

Research Paper

eISSN: 2783-4573

A structural model of the role of brand love in the impact of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction

Peyman Deilami Moezzi¹ 

1- Master of Business Administration, Allameh Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran

Receive:

22 October 2021

Revise:

07 November 2021

Accept:

18 December 2021

Published online:

20 December 2021


Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a structural model of the role of brand love in the impact of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction. This research is applicable in terms of purpose, and survey in terms of collection method. The statistical population of the study consisted of customers of Kaleh Company in Mazandaran and Gilan provinces. The sample size of the research was determined based on Cochran's formula of 384 people and the available sampling method was used., standard questionnaires of marketing motivations of Hassanzadeh and Rezvani (2016), customer satisfaction of Garmels and Guiner (2000) and love of brand of Chow and Fiore (2015) were used to collect data. In order to analyze the data, the structural equation technique with Lisrel statistical software and Spss software were used. The research findings showed that the components of marketing stimuli were product stimulus, pricing stimulus, distribution stimulus and promotion stimulus, and respectively had the greatest effect on customer satisfaction. The results showed that marketing incentives affect customer satisfaction directly and indirectly. Love for the brand has a mediating role in the effect of marketing incentive elements on customer satisfaction.

Keywords:

Brand love,
marketing incentives,
customer satisfaction,
pricing incentive,
distribution incentive

Please cite this article as (APA): Deylami Moezzi, P. (2021). A structural model of the role of brand love in the impact of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction. *Journal of Business Management And Entrepreneurship*, 1(1), 101-118.

 <https://dx.doi.org/10.22034/jbme.2022.313113.1000>



Publisher: Institute of Management fekrenoandish

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Corresponding Author: Peyman Deilami Moezzi

Email: deylamipeyman@yahoo.com

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Brands play a pivotal role in consumer behavior, and making strong relationships between customers and their chosen brands has a tremendous impact on customer behavior and brand preference. Creating such strong relationships at times leads to the formation of deep emotional bonds and ultimately love toward the brand. Creating and strengthening strong emotional bonds turns customers into staunch advocates for the brand, resulting in huge investment capital for the company (Hajibabaei & Esmailpur, 2019). Nowadays, the successful companies try more than ever to take a step toward the improvement of the stable competitive advantage. The first and foremost function of competitive advantage is to ensure the survival of the organization. When an organization ensures its survival by relying on competitive advantage, then it can follow the path of success to growth (Ermaya & Wibowo, 2020). Analyzing the behavior of buyers and customers in the marketing process is a key point in developing marketing strategies. In the process of analyzing customer behavior, marketing professionals focus on the customer decision process. The important part of this mental process is related to the external and internal stimuli of the person (or internal and external incentive). The most important external incentives are advertising and other promotional methods such as discounts and price changes that have been developed in the strategic marketing plan. Measuring these motivators for marketing professionals plays a helpful role in evaluating the effectiveness of marketing strategies (Sakifard & etal, 2019). Such motivators form the intention of buying to the customer; and if it continues, it will lead to customer satisfaction (Kootenaie & Kootenaie, 2021). Examining different dimensions of consumer behavior can help researchers to identify the reasons why customers want to buy. One of the elements that affect customer satisfaction and re-purchase intention is love for a particular brand. Robert (2005) states that brand love expresses the strongest emotional bond between the consumer and the brand (Rezaei Hajiabadi & etal, 2021). Brand love can act as a stimulus for consumers to develop and maintain close relationships with companies. Marketing has used love as a structure that shows consumers' strong emotional attachments to the love of objects, whether a brand or a product or a service (Cossío-Silva & etal, 2016). This research seeks to design a model that establishes a relationship between marketing incentives available to Kaleh Company and brand love with customer satisfaction (and ultimately the consequence for Kaleh Company is to increase competitiveness and create a strong brand). Therefore, in this study, the effect of marketing stimuli and brand love on customer satisfaction has been investigated. In this study, an attempt is made to answer the question that if marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction with the mediating role of brand love in the branches of Kaleh Company in Mazandaran and Gilan provinces have a significant impact.

Theoretical literature

Brand love is the degree of emotional attachment that a satisfied customer has to a particular brand. In the other word, when a brand acts in such a way that is able to satisfy the real and tangible needs of the other party, it can be interpreted as love and thus the concept of brand love gradually entered consumer research (Palusuk & etal, 2019).

Marketing incentives are a set of marketing activities that companies do to meet the needs of their target markets as best as possible (Chang & etal, 2019). After selecting a target market, marketing managers must develop a systematic plan for selling to customers and building long-term relationships (Li, 2020).

Researchers consider customer satisfaction to be a psychological feeling that results from comparing the product specifications received with the needs and wants of customers and the social expectations regarding the product. According to the definitions in explaining

satisfaction, three conditions are necessary: First, expectations must be formed. The formation of evaluations is the second condition, and the third condition is that expectations and evaluations allow direct comparisons to be made (mirzaee Azandariani & Arya, 2020).

Song & Kim (2022) conducted a study entitled The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Value of Luxury Brands: The Dual Impact of Brand Satisfaction and Brand Love on Word of Mouth Loyalty Intentions and Attitudes. The statistical population consisted of e-shop customers in China. The research method was correlative, and the sampling method was voluntary. The results showed that social media marketing on the value of luxury brands and brand satisfaction and brand love have a significant effect on word of mouth loyalty intentions and attitudes.

Choi & et al (2022) conducted a study entitled The Impact of Customer-Based Company Reputation on Customer Interaction Behaviors: Customer Satisfaction and Brand Love as Intermediaries and Industry as Modifier. The statistical population of customers was service companies in Tokyo. The research method was descriptive-survey, and sampling method was random simple. The results showed that company reputation, customer satisfaction and brand love had a significant effect on customer interaction behaviors and the type of industry had a moderating role in this regard.

Pallikkara & et al, (2021), conducted a study entitled: The Impact of Marketing Incentives on Repurchase Intent; The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction. The statistical population was the customers of UK banks. The research method was descriptive-correlative and the sampling method was random simple. The results showed that marketing stimuli of customer satisfaction have a positive and significant effect on the intention to repurchase.

Methodology

The research method is descriptive-correlational in nature, and applied in terms of purpose. The statistical population of the study consisted of customers of Kaleh Company in Mazandaran and Gilan provinces. The sample size of the research was determined based on Cochran's formula of 384 people and the available sampling method was used. For data collection, standard questionnaires of marketing stimuli (Hassanzadeh & Rezvani, 2016), customer satisfaction (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000) and brand love (Cho & Fiore, 2015) were used.

Discussion and Results

The results of the first hypothesis showed that the effect of marketing stimuli on brand love was equal to (0.69) which shows that the correlation is favorable. The t-test of the test was obtained (7.67) which is more than the critical value of t at the level of 5% error; (1.96) and shows that the observed correlation is significant. The results of the second hypothesis showed that the effect of brand love on customer satisfaction was calculated equal to (0.76), which shows that the correlation is favorable. The t-test of the test was obtained (8.72) which is more than the critical value of t at the level of 5% error; (1.96) and shows that the observed correlation is significant. The results of the third hypothesis showed that the effect of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction is equal to (0.42) which shows that the correlation is favorable. The t-test of the test was obtained (5.40) which is more than the critical value of t at the error level of 5%; (1.96) and shows that the observed correlation is significant. The results of the fourth hypothesis showed that the power of direct effect of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction is equal to (0.42). Indirect effect of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction is calculated equal to (0.52) provided that there is a mediating variable of brand love. Due to the fact that the effect of direct path is less than indirect paths, therefore, the

existence of the mediator variable of love for the brand increases the power of influence and the mediating role of the variable of love for the brand is confirmed in the present hypothesis.

Conclusion

The power of the effect of marketing stimuli on brand love is calculated equal to (0.69) which shows that the correlation is favorable. Therefore, paying attention to the brand and increasing its value by Kaleh Company plays an important role in improving branding and brand love. Love and affection for the brand is one of the components that can lead to attracting more customers for the company. The more the customer's love and interest in the brand, the more loyalty to the brand and the more word of mouth advertising at the end. The use of promotional incentives to increase customer information and even advertising in bringing the brand closer to the interests of the consumers has a significant impact. These results are consistent with the findings of (Bauer & et al, 2020) and (Hajibabaei & Esmailpur, 2019).

The strength of the effect of brand love on customer satisfaction is calculated to be equal to (0.76), which indicates that the correlation is favorable. Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) and Unal & Aydin (2013) in their research concluded that the more customer love for the brand, the more verbal advertising customers about the brand (Khalighi, 2020). This means that love for the brand will encourage the customer and will lead to their satisfaction. Such a level of satisfaction will create loyalty in them. These results are consistent with the findings of Song & Kim (2022) and Choi & et al (2022).

The effect of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction is calculated to be equal to (0.42), which indicates that the correlation is favorable. Providing the best possible value to customers is undoubtedly vital for Kaleh Company in the current competitive market. As long as the company offers quality products to customers, customers are satisfied with receiving such products and this customer satisfaction leads to their commitment to purchase services (Chang & et al, 2019). On the other hand, improving the quality of products and paying attention to customer tastes is another important marketing stimulus that plays an important role in improving customer satisfaction. These results are consistent with the findings of Sheikhesmaeili & et al (2021) and Pallikkara & et al (2021).

The indirect effect of marketing stimuli on customer satisfaction in the presence of the mediating variable of brand love is equal to (0.52). Marketing incentives motivate customers to reuse products, and this directly and indirectly leads to customer satisfaction (Fahimi, 2020). This can be examined from different angles. When Kaleh Company tries to introduce its products to its customers based on its promotional advertisements or when it uses pricing strategies to acquire and maintain its market, it tries to design its marketing stimuli in such a way that customers fall in love with this brand. Matching the company's products and services with customers' tastes will create pleasure and two-way communication between the brand and the customer. These results are consistent with the findings of Shafieih (2018) and Aghajani (2020).

In this regard, it is suggested that the marketing managers of Kaleh Company can create a better association in the customer's mind by using a better image, scent, sound and symbol. In this regard, reference groups can be used to increase brand love. Providing more and more up-to-date services can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty as much as possible. By identifying the customer's wishes, aspirations, ideals and dreams and fulfilling them, the customer's interest in Kaleh Company can be increased. Responding quickly to customer requests and listening to their conversations can make them feel important and Increase their interest in the company. The use of nostalgia can evoke positive memories and increase the realization of the customer's love for the brand. To ensure that customers are in constant contact with them, company managers must adopt clear policies and procedures.