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Investigating the Effect of Marketing Mix and Corporate Image on Brand Equity of Talia and Rightel Companies

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Abstract

Brand equity is known as a key index of determining the health of brand and its continuous reviewing is an important activity in effective brand management. One of the aspects of investigating brand is studying it in the view of customers that is according to subjective estimation of customer from a brand. Perceived quality of a certain brand, brand loyalty and brand awareness accompanied by brand associations are the main components of that brand.. The present study is a descriptive survey one. It aims to determine the effect of marketing mix components (price, product, place and promotion) in terms of customers' perspective of Rightel and Talia companies. Twenty two hypotheses were developed. Population was customers of Rightel and Talia companies and a self-administrated questionnaire was employed to collect data. Reliability was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was based on correlation and regression analyses with SPSS software. The results indicated that marketing mix components including price, product, place, and promotion have a significant relationship with brand equity and corporate image. Further, a significant relationship between corporate image and brand equity was found.

Key words: Combined factors; Corporate image; Brand equity; Talia and Rightel

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INTRODUCTION

Brand is the most valuable asset of a company. Paying attention to concepts including brand, its management and its equity leads to a suitable position in the minds of customers. It is very important for a company to get a good position in the customer's mind, so that the customer would be loyal to the company. One factor to achieve this position in the customers' mind is brand. Brand equity is a company's asset that increases the business cash flow (Abratt & Bick, 2003). Also brand equity is one of the strategic tools that creates commitment and repeated consumption, increases the economic value for shareholders, and extends the economic activities beyond the geographic boundaries. According to the importance of brand equity for companies, it is necessary to examine how marketing mix components create value for brand. On the other hand, marketing activities affect the brand equity and marketing mix components are factors that can be controlled by managers and decision makers. Now if the relation between these components and brand equity and especially, its dimensions, becomes clear, company's decision makers can easily make decision about the way of using activities related to the marketing mix components to achieve maximum brand equity and finally, stable profitability and use it to increase profitability and satisfy needs of customers and shareholders. Managers need to promote brand-composing marketing activities and avoid damaging activities (Yoo et al., 2000). Making and managing a suitable brand is the priority of most companies (Keller, 2003). Keller (1993) mentions that for building a brand, internal attempts are first needed to create brand identity and second, brand identities must be integrated using marketing mix components such as product, price, promotion and distribution decisions. So this research examines the effect of marketing mix components and customer's corporate image on brand equity of Talia and Rightel Companies. Since brand equity is a multidimensional concept in Aaker's (1991) studies, this study is based on the conceptual framework by Kim and Hyum (2011). According to the study by Yoo (2008) in which brad awareness and brand associations are integrated, brand equity dimensions have three dimensions in this model that include brand awareness/association, the perceived quality and brand loyalty. In addition, four marketing mix factors (after sales service, value-based price, promotional activities and distribution channel) are considered as factors determining brand equity. According to the study by Yoo et al. (2000), corporate image is a mediator variable. Finally, brand equity is the result of its three dimensions.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Marketing Mix

Marketing mix is one of the main concepts in modern marketing. Marketing mix is a set of controllable and tactical tools of marketing by which a company gets its desired result from the target market. An effective marketing program combines all marketing mix components and converts them into a uniform program that makes it possible to achieve the company's marketing purposes by offering value to the customer. Marketing mix is composed of everything by which a company can affect the demand of its product in the target market. Different possible things can be classified into 4 groups known as 4 Ps: Price, Product, Place and (sales) Promotion.

Table 1
Components of Marketing Mix

Promotion	Place	Price	Product
Advertisement	Distributions channels	Price list	Service
Personal sale	Coverage	Pay-off	Quality
Sale promotion	Segmentation	Reward	Diversity
Public relations	Locations	Pay time	Design
	Transportation	Credit conditions	Characteristics
	Logistics		Packaging
			Brand

Product/service is everything offered to the market for drawing attention or consumption and can meet the demands and needs. Product does not only include tangible things and in a more general definition, it also includes physical objects, service, events, people, places, organizations, ideas and their combination. Service is also a type of a product offered for sale that is basically intangible and does not lead to the ownership of something. In addition, products and service are classified into two consumption and industrial groups according to the type of the consumer (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). Price is the sum of money paid for a product or service. In a more comprehensive definition, price is the benefit paid by consumers for the advantages from having or using a product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011, p. 427). Researches showed that price highly affects the purchase intention and consumers' satisfaction. Consumers' perception of the price unfairness affects their interpretation of the product's value and finally, their desire to continue buying (Shifman & Kanok, 2012, p. 240). Value-based pricing is pricing based on the value perceived by the customer instead of the sellers' costs. In order to determine a suitable price, the value provided by the product or service for the customer must be perceived. In value-based pricing, the key point of pricing is the customer's perception of the value instead of the sellers' costs. Decisions related to the design and how much can be paid for a product are also made based on the target value and price.

So pricing begins with the analysis of the customer's needs and perceived value and price is determined so that it is consistent with the value perceived by customer. Distribution/place is a series of activities giving a product to the final consumer, and according to Kotler, it includes distribution channels, coverage, classification, places, warehousing, transportation and procurement. Distribution channels are as follows: dealers, specific stores, retailers and decisions related to the product's advertisement (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011, p. 88). Promotional activities refer to a series of advertisement, face to face sale, sales promotion and public relations used to achieve the purposes of the sales program (Rousta et al., 2008, p. 365). Different factors determine the need for promotion including the increase in the distance between producer and consumer, and intense competition among different sources and companies related to an industry. Marketing professionals believe that today, consumers want to meet their needs, not their desires, so companies have tried to draw the attention of more customers to implementing suitable promotional programs. In promotional activities marketing system, it is tried to communicate. If a manager is aware of theories of communication, he can implement and control programs of promotion better. Process of communication is basically composed of components that include message, message sender, message means and channel and message receiver (Rousta et al., 2008, p. 366).

1.2 Corporate Image

One way of communication between a brand and its secondary knowledge is corporate image that can be promoted by improving the brand's secondary knowledge or equity (Keller, 2008). Corporate image is an immediate mental perception of an organization by a person, group or network or the interconnected internal state of the mind making the successful or unsuccessful attempts by a company as a basis. In 1993, Keller defined the brand image as follows: "It is a perception of the brand formed by its associations in the mind of the customer. The perception of the brand image formed according to the brand associations and customer's attitude is an independent component of the brand equity widely used in the framework of the equity. Brand image is rooted in all customer's experiences of consumption and the function of these experiences is to perceive the service quality." Corporate image is the emotional and logical perceptions of the consumers communicated with a certain brand. It forms based on the customers' beliefs about a certain brand. These beliefs are based on the perception or features of a product or service. When an organization reaches a certain result about the image it wants to communicate and confirms that it can present itself based on this image, it must trace the public perceptions. Corporate image is a series of components formed beyond one's mere perception. Some authors consider the corporate image as a pure result of all experiences, beliefs, feelings, and consumer knowledge about the company. Internalization of these components means that researchers consider the corporate image as an intangible thing and it can be perceived by anyone in any way. Therefore, one's perception will not be the same as others. Using this argument, researchers stated that corporate image is not only a unit subject, because any group of people has its own impression based on its experiences and relation with the company (Flavin et al., 2004). This image is formed in customer's mind by a process by which information is organized in customer's mind as definite and classified meanings. Any company has an image in the mind of any of its stakeholders that is based on the stakeholders' perception of the measures, performance and certain programs of the company and also its industry and country of origin. This image affects the behavior and reaction of stakeholders to the measures and issues related to the company and its products. In past research, five factors effective in the corporate image were identified that potentially affect the customers' perception of the corporate image: company's identity, reputation, service provided, physical environment, and personnel's attitude. Moghadami and Zarea (2008) introduced factors effective in corporate image in ten sectors including price, product, after sales service, the way of getting funds from customers, fulfilling commitments, diversity of products, observance of ethics, relative continuous growth of organization, creativity, innovation, access to products and service quality. Chatananol et al. (2007) examined the role of social marketing and its effect on the corporate image and they presented a model and classified the factors affecting the customers' corporate image into three groups: characteristics of the marketing programs, organizational communications and demographic characteristics. Olsson and Famborn (2006) classified the factors affecting the corporate image into three organizational, personal and environmental groups. An important point is that the first stage to create and manage the corporate image is to understand a process by which the corporate image is formed. The following figure shows a conceptual framework of the process of the corporate image formation. These resources are classified into two groups in a general classification based on the control domain of the organization:

Internal factors that can be controlled by organization;

External factors that can't be controlled by organization.

Internal factors can be controlled by organization and organization can use them to manage the corporate image among the stakeholders. External factors are not under the direct control of the organization, but the organization can indirectly affect them by manipulating the internal variables.

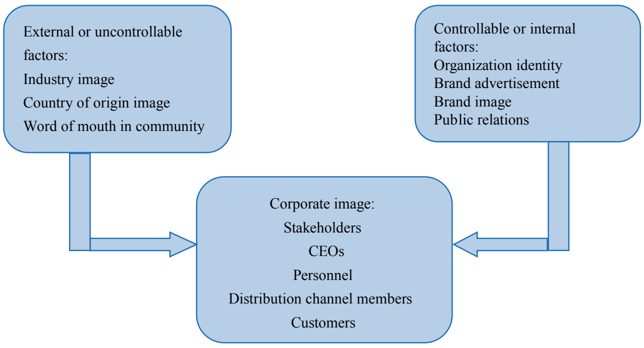

Figure 1
Process of Corporate Image Formation

1.3 Brand Equity

According to the definition by Aaker (1991), brand equity is a set of properties and liabilities related to a brand deduced from or added to the value offered by a product or service as a name or symbol for a company or its customers. Brand equity refers to the extraordinary or inherent value of a brand. It is created when consumers tend to pay more for an equal level of a brand's quality due to its name attractiveness and high belonging to it. Brand equity shows the position of a product in the minds of consumers in the market. It is some opinions, thoughts, feelings, emotions and associations formed in the consumer's mind. Therefore, a brand is valuable when it can affect the consumers, so that the consumers prefer to buy the brand repetitively. Brand equity is a multidimensional concept and a complex phenomenon (Kim et al., 2008). According to Aaker (1991), brand equity includes five dimensions: (1) Brand awareness (AW). (2) The perceived quality (PQ). (3) Brand Associations (AS). (4) Brand loyalty (LY) and (5) other asserts (including franchise, patent, …). He considered these five dimensions as the measurement basis of the brand equity. This conceptualization only observes Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE). Keller (1993) defined CBBE for the first time: the distinct effect of the brand knowledge on consumer response to the brand's marketing. In other words, brand equity depends on brand knowledge and its comparison with a nameless similar product. Therefore, Keller emphasizes two main constructs in CBBE: (1) Consumer knowledge, and (2) consumer response.

Consumer knowledge is defined as brand awareness and image, while consumer response is defined as customer's perception, brand preference and customer's attitude towards marketing mix activities (pricing, distribution, advertising and promotion). Brand equity dimensions used in this study are described as follows. The perceived quality is defined as "consumer's perception of the general quality or the superiority of a product or service compared to other options". The perceived quality is a competitive necessity and today, most companies have focused on the customer-oriented quality as a strategic weapon (Atilgan et al., 2005). Kotler (2000) examines the relation between the product/service quality, customer satisfaction and profitability of a company. Aaker (1996) proposed that the perceived quality of different brands can be also measured directly. Aaker (1996) showed that up to 80% of the variations of the perceived value are explained by the perceived quality. The perceived quality is not a product's actual quality, but it is a customer's mental evaluation of the product. Like brand associations, the perceived quality also creates value for customers in order that they have a reason to purchase by making the brand distinct from the competitors. Customer's perception of quality is basically related to the perception of intrinsic and extrinsic features of quality. Among extrinsic features, marketing activities through price, advertising and promotion is a prominent instrument (Gil et al., 2007). Brand loyalty is defined as a customer's attachment to a brand. It is also defined as a deep commitment to repurchase or to be a permanent customer of the products or services provided in future (Brown et al., 2006). It can be also defined in terms of behavioral, attitudinal and choice perspectives. While the behavioral perspective is based on purchase of a certain brand, attitudinal perspective refers to the consumer's preferences and attitudes towards a brand and the choice perspective is based on the reasons of purchase or factors that may affect the purchase. Brand loyalty produces a predictable profit for a company. Research shows that brand image affects the customer value and the quality of services and products and leads to customer's loyalty to brand (Park & Stoll, 2005). A theoretical review on loyalty shows that brand loyalty is different for consumer, industrial and service markets in terms of different features of markets including shopping habits, depression conditions, satisfaction, attention to purchase, share of a product category and risk. So brand loyalty is classified into three groups based on the type of the market including consumable goods, durable goods and service, and markets are classified according to the value of transactions and buying activity, final consumer and the level of the involvement of supply resources and buying process (Tsai & Aldo, 2009). Aaker (1991) defines brand awareness as "the buyer's ability to recognize and remember that a brand belongs to a certain product category". According to Keller (2003), brand awareness plays an important role in making decision to get the advantage of learning, attention and selection by customer. Customer-oriented brand equity occurs when customer has a high level of awareness of the brand and keeps strong and unique associations of the brand in his mind (Atilgan et al., 2005). According to Aaker (1991), while brand awareness creates knowledge and is a sign of commitment and strength, the perceived quality acts as a tool of differentiation. Keller (1993) defined customer-oriented brand equity as the different effect of brand knowledge on customer response to marketing activities. He also defined brand knowledge related to two main components of brand, i.e. brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is related to the recall and identification of brand performance by consumers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kim and Ko (2012) found that marketing activities significantly affect the brand equity, relation equity and value equity through social media (including word of mouth) and hence, they affect the purchase intention and customer equity. Developing the model by Aaker (1991), Yoo et al. (2001) examined the value of brand in the view of customer in different cultures and about different products and mentioned that marketing strategies of a company (related to price, advertising, desirable image, level of distribution, and price promotions) affect the value established for the customer and hence, the value established for the company by affecting the dimensions of the brand equity. The results of their research showed that in the view of the consumer, the value of the brand is positively related to the consumer's perception of the brand's quality, brand loyalty and brand awareness and affecting the brand loyalty, the brand's quality and associations affect the brand equity. Among the marketing mix components, price, image and distribution positively affected the perceived quality of the product. In contrast, sales promotion showed a negative effect. Huang and Sarigöllü (2012) showed that there is no relation between brand awareness, sales, market share and brand equity. Also, the hypothesis of the effect of advertising on brand awareness is not supported. Analyses of the research show that there is a positive relationship between brand awareness and distribution, and price and advertising. Beristain and Zorrilla (2011) concluded that the store image is an important factor for retailers to increase their brand equity. In this research, the relation of brand image with brand quality, loyalty and awareness was positive and significant and the results also indicated a positive relation between price and brand loyalty and awareness and a negative relation between price and quality. Kim and Hyum (2010) examined the effect of the marketing mix components and corporate image on brand equity in IT industry. In this research, as a moderator variable, corporate image moderates the effect of the marketing mix components on brand equity. The results of the research showed that the performance of the marketing mix components is positively related to the brand equity and corporate image moderates the effect of the marketing mix components on three brand equity dimensions. In a research, Creating brand equity in the Chinese clothing markets, Tong and Hawley (2009) examined the effect of marketing activities on brand equity dimensions. The results showed that the store's image and different ways of advertising and sales promotion including strategies of discount and price reduction positively affect the brand equity in China. Findings of Villarejo and Sanchez (2005) in Spain showed that there is a positive relationship between the level of advertising and three brand equity dimensions including the perceived quality, brand awareness and corporate image. Price promotion negatively affected the brand. In addition, a positive relationship was found between brand awareness and corporate image. Rafiei et al. (2012) examined the effect of marketing mix factors and corporate image on brand equity in the software sector of IT industry. They showed that as a mediator variable, corporate image plays the most important role in the process of brand equity creation, and after sales services, price and promotion affect the brand equity dimensions through this variable, and also among brand equity dimensions, the perceived quality and brand loyalty significantly and positively affect the brand equity. The results of the study by Gilaninia and Mousavian (2010) showed that brand loyalty, awareness and quality affect the brand equity and its reputation and brand awareness also affects customers' loyalty to brand.

3. THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The review of the existing literature on using effective marketing mix strategies and their effect on the brand equity of a company shows although some studies have examined this subject, it is necessary to pay attention to this field in the service sector of the cell phone operators. So the proposed model of the research has examined marketing mix components as one of the factors determining the corporate image and consequently, the brand equity. In this model, the perceived quality refers to the services and tariffs of Talia and Rightel Sim cards, the comparison of using the services by the customers of these companies and that of other companies and the risk involved in using Talia and Rightel cell phone operators. Brand awareness also refers to the measurement of the desirability of the image of a company in the view of customers, the distinction between the services and designs offered and those of other companies in the view of Talia and Rightel customers, the brand's reputation, and variety and attractiveness of the services of these companies according to the subscribers. Brand loyalty refers to a safe use of an operator by subscribers, even when it is not accessible for a short time. Corporate image refers to the trust in the compliance of the commitments given by a company, the quality of the connection and internet lines of the company compared to other companies, the attractiveness of the incentive plans of other cell phone operators compared to the given company, satisfaction of the quality of after sales services of Sim cards, internet lines, audio and video services, and reputation of the company in the view of subscribers. After sales service also refers to the quality of the after sales services of Rightel and Talia Operators, continuous service provision (tariffs, incentive plans of Sim card's charge and using high speed internet) while keeping the quality and speed of providing customer service. In this model, price refers to the discounts given to customers, costs equivalence (rate of tariffs) with the product's quality and services provided by the company, discounts given per purchase, dialogues and internet usage. Promotional activities refers to advertising by television, magazines and newspapers, attitude towards customers, responsiveness of sellers to buyers, drawing and festivals, commitment of the company to the society and social events, information of subscribers about new plans and discounts and various incentives among customers. Distribution channel also refers to the geographical coverage of the company's representatives, easy access to sellers and distributers of the products and services and appropriateness of the distance between the representatives. According to above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. After sale services is positively and significantly associated with corporate image.

H2. After sale services is positively and significantly associated with brand loyalty.

H3. After sale services is positively and significantly associated with perceived quality.

H4. After sale services is positively and significantly associated with brand awareness.

H5. Sale promotion activities are positively and significantly associated with corporate image.

H6. After sale services is positively and significantly associated with brand loyalty.

H7. After sale services is positively and significantly associated with perceived quality.

H8. After sale services is positively and significantly associated with brand awareness.

H9. Value based price is positively and significantly associated with corporate image.

H10. Value based price is positively and significantly associated with brand loyalty.

H11. Value based price is positively and significantly associated with perceived quality.

H12. Value based price is positively and significantly associated with brand awareness.

H13. Distribution channel is positively and significantly associated with corporate image.

H14. Distribution channel is positively and significantly associated with brand loyalty.

H15. Distribution channel is positively and significantly associated with perceived quality.

H16. Distribution channel is positively and significantly associated with brand awareness.

H17. Corporate image is positively and significantly associated with brand awareness.

H18. Corporate image is positively and significantly associated with brand loyalty.

H19. Corporate image is positively and significantly associated with perceived quality.

H20. Brand awareness is positively and significantly associated with brand equity.

H21. Brand loyalty is positively and significantly associated with brand equity.

H22. Perceived quality is positively and significantly associated with brand equity.

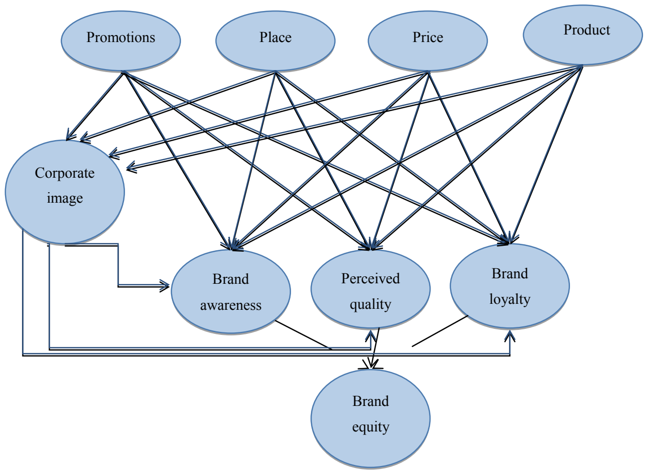

Figure 2
Conceptual Model

4. METHODOLOGY

The study is an applied one in terms of the purpose, and is a descriptive-survey one in nature, in which data are collected about the concepts and theories related to the marketing mix and brand equity by library studies and studying books, articles and master theses. The questionnaires provided by the researcher were used to gather data. Questions were designed based on the scales selected for the constructs including price, product/service, distribution channel, promotion, corporate image, the perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand awareness. They were adopted from the study by Kim and Hyum (2011) and Yoo et al. (2000) and included 39 closed questions using Likert's five-point spectrum. 18 questions were designed for the marketing mix components, 6 questions were designed for brand's corporate image and 15 questions were designed for brand equity. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by three experts in the consumer's behavior. Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the reliability of the measurement instrument. For this purpose, 20 questionnaires were distributed and using the data obtained and SPSS Software, the reliability coefficient was calculated by Cronbach's alpha. If Cronbach's alpha is higher than 0.7, the reliability of the questionnaire is satisfactory (Hair et al., 2006). The population of the research is all customers used the products and services of Talia and Rightel Companies from July to February 2013. The statistical sample of the research is 384 customers of Talia and Rightel Companies in Tehran that were purposefully selected by classified random sampling (2 classes of Rightel and Talia with the ratio 70 to 30). In this research, SPSS Software ver. 15 was used for statistical calculations. Correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Sample

The sample includes 300 respondents, among which 223 respondents (74.3%) are male and 77 respondents (25.7%) are female. The age range of 52.30% is 25-35 years old, that of 18.0% is 36-45 years old, 16.0% of the respondents are younger than 25 years old and 13.7% of them are older than 46 years old. 88 respondents are students of school or have high school degree, 48 respondents have associate's degree, 90 respondents have bachelor's degree, 64 respondents have master's degree and 10 respondents have PhD. In addition, 77% of them are customers of Rightel. 52% are employees, 37.7% are self-employed and 9.7% are students.

Table 2
Sample Profile

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	77	25.7
Male	223	74.3
Age		
Below 25 years	48	16
25-35	157	52.3
36-45	54	18
Above 46 years	41	13.7
Education		
Bachelor	88	29.4
Diploma	48	16
Graduate	90	30
Master	64	21.3
Operator		
Rightel	231	77
Talia	69	23

To be continued

Continued

	Frequency	Percent
Job		
Employee	156	52.3
Self-employment	113	37.7
Student	29	9.7
Missing	2	0.7

5.2 Reliability of the Questionnaire

In the questionnaire, questions were included to examine the effect of the marketing mix components and corporate image on the brand equity of Talia and Rightel Companies. The brand equity included the perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand loyalty and the marketing mix components also included product, price, promotional activities and distribution. The reliability of the questionnaire was first computed by Cronbach's alpha. Since Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.7 according to the table above, the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 3
Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Perceived quality	Brand awareness	Brand loyalty	Corporate image	After sale services	Value based price	Sale promotion	Distribution channel
α	0.779	0.903	0.872	0.842	0.774	0.671	0.882	0.89
Number	4	4	7	6	4	3	8	3

5.3 Test of the Hypotheses

In this study, Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to examine the relationship between the marketing mix variables (price, distribution, promotion and product), corporate image, brand awareness, the perceived quality and brand loyalty. The results of Pearson's correlation test are presented in the following table. As it is seen, all relations are significant. The hypotheses related to the relationship between after sales service and the corporate image and the brand equity dimensions are examined as follows. Since the probability values are less than 0.05, the variable "after sales service" is significantly related to every four variables including the customer's corporate image, brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness at the level of confidence 95%. The correlations are also positive that show a direct relationship between after sales service, corporate image and brand equity components (brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness). The results showed that the variable "sales promotion" is significantly related to every four variables including the customer's corporate image, brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness at the level of confidence 95% and the above mentioned hypotheses are supported. The correlations are also positive that show a direct relationship between sales promotion, corporate image and brand equity components (brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness).

Table 4
Correlation Coefficients for H1-H19

Index	Correlation test	Brand awareness	Perceived quality	Brand loyalty	Image
After sale services	Pearson correlation	0.622	0.731	0.764	0.772
	p-value	0	0	0	0
Sale promotion efforts	Pearson correlation	0.57	0.704	0.607	0.743
	p-value	0	0	0	0
Value based price	Pearson correlation	0.403	0.577	0.656	0.655
	p-value	0	0	0	0
Channel distribution	Pearson correlation	0.374	0.513	0.498	0.605
	p-value	0	0	0	0
Corporate image	Pearson correlation	0.638	0.845	0.823	-
	p-value	0	0	0	-

The relationship between the value-based price and the brand equity dimensions is as the following table. Since the probability values are less than 0.05 in the table above, the variable "value-based price" is significantly related to every four variables including the customer's corporate image, brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness and the above mentioned hypotheses are supported. The correlations are also positive that show a direct relationship between value-based price, corporate image and brand equity components (brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness). Since the probability values are less than 0.05 for the relationship between the distribution channel and the corporate image and the brand equity components, the variable "distribution channel" is significantly related to every four variables including the customer's corporate image, brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness at the level of confidence 95% and the above mentioned hypotheses are supported. The correlations are also positive that show a direct relationship between distribution channel, corporate image and brand equity components (brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness). Since the probability values are less than 0.05 for the relationship between the corporate image and the brand equity components, the variable "the customer's corporate image" is significantly related to every three variables including brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness at the level of confidence 95% and the above mentioned hypotheses are supported. The correlations are also positive that show a direct relationship between the customer's corporate image and brand loyalty, the perceived quality and brand awareness. The test of the hypotheses related to the relation of brand awareness, brand loyalty and the perceived quality with the brand equity also shows that there is a correlation between these components. The following table shows the coefficients of the correlation between the brand equity components.

Table 5
Correlation Coefficient Among the Components of Brand Equity

Correlation matrix	Perceived quality	Brand awareness	Loyalty
Loyalty	0.768	0.577	1
Brand awareness	0.572	1	0.577
Perceived quality	1	0.572	0.768

5.4 The Comparison of Talia and Rightel

According to the analyses of the correlation between the variables of the research, it can be concluded that Rightel had better performance than Talia in terms of the after sales service. In other words, it could affect the corporate image (0.747), brand loyalty (0.769), the perceived quality (0.670) and brand awareness (0.775) more. However, the after sales service of this company could also affect the corporate image (0.756), brand loyalty (0.740), the perceived quality (0.715) and brand awareness (0.552). The results showed that Talia had better performance than Rightel in terms of sales promotion and could more desirably affect the equity dimensions including corporate image (0.772), brand loyalty (0.684), the perceived quality (0.700) and brand awareness (0.559). Using tools of sales promotion, Rightel could also affect the corporate image (0.676), brand loyalty (0.523), the perceived quality (0.636) and brand awareness (0.492). For the dimension "value-based pricing", the findings also showed that Talia had better performance in terms of the value-based pricing and could affect the corporate image (0.587), brand loyalty (0.691), the perceived quality (0.712) and brand awareness (0.580) more than Rightel. However, Rightel had also better performance for this dimension of the marketing mix and could affect the corporate image (0.643), brand loyalty (0.619), the perceived quality (0.506) and brand awareness (0.315). According to the findings of the research, it can be concluded that for the dimension "optimal use of distribution channels", Talia could affect the corporate image (0.682), brand loyalty (0.515), the perceived quality (0.585) and brand awareness (0.571) more than Rightel. However, using effective distribution channels, Rightel could also affect the corporate image (0.602), brand loyalty (0.487), the perceived quality (0.500) and brand awareness (0.326). Finally according to the findings from the test of the correlation between the corporate image and the brand equity dimensions, it was found that Rightel had relatively performed better to create desirable corporate image in the minds of customers and affect the brand equity and could significantly affect brand loyalty (0.817), the perceived quality (0.826) and brand awareness (0.576). However, Talia also performed properly and could affect brand loyalty (0.750), the perceived quality (0.778) and brand awareness (0.619).

Table 6
Correlation Coefficient of Marketing Mix, Corporate Image and Brand Equity

Corporate	Independent variable		Brand awareness	Perceived quality	Brand loyalty	Image
Rightel	After sale services	Correlation coefficient	0.552	0.715	0.74	0.756
		p-value	0	0	0	0
Talia		Correlation coefficient	0.775	0.67	0.769	0.747
		p-value	0	0	0	0
Rightel	Sale promotion	Correlation coefficient	0.492	0.636	0.523	0.676
		p-value	0	0	0	0
Talia		Correlation coefficient	0.559	0.7	0.684	0.772
		p-value	0	0	0	0

To be continued

Continued

Corporate	Independent variable		Brand awareness	Perceived quality	Brand loyalty	Image
Rightel	Value based price	Correlation coefficient	0.315	0.506	0.619	0.643
		p-value	0	0	0	0
Talia		Correlation coefficient	0.58	0.712	0.691	0.587
		p-value	0	0	0	0
Rightel	Distribution channel	Correlation coefficient	0.326	0.5	0.487	0.602
		p-value	0	0	0	0
Talia		Correlation coefficient	0.571	0.585	0.515	0.682
		p-value	0	0	0	0
Rightel	Corporate image	Correlation coefficient	0.576	0.826	0.817	-
		p-value	0	0	0	-
Talia		Correlation coefficient	0.619	0.778	0.75	-
		p-value	0	0	0	-

CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that there is a correlation and direct relation between the after sales service and corporate image in the mind of customer. Mudambi et al. (1997) showed that corporate image is an important prerequisite of the brand equity in the industrial markets and corporate image management is very difficult, because it is fragile, and a lot of time and resources must be spent if it is damaged. A good corporate image gives reliability and reputation to the consumers or buyers and as a result, the customer's perceived quality of the brand increases. Corporate image is a key factor to create proper association in the minds of buyers. In addition, there is a direct relationship between the after sales service and brand loyalty. This finding is consistent with that by Kim and Hyum (2011) that the more desirable the after sales service of a company, the higher the loyalty to it will be and it will create remarkable advantages for the company in long term. According to the results of the research, there is a direct correlation between the after sales service and the perceived quality of the product. This finding confirms the results of the previous studies. The results of Anil and Atila (2010) showed that after sales service significantly and positively affects the perceived quality. There is also a significant relationship between after sales service and brand awareness/ brand association. In the consumer market, after sales service is not the main prerequisite of the brand equity, but it is a factor related to the product, promotional activities or distribution channel. After sales service is the main factor to create brand loyalty in the industrial market. It is also a more important criterion than price in the process of the product selection. Excellent support service creates a memorable feature of the brand in the customer's mind and after it, positive association of the product forms in the customer's mind (Kim & Hyum, 2011). The results of the research by Kim and Hyum (2010) are consistent with the results of this hypothesis. According to the findings, promotional activities are directly related to the corporate image. Yoo et al. (2009) also showed that effective strategies of the promotional activities and sales promotion can form an ideal corporate image in the minds of the potential customers. The significant relationship between the promotional activities and brand loyalty can be interpreted in a way that using some marketing mix components (including proper access and provision of services, speed in providing services to customers, variety of the services provided and suitable advertising to attract customers) can increase depositing. One of the marketing mix components is promotional activities. Loyalty is a behavioral response where a consumer prefers a brand to other brands in a period of time and feels close to it and a special attitude towards it is formed in the consumer. Loyal customers are very important for organizations. Although purchase repeat and customer increase are important, having customers loyal to the brand are much more important for organizations. Volckner and Sattler (2007) showed that promotional activities positively affect the brand loyalty and the perceived quality of the services. The correlation between the promotional activities and the perceived quality of the products was also significant. Kim and Hyum (2011) also indicated that promotional activities that mainly include personal selling positively and significantly affect the brand awareness and the perceived quality of the products. A direct and strong relationship was also found between the promotional activities and brand awareness. In today's markets, promotion is interpreted as provision of information and information also positively affects the brand equity. In industrial markets, seller is a communicational dealer. Therefore, personal selling is an important tool providing the required information of any member of the buying organization. Initial brand awareness and customer's awareness are often achieved by direct contact with the seller in industrial markets and sales representative is the most effective way to achieve brad awareness. The direct correlation between price and corporate image was significant that is consistent with the results by Tong and Hawley (2009) in China. In fact, price is a factor determining customers' mind about a company. The relation between price and brand loyalty was also direct that is consistent with the results by Tong and Hawley (2009) in China. The results by Kim and Hyum (2010) also support this hypothesis. A strong direct relationship was also observed between price and the perceived quality of a product that is consistent with the results by Beristain and Zorrilla (2011) where there is a positive relationship between price and loyalty and there is a negative relationship between price and quality. Although a higher price can not alone show a better quality, the results of the research are consistent with those by Yoo et al. (2000) and Villarejo and Sanchez (2005). The results show a direct correlation between value-based pricing and brand awareness. In technology-based markets, organizational buyers attach less importance to the low price than other product selection criteria and tend to pay higher price for more advanced equipment. Higher price increases brand loyalty together with more services provided by distribution channels. Value-based pricing shows the correspondence between price and quality. In other words, prices are determined based on the value they create for customer. Value-based pricing is a prominent feature of a brand and draws the customers' attention and makes them think more about the brand and positively affects brand awareness/association (Kim & Hyum, 2011). The results of the research are consistent with those by Yoo et al. (2000).

There was a significant relationship between the distribution channel and corporate image. The results by Kim and Hyum (2010) and Yoo et al. (2001) are consistent with this result. Research shows that the distribution network is effective in creating the brand equity. If the distribution channel has a desirable image, not only more attention is drawn, customer's satisfaction also increases and the product is advertised positively. Hence, brand awareness and loyalty also go to a higher level. In addition, distribution through valid stores shows that brand has a proper quality. Extensive distribution also positively affects the brand equity dimensions, because the consumer can access the product at any time and place and hence, the probability of buying the brand by the consumer increases. The more extensively the products are distributed, the easier the product will be found by the consumer. So the consumer feels that the product has more value and consumer's satisfaction and loyalty will increase (Yoo et al., 2000). According to the results, the correlation between the distribution channel and brand loyalty was significant that is consistent with the results by Yoo et al. (2000). Easy access to Sim cards' distribution channels makes services more tangible for the subscribers. According to the research by Yoo et al. (2009), the higher distribution of a brand leads to a higher quality perception. In fact, the positive direct relationship between the brand volume of distribution and its perceived quality is confirmed. Also, the results by Yoo et al. (2001) and Kim and Hyum (2010) are consistent with the hypothesis that the distribution channel positively affects the customers' perceived quality. A direct correlation was found between the distribution channel and brand awareness. The suitable coverage of the representatives and easy access to them reduces the distribution costs and the product's cost or increases the profit margin of the retailer. So providing desirable services for subscribers creates a better corporate image in their minds. Kim and Hyum (2011) indicated that the channel performance positively affects the brand awareness and loyalty. So it can be argued that the distribution channel performance positively affects the brand equity dimensions in industrial marketing. The results of the correlation test showed that there is a direct relationship between the corporate image and brand awareness. This finding is consistent with that by Kim and Hyum (2011) and Kayamn and Arasli (2007) that there is a relationship between the corporate image and brand awareness. Kayamn and Arasli (2007) examined the effect of brand awareness, brand loyalty, the perceived value and brand image in hospitality industry and promoted the perception of the brand value in the customer's view. In this study, using brand equity dimensions and examination of their relation with brand image, researchers concluded that brand equity dimensions affect the brand image. Kim et al. (2008) also examined the effect of brand equity on brand image. They found that brand equity significantly affects the brand image and all dimensions of successful communication with customers also affect the brand image. Stronger brand equity creates a clearer and more stable image in the customer's mind that finally produces loyal customers and increases profitability. Brand equity affects the brand image. A direct correlation was observed between the corporate image and brand loyalty. This finding is consistent with that by Kim et al. (2008) that there is a direct relationship between brand loyalty and brand image. The direct relationship between the corporate image and the perceived quality was also significant. This finding is consistent with that by Kim et al. (2008) and Kim and Hyum (2011) that there is a significant relationship between the corporate image and the perceived value. One of the main reasons that non-consumers don't use the services is their low perception and mentalities of the brand. But influence on the minds of the potential and actual customers is possible by improving brand knowledge and creating brand image. Clearly, it is not possible for an organization to directly control this variable. Therefore, understanding the causal relationship between this variable and other variables controlled by the organization helps it promote brand knowledge and image effectively. According to the results of the correlation test, a direct relationship was found between brand awareness and brand equity. The results by Kim and Hyum (2011) also confirm this finding. According to the findings, the correlation between the brand loyalty and brand equity was significant. This finding is consistent with that by Kim and Hyum (2011). Finally, the results of the correlation test showed that there is a direct relationship between the perceived quality and brand equity. This finding is also consistent with that by Kim and Hyum (2011).

(1) Managerial Suggestions

According to the findings of the research, suggestions can be offered to the managers of Talia and Rightel Companies: first, since the product/service affects the brand equity dimensions, the diversity of the products and services offered and their high quality can promote the brand equity and improve the customer's corporate image. So customer's corporate image can be improved and the brand equity becomes more desirable in the view of customers by providing incentive plans, giving prizes together with products/services, offering desirable after sales service, controlling customers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction after using the products/services through SMS Survey Systems, dealing with customers' complaints about the products or services and trying to solve them.

Second, the results showed that value-based price significantly affects the brand equity dimensions and corporate image. So managers of the operator companies are suggested to price by experts and based on certain criteria in order to provide the highest desirability for customers compared to their competitors. In addition, effective use of pricing strategies such as penetration pricing (keeping the prices lower than normal to attract more customers) or economic pricing (in production and sale, techniques are used that result in the lowest cost) can be effective and can not only improve the brand equity, but a desirable image is also formed in minds of customers as a fair operator. Third, according to the effect of the distribution channels on the brand equity dimensions and corporate image, managers of the operators can be recommended to distribute their products extensively and display them more by authorized representatives and mobile communication centers at any region can not only increase the sales of the products, they can also make customers think that these operators want to provide high speed services and want to meet their customers' needs and finally, the corporate image becomes more desirable and the brand equity is improved in the view of customers. Also distributing the products and services extensively, the time spent on looking for stores by customers decreases, buying becomes easy and services related to the product can be easily provided. Hence, if the intensity of distribution increases, consumers will have more time and they will receive more value from the product. This added value leads to more consumer satisfaction, more brand loyalty and finally, more brand equity. Fourth, according to the effect of sales promotion on brand equity dimensions and corporate image, it can be concluded that cell phone operators must emphasize their media advertising and providing useful information about the products and services in the mass media, they must advertise by billboards, during sport events, use public relations optimally and participate in activities in which many potential customers participate and use expert sales personnel to persuade customers to use the services of the company. Hence, their capabilities compared to the products/services of competitors can be effective and not only a desirable image is formed in the minds of likely customers, brand equity is also promoted. Finally, according to the effect of the corporate image on brand equity dimensions, managers must adopt strategies to improve corporate image in the minds of customers. This is possible by measures mentioned above. In addition, holding festivals, conferences and contests and also supporting such events can help the formation of a desirable corporate image. Improvement of the company's website and provision of useful information about the products and services can be also helpful.

(2) Limitations of the Research

The research had also limitations. In this research, the effect of the marketing mix components including price, distribution, product and promotion is only examined. Other components of the marketing mix are not examined including service quality and productivity, physical assets, staff and process management. In addition, the study is only conducted for Talia and Rightel companies. So, the generalizability of the findings is limited.

(3) Suggestions for Future Research

Suggestions that can be offered for future research are as follows. This research considered only four components of the marketing mix, while other factors can be also included such as service quality and productivity, physical assets, staff and process management. In addition, the results obtained from evaluating the effect of the marketing mix components on brand equity differ among different companies and industries. Therefore, similar researches can be conducted about other cell phone operators to increase the generalizability of the results. On the other hand, the effect of the marketing mix components on brand equity can be also examined based on financial measures. Also since no native model is offered to valuate brands in Iran, a native model must be offered in order that all brands are valuated by this model and branding is extended in Iran.

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