Effect of Integrated Marketing Communication Infrastructures on Brand Personality to Improve the Performance of the Brand in Iran's Chain Stores

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Abstract

Since we are living in a global market nowadays, the role of marketing communications on the performance of companies is very evident. Companies are no longer trying to just sale their products, since they have found out that optimum communication with the customers, and making them confident can lead to attracting and maintaining them. On the other hand, while selection, each of the consumers, chooses the brand which has similarities with his/her personal characteristics. Brand personality aspects may have specific functions in different ways or affect the preferences of consumers due to different reasons. In this research, it is tried to investigate the effect of integrated marketing communication (IMC) variable including market-orientation, customer-orientation, and brand-orientation infrastructures on the mediator variable of brand personality in order to improve the brand performance in ETKA Chain Stores. The brand personality is based on the Jennifer Aaker's model and contains 5 properties of sincerity, competency, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness. Employing SPSS 18, and LISREL 8.5 software, the data was analyzed. Results are presented in the sections of descriptive and illative findings. In descriptive statistics section, statistical indices of average, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, and graph have been used. Also, in this section, exploratory factor analysis is performed. In illative statistics section, using LISREL software, model fitting parameters and indices are investigated. Moreover, in this section, confirmatory factor analysis and investigation of the correlation between variables are performed and finally, using multiple regressions, effect of the variables is studied. Results indicate that the three components of market-orientation, customer-orientation, and brand-orientation (IMC infrastructures) affect all five properties of brand personality and improvement of brand performance. Certainly, the foremost effect of these three components has been on brand excitement and competency. Also, four characteristics of sincerity, excitement, sophistication and ruggedness affect performance improvement and only brand competency has no effect on improvement of brand performance.

Keywords: Brand-orientation, customer-orientation, market-orientation, brand personality, improving brand performance.

Introduction

Appearance of newfound and effective methods in the field of marketing leads to the conclusion that we are living in a unique global market in which we have types of brands, communication methods, and shopping techniques around us. In today's variable environment, marketing communications of companies for growth, survival, and higher interaction with customers and consequently increasing the share of market and customer plays an important role. Companies are no longer trying to just sale their products, since they have found out that the optimum communication with the customers and making them confident can lead to attracting and maintaining them. On the other hand, increment of the amount and flow of information should be considered, since it further complicates the construction of marketing communication programs. Methods of introducing and presenting products, mode and type of advertisements, quality of the products and brand of the company, and most importantly type of marketing communications of a company have considerable importance, in this regard and can lead to

success of companies in this competitive market. The novel phenomenon in marketing field entitled "Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)" is discussed as a competitive advantage for the companies. In this research, investigating the effect of factors affecting these communications i.e. "customer-orientation, brand-orientation, competitive-orientation" on brand personality, it is tried to propose solutions for improving the brand performance (for increasing sales, causing higher share in market,).

Nowadays, several novel concepts on marketing communications have been presented due to globalization, and development of new technologies. In 1993, a novel concept named Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) was introduced. IMC is a customer-oriented managing process which aims to create or effectively vary the nature and integration of communicational tools of the companies in order to achieve communicational harmony. As a result, by integration of communicational tools in addition to improving the performance of name and brand, enhances the share of

market and customer and this issue from most researchers' viewpoint is a competitive advantage in the market. IMC system means all the messages of the company, all the images that the customers have from the company and its products in their mind, base and the position of the company in the market and finally the identity of the company in the whole system of marketing communications become integrated. IMC is the process of managing the relations with the customers which tries to direct the fundamental values of the brand by communicational activities, since the ultimate result of improving such communications is to improve the brand performance and finally leading to higher profit and sales. In this research, IMC infrastructures are considered which include three components of brand-orientation, customer-orientation, and market-orientation. Furthermore, brand personality is investigated based on the Aaker's model in five aspects of sincerity, competency, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness. The effect of IMC infrastructures on brand personality is studied and ultimately the effect of these factors on improving the brand performance is examined.

Hypotheses and Conceptual Model: i. Customer-orientation, brand-orientation, and market-orientation affect brand sincerity. ii. Customer-orientation, brand-orientation, and market-orientation affect brand excitement. iii. Customer-orientation, brand-orientation, and market-orientation affect brand competency. iv. Customer-orientation, brand-orientation, and market-orientation affect brand sophistication. v. Customer-orientation, brand-orientation, and market-orientation affect brand ruggedness. vi. Customer-orientation, brand-orientation, and market-orientation affect improvement of brand performance. vii. Brand sincerity affects improvement of the brand performance. viii. Brand excitement affects improvement of the brand performance. ix. Brand competency affects

improvement of the brand performance. x. Brand sophistication affects improvement of the brand performance. xi. Brand ruggedness affects improvement of the brand performance.

Research Background: Integrated Marketing Communications: Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is a process for planning, execution, and monitoring of brand messages which creates the relation with customer. IMC is indicator of synergy, creativity, and integration in marketing communications of the company[1,2]. One of the results of integration is synergy. Interaction of single sections is in the way that integration makes the whole greater than sum of its sections. Infrastructures of these relations include three components of brand-orientation, market-orientation, and customer-orientation[3]. i. Brand orientation: It refers to the concept that company recognizes the significance of a brand as a valuable asset and focuses marketing strategy, and its activities on developing the capability of building strong brands. Brand-orientation as an approach which introduces organization circulation process centered on creating, development, and support from brand recognition in the start of interactions by the target customers in order to achieve permanent competitive advantage in the form of the brand[4]. ii. Market-orientation: It is a management approach which has an operating application and based on it, companies mainly try to create permanent added value for their customers and consequently close monitoring of their market to be able to quickly respond to fast growth of their variable needs. The ultimate goal of a market-oriented company is to create added value for the customers who use the resources and capabilities of these companies[5,6,7]. iii. Customer-orientation: It is a procedure in which the organization works by measuring the thoughts, conditions, opinions, and suggestions of the customer and tries to meet the customers' leanings, demands, and needs according to facilities[8].
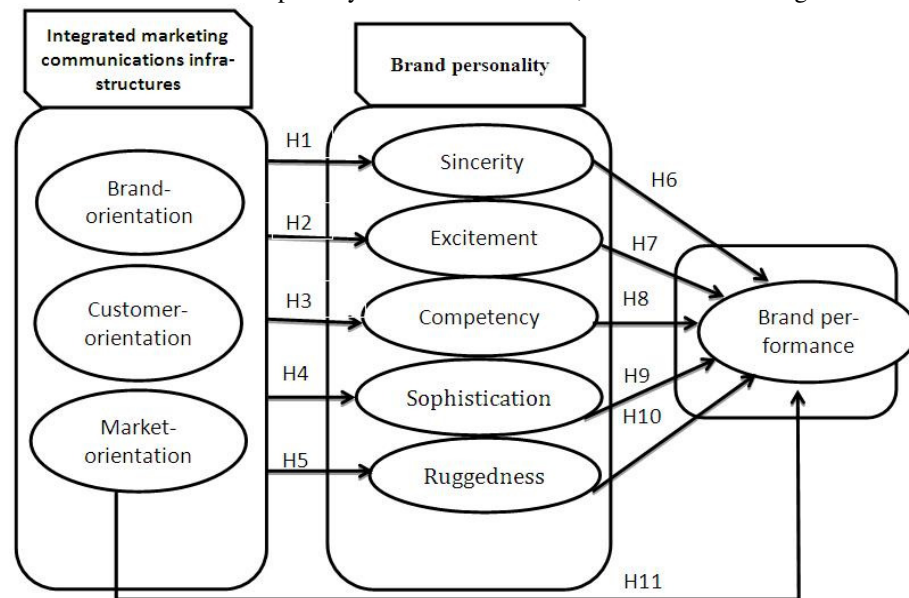

Figure-1
The main framework of the assumptions of the research

Brand Personality: Aaker defined brand personality as the set of human characteristics accompanying brand, brands are from non-human bodies though. Brand personality is an attractive and gracious concept in today's marketing. Aaker has defined it as one of the main dimensions of brand personality and described it as the closest variable to decision making process of the consumer for the shopping. Brand personality is human properties which are attributed to brands. Nowadays, a huge attention is devoted to personality of commercial names to the extent that marketers try to design the personality of commercial names proportional to dominant personality of consumers so that their products be welcomed[9]. In fact, a commercial name with a specific personality is attractive for the customer, since it is used as a tool for creating, and expressing the identity. On the other hand, it has value for the company, since it is used as a valuable source for differentiation and positioning and also a tool for creating an emotional relation with the customers[10]. Personality of a commercial name is the set of human traits which are associated to a commercial name. In another definition, Kotler mentioned the personality of the commercial name as a special combination of human properties which may be attributed to a specific brand. However, the personality of a commercial name is affected by interaction between two main factors. One is effort of service supplying company to attribute to its commercial name as the personality, and the other is perception of the customers relative to the personality of the commercial name. These are not always necessarily equal[11]. Personal properties of human beings are specified using multi-dimensional factors like individual behavior, appearance, approach, beliefs, and demographic characteristics. Based on Trait theory, it is observed that there are five stable personality dimensions. Also, these dimensions of human personality are called "five bigs". Five bigs of dimensions of human personality are extroversion/introversion, compatibility, awareness (consciousness), emotional stability, and culture[12]. Several different research have confirmed the issue that for better understanding the image of a commercial name, personality metaphor can be used for the commercial name, but before the paper entitled "dimensions of brand personality" written by Jennifer Aaker, there was no agreement regarding its classification[13]. This paper could offer a theoretical framework and novel method regarding the concept of personality of commercial names which its validity was approved by several later studies. Aaker using a theoretical framework regarding classification of personal properties of human beings in psychology focused on the issue that how to benefit this framework for classification of commercial names[14]. In this paper, she examined personal dimesions under 114 properties for describing 37 different commercial names and by classifying these properties and by being inspired from "the five big properties" regarding human personality in psychology, proposed "the five big properties" in the field of commercial name personality. Aaker introduced sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness as these dimensions. This pattern shows that these brand personality dimensions with different methods due to different reasons work or impact customer's priority. Sincerety, excitement, and competence show an inherent part of human personality while sophistication and ruggedness are dimensions from individual desires. Brands affect customer decisions for shopping in each of the above methods, or by a combination of them.
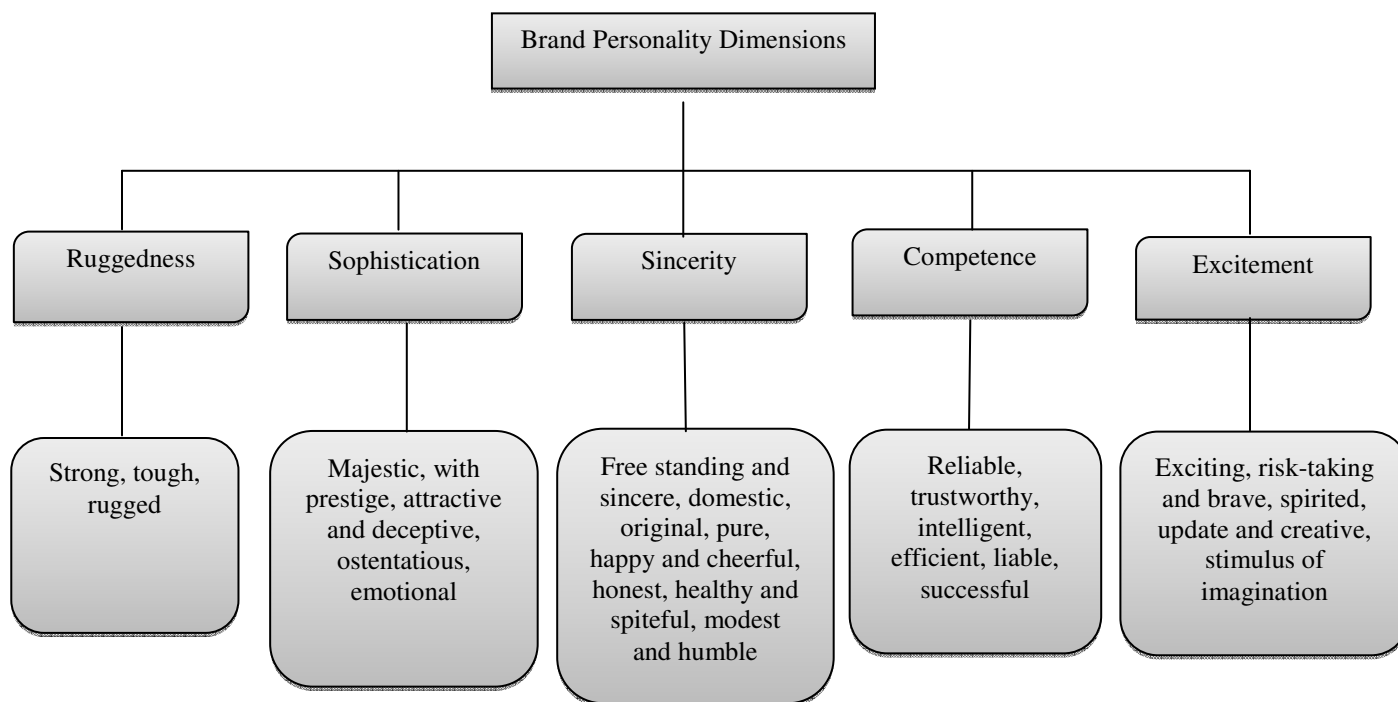

Figure-2
Dimensions of brand personality in Aaker's five dimensional models (Aaker, 1997)

Brand performance: Brand performance points the success of a brand in the market and tends to measure the strategic successes of a brand. In fact, brand performance presents the quality of brand position in a successful market and further emphasizes on the measurement of the strategic goals of a brand and as a result, economic measurements are inappropriate for this structure. Brand knowledge, brand credit, and brand stability are stated as the important performance of a brand[15].

Methodology

This research is applied from the research goal viewpoint. The research plan in this descriptive research is survey. This research is descriptive, since it presents an image from the present condition. Also, it is survey, since it is performed by gathering information from the population using questionnaire. For this research, cluster sampling has been employed. In cluster sampling, every store is considered as a cluster in which peoples in the clusters are inhomogeneous and the clusters (or in fact stores) are homogenous relative to each other. It means they do not have a tremendous difference with each other in offering services to the customers. In this research, population is ETKA chain stores which contain 10 main chain stores in Tehran. Based on the sample volume, for every store 40, and as a result an overall number of 400 questionnaires were distributed and collected. For calculating the required sample volume for the research Cochran formula in the following form is used:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \, \text{var}(\theta)}{d^2}$$

$$\text{var}(\theta) = pq$$

$Z\alpha/2$ is the error level i.e. α, based on the existing tradition is considered 0.05 or 0.01[16]. Statistical amount of Z is in 95% meaningful level (which equals to 1.96).

δx: the standard deviation of the population: since the amount of standard deviation is not available, the distribution of the population is normal and also Likert's 5 option spectrum from very low to very high has been used, the standard deviation can be estimated as σ=0.667 Error value of 0.5 percent is considered[17].

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

Finally, in the 95% confidence level, a sample with the volume of 385 is used for data analysis. To ensure the return of the considered sample volume, 400 questionnaires were distributed. IMC infrastructures (including: brand-orientation, customer-orientation, and market-orientation) are independent variables. Brand personality (including sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) is the mediator variable and improvement of the brand performance (including causing awareness, credit, and satisfaction) is the dependent variable. Library research tools and questionnaire are used for data gathering. Using descriptive and illative statistics (structural equations model), and employing SPSS 18, and LISREL 8.5 software, the data is analyzed. Initially, using descriptive statistics and statistical indices of average, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, and cognitive graph of the state, demographical properties of the respondents were determined. Consequently, for examining the hypotheses and investigating casual relations of the existing variables in the research, structural equations model (confirmatory factor analysis or path analysis) was used. Indeed, exploratory factor analysis is also performed, in this section. In illative statistics section, using LISREL software, model fitting parameters and indices are investigated. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis and study of correlation among variables are also performed and finally using multiple regressions the effects of variables are investigated.

Results and Discussion

According to t-value amounts reported in table 1, it can be concluded that all the impact coefficients among the variables have been meaningful (t value of greater than 1.96). Only impact coefficient of competence variable on improvement of brand performance with the value of 0.03 and t-value of lower than 1.96 has not become meaningful. It means based on the statistical exams performed and investigation of the relations between variables, all the assumptions of the research are approved, instead of assumption No. 9 (i.e. the effect of brand competence on improvement of brand performance). Furthermore, comparing the intensities of impact factors, the strongest is related to IMC infrastructure on brand excitement with the value of 0.53 and afterwards IMC infrastructure on brand competence with the value of 0.50. Moreover, the weakest impact factor is for the brand competence on improvement of brand performance and afterwards sophistication, and ruggedness on improvement of brand performance. Furthermore, all the impact factors are positive and are indicators of direct influence of independent and mediator variables on dependent ones.

Conclusion

In recent years, several companies have found out that intangible assets, and most importantly their brands can be value creator. Marketers have found out that in today's complex and growing marketing world, an attractive and strong brand should be presented and they should use the methods for communication with customers, which associate the desired brand better, faster, and with adequate confidence in customer's mind. The point is different IMC tools and IMC infrastructures should be used for communicating with the customer and as a result reinforcing brand personality and improving its performance. Since IMC is a process for planning, executing, and supervising the brand messages which creates relationship with the customer and brand relations is one of its results. If these relations be strong, they can lead to improving the brand

performance and as a result enhancement of profitability. It can be concluded that this improvement of performance is a required competitive advantage for all organizations in today's competitive scene. Based on the results, effect of factors like customer-orientation, market-orientation, and brand-orientation on brand personality and also the effect of brand personality on brand performance are observable. It means that in order to improve the brand performance in the market, IMC infrastructures for designing brand personality can be used and designed brand personality according to market and a special class of customers. Since consumers match brand personality with their own personality and choose the brand which is more close and similar to their personality. If the brand personality is designed based on what is organization's desire, and certainly according to Aaker's 5 personal dimensions, we can be more hopeful about the effectiveness of this personality in the brand on customer's personality and on the other hand achieve the improvement of the performance of that brand and consequently higher sale in the market.

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Table-1
Results of testing assumptions and the effect of the perceived value variable

Hypothesis	Standard coefficient	t-value (meaningful level)	Result of the exam
IMC infrastructure on brand sincerity	0.45	6.66	Hypothesis confirmation
IMC infrastructure on brand excitement	0.53	9.77	Hypothesis confirmation
IMC infrastructure on brand competence	0.50	7.68	Hypothesis confirmation
IMC infrastructure on brand sophistication	0.43	8.16	Hypothesis confirmation
IMC infrastructure on brand ruggedness	0.37	7.47	Hypothesis confirmation
IMC infrastructure on improvement of brand performance	0.31	4.12	Hypothesis confirmation
Brand sincerity on improvement of brand performance	0.21	3.15	Hypothesis confirmation
Brand excitement on improvement of brand performance	0.15	2.43	Hypothesis confirmation
Brand competence on improvement of brand performance	0.03	0.78	Hypothesis rejection
Brand sophistication on improvement of brand performance	0.12	2.11	Hypothesis confirmation
Brand ruggedness on improvement of brand performance	0.12	2.12	Hypothesis confirmation

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