The Impact of Brand Personality on Product Sale through Brand Equity (Case Study: Cosmetic Products Retailers)

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Abstract

In recent years, understanding the reasons of brand personality attraction for consumers, the determination of its effect on consumer behavior and brand equity has been an area of interest to researchers of consumer behavior.

Certainly , this concept can be important for sellers of product that are on the other side of the purchase & sale equation and the results can be effective in promoting their brands. In order to reach this purpose, this study has analyzed the influence of brand personality on sale product through brand equity concept, from view point of retailer cosmetic product in Iran.

The findings of this research imply that brand personality influence on brand equity and product sale and the dimensions of brand equity show a mediator role between brand personality and product sale. Furthermore, the results indicate excitement and sincerity as the two dominant dimensions of L'Oreal's personality and show indirect impact of brand personality on brand equity and sale product dimensions.

Keywords: brand, brand personality, brand equity, sale product

Introduction

In today`s world every decision and movement of the organization, judge by its brand Relationship with customers and commitment to the claims cause the consumer satisfaction and finally end to brand loyalty. Today, brands produce widespread competition in different

forms, sizes, functions and features and they are the vital capital of the most trades. Brand differentiation is now an important tactic for the competitive struggle in today's hostile market.

A good solution for making brand superiority is through brand personality. Sticking personalities to brand helps in making a different identity and then end to better desirability for consumers. In recent years cosmetic products industry has been one of the most attractive retail markets in Iran. In these years, by entrance of the credible and genuine brands to our country, not only increased the awareness level of people about the skin and hair health but also made the competition between the residential and outside distributors of products for receiving more benefits and share of market. This industry is currently in the growth stage of its life cycle and its market is saturated with the competitive brands. These brands, based on their personalities, ignite interest inside the consumers. Thus; each brand has its own distinct personality which in different and various situations will rise at consumer's view.

However, answer to the question of how and why people are interested in a particular brand personality and choosing a brand can be a powerful tool in the hands of brand managers to develop and increase the perceived value of the brand. This concept includes strategies on how to sell a brand and also affect the personality strategy that can improve it.

Brand

Brand is one of the Company's intangible assets, which can play an important role in growth and profitability in long term. According to Kotler and American Marketing Committee, brand includes name, expression, logo, symbol, design or a composition of them, intended to introduce the product or service offered by a vendor or group of vendors.

A brand has different and important roles that include: Differentiating products and services, communicating with consumers, and operating as a legal domain which producers can fund on it. A brand includes tangible and intangible values of a product. Brands are actually the values that make conscious contact with the target consumer groups.

Product that has no name is just like a product that only its price is important,

Product that has no name is just like a product that only its price is important,, so the winner is the one who has the lowest price (kotler, 2006).

From the customer perspective, a brand can be defined as the sum of all experiences. The important factor that affects choosing a brand is, consumer needs.

According to Park (1986) brands is often a combination of symbolic, functional and experimental benefits.

A brand with functional concepts is designed to meet the needs that are created by external demands.

Symbolic needs are defined as an interest to products that solve the inner needs for promoting person, position, role, group membership or self-identified.

Experiential needs are defined as an interest to the desired products that make sensory pleasure, variety and mental stimulation.

Consumers often decide according to the two basic dimensions of a brand. 1) logical assessment that contains the consumer`s expectations of appropriate function of the product, for example: speed function, confidence qualification etc. In fact this evaluation is considered the intellectual decision. 2) Emotional assessment that includes all of the emotional assessment of consumers about choosing the brand that is not compatible with the logical criteria.

Brand Personality

The concept of brand personality has long been an accepted part of the branding theory and there are a lot of adopted definitions about it from different researchers.

Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand. His definition includes demographic characteristics (sex, age and socioeconomic status), lifestyle characteristics (activities, interests and opinions) and also human personality traits (warmth, concern, thoughts).

Human personality is the starting point of brand personality researches. Based on the theory of animism, brands can also have their own unique personalities.

In fact, people feel the need to personify the objects to help their interactions with the intangible world.

All of the direct and indirect communication and contact that consumers have with a brand affect perceptions of personality traits and make them (Plammer, 1984).

Brand personality, such as human personality includes traits that are considered relatively stable.

Aaker (1997) defines the distinct characteristic of brand personality which includes sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness and shows that this definition has a different impact according to different reasons and approaches. Dimensions of Brand personality are compatible to "big five" human personality model according to Norman (1963) that includes the below characteristics:

1-Sincerity that includes traits like honest, real and safe
2-Excitement that includes traits like courageous, imaginative, exciting
3- Competence that includes traits like Intelligent, secure and reliable
4- Charming that includes traits like attractive Glamorous, charming, ingenuous

5- Ruggedness that includes traits like Strong, masculine and muscular and Western

Thus brand personality is the concept of relationship marketing that refers to all personality traits associated with a brand.

This concept helps better understanding of development and maintenance of the relationship between brands and consumers (Fournier, 1998; Ambroise, 2006; Gouteron, 2006).

Customers' attitudes and behaviors towards the brand will reflect in brand personality which may affect on consumer tendency in connection with the brand and ultimately affect purchase likelihood (Aaker, 1996; Blackstone, 1993; Fournier, 1994)

Several marketers clearly believe that using brand personality has potential benefits for trading companies. Brand personality helps more active processing of information, symptoms, characteristics and advantages of the brand by consumers (Aaker, 1996; Biel, 1993). Organizations can improve brand function by connecting symbolic meaning to the brand.

A brand personality explains how an organization penetrates the brand into the market by human personality characteristics considered to make the powerful, unique and compatible symbolic associations for consumers (Freling & Forbes, 2005).

Finally, consumers' personal congruency with the brand will determine the brand personality.

Brand Equity

Several researchers have relatively different definitions of brand equity. Brand equity is described as follows:

Researches offer different definitions of brand equity. Brand equity is defined as:

1- Assets and liabilities attributable to a brand's name and symbol that reduces or adds the value provided by a product or service to customers.
2- The differentiation effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to brand marketing.
3-The power that the brand may be acquired from name, logo or symbol in the market (Lee & Beck, 2008)

Brand equity is mainly due to the trust that consumers have with a brand relative to other brands as this trust is translated as consumers' loyalty and their willingness to pay higher prices for the brand.

Most studies show that measuring brand equity is a global issue and is consistent with the definition of the value added to the product.

Measurement tools such as price premiums, consumer based perceptions and purchase behavior is consistent with this view.

Keller and Lehmann (2004) show three main and distinct perspectives of brand equity:
1- Customer based brand equity
2- company based brand equity
3- Financial based brand equity

In this research customer based brand equity perspective is used for assessing the brand.
Aaker (1991) has been the first person that introduced customer based brand equity based on both cognitive and behavioral dimensions.

Aaker defined brand equity as follows:

A set of five categories of assets (Liabilities) that are attached to a brand name or symbol and add or (reduce) value provided by a product or a service.

He has named these five categories as follows that is usually considered the four main dimensions. They are brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, brand loyalty, and other assets, such as brand exclusive rights, trademarks and communication board.

Thus, in marketing theory, customer based brand equity divided into two categories: customer`s perception (brand awareness, brand association, brand perceived) and customer`s behavior (brand loyalty, willingness to pay higher prices) .

The conceptual framework also examined in this study, linked brand equity concept with different aspects of Aaker's brand equity proposed model.

Brand Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is defined as consumer perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service than other options (Zeithmal, 1988). High perceived quality guides consumers to choose one brand over the other competing brands (Yoo & Donthe, 2000). In order to succeed, companies need to identify features that customers look for in relation with quality. Perceived quality is a competitive necessity and nowadays most companies find quality customer oriented as a strategic weapon (Atligan, 2005).

Brand Loyalty

Loyalty is a criterion that evaluates the tendency of consumers to brand. Customers who are comfortable, buy the product despite competitors' top product features, price and easy function, have understood the value in the brand loyalty means a strong commitment by the customer to permanent buying and using a certain type of product (Yoo, 2005). In fact, customers who are loyal to a particular kind of brand always attempt to buy it permanently and

have no interest in buying other brands. Loyalty is an important concept in marketing strategies and according to Aaker brand loyalty is the central core of brand equity.

Solomon (1992) showed that purchasing decisions based on loyalty may become a habit and this may be a result of current brand satisfaction.

In general it must be said that high number of loyal customers are an asset for an organization and have been identified as the most important determinant of brand equity.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness means that how can a customer, distinguish and remember unknown from known brands in purchase decision situations. This action can show the relationship between brand and its associations in memory such as name, logo and sign (Bother, 2007). Brand awareness is a power reminder in consumer`s mind. There are 4 types of brand awareness: 1) high mental awareness 2) brand reminder 3) brand recognition 4) unawareness (Bumm & Bonkim, 2005) .The role of brand awareness in brand equity depends on the level of achieved knowledge. The higher level of awareness, are more likely to increase considering brand and its effect on consumer purchasing decisions (Bennett & Rundle, 2001) .

Brand Associations

Brand associations can be provided to customers take the best choice by having specific items in their mind, where there are multiple choices. Aaker (1991) defines brand association as anything related to the association of a certain type of the brand or its image. Brand association is a relation with knowledge of a particular type of one by customer. This knowledge formed by any idea, examples and facts which is caused by the product (Yoo & Donthe, 2000). Associations make a sentimental value for trademarks that differentiate them from other trademarks.

Brand Personality and Brand Equity

Pervious researches have expressed brand personality and brand equity as two related concepts. It is thought that brand personality is one important component of brand image that can help build brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Batra 1993; Biel 1993; Keller, 1993) and consumers use brand personality dimensions as determinants of value added to the brand. Brand personality ensures consistent brand image over the time and allow consumers to express their personalities (Aaker, 1997)

When brand personality associations are enabled strongly in consumers' mind, it also affects consumer behavior and attitudes toward the brand (Wysung, 2000).

Some studies have stated that, although there is no evidence that connect directly personality dimensions to brand equity, however, numerous studies have revealed effect of elements on brand personality which is reflected in the components and outcomes of brand equity (Pier

Vallet- Florence, 2009). For example, a successful brand personality can increase customer preference and encourage consumption of the brand (Sirgy, 1982), and also increase consumers' emotional attachment to the brand (Biel, 1993), trust and loyalty (Fournier, 1998) and provide a context for differentiation (Aaker, 1996).

Keller also stated these concepts in his brand equity model that brand personality affects the relationship between consumer and the brand including brand preference (Kim, 2000), brand attachment (Sung, 2005), brand trust (Hess, 2007) and brand loyalty (Bercus, 2009).

Marketing Performance Metrics

Marketing measurement is associated with a wide range of variables and included mental problems that pose a challenge to standards development process. Previous studies have pointed to a number of criteria for evaluating marketing performance. The attempts has been regarding to classifying several measure of marketing metrics to a number of key measures (Ambler, 1999). Finally these metrics has been described at six groups:
1-Financial measures (as turnover, contribution margin and profit)
2- Competitive market measures (as market share, advertising and promotional share)
3-Consumer behavior measures (as consumer penetration, loyalty and customer gained)
4-Consumer intermediate measures (as brand recognition, satisfaction and purchase intention)
5-Direct customer measures (as distribution level, profitability of intermediaries and service quality); and
6-Innovativeness measures (as products launched and their revenue).
The centralization of different marketing metrics is gradually moving from mass performance criterion (such as market share, sale or profitability) to performance evaluation indexes at customer level.
In this study, for assessing effect of brand personality and brand equity concepts on sales product, marketing metrics such as satisfaction, preference, purchase intent and sales volume are used.

Research Background

Motameni, Moradi, Hemmati (2011) in a research "Brand personality and its effect on customer loyalty" identified four dimensions of MTN brand personality and stated that the results show a positive and significant impact of brand personality on satisfaction and perceived value and also a significant effect of satisfaction, on trust and loyalty, and perceived value on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Vallet Florence (2009) in his research as, "The impact of brand personality and sales promotion on brand equity argued that the dimensions of brand personality have positive impact on brand equity, while attractive consumer promotion affected negatively on brand equity. Positive impact of brand personality is larger than the negative impact of sales promotion.

Louis and Lombert (2010) in their research as, "Impact of brand personality on three major relational consequences (trust, attachment, and commitment to the brand) ", stated that their study highlights several interesting results such that all nine studied personality traits directly have a positive or negative result on at least one of the three considered related result; trust, attachment and commitment to the brand.

Stephanie, Aaron, Lay Peng and Jayne (2011) in their research, "The Effect of Brand Personality and Congruity on Customer-based Brand Equity and Loyalty of Personal Computer Brands", approved positive impact of brand personality congruity on brand equity and brand loyalty of personal Computer Brands and showed that both exciting and competence dimensions are important for personal computer brands.

Sheena, G. Naresh (2012) in their study, "Do brand personalities make a difference to consumers? "stated that the traits assigned by Aaker and Hawkins strongly impact on brands and it is perceived that these attributes will help the brand to success. They concluded that marketers need to develop their strategies based on important personality trait of their brands.

Methodology

Literature reviewed in the previous section discussed brand personality structure, brand equity structure and brand performance evaluation. Based on objectives of the study, the conceptual model and hypotheses were developed for this study which followed here:
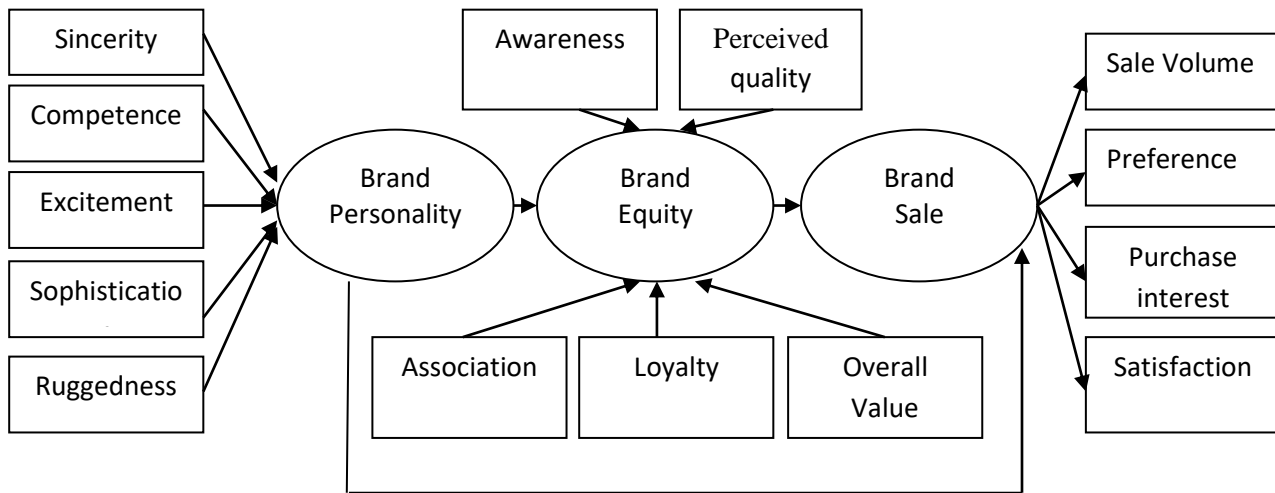
Research Conceptual Model

And the research hypotheses are:

H1: Brand personality has an effect on brand equity.
H2: Brand equity has an effect on sale product.

H3: Brand personality has an effect on sale product.

This study can be considered as an applied research from purpose perspective and descriptive-survey with regards to the nature and method (type of correlation). To gather data, a five-choice Likert type questionnaire in three parts was prepared to measure brand personality, brand equity and brand sale.

To measure brand personality 42 traits of Aaker's brand personality model are used and to assess brand equity 4 dimensions of Aaker's brand equity model are utilized.

Reliability and validity of the questionnaire in the study were examined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and confirmatory factor analysis. Results for Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the variables used are presented in Table 1. And since the Churchill and Peter (1984) values higher than 0.7 have confirmed the reliability, the resulting values in Table 1 has shown good reliability of collected data. Also, in order to assess validity of brand personality questions confirmatory factor analysis is used and for assessing construct validity of the questionnaire opinions of experts and academics are used.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient results

Question number	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
58 و 55 ، 52 ، 49، 50، 51 ، 48 ، 46	Competence	0/85
64و45، 53 ، 36 ، 35 ، 34 ، 32، 33 ، 30، 31	Sincerity	0/82
60 و 54 ، 47 ، 44 ، 43 ، 42 ، 40، 41 ، 39 ، 38 ، 37	Exciting	0/89
61 و 59 ، 57 ، 56	Sophistication	0/81
65 و 63 ، 62	Ruggedness	0/68
Brand Personality		0/95
3 و 2 ، 1	Brand Awareness	0/69
6 و 5 ، 4	Perceived Quality	0/63
16 و 11 ، 10 ، 9 ، 7	Brand Associations	0/70
29 و 28 ، 18 ، 17 ، 15 ، 14 ، 13 ، 12	Brand Loyalty	0/86
27و26 ، 25 ، 24 ، 23 ، 22 ، 21 ، 20 ، 19 ، 8	Brand Overall value	0/83
Brand Equity		0/92
66,71	Sales Volume	0/89
67,72	Purchase Interest	0/7
69,70	Brand Preference	0/77
68,14	Customer Satisfaction	0/71
	Brand Sale	0/87
Total		0/97

Causes of choosing L'Oreal brand for evaluation purposes of this study has been its hundred year experience in cosmetic industry worldwide; its 10-year history of distributing in Iran's cosmetic market and also having a complete list of distributor stores.

Thus, all L'Oreal selling positions ranging from retail stores and pharmacies in Shiraz city formed the population of the research which according to the existing list was 180 positions. So, this study was conducted among 119 L'Oreal products vendors (sample size according to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table). Demographic characteristics of participants are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Women	50	42
Man	69	58
Position		
Director	70	58/8
Vendor	49	41/2
Place Type		
Store	79	66/4
Pharmacy	40	33/6
Experience		
Lower Than 1 Year	53	44/5
1-3 Year	48	40/3
4-10 Years	8	6/7
Higher Than 10 Years	10	8/4
Age		
Lower Than 30 Years	64	53/8
31-40 Years	39	32/8
41-50 Years	15	12/6
51-60 years	1	0/8
Higher Than 60 Years	0	0

Data Analysis and Results

For analyzing data, Amos software and a two-step method of Structural Equation Modeling proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was used. At first stage, the used metrics examined by using confirmatory factor analysis and at second stage the made relationships and assumptions examined by using structural equation modeling was done. The results of factor analysis showed that all items (questions) are in good condition by being significantly different from zero (P-Value>0.05, the 95% confidence level) and have the ability to measure variables.

Due to the various components of the model developed in this study, the first three model fit was evaluated separately.

After ensuring their relative acceptability, the overall structural equation model was evaluated. Figure 2 indicating overall structural equation models after estimating with the bootstrap method of 5000 samples. And fit indices (P = 0.065 (greater than 05/0), CFI = 0.984 (greater than 9/0), TLI = 0.977 (greater than 9/0), PCFI = 0.68 (larger than 5/0), PNFI = 0.637 (greater than 5/0), DF = 1.229 / CMIN (less than 5), indicates that the final model fit is desirable.
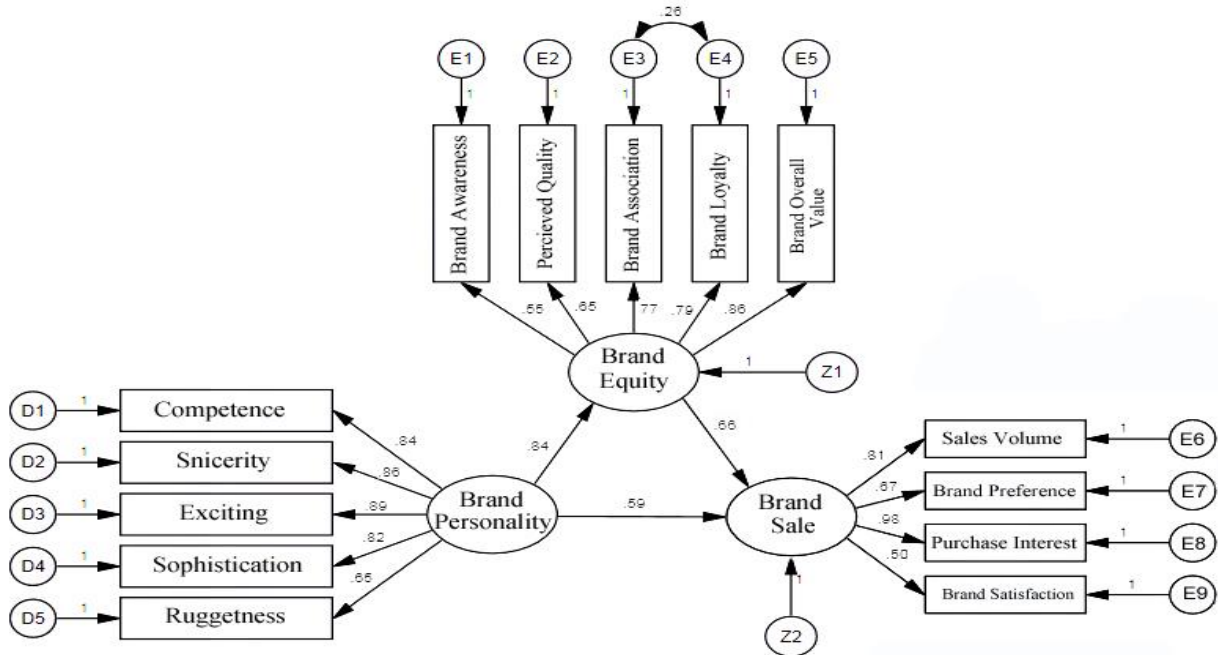

Figure.2 Estimating overall structural equation model

Significant relationships between the components of the model are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Significant Relationships between Model Components

	Standard Coefficient	Standard Error (S.E.)	Critical Ratio (C.R.)	P-Value	Results
Brand Personality-- >Brand Equity	.838	.104	5.691	***	Not Rejected
Brand Equity-- > Brand Sale	.661	.365	4.886	***	Not Rejected
Brand Personality-- >Brand Sale	.586	.337	3.244	.001	Not Rejected
*** Represent that P is less than 0.001					

The results obtained from structural equation modeling, showed sincerity, excitement, competence, charming and ruggedness as appropriate dimensions to assess L'Oreal brand personality, where "exciting" and "sincerity " have higher impact with 0.89 and 0.86 coefficients and " ruggedness " with 0.89 coefficient has the lowest impact.

Also the results obtained from structural equation modeling showed appropriate results from using brand awareness, brand associations, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty dimensions to assess brand equity, where "overall perceived value of brand" and "loyalty " dimensions have higher impact with 0.86 and 0.79 coefficients and" brand awareness" with coefficient 0.55 has the lowest impact.

Also the results obtained from structural equation modeling showed appropriate results from using sale volume, customer satisfaction, customer preference and Customer purchase interest (purchase intent) dimensions to assess product sale ,where "purchase interest " and "sale volume" have higher impact with 0.98,0.81 coefficients and "customer preference" with 0.65 coefficient has the lowest impact.

Relations derived from structural equation modeling confirmed the proposed hypotheses H1, H2, H3, in other words, the results showed a direct impact of brand personality on product sale and its indirect impact on product sale through brand equity which has more coefficient weight through brand equity route .

The results of the indirect effects of model components to each other, showed indirect effect of brand personality on product sale dimensions (sale volume, customer satisfaction, customer preference and Customer purchase interest) and also brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand associations, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty) .

Managerial Suggestions

Since the results, showed the impact of brand personality on brand equity and product sale, managers must focus on the sources of brand personality in order to develop a positive brand personality, creating a distinction in customer's mind relative to other brands and influence brand equity dimensions.

Focus on the development of these resources can strengthen brand personality and its associated attitudinal loyalty in cosmetic products sector.

Companies must mix brand obtained experimental features with their marketing strategies to create a distinctive brand personality and enhance customer choice probability.

L'Oreal brand managers must act intelligently in its decisions in relation to select the location and distribution intensity of the product in stores and pharmacies, and also product pricing and promotions. Because choosing a store or a pharmacy that does not have required work quality

and does not understand personality and value of the brand given to them will not only help to increase sales but will lead to the adverse effects on the character and value of the brand, in the market.

Managers should note that frequent and ineffective promotions reduce overall perceived value of the brand and will destroy general aspect of the brand, its personality and eventually its value. Since one of the direct resources of brand personality are corporate employees and managers, their personality traits, physical appearance, social and professional behavior, in communication with customers, must be in line with the intended brand personality that is set to be offered to the customers and the market.

They should completely be aware of the main established or intend to establish personality characteristics of the brand that they are responsible to sell and to penetrate into market with effective communications and available marketing tools.

Since" sincerity" and "exciting" were estimated as two important predicted dimensions that affect L'Oreal brand sale and customer preference and showed higher effect on L'Oreal brand equity, so L'Oreal brand Managers can highlight these dimensions in their ads and in their customers' mind.

As the results showed that the created brand equity has an impact on brand sale and the two dimensions "overall perceived value" and" brand loyalty" have the greatest impact on this value creation. It is recommended that the company must use appropriate policy to increase brand loyalty among consumers and then by creating and maintaining loyal customers help creating higher brand equity.

Various marketing activities including marketing communications, sales promotion, public relations, social participation and effective relationships have the fundamental role in increasing customer loyalty and as the brand associations, brand perceived quality and brand awareness dimensions have the lighter impact, measures need to be considered to strengthen these three dimensions in customers' mind.

Promotional tools such as brochures, stickers, posters, sms notifications, holding product training seminars for vendors, sampling programs, regular visits to sale positions and having effective communication with their vendors and their officials and exchanging information about products features and marketing programs and also motivating sellers by giving them gifts for having better and stronger presentation of the products, can be effective for this purpose.

Due to the limitations of this study, it is recommended that in future research, more brand names and in other parts of the country be examined than the results can have better reliability and generalizability .

The study also suggested that the proposed model be examined separately for various lines of health and beauty Products (hair care, skin care, hair color, make up and perfumes...).

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