

Investigation of the Influence of Purchase Involvement Dimensions on Brand Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

The present research deals with influence of purchase involvement dimensions on brand loyalty (Laptop product). In terms of goal, it is an applied study and in terms of methodology, it is a descriptive correlation study. Statistical population of the research included all Laptop purchases in Tehran City. 268 people were selected as sample members. Questionnaire was used for data gathering. Structural equations modeling technique was used for data analysis. The results showed that interest in purchase, signal value, risk importance and pleasure with purchase were dimensions which had significant impacts on loyalty to brand but risk possibility did not have significant impact on brand loyalty.

KEYWORDS: brand loyalty, purchase involvement, interest in purchase, pleasure with purchase, signal value, risk possibility and risk importance

INTRODUCTION

Brand loyalty and purchase involvement are two important concepts in consumer behavior and an important part of consumer behavior is described by these two concepts.

Brand loyalty is created when a customer believes that a brand reflects or strengthens some aspects of his or her perception of him or her. This kind of loyalty takes place mainly for luxurious products like car and it might take place sometimes for the case of service and time situations in which an individual is involved in inter-individual communications. Furthermore, brand loyalty can be created by a performance better than customer's expectations such that the purchaser feels astounded by services he or she receives and considers the value beyond his or her expectations (Hawkins et al, 2006).

Brand loyalty can be defined as: the level to which a customer has a positive attitude towards the brand, the level to which he or she is adherent to the brand and intention to continue purchase in future. Brand loyalty definition is based upon two general approaches: behavioral criteria and attitudinal criteria for brand loyalty (Moun and Minor, 2009).

Behavioral approach refers to stability of a brand purchase in the long run and attitudinal approach is a favorable approach to a brand.

Kapferer and Laurent (1985) investigated purchase involvement as a multidimensional concept and identified five factors concerning involvement. These include: "pleasure with purchase, interest in purchase, risk probability, risk signal, risk importance". They showed that different aspects of involvement can have different impacts on consumer behavior. Based on these dimensions, behaviors like time spent on data acquisition, the number of brands investigated and attention to commercial advertisements by different people can differ. Therefore, product involvement must be investigated with all its dimensions to clarify relationship between consumer and product (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985).

This criterion has been used in many studies for measurement of purchase involvement concept. Therefore, this research tries to investigate the influence of dimensions of purchase involvement on brand loyalty and tries to deal with loyalty concept via measurement of three aspects: cognitive, emotional and voluntary. Therefore, the main question of the research is "how is the influence of dimensions of purchase involvement on brand loyalty?".

Brand

Brand is not only a name but it is representative of product category. Sometimes, some names are embedded in a person's mind that he or she forgets it is only a name and he or she considers it as synonym to a product and service.

A brand is an important guide for a customer. Like money, brand facilitates a transaction. Customers get confused when they confront different unknown products because they don't know their names. Brands and prices make it easy to understand products (Kapferer, 2006). Wang (2004) states that customers express lower loyalty to organizations as a result of factors like increase in customers' awareness, access to information,

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diversity of products and so on. Therefore, the way of establishment of relationship with customers and making them loyal is an important issue in competition arena. Customers who are loyal to a special brand create advantage for an organization and reduce marketing cost.

As Stephen King believes, a product is something which is produced in a factory: a brand is what a customer purchases it. A product may be copied by a competitor but a brand is something unique. A product life cycle may end but a successful brand lives on for a long time.

America Marketing Association defines brand as:

It is a commercial name, term, sign or a combination of them which is used for identification of a product or service of a seller or group of sellers and differentiation of these products or services from those of competitors.

For short, a brand helps identify a seller or manufacturer. A brand is the permanent commitment of a seller to present a collection of features, advantages and special services.

commercial name theory over time changed gradually into brand. in the past, products were denoted and denotation involved a signal which was in the form of a sign or symbol of ownership of product.

a brand is an abstract of identity, originality, feature and difference of a product or company towards other products and companies.

A brand is a defensive instrument in competition over prices. A powerful brand provides more comfort and better mental image on quality in comparison with names with weaker fame. Individuals are ready to pay for powerful brands. The ultimate strength of a brand has been based on its performance and not based on promotion of its sale (Kotler, 2006).

Brand meaning

A brand is a permanent commitment a seller gives to provide a collection of features, advantages and special services to purchasers. The best brands involve quality guarantee but a brand can symbolize more complex issues. A brand can have up to six different meanings (Kotler, 2006).

Features: the first thing a brand brings to mind is special features. Therefore, the following items are reminded when we hear about Mercedes: high price, good manufacture, superior engineering, durability, validity and popularity, high price for used cars, speed and so on. A company may use only one or two items of these features in its advertisements. Mercedes has said for years: "engineering not utilized in any car all over the world." This advertisement title has been used as a positioning instrument and has contributed to other features development.

Advantages: a brand is something beyond a collection of features. Customers do not purchase features but they buy advantages. features should be converted into operational advantages or emotional advantages. the feature "durability" results in the operational advantage: "I will not have to buy a new car every other years". The feature valuableness results in the emotional advantage: "car helps me feel I am important and popular". The feature "good manufacture and design" may result in the operational and emotional advantage: "I will not get harmed in case of an accident". Brand benefits: a good brand has some words about benefits a producer provides. Therefore, Mercedes symbolizes good performance, safety, popularity and things like that. A brand marketer should investigate special groups of car purchasers who look for these benefits.

Culture: a brand may indicate a special culture. Mercedes car indicates German culture, i.e. efficacy and superior quality.

Personality: a brand may bring a particular personality in the mind. The question is that what would a product bring in mind if it was a person, animal or an object? Mercedes may remind us of a bad boss (person), a governing lion (animal) or a deserted palace (object). Sometimes, it may take on the personality of a person or speaker.

User: a brand conveys the consumer of a product. we undoubtedly get astounded if we see a 20-year-old secretary driving a Mercedes. In contrast, we expect a 55-year-old senior manager to sit at the back of the steering wheel of a Mercedes. Users of a product will be those who respect the value, culture and personality of a product.

Brands differ in value and power they have in markets. at one end, we have brands with which purchasers do not have familiarity. In the other end, we have brands of which purchasers have complete awareness. Beyond this, we have brands with high popularity. These are names purchasers do not show any resistance when they want to buy them. After this category, we have brands which are highly preferred and these are brands which are selected by purchasers. In the end, we have a brand which is of great loyalty.

Brand loyalty process

Some researchers like Oliver believe that loyalty should be considered as a process and not as an output. He identified four stages for loyalty (figure 1).

1. Cognitive loyalty, 2. Emotional loyalty, 3. Voluntary loyalty and practical loyalty

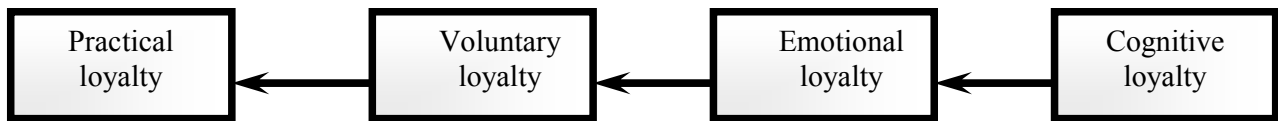


Figure 1. Oliver's stepwise loyalty model

Reference: Askarpour, 2007

Dik and Basou (1994) consider three aspects of attitude: cognitive, emotional and voluntary, as the triangle of customer loyalty and formation of special viewpoints in him or her, which is the very infrastructural process of creation of loyalty to brand. Deep understanding of attitude towards brand is effective in policies of customer attraction and development of goals and marketing (Quester and Lim, 2003).

Involvement in consumer behavior

When we investigate historical root of studies in the field of involvement, we conclude that conceptualization in consumer mental involvement is largely dependent on social psychology. The origin of involvement studies can be traced to social judgment theory which was proposed by Sherif et al (1965), Sherif and Cantril (1947), Sherif and Hoyland (1961). This theory deals with way of thinking, its organizing and processes of behavior change and judgment (Laaksonen, 1997).

Involvement is a psychological structure which was pioneered by Kantril and Sherif (1947). They believe that involvement is a state which occurs at the time of influence of smart and semi-smart stimulants. They stated that individuals can have different types of involvement. For instance, involvement related to their activities, involvement related to objects, beliefs, social issues and so on. Therefore, a product is an issue in which individuals can get involved (Tashchian and Slama, 1985).

As it was said before, involvement is originated from social psychology and "ego involvement" idea. It refers to relationship between an individual and an issue or object. This conceptualization is the base of application of involvement in consumer behavior. Different and numerous definitions of involvement in social psychology mean that application of involvement in consumer behavior is complex. The link between involvement and marketing and consumer behavior was clarified by Kragman in 1967 (Michaelido, Dibb, 2006).

Since then, involvement has been propounded as an important factor in investigation of influence of advertisements. In these investigations, involvement refers to effectiveness of popular advertisements. In addition to concentration of involvement on advertisements, other researchers have used involvement in relation to purchase decisions or purchase behavior. research on this aspect of involvement emphasizes mainly on searching for information like time spent on searching for or the number of stores visited (Zaickofsky, 1986).

These three study fields have had common aspects in involvement. In the heart of this conceptualization lies the idea of "personal importance". It is unanimously accepted that the level of mental involvement of a consumer in an object is determined by the level to which the product is important. Furthermore, involvement has been investigated in relation to other concepts like perceived risk, information search, brand loyalty and so on (Michaelidou, Dibb, 2006).

Consumer involvement profile (CIP)

Studies conducted by Gil Laurent and Jean Noel Kapferer

Most studies conducted on relationship between involvement and product have classified involvement as a mutual subject (high or low involvement) and this seems very naïve (Quester and Lim, 2003).

A new area of study started in Europe in 1981 specified that few studies and discussions have been made on the source or cause of involvement. Besides this one-dimensional conceptualization, Kapferer and Laurent (1985) stated that involvement is a latent construct and can be measured only by its preconditions and causes. If mental involvement of a consumer is considered as a multidimensional criterion, its quality can be described well. They identified 10 types of involvement. They believed that every consumer can have a unique involvement profile. They used cluster analysis and found enough empirical support for 10 types of involvement. Two of these types which lay at the two ends of the spectrum were "total involvement" and "absolute involvement", and those which lay in between were called "contrasted profiles". They identified 5 dimensions for measuring involvement level of the individuals. They included: interest in purchase, pleasure with purchase, symbolic value, risk probability and risk importance (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a).

In "minimal involvement", consumers acquired the lowest scores in all five dimensions of involvement while "total involvement" was related to consumers who had the highest scores in all dimensions. In "contrasted

profile", consumers had high scores in some of the dimensions of involvement while they have low scores in other cases (Ibid).

In an empirical study conducted on 20 products, Kapferer and Laurent (1985) observed that "minimal involvement" and "total involvement" constituted only 25% of the sample while the remaining 75% included "contrasted profiles". According to this finding, they stated: mental status resulted from interaction of dimensions is what results in special behavioral implications. Presence of these "contrasted profiles" show that involvement is not situated on a spectrum (in the form of high or low involvement) but different types of involvement lie in the line of this spectrum. This multidimensional approach shows a more complete and deeper understanding of involvement level of a consumer because it links involvement level to its causes (Quester and Lim, 2003).

Table 1: consumer involvement profile (CIP)

CIP dimensions	
Interest in purchase	Personal interest in a product, the level of importance a person gives to a particular product or "personal meaning" of that product for that person.
Pleasure with purchase	Pleasure-based value of a product, emotional and sentimental attraction and ability of a product to provide pleasure.
Sign value	It is a symbolic value given to a product by a consumer.
Risk probability	How much a consumer thinks his or her purchase has been wrong.
Risk importance	Importance of negative implications in case of wrong selection

Resource: Quester and Lim, 2003

From an applied viewpoint, CIP can be used for market segmentation. Instead of dividing market into high and low involvement, using this profile, we can identify consumers who are high in one aspect but have low involvement in other aspects. Moreover, involvement profile can help understand dynamism of consumer behavior. By looking at these aspects we can understand the origin of involvement. This provides us with clues on different types of attractiveness which must be used in relation to each section (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985).

For short, a review of applications and indices of involvement and empirical studies show that "involvement" state (permanent or temporary) may be originated from different sources. Common use of the word "involvement" along with different feature (personal involvement, emotional involvement and so on) shows that involvement source is considered as an important information element and researchers and managers should not consider the involvement itself as enough, knowing about involvement is only a static description. Knowing about the resource of involvement provides us with a dynamic image of mental status of consumer and provides us with clues about attractions which must be used in relation to consumers. It seems necessary to prepare a complete image of the nature of consumer involvement by measuring situation of consumer in each of these five aspects and therefore specify involvement profile.

Research model

Investigation of literature on identification of factors affecting loyalty indicates that an increase in mental involvement of a product can cause loyalty to a particular brand in that category. Consumers who are involved in a particular brand are more committed to that brand and more loyal to that. Quester and Lim (2003) used Kapferer and Laurent's (1985) multidimensional structure of product purchase involvement as a base for their hypotheses. Like Quester and Lim (2003), the present research also makes use of multidimensional structure of Kapferer and Laurent (1985) for its hypotheses. Using this framework, the research hypotheses were designed:

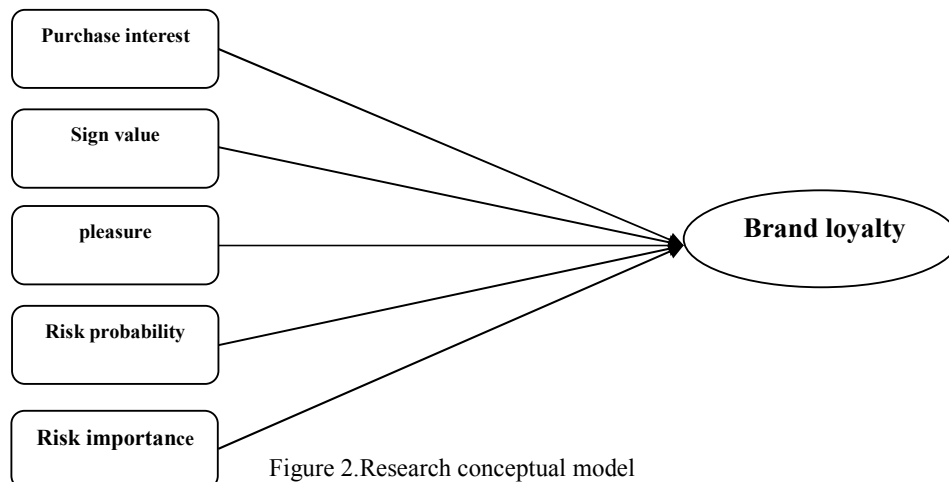


Figure 2. Research conceptual model

Considering the conceptual model, research hypotheses were as follows:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is an applied study. In terms of data collection, it is a descriptive study. Furthermore, the research is a correlation study and structural equations modeling technique was used for data analysis.

Statistical population and sample

The statistical population of the research included all purchasers of Laptop in Tehran City. Because the population size was unlimited and because of presence of multi-valued variables, the following correlation was used for determination of sample size:

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times P(1 - P)}{\epsilon^2}$$

Z is standard normal probability, alpha is error level, P is ratio of success and Epsilon is precision (Momeni, Fa'al Ghayyoomi, 2005). In this research, certainty level was about 95% and precision was about 6%. Because there was no estimation for ratio of success, it was equal to 0.5. sample size is maximized in this case.

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.06)^2} = 267$$

Data gathering information

Questionnaire was used for acquisition of data. five-point Likert scale was used (from completely agree to completely disagree) as a scale for measurement. After preparation of questionnaire, 30 questionnaires were distributed among Laptop purchasers in Tehran City as a pretest. Cronbach's alpha was used for reliability test and all coefficients for questionnaire variables and total questionnaire were above 0.7 (the Cronbach's alpha coefficients have been summarized in table 2). Moreover, content validity of the questionnaire was also verified by experts. Therefore, the questionnaire has enough reliability and validity to be distributed among population members.

Table 2. reliability and separation of questionnaire questions

variables	questions	Reliability of dimensions
Interest in purchase	1 to 3	0.89
Sign value	4 to 9	0.78
pleasure	10 to 13	0.72
risk importance	14 to 17	0.78
Risk probability	15 to 19	0.75
Brand loyalty	20 to 23	0.76
	23 questions	0.89

Considering the fact that some questionnaires might not be usable, 300 questionnaires were distributed for data gathering. These questionnaires were distributed randomly among sample members. 268 questionnaires were complete and appropriate for analysis.

Demographic information of the respondents has been summarized in table 3.

Table 3. demographic information of respondents

variable	dimension
gender	Male: 67.9%, female: 32.1%
age	Lower than 25: 10.6%, 25-30: 35.5%, 31-40: 31.2%, 41-50: 17% and 51 and above: 5.7%
education	High school and below: 14.5%, associate's degree: 12.9%, bachelor degree: 55.6%, master degree and above: 17%

Research hypotheses test

Structural equations modeling technique was used for investigation of the hypotheses. It is a statistical technique which embraces other techniques like multivariate regression, factor analysis, and path analysis and its main concentration is on latent variables which are defined by measurable and observable variables.

In structural model we try to validate relationships between latent variables which have been extracted considering data. LISREL software (version 8.8) was used for modeling.

The important point in structural equations modeling is that the model should be fit enough for investigation of relationship among variables. this can be obtained via fit indices provided in the final output of LISREL. Table 5 depicts fit indices.

Table 5. mode fit indices

indices	Allowable range or value	Calculated numbers
Kai-squared over df	$\chi^2/df < 3$	2.26
P value	<0.05p value	0.000
(RMSEA)Root mean square error approximation	0.08<RMSEA	0.069
(GFI)Goodness of fit index	Above 0.9	0.86
(CFI)Comparative fit index	Above 0.9	0.96
(NFI)Normalized fit index	Above 0.9	0.93

As it can be seen in table 5, all fit indices (except for fit index=0.86) are in allowable range and this indicates fitness of model: Kai-squared over df=1.94, p=0.000, RMSEA=0.069, comparative fit index=0.96, normalized fit index=0.93.

In order to test research hypotheses, we used the results of LISREL software in two states of standard model (figure 3) and significance model (figure 4).

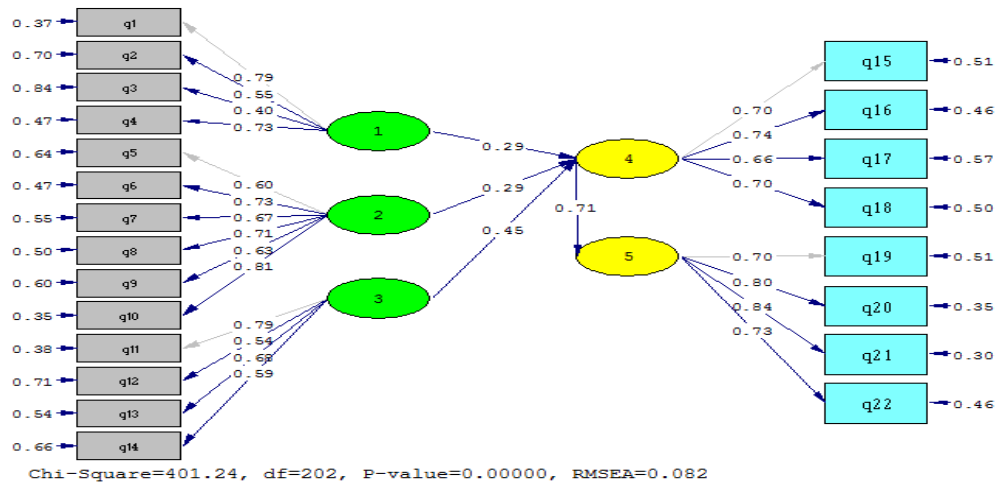


Figure 3. research model in standard state

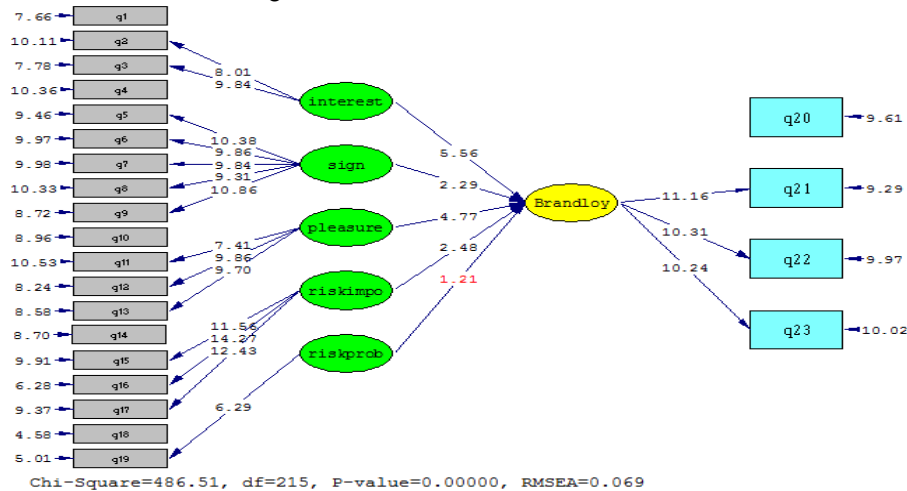


Figure 4. research model in significance state

Considering the research model in significance and standard states, the results of hypotheses test can be summarized in table 6.

Table 6.results of hypotheses test

hypotheses	Path coefficient (standard)	Sig. (T)	result
H1: interest in purchase has a positive influence on customers' loyalty to brand.	0.46	5.56	supported
H2: sign value has a positive impact on customers loyalty.	0.17	2.29	supported
H3: pleasure with purchase has a positive impact on customer's loyalty.	0.36	4.77	supported
H4: risk importance has a positive impact on customers' loyalty to brand.	0.13	2.48	supported
H5: risk probability has a positive impact on loyalty to brand.	0.08	1.21	rejected

Considering the fact that certainty level is 95% for hypotheses test, all hypotheses which have significance numbers (T) outside +1.96 and -1.96 are acceptable. according to table 6, all research hypotheses are supported except for the hypothesis related to risk probability variable (H5) with a significance number equal to T=1.21. of purchase involvement dimensions, interest in purchase dimension with a standard factor loading equal to 0.46 is the ,most effective factor and risk importance factor with a standard factor loading equal to 0.13 has the least impact on customers' loyalty.

Sum-up

A review of the results reveals that companies know that they are not confronted with development of growing markets as a result of expansion and saturation of many markets and continues changes. Considering the results and literature on involvement, we can learn about the importance and role of involvement in increasing brand loyalty. Consumers care about interest in product purchase, satisfaction level and symbolic value. The present research shows that except for risk probability, all other dimensions of product purchase have significant impacts on brand loyalty. Different aspects of involvement can have different impacts on consumer behavior. therefore, product purchase involvement must be investigated along with all its dimensions so that relationship between consumer and product can be explained well.

Mental involvement of consumers is an important variable in segmentation. Segmentation of target markets can be based on CIP. Instead of dividing market into high and low involvement, using this profile, we can identify consumers who are high in one aspect but have low involvement in other aspects. Moreover, involvement profile can help understand dynamism of consumer behavior. by looking at these aspects we can understand the origin of involvement. This provides us with clues on different types of attractiveness which must be used in relation to each section. Moreover, marketing managers should conduct studies on symbolic values of products and make attempts for recognition of personal image of target consumers in order to differentiate their products from those of competitors. Marketing managers should study factors which affect risk perception and negative perceptions of customers (understanding of social risk and intangible risk). Marketing managers who look for increasing profitability via brand loyalty should pay attention to involvement and its dimensions.

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