and also calculate effect of class. Feshrin and Boolangar (2014) in an article entitled effect of product class on business relations with consumers concluded that love to certain brand has a considerable positive effect on customers' business loyalty and their purchase intention. Albert and Meronka (2013) in a study investigated role of brand love in relations between brand and consumer. Yasin and Shamim (2013) in a study investigated mediated role of brand love between purchase intention and mouth marketing. A summary of previous studies results about brand love is presented in the following table:

Table1: Researches in the Field of Brand Love

Researches	Researchers
Investigating effect of brand love, brand personality and brand image on mouth advertising	Smile & Spinli (2012)
Cases of data and results of brand love	Caroll & Ahooya (2006)
Investigating relation of brand love, brand image on verbal advertising	Tavakoli, Haghighi and Mira (2013)
Investigating relationship between brand and consumer	Motaharinezhad, Samadi, Toolabi & Poor ashraf (2014)
Investigating influencing factors on brand loyalty and repurchase intention in Iranian consumers with end of designing and explaining model of loyalty/advocacy towards brand and willingness to repurchase and identifying effective and non effective factors among Iranian consumers	Jalali, Kheiri & Khadem (2011)

Purposes of the Study

Main purpose of the study: investigating effect of brand love on mouth marketing and purchase intention and subsidiary purposes are:

1. Investigating effect rate of brand love on brand loyalty by customer
2. Investigating effect rate of brand love on customer's purchase intention
3. Investigating effect rate of brand love on mouth marketing by customer
4. Investigating effect rate of brand loyalty on customer's purchase intention
5. Investigating effect rate of brand loyalty on mouth marketing
6. Investigating effect of product class on relation between customer and his favorite brands

Research Hypotheses

Based on the obtained model for this study, hypotheses are presented as follows:

- Brand love effects on mouth marketing and purchase intention.
- Brand love has significant effect on brand loyalty.
- Brand love has significant effect on purchase intention.
- Brand love has significant effect on mouth marketing.
- Brand loyalty has significant effect on purchase intention
- Brand loyalty has significant effect on mouth marketing.
- Product class moderates relation between customer and his favorite brand.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

As this study tries to investigate effect of brand love on mouth marketing and customers' purchase intention considering moderating role of product class and present applicable and practical strategies and efficient programs of attracting and managing customer and finally effectiveness of advertising of these companies. So it can be said that this study is an applied study in terms of nature of subject and purpose of study. Statistical population of the present study includes customers of home appliance in Isfahan. Primary instrument of data collection is questionnaire that are distributed verbally and include 35 questions, questions related to variables are: brand love 10 questions, brand loyalty 8 questions, purchase intention 7 questions, mouth marketing 10 questions. To ensure of questionnaire validity content validity method is used. Reliability coefficient and internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated based on the obtained data using Cronbach's alpha coefficient that is value in brand love aspect equals 81 percent, loyalty 84, purchase intention 77, mouth marketing 79 percent and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of total questionnaire equals to 82 percent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

From demographic perspective, 95 people who consist the most frequency are women and the least frequency is related to 77 people who are men. Education rate at diploma and lower degree is about 37.2 and the least frequency about 8.7 percent are MA/MS. Also the most frequency belongs to 31 to 40 years old with 63 persons and 36.6 percent and the least frequency with 19 people and 11 percent belongs to more than 50 years old. Also to identify characteristics of variables of study, mean of each one of aspects and main concepts of study are presented in the following table:

Table 2: Variables Descriptive Statistics Results

Studied Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Brand Love	3.5105	0.87493	0.766
Loyalty	3.1860	0.94013	0.901
Purchase Intention	3.1395	0.93237	0.869
Mouth Marketing	3.0209	0.94158	0.887

As it can be seen from among these factors, brand love, mouth marketing have the highest and least mean respectively. To analyze data, multiple regression analysis has been used that the following table shows results of analysis and in table 3 and table 4 regression test related to main hypothesis is presented.

Table 3: Regression Test Related to Main Hypothesis

Error	Moderated	Identification Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient	Model
0.76968	0.249	0.253	A 0.503	1

Table 4: Regression Coefficient Related to Main Hypothesis

Model	Non-Standard Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	T	Significance Level
	B	Error			
Constant	1.521	0.217		6.998	0.000
Brand Love	0.511	0.067	0.503	7.597	0.000

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Also results of regression test between dependent variable (brand love) and each of these variables and brand loyalty on purchase intention and mouth marketing are presented in table 5 and table 6.

Table 5: Related to Test of Hypotheses

Model	Correlation Coefficient	Identification Coefficient	Moderated	Error
Brand Love and Brand Loyalty	A0.574	0.329	0.325	0.77970
Brand Love on Purchase Intention	A0.748	0.560	0.557	0.62057
Brand Love on Mouth Marketing	A0.666	0.443	0.440	0.70455
Brand Loyalty on Purchase Intention	A0.830	0.688	0.686	0.52216
Brand Loyalty on Mouth Marketing	A 0.549	0.302	0.298	0.78918

Table 6: Regression Coefficient Related to the Hypotheses

Model	Non-Standard Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	T	Significance Level
	B	Error	β		
Constant	1.250	0.220	0.574	5.679	0.000
Brand Love	0.622	0.068		9.132	0.000
Constant	0.660	0.175	0.748	3.767	0.000
Brand Love	0.797	0.054		14.697	0.000
Constant	0.992	0.199	0.666	4.987	0.000
Brand Love	0.717	0.062		11.637	0.000
Constant loyalty	0.543	0.140	0.830	3.885	0.000
	0.815	0.042		19.370	0.000
Constant	1.485	0.211	0.549	7.027	0.000
Loyalty	0.545	0.064		8.569	0.000

And in table 7 summary of hierarchical regression which has role of moderator of product class which is related to sixth hypothesis is presented.

Hierarchical regression indicates that 25 percent of changes of mouth marketing were consequence of moderator effect of product class. In other words, product class variable that in the mentioned regression suggests moderator effect consist 25 percent of mouth marketing changes.

This value is relatively desirable and shows effect of product class on relationship between brand love and mouth marketing.

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Table 7: Summary of Hierarchical Regression of Moderating Role of Product Class

Variable	First Phase	Second Phase	Third Phase
Brand Love	0.88	0.54	0.43
Product class	-	0.42	0.47
Love To Brand X	-	-	0.31
Product Class			
R ²	0.05	0.21	0.46
ΔR ²	0.05	0.16	0.25
F	4.67	9.4	7.1

Conclusion and further suggestions

One of the main results of this study is to achieve its original aim- investigating effect of brand love on mouth marketing and consumers' purchase intention through customers' brand loyalty. Any brand of household appliances in the market which possess higher brand love will benefit from competitive advantage consequently this factor causes advertisement by customer to other potential consumers and also increases customers' purchase intention.

To this end brand love, loyalty, purchase intention and mouth marketing have been studied and on this basis seven hypotheses have been raised which make main hypotheses of research. Based on data analysis all seven hypotheses were approved that the highest effect belongs to effect of loyalty on purchase intention, the next rank belongs to effect of brand love on purchase intention. Effect of brand love on mouth marketing is at the third rank. The fourth rank belongs to effect of brand love on loyalty and the fifth rank belongs to effect of loyalty on mouth marketing and in the sixth rank in effect of brand love on mouth marketing.

Considering results of study the following suggestions are presented:

1. To increase brand love in customers', brand managers must act in such a way that a consumer even in the first encounter finds a positive attitude toward brand. This can be done through improvement of product design, attractive packaging, high quality product, good deal when buying a product at the store, appropriate cost, service consumers expect from the brand after purchase, proper behavior about dissatisfactions, expansion of distribution network.
2. To increase brand love in customers', brand managers must act in such a way that a consumer even in the first encounter finds a positive attitude toward brand. This can be done through improvement of product design, attractive packaging, high quality product, good deal when buying a product at the store, appropriate cost, service consumers expect from the brand after purchase, proper behavior about dissatisfactions, expansion of distribution network.
3. Marketers by evaluating and implementing strategies for locating suitable sale agents place as well as attractive design of stores constantly attempt to develop and improve mental image of buyers from stores and have it under control. The price factor as one of the most important factors in purchase of household appliances which has a positive relationship with value from customer's perspective therefore, it is suggested that prices should beat reasonable levels and must be appropriate to quality and have relative stability.
4. In addition to identifying companies' contact links with customers, by taking advantage of marketing activities such as advertising, companies' advertising slogan, showing emotions and direct experiences of previous customers in advertising, behavior, appearance, way of responding, behavior and speech of employees, fields of making and presenting powerful, unique desirable character for brand to remain in customers' mind and foundations of perceived value and brand loyalty and strengthen increase of purchase intention.
5. Producers of household appliances by publishing bulletins and printed and online advertising journals periodically and making continuous advertisements and giving information of new products and their use and by making advertising slogans such as " more comfortable life with newer appliances" force

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customers to think that their products can bring more comfortable lives to them and this is a factor to buy new products of this brand and increase purchase intention in customers.

6. It is suggested to other researchers to investigate effect of brand love on loyalty to purchase intention and mouth marketing in other classes of products: clothing class, cosmetics and food and etc. also investigate effect of brand love on loyalty in home appliances market between Iranian and foreign brands and investigate society culture variables on brand love and loyalty and investigate brand identity variables, brand mentality and brand personality according to model of the present study.

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