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Investigating the Impact of Marketing Mix and Customer Relationship Management on Brand Equity Dimensions

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of marketing mix and customer relationship management on brand equity dimensions. This is an applied research in terms of purpose and a descriptive-survey research in terms of method. The statistical population of this study was selected among the consumers of the two pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries, among whom as many as 240 questionnaires were distributed for data collection. The analysis of the obtained data shows that communication marketing and customer relationship management play an important role in increasing brand equity, and consumer awareness of brand is one of the key dimensions that plays the supporting role in the interaction among other dimensions and creates brand loyalty. It should be noted that the results of this research can help marketing managers of organizations and companies to improve their decision-making quality.

Keywords: customer relationship management, marketing mix, brand equity, advertising.

1. Introduction

A brand may be understood to be "a *name*, *term*, sign, symbol, or a *combination of* them, which distinguishes the goods and services of a vendor or a group of vendors from those of other competitors (Sehat, Bajmaloy Rostami & Kashkooli, 2012; Kotler, 2004). Since the late eighties and with the rise of the value-based management philosophy, brand equity has become one of the key concepts of marketing and developed throughout the theoretical and practical activities of management (Burmann, Jost- Benz, & Riley, 2009). One of the fundamental variables in the brand equity structure that has been investigated in previous studies is the elements of marketing mix (Yoo, Donthu & *Lee*, 2000). Many studies have been conducted on the effect of various elements of marketing mix on brand equity (e.g., Keller and Lehmann, 2006; Sehat et al., 2012; Rafiei, Haghighinaseb and Yazdani, 2012), but these studies failed to identify the full scope of brand equity dimensions and the interaction and correlation between these dimensions because they mainly focused on the impact of the advertising cost and monetary promotion on brand equity (e.g., Yoo et al., 2000; Bravo, Fraj and Martinez, 2007). However, the present research has also considered the attitudes of individuals towards advertising and non-monetary promotion, and customer relationship management, and analyzed the causal relationships between the dimensions of brand equity and the interaction between them; while many of the previous studies have provided a hierarchical analysis of these dimensions (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2001; Keller and Lehmann, 2003 and 2006). Therefore, the present study focuses on just one of the elements of marketing mix (sales promotion mix) rather considering all its elements, and investigates CRM along with promotion mix elements considering that relationship with customers is one of the requirements of today's world. Communication is regarded in this research as one of the 4C (Customer, Cost, Communication, Convenience) elements and customer relationship management is also considered as a factor that plays a decisive role in maximizing customer loyalty and helping create value for customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). It should be noted that the role of CRM on brand equity dimensions has not been addressed in domestic and foreign studies so far, which will be dealt with in this study.

2. Marketing mix and CRM

Marketing mix elements affect consumers' perceptions of brand equity (Oappu & Quester, 2008). These elements not only affect brand equity, but also empower marketers in line with the growth of this value through marketing activities due to the control that the market has on them (Yoo et al., 2000; Herrmann, Huber, Shao, & Bao, 2007). No studies have been conducted on the impact of CRM, as marketing communication tools, on brand equity. According to studies, one of the goals of CRM is to create brand loyalty among consumers. Therefore, the present research focuses on three types of marketing communication tools: CRM, sales advertising and promotions (monetary and nonmonetary), which are briefly described below.

CRM: CRM is a business strategy designed to optimize profitability, revenue and customer satisfaction by organizing service delivery based on customer needs, improving customer satisfaction levels based on customer-centric principles, and implementing customer-centric processes. Therefore, the goal of CRM is to customize the products based on the needs and interests of the customers in order to influence the brand equity dimensions and, ultimately, lead to consumer loyalty (Elahi and Heidari, 2005).

Advertising: Advertising is one of the most prominent marketing activities, so that researchers consider it a major factor in creating consumer-based brand equity and a tool with a sustained and cumulative impact on this asset (Wang, Zhang, & Ouyang, 2009). The effects of advertising on brand equity depend on the amount of investment on advertising and the type of advertising messages (Martinez, Mantaner, and Pina, 2007). This

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is why it is known in this paper as the cost of advertising. In addition, people's attitudes toward advertising play an important role in influencing brand equity (Bravo, Frau and Martinez, 2007; Sriram, Balachander & Kalwani, 2007), used in this article as the advertising attitudes.

Sales Promotion: Sales Promotion is a key marketing tool for influencing brand equity in communication programs (Valette-Florence, Guizani, & Merunka, 2011), but various types of promotional tools (monetary and non-monetary promotions) may have different effects on sales, profit and brand equity (Srinivasan & Anderson, 1998). Therefore, sales promotion is considered in this study as two types of monetary and nonmonetary promotion. The above points support hypotheses one to five.

3. Theoretical foundations

3-1. Brand equity

Brand equity became one of the key issues in marketing management during the nineties (Aaker, 1996; Dyson, Farr and Hollis, 1996), but although this issue has received a lot of attention in recent years, the studies have failed to provide the same framework for this issue. This may be partly due to the different perspectives that have been presented to describe and assess this concept (Christodoulides, & Chernatony, 2010). There have been three major perspectives on brand equity during these years: the consumer-based perspective, the financial perspective, and the combined perspective (Kim, 2005). The dimensions of the initial perspective are considered in this research.

In the marketing literature, the consumer-based brand equity is usually divided into two groups:
A) Consumer perception.
(B) Consumer behavior (Cobb-Walgren et al. 1995; Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

   Two researchers called Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993 and 2003), presented the most common dimensions of consumer-based brand equity. Aaker (1991) considers the dimensions of the consumer-based brand equity as follows:

- Brand loyalty (having positive attitudes towards such items as brand, services, shop, seller) and supporting behavior towards the brand (Mosakhani, Haghighi and Torkzadeh, 2012).
- Brand awareness (the extent to which a brand is known among the public).
- Perceived quality (Customers' mental judgment on the performance of a product).
   Brand associations (The extent to which one brand can retrieve items in the minds of consumers).

   Keller (1993) states that brand equity is affected by two factors: 1. the buyers' knowledge about a brand; 2. the consumers' desirable, strong and unique associations with the brand. He defines Brand's knowledge based on two components: brand awareness, which refers to the brand's recognition or recall upon seeing the product, and the brand image, which refers to associations that consumers create with the brand in their minds.

   However, many studies have modeled and measured brand equity through dimensions such as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty (Yoo et al., 2000; Tong & Hawley, 2009; Lee & Back, 2010).

The four dimensions of brand equity (brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association), which Aaker (1991 and 1996) presented have been widely accepted and used by many researchers (Low and Lamp, 2000; Yoo & Donthu, 2001), and these four dimensions have also been used in the present study.

3-2. Relationships between the dimensions of Brand equity

Many studies provide a hierarchy based on the importance of brand equity dimensions (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Keller & Lehmann, 2003 and 2006). The traditional perspective towards purchase is that the person first forms his or her ideas and beliefs about a product by collecting information about it and then decides to buy or not to buy it based on his or her attitude and feelings towards it (Solomon., Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2006). However, few studies have empirically examined the internal relationships of these dimensions with each other. Therefore, brand equity dimensions interact with one another. While some studies address the relationship between brand equity dimensions (Yoo et al., 2000; Tong & Hawley, 2009), a small number of researchers have dealt with the causal relations between these dimensions (Ashill & Sinha, 2004; Bravo, Fraj & Martinez, 2007). The framework provided in this way is that brand awareness leads to the creation of attitudes about perceived quality and brand association, which both affect brand loyalty (Konecnik, & Gartner, 2007). Therefore, the above-mentioned points can support hypotheses six to nine.

Conceptual Framework

Considering the points mentioned in the previous sections and various models existing about brand equity, this research aims to study the components of consumer-based brand equity from the point of view of Aaker and to examine the interrelationship between these dimensions and the effect of the marketing mix elements and customer relationship management on this model. Therefore, based on the theoretical foundations, the conceptual model of the research, derived from the framework proposed by Yoo et al. (2000), is shown in Fig. 1.
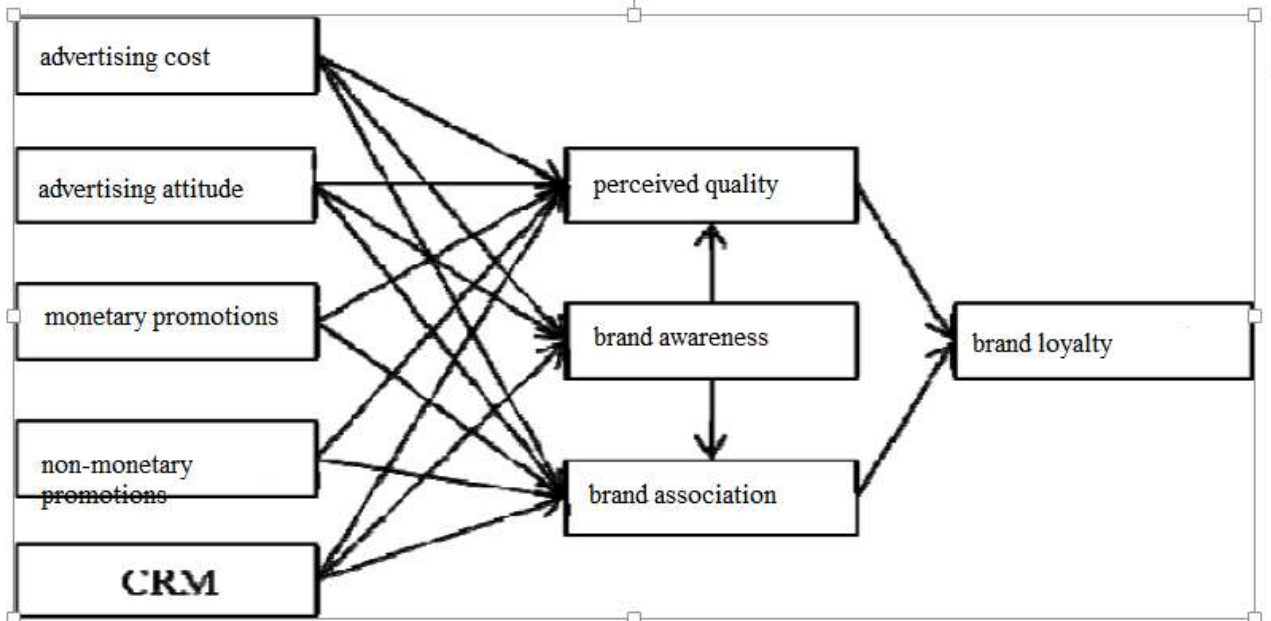

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the research
Source: The researchers' plan derived from the framework of Yoo et al., 2000

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As shown in Figure 1, this study examines the impact of advertising costs, people's attitudes towards advertising of and CRM on the three dimensions of perceived quality, brand awareness and brand association, as well as the effect of monetary and non-monetary promotions on perceived quality and brand associations. Finally, the second target model of the research examines the interactive and interrelationships between the brand equity dimensions through the effect of brand awareness on perceived quality and brand associations, and the effect of brand equity and brand associations on brand loyalty.

The hypotheses of this study based on the conceptual framework are as follows:

1. The consumers' perception of the cost of brand advertising is positively associated with perceived quality of the product.
2. The consumers' perception of the cost of brand advertising is positively associated with brand awareness.
3. The consumers' perception of the cost of brand advertising is positively associated with brand association.
4. People's attitudes towards advertising of a brand is positively associated with perceived quality of the product.
5. People's attitudes towards advertising of a brand is positively associated with brand awareness.
6. People's attitudes towards advertising of a brand is positively associated with brand association.
7. Consumers' perceptions of monetary promotions of a brand are positively associated with perceived quality of the product.
8. Consumers' perceptions of monetary promotions of a brand are positively associated with brand association.
9. Consumers' perceptions of -nonmonetary promotions of a brand is positively associated with perceived quality of the product.
10. Consumers' perceptions of non-monetary promotions of a brand is positively associated with brand association.
11. CRM is positively associated with perceived quality of the product.
12. CRM is positively associated with brand awareness.
13. CRM is positively associated with brand association.
14. Brand awareness is positively associated with perceived quality of the product.
15. Brand awareness is positively associated with brand association.
16. Perceived quality of a product is positively associated with brand loyalty.
17. Brand association is positively associated with brand loyalty.

4. **Methodology**

This is an applied research in terms of purpose and a descriptive-survey research type in terms of nature and method. The researchers used the library method to collect the required data and review the literature. They also used a questionnaire as the tool to collect the field data. The criteria used for measuring the variables in the questionnaire are summarized in Table 1.

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Table 1. Criteria for measuring the research variables in the questionnaire and their sources

Variable	Number of questions	Source
Advertising cost	3 questions	Yoo et al. 2000
Attitude toward the ad	3 questions	Yoo et al. 2000
monetary promotions	3 questions	Yoo et al. 2000
Non-monetary promotions	3 questions	Yoo et al. 2000
brand awareness	5 questions	Yoo et al. 2000
brand association	9 questions	Pappu, Quester & Cooksey, 2005, 2006
perceived quality	4 questions	Pappu et al, 2005, 2006
brand loyalty	3 questions	Yoo et al. 2000
CRM	2 questions	The researcher

After the initial design of the questionnaire, it was presented to experts to comment on and confirm its validity. They also used Cronbach's alpha method to calculate its reliability coefficient, which was 0. 93 according to the data obtained from the questionnaire and the output of the SPSS software. The value obtained for Cronbach's alpha indicates that the research questionnaire has good reliability.

The study population consists of customers who are familiar with the products or services of the two pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries and have previously used their products or services. The reason for choosing these two industries for the study population is that because a wide range of people use the products of the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries, these brands have similar perceptual backgrounds from the perspectives of the public. In addition, the products of these industries are very similar in terms of the type of customers (end-users), purchase methods, consumption pattern, distribution and supply routes, and most people of the community use their products frequently, so the role of the marketing mix promotions of the products of these two industries in forming the perception of the company's brand equity from the customers' perspectives is more prominent than that of other industries. On the other hand, different items of the products of the two industries form a major part of consumer basket of people in comparison with the products of other industries. To collect the field data, the researchers selected two valid brands from each industry (Obeidi and Aburaihan pharmaceuticals for the pharmaceutical industry and brands of the Saviz and Cinere for the cosmetic industry). Due to the large population and impossibility of access to the whole population, and because of the unspecified number of people in the whole population, we estimated the standard deviation of the data after distributing the questionnaires among the initial population (30 people) in order to determine the sample size and considered the acceptable error rate as 0.05. Thus, we estimated the total number of samples as 240 people at the confidence level of 0.95 and based on the computational formula used for determining the sample size of the unlimited populations. In addition, we used the convenience sampling method in this study. To distribute the questionnaires among the sample members and collect the required data, we first designed the questionnaire items for each of the brands in a separate web page (four questionnaires in four separate

Internet addresses) and sent an email containing questionnaire links for more than 4000 people, who were asked to choose a brand that is more familiar to them and which they use most often and to respond the questionnaire items related to the brand in the next link. At the end, after a twenty-day period, the number of the completed questionnaires reached the desired sample size and the questionnaires were used for the final analysis.

5. **Findings**

The information obtained from the collected questionnaires showed that half of the respondents were male and half of them were female. 48% were singles and 52% were married. The information related to the respondents' age also showed that 45% of them were between 25 and 30 years old, 36% were more than 30 years old, and 19% were between 20 and 25 years of age. The information about their educational status showed that 56% of them had higher education degrees than master's degree, 39% had bachelor's degrees, and only 5% had degrees below the bachelor's degree. The hypotheses of this research were analyzed based on the collected data and using structural equation modeling by help of the LISREL software. The results of standard coefficients (path coefficient) and t-value of the variables of the research model analyzed in LISREL are summarized in Table 2. If the t-value is less than 1.96, the relationship between the two variables is not accepted and the relevant hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2. Results of standard coefficients and t-statistic of the variables of the research model in LISREL

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Symbol in the model	Dependent variable	Symbol in the model	Standard coefficients	T-statistic	Result
Hypothesis 1	advertising cost	ADS	perceived quality	PQ	-0.01	-0.17	rejected
Hypothesis 2	advertising cost	ADS	brand awareness	AWA	0.05	0.94	rejected
Hypothesis 3	advertising cost	ADS	brand association	ASS	0.04	0.84	rejected
Hypothesis 4	attitude toward the ad	ATA	perceived quality	PQ	0.12	2.59	confirmed
Hypothesis 5	attitude toward the ad	ATA	brand awareness	AWA	0.00	0.08	rejected
Hypothesis 6	attitude toward the ad	ATA	brand association	ASS	-0.05	-1.13	rejected
Hypothesis 7	monetary promotions	MPR	perceived quality	PQ	-0.01	-0.24	rejected

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Hypothesis 8	monetary promotions	MPR	brand association	ASS	0.03	0.62	rejected
Hypothesis 9	non-monetary promotions	NMPR	perceived quality	PQ	0.22	4.04	confirmed
Hypothesis 10	non-monetary promotions	NMPR	brand association	ASS	0.18	3.28	confirmed
Hypothesis 11	CRM	CRM	perceived quality	PQ	0.60	7.32	confirmed
Hypothesis 12	CRM	CRM	brand awareness	AWA	0.69	10.11	confirmed
Hypothesis 13	CRM	CRM	brand association	ASS	0.55	7.27	confirmed
Hypothesis 14	brand awareness	AWA	perceived quality	PQ	0.13	2.20	confirmed
Hypothesis 15	brand awareness	AWA	brand association	ASS	0.23	3.82	confirmed
Hypothesis 16	perceived quality	PQ	brand loyalty	LOY	0.22	2.93	confirmed
Hypothesis 17	brand association	ASS	brand loyalty	LOY	0.57	7.13	confirmed

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A look at the t-test statistic obtained for each of the relationships in the research model shows that ten of the research hypotheses have been approved and seven of them have been rejected.

The fit indices obtained for the model (Table 3) show that the GFI, with a value of 0.87, and the AGFI, with a value of 0.75, show good fit. Other goodness of fit indices are also of excellent desirability and are within an acceptable range. This result demonstrates the optimal fit of the final research model. The final and approved model of the research along with the direct effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable is shown in Figure 2.

Table 3. Statistics of the model's fit of index

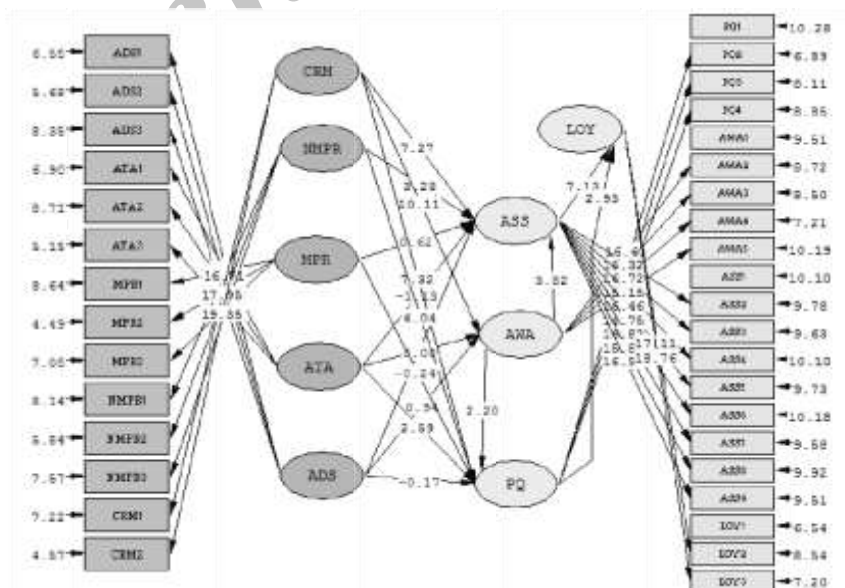| Indices	Proposed levels	Real value
goodness of **fit** index (**GFI**)	>0.9	0.87
Adjusted goodness of **fit** index (**AGFI**)	>0.9	0.75
Normalized fit of index (NFI)	>0.9	0.95
Non-normalized fit of index (NNFI)	>0.9	0.97
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (*RMSEA*)	<0.1	0.096

Figure 2: Final Model of the Research

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6. **Conclusion**

Data analysis shows that increasing the advertising costs does not necessarily lead to increased perceived quality, brand awareness and brand associations. Rather, the costs of advertising have a final limit point, thereafter these increases no longer affect the dimensions of brand equity. Chu and Keh (2006) confirm this, and Wang, Zhang and Ouyang (2009) also state that from an extreme point onwards, we can find a negative impact from advertising costs in brand equity. Keller & Lehmann (2003) also stated that an increase in financial investment in this area cannot guarantee the success of a brand and growth in brand equity. The present study concludes that there is a significant relationship between people's attitudes toward advertising and perceived quality. In fact, creating creativity, innovation, being different and lack of imitation in advertising help promote the perception of the quality of a brand's products. However, these attitudes, which arise due to innovative strategies in advertising, do not necessarily have a significant relationship with brand awareness and brand association, meaning that advertising attitudes does not lead to brand recognition from other brands, or the feeling of credibility, value, personality, and trust from purchase. In general, Sehat et al. (2012) reject the effect of advertising on each dimension of perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand association, like Huang & Sarigöllü (2012), who have confirmed this result. The result of their study rejected the effect of advertising on brand awareness. It should be noted, however, that these researchers had evaluated only the impact of advertising on the dimensions of brand equity in general. Another result is that monetary promotion is not significantly related to perceived quality and brand association. In other words, the more cash and coupon discounts which a brand uses on its products do not show a better quality of the product from the perspective of the statistical population and do not create a feeling of benefit from buying the brand products, nor do they bring about a better character, interest and trust and credibility of consumers. This was shown in Martínez, Montaner & Pina (2007) and Montaner & Pina (2008) whose findings also indicate a negative effect of monetary promotions on brand association. Yoo et al. (2000) also showed the negative effects of monetary promotions on brand equity. Conversely, non-monetary promotions such as small and free gifts of a product can prove this relationship and an increase in these promotions can positively affect perceived quality and brand association. Therefore, it is observed that non-monetary promotions play a decisive role in relation to brand equity.

Many studies confirm this important result (Papatla & Krishnamurthi, 1996; Mela, Gupta & Jedidi, 1998; Chu & Keh, 2006). Although Sehat et al. (2012) show the positive effect of sales promotion on perceived quality and brand awareness, which is consistent with the findings of Tong and Hawley (2009).

This study showed that the creation and observance of CRM elements and factors can increase the dimensions of brand equity. Therefore, the greater degree of customization of products, consistency of the characteristics of products with the interests of each and every consumer and their high availability will help increase the brand equity.

Finally, the findings showed that the dimensions of brand equity are interrelated. An increase in brand awareness will lead to an increase in perceived quality and brand association; and brand association and perceived quality will lead to brand loyalty. The present results can have important implications in the areas of marketing and market management. Although too much investment on advertising may not play an effective role in creating brand equity, marketing managers must recognize the role of creativity, innovation, being different from others, and non-imitation in advertising, and take measures to implement the perception of brand's better quality. Attitudes attitude toward the ad is not significantly associated with brand association and brand association, it increases

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consumers' perceived quality. Moreover, paying more attention to non-monetary promotions creates brand equity. Today, due to the many advances that have occurred in the area of CRM and the need to use virtual tools of communication with customers, CRM is recognized as a key factor in creating brand equity, and managers must take measures to create and use CRM more than ever. As seen in the model, brand awareness is the main backbone for creating interactive and correlated relationships between brand equity dimensions. In other words, brand awareness is a starting and reference point to which managers must pay special attention if they want to create brand loyalty.

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