

Impact Of Brand Personality On Three Major Relational Consequences (Trust, Attachment, And Commitment To The Brand): Case Study Of Nestle Nutrition Company In Tehran, Iran

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Abstract: This research was conducted to determine and study impact of brand personality on relational consequences (trust, attachment and commitment) and implemented by a survey-descriptive method providing effective suggestions to improve role of brand on consumer's behavior. Six hypotheses were codified and produced for test based on the consequences of brand personality after providing general framework of the study. A questionnaire comprising of some 23 questions was designed and distributed over statistical population of the research including 150 consumers of products with Nestle brand. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS and LISREL (technique of structural equations) softwares, Friedman test and by modeling structural equations. All hypotheses were confirmed except the path from attachment to commitment. The obtained and analyzed results were provided.

Key words: brand personality, trust, attachment, commitment, Nestle Nutrition Company

INTRODUCTION

Companies apply various marketing strategies and methods in order to make distinction between products of them and their competitors in market. Deciding about a trade name (brand) for a product is one of the most important decisions. A brand can guarantee success of a product in the market to a great extent when chosen with accurate psychological issues and studies on the behavior of consumers, and also based on correct marketing principles. Brands are of the most valuable properties of a company which create added value for the products. Brands are indeed a brief explanation of the company's activities which make relations with customers. Considering the high rate of new competitors entering the market and providing different services, keeping current customers has a crucial significance due to heavy costs of finding new customers. For this purpose, it is very important to establish deep relations with the customers which can be achieved through reliability of the brand. Since brand personality is subtle, a personal perception, and more difficult to imitate than product attribute (Ange and lim, 2006), this appears to be sage advice for companies. Brands can get personality traits of human beings and obviously all brands have their own personalities. Appropriate personality of a brand may encourage one to establish a deep relation with it. Brands were the subject of a great deal of research, including the concepts of brand identity (Kapferer, 1998), brand equity, brand image (Keller, 1993), and lastly brand personality (Aaker, 1997). The concept of brand equity is the added value that a brand brings to a product. It is an additional effect in a consumer's response to a brand that stretches beyond the product itself and its attributes (Keller, 1993). The most significant and exclusive properties of the brand will appear in its identity. Identity of the brand determines its exclusiveness, ideals and targets, values and indicators for identification of a brand. Brand identity involves various dimensions such as apparent and graphical components, personality and relation of the brand with its customers, culture and quality. Brand personality is used to address emotional feature of its image in the individuals' minds which has been formed from all experiences of the consumers. Consumers usually perceive the brand from features which have been generally derived from personality of its individuals and then extend it to the whole brand. One of ways to raise consumer loyalty for a company is to set up relationship marketing operations, which Morgan and Haunt define as the set of activities whose purpose is to establish, develop, and maintain successful relational exchanges. Then, The Company attempts to develop and maintain a relationship over time with its customers. There are various approaches including behavioral, attitudinal and combinational. The behavioral approach can not provide the loyalty caused from distinct repetitious purchases alone and the consumer must have a positive attitude to a brand to be regarded as loyal. In addition, brand trust represents the recognition that brand value can be created and developed with the management of some aspects that go beyond consumer's satisfaction with the functional performance of the product and its attributes (Aaker, 1996; Lassar *et al.*, 1995). Previous studies were based to specific links such as, brand personality attributes or relation between trust and attachment, while this research notes all links simultaneously and thus offers a model of the relational consequences. In the literature on person-person relationships, it is suggested that an attachment is an emotion-laden target specific bond between two persons (Bowlby, 1979). Attachments can be relatively strong or weak. Strong attachments are associated with

stronger feelings of connection, affection, love, and passion. Correspondingly, Schifferstein and Zwartkruis-Pelgrim (2008) defined consumer-product attachment as “the strength of the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a product”. Many scholars have criticized the one-dimensional perspective and view commitment as a two components construct, including continuance and affective commitment (Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) or three components Allen and Meyer (1990). Result of systematic and continuous behavioral reaction would be commitment to the brand. Results of various researches indicate that the brand personality has positive effect on brand preference, attachment to brand, commitment and purchase intent (Lin, 2010, p.5). Grondloak *et al.* (1995) believe that the commitment should be considered as the crucial component of marketing since concentration of the marketing is being changed from “transaction” to “relations”.

The main purpose of this study is to provide a model (based on the conceptual modeling of Louis and Lombart, 2010) which illustrates direct and indirect effects of perceived personality from the brand on three relevant consequences of it (trust, attachment and commitment to the brand) (Nestle brand was chosen and further details are given in the methodology section). Correlation among the consequences will be investigated in addition to the relation between brand personality and trust, attachment and commitment. In this research, the concept of brand personality and its consequences are defined. The research hypotheses and conceptual framework are then described. Finally, the methodology used, the results of the research, conclusion and limits are provided.

Literature Review:

2.1. Concepts and Definitions:

2.1.1. Brand Personality and Its main Consequences:

Brand personality, defined as all personality traits used to characterize a person and associated with a brand, is a concept within the field of relational marketing. It helps better understand the development and maintaining of relations between brands and consumers. In addition, it explains how those relationships impact consumers' behavior (Fournier, S, 1998).

Human personality is the starting point of the research on brand personality. The currently prevailing school of thought in the area of psychology is the personality trait structure. Traits can be defined as inclinations to adapt consistent modes of cognition, affect, and behavior (Costa, P.T. Jr and McCrae, R.R., 1998). Overall, personality traits should be considered as stable psychological features giving meaning to human actions and experiences. According to theories of Animism, brands too can have their own personality. Indeed, human beings feel the need to personify objects in order to help their interactions with the intangible world. All contact, whether direct or indirect, that consumers have with a brand generate and impact the perceptions of the brand personality traits (Plummer, J., 1984).

2.1.2. Trust:

Garbarino and Johnson (1999) demonstrated that satisfaction and trust play different roles in predicting future intents for small and great relations of the customers. Trust has been seen as the basic and important component of any relation or even as the key concept which regulates the relation. They have concluded that the psychic advantage of confidence and trust are more significant than the special behavior or social advantages in relation of a user and a company/brand. Morgan and Haunt (1994) have declared that trust toward a brand would lead to loyalty and commitment to it since trust is able to create relations of high value. There are various expressions in social and psychological sciences such as humanism (Frost, Taggart, David V. Stimpson, 1978), benevolence and integrity (Larzelere, Robert and Ted L. Huston, 1980) or reliability and responsibility. In the field of brand issues, trust is a kind of safety feel by the consumer in relation with the brand answering this question: “Does the brand fulfill expectations of the consumer?” This feeling can be expressed based on two general dimensions, namely reliability to the brand and main intents of it toward individuals. The first dimension is associated with this assumption whether the brand has adequate capability and ability to cope with the needs of consumers. For instance, through offering proposals of new products this would be felt necessary by consumers in the future, or through suggesting different quality levels for the products. The second dimension associated with intents of the brand is more derived from emotional and sensational causes (Mickel, 1998).

2.1.3. Attachment:

Attachment is formed initially during childhood and then the process is continued during next stages of life. Individuals may get attached to their friends, pets, places and objects. Attachment to objects might be result of feeling anxiety during inaccessibility to the object. Attachment to a brand reflects relations of the brand which have been created during time. Satisfaction of the brand and trust to it will lead to attachment. In other words, attachment to a brand will be developed if with using it is led to satisfaction and trust of the consumers. Long-term and final consequence of having relations with the brand is attachment to it which can lead to current

behavior and future intent for purchase. Based on psychological studies, attachment will lead to appearance of approach to behavior and also tendency to current and future attachment (Chan, 2006, p.417). Consumers are likely to form strong emotional bonds with both product and service brands, and freely say that they love a store or brand (Yim, C.K., *et al.*, 2008).

2.1.4. Commitment:

Wan park *et al.* (2006) Define commitment to the brand as a consequence of attachment. Attachment to the brand reflects a psychic state of the consumer (strong self-brand relation and automatic recovery of thoughts and feelings about a brand) while commitment to the brand indicates tendency to maintain relation with a brand. Consumer commitment to the brand has been identified important in marketing (Ahluwalia, Rohini, 2000; Kotler Philip *et al.*, 2009). Recent studies put forward a new definition of commitment with a new scale for its evaluation. Basic structures of commitment to a brand are loyalty, satisfaction, involvement and relative performance of the brand. Unnava and Montgomery (Rajus, H.R. Unnava and N.V. Montgomery, 2009) have applied three following items to assess commitment:

- 1) if the brand is not accessible in a store, it does not mind for me to choose another brand;
- 2) I know myself as loyal to the brand;
- 3) I may possibly purchase a brand in a sale (Rajus, Unnava and Montgomery, 2009, p.854).

Brand personality has positive effect on attitudinal commitment to the brand which can also lead to positive verbal advertisements of the brand. It is possible that committed customers follow below initiatives more than others:

- 1) Collect positive recommendations for individuals in reference groups;
- 2) Show greater motivation to process new information about the company and the brand;
- 3) Resist more against information contrary to their opinions (Kim, *et al.*, 2010).

2.2. Research Backgrounds:

Salamati (2009) in her thesis ("Studying Effect of Cognition on Brand and Brand Relations on Current and Future Purchase Decisions of Customers") assessed effect of customers' knowledge and subjective image from a brand on satisfaction, attachment and commitment to the brand and purchase decisions of their customers. She discovered that knowledge and subjective image of the brand can lead to trust, satisfaction and trust can lead to attachment, and finally, attachment can lead to current and future purchase decisions of the customers.

Sadeghi Damaneh (2006) demonstrated in his thesis ("Effect of Service Quality on Loyalty and Image of a Brand) that creating special value for the brand is a key stimulus of any growing commercial competition in the market of services which causes many companies seeking competitive advantage to concentrate on branding strategy. One major finding was that perceived quality, loyalty and image of the brand are three special dimensions of brand's value in hotel industry. Moreover, he demonstrated that the perceived quality is the only dimension which affects loyalty and image of the brand in this field.

Ranjbar (2010) in her thesis ("Application of Brand Personality Scale in Automotive Industry: A Case Study for Brand Personality of Samand Car) investigated brand personality of Samand car in Iran using five index dimensions of Aaker's brand personality (1997). 42 personality traits were classified in five dimensions of Aaker's brand personality (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and tough) and it was demonstrated that the personality dimensions of Samand include sincerity, competence and tough while sophistication and excitement do not match with this brand. Hess and Story studied multidimensional relations between brand and users taking into account the commitment based on trust. They discovered that satisfaction of a brand can act as the background factor for trust though much more related to functional dimensions of the brand. Louis and Lombart (2010) evaluated the effect of brand personality on trust, attachment and commitment. They found that 9 personality traits under study associated with Coca-Cola brand bear direct effects on its consequences namely trust, attachment and commitment to the brand.

Matthew *et al.* (2005) in their research ("Evaluating Intensity of Users' Emotional Attachment to Brands") assessed attachment with three indexes (interest, deep sensation and dependency). They also studied its effect on brand loyalty and high prices of the brand and concluded that although emotional attachment would lead to prediction of brand loyalty and tendency to pay surcharge, it is not the only stimulus of loyalty. They additionally demonstrated that deep emotional attachment can be rarely seen in the field of brands or managers might be unable to promote intensity of emotional attachment users have toward a brand.

Hypotheses and conceptual modeling of the research will be given as well as results.

2.4. Hypotheses of Research:

- H1a: Brand personality has significant effect on trust to the brand;
- H1b: Brand personality has significant effect on attachment to the brand;
- H1c: Brand personality has significant effect on commitment to the brand.
- H2: Trust to the brand has significant effect on attachment to the brand;

H3: Attachment to the brand has significant effect on commitment to the brand;
H4: Trust to the brand has significant effect on commitment to the brand;

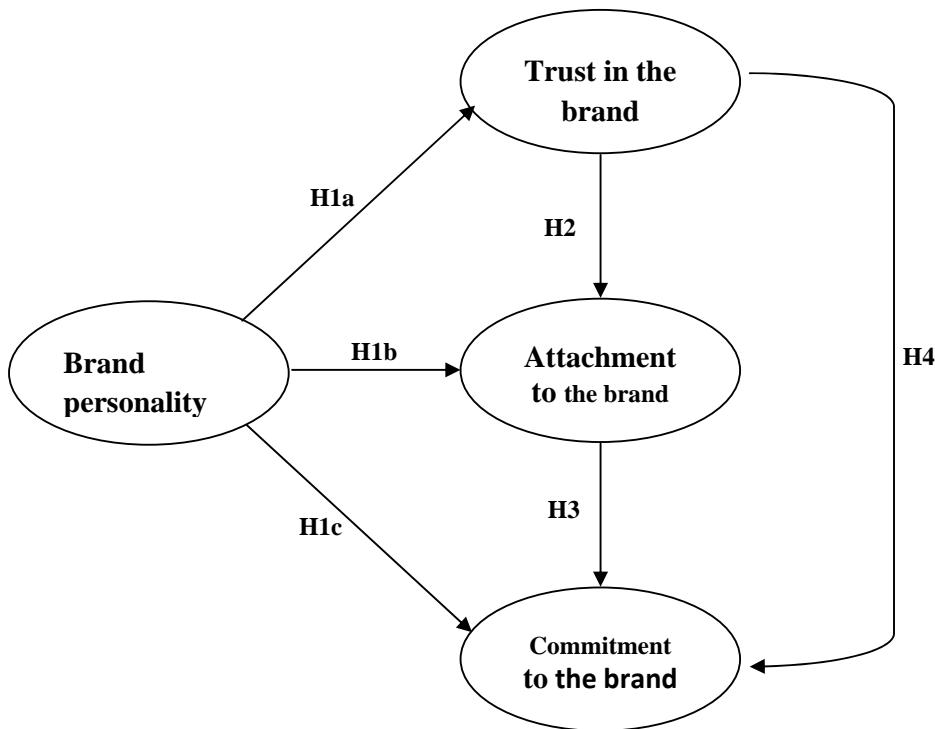


Fig. 1: conceptual framework source: Didier Louis, Cindy Lombart, 2010

Research Methodology And Data Analysis:

Statistical population used in this study includes customers of Nestle brand from famous supermarkets of Tehran, Iran (Shahrvand in Argentine Square and Ghezel Ghal'e in Gomnam Highway). Some 150 questionnaires have been distributed over the population under study using simple random sampling method. Finally the amount of reliability for questions in the questionnaire was measured as 0.984 which was believed to be good and acceptable enough.

Obtained information in this research was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics methods. Friedman test was employed to determine ranking of various indexes of personality's variables by SPSS software, while statistical technique of structural equations using LISREL software was conducted to study the impact of brand personality on three relevant consequences (trust, attachment and commitment to the brand).

According to the following table, indexes and Cronbach's Alpha were used to examine structures and reliability, respectively.

Table 1: Reliability of constructs

Cronbach's α	source	Measures	construct
0.95	Aaker(1997)	Sincerity(honest, sincere reliable, etc) etc) Excitement(exciting, cool, young etc) Competence(confident, secure, Sophistication(charming, upper, class, etc) Ruggedness(tough, rugged, etc)	Brand personality
0.959	Korchia(2002)	Reliability Integrity benevolence	Trust in the brand
0.910	Lacoeuilhe(2000)	satisfactory	Attachment to the Brand
0.947	Fullerton(2005)	unidimensional	Commitment to the Brand

3.1. Structure Verification: Exploratory Factor Analysis:

Exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted to identify a priori dimensions of the variables. KMO and Bartlett's tests have been estimated to assess the appropriateness of factor analyses on the data. Amounts associated with KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity were obtained 0.947 and 0.000, respectively.

Considering the factor loadings determined from the rotated matrix, 23 questions were classified in 4 different dimensions which compose about 74.75% of the total variance of scores. Thus, it can be argued that the data are related to factor analysis.

3.2. Convergence Verification: Confirmatory Factor Analysis:

Results of confirmatory factor analysis for all variables of the research have been offered by LISREL software in this section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results of the Structural Modeling:

A structural model has been estimated in order to examine the hypotheses. Indexes of being good for fitting test of the model were (CFI) =0.98, (NFI) =0.97 and (IFI) =0.98, whereas indexes of being bad included χ^2/df and RMSEA. The model is known to have better fitting when the two recent indexes are as small as possible. Allowed limit of χ^2/df is 3 while allowed limit of RMSEA is 0.08. In this research the following value were reported: RMSEA=0.077, χ^2/df =1.89 and P=0.000<0.005. The structural modeling below has determined brand personality as the external variable and trust, attachment and commitment to the brand as the internal variables (Figures 1 and 2).

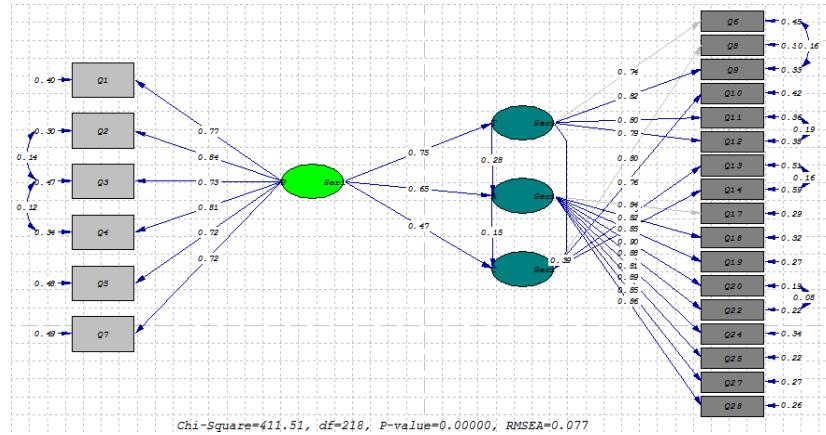


Fig. 4.1: Validated structure model (standardized path coefficient)

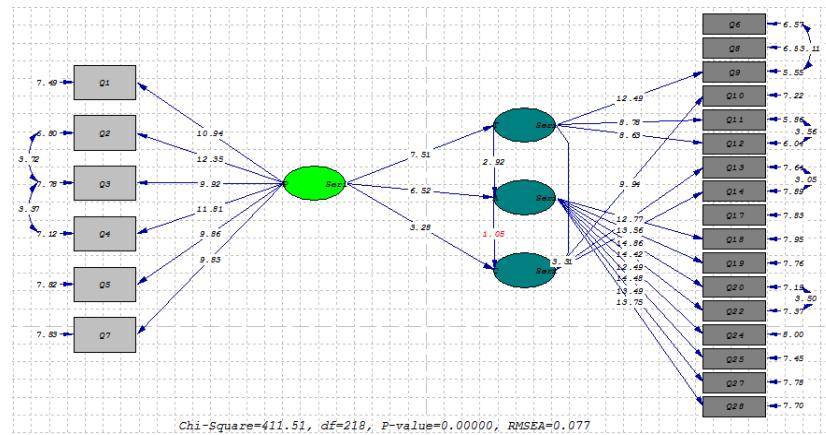


Fig. 4.2: Validated structure model (significant numbers Coefficient)

Table 2 summarizes the final model and explains all causative relations between structures of brand personality, trust, attachment and commitment having positive significance. It also illustrates approval of H1, H2 and H4 hypotheses with rejection of H3 hypotheses about Nestle brand.

The impact of brand personality on trust (H1a), attachment (H1b) and commitment (H1c) are direct and positive, while the effects of trust on attachment and commitment (H4) are direct and positive again. On the other hand, the path of attachment to commitment is rejected (H3). Although brand personality has affected

attachment through the intermediate effect of trust ($0.75 \times 0.28 = 0.21$) in addition to commitment ($0.65 \times 0.15 = 0.097$) through intermediate effect of attachment, it is expected to bear smaller effect in comparison with the direct path. In other words, trust and attachment are unable to play a strong intermediate role. The relation between brand personality and trust to the brand is confirmed with a coefficient of path equal to 0.75. The results indicate that when perception of customers from brand personality is at a high level, they are likely to get more reliability toward Nestle brand.

Table 2: Summary of hypotheses testing

Result	t-value	Path estimate	Hypothesized path	
			to	From
Accept	7.51	0.75	<i>Trust in the Brand</i>	<i>Brand personality :H1a</i>
Accept	6.25	0.65	<i>Attachment to the Brand</i>	<i>Brand personality :H1b</i>
Accept	3.29	0.47	<i>Commitment to the Brand</i>	<i>Brand personality :H1c</i>
Accept	2.92	0.29	<i>Attachment to the Brand</i>	<i>Trust in the Brand :H2</i>
Reject	1.05	0.15	<i>Commitment to the Brand</i>	<i>Attachment to the Brand :H3</i>
Accept	3.31	0.39	<i>Commitment to the Brand</i>	<i>Trust in the Brand :H4</i>

Regarding the above table, it can be argued that the path from brand personality to trust has been reported with standard estimation of 0.75 which is the greatest amount of correlation from personality on correlation. Taking into account the results of significance numbers of t-value, all hypotheses are accepted with significance numbers greater than 1.96 except for the path from attachment to commitment which is accepted with 1.05.

Table 3: Scores received by the Nestle brand on its various personality traits

Perceived personality traits of the Nestle brand	scores
<i>Competence</i>	4.68
<i>Sincerity</i>	4.64
<i>Excitement</i>	4.21
<i>Creative</i>	4.20
<i>Sophistication</i>	3.78
<i>Introvert</i>	2.85

Result Table.3: Looking at the table above uncovers that the highest rank of brand personality scale in terms of importance from participants' point of view were product competence whereas the lowest rank was related to propriety with introversion characteristics.

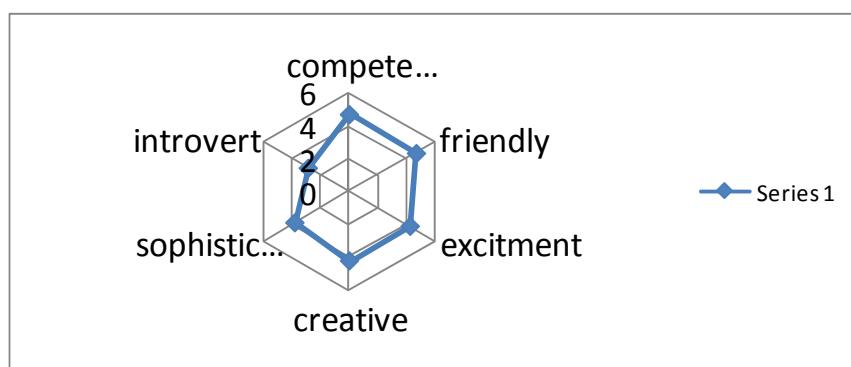


Fig. 4.3: personality of the Nestle brand

Result Fig 4.3: Considering the radar diagram above, brand personality of Nestle has been introduced as the competent and high-quality product with rank of (4.68).

Table 4: Coefficients of determination

Independent variables	R ²
<i>Trust in the brand</i>	0.56
<i>Attachment to the brand</i>	0.75
<i>Commitment to the brand</i>	0.79

Result Table4: Regarding the table above, coefficients of variation for variables of commitment, attachment and trust to the brand personality were reported 0.79, 0.75 and 0.56, respectively.

4.2. General Results:

The aim of this research was to provide a model which shows the effect of brand personality on its relevant consequences for Nestle products. For this purpose, this study has launched to experimentally investigate the effect of brand personality on trust, attachment and commitment as well as the relation between its consequences. This study has confirmed the results of Aaker (1997) by giving some evidences from customers. Brand personality will be further assessed for all products of Nestle brand.

Taking into account the results obtained from Friedman test in order to determine ranking for each index of the brand personality, all personality traits of the brand (competence, sincerity, excitement, creativity and sophistication) except the internal ones (introvert, shy) have played significant role in personification of the brand in the mind of consumers.

However, competence (high quality) of the brand was believed to impose the greatest effect in terms of importance with the highest ranking over users' trust, attachment and commitment, while propriety of the product with the user's internal characteristics is known to have the smallest effect with the lowest ranking. On the other hand, taking into account table 2, all hypotheses except the path from attachment to commitment have been confirmed and accepted.

Discussion:

Louis and Lombart (2010) studied the impact of personality on trust, attachment and commitment to the brand. They finally discovered that nine personality traits under study related to Coca-Cola brand has direct effect on its consequences namely trust, attachment and commitment.

Mathew and *et al.* (2005) concentrated on "Measuring the Strength of Consumers' Emotional Attachments to Brands" and assessed the attachment with three scales (affection, passion and connection) as well as its effect on loyalty and expending greater money for the dedicated brand. They eventually understood that although emotional attachment leads to prediction of brand loyalty and tendency to pay more money, it is not the only stimulus of being loyal. Comparison of their results with the current work revealed some consistencies since all factors which can positively affect user's attachment to the brand show different positions. Their results suggest that brand personality has the greatest effect on attachment in terms of trust to the brand.

Ranjbar (2009) has taken into account "application of brand personality scale in automotive industry (a case study for personality dimensions of Samand car)" in Iran. Her results demonstrated that personality dimensions of Samand are sincerity, competence, and tough while sophistication and excitement do not have dealings with this brand. Furthermore, exploratory factor analysis and structural modeling were used to provide some evidences representing unreliability of the Aaker's proposed tough dimension and its inadequate relations with the main structure of the brand personality. Results of this study, as compared with the current work, indicate that despite the existing propriety between tough personality trait and Samand, this characteristic was inappropriate with Nestle brand. However, sincerity, competence, sophistication and excitement are appropriate with Nestle brand.

Bohlel and *et al.* [24] studied the value of brand personality and its effect on consumer's decision making including trust, attachment and commitment to the brand. They believed that sensitivity and involvement levels of consumers have dealings with brand personality and relevant variables of it and that these levels can regulate the effect of brand personality on consumer behavior. Their results were similar to the current research in terms of studying the effect of personality on trust, attachment and commitment but the regulatory role of consumer's sensitivity and involvement was only examined in the research of Bohlel. He showed that the mere characteristics of sincerity and competence can not make deep trust and attachment in consumer but the current work expects brand competence to cause trust and attachment.

Conclusion And Limits:

Considering the results obtained from Friedman test and radar diagram to determine ranking of the brand personality index, the highest rank in terms of importance goes to high quality of products while the lowest rank is reported as the propriety of product with internal characteristics. Personality of Nestle products has been introduced as competent from the viewpoints of participants. Looking at figures 1 and 2 and also table 2 demonstrates that the greatest amount of correlation has been noticed from the path of personality to trust regarding the results of standard estimation. With respect to the t-value, all hypotheses except the path from attachment to commitment have been confirmed and accepted.

It is recommended that companies and marketplaces emphasize on personality traits of the brand as much as possible and try to reinforce those properties which can attract reliability of the customers. Nestlé brand managers should keep an eye on consumers' perception of the introvert personality traits of the brand and they should be reduced by consumers because they can damage the brand's capacity to establish a lasting relationship with them. Although Nestlé brand was not appeared as being introvert or shy. A company should reinforce high quality indexes of the brand (competence) which can create sufficient confidence and reliability of the user to the desired brand. Meanwhile, it is always suggested that the company benefit from proper indexes of

personality such as being domestic in order to increase and reinforce the attachment. Creation of commitment feeling to a special kind of brand among the customers depends on their subjective perception from desirability, efficiency, social position and many other properties of the brand.

Once researchers and marketers completely understand it, they would be able to get the commitment of customers to the brand. As possible as a brand is reliable as much as possible associates a high social position in the mind of customers, they will feel themselves more responsible to be loyal. Taking into account the results of this research, attachment cannot play significant role in creation and promotion of consumers' commitment. Instead, companies can promote customers' commitment to select and purchase the brand by making the correct personality and increasing users' trust to the brand.

Future research can also focus on a longitudinal time frame where consumer perceptions of a brand are tracked over time so as to gauge the stability of impact brand personality and advise managers on how to not only develop and communicate a brand's functional and symbolic attributes, but also how to sustain and develop relational consequences through brand identity and future brand extension.

This research has a number of limits. First of all, Brand personality or related researches in Iran have not been done a lot. Random sampling method was adopted in this research. Most participants in the survey were young people with the age of 20-30 years which compose part of the target market for Nestle products. Then, Inaccuracy and lack of information among participants for answering the questions and lack of implemented studies in the field of special personality traits as well as the effect of personality in the field of investigation on customers of various brands. Lastly, although brand personality scale has been used in this study, other relevant dimensions of brand personality can be applied for better perception. Such as, a scale of male and female dimension from brand personality which can be employed to assess self-concept congruence in other brands based on the identity of consumers' gender role.

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