

**Research Article**

## **IMPACT OF BRAND PERSONALITY ON TRUST, ATTACHMENT AND COMMITMENT TO BRAND IN LEATHER INDUSTRY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Today, competition has become the key to success in business and those will be successful in this field that step into this field with newer methods. In this situation for improving mechanisms and businesses companies should have a new attitude toward commodity, brand and customer and so on. Among these changes we can name new attitude toward assets from tangible to intangible assets. In this research trust, commitment and attachment of customers to brand as one of the intangible assets of organizations have been studied and the impact of brand personality have been assessed. This paper is experimental-descriptive and has been conducted in survey method among the desired population (leather industry customers) and is based on questionnaire data obtained from 224 leather industry customers according to Cochran sampling formula and stratified random sampling method with proportional allocation. The hypotheses test results after fit of structural equations among research variables dimensions indicate that brand personality have significant and positive impact on commitment, attachment and trust of customers. Also it is found that the impact of brand personality on affective, continuous and emotional commitment, credit and traits trust as well as behavioral and attitudinal attachment is significant.

**Key Words:** *Brand, Commitment, Trust, Attachment, Customer*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Having loyal customers is considered to be one of the biggest advantages an organization can have and today it is one of the main concerns of managers due to intense competition (Bouder, 2008).

Loyal customers also have a significant role in verbal advertisements. The chances that a satisfied customer will convey his good and pleasant experience to others are more; as a result it has a positive role in verbal advertisement. As a result it can be claimed that customer's satisfaction level have a positive relationship with customer's loyalty level (Hsu, 2006). Among the methods for maintaining customers' loyalty, marketing and popularizing the name of the company, customer recognition, rewarding customers and engaging customers can be named.

Goods quality shows the ability and capability of goods in performing goods duties which includes durability, reliability, accuracy and ease of use which have a significant role in determining the position of goods and is measured based on buyer's mental perceptions. In strategic quality management for outpacing rivals with offering products that meet the needs and preferences of consumers we can achieve the desired quality level for a specific product in market, hence companies in addition to creating desirable product quality should offer it in a good way so it can meet the customer requirements.

The fact that perceived product quality is turning into one of the most factors of competition in business world, has caused the present business age to be called "age of quality" (Piller, 1996) hence scholars and researchers of service marketing have provided several metaphors of this subject. For example, Barrie name it as the most powerful competitive weapon (Kandampoli, 1998), clove as organization's lifeblood (Clove *et al.*, 1993), Pears as a magical bullet that which a lower cost provides more services and causes more profits (Pears, 1997). Each feature of good can be used as a competitive tool for differentiating the

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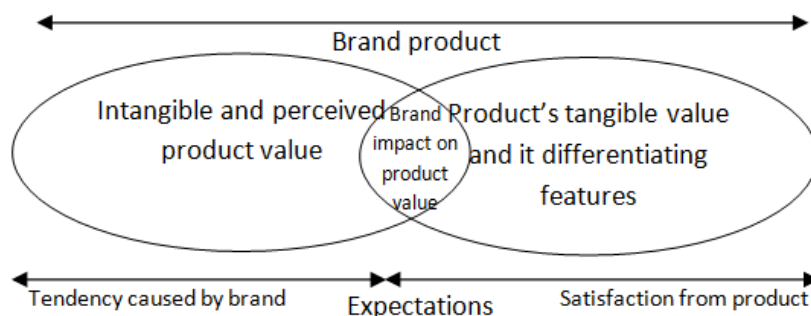
product from other competitors' products and manufacturer with periodical evaluations from their buyers should try to create new features, promote and improve their good. Product design is another method for making product prominent; hence using a good design can cause product popularity. Design is a concept way more extensive than the appearance of the product, because product appearance will only present the look of the product but product design can lead to its better performance and efficiency. A good design should help to both appearance and usefulness of the product and it should consider necessary measures in distribution of product and it's after sale services so that in addition to reducing production costs which leads to product competitiveness over other competitors in targeted market. Determining a brand can increase the usefulness and values of product and is a very important matter in specifying policy on the marketing of goods, which in long term is so much important for promotional advertisement and packaging goods and products.

### Theoretical Framework

Today's, so many of markets are intensely competitive and for remaining in this competitive environment, organizations should produce and supply high quality products and services to obtain satisfied and loyal customers. Creating and obtaining satisfied customers is the main goal of every business; because there is a strong and clear relationship between products, customer's satisfaction and profitability (Dikova, 2004). In fact, the main key to organizational life is maintaining satisfied customers. One of the most distinguished skills of professional may be their ability to create, maintain and development of their brand (Kapferer, 2006). With increased competition in business and rapid technology changes and also increased power and choice of customers, success will be of those companies which are capable of recognizing and understanding the desired expectations and values of their customers and to respond to them in a better way (Wang et al., 2002). Brands features have impacts on customer behavior and today business requires branding strategy (Javanmard, 2009). In international marketing glossary brand has been defined as an exclusive name for a product with comes with personality and visual identity which is given to the product by the producer (Yadin, 2002).

This definition has been criticized, since it is intensely product-based. Most of managers look at brand as a concept which creates awareness, prominence and reputation in market (Claire, 2006). In fact this definition emphasizes on visual features (as the source of differentiation) (Wood, 2000; Crainer, 1995).

From the point of view of customers, brand can be defined as the collection of all the experiences that a customer achieves from a brand (Pearson, 1996). In this regard, Professor Claire states that brand is a mix of signs of emotional and mental in consumer which adds to the perceived value of product or service (Claire, 1999) and these signs should be unique, prominent and desirable.



**Figure 1: Brand impact on product value**

Therefore, maybe it can be said that brand is all the promises and experiences provided to the market. Hence; always there should be a consistency between promises and experiences of customer for brand to have meaning (De Charnatony and Cottam, 2006). Also, the promised features by a brand can be real or unreal, logical or illogical and tangible or intangible (Amber, 1992; Wood, 2000).

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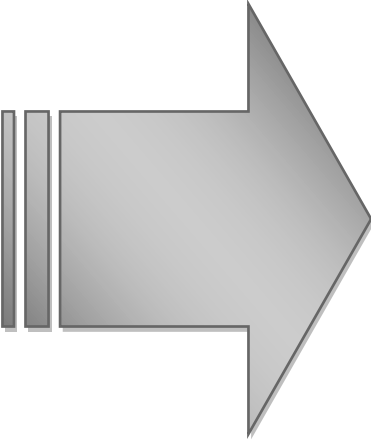
A number of other definitions are focused on the use of a method for creating differentiation or advantages that a customer achieves by buying a product. In fact, it can be stated that brand is all the activities toward creation of differentiation (Claire, 2006). These definitions include descriptions that emphasize brand as a mental image, brand personality (Aaker, 1996; Goodyear, 1996), a value system (Sheth *et al.*, 1991) and added value (de Chernatony and McDonald, 1992; Wolfe, 1993; Doyle, 1994).

Among those who have proposed a model for studying dimensions of perceived special value of brand, Lassaer *et al.*, (1995) can be named. They have considered five dimensions of performance, perceived value, social image, Trustworthiness as well as sense of dependency (compatibility) as factors influencing special value of brand and in this research only the impact of perceived dimensions on special brand value have been studied and behavioral dimensions have been neglected. This model have been provided based on a previous model proposed by Martin and Brown (1990) and includes perceived quality, perceived value, mental image, trustworthiness and commitment and some changes have been made in its dimensions or dimensions definition.

Among the factors that can be effective in creation and development of loyalty to service brand, customer trust to brand can be named that can be influenced by brand feature, company features and features of customer-company brand (Lao and Li, 1999). Firs researches conducted on loyalty to brand are focused on behaviors which are influenced by repeating purchase and desire to make purchase in future. Later on, other scholars focused on this dimension that loyalty to brand has to dimensions: loyal behavior toward brand and loyal attitude toward brand (Lao and Li, 1999).

Today brands are expressed as a starting point of differentiation between competitive offers hence they have critical roles in organizations' success. Therefore, brand management is considered to be a strategic process rather than a tactical process (Wood, 2000).

**Table 2: Brand management change of attitude from tactic to strategic view (Davis and Dunn, 2002)**

Brand traditional manamgnet		Strategic management of special brand value
Brand management		Strategy of special brand value management
Maintaining brand		Brand ambassadors
Maintaining brand		Deep loyalty
Frequent transaction and exchange		Communications throughout life period
Customer satisfaction		Customer commitment
Product income		Income from brand
3 months focus		3 years focus
Proceeds from market share		Proceeds from capital price
Brand marketing and management		Management of functional brand areas
Awareness and recall measures		Advance brand measures
Leading brand from within the organization		Leading brand from outside the organization

## Research Hypotheses

Regarding the above purposes, the following research hypotheses can be presented as below:

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H1: brand personality has significant effect on credit trust to brand in leather industry.

H2: brand personality has significant effect on trait trust to brand in leather industry.

H3: brand personality has significant effect on behavioral attachment to brand in leather industry.

H4: brand personality has significant effect on attitudinal attachment to brand in leather industry.

H5: brand personality has significant effect on emotional commitment to brand in leather industry.

H6: brand personality has significant effect on normative commitment to brand in leather industry.

H7: brand personality has significant effect on continuous commitment to brand in leather industry.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

The present research is experimental from objective point of view and is descriptive (non-empirical) from data gathering method point of view and is a field study and since in this research the author seeks to determine and study the effect of brand personality on trust, attachment and commitment to brand name in leather industry, the research type of it is correlation research from research method point of view and its conduct method is survey and the most important advantage of it is the fact that its results can be generalized.

### Research Population and Sample

Research population includes all the customers of leather industry that in person have referred to head office of Mashhad Charm Company. Based on monthly figures the number of these customers is 537 people. For determining the minimum required sample volume, Cochran formula for limited population has been used. Therefore, the minimum required sample is determined to include 224 individuals. However, for assurance of enough questionnaire return, the sample has been considered as 330 individuals. Since the research population under study included one group of customers and is homogeneous, hence for sampling simple random sampling method has been used. Demographic characteristics of respondents are as per the following:

**Table 2: Respondent's characteristics**

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		Gender	Marriage status	Education			Employment type			Age	Work experience									
Features	Frequency	Percentage																		
	74	167	Male																	
	26	57	Female																	
	13	28	Single																	
	87	196	Married																	
	10	23	diploma																	
	4	8	Associate degree																	
	59	133	bachelor																	
	27	60	Master and higher																	
	77	171	Governmental employment																	
	18	41	Semi-governmental employment																	
	5	10	Private employment																	
	5	11	24 years and lower																	
	30	67	25 to 34 years																	
	32	72	35 to 44 years																	
	33	74	45 years or higher																	
	3	6	1 to 5 years																	
	17	39	5 to 10 years																	
	21	47	10 to 15 years																	
	24	54	15 to 20 years																	
	35	78	20 years or higher																	

### Data Collection

Data was collected through questionnaires. 330 questionnaires during 3 weeks were distributed and collected among the research population. Respondents have been assured that their name and the name of their organizations will remain confidential. From 330 distributed questionnaires, 302 were returned and

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224 completed questionnaires were analyzed. The average of return rate of questionnaires is 91% which is considered as satisfactory considering the research culture is our country.

### Measurement Scale and Validity and Reliability

The validity of the standard questionnaire of Luis and Lumbart (2010) which is consisted of 17 closed questions were obtained based on content validity and the reliability of this questionnaire was calculated by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is equal to 92%. Each item of the questionnaire includes 5 options including strongly disagree, disagree, no comment, agree, and strongly agree and respondents were expected to choose one of these 5 options.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Data Analysis and Findings

Before performing testing hypotheses and evaluation of brand personality impact on dimensions of commitment, trust and attachment, the assumption of establishing a linear relationship between independent variable of brand personality and variables' dimensions as dependent model's variables has been estimated with the use of Spearman's correlation coefficients. Estimation of these coefficients which was presented in table 1 indicated the significant linear relationship of each of dependent variables with independent variable of brand personality. The significance level of null hypotheses of these relationships has found to be smaller than first type error of 0.05 and therefore, the assumption of significance of linear relationship between them in this error level are accepted.

**Table 1: Estimation of Spearman's correlation coefficients among model's variables**

	Credit trust	Trait trust	Behavioral attachment	Attitudinal attachment	Emotional commitment	Normative commitment	Continuous commitment
Brand personality	.582**	.686**	.760**	.591**	.638**	.620**	.699**

Based on this table, the relationship among independent variable with all the dependent variables under study is positive and aligned.

**Table 2: The model's coefficients of regression**

Relationships			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Brand	--->	Commitment	.604	.049	12.379	***
Trust	--->	Brand	.582	.054	10.699	***
Attachment	--->	Brand	.633	.036	17.530	***
Credit	--->	Trust	1.000			
Trait	--->	Trust	1.041	.119	8.757	***
Behavioral	--->	Attachment	1.000			
Attitudinal	--->	Attachment	.812	.083	9.805	***
Emotional	--->	Commitment	1.000			
Normative	--->	Commitment	.972	.103	9.462	***
Continuous	--->	Commitment	1.105	.116	9.518	***

In order to test the research hypotheses, we have fit the structural model between the research variables. In this model, all the research hypotheses are evaluated simultaneously and their regression effect coefficients are estimated. The results of model parameters estimation and its goodness of fit test were presented in table 2. The significance level of the coefficients of regression effect for research variables

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was smaller than first type error of 0.05 (Chi-Square = 4.901, DF = 3, Probability Level = 0.179) and as a result of this error level, it can be accepted that brand personality has a significant effect on trust, attachment and commitment and also since dimensions of credit trust and trait trust justify trust variable in a significant way, it can be concluded that the effect of brand personality on trust dimensions including credit and trait at the level of first type error of 0.05 is significant.

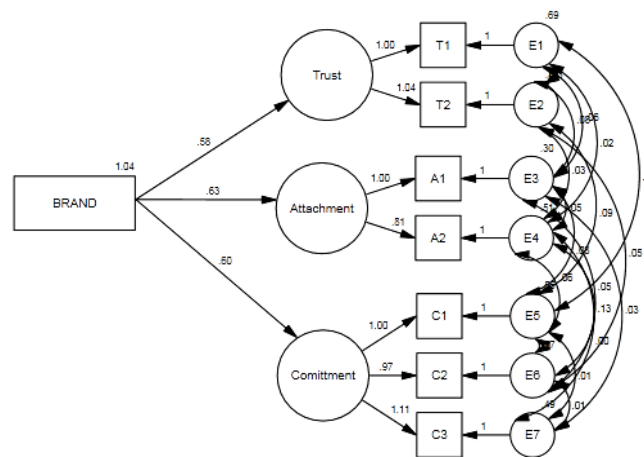
Also, justifying the attachment variable with the use of behavioral and attitudinal dimensions has found to be significant. Hence, it can be concluded that brand personality has a significant effect on behavioral and attitudinal attachment.

The significance levels obtained for commitment variable and its dimensions also indicate that this variable can be explained in the level of first error type of 0.05 with the use of dimensions of emotional commitment, normative commitment and continuous commitment.

Considering the above stated results, it can be claimed that brand personality has significant effect (at the level of first type error of 0.05) on variables and dimensions of credit trust, trait trust, behavioral attachment, attitudinal attachment, emotional commitment, normative commitment and continuous commitment. Hence, research hypothesis is confirmed.

**Table 3: Covariance estimation of regression model variables**

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Emotional commitment	<-->	Normative commitment	.104	.038	2.718	.007
Trait trust	<-->	Behavioral attachment	.081	.025	3.271	.001
Behavioral attachment	<-->	Emotional commitment	.082	.028	2.942	.003
Attitudinal attachment	<-->	Normative commitment	.127	.037	3.401	***
Trait trust	<-->	Emotional commitment	.085	.033	2.578	.010



Also, estimating the values of correlation between dimensions of trust, attachment and commitment variables indicate that:

1. Trait trust has a significant linear relationship at the level of first type error of 0.05 with behavioral attachment.
2. Behavioral attachment has a significant linear relationship at the level of first type error of 0.05 with emotional commitment.

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3. Attitudinal attachment has a significant linear relationship at the level of first type error of 0.05 with normative commitment.

4. Trait trust has a significant linear relationship at the level of first type error of 0.05 with emotional commitment.

5. Emotional commitment has a significant linear relationship at the level of first type error of 0.05 with normative commitment.

Significance level of chi-square of model fit was calculated to be equal to 0.179, which is bigger than the value of first type error which is 0.05 and as a result it can be concluded that the fitted model at the level of first type error of 0.5 is consistent with the initial distribution of data and at this error level the model can be considered as a proper and saturated fit model.

**Table 4: Ability indicators of goodness of fit of the model**

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.013	.995	.935	.083
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.427	.331	.140	.257

Estimation of indicators of AGFI=0.935 and GFI=0.995 have found to be more than significance level of 0.9, indicating the goodness of fit of the above structural model and hence the fit model has a proper ability in breaking down and identifying the relationships among the variables.

**Table 5: Error indicators in goodness of fit model**

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.053	.000	.135	.380
Independence model	.386	.365	.407	.000

Estimation of Root Minimum Square Error (RMSE) value is equal to 0.53% and was reported to be at the significance level of 0.380 which indicates that the value of fit model error at the level of first type error of 0.05 is small and as a result the assumption stating the RMSE to be smaller than 0.05 is not rejected.

Considering the goodness of fit of the research structural model, the research findings can be considered reliable and the hypothesis stating that brand personality has effect on each of the dimensions of commitment, attachment and trust is accepted.

### Conclusion

Since financial models have focused on quantities such as the value of stock market potential revenue value, revenues obtained from granting license, acquisition costs and only prices or customer contribution margin, marketing theorists have criticized financial models (Archer and Lemsho, 2006; Bandickson, 2001).

These criticisms have led to providing new concept such as power of brand as an element based on demand. For many of the brands, the size of customer base is a key element to its special value. The number of customers is important because it provides economies of scale (the ability of having more extensive advertisements and other fixed costs in a bigger base). For each business, obtaining new customers is so much costly and of course, maintaining the current customers is still rather more costly. However, current customers are considered as a tool for brand advertisement and assuring new customers. The value of customer base depends on loyalty level and the size of the base (Business magazine, 2007). Loyalty toward brand is the ultimate goal of a company having product with special brand. Customers have found out that the brand give them a product with good design, good quality and a proper price. This customer's perception will be a basis for repeating purchases. Customers first make one test purchase form a product with special brand and if they will be satisfied with it will be inclined to repeat and

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continue their purchase from the same brand, because they are familiar with the product and they are confident about it (Bradley, 2000). On the other hand, affiliates also provide a basis for the decision to purchase and loyalty. Affiliates can create value through processing/recovering information and differentiating. They are reasons for buying a brand name and creating positive feeling and attitude which is a basis for developing the domain of brand name. Therefore, strong affiliates can become a basis for developing the domain of brand name (Simon and Sullivan, 1993). In the present paper, the effect of brand personality was studied and the results indicated that brand personality has a positive and significant effect on customers' trust, attachment and commitment. Considering the existence of a significant and positive relationship between the three mentioned dimensions, consumers have shown that if they will perceive a high quality from a brand, they will recommend others to purchase it. The more awareness a customer has from brand, he will be more inclined to recommend others to purchase it. And also loyal customers with recommending other to buy the brand are marketing that brand for the company and leather industry is not an exception in this regard.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the significance of brand for companies and organizations which is seen in terms of the sign of quality from the customer point of view, competitive advantage source, a tool for offering a unique product, a tool for empowering unique features of product, index of core competences and a source for creating financial returns and is considered as one of the necessities for company and organization. Based on the above stated conclusions, the following recommendations are provided in line with improving the levels of trust, attachment and commitment of customers for organizations:

1. Managers should understand the intangible assets of their company. If one of these organizational intangible assets is related to marketing, they should decide about the benefits resulting from it.
2. The required method of advertisement and offering products and services to customers should be determined considering criteria, information requirements and problems.
3. It is necessary to ensure that the quality, price and useful life of products are appropriate and it should also guarantee the abilities of organization for special conditions of product sale or service provision.

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