

Indigenous model of brand image in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for Dairy products

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ABSTRACT

The present research designs an indigenous model of brand image in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and supplies required for dairy products. The statistical population includes experts in the Iranian dairy industry who have at least an MSc degree and are familiar with the dairy industry. We selected the statistical sample (20 people) by a purposeful judgmental method. Data collection tools included library studies and semi-structured interviews with experts. The validity of the interview questions was confirmed by the content method and their reliability by the retest method (0.89). We performed data analysis with a qualitative approach using data based theorizing and the coding process in three stages of open, axial and selective coding. Accordingly, we described each component of the coding paradigm, drew the pattern of the brand image in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and supplies required for dairy products and finally created the theory based on 13 judgments. Based on the calculated model, we explained the causal conditions (including brand capabilities), central category (brand performance), contexts (brand innovation), contextual conditions (brand modifiers), strategies (brand orientation), and consequences (brand value creation and brand image) in the paradigmatic model and finally theorized the relationships between categories in the selected model.

Keywords: brand image, brand orientation, brand capabilities, brand value creation, brand innovation

Introduction

In today's world, the main asset of many organizations is the brand of that organization. Brand is one of the important communication tools in customer relationship management (Lahap et al., 2017). Nowadays, the real value of the company is somewhere out there, in the minds of potential buyers. The price of a product measures its monetary value, but the brand of that product introduces it and reveals its distinctive aspects (Mohammad Shafiei and Ahmadzadeh, 2017). Therefore, building a strong brand in the market is the goal of many organizations. Branding helps the company to create a positive experience for consumers to forget never the brand name and helps customers choose a company's product from among the products of competing companies (Hegner et al., 2017). One of the categories that is very important in attracting and retaining customers and is one of the important factors for the success of companies is customer value. In today's customer-centric era, customer value is a strategic weapon in attracting and retaining customers. In this regard, the overall image of a company plays an important role in customer perception of its received value (Alwi et al., 2016).

Creating a brand image is an essential tool for attracting and retaining customers. Thus, creating satisfaction and creating a brand image are interrelated processes (Lien et al., 2015). Different people form images in their minds about different entities such as products, brands and organizations. Acker (1991) believes that the mental image of a brand can be a set of meaningful associations for customers. Consumers use brand image to infer general perceptions of a particular product, and a product with a stronger image may associate a higher quality and more valuable product for customers (Jasmani, 2020). To et al. (2013) believe that brand image represents an important dimension of marketing activities and includes symbolic meanings that associate specific features of a product or service for consumers.

Researches also show that brand image is one of the most important indicators of brand performance evaluation. The success of any business is undoubtedly due to the brand performance of that business. The meaning of brand performance in the market is the position of the brand in the market, which in a way indicates the success or failure in the market (Rasouli and Esfandiarpour, 2018). Nowadays, we observe that brands are as customer-based assets, because customers buy these brands and the performance of these assets shows the desire of customers to that brand (Foroudi, 2019). O'Cass & Ngo (2007) state that according to existing studies, about 70% of companies' revenues are attributable to the brand. This indicates a direct relationship between organizational performance and brand performance. Continuous monitoring and evaluation, in other words, measuring brand performance to prevent any deviation is very important (Feyz et al., 2017). On the other hand, due to brand differentiation, the innovation creates an incentive in the company to produce innovative products and services using innovative production methods for having a distinctive brand and create a positive image of its brand in the minds of customers. Organizations that have a culture of innovation are well aware that creating a successful brand depends on the ability of the organization to develop innovative new ways of creating higher value for customers (Gharibi et al., 2019). A look at the situation of service organizations shows that these organizations are in high competition to provide their services to customers and gain their satisfaction and loyalty. Nowadays, brand management is a key to success in achieving sustainable competitive advantage in manufacturing and service industries that have more or less similar products. Since in service organizations, the existence of multiple brands, competition between service providers and similarity of services leads to customer confusion in choosing a brand and creating a distinction between them (Rasouli and Esfandiarpour, 2018), in such circumstances, the image of the brand and Marketing activities will affect the intensity of customer decisions. The most important assets in the service sectors are intangible and include brands, symbols, company slogans, brand image, brand personality, association and brand awareness (Mehrnoosh and Tahmasebi, 2017). These assets, along with other tangible dimensions, capture brand value and are the primary source of competitive advantage. Creating a stable and powerful image when having a high brand value is a hidden resource that can differentiate a service provider from its competitors (Rasouli and Esfandiarpour, 2018). Therefore, considering the importance of branding products and services in the dairy industry, the need to measure the brand image is undeniable.

Although the field of brand management and related subjects has received much attention in various researches, but in the field of service and production industries such as manufacturers of additives and production and service devices, this concept is not well known. At the same time, in manufacturing and service companies in general and manufacturing and service companies in the field of materials and supplies required for dairy products in particular, researches have not paid much attention to the concept of brand imaging and the various components of the native pattern of the customer's image of the brand. Therefore, considering the importance of branding and customer image of the brand, it is necessary to identify the dimensions and components of this concept in the form of an indigenized model in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and supplies needed for dairy products. Thus, the research begins with the question, what is the indigenized pattern of the customer's image of the brand in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and supplies required for dairy products?

Background and theoretical foundations of the research

Brand image

So far, researchers have provided different definitions for the image; we mentioned some of them in Table (1):

Table 1: Definitions of brand image

Row	Researcher/s	Year	Definition of brand image
1	Bilgen	2018	The brand image represents the personal symbol of the customers, which includes all definitions and evaluations of the brand.
2	Drishna and Wesma	2018	In addition, the brand image is a gateway for customers to identify a product, evaluate its quality, accept purchase risk, and gain experience and satisfaction.
3	Chinoma	2016	A brand image can be considered as a set of relative position, uniform quality assurance and characteristic of product and service performance that makes customers reflect in their brand image and helps in purchasing decisions.
4	Lee and Buck	2013	A brand image is a collection of associations that is mainly organized in a meaningful way.
5	Lee and Tone	2012	A brand image is a set of perceptions that exist in the mind of the consumer. In other words, the consumer's perception of the salient features of the product forms an image in the customer's mind of the combination of all the signs sent by the brand, including name, appearance, products, advertisements, messages and official announcements, etc. These perceptions can be reduced with appropriate indicators of the consumer's mind about the brand and increase the level of consumer satisfaction and loyalty.
6	Onichia	2013	A brand image is an understanding of a brand created in the customer's memory and reflects the overall impression of the customer. We can consider a positive mental image as a vital ability of a company to maintain its market position.
7	Lee et al	2011	The brand image contains information and ideas that the consumer has about different brand products and product features.

Brand image patterns adopted from previous models

So far, researchers have conducted studies in the field of brand image inside and outside the country, in which they have referred to some indicators and components of brand image in the form of models.

Table 2: Models of customer brand image adopted from previous models

Row	Researcher/s	Year	Title	Indices/Components
	Gharibi et al	2019	The effect of brand image and brand strength on customers' desire to buy from online stores	Company image Service image Customer image
	Mehrmoosh & Tahmasebi	2017	The effect of brand equity and social capital on brand image	Brand image dimensions: Cognitive perception of the brand Emotional perception of the brand Sensory perception of the brand
1	Shafiee & Ahmadzadeh	2017	The effect of organizational agility and corporate social responsibility on the brand image	• Brand services • Brand communication • Brand reputation
2	Mahmoudian et al	2017	The effect of athlete brand image dimensions on fan loyalty	Brand image dimensions: • Sports performance • Attractive appearance • Market-friendly lifestyle
3	Mohammadian & Khajeh Deheshti	2016	Investigating the effect of emotional attachment between consumer and retail trade on purchase intention	• Top marketing features • Traditional customer results • User-centric benefits • Emotional memories

4	Rafiei et al	2012	The effect of mixed marketing factors and company image on brand equity in the software sector of the technology industry	Brand image dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product-related features, benefits and attitudes • Associations related to people and relationships • Values and applications • Company credit
5	Yuan et al	2016	Two-way transfer of brand identity and image in postgraduate studies	Dimensions of the brand mental image: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional • Symbolic • Rational
6	Acker & Bill	2013	Advertising and brand values: The role of advertising in building a strong brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product or service features • Consumer benefits • Brand personality
7	Duble & Fan Week	2006	International transfer of store brand image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • price product • Arrangement • Organization style and location
8	Ross et al	2006	Developing a scale to measure team brand communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of product or service • Possibilities • Crowding • Extension • Cleanliness • Institute atmosphere • Price
9	Lindquist	1974	The meaning of brand image: an empirical research and its evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service product • Customer Orientation • Physical facilities • Convenience • Promotion • Shop atmosphere • Satisfaction after purchase • Organizational factors

In general, a look at the research backgrounds conducted in the field of research shows that in these researches, they have considered only some of the antecedents or consequences of the brand image; or in a limited number of cases, they have explained some background factors, as we have mentioned above some of them. However, less research has attempted to enumerate effective strategies for promoting the brand image and explained its consequences by taking a comprehensive approach and considering other bedrock factors, contexts and causal conditions that result in the brand image. Accordingly, in order to fill the existing research gap, we have tried to design an indigenized model of brand image in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and supplies required for dairy products based on the data based theorizing. In the following, we described the methodology of solving the research problem.

Research methodology

The present research is developmental-applied and descriptive-exploratory in terms of the research implementation strategy. At the same time, we have conducted this research in terms of data collection method based on library and field studies (using semi-structured interview tool). Therefore, in terms of data type, it is a qualitative research. It is single cross-sectional. On the other hand, due to the non-experimental nature of the research, the rate of researcher intervention in the research process is minimal.

The statistical population of the research includes experts in the Iranian dairy industry who have characteristics such as having an MSc degree or higher in the field of brand management and marketing, sufficient experience and familiarity with the dairy industry. We carried out sampling with a purposeful judgmental approach and snowball method, up to the theoretical limit of data saturation. We selected 20 people (5 company managers, 9 marketing and sales managers, and 6 senior experts in the marketing department of companies) as a sample of research experts and interviewed with them. As mentioned, the data measurement tool in this research, in addition to in-depth study of documents using the library method, included semi-structured interviews with experts.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the results of the interview process, we used special criteria of qualitative research including credibility and confirmability. In order to increase the credibility, we used

the review methods by the interview participants. For confirmability in the final stage, we returned the obtained classes to three of the initial participants for review and approval, and applied the suggested points. In addition, in the current research, we used a retest method to calculate the reliability of the interview. In this regard, from among the interviews conducted, researchers selected three interviews and coded each of them twice in a period of 14 days. Table (3) presents the results of these coding processes.

Table 3: Calculation of retest reliability (stability index)

Row	Title of interview	Total number of codes	Number of agreements	Number of non-agreements	Results of retest reliability
1	IN3	67	30	7	89.55%
2	IN9	82	37	8	90.24%
3	IN17	75	33	9	88%
Total		224	100	24	89.28%

As can be seen in Table (3), the open reliability of the test was 89%. It indicates that the coding of interview expressions in two different periods was similar by more than 89%, which specify the reliability of the interview coding process by the researcher.

We analyzed the data obtained from the interview with the approach of data based theorizing. In the fundamental conceptualization method, the discovery or production of a theory is based on existing facts, the systematic collection of data and taking into account all potential aspects of the research subject. The collected data go through their evolution until they come to the theory in the form of three stages of open, axial and selective coding.

Analysis of research data

After collecting the data and summarizing the interviews, we attempted to generate the relevant theory using data based theorizing and based on three stages of open, axial and selective coding. In the following, we described the three stages of data based theorizing.

Step 1: Open coding: Open coding refers to a part of the analysis that deals with the titling and classification of the phenomenon, as the data have shown, and that requires asking questions and making comparisons. A result of titling is "concepts" namely the main pillars in building data based theory. In the next stage, the concepts themselves are categorized based on their similarities; this is categorization and so we specified the significant "categories" or "dimensions". Themes are created by putting together the related dimensions. Based on the findings of this section, we identified 142 selective codes (selective expressions). In the next stage, by analyzing the selective expressions, we categorized these expressions into 50 basic themes (selective concepts). Then, we revisited these basic themes in terms of content and appearance and categorized into 15 organizing themes (dimensions). Finally, by reanalysis of organizing themes, we categorized these dimensions into 7 general categories (inclusive themes). We presented the open coding results in table (4):

Table 4: Themes of Open Coding Process in data based theorizing

Inclusive themes	Organizing themes	Basic themes
Brand capabilities	Marketing capabilities	Brand position and market share
		Marketing mixes
		Internet marketing services
		Having a brand reputation
		Having a special advertising slogan
	Organizational capabilities	Fast shipping facilities
		Strong brand support (managerial, financial, human, information)
		Having a sustainable competitive advantage
		Strong supply chain
		Creating a sustainable value chain
Brand orientation	Competitive orientation	Interactive communication with other competitors
		Interactive communication with customers

		Establishing stable relationships with providers
		Establishing stable relationships with suppliers
	Product/service orientation	Providing distinctive products / services
		Providing green product / service
		Providing a low cost product / service
Brand performance	Customer-related performance	Customer satisfaction
		Customer's loyalty
		Speed in product / service delivery
		Providing innovative product / service
	Brand social performance	Social Responsibility
		Adherence to environmental principles
		Solving economic problems
	Brand company performance	Brand position promotion
		Increasing sales and brand revenue
Promote brand equity		
Brand value creating for the customer	Material value creating	Possibility of bargaining for the customer
		Paying attention to customer needs
		Reducing customer costs
	Immaterial value creating	Positive customer experience
		Creating prestige for the customer
		Verbal and behavioral honesty
Brand image	Brand image among customers	Creating a good feeling among customers
		A clear picture of the future of the brand
		Optimal customer perception of the brand
	Brand image among competitors	Having a reputation in the industry
		Distinctive brand image among competitors
		Leading the brand in the industry
Brand innovation	Innovation in market	Innovation in competitive strategies
		Providing creative advertising
		Flexible payment terms for the customer
	Innovation in processes	Tendency to take risks in processes
		Welcoming customers' designs
		Promoting brand knowledge
Brand modifiers	Internal modifiers	Company type
		Type of company ownership
	External modifiers	Number of competitors in the industry
		Variable environment

Step 2: Axial coding: The aim of this step is to establish a relationship between the dimensions (categories) produced in the open coding stage. This is based on a comprehensive model called paradigmatic model and helps the theorist to develop the theorist more easily. The basis of the communication process in the central coder is to focus and determine a category as a central or main category, and then other categories, as sub-categories, relate to the main category under the different titles of the paradigmatic model (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

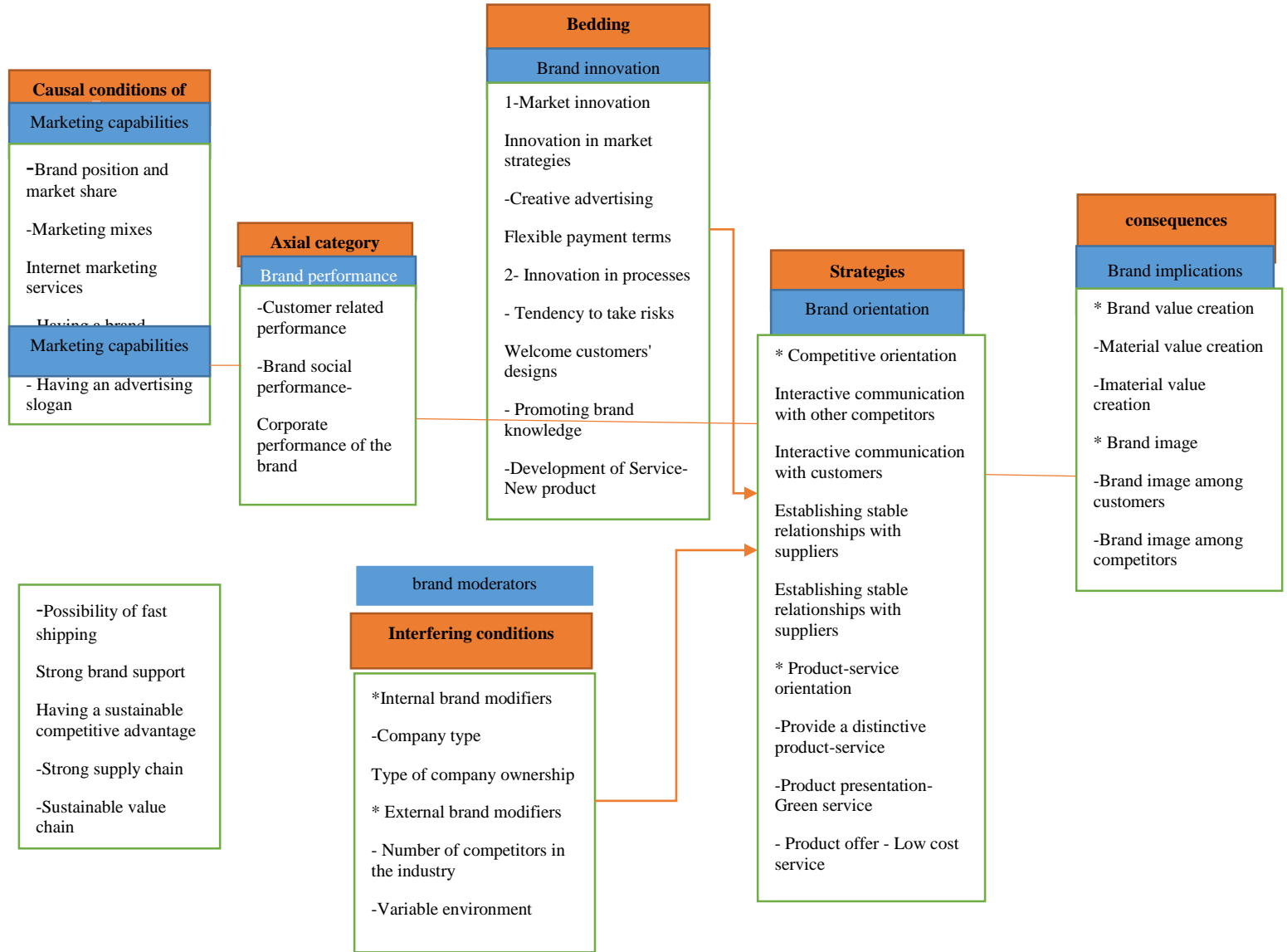


Figure (1): Paradigmatic model of brand image indigenized model in dairy service industries

Step 3): Selective coding: The goal of data based theorizing is to produce the theory, not to describe the phenomenon. For building theories from analyzes, we should regularly linked the concepts together. Selected coding is the main stage of theorizing which produces theory based on the results of the previous two stages of coding (which, as preliminary stages for theorizing, provide the basic categories and relationships as the main constructs and principles of theory). In this way, it relates the central category systematically to other categories, clarifies those relationships within the framework of a narrative and corrects the categories that require further improvement and development. Therefore, the selected coding is the process of integration and improvement (refining) of categories so that the researcher arranges them to present and form a theory (Creswell et al., 2004).

As mentioned in this study, we investigated and examined the design of brand image indigenous pattern in manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products. In the study of this phenomenon, we saw new categories according to which we adjusted open coding tables. Then in the stage of axial coding based on the paradigmatic model and with the focus of the category "brand performance"

as a main theme, we developed the categories more and created some relationships between them and the central category, the results of which we presented in the previous section. Then, considering the structuration between the categories presented in the paradigm model, we presented the theory and explained the propositions. In other words, the researcher tried to provide a comprehensive view and present the indigenous pattern of brand image using the themes and categories extracted in the previous sections. In this regard, the researcher arranged the sequence of patterns in the model and finally achieved the desired theory and obtained theoretical propositions that indicate the general relationships between the axial class and other classes. At the end of the selected coding, we presented 13 judgments as follows:

Proposition 1. Marketing capabilities as causal conditions affect brand innovation in the manufacturing and service industries of the materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 2. Marketing capabilities as causal conditions affect brand orientation in manufacturing and service industries of the materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 3. Organizational capabilities as causal conditions affect brand innovation in manufacturing and service industries of the materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 4. Organizational capabilities as causal conditions affect brand orientation in manufacturing and service industries of the materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 5. Marketing capabilities as causal conditions affect brand performance in the manufacturing and service industries of the materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 6. Organizational capabilities as causal conditions affect brand performance in manufacturing and service industries of the materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 7. Brand innovation is a platform for brand orientation in the manufacturing and service industries of the materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 8. Brand innovation is a platform for improving brand performance in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 9. Brand orientation is a strategy to improve brand performance in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 10. Brand performance as a pivotal phenomenon plays a role in brand value creation in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 11. Brand performance as a pivotal phenomenon plays a role in creating a desirable image of the brand in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 12. Brand value creation plays a role in creating a desirable brand image in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products.

Proposition 13. Domestic and foreign modifiers affect the relationship between brand orientation and brand performance in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products.

In general, the data based theory leads to the production of conceptual relationships. Based on the above statistics, we present the conceptual model of research in figure 2. At the same time, each of the above propositions is examinable in the form of hypothesis and in subsequent researches. These hypotheses are preliminary claims and wise conjectures about the relationship between the components of the research model that expose themselves to falsification for quantitative testing.

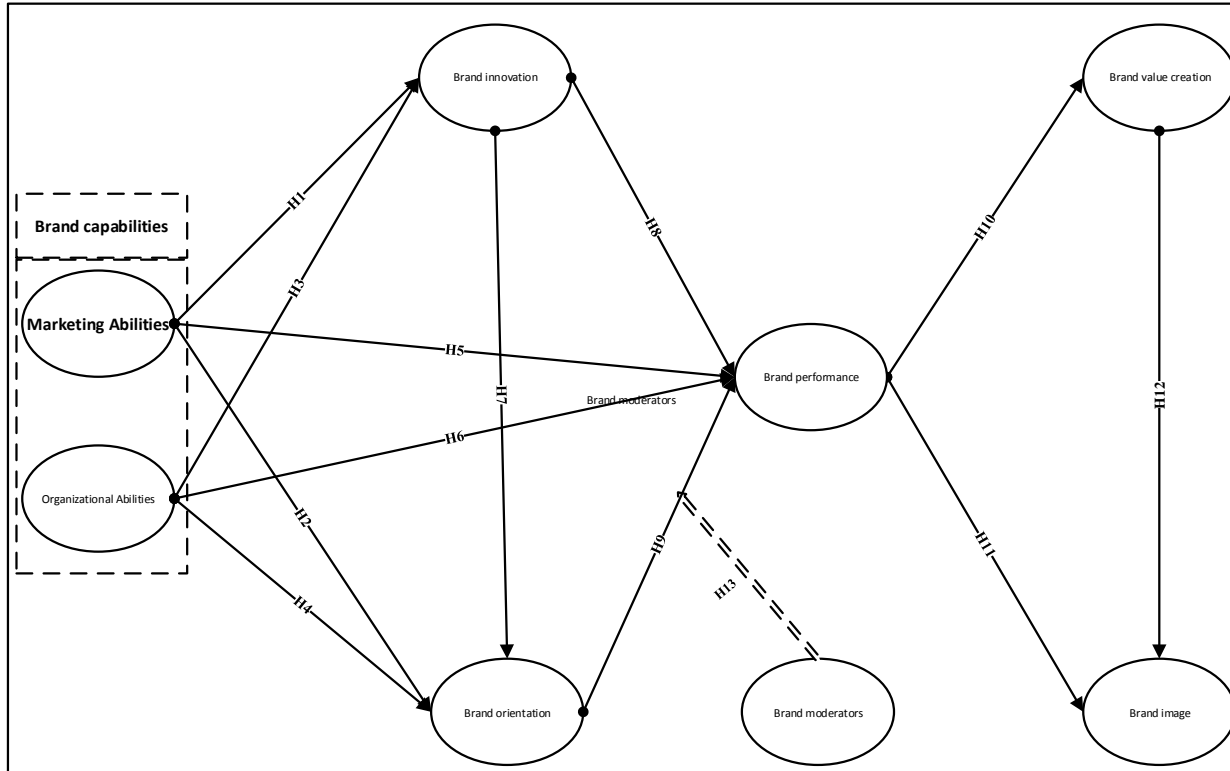


Figure (2): Conceptual model of causal relations between variables based on selective coding

Value creation of brand, brand innovation, brand performance, brand capabilities, marketing capabilities, organizational capabilities, brand image, brand modifiers, brand orientation

Conclusions and Suggestions

This research seeks to design an indigenous brand image model in the manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products. Therefore, using exploratory approach and using data based theorizing, we presented the brand image pattern in these industries based on three stages of open, axial and selective coding and created finally 13 judgments. In future researches, it is necessary to present these theoretical propositions in the form of research hypotheses and to validate them using quantitative methodology with a structural equation modeling approach. Based on the research findings, the causal conditions affecting the research paradigmatic model include "brand capabilities" which itself consists of two parts: "marketing capabilities" and "organizational capabilities". Identified marketing capabilities include brand status and market share, marketing mixes, internet marketing services, brand reputation, and having a specific advertising slogan. Organizational capabilities also include fast transportation facilities, strong (management, financial, human, information) brand support, having a stable competitive advantage, strong supply chain and creating a sustainable value chain. On the other hand, we considered brand performance as the central category of the research model; we classified it into three areas: "customer-related performance", "brand social performance", and "brand corporate performance". In this research, we have emphasized "brand innovation" as a platform for brand performance developers, which includes market innovation and innovation in processes. On the other hand, we also considered brand orientation as a strategy to promote brand value creation and image, which includes competitive orientation and product/service orientation. We saw the brand value creation and brand image as the consequences of paradigmatic model; we emphasized value creation in both material and immaterial domains and brand image in both customers and competitors. Finally, by selective coding, we theorized and 13 cases were

theorized causal relations between the identified concepts and numerated 13 judgments their relationships we depicted in figure 2. Based on identified propositions, marketing and organizational capabilities are of effect on brand performance, brand innovation and brand orientation as causal conditions. Brand innovation also is a platform for developer of brand performance and brand orientation. At the same time, brand orientation leads to improved brand performance. Finally, improving brand performance creates brand value and ultimately creates a desirable brand image among customers and competitors. In general, the findings of this research are consistent with some previous studies. For example, Mehrnoosh and Tahmasebi (2017) have pointed out the effect of brand equity on creating a desirable brand image. Shafiee and Ahmadzadeh (2017) emphasized on the role of social performance of the company due to adherence to social responsibilities in promoting brand image. Rafiee et al. (2012) have pointed out the impact of marketing mix factors and the company's image on brand equity. Acker and Bill (2013) have also referred to the role of advertising in building a strong brand. Finally, based on the research findings, we present some suggestions as follows:

- It is necessary that the mentioned industry managers take action to improve marketing capabilities. In this regard, they must take necessary measures to promote brand status and market share, develop marketing mixes, provide on-line marketing services, have brand reputation, and have a specific advertising slogan.
 - It is necessary that the mentioned industry managers take action to improve organizational capabilities. In this regard, they should take necessary measures in order to develop fast transportation facilities, carry out managerial, financial, human, information support of brand, to create sustainable competitive advantage, a sustainable supply chain, and a sustainable value chain.
 - In order to develop brand performance and create a desirable brand image, the mentioned industry managers should make appropriate competitive orientation. In this regard, it is necessary to establish interactive communications with competitors and customers. It is also essential to provide stable relationships with providers and suppliers to create a sustainable value chain.
 - To promote brand innovation in two areas of market and processes, some measures are necessary. In relation to market innovation, it is essential to emphasize indicators such as innovation in competitive strategies, creative advertising, and flexible payment conditions for the customer. In order to innovate in processes, paying attention to criteria such as willingness to take risks in processes, welcoming customers' plans, promoting brand knowledge, and developing new services/products is essential.
 - In order to improve brand performance, all brand performance dimensions including customers, social and corporate aspects of the brand are important. On the brand performance related to customers, it is necessary to create satisfaction and loyalty in customers, provide innovative products or services in the fastest time. In the field of brand social performance, it is necessary to take action in order to adhere to social, environmental and economic responsibilities. Finally, regarding the corporate dimension of brand performance, it is important to promote brand position, increase sales and brand income, and promote brand equity.
 - We must consider brand value creation in both material and immaterial domains. In the material field, emphasis is on indicators such as the possibility of bargaining for the customer, paying attention to customer needs, and reducing customer costs. In the immaterial domain, we should consider indicators such as positive customer experience, creating prestige for the customer and verbal and behavioral honesty.
 - In order to improve the brand image, two areas of customers and competitors are important. In order to create a desirable brand image among customers, we should pay attention to indicators such as creating good sense among customers, clear picture of brand future, and customer's desirable brand concept. Concerning the competitors, it is necessary to pay attention to indicators such as having a reputation in the industry, a distinctive brand image among competitors, and brand leading in the industry.
- Finally, it is noteworthy that we tried to design brand image model in manufacturing and service industries of materials and requirements for dairy products with a qualitative approach and using data based theorizing. However, in order to increase the generalization of the findings of this research, it is necessary to validate the hypotheses obtained from the propositions in the population under study. In this regard, due to time limitations of the research, we suggest to test the proposed research hypotheses in future researches based on quantitative methodology and using structural equation modeling.

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