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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARKETING INFORMATION SYSTEM, BRAND CHARACTER AND CUSTOMERS' LOYALTY OF SPORTING GOODS IN TABRIZ

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between marketing information system, brand character and Customer Loyalty of sporting goods in Tabriz. The purpose of the study is applied and its method is descriptive-correlation and statistical population includes all Customers of sporting goods in Tabriz (N= 100000). Sample size was 309 participants that were determined based on Morgan table and were chosen randomly. The instruments used for data collection consisted of brand character Questionnaire of Aaker (1997), Customer Loyalty questionnaire of Anisimova (2007) and marketing Information system questionnaire of Eldon (1993). The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts of sport management department. The reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Brand character was $\alpha = 0/88$, customer loyalty questionnaire was ($\alpha = 0/89$ and for marketing information system was $\alpha = 0/92$). To analyze the data, descriptive statistics (tables of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used for inferential statistics to assess the normal distribution of data. After confirmation of the non-normality of the data, the Spearman correlation nonparametric method was used. The results showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between the marketing information system, brand character and customer loyalty of sporting goods in Tabriz (Sig < 0/05). There is a significant relationship between the brand character (honesty, enthusiasm, excitement, competence, perfection, and strength and firmness) and customer loyalty (attitudinal and behavioral) of sporting goods in Tabriz (Sig < 0/05).

Keywords: *Marketing Information System, Brand Personality, Loyalty, Sporting Goods Customers*

INTRODUCTION

With the invention of computer, humans entered into a new scene and quickly converted the industrial age to the informational age. New technology in this Age helped human to create phenomenon of the information explosion so as to accelerate the rate of production of new knowledge from day to day and hour to hour, or in other words to add the new information (Elahi, 1996). Organizations have used information systems to increase the ability to produce and give more and newer products and services, and their managers also have equipped themselves with a device called management information system. This good tool of management led organization managers can achieve information of the latest events and activities within the organization and outside the organization more quickly, with greater accuracy and greater efficiency and lower costs, and then they make their own decisions based on this information (BaniAsad and Momeni, 2009). The key to success in any organization's management system is the fact that the managers can link new data with former knowledge of the organization gradually and provide the grounds for receiving new information. They try to receive more new information appropriate to the situation of the company and with respect to the hierarchy of the organization. They make sure that on the one hand, the organizations don't confront with the influx of new data while it is not ready to understand and accept them, on the other hand, there should be no gap between the haves and deep findings, because If this isn't done so, management system not only won't be able to link new information to the body of the organization because of many missing chains but also it will lose the ability to make any correct decision for the development because of its alienation with new information and thus it will lose its

Research Article

effectiveness. Weak information makes the management of organization not only has no accurate and complete picture of the future, but also fails to properly recognize the past and present strengths and weaknesses. Therefore it not only cannot properly have plans but also isn't able to design good activities for the organization. Market efficiency is the relationship between performance output and input required to achieve them. Increasing market efficiency as mentioned is listed in the goals of an organization's marketing information systems (Panahi, 2006).

The concept of marketing information system is the first part in the concepts of management information systems that was introduced as a basic requirement in information system (Aldan *et al.*, 1993). In this regard, the prominent role of computers and peripheral systems as sub-systems in the entry of efficiency processing and artificial intelligence greatly increased. It means that as users of computer sub-systems become more powerful, management activities in company and organization will improve. Marketing Information System has completely improved efficiency and effectiveness of companies and organizations and it is considered as a competitive advantage. A marketing information system must not only be as a center for storing all relevant information relating to the company's customers but also have the ability to collect, store and analyze information related to the marketing mixtures, competitors, environmental macro variables and internal documents of the company (Turkaman, 2012).

Five market roles of marketing efficiency evaluation system include ensuring alignment with the binding standards such as regulations and industry standards, to refine general vital signs and quick warnings about the future problems that can affect the performance of companies and organizations such as increasing customer dissatisfaction, to provide input data for planning and decision making that helps maker to learn (Chaharsooghi, 2007).

To identify the factors of success and criteria for measuring it, we must first have an understanding of the goals of our company. A newly established company that is seeking to enter the goods to the market has certainly more different objectives than a large company that wants to establish close relationships with its customers. But all those who want to choose the criteria for measuring marketing efficiency must consider the factors that have positive effects of the following three concepts: customer attraction, customer retention, revenue (same reference).

Sultan *et al.*, (2012) in a study named determining the relative portion of brand loyalty from brand associations among fans of football pro League of Iran concluded that there is a correlation between three factors: assets, interests and attitudes of brand association and the brand loyalty and also, according to the results of multiple regression test, factors of interests and attitudes of brand association are a good predictor of the degree of brand loyalty.

Yektayar (2013) in a study entitled the relationship between character of brand and customer loyalty in the household appliances concluded that there is a significant relationship between the characters of the studied brands and customer loyalty. Moharramzadeh and Akbari (2014) concluded in a study named the relationship between the dimensions of customer loyalty and strengthening national brand in the professional leagues of football and volleyball that there is a significant and positive relationship between the dimensions of customer loyalty (cognitive, emotional, management of relationship with customer, time management, invested resources and the participation of senior management) and strengthening the national brand.

According to the obtained results, it is suggested that managers create a healthy competitive market and give facilities and privileges to strengthen customer loyalty. Kim *et al.*, (2011) in a paper entitled "the impact of customers' understanding of brand character in random restaurants." Choosing 336 participants as the sample of the study, investigated the relationship between understanding brand character, and attitudinal loyalty in chain restaurants of Olive Gardena Chili and the results indicated that the understanding of brand character influences on the attitudinal loyalty. They also found that direct relationship exists between the brand preference and rumored advertising in the studied restaurants (Yektayar, 2013). Silurian *et al.*, (2011) in the article entitled "Re-conceptualization of brand identity in dynamic environments," seeks to redefine brand identity in dynamic environments and create a new management framework to mitigate the challenges of brand identity in the new markets.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method of the Study

The aim of the present study is functional and its method is comparative and descriptive, it has been carried out in the field. The population of the research consists of all sporting goods customers. The population of this study that is studied is purely customers of sporting goods and includes 100,000 individuals. The research population of the study includes thousands of customers of sporting goods in Tabriz city. Based on Morgan table, 370 subjects were selected as a research sample by the method of cluster random sampling and questionnaires were distributed among them. After the questionnaires were collected, 309 usable questionnaires were obtained and this number was considered as the research sample and the reason of questionnaire reduction is due to some faults of handwriting on the questionnaires. In this study the researcher used questionnaire of brand character (Aaker, 1997) and customer loyalty questionnaire of Anisimova (2007) and marketing information system questionnaire of Alden (1993) for the relationship between marketing information systems with brand character and customer loyalty of sporting goods in Tabriz. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Obtained Coefficients for Brand character Questionnaire (Aker, 1997) were ($\alpha = 0/88$), customer loyalty questionnaire of Anisimova (2007) was ($\alpha = 0/89$) and marketing information system questionnaire of Alden (1993) equaled ($\alpha = 0/92$), respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Findings

Evaluation of the normal distribution of scores of marketing information systems variables.

Table 1: Results of Kolmogorov- Smirnov test to evaluate the normal distribution of scores

		Analyzing marketing opportunities	Search and selection of target market	Designing marketing strategies	Planning for Marketing Programs	Organizing, executing and controlling all marketing activities
Numbers		309	309	309	309	309
Normal parameters.	Mean	4/1352	4/3685	4/3628	4/3452	4/3028
	Standard deviation	0/65891	0/77582	0/60025	0/56642	0/65001
Kolmogorov-Smirnov		0/529	0/564	1/558	1/549	2/527
Sig (2 - sided)		0/009	0/009	0/006	0/007	0/008

We used Kolmogorov- Smirnov test to evaluate the normal distribution of scores of variables. Normal distribution of variables is the null hypothesis in this test. If significant level of the test is less than 05/0, the null hypothesis is rejected and we conclude that the distribution of the variable is not normal. According to the results of Kolmogorov - Smirnov test of normality, it became clear that the data distribution is not normal and nonparametric statistics should be used. These conditions also apply for the brand character variables and variables of customer loyalty. There is no significant relationship between marketing information systems and brand character of sporting goods customers in Tabriz. Based on the results, Spearman correlation coefficient between marketing information system and the brand character is 0/112. Since the significant level of Spearman test is less than 05/0, the hypothesis of independent variables is rejected. It means that there is a significant and positive relationship between marketing information system and brand character (significant levels are smaller than 05/0). There is no significant relationship between marketing information systems and sporting goods customers' loyalty in Tabriz. Based on the results, Spearman correlation coefficient between marketing information system and

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customers' loyalty is 0/142. Since the significant level of Spearman test is less than 05/0, the hypothesis of independent variables is rejected. It means that there is a significant and positive relationship between marketing information system and customers' loyalty (significant levels are smaller than 05/0). There is a significant and positive relationship between brand character dimensions (Honesty, enthusiasm, excitement, competence, perfection, and strength of firmness) and Loyalty dimensions (attitudes, behavior).

Discussion

Today, the brand character as a prominent issue has been discussed and all marketing activities of companies have been done with the aim of having customers who believe in the brand character and discern, then prefer it among competitors, and also strengthening the relationship between brands and customers has been carried out to enhance brand loyalty (Heidarzadeh *et al.*, 2012). Trademarks have important strategic role in achieving competitive advantage and the strategic management decisions of companies. Customers who show their loyalty to the names and trademarks will be a suitable criterion for evaluating the long-term effects of marketing decisions.

Companies should be aware of the role of trademarks in creating customer loyalty to grow and expand customers' presence in the market (Ranjbarian and Barari, 2010) and by the invention of computer, humans entered into a new scene and quickly converted the industrial age to the informational age. New technology in this Age helped human to create phenomenon of the information explosion so as to accelerate the rate of production of new knowledge from day to day and hour to hour, or in other words to add the new information (Elahi, 1996).

Organizations have used information systems to increase the ability to produce and give more and newer products and services, and their managers also have equipped themselves with a device called management information system. This good tool of management led organization managers can achieve information of the latest events and activities within the organization and outside the organization more quickly, with greater accuracy and greater efficiency and lower costs, and then they make their own decisions based on this information (BaniAsad and Momeni, 2009). This issue is also particularly important in terms of customer who is an influencing factor. Moreover, in order to create loyalty in the customers, the process of required loyalty should conform to the expectations of customers to satisfy them. In this regard, it can be noted that the demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, education), are the factors that influence the expectations of customers and they must be cared about for predicting the degree of customer loyalty (Heidarzadeh *et al.*, 2012).

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Research Article

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