



The Effect of Brand Mental Image of Buyer's Customers ASUS Laptop On Brand Equity

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ABSTRACT

The present study has been designed and implemented for the effect of brand mental image of buyer's Customers ASUS laptop on brand equity. This descriptive study is applied in terms of purpose and data collection is conducted through a survey study. This study is also a quantitative study regarding the data and a cross-sectional study in terms of time. For this purpose, the Iranian customers of this product have been considered as the statistical society. Considering that the study population is unlimited, a sample of 384 members was selected from among them. In order to assess the basic concepts of the research, brand mental image questionnaire including 15 questions and brand equity questionnaire including 29 questions were used, respectively. The reliability of the questionnaires for the two mentioned variables was respectively calculated to be 0.87 and 0.94 through Cronbach's alpha. The validity of the test was confirmed through the comments and suggestions of several university professors and experts and finally the results of structural equation modeling using Smart PLS software indicated that all research hypotheses were confirmed at the confidence level of 95%.

Keywords: Brand Mental Image, Brand Personality, Brand Attitude, Brand Equity, Asus Laptop.

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INTRODUCTION

Although price is primarily considered an important factor for the customers in buying a laptop, market activists believe that price should not be considered the only important factor in buying a laptop. This product has other important features that brand selection is one of those factors. A brand image is formed in customers' mind while confronting brand image. The first mental image was defined by Martineau (1958) as an important factor in retail growth. The mental image of the store is considered as a general concept in mind that is associated with the results of perceptual characteristics which are stimulated in customer's memory according to past and present exposure in a direct and indirect way. The mental image has been proposed as a predictive factor in choosing retail (Hsu et al., 2010). Kotler (2000) has described image as "a set of beliefs, ideas, and idea that a person has about an object." Although brand mental image has been widely defined and used in many ways, but the general agreement on the definition of the brand image has been introduced as a general perception and the overall consumer sentiments of a brand (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). The brand value is obtained from the total brand mental image that was conducted by the individual through perceived perceptions, (Michelle et al., 2001). In fact, the brand equity is the consumer's prioritization of a brand in comparison to other brands in a class

of products (Lazar, 1995). This study examines the effects of concepts such as the mental image on brand equity and aims on raising brand value for the customers of Asus laptop.

literature review

The important point to keep in mind is that the consumers will finally get an image of your company, product and brand, whether you have consciously tried to create it or not. Packaging, distribution areas, impoliteness or politeness of those who respond the telephone and all that a consumer sees or hears from your company will create an image in his mind and this image will affect his decisions to buy or not before you can create an image in your mind, you need to know what kind of thoughts and associations are there (Sarmadi, 2011). If the consumer has an appropriate brand image, brand messages will have a stronger effect on him than competing brand messages (Hess and Lee, 2008). Brand image plays an important role in business markets, particularly where it is difficult to distinguish products or services based on their tangible qualities, or even when the provided goods are in the same shape, the buyers a different reaction to the company's mental image or brand name of the manufactured goods (Keller and Kevin, 1993). The brand mental image has two components of brand personality and brand attitude according to the conducted researches. In recent years, brand personality has been identified as an important strategy for works, and this is why it has been attended by many scholars (Luis and Lombert, 2010). Brand personality has been

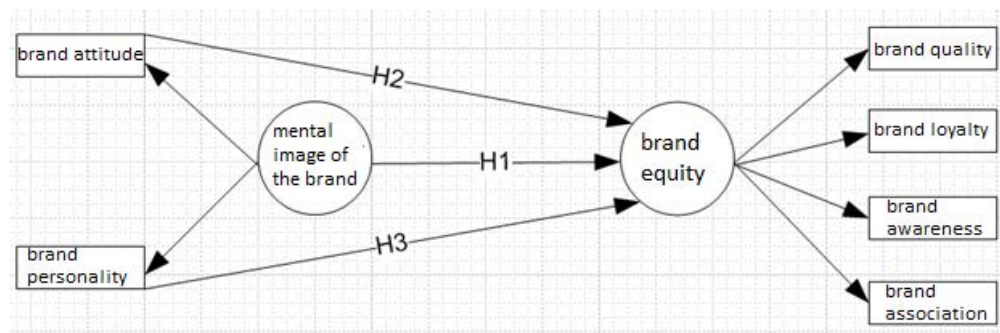
introduced as a human attribute that is related to brand and is a key factor in brand image, for example: "cool" for non-alcoholic beverages like Coca-Cola, "fresh" for Pepsi, "male" for Marlboro cigarettes, "high-class" for the BMW car and the "single" for Dr. Pepper (Sang Wattingham, 2005). Customers often give human aspects to brand through giving personality to brands, and marketers often create and reinforce these perceptions through positioning (Rajakupal, 2008). Brand attitude is a positive or negative overall assessment of the customer from the desired brand (Chang and Ching, 2006). The importance of brand attitude as another component of brand mental image is that it creates the possibility of predicting and directing consumer behavior in the market (Ranjbarian et al., 2007). In his study on brand attitude, Chadhoury (1995), has introduced brand attitude as one of the predictors affecting brand equity. Brand equity is the ultimate desirability or added value that a product creates through a brand name, such as Coca-Cola. One of the main reasons of the importance of this concept is its strategic role in achieving a competitive advantage which is gained in the market. Brand equity is considered as an asset for the company which increases the turnover of the business funds (Simon and Sullivan, 1993).

Lazar et al. (1995) consider brand equity as a very important concept in business and academic research because marketers can gain competitive advantage through successful brands. Brand equity is, according to the consumer, a strategic role and an important competitive advantage that is used in strategic management decisions and affects marketing decisions. Kevin Keller believes that positive customer-oriented brand equity is

created when consumers show a positive reaction to products with positive brand rather than products without brand names (Boone Mark, 2005). Positive and customer-oriented brand equity can, in turn, lead to higher earnings, lower costs, higher interest and direct impacts on the organization's ability in making decisions (Keller, 2003).

In competitive conditions in today's markets, it is important to have an appropriate place in the minds of the consumer so that the consumer is loyal to the company. Among the things that creates this place in the minds of customers is the brand equity of the company. Brand equity is considered as an asset for the company which increases the turnover of a business (Simon and Sullivan 1993). The issue which needs to be addressed here is that maintaining and expanding brand equity is often a challenging and difficult activity. In this regard, it is necessary to obtain a broad perspective of different attitudes towards the factors affecting brand equity to be able to correctly expand brand equity. In today's marketplace, there are many different ways which can affect the creation and increase of brand equity through these marketing programs (Keller, 2003). Several research has been done in the past on brand mental image and brand equity. But no significant research has ever been observed to include these two areas together and regarding the opinions of laptop products consumers. The study seeks to examine the effect of brand mental image on brand equity in ASUS laptop products. Therefore, this research seeks to answer the question that "Does mental image of the brand affect brand equity according to the ASUS laptop product customers?"

Conceptual model of the research



Research Hypotheses

H1: Mental brand mental image has a positive and significant impact on brand equity among customers of Asus laptop products.

H2: Brand attitude has a positive and significant on brand equity among the customers of ASUS laptop products.

H3: Brand personality has a positive and significant impact on brand equity among customers of ASUS laptop products.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is an applied research in terms of purpose. It is also a descriptive-survey research. The statistical population includes all customers of ASUS laptop products in Iran. Therefore, the sample size of the study was considered 384 people using Morgan table. Aaker's brand equity questionnaire (1991) and the brand mental image questionnaire of Abdullah Alhaddad (2014) have been used. The content validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed by experts and also by professors, particularly by the supervisor. Smart PLS software was used in this study and structural equation modeling has also been used to test the hypotheses.

FINDINGS

After collecting the data, 275 were male respondents and 101 women were female. Meanwhile, 8 people did not answer this question. By collecting the data, it was found that the level of education, age and income of the respondents were as follows: 63 subjects had high school diploma, 82 had diploma, 42 had associate degree, 133 had bachelor's degree and 60 subjects had master's degree or higher. 4 people did not answer this question. The age of 34 respondents was under 20, 100 subjects were between 20 and 25 years old. 124 subjects were between 25 and 30 years old. 66 subjects were between 30 and 35 years old, 39 subjects were between 35 and 40, and 16 subjects were 40 and older. 5 subjects did not answer this question. 145 subjects had an income below one million Tomans, 140 subjects had an income between one to two million Tomans, 42 subjects had an income between two and three million Tomans, and 37 subjects had an income of three million Tomans or more. 20 subjects did not answer this question.

To examine the fitting of the conceptual model of the research, we will deal with testing the hypotheses with respect to the algorithm analysis model in the PLS process. To fit the

measurement model, we first deal with the fitting of the measurement models using the three criteria of reliability index (coefficients of factor loads, Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability, or CR). At first, the factor load of the questions or items was examined. The results indicated that the factor load of all questions is more than 0.4, which indicates the appropriateness of this criterion. Other results related to Cronbach's alpha coefficients, combinational reliability and convergent validity are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Fitting of the measurement models

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Combined reliability	AVE
Brand mental image	0.841	0.857	0.668
Brand attitude	0.801	0.934	0.737
Brand personality	0.770	0.819	0.752
Brand equity	0.904	0.874	0.675

Investigating the conceptual model of research and testing the hypothesis

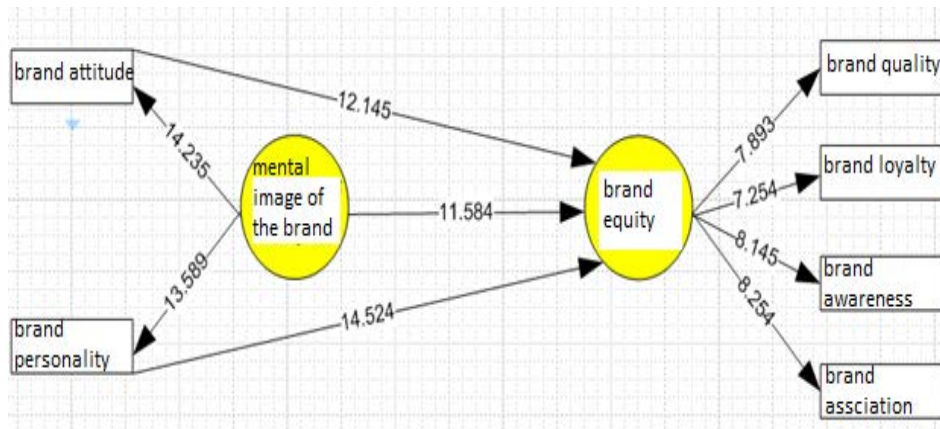


Figure 2. The drawn model together with T-Value of the research hypotheses

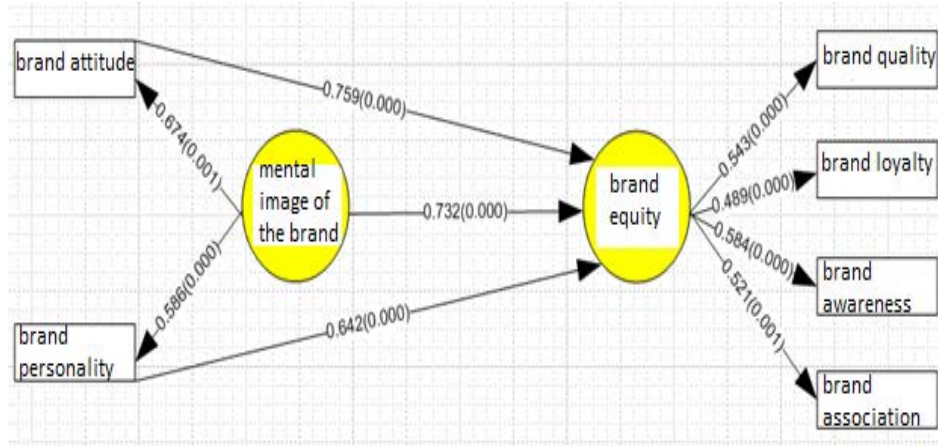


Figure 3. The drawn model with standard coefficients and P-value of research hypotheses

Considering that the value of T statistics for the variables of the model is greater than 1.96 and the P-value is less than 0.05, the hypotheses are tested. The summary of the results of testing the hypothesis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of testing the hypotheses

Research hypotheses	Path coefficient	t statistics	Level of significance	Test result
Mental brand image has a positive and significant impact on brand equity among customers of Asus laptop products.	0.732	11.584	0.000	Approved
Brand attitude has a positive and significant impact on brand equity among customers of ASUS laptop products.	0.759	12.145	0.000	Approved
Brand personality has a positive and significant on brand equity among the customers of ASUS laptop products.	0.642	14.524	0.000	Approved

The results of the structural equation modeling using the Smart PLS software indicated that all research hypotheses are confirmed at the confidence level of 95%.

Suggestions

Suggestions based on the results of the first hypothesis

The results indicate that brand mental image is effective on brand value among the ASUS laptop customers. In this regard, managers are suggested to plan on designing brand, price, quality, packaging, distribution and etc. to make the customers differentiate between the brand of the desired product and the competitors' brand and therefore, create the appropriate mental image for customers. The results of this finding is consistent with the study of Ammari and Zendedel (2012), entitled as "Evaluating the mediating effect of brand mental image on the formation of brand equity in the chocolate industry", who have come to the conclusion that the mediating effect of brand mental image on the formation of brand equity in the chocolate industry is approved.

Suggestions based on the result of the second hypothesis

According to the results of testing the first hypothesis, it was identified that brand personality affects brand equity. In this regard, the researcher recommends managers and practitioners to pay enough attention to create an appropriate mental image in their customers, because when the brand has a suitable position and high human features such as attributes, gender, social class, etc., it can have an impact on the value the customer has for the brand and lead him to buy again. The results of this finding are consistent with the study conducted by Ismail Pour et al. (2014), entitled as "Investigating the effect of brand personality and brand fame on brand equity dimensions (Case study of Golrang Corporation), who have concluded that brand personality and brand fame on brand equity dimensions in chain stores of Rasht city have a positive and significant effect on the dimensions of brand equity.

Suggestions based on the third sub hypothesis

According to the results of testing the second hypothesis, it was found that brand attitude affects brand equity. In this regard, the researcher recommends to consider the general beliefs of customers about a product and service. Either positive or negative, these ideas can be effective in differentiating a brand from another brand. Because each of the product attributes is important to customers. The results of this finding are inconsistent with the study conducted by Fakhriye et al. (2011) regarding the effect of buyer's attitude on brand value due to the buyer-seller relationship quality, who concluded that the buyer-seller relationship quality on brand value and the mediating role of the buyer-seller relationship quality was not approved in affecting the buyer's attitude on brand value.

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