The impact of brand identity and brand loyalty credit sales agents: mediate satisfaction sales agents

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Abstract
The purpose of this research is the evaluation of the effectiveness of brand identity and Brand credibility on the loyalty of sales agents. It aims at clarifying the role of mediator, the satisfaction of sales agents of the Tile and Ceramic industry of Meybod star of Yazd. This study is descriptive. It uses the technique of survey in data collection. Also, questionnaire is used to generate quantitative data. To measure of the brand identity, the questionnaire that was designed by Samiee (2011) was used for evaluating the customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Questionnaire designed by Erkan Bayraktar (2012) was used. In this research, the dependent variables are customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. The independent variables are brand identity and brand credibility. The Statistical populations are the customers and sales agents of tile and ceramic representing of the city of Meybod. The unlimited size of society, 384 persons as a sample was chosen based on Morgan Table. The analysis of data was conducted by using the structural equations and the software of SPSS, AMOS. The findings showed that the credibility and brand identity have impact on the satisfaction and the loyalty of sales agents (clients). The results are indicative of positive impact of customer satisfaction on the loyalty. The Findings of this research imply the awareness of the members of the organization of the importance of their role in creating a powerful brand identity and credibility. Also, the controlled communications and advance sales can be used as a useful tool in order to create a powerful brand identity.

Keywords: Brand identity, Brand credibility, Customer loyalty, customer satisfaction.
1. Introduction

Nowadays, the customer’s loyalty is the key of commercial success. By increasing the customer’s loyalty, market share and the rate of profitability of enterprises increase. The understanding of market by planning and the adoption of the suitable strategies to make customers loyal and the increase of rate of their loyalty create the long-term interests for companies and organizations (Hamidizadeh and Ghamkhari, 2010). By intensifying the competition at business and rapid technological changes, the success will belong to those companies that are able to realize and identify the customers’ expectations and values in more qualified manner and respond to them appropriately (Wang and Liu, 2007). The credibility of a brand reduces the perceived risk. Also, credibility reduces the information costs because consumers’ credibility may benefit the brand and reduces costs (Heidarzadeh et al., 2012). On the other hand, the concept of brand identity is an internal organizational factor and one of the most important issues in the field of marketing and brand. One of the ways to create the customer's loyalty to the brand is the development of an appropriate identity for the brand. The brands are identified to customers by identity and distinguished from other competitors. The managers in Tile and Ceramic industry by resorting to the presented model in this research gain a better understanding of the role of customer’s loyalty (sales agents). To achieve a competitive advantage, we consider the studied variables in this study and the way they formulate and explain its marketing programs.

2. Literature and Theoretical Principles of Research

2-1. Sales agents Satisfaction and loyalty

Loyalty and satisfaction are related, although are also clearly distinct, Morrisson and Huppertz (2010) and Sousa and Voss (2009), in their studies, consider several conceptual bases for this distinction, but, in general, higher satisfaction has been proposed to be related to higher loyalty. As has been hypothesized and borne out in the marketing literature (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Weun et al., 2004; Pina e Cunha et al., 2009), trust is logically and experientially a critical variable in relationships. Those who are not willing to trust a vendor in a competitive marketplace are unlikely to be loyal. The importance of trust in explaining loyalty is also supported by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Singh and Sirdeshmukh (2000), Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) and Rod and Ashill (2010). Trust is sometimes conceived of, as pointed out by Rod and Ashill (2010), as having two components: performance or credibility trust and benevolence trust. In a business-to-business context, Rod and Ashill found strong effects for credibility trust on relationship commitment but not for benevolence trust. He argued that this was because businesses base their purchase and selling decisions much more on performance issues. Clearly, performance or credibility trust is
importance in business-to-consumer relationships as well. Other authors have also suggested the existence of an effect for credibility trust on loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Morrisson and Huppertz, 2010). A schematic representation of the conceptual framework used to operationalize the research questions in our study is shown.

Sales agents’ loyalty is critical to conducting business in today’s competitive marketplace, and banks are no exception. Thus, commercial banks have embarked on different management strategies to promote sales agents loyalty (Jamal and Naser, 2002). Loyalty refers to a deeply held commitment to re-buy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future. A loyal Sales agent feels an obligation to persevere with a personal relationship through good and bad times (Reynolds and Arnold, 2000). The central theme that runs through Sales agent’s loyalty relates to the proportion of expenditure devoted to a specific brand or store (Gee et al., 2008). In other words, Sales agent’s loyalty is a situation where repeat purchase behaviour is accompanied by a psychological bond and repeat purchase intentions and behaviours. Loyal Sales agents help promote business by providing strong WOM, creating business referrals, providing references, and/or serving on advisory boards. Moreover, loyal Sales agents serve as a fantastic marketing force by providing recommendations and spreading positive WOM: those partnership-like activities are the best advertising a company can get (Johnston and Michel, 2008). The company can realize economic benefits from positive WOM and loyalty is linked to company growth (Reichheld, 2003). However, service failures are inevitable and occur in both the process and the outcome of service delivery. They include situations when the service fails to live up to the customer’s expectations (Michel et al., 2009; Johnston and Michel, 2008).

2-2. Brand Identity
Brand Identity. On a general level, the firm’s brand identity and what it represents is the most important intangible asset for many companies and is arguably a primary basis for competitive advantage (Aaker 1991). At its most simplistic, a company’s brand identity represents a set of promises that, for the buyer, implies trust, consistency, and a defined set of expectations (Davis 2000). The strongest brands develop a position that is unique to that company. While there is extensive literature devoted to branding, most of it examines branding among large, well-established, mostly publicly-traded firms (Keller 1993).

2-3. Brand credibility
A firm can work towards building brand credibility as it is largely driven by the quality of the information conveyed through the marketing strategies associated with a brand (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Since endorsement, as a communications tool, will comprise some of the signal of the endorsed brand, it seems likely that the credibility of an endorser will subsequently transfer to the brand. For example, film star Cate Blanchett who is committed to promoting environmental causes is perceived to be highly trustworthy. Therefore, when Blanchett endorses
SK-II skin care products, consumers’ credibility perceptions of this luxury brand are likely to be positively Celebrity endorsement affected. In sum, high endorser credibility should lead to higher brand credibility.

Brand investment has also been identified as an indicator of brand credibility, as it is assumed that firms that make large brand investments are more likely to deliver the promised product (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Hence, simple use of celebrity endorsement may be associated with a higher level of brand credibility. Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is advanced.

3. Research hypotheses

H1. Brand identity will have a positive impact on Sales agents Satisfaction
H2. Brand credibility will have a positive impact on Sales agents Satisfaction

H3. Brand identity will have a positive impact on Sales agents Loyalty
H4. Brand credibility will have a positive impact on Sales agents Loyalty
H5. Sales agents Satisfaction will have a positive impact on Sales agents Loyalty

4. Research method

The population of the study includes ceramic customers and sales agents are in Meybod city. Since the population of ceramic customers and sales agents are an unlimited number based on Morgan for unlimited communities were selected as sample 384. In this study, a simple random sampling method is used.

Prior research was used as the source of measures for the constructs defined in the model tested in the present study. Brand credibility, representing the belief that the brand is capable and willing to act on its promises, and comprising aspects of expertise and trustworthiness, was measured based on scales used by Jill Sweeney (2008). Satisfaction and loyalty measures were taken from Erkan Bayraktar (2012), Brand identity measures were taken from Samiee (2011). All items were measured on 5-point Likert scales. Details on the origin of the scales used in the study while the specific items used following scale purification. Measurement means in this research has suitable justifiability and in fact justifiability resulted in contents for more assurance we consulted questionnaire justifiability by several experts of this field. In this research for evaluation of reliability coefficient of questionnaire, we used internal adaptive method and by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. By primary distribution of 30 questionnaires, reliability coefficient for questionnaire was 0.907 which shows very good reliability.

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5. Findings of the Analysis of Research Conceptual Model

Confirming measurement models of research variables, the conceptual model of research investigated by structural equation modeling. The reason for using this method is that this model has the capability instead of examine two to two and separate variables, the relations among all variables survey concurrently. SME approach is a comprehensive method for testing the hypothesis about the relations among observed variables. The conceptual model of research considers the survey of causative relations, for providing concurrent analysis. We used structural equation method which it is used in model analysis of AMOS software that is one of the most famous software's for performing structural equations.

The results of SEM analysis were depicted in Figure 1, the overall model were CMIN X^2=121.675, DF= 123 p=0.0 The fit indices were all in acceptable ranges with CFI= 0.980 , TLI=0.974 and RMSEA=0.047. Models with cut-off values above 0.90 for CFI, and below 0.08 for RMSEA are considered to have a good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

5-1 Structural model results

Figure 2 displayed all of the structural relationships among the studied constructs; path coefficients and their significance, for each dependent construct are also presented in this figure. As indicated in Figure 1 all hypotheses, were supported by the data. The hypothesized relationships were found to be significant in the proposed directions.
Figure 1. Conceptual model

Table 1. Results of research hypotheses test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Statistics t</th>
<th>Regression coefficient</th>
<th>Test result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1. Brand identity will have a positive impact on Sales agents Satisfaction</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2. Brand credibility will have a positive impact on Sales agents Satisfaction</td>
<td>14.63</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3. Brand identity will have a positive impact on Sales agents Loyalty</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4. Brand credibility will have a positive impact on Sales agents Loyalty</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5. Sales agents Satisfaction will have a positive impact on Sales agents Loyalty</td>
<td>11.09</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion and conclusion

Christiane (2004), in her study of brand identity, achieved the existence of the relationship between long-term relations of customers with an organization and its organization identity particularly after its presentation brand of organization. A study was conducted By Foster and Cadogan in 2013, refers to the relationship between the organization's brand differentiations (the dimensions of brand identity) with the customers loyalty that mentioned studies supports the results of our study.

Tsai (2011) in his study, focused on creating the relationship of customers with the brand and making them loyal. He examined the development and modification of the management of model of strategic communications of brand and came to the conclusion that by making products with different features, we can maximize the customer relationships with brands and manage and develop their loyalty to the brand. Abdul and Mahin (2000) elaborated on issue of what is appropriate to satisfy the needs and demands of customers by a specific brand. This leads to loyalty to a particular brand (Ranjbarian and Barari, 2010). Carlson et al. (2009) examined in their studies the experience of brand’s role in moderating health of the brand personality and its position to predict the identity of customers and their buying behavior. In a study, Wang & Yang, (2011) in China surveyed the impact of brand credibility and the experience of brand on the willing to buy. The results of studies showed that the brand credibility had a significant positive influence on the willingness to buy and the experience of brand acts as a positive modifier in the relationship between brand credibility and willingness to buy. Matos (2009), also in his studies highlighted role of brand credibility in creating a motivation in customers for the use of brand and their loyalty. Our research also was aligned with the findings of the research mentioned in this section. As well as Num et al (2011) in their study stated that dimensions such as offering and brand differentiation in comparison with other products and the location of its offering, behavior and manner the sellers have a positive impact on the on people's experience of the brand along with their brand loyalty to the organization.

Rumsey and Sohi (2013) also found the direct influence of the trust and brand credibility on the behavioral loyalty of customers of organization. In addition, they concluded that customers purchase from a familiar and valid brand would cause the reduction of the perceived risk and thus increases brand loyalty. Patrick et al (2001), concluded that the customers’ satisfaction and brand loyalty are significant relationships between the satisfaction of a person's use of a particular brand and perceived value of that brand with his willingness to repurchase the brand. Our research also aligned with the findings of the research which are mentioned in this section.
References


